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Seminary Promise

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Photo courtesy of the family

▲ Dot met President Andrea Luxton in 2019 and shared her excitement to help students.

Seminary Promise

Don's management career provided a comfortable lifestyle for his wife, Dot, and their two sons, Kells and Kenley. Their needs were always provided for, but they did not live extravagantly. Dot faithfully attended the local Seventh-day Adventist Church each week with her sons while Don stayed home.

Dot was strongly convicted of the benefit of a Seventh-day Adventist Christian education. Don did not share her perspective, but Dot quietly refused to be deterred. She took a job as a secretary at her church with the goal of providing her sons an Adventist education at the local church school. Both sons received Adventist education, starting with elementary school and culminating with postgraduate degrees from a Seventh-day Adventist university. Dot reflects with deep pride that both of her sons and their

wives have committed their professional careers to Adventist education.

When the family moved to California and both boys were attending a local Adventist school, Don began to go to church, too. He was eventually baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church by Kenley, who had earned both an MDiv and DMin from the Seminary at Andrews University.

After Don's death in 2017 at the age of 83, his family began settling his financial affairs. Dot's estate settlement attorney immediately recognized she would benefit from the counsel of a financial advisor. Aware of Dot's religious affiliation, the attorney suggested she meet with Dana Wales, CFP, a Seventh-day Adventist and a financial advisor.

"During my initial meetings with Dot, a primary focus of our discussion were her

values and identifying her financial goals," says Wales, "then we pivoted to her capacity as a donor. When I shared with her that she could comfortably gift \$1 million, she was overcome with surprise and emotion."

Dot found herself in an incredibly humbling position where she could directly impact the trajectory of the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church by donating funds to support the Adventist education of future church leaders' children.

The dialog centered on this question: If the financial obstacle of an Adventist education were fully removed, would future church leaders choose an Adventist education for their children?

The Seminary Promise began to take shape as a tuition scholarship program established to remove financial roadblocks to Seventh-day Adventist education for children of graduate students currently enrolled in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary's Master of Divinity (MDiv) and Master in Youth & Young Adult Ministry (MAYYAM) programs at Andrews University.

Modeled after other "Promise" scholarship programs in communities across the country, the program provides up to 100 percent of base tuition and annual registration fees for students meeting established criteria. "I shared with Dot that it will take millions to fully fund the Seminary Promise which led to her desire to make her initial \$1 million gift into a challenge grant," says Wales.

A family spokesperson says, "Dot, Kells, Kenley and their wives hope this initial challenge grant will motivate numerous additional gifts to the Seminary Promise. They believe that if our church leaders and members believe Adventist education is important, then we should do all we can to support it." ■

Keri Suarez, contributing writer