

## *My history (as of May-2009)*

**Thanks to the practice of Buddhism for 48years I was able to pave my way by HENDOKU IYAKU (Change poison into medicine).**

**Now I am going to participate in activities on the global stage with ever youthful spirit.**

### **Prologue**

48 years have passed since I joined the Soka Gakkai. Now I am 68 years old. I retired at the age of 60. In the third year after the retirement I experienced a very hard and serious year. I can say it is “The worst time in my life” or “The time of the very bottom of the hells”.

Very fortunately, however, I managed and paved yet another new path that is expanding forward to an even brighter future. Through these latest experiences and a lot of experiences in other occasions since my conversion 48 years ago, I was able to have a profound conviction that I can overcome any kind of obstacle through the practice of true Buddhism.

I hereby summed them and wrote a draft, “My experiences in faith”, with the intention to pass these to my children who have many years to come and to allow them to know about my life of these past 67 years.

After I wrote a draft about my entire personal life, I summarized the parts that I think can be shared with a third person. So I am offering this to all, now, overcoming the shame of showing openly my private life, with a sincere wish that this would be of some help to others.

### **From my birth to the time of my conversion**

I was born on March 17, 1941, in Nagano prefecture. I had two brothers and two sisters. I was the second of five children.

My name is Takeshi. “Takeshi” in Chinese letters has been used also to mean “Samurai”. I was born in Japan just before the beginning of the Pacific War. Under such situation, my parents gave me the name “Takeshi” with a wish that I would be strong like a Samurai.

In my childhood, I experienced both a life in the mid war and a life just after the war. The shortage of food was rampant. To prevent starvation, our family would go to the mountains near my house to pick up some edible weeds to cure hunger. On one occasion, my mother went out from the storehouse, holding Mochi (rice) cakes when a beggar approached, intending to steal from her. My mother screamed. “Help me!” This scene has been vividly etched in my mind and I have never forgotten it until now.

During summer season, our house was occupied by “Okaiosama”(silkworms) that were fed with green leaves of Kuwa(mulberry). So we had to pass the night in a shabby cottage.

### **Primary school days**

Our primary school was managed and maintained economically by Higashiminowa

village. It took about 30 minutes on foot from my house. I sometimes used to envy my classmates who lived closer to the school.

We had Gakugeikai, mini culture festivals. Once, our class presented a mini drama of “Don Quixote”. I played the role of Sancho Panza, the subordinate of Don Quixote. It is very significant and interesting that this role I played has become the indirect cause for me to become “Don Quijote de Tokio”(“Don Quixote of Tokyo”). This teaches me, keenly, how an impetus and nourishment in boyhood influenced my life even in adulthood.

### **Middle school days**

After primary school, I proceeded to the middle school of Higashiminowa. But in the third year, with the merger of a town and two villages, our school joined with the middle school of Minowa. As a result it took me about 40 minutes to walk from my house to the school. My classroom teacher was Mr. Matsuzaki. He taught us Japanese language and literature. He was very passionate in attending to students.

When I was working for a small company in Tokyo after school then, I faced a serious deadlock in the midst of the severe actual society. I wrote a letter to my mentor who lived in my native town, Minowamachi. More than three years had passed since my graduation. The letter I received soon from him was very encouraging and moving. He advised me cordially about how I should live. I think I was very fortunate to have had such a kind teacher in my boyhood.

### **High school days**

I went to Inakita High School, one of the best high schools in Nagano Prefecture. In the beginning of the second year, a dreadful incident happened which we had never expected. Most of the school buildings were burnt down from a fire. Fortunately, the auditorium and gymnasium remained unburnt. Because it would take more than two years for reconstruction, our school put up separation panels in the auditorium and the Gym as "walls" to create temporal study room for the classes. Since these rooms didn't have ceilings, the voices of the students and teachers in neighboring rooms could be heard. We needed to listen intently to the teachers. My classmates who were eager to pass the entrance examination for the university would take the front seats so that they could hear the teachers' words better. I would usually sit in the third row.

Under such disadvantaged circumstances, however, seven of us passed the entrance examination to Tokyo University, the most difficult and prestigious national university in Japan, and more than 20 of us, including myself, entered Waseda University, one of the most distinguished private universities in Japan at that time. I think the percentage of students who went to higher education that year was one of the best records in the history of Inakita High school. This can be compared, I think, to “Hendoku Iyaku (change poison into medicine in Buddhist terms)”. I believe this was because almost all of us were determined to commit more to study to overcome the disadvantage.

Anyway, the intense study of this period helped me advance in many subjects. It was remarkable especially in English. I occupied the No.2 position in English examination contest of all 6 classes in the second year. I had the confidence in me and the conviction at this occasion served as a source to obtain a teacher's certificate in English. This also

became one of the causes by which I was dispatched overseas as a correspondent for 10 years.

The study turned out to be very useful too, later, to enable me to attend to the American SGI members who worked on Yokota Air Base. After my retirement, I could also, through the American connection, take a class at Central Texas College on base. Thanks to this endeavor, using English as a base, I was able to manage Spanish, too.

I was fond of the subject, “Social studies”. What I have studied in social studies in high school served me eventually to prepare teaching materials for a group of high school students 50 years later. The title of the material is “Flying Don Quixote on an Airplane”. The text is intended to deepen the students' understanding of international affairs.

Inakita High school was located on a high hill in Ina Valley. We could appreciate Mount Higashi Komagatake and Mount Senjyo to the east (both of them were 3000 meters above sea level) and Nishi Komagatake(2900 meters) to the west, while the Tenryu River flowed down south to the green forested Ina Valley.

These natural environments nourished me to aim high, overcoming any obstacles or hardships. Prof. Makiguchi, first president of the Soka Gakkai, published a book, “Geography of Human being”. In this book he mentioned, “Natural environment plays a very important role in forming human beings and human beings play a very important role in forming the natural environment.” I think what I mentioned above is similar to this assertion.

Nowadays (after almost half a century since my graduation from Inakita High School), we have an Alumni association. Members of the alumni are communicating with each other daily, using e-mails and we get together in Tokyo every 3 months. All of these serve as an impetus to enrich our lives.

### **My mother fell down and I began to work in Tokyo**

To back-track a few years back, I initially failed in the entrance examination of Kyoto University and Waseda University, I was forced to decide to stay back home to challenge again the following year. Coincidentally, in that year, my mother fell down as a result of a cerebral hemorrhage. It could be that she had worked so hard in those months and was lacking sleeping hours. All of these affected her health. She absolutely had needed rest. I took care of her for about two months at the house. Then she was hospitalized in Okaya city. My father stayed at the hospital to take care of her. We, three brothers and two sisters, united to take care of the fields on behalf of our father.

Under such situation, I abandoned the idea of going to the university and came up to Tokyo to work at a company that sold auto parts in retail. It was a small company. We had only a total of twenty employees. We worked from eight in the morning to six in the evening. We stayed at the company dormitory that was in the same building as the offices and shops.

### **I joined the Soka Gakkai**

The biggest encounter in my whole life was my encounter with the Gohonzon. I joined the Soka Gakkai. It was in August, 1961, 47 years ago. One of my friends in the company

where I worked for invited me to a Zadankai meeting. A lot of topics were discussed in that meeting. I cannot remember all of them now, but I can recall one phrase very vividly even now. That is: "It's impossible for us to tell whether a cake tastes good or not without eating it. So why don't you try this Buddhism anyhow before you talk about it only in theory?"

I had a conscience even at that moment, at the age of just 20 that I could not accept a thing which I could not assent. I joined, however, under the following motivations.

