

HORIZON

“A Meeting in Your Mailbox”

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WHAT'S NEW

by Sandi Monica-Pier



Goats enrolled at SUA: About 500 goats will munch away on the drying brush around **Soka University** under the watch of a full-time herder. As the goats naturally eat away at the brush along the school's 103-acre border, they'll also be reducing fire hazards. (from: Claudia Koerner / *The Orange County Register*)

SGI at the White House: SGI representatives participated in an interactive interfaith meeting at the **White House** with Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Jain leaders, to listen to their concerns and issues. Read the full article here:

<http://tinyurl.com/6sw9clq>

Free Lecture: Soka Gakkai International-USA's **Culture of Peace Resource Center** in Santa Monica will host a lecture with **Atim George**, career Senior Foreign Service Officer for the U.S.

State Department. Based on her over 25 years of experience in international affairs, Ms. George will share how she has strived to help develop a global culture of peace by anchoring her work in commitments to peace, social justice and international understanding. The free lecture will take place on Saturday May 19 at 4:00pm in the SGI-USA Culture of Peace Resource Center (606 Wilshire Blvd, Santa Monica CA 90401). Free parking is available.

The Culture of Peace Resource Center in Santa Monica is one of five centers in the United States opened by Soka Gakkai International-USA with the support of former United Nations Under-Secretary-General Ambassador **Anwarul Chowdhury**.

Happy trails...

CONNIE'S CONUNDRUMS

\$Money, money\$

by Constance Barr

In May, SGI's official contribution month, when we “pass the hat,” so to speak, money is a frequent topic of discussion. Every spring I feel like *Jerry McGuire*: “Show me the money!” as I look for creative ways to manifest an extra amount of the stuff for our family's contribution. I save money toward the annual goal, but always amp up my daimoku to help the universe yield additional moolah. Extra “ds” are good for any occasion, but especially now, since, for several years, my husband and I have upped the ante and donated a little more.

This year will be especially challenging for us to meet our ambitious

goal, since he just retired, and I'm in transition (read: unemployed). At this time of year, I reflect on how many "treasures of the heart," in addition to those of the body and storehouse, I have accumulated during my years of Buddhist practice. I speculate about what my life would look like without the Gohonzon. Based on the trajectory I was on when I began chanting, it is never a pretty picture. This thought process always helps me put this period of giving into proper perspective.

Unlike the straight-donation approach charities favor, the Buddhist way is to enable folks to create their own fortune. I've always loved the fishing analogy: rather than give fish to the hungry, teach them how to fish, so they will never starve or depend upon someone else to feed them. By sharing this practice with others, teaching them to chant, and encouraging them on their Buddhist journey, we definitely provide people with the tools to change financial fortune, along with relationships, health, and so much more. With the Gohonzon, we can leave the world of victimhood in the dust.

Most of us support favorite charities. I read alarming stats lately, estimating that charities allocate a staggering 20 – 30% of donations to administrative costs. However, I still choose to believe most non-profits work hard to control costs in order to dedicate maximum funds to those in need.

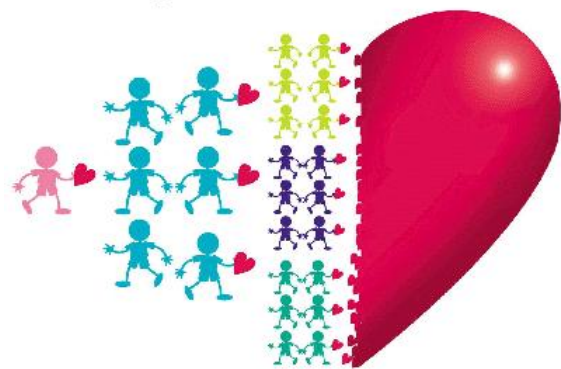
Whenever I encounter panhandlers downtown, or homeless people with their pleading cardboard signs along freeway entrances, I feel uncomfortable. As I await the change of the traffic light, I try to evaluate the person. *If you are truly homeless, how is it that you have enough money to acquire pricey designer tennis shoes or a spanking-new leather jacket?* Despite the documented exposés showing that some of these beggars generate in excess of fifty thousand dollars a year, I feel certain many of them are genuinely in need. As a compassionate person, I feel I should give them something — a gift of fast

food coupons which cannot be used for drugs or alcohol.