First, my mother had fallen ill with a cerebral hemorrhage three years before. They told me that the illness could be explained by "The four proverbs" that the Zen sect, to which she had belonged, was the invention of the heavenly devil, and illnesses such as cerebral hemorrhage would come from believing in these erroneous religions. These words coincided exactly with my mother's situation. I had a strong wish to cure my mother.

Secondly, at that time, I had abandoned going to university because of the economical situation of my family and I was working for a small company in Tokyo. While for two and half years, my mother's condition was steady even though she was not cured completely. So I made up my mind again to take a challenge to the entrance examination of University. I told them I had a plan to take an entrance examination next year. Then they said, "You had far better embrace Gohonzon if you want to realize your dream" and they conveyed me the experience of a senior members who had succeeded in the examination.

Being motivated, I joined the Soka Gakkai finally and enshrined the Gohonzon in my small room in the dormitory of the company which I shared with a colleague. But I didn't have enough money to buy an altar, Butsudan, which cost about 5000 yens. So I pinned a thick paper box for shirts on the wall of the room and enshrined the Gohonzon in it. When I began doing gongyo, some of my colleagues in the company peeped in the room and made fun of me.

For half a year before the date of the entrance examination, I worked hard, studied hard and chanted fervently. Thanks to these efforts, I succeeded in the entrance examination of Waseda University. Only 10 percents of applicants could pass. My colleagues who had graduated from the same high school had been studying from morning till night, but in my case I had time to study only at night on weekdays and full time on Sunday because I had to keep working to support economically myself and my family. In that sense, I had a disadvantage compared to them. Anyway, I began to take class at Waseda University.

I think I can count the following as the benefits of the practice of this Buddhism. First: The questions in English test favored me. One of the questions was as how to answer to telephone calling. It had been almost 50 years ago and for those who had graduated from high school in country side, the questions were very difficult, because they had not had a chance to use the telephone owing to the lack of these facilities in rural area at that time. In my case it was very fortunate, however, that I was accustomed to using the phone daily at work at my company.

Second: I had to keep working even after entering the university because of my situation. I consulted with one of the directors of the university about my situation. He told me, that without changing the faculty, I could take the classes designed for evening students.

Third: They taught bookkeeping and accounting at the faculty of commerce. My work was also related to bookkeeping and accounting. Coincidentally, my study at the university was helpful to my work itself. Under such situation, the owner of the company paid all the educational tuitions of the university for four years for me.

In the beginning time of my practice, I was profoundly impressed with the experience of my group leader who would always encourage me. His name was Fumio Nakamura. His school career was middle school only but he loved to study and he had a seeking spirit. He had once belonged to a group of Yakuza (gangster). He strongly wanted to part away from the group. But they forced him to cut off one of his fingers to withdraw from the group, because it was one of the strict rules in the world of Yakuza.

He got out, trying to find a place to hide. He fled and went through many places. One day he plunged into a house to escape from the Yakuza. Miraculously, the house turned out to be a Soka Gakkai member's home. He was converted to Buddhism by the house members. He was moved and finally joined the Soka Gakkai. Thanks to this conversion, he was able to part with the Yakuza without cutting off his finger.

After he converted in Buddhism, he became very attentive to every person because he had been one of the staff members of Yakuza. He encouraged not only YMD members but also members in all other divisions. He became very popular among all of them. I profoundly appreciate him for what he had encouraged me.

### **My daily life: Work in the day time, Study at the University in the evening and participate in activities of the Soka Gakkai.**

Busy days began. I worked from 8 o'clock in the morning until 4 o'clock in the evening. I would go out from the office with appreciation to my comrades for what they did, allowing me to leave two hours earlier than closing time to go to attend class while they had to work until 6 o'clock.

I would change my clothes and board the bus at the JR Omori bus stop near the company. I would take the Keihin Tohoku Line at Omori station and transferred at Shinagawa station to Yamate line; get off at Takadanobaba station and ride on bus again to the University. I would run into the room just in time for the beginning of the class at 5 o'clock in the evening.

As for the subjects at the University, we had to study two foreign languages (English and German in my case) for 4 years. I could only take the classes after 5 o'clock in the afternoon owing to my work as I mentioned before. This meant that my foreign language choices were very limited. I was limited to take German as a second foreign language because it was the only other choice available after 5 o'clock.

From the third year, I took "The study of commerce in English" and "The study of economy in German", too, in addition to the study of the two languages. I felt that the subjects were more useful and effective for me to learn applied language than to study them

only as academic subjects.

I had a good friend, Mr. I, who had a handicap in his right leg. As soon as he graduated from the university, he started an association, "Japan Abilities Association". Later, he established a company, composed mainly of handicapped persons.

Mr. I had an intimate contact with Christianity and the church. Though I was a Buddhist, I was inspired and encouraged by his positive ways of living. I could agree with their goals and could understand what they were actually doing. So I supported him from the very beginning. I became one of the stock holder's of his company when it was established.

The class at the university usually lasted until 8 pm in the evening. I would go back to the company around 9 pm to close the sales of the day. It would take about one hour. Now and then I went to the meeting place of the Soka Gakkai on my way back from the university.

The meeting place was usually at Nakanobu, Ebara, along side of the Second National Road between Tokyo and Yokohama or at the place near the Oimachi station of the National Railroad. On such occasions, I would go back to the company after 10 pm and from then began the work of closing accounting. It would take only 30 minutes or less than one hour. People around me were already sleeping. I thought to myself sometimes, "Why do I have to experience such a hard time?"

Much time has passed since then, and now, however, I believe that it is because I had made so much effort and endured so many hardships in the past that I have the confidence to overcome obstacles of any kind. I am very thankful to the environment that had implanted in me through my entire life the self-assurance to win over any situation.

### **I worked for NHK Gakuen High School**

When I advanced on to the fourth year at the university, I saw lots of announcements on the board near the dining room of the University. They were to recruit students to jobs. I believe that my academic career, including graduating from the faculty of commerce of Waseda University, would give me an advantage to enter some company. But I pondered and hesitated to move to another company just so soon after I graduated from the university. I was aware that I had owed so much to the small company, Fujii Shokai, which I had been working for.

Meanwhile, however, I had an earnest wish to pave my way after graduating the university. When I was pondering about my future, I happened to be informed of the examination managed by Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

It was in December. The examination was to prepare a list of able teachers for private high school in Tokyo. I was not sure about my future at that time, but I took the examination anyway to prepare for any possibility for the future. I understood how important it was to be prepared for any opportunities to come along. Thanks to this spirit, I was able to pave the path for my next part of life.

Fortuitously, I received an invitation letter from NHK Gakuen High School in January the following year. It was a notification to participate in a paper test and to interview to work for the school. I imagined that they had chosen the candidates from the list of examinees from December's test.

The school was about a 20-minutes walk from JR Kunitachi Station. Eight applicants

were tested on the areas of bookkeeping and accounting and two were selected. Fortunately I was the one of the two. I thought the fact that I graduated from Waseda University and I also had experience in accounting work at a company had increased my chances. It was the third year from the inauguration of the school and they needed teachers who could teach bookkeeping, one of the compulsory subjects that students had to study during the third year.

Time was exactly right. I was relieved that Mr. Fujii, the president of the company I worked for, granted my wish to quit my job peacefully without any problems.

The NHK Gakuen School was a three storied modern building and the room for teachers was on the second floor. The principal, Tatsuo Morito, had once served as minister of education and the vice principal had once been the principal of the Fifth Business High School in Kunitachi.

In the morning, we corrected the reports from students, gave advices and added some comments. In the afternoon, we would design questions for tests, prepare materials for the class and we would have different kinds of meetings. Once or twice a month, we would attend schooling or give lectures in the classrooms. In addition, we were dispatched to distant area like Hokkaido or Kyushu three or five times a year to present lectures.

### **Visiting the Soviet Union eventually made me become a staff of the Soka Gakkai Head Quarters.**

One day in June of my third year of NHK Gakuen High School, I went to Waseda University, my alma mater, to apply for a license to teach social studies. I happened to notice an announcement, “Why don’t you participate in the Highlight trip to the Soviet Union”. It was just after I received the license of social studies. I applied to it without hesitation because I thought it would be good to do actual studies about geography and history.

This tendency of my making decision promptly has become the reasons of my travel overseas and to study abroad after retirement. In actuality, I had been a man of indecisiveness. I don’t know from where in me that I found such a power of decision making.

Situations and the environments have changed in these decades and a trip to Russia has become very easy and convenient. The Soviet Union, at that time, however, was still covered with a “heavy iron curtain”. We took a voyage from Yokohama to Nakhodka and we toured by plane and railroad train in the country of Russia. My traveling cost for two weeks totaled about 240,000 yen.

I wrote a short report of this trip and told it to Mr. I, an intimate friend of the university who had begun printing business for handicapped people. Then he voluntarily edited my report to a booklet.

In fact, this booklet has become the cause of my changing profession, from a teacher to an editing staff, from NHK Gakuen High School to Seikyo Shimbun. I was absent from activities of YMD for more than two weeks owing to this trip, so I handed this booklet to my senior leader of YMD as a token of my appreciation.

Then new opportunities arose. In January, the following year, a senior leader called me saying, “If you are fond of writing, why don’t you come to the Seikyo Shimbun as a staff

writer?" I went to the Head Quarters of the Soka Gakkai and took the paper test and interview. Fortunately I passed. About ten new staff workers in total were hired at the same time.

I began to work for the Seikyo Shimbun from April, 1969. While I felt sad to suddenly leave NHK Gakuen High School (which I owed much), I felt a little relieved because it was during time of between-term break and it was relatively easy to hire another teacher to cover my absence.

Anyway, it was a great change of life. On top of that, I was engaged in December and I was going to be married in April, precisely the very first month of my new job. I imagined that the parents of my fiancé allowed their daughter to marry me with a sense of security because school teachers had been well paid in general. Her father once had the position of Chikubucho, district chief, and knew about the economical life of our Honbu Staff to some extent. However, however.....from here, a new bigger life was opened before me.

**I got married at the same time as my entering the Seikyo Shimbun. It was a very rare case in the history of the Honbu staff workers.**

It was as if good things always came in pairs. Simultaneously, I received a used house managed and maintained by the Metropolitan Government. I was shown three different types of homes and I decided to live in the house in Josui honcho near JR Kokubunji station, because I thought my living quarter would be closer to NHK Gakuen High School, the place I was working for, but I was offered a position with the Seikyo Shimbun. How mystic our life is!

On the very day I was preparing for my move from Omori to Kodaira, my senior leader F called me and persuaded me to work for the Seikyo Shimbun. The distance from my house to my office, from Kokubunji to Kunitachi, should have become shorten, but it became even longer eventually then, from Kokubunji to Shinanomachi, Shinjuku.

In the beginning of April, as soon as I entered in the editing department of the Seikyo Shimbun, my daily life was totally changed. I began a special training course and I came back home very late every evening, (even during my newly-wed days, at 10 o'clock at the earliest and 12 o'clock at the latest). Besides, I was married at only the first month of my employment. Although my fellow workers admitted the fact that I had been priory engaged in the past, this was the first time in the history of the Honbu staff workers of the Soka Gakkai.

**A novice reporter had a hard time, desperately struggling, coming back home late.**

Our honeymoon was only one night and two days at Hakone. From the next day of my return from the honeymoon, the time of my coming back home from the office became very late. Even on Saturday and Sunday, I had to go to the office. I couldn't write good articles. I couldn't think of any impressive titles nor could I prepare creative plans for the newspaper.

Time was passing while I couldn't proceed with the work. My boss taught me once about a pressman's spirit. He said, "Even though you are ill in bed, come to the office lying on a wooden timber. Readers are waiting for your report. We can never publish our



newspaper with one page blank in white which you are supposed to fill out”.

I read many books that referred to writing articles and editing and I learned many things because I was a brand new pressman. Some of the phrases that gave me stimulus were: “When your boss begins to correct your article, you should feel a little bit relieved because he acknowledges that the content of your article is worthwhile to correct. If the article is not good enough, a strict boss will tear off the paper of the article or will even light the paper with fire from cigarette”. This means that through this humiliation by your boss, you will surely make up your mind to improve your knowledge and skill in writing.

One of the best report projects I proposed and wrote was “The steps for learning throughout life”. It was a project serialized in five times. Why did I choose this as one of the best? Because, the word “Learning throughout life” was used for the first time in the history of the Seikyo Shimbun.

The word “Education throughout life” had been used pretty often in the society at that time but the word “Learning throughout life” had rarely be seen in newspapers and magazines. However, the word has become popular little by little in society. Now I feel a sense of pride in it with emotion.

Strangely to say, my life after retirement has turned out just like what I had appealed. It is a very impressive and emotional fact.

### **My challenge to master English and Spanish.**

As time passed, as I could manage English, I was directed to take charge of the reports from overseas. In the beginning, I prepared several short articles to fill out a small box on a page once a week. “Nichiren Shoshu in the world” was its serialized title.

With the development of the organization in overseas countries, foreign news divisions were formed. In our editing department of the Seikyo Shimbun we had four staff members. We, four members, discussed how to assign each of us to respective areas.

In fact, three of the four staff members were graduates from the university that focused on foreign languages. One of them was from Tokyo Foreign Language University. I graduated from Waseda University and I majored in bookkeeping and accounting. I could manage English to a certain extent, but the others easily surpassed me. Therefore, I accepted Spanish as my responsibility. I definitely needed to understand Spanish to be able to write articles about the issues in Latin America. I believed I should be well informed of the region. So I began to study Spanish by myself.

The pronunciation in Spanish is similar to Japanese but the grammar is very complicated and difficult. The conjugation of the verbs is especially difficult. I was happy to be informed that there was a Spanish class at Casa de España near the office in Shinanomachi where I might attend.

At that time, in the evening after work, I would participate in Gakkai activities as a leader of the young men’s division. Meanwhile, the staff members of the editing department had some free time during the day. My supervisors told me that as long as they deliver the assigned articles to the top on time, they would ask for permission for me to go to Spanish class during working hours. This request was delivered to the top leader of the Seikyo Shimbun, Sensei.

To my great surprise, I received a message from Sensei as follows:  
“It’s wonderful to have a staff member who has such strong seeking spirit. The activities of kosen-rufu will surely be extended to overseas countries from now on more than ever. We will need lots of members who are able to manage Spanish. So let him study hard.”

As a consequence, I began to go to the Spanish class from the summer of 1975, twice a week, two hours a day. It may seem paradoxical, but thanks to the fact that I was not perfect in managing English, I eventually became able to manage Spanish. Perhaps, I was being very fortunate for it was a very rare special case. Anyway, I would like to share this experience with those young people who have strong seeking spirits and goals for the future.

Ten months after that, I was dispatched to Panama as a correspondent of the Seikyo Shimbun to cover the activities of the SGI members in Latin American continent. It was the seventh year of my life as press staff worker.

Also, I was very fortunate to have been able to hear the President Ikeda’s guidance in the very first year in the Seikyo Shimbun: “Chant one million daimoku when you face some problem (difficulty). Chant one million daimoku a year!”