Questions I wonder about: Do we have a moral obligation to share our resources with those less fortunate? How do we reconcile a charitable attitude with the Buddhist approach? During the devastating Tsunami last year in Japan, donating to the relief effort was a no-brainer, simply because so many of our comrades in faith were impacted. It didn't feel like charity, but rather extending a helping hand. Would I feel the same if there weren't so many SGI members involved?

The silent prayers in our daily recitation of the sutra mention our "debt of gratitude." Is that debt only to our founders and mentors in Buddhism, or do we have an inherent debt to our fellow humans as well? I found these words from Sensei in *My Dear Friends in America*: "I hope you will build, and help others build, solid lives filled with unshakable happiness, while protecting the weak and the suffering." This sounds like we are being encouraged to do everything in our power to help those who suffer.

Pay it forward



Then there is the intriguing notion of "paying it forward." A few very dear friends, one an ordained, new-thought minister, find little ways to employ this concept. They often pay for several cars behind them when entering a toll booth, anonymously pay utility bills for struggling neighbors, and leave behind meaningful

little gifts in unexpected locations when visiting friends. Another pal of ours hosts an open-to-all dinner at his home most Friday nights, particularly for single folks who might otherwise spend the evening alone. These random acts of kindness are a different form of charity toward strangers, all stemming from loving hearts.

The decision about how much and in what way to give to others is an intensely personal one. Recently, I was faced with a moral dilemma in this area. My husband and I received a form letter apparently penned by and sent from our fourteen-year-old grandson living in another state. Raised as a Christian, he is heavily influenced by his other grandparents, fervent fundamentalists. The letter was a plea for donations to a church mission, was sprinkled with Bible verses, and definitely not written by our grandson. I felt it was misleading and inappropriate.

If our grandson had called, sent a personal note, or actually written the letter, I might have felt differently. I would never consider soliciting funds from our co-grandparents to send our Buddhist

whether we will achieve our contribution goal for 2012.

I hope you will all enjoy the month of May and your experience giving from your personal “treasures of the storehouse,” while accumulating treasures of the heart.

“More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all. Strive to accumulate the treasures of the heart!” (*WND*, vol. 1 p. 1170)

PILGRIMAGE TO THE PROMISED LAND (Philadelphia)

by Linda Segall Anable

Last month, my dear friend and contributing editor Angelique Jurd spoke of her devotion to the music of Bruce Springsteen, a passion we both share, which brought us together nearly ten years ago, despite our living in different hemispheres. The lower half-planet where Angel lives receives far fewer visits from our personal savior than the upper, and her location in the Bruce-challenged land, New Zealand, has seen him only once, in 2003 (yes, she was there). However, it must be noted that the hardships endured by Springsteen fans in New Zealand are partially mitigated by the unique fortune of getting to live there.

Like New Zealand, my hometown of Portland, OR, is also not on Bruce’s 2012 itinerary, so in order to see him (which I really, really wanted to) I had to travel — on an airplane — not something I relish, but my desire to see Bruce generally trumps any and all obstacles. I decided to go to New York and see two shows at Madison Square Garden (MSG). I have good friends in NYC, including many Bruce friends, and part of the fun is hanging out with those similarly obsessed. Like me, many are now approaching geezerhood, and have been following Bruce (technically, also a geezer) for generations. Now those generations join us.

grandchildren to FNCC or for any other reason. However, it is interesting that this situation surfaced at the same time I am working to pull money together for the May contribution campaign. I know what value is created by our donations to SGI, including keeping the lights on in our many community centers. What value would be created from donating to the church cause? I continue to chant about this dicey dilemma, unsure of what to do, while I also chant about the even more urgent matter of



Florida Nature Culture Center – FNCC

Preparation for my pilgrimage commenced with a daimoku campaign, the most practical method I know for the fulfillment of desires. After a Buddhist lifetime of good fortune, few personal items remain on my bucket list, but seeing Bruce is never checked off, even after some 70 shows, starting in 1975, when I saw him at the Roxy nightclub in LA. In the Bruce



October 17, 1975 — a life-changing event

world this ranks me as a lightweight; many fans I know, mostly on the Right Coast, have been to hundreds of shows. Right Coaster NJ Gov. Chris Christie (not one of my Bruce friends), has been to 127, including the second night in Philly, where he responded to a fan who gave him the finger, “Happy now?”