From that time on, I have tried to chant more than 3000 daimoku a day. I kept writing in a small memo pad the number of daimoku I chanted every day. According to this record, I kept surpassing one million daimoku every year. I am totally convinced that the accumulation of those daimoku has become the source for me to pave my course in life in every aspect.

**Live a full life as a correspondent in Panama for ten years.**(This part is summarized in another booklet in detail.)

### **I was appointed chapter chief of Tsutsujigaoka.**

In the first year after returning from Panama, my wife and I lived in Kokubunji city for one year, renting a house. Then, through a loan we could afford to buy a room of an apartment building constructed by the Housing *Corporation*. We moved to Tsutsujigaoka in Akishima city in 1987. Six months after our relocation, I was appointed chapter chief of the area. The Tsutsujigaoka chapter was composed of five districts, about 220 families in total.

We would have planning meeting of the chapter at my house and discussion meeting at the women’s division chief’s house. As the community of Tsutsujigaoka was comparatively newly established, the contents of our activities were also refreshing.

We were able to have different kinds of events and activities during the four years when I was in charge of the chapter. We composed a chapter song and held a recital at Tachikawa Culture Center, focusing on the new chapter song. We also had mini culture festival at the small Public Hall of Akishima city.

I have heard many times members saying, “We had a very good time when Mr. Shimizu was our chapter chief. We enjoyed activities so much but now.....” It seems to me that they enjoyed the activities during the time when I was chapter chief. I would like to tell them that we need to move on and we should raise (train) new capable leaders.

(The following text maybe inserted later)

**I was dispatched to Europe to cover President Akiya's guidance tour to attend the issue of Nikken sect.**

**I was dispatched to Panama for the first time in seven years.**

**I visited Colombia, Mexico and Cuba.**

**I was transferred to the International Office of the Soka Gakkai from the Seikyo Shimbun.**

### **I served as chapter chief of Santamerica**

Soon after my resignation as chapter chief of Tsutsujigaoka, I was appointed chapter chief of Santamerica, an organization of American members who worked for Yokota Air Base in the neighboring city of Fussa. It was because I could manage English and I that lived in Akishima city which was very close to the base.

There were about 100 members in Yokota. The organization itself was very different from that of Japan. The members were very joyous and vigorous. Every one would speak actively and openly. I served as chapter chief for about 7 years. In the latter part of my assistance, Dr. Kenneth Siu, Lieutenant colonel, assumed the position of District chief. He was very smart and worked hard for the organization together with Mrs. O., WD's District leader. They officially registered our organization to the religious bureau of the base as a Buddhist association. Thanks to their effort, Santamerica gained lots of privileges, as follows:

Use the chapel just like the Christians, Protestants and Muslims.

Announce activities in the base newspaper

Use of the broadcast system in the base to promote our activities.

Military buses at special event outside the base.

The cost of gasoline and the fee for using highway will be covered by the base.

Leave brochures and books on Buddhism or SGI at the public facility, such as library or hospital

Inform us (center figure) of the members who moved to Yokota from another base

This reflected the society of the United States that treasured religion and respected the equality of every sect. Making full use of these advantages, we had our meetings at the chapel, we visited the Head Quarters of the Soka Gakkai and Fuji Art Museum at Hachioji using military buses, and we put on the base air channels the itinerary of our activities. We donated many kinds of books to the library.

By the way, to enter the base I had to ask an American member in the base to notify the officer of the gate that I would be escorted. Only with a pass issued at the gate I could enter the base. I thought this might give members nuisance. I would rather evade such troublesome if possible.

Soon after my retirement, a very good idea came to me. That is "To become a student of the university in Yokota Air Base. Then I can get a pass to enter the base.

There were two universities (colleges) on base: Maryland University and Central Texas College.

Maryland University admitted students with a minimum of 213 points at TOEIC Test and I could not reach the level. My point was 207. As for Central Texas College (CTC), the minimum standard score for admission was 170. I entered CTC easily without any problem. Yes, the gate pass was very convenient for me. It was also very fascinating to me in the sense that I was able to improve my English so that I could be of more help for members and I could study the differences in the culture between the United States and Japan.

### **Study abroad at Malaga University in Spain, in the second year of my retirement.**

(I published a book titled, “Why don’t you study abroad after retirement? –A recommendation of an active life from 60 years—”. The life at Malaga University is written in detail in this book. The content of the book also appears in my website in Japanese and in Spanish.)

Another goal to my prime goal(improve my Spanish) was to contribute to the members in Spain. When we began to live in Torre Molinos near Malaga city, there were less than five members in total in Malaga. Under such circumstance, however, the membership was increasing gradually thanks to the effort of Sra. Marcera and Veronica who immigrated from Argentina. My wife and I would participate in the meetings, in chanting and encouraging the members.

Further more, I would go to neighboring provinces of Nerja city and Almunecal to support the activities and study meetings there. Going one way to the cities would take about 2 hours by bus. I got acquaintance with an English couple Elizabeth and an Italian couple, one of whom was a lawyer. I was very impressed that there were many members who were trying to study Nichiren Buddhism, seeking after the guidance of President Ikeda and participating in activities of SGI at these remote and distant places from Japan. I regarded them as authentic “Bodhisattva of the earth”.

In September of 2002, from Malaga, some ten members participated in the general meeting of South Spain area held at Sevilla city. Mr. Enrique Caputo, General Director of SGI Spain, came all the way from Madrid to encourage members. The report of this meeting appeared in the Seikyo Shimbun with a commemorative picture of the members. Actually, the organization of Malaga had surpassed the level of group.

We were very pleased to know that a little while after our return from Spain, Malaga district was officially formed.

Incidentally, our visas (pension visa) were valid until August 2003. But the expiring date of the insurance for overseas life was approaching. We left Japan at the end of April the year before and the insurance would expire one year from the departure. I had also many things to do in Japan.

I had a plan to publish a book. So I needed to proceed with the preparation. I also had to support the marriage of my two daughters. I had to make ends meet for my life abroad considering my future economical situation. With these in mind, we came back to Japan just after one year's stay in Spain. We arrived at Narita airport on April 24, 2003.

### **I published a book**

During my stay in Spain, I contacted and negotiated with a publishing company in Japan. So, as soon as I returned I proceeded with the matter. Frankly, studying abroad at Malaga University in Spain for one year was the most fruitful period in all my life. I had a strong wish to share my experience with other elderly people and recommend them to do the same if the situation permits.

The title of the book was “**Why don’t you study abroad after retirement?**” and the subtitle was “**A recommendation of an active life after 60 years of age**”. The publishing company was Bungeisha, one of the major publishing companies that publish books with the authors paying most of the cost. I decided on the publishing date of my book, August 17, the date of my conversion. The book sold around 1500 copies with a second reprinting by the end of its year, although the selling pace subsided since then.

### **I fell in depression. I was in the bottom of my life.**

I had a wish to do some other work after publishing the book. However, it seemed that my spiritual condition was worsening little by little unconsciously.

I didn’t have confidence in anything. I lacked the will to decide. I couldn’t sleep well at night. It was very hard for me even to live. Now and then, thoughts of committing suicide would come to my mind. I was diagnosed as having depression.

I asked why I became like that. I had no idea. I did not know the cause. I imagined it may be because I returned from Spain where my life was totally free and relaxed. When I returned to Japan, life was busy in every aspect. I was also thinking it may be because I had so many burdens like the arrangement of the marriage of my daughters or was it because my character was too serious to attend to things?

And, what a miserable coincidence! At the beginning of next year, when my condition was at its worst, I received several offers of jobs in succession. These were from people that I had asked in the summer and autumn of the year before and they were in charge of employment.

One of these jobs was as lecturer of English conversation for the correspondence course of Soka University. The other was a lecturer of correction by mail of NHK Gakuen High school. Another was a lecturer of Spanish at a Culture school in front of JR Akishima station. Finally, another one was as adviser of the presidents’ office of Japan Carenet Company. I had to refuse all of them unwillingly owing to my worst condition of life. I had no hope for the future.

My condition was at its worst in February and March of next year. I visited several mental clinics. The doctors diagnosed me and told not to worry about things, not to do things I don’t want, be relaxed, and live freely as I wish. This was the treatment for my depression. I was prescribed medicine, too, of course.

When I was in the worst condition, Mr. Suzuki, central figure of the organization of the Soka Gakkai in Akishima, visited my house and encouraged me. “I pray for your good health. You needn’t do anything at this moment. Please feel free and be relaxed. The fact that you are living is a great pleasure for us. We will continue to pray for your early recovery. So please have enough rest”. This encouragement made me feel uplifted and relaxed. (Then, I realized the importance of the way to encourage members who are ill or at

the worst condition from some reason.)

At that time, I received an invitation as a faculty member of Soka University to participate in the commencement ceremony. Even I had already refused the offering of a position as a lecturer, for some reason the invitation card was sent to me. It could be that the process of canceling my position might have taken some time?

It was on April 1. Sensei was expected to be present at the commencement. So I made up my mind and participated in it, with a strong wish to make it my turning point. I was guided to the seat on the stage but fortunately it was behind a screen. I could listen to the words of Sensei without being tense. Sensei was humorous and persuasive and my heart calmed down. That was indeed my turning point,( with the support of medicine), my life condition became better, little by little.

### **I was able to “Change poison into medicine” in every aspect.**

My life condition forced me to cancel four nice jobs offered to me. After I refused these offerings, I was devastated. I felt my life was totally dark. When I got up in the morning, I faced a long day in which I had nothing to do. When night came, it seemed to me that the long, long dark night would begin. So my heart was also totally dark.

After several months passed, I felt that my life condition became a little bit better. So I began seeking for jobs again. I couldn't dare say, however, “Now that I have recovered from depression, so will you please allow me to work at your office?”

Actually, when I went to the managing office of Spanish class to see the possibility to apply again, another lecturer had already been appointed and there was no vacancy open for me. I already lost my credibility by abruptly refusing those job offers.

I also asked Mr. K who had kindly arranged me the job before at NHK Gakuen High School. But he said, apologetically, “Please don't rely on me anymore”.

When I was in the worst condition for several months, I had no intention nor wish to read neither a newspaper nor watch any TV program. I even cancelled these subscriptions for months. But when my condition improved a little, I began to read and carefully check for job advertisements or fliers that were delivered on Sundays. I couldn't find any suitable job for me.

First of all, there were much less opportunities for those of us who were more than 60 years old. The only jobs for elderly people that I could find were administrators of mansions, parking lots or buildings, street cleaners, or garbage collectors. I even thought once, “As long as I can get a job, it's OK even though it is for toilet cleaner for the railroad station!”

A little later, I was informed of the existence of a Silver Talented People Center of Akishima city and I applied to work in it in April. They interviewed me and accepted. I was assigned to the department of parking lot for bicycles in Akishima city.

### **I started the work of arranging bicycle at parking lot.**

The work began June. I would go to the parking lot for bicycles, south of JR Akishima Station. It would take me five minutes by bicycle ride. There were a total of ten of us comrades. I was the youngest. Usually, the work would begin at 6 am. First we would clean the parking lot. There were much trash and dust. Now and then, remembering my own

career, I asked myself, “Is it OK for a person who has so many abilities to be doing such kind of works?” (But, this way of thinking has been changing a little by little with the time pass by)

The work itself was very simple and I worked 3 or 4 days a week and 4 or 5 hours a day. Under these situations I had yet much free time. So I went to Hello Work office at Tachikawa city to get another job.

**I made up a material for Metropolitan High School and gave guidance to the students who were going to take STEP test.**

Then I happened to find a job - teaching assistant of the metropolitan high school. The job was offered by the Tokyo metropolitan government only for the year as an emergent measure for the unemployed. I was very lucky. I participated in an interview session and they approved me. I was assigned to Sunagawa High School in Tachikawa city. The work I was asked to do was to prepare some materials for social study.

I went to the school and had a talk with a teacher who was in charge of these materials. Hearing my experience in overseas countries, he asked me to create a program so that students can deepen their understanding about international matters. The material would appear in a website. It was very fortunate for me to utilize my own experience in abroad. How lucky I was!

I prepared materials in the teachers’ room of the school, making use of the books that I published. They included “Why don’t you study abroad after retirement?” and “My life in Latin America”. I found them useful to write new articles. I am very grateful that my experience in overseas countries contributed so much to this work. A short time after, the material appeared on the website.

After I completed this work, I was asked to take care of students who were going to take the STEP test. I went to Hino Metropolitan High School and then to Sunagawa Metropolitan High School. I attended to about 10 students in each school who were going to take their second level, pre-second level and third level of the STEP test. I taught them English using sample test papers and I played the role of the interviewer at the interview test. The teaching aspect was very interesting and enjoyable for me. The news that all the students whom I attended passed the test made me feel very happy. I also received thank you e-mails from the teachers of both schools.

Now, when I look back to my life, it was very fortunate for me to have obtained a teacher’s license for social study while I was teaching bookkeeping at NHK Gakuen High School and a license of English lecturer while I was working at Seikyo Shimbun. These two licenses played an important and significant role even after 30 year up till today.

**I served as one of the leaders of elderly people club in my community. I became a member of the Citizen’s college of Akishima city and I participated in voluntary activities at TMC(Tachikawa Multicultural Center).**

As time passed by, my life condition turned better little by little. I began to participate in various activities. I was nominated to be one of the leaders of the clubs composed of elderly people in my community. Consequently, I became a promoter to establish a computer circle. I named the circle “Rakuraku Pasocon Circle”(“rakuraku” means “easy to learn”) and I

became the first president of this circle.

With this consequence, again, I accepted the editing work of “Yuzuriha”, monthly paper of the club. I was very fortunate that I could effectively use the experience I had accumulated through the work of the Seikyo Shimbun.

In addition, I became a member of Akishima Citizen’s College. I registered as a volunteer interpreter of TMC and consultant for foreign residents in Japan. TMC is an association composed of people with a volunteer spirit to help and support foreign residents in Japan. They held a forum to discuss a theme, “How we, Japanese, should receive foreigners and get along well with them in our society”.

At that occasion I served as one of the four panelists. The content of the forum was very good and fruitful so I wrote a short article about the forum and sent it to Seikyo Shimbun. The article was printed in the column “Myouji no gen” in the Seikyo Shimbun. Several days later, I heard that the general director of TMC had delivered the copy of the article to all the directors of TMC.

### **Tennis club, men’s cooking club and Waseda University’s alumni association (Tomonkai)**

I participated in sport’s activities to keep my health both in body and spirit. I began to play tennis again in the “Rainbow tennis club”. Then I joined the men’s cooking class which was held once a month at AIPOCK, welfare center of Akishima city. What I learned at a private cooking school in the first year of my retirement was very valuable and helpful. All of these have also become very useful in cooking for my family.

It was a coincidence that one of the directors of Waseda Alumni Association of Akishima was working at the parking lot near the place where I was working. He kindly explained to me about the association and I joined. He was also one of the directors of Silver Jinzai Center and was the chief of public relation’s department at the same time.

Several months after I began to work, he asked me to write an essay about my work in the organ’s paper “Izumi”, knowing my carrier and experience. The title of the essay was “The daily work of a totally fresh man at the bicycle parking lot”. I think the essay was interesting and had a humor sense too.