Though I hardly ever go anywhere, for Bruce I leave town, get on planes, and hang out with gangs of Bruce People, standing outside for hours as we await the moment when our fate is decided — the selection of a lottery number determining whether or not we get into the “pit” — the standing room in front of the stage — or are left to lurk in the nether regions of the arena, where, thanks to Bruce’s penchant for roaming the arena and being passed around the audience on his back, there is still a chance to touch his butt. I did not specifically chant for butt-contact — not that I would turn it down, but I prefer eye-contact. In 2003, I received an 8-second

pupil-to-pupil eye-lock in Chicago during the instrumental break at the end of “Bobby Jean,” not that I remember.

Of course, soon as you start a daimoku campaign, obstacles appear, always a sign that you’re on your way to victory and one day *you’ll look back on this and it will all seem funny, la la la...* Well, after I had initially booked a non-stop round trip to NYC for the MSG shows, friends warned that MSG is the toughest ticket in the country, and it would be better to go to Philly, or risk getting shut out. Shut out? The magnitude of anxiety I’d endure worrying about a shutout was unthinkable, so I opted to go to Philly instead, which entailed changing plane reservations.

My new itinerary meant a higher fare, plus a cancellation fee, but what the hell. I was going to see Bruce in Philly, where he always goes the extra mile, where there are always exciting surprises. I was able to score GA floor tickets for the two shows, so I was spared the worry of going with no tickets — not a problem, since Bruce always reserves the best seats for fans. However, these tickets don’t drop until the last minute.

Despite my careful plans, unknown to me, I had somehow neglected to finalize my new airline reservation — some button I didn’t press. When I went to get my boarding pass the day before my trip, I found out I was not booked, either going or returning. I felt faint. I called the airline and was quoted a last-minute fare more than three times my original round-trip ticket, with connecting flights and middle seat both ways. I got so upset with myself for making such a bozo error, I considered not going, although I was holding three concert tickets (my two and a friend’s), plus hotel and train reservations. It would be costly to cancel as well.

Emotional rescue appeared in the form of my dear husband, who, upon learning of my blunder, did not bat an eye, did not twitch, did not judge. He said, “Look, it’s your birthday (it was), it’s Bruce (also true), and you’re going!” Joy! Relief!

Thank you, my wonderful *shoten zenjin* husband! (Boy, do I owe him.)

As my high-priced, low-luxury flight was landing at JFK, I watched an orange beam of setting sun bounce off the Empire State Building and felt it was a sign of happier thrills to come. My tendency to over-chant for protection on all trips over a mile paid off immediately: A nice man carried my bag down two flights of stairs, and a caring taxi driver went out of his way to help me find my friend's apartment in a maze of building complexes in lower Manhattan. Good karma is also due to the Amtrak conductor who, after the last show in Philly, let me board the last train back to NYC at 12:13 AM, even though I thought I had lost my ticket, and the train was leaving in seven minutes, leaving me little time to purchase another \$85 fare. (Later, on board the train, I found the ticket in my purse-*doh!*-and thanked the conductor for his trust in me. Then I thanked myself for having had the good sense to go on my months-long daimoku campaign in anticipation of situations just like this.)

The first day in Philly my friends and I got to the Wells Fargo Center around 3 PM to obtain wristbands. The winning number is usually drawn at 5 PM, and the first 500 from the numbers drawn get into the pit. To keep my fortune plate spinning, prior to the lottery I chanted daimoku and did gongyo in between loitering with friends. At 5 PM, the number was drawn. We were in! I ended up standing six people deep in the center — Bruce's mike was 15 feet away from me, well in range of his lethal love frequency. During the 3-hour+ wait until the show, there was plenty of time to take out my little Gohonzon and chant daimoku as I sat on the cold concrete floor. My ichinen was to fill the Wells Fargo Center with the power of the Mystic Law.

Happy to say, daimoku worked again! Bruce gave a Philly-worthy show, with cherished rarities ("Seaside Bar Song"), and a funny escapade into the audience, as he climbed over armrests, yelling, "I need a seat!" He sat down. Then he said, "I need a beer!" Someone handed

him one. He chugged down the beer, tossed the cup in the air, and clambered back to the stage. "That beer was good!" he said, upon returning to the show, already in progress. Watch it here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=df5kWft4N_A



Bruce Springsteen, Philly, March 28, 2012

It was thrilling to know Bruce was so close to my Omamori Gohonzon. Though he wasn't singing the words, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, many of his songs are spiritual in nature. Let's face it: It's the closest I'll ever come to chanting with Bruce.