### **I became a correspondent of the monthly magazine, Nikkei Masters**

When I bought a monthly magazine, Nikkei Masters, I noticed a report that referred to my high school friend, Mr. M. He worked for NHK as an announcer when he was active in duty. After his retirement, he obtained a license as “forest instructor” and projected his work very actively.

On another page in the magazine, I noticed a note that the magazine itself was recruiting correspondents. I applied for that and they accepted me. Since then, I sent several reports to the editing room, beginning with the “Special Olympics Report” that was held at Nagano Prefecture in February 2005. Some of my reports were adopted and appeared in the magazine. (Nowadays, the name and the contents of the magazine were changed and I am not sending reports.)

### **I became a member of Japan P.E.N. club.**



When I published the book “Why don’t you study abroad after retirement?” one of my senior friends in Seikyo Shimbun (who was already a member of the club) recommended me to apply for the club. Thanks to his recommendation letter and another recommendation letter from Mr. S, one of the directors of the club, I became a member.

In actuality, being a member of the club has profound meaning because the club itself has a prestigious position in Japanese society. So many peoples want to belong to the club but it is not easy because the membership application required the applicant to have published at least two books.

When I was in my worst condition, however, I once intended to quit the club. I even thought that I would never hold a pen again ( I had no intention to write articles). All things considered, I was very fortunate.

### **I began to work at the SGI office.**

A short while after I completed the material for social study at Sunagawa High School and the training class for STEP test, I received a call from the SGI office. It was an inquiry about my possibility to work for the SGI, two days a week, including Saturday and Sunday. This just fit my working schedule because I had worked at the parking lot for bicycle 3 or 4 days a week.

In addition to that, the work itself was ideal for me because I could best utilize my English, Spanish and my own overseas experience. I began to work from May that year.

The work itself is to answer telephone calls from the members in Japan and from abroad, to attend the members who are visiting Japan and to give guidance or encouragement to Japanese members who are going abroad and to arrange introduction letters to the organization of respective countries where he/she is going to visit.

After I had been working for about three months, I noticed that among the visiting members to the SGI office, there were many who were going to study abroad. Knowing this, I made up my mind to take a license as an advisor for Overseas Studies. I studied hard. The examination was held at Tokyo University at Hongo, Tokyo. I passed the test and got the license.

“How (in which way) can I contribute most to the members?” was the basic point of my way of living. When the foreign news department was formed in the Seikyo Shimbun, there was no one who could manage Spanish. So I began to study Spanish voluntarily at the age of 34. This became one of the factors that I was appointed as an official correspondent in Panama after my one year of study of Spanish.

And when I was chapter chief of Santamerica (Group of American members who worked for Yokota Air Base), I went to CTC(Central Texas College) in the base to improve my English so that I could support the members most. It’s because the more I could understand English, the more I would understand what members wanted to transmit to me.

I believe this attitude and way of thinking could be applied to each member of the Soka Gakkai and to every person in society.

The work itself just fit me. I could utilize the most of my foreign language ability, experience in overseas, experience of long years of practice and long years of life itself.

When there is neither visitor nor any telephone calls, I have time to prepare documents using the computer and work on translations. This will prevent me from becoming rusty in

the two foreign languages of English and Spanish. I can use my time to improve on them. I am very grateful to my situation and the environment.

### **I built my own website.**

When I completed the material for social study for high school, a wish rose in my mind to condense the same materials onto my own website. Fortunately, the director of Sunagawa High School allowed me to reproduce the materials that I had written by that time. With a support of a computer instructor, I prepared many articles and pictures, essays and reports, pages in English and in Spanish and put them all in my website.

Thanks to these materials, my website has come to have contents equal to the volume of more than ten books and it has become very attractive and interesting. (As of April, 2009, I had 9000 visitors to my site)

Nowadays, the internet connects the world instantly and is changing even the history of modern civilization. I think it's important to make full use of this system from now on. We can express and transmit our own thought or opinion to others all over the world and thanks to this system; I am actually sharing my experience with you at this moment.

### **I visited again the setting of the novel, "Don Quixote".**

In autumn of 2005, I took a tour to Spain together with Mr. I in Tachikawa city who had just retired from the Seikyo Shimbun. We visited the setting of the novel "Don Quixote", I pretending to be Don Quixote, and Mr. I, as Sancho Panza, Don Quixote's subordinate. The places we visited were Madrid, Alcala de Henares, La Mancha, Granada, Malaga, Marbella and Torremolinos.

My travelogues were printed in the Evening newspaper of Shinano Mainich Shimbun, serialized in five issues. I thought that the Shimbun appreciated my voluntary participation as the interpreter of Spanish at the occasion of the Special Olympics (an International sports event of mentally handicapped people) that had been held in Nagano prefecture in February of that year.

After that, short articles (essays) and pictures were printed in the monthly magazine, "Ushio" and "Pumpkin". In addition to that, I received an interview via email from a staff writer of the newspaper, "Diario Alcala" in Spain. It was because one of the SGI members in this city informed the newspaper of my visiting the city. The content of the interview was printed in the newspaper with a title, "Japan may need many Don Quixote". I could possibly expand the circle of friendship between both nations that I had never expected.

### **I received a home stay guest from U.S. and I received a radio interview from FM Tama.**

In December of this year, a woman from the United States stayed one night at my house. She was one of the members of a group that has relations with the Fulbright scholarship. They came to Japan to promote the exchange of friendship.

Akishima city received 20 members from the group who were teachers of primary school in the U.S. Volunteers provided a home-stay program for our visitors.

Ms. Holly Martial from Indiana State was assigned to my home. My wife and I did our

best to welcome her. We talked about many things. It was a very fruitful experience for us also.

On January 5 of 2006, just after the New Year's holiday, I received an interview from an announcer of FM Tama. She asked me a lot of question about "Studying abroad after retirement". It seemed that they had an expectation that my way of living would give impetus and encouragement to the elderly. It was a ten-minute program but I could transmit fully what I had experienced and what I was thinking.

### **Now, I could understand the profound meaning of "Hendoku Iyaku" (Change poison into medicine)**

When I recall the hardest time in my life five years ago, the time when I was in agony with depression, I admit that I was very fortunate that I could overcome the depression.

Further more, I was able to Hendoku Iyaku (change poison into medicine), and to pave my way and that I got other appropriate jobs. In a sense, it seems to me that the lost opportunity of the four apparently great jobs eventually turned out to be my benefit.

Thinking back, the English conversation lecturer position offered by Soka University, although it seemed very good at first, but when I thought about what I would do for the class, I would never be able to compete with other native lecturers who work for a language school . Even if I would have studied very diligently, it would be impossible for me to catch up with them. I would have faced a deadlock and I would probably feel disappointed and depressed.

If I had been appointed as a correction lecturer of NHK Gakuen High School, I would have to study the subject, "Introduction to business" from the very beginning and I would have to study at the desk for long hours and I would have lacked exercise.

As for the lecturer of Spanish at Showa no Mori culture center, I would have also required so much preparation for a small paycheck.

Mr. Ito, my intimate friend of Waseda University, had offered me a position in his company, as the adviser of the President's office. More than 500 employees were working in the company. So the responsibility would be pretty heavy even though my position would be part-time. In addition to that, I would have to study from the very beginning what I had not experienced. It would be impossible for me to maintain the rhythm and I would have fallen into depression again eventually.

At this moment, it seems to me that my actual work at the parking lot for bicycles is meaningful and most suitable for me. First of all, it gives me the rhythm of my daily life and serves as a form of physical exercise. When it is my turn to work in the morning, I need to get up at 5 am to be in time for the work that begins at 6 am. Waking up early in the morning requires a little bit more effort, but I would be free in the afternoon instead. I could make use of the time in the afternoon. Sometimes I feel as if I have two days packed into one.

Walking and using my body in the work is good exercise. Greeting my customers in a loud voice and chatting with customers are good for my health. Young ladies and high school girls using the parking lot gave me a refresh feeling. I use only my physical body during working hour and I allow my brain to rest. This is good for me to dedicate to another

work later that requires some brain energy, for example, writing in front of my personal computer.

Whether I was a correspondent of Seikyo Shimbun in Panama and work as a guidance chief of Central America, as a chapter chief of Santamerica (Organization of American members who work for the Yokota Air Base) or as a student studying at Central Texas College on Yokota Air Base, I feel very lucky that every aspect of my experiences is reflected and being utilized in my work at the SGI office.

Having studied abroad at Malaga University in Spain after retirement, or struggling through 47 years of practice and enduring of 68 years of my long life, all these experiences have turned out worthwhile for my work at the SGI office.

I am a volunteer at TMC (Tachikawa Multicultural Center) to support foreign residents in Tokyo. Sometimes I translate notes or small documents also. Occasionally, I ask my friends in Hawaii (English) and in Panama (Spanish) via email to check my translations. If I send my documents out in the evening, I can usually get a reply back the following morning. The time-zone difference works to my advantage while I am sleeping (Please refer to my article: "I have a Ginny in my pillow").

I think I am very fortunate to be able to do my work and activities on the global stage. It's my great pleasure that I can utilize my overseas experiences and my language career to support foreigners who live in Japan. In the activities as a correspondent of the journal Nikkei Masters, the experience at the time of Seikyo Shimbun is very useful.

As a member of Akishima citizen's college, after receiving lectures for two years I gave a presentation in the third year. The title of my lecture was "Let's lead an active life brilliantly after retirement". Now, I am planning to open a class, "Let's study Spanish pleasantly" in the near future.

In the activities as a member of Tomonkai (Association of Alumni of Waseda University) I could expand the circle of friendship through participating in Karaoke and golf circle. I even gave a lecture at the general meeting of the Association in autumn of 2007. I have also expanded the circle of joyful friendship at the Rainbow tennis club and Shokurakukai, cooking circle for elderly men.

**I would like to express my whole hearted gratitude to my wife and to those who have supported me until now.**

Looking back these five years, from the time when I fell in depression, I am profoundly convinced that I owe so much to my wife for her support and to the people around me. I feel impressed with the total recovery of my health. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Gohonzon, to those who have supported and helped me.

It is impossible for me to count to what extent I have made my wife worry. It's beyond description. She continued her incessant prayer and support all the time. Thanks to her prayer and continued support I was able to come back to a normal life. So I wrote a Haiku (short poem) and sent it to Haiku contest held at Tachikawa city.

"Stepping on fallen leaves, I express my gratitude to my wife for her sincere support. Thanks to her, I could cure my illness and I am living, just right now." Although I did not win any prizes for the poem, but Mr. Roujin Arima, the judge, told me, appreciating my

work, “Yours is a good poem that expresses the gratitude and sincere feeling of the writer”.

### **My life was opened by accumulating 50 million Daimokus.**

The point I would like to stress here is that I have continued chanting daimoku from the very beginning of my practice and accumulated 50 millions daimoku until now. Actually, when I recall my life, I notice that I could overcome problems, obstacles, hardships (and during serious moment it was just like calling “It’s emergency!” but it worked too!), thanks to chanting daimoku.

I received the Gohonzon and joined the Soka Gakkai in 1961. The motive of my conversion was my mother’s illness. She fell down by cerebral vascular accident. My family in Nagano prefecture belonged to Zen sect. According to the teaching of Nichiren Daishonin, those who believe in Zen sect are likely to acquire illnesses like cerebral diseases (Permit me to omit the explanation about “why” to make this report short.).

The first benefit that I received was the fact that I was able to pass the entrance examination of Waseda University, even while I was working in day time. I could take evening class without changing the faculty from day time to night time. (The faculty of night time is mostly for the students who have work in during the day and it is far easier to pass their entrance examination than that of the day-faculty) I appreciate the company that I worked for paid the tuition fee for four years of my study.

When I graduated the university I refrained from job hunting because I owed to the company so much. Under such a situation I unexpectedly received an invitation letter from NHK Gakuen High school that recommended me to work for the school. I went to the school and participate in interview. I passed the interview and I was hired. If I had had the license of Social study or Japanese language it would have become very difficult to be hired because there were so many other applicants who have the license of these subjects. Fortunately enough, the subject I majored was accounting; I graduated from one of the prestigious universities and I had many experiences in actual world. All of these factors favored me to be employed by the school.

After I began to teach accounting at the school I earned licenses to teach Social Studies and English. These two licenses had become very useful eventually after 30 years. I could prepare materials for the subject of Social study and I could give advice to those students who were going to take the STEP test.

NHK Gakuen High School probably had the highest credibility among more than 4000 high school all over Japan. It went to high up the reputation of the teachers there. In addition to that, the fact that NHK is one of the major media in the world of journalism and its neutral standing eventually led me to Seikyo Shimbun.

The timing that I moved from NHK Gakuen High School to Seikyo Shimbun was also quite miraculous. The very day when I was preparing the moving from dormitory of the company in Omori to Tokyo Metropolitan housing in Kodaira city, I received a phone call from the headquarter of the Soka Gakkai. If it had been even a day late, my future from that time on would have changed completely.

**Thanks to the fact that my English was not perfect, I was able to manage Spanish, too.**

It was very fortunate for me that I was assigned to handle news and reports from overseas at the Seikyo Shimbun. I was appointed as one of the correspondents of the Seikyo Shimbun. There were so many staff members in the editing department. As my English was not as good as that of three other staff members in the foreign news department of the Seikyo Shimbun, I have become able to manage Spanish.

I was dispatched to Panama in 1976. During my stay in Panama for ten years, I was able to visit 32 countries as a correspondent. Once, Japanese school in Panama offered an opened competition of lyric and poem for school anthem. I participated in the competition and my letters (poem) was chosen as the best one amongst 50 other letters. My name has been "engraved" in the history of the society of Panama.

When I came back from Panama after 10 years, I was assigned to the foreign news department again. It was very lucky for me that I was able to maintain contact with the foreign language.

By serving as chapter chief of Santamerica for about 7 years, I had a chance to practice English. I also took classes at CTC (Central Texas College) in Yokota Air Base.

It cost me much money to publish a book about my life at Malaga University. The fruit of this effort has blossomed in more fields than I ever imagined as "I will invest to myself for future life after retirement."

The same was true with the case when I bought my home at the Tsutsujigaoka apartment complex in Akishima city. It was a time when the price of home was rising in the midst of bubble economy. I was desperate to own a home. While I was continuing chanting 10000 daimoku a day for three days successively, a flyer was thrown into my house. That flyer was announcing the sale of units by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation in Akishima city.

I responded to the flyer and applied to buy an apartment home. There were five times as many applicants than the numbers of available units. It was great fortunate for me to have been able to be selected from the lottery. As time passed by, this area of Akishima has developed rapidly and the environment has become far better. I am wholeheartedly satisfied that I selected this place. I am convinced that where I am now owes to the accumulation of chanting daimoku. For this I am profoundly grateful.

I have shakubukued five members since I converted to this Buddhism. Those who began to practice through my Shakubuku include my elder brother, my younger sister, Mr. Y (a classmate of Waseda University), Mr. A in Panama and Miss S from Canada, and an English teacher of NOVA in Tokyo.