I enjoy making Bruce-to-Buddhism analogies, not limited to the "B" followed closely by "U." Bruce is dedicated to peace and happiness. He speaks of mission and making vows (*Blood brothers on the summer's night, with a vow to defend... No retreat, baby, no surrender...*) He understands *itai doshin* (many in body, one in mind), another way of describing unconditional love — each accepting everyone as they are. Springsteen concerts are all about *itai doshin*. He states his intention to "pierce your heart," to take you somewhere you've never been before. All are invited. (*Well, this train carries saints and sinners... This train carries losers and winners...*) Bruce is all about connection. He lives the truth that we really all are One.

Throwing himself, literally, into the crowd, he is fearless. My favorite Sensei quote is, “Faith is to fear nothing.” That’s why I always say, If President Ikeda were a rock star, he would be Bruce Springsteen. They just operate in different contexts.

Springsteen’s passion, his commitment, dedication, the way he merges the spirit with the flesh, have not dimmed a whit over the 40+ years he’s been performing. His stamina is as incredulous as ever, perhaps more, considering he’s 62. The show starts at a grand climax and builds from there. He gives everything he’s got every single time. At an age that should have long ago seen the end of crazy antics, there he is, sliding on his knees, jumping on the piano and leaping into the crowd. At the tour premiere at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem,



March 9, 2012, Apollo Theatre, Harlem, NYC

he dangled over the outside edge of the balcony, which must have given his insurance carrier a coronary. The shows often run past three hours without a break. Springsteen once told *60 Minutes* that his shows are “part circus, dance party, political rally and big tent revival.” And as Eric Alterman recently said in *The Nation*, “The sum of these parts forms an incomparably larger whole, one that has no equivalent in American life and culture.”

Speaking of life and culture, while I was there, the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia was hosting a major Springsteen exhibit (still running) that features his life and career — a pretty impressive achievement for a rock and roll singer. Seeing that was another major highlight of the trip.

<http://constitutioncenter.org/springsteen>

I could have gone home happy after the first show, with memories to last a lifetime, but there was a second show, when my fortune grew even greater. My lottery number was just 40 from the number called, which put me in the spot you see in the photo at the end of this article: lower left, purple shirt, hands clasped. Of course, I could have just printed this picture and not written a single word about the experience. Actual proof of actual proof! But that wouldn’t be superfluous enough.

In a night filled with peaks, the two biggest moments were Bruce dancing with his mom, who is “almost 90,” and the ovation for the Big Man, Clarence Clemons,

Bruce’s longtime saxophone player and foil. (Bruce always knocked himself out trying to introduce Clarence: “The

minister of soul! Secretary of the brotherhood! The next king of England! You want to be like him but you can’t! I have seen the future of the whole f*ckin’ thing and it’s Clarence Clemons!”). The Big Man passed away last summer at age 69. It was hard to imagine how the band could go on. It was like a planet had left the solar system. However, the band did go on, and Bruce had to find a way to deal with the loss, for his fans as well as the band. He expanded the horn section, explaining that “it takes a village”



to fill Clarence's shoes. There are now 17 members in the band. The saxophone solos are handled by Clarence's talented young nephew, Jake Clemons, who has been well-received.

One of the band's signature songs is "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out," often played during band introductions. The song tells the story of how the band was formed and contains the line: *The change was made uptown and the Big Man joined the band...* After he sang that, Bruce stopped and held the microphone high in the air. Standing directly in front of me, not five feet away, he pointed to the sky, touched his heart, said, "Love Clarence," demanded more, more, more, and the loving screams lifted the roof off the building for a full minute. It was incredible. I felt myself vibrating at the DNA level. Who in history has ever had such a powerful tribute? I thought, Clarence must be SO enjoying this.

And when Bruce pulled his mom, Adele, up on stage during "Dancing in the Dark," — I won't even try to describe that. My state of complete and utter love says it all. Here is a video of a woman seeing actual proof before her eyes.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOQd>

[_oauif8&feature=share](#) .

About that eye contact — I got a smile from Bruce during "Promised Land," and I thought, How ironic because that is exactly where I am right now.

That is, until September, when Bruce will be at another venue in the Promised Land, known as Wrigley Field in Chicago. I'm looking to break Gov. Christie's Springsteen show record, which will take some doing — but darn it, I'm willing to try. I have my plane reservations and, this time, a confirmation number. Haven't scored concert tickets yet, but I'm not too concerned because my Chicago daimoku campaign is well underway!

Faith is to fear nothing...

Daisaku Ikeda

The Horizon

<http://www.lindasegallanable.com/horizon/current.pdf>

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