It has been difficult for some of them to maintain their faith. Even though many began to practice, they may give up owing to their unfavorable circumstances. I pray from the bottom of my heart that every one of them who had contact with me once will lead truly happy lives by practicing this Buddhism.

My wife is in good health and my three children now have their own family respectively and they are maintaining their life even though it may be modest. I am profoundly grateful to that. Now I am determined that from now on I will do my best to contribute to society, to reciprocate for my benefits I have received and I will become a pillar which my children can rely on.

### **The perspective of my life from now.**

I will keep working until 75 years old with vigor and I have a goal to live actively and vigorously until 90 years old and die without falling ill in bed for a long time. In Japanese, it is said “Pin Pin Korori” (Live vigorously and Die almost instantly). This phrase comes from Nagano prefecture where men live the longest in Japan. This phrase means that a man lives active and vigorously (healthfully) until 90 years old and dies peacefully without suffering from discomfort for a long time.

This was true with my father’s case. He celebrated a wonderful eighty-eighth birthday, completing 88 years of age.

This number 88 in Japanese is very lucky and meaningful and has typical and profound meaning in Japanese. The letter eight in Kanji looks like as though it is opened for the future. My father had continued working in the farm until a half year before he died. He was a specific example of a man who lived long life actively. So I would like to lead my life as he did.

Now, I would rather copy the life of Mr. Saburo Shouchi, director and the founder of Shiinomi Gakuen. Mr. Shouchi established the Gakuen to support children who have handicaps in the body or in mind. Mr. Shouchi is 102 years old now and he is traveling the world, giving lectures overseas.

He says: “I shall die at the age of 100 by NPO style”. N is the abbreviation of Nagaiki=longevity, P is abbreviation of Pockuri=sudden and peacefully, O is the abbreviation of Ojo= get illumination. How I wish and pray that I can lead my future life like Mr. Shouchi.

It may appear wonderful if we can continue working until 65 or 70 years old as a part-time employee after retirement at the same company we had worked for. However, when we think over our limited life after retirement (before we die), I believe that if we can dedicate to what we want to do after 60 (even the pay may be less) it is more valuable.

One of my friends, Mr. K (who could stay working at NHK Gakuen school as part time employee after retirement) once told me, “If I continue working at NHK Gakuen High School as a part-time employee after retirement, I shall not encounter much hardships because I already have enough experience in this world and my income will be pretty good. But I wonder if it’s OK for me to keep working only. Don’t we have more important things to do in our important and short life before we die? I have come to ponder about this.”

Mr. K refused the offer of the position that every one adores. He was very much fond of baseball when he was young. Instead, he chose to be a manager of the baseball team of the high school that he graduated from. He looked contend with this way of living. This makes me think over how I should live!

My work after retirement is completely different from the work that I had when I was in active service. Now I have spare time to dedicate to other activities. I am planning to continue working until 75 years old.

From this year, I was assigned as director of the public relations department of Silver Jinzai Center. I am an editor chief of a bimonthly magazine, “Izumi”. To proceed the work as director, my long year’s experience as an editing staff member in Seikyo Shimbun is very useful and helpful. I am happy with this.

I wish to continue working at the SGI office as long as they accept me. I intend to

continue participation in volunteer activities at Tachikawa Multicultural Center. I have given speech on many occasions. For some of them I did with remuneration and some of others without. I am considering continuing these activities. At an International friendship exchange meeting, I presented an English Rakugo for the very first time. I will continue writing reports and essays to newspapers and magazines. I would like to express and transmit my thoughts to others through my website.

In the latter half of my 70's, I would like to continue some part of my work that I mentioned before. In my spare time, I would like to grow some vegetable in a rented farm, making best use of my experience I acquired from my father in my boyhood. I would like to participate cheerfully in men's division activities "Taiyoukai=Group of the sun". In my 80's, I would like to proceed even more vigorously as I would do in 70's. And in my 90's, I would like to lead my life just like Dr. Shigeaki Hinohara, doctor in active service and the director of Seiroka International Hospital, who remains very active in everything including volunteer activities at his senior age. He says, "I will lead my life as it goes".

### **I have made "The visiting the setting places of masterpieces in the world" my life work after retirement.**

Fortunately, my essays and reports about the setting of the novel "Don Quixote" have been appreciated highly. Some of them were printed in Shinano Mainichi Shimbun, daily newspaper in Nagano prefecture, Usio and Pumpkin, monthly magazines.

Further more, I received an interview by way of email by an editing staff of the daily newspaper "Diario Alcala". Alcala is a city in Spain where Miguel de Cervantes, author of the novel "Don Quixote" was born. Thus the ripple effect has been expanding.

I am very glad that the dream that I hoisted just after my retirement has been coming true little by little. I am aware that my "life work" is most appropriate to make the best use of my experience in the editing field and my ability in foreign languages.

Three years ago, in 2006, when I was 65, I visited Atlanta and New Orleans in the United State, the setting place of the novel, "Gone with the wind", which celebrated 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary in that year.

In 2007, I visited Panama for the first time in 10 years to encourage members and to write reports to Seikyo Shimbun about the events held during my stay. It was an exciting moment because I felt as if I had been playing the role of correspondent again.

And, last year, I visited Prince Edward Island in Canada, the setting place of the novel, "Anne of Green Gables", which celebrated 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its first edition.

After these three master pieces, I am planning to cover the works of Shakespeare. Shakespeare wrote so many works. I am at a loss from which novel I should begin first. At this moment I am thinking to grapple with "Romeo and Juliet", the worldly noted tragic story and "The Merchant of Venice". The settings of both of these places are in Italy and they are located close to each other. Subsequently it is very convenient and economical for me to visit these two places at the same time.

After that, I have a plan to visit Denmark, the setting of "Hamlet", then Germany, that of "Fast" and "Worries of young boy Welter" written by Goethe, France, of "Le miserable",



Russia, of "War and Peace" written by Tolstoy and "Sin and Punishment", written by Dostoevsky and after that, China, the setting of the work "History of the three Dynasty".

The setting place of this novel is too vast to visit. It's impossible to visit every place that appears in its history. So I am thinking to focus the trip to visit "Sekiheki" where they had the biggest battle among three countries. I had a wonderful opportunity to study the poem "Sekiheki" in Chinese, when I was in high school. This has become one of the strong factors to make me visit China.

After these, I have a plan to visit Spain again to cover the setting of the novel, "Let's do away with weapons" and "Carmen". All of these are works that had made my heart excited in my youth days and have made my life more fruitful and meaningful after I became an adult.

It will be ideal if I could cover the cost of my tour to the setting place of master peaces with remuneration for articles and pictures paid by newspaper or publishing company. It will be impossible, however, to cover all the cost. At the same time I will be just as satisfied if I am not reimbursed for any expenses. I intend to appropriate the money to fill the missing part that I earned by working at the parking lot for bicycles.

As I mentioned repeatedly in this experience, I have so many things to do in my future and it seems that my life is opened widely towards the future. I am currently wholeheartedly grateful to the Gohonzon and to everyone who supported me when I was at the worst condition.

Thanks to their support I was able to "Change the poison into medicine". I was able to pave my way. So I am determined now that I will make the utmost contribution to others and society, with appreciation, taking care of my health, working and enjoying life.

### **Closing word**

I tried to summarize my experiences here, including the history of my life. This is my own recollection. Therefore there may be some parts in which I might have interpreted things to my favor, or I might seem biased, as if I was being arrogant. If you happen to notice these points, I would like to ask you to kindly forgive me because this is "my private history". It will be my sincere wish that these experiences of mine would become helpful and that they convey an encouraging message to all my readers.

Thank you.

Takeshi Shimizu  
Don Quixote of Tokyo