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From Mud Floors to a Career in the Clouds

Nathan Gulzar

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From Mud Floors to a Career in the Clouds

MY MIRACLE OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION

NOT MANY CHILDREN LEAVE HOME AT AGE ELEVEN. I discovered early on that my life would never be like most children's. I was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in Central Africa, the son of Pakistani missionaries working at the Adventist University of Lukanga. My father served as professor of Finance, then became university president; my mother was a cashier, and later registrar. Together they served in the Congo for 17 years.

My Adventist educational journey began with pre-school in a small, mud-floored facility serving 60 children. Recesses were spent on muddy playing fields. Our only notebooks were the ones my parents provided for my classmates and me. Still, I loved going to school every day because I was learning from one of the finest, most loving teachers I would ever meet.

Later, in elementary school, we still had mud floors. The only textbook was the one the teacher possessed. Each student "textbook" was whatever we copied into our notebooks from the teacher's writing

on the blackboard. I was the only foreigner in that school of 450 students, but my teachers and classmates made certain that I never felt like an outsider.

After nine years of pre-school and primary education in the Congo, all of it in French, my parents decided I would benefit from education in English. The decision was made: although not yet a teenager, I would travel about 500 miles to the Adventist boarding school in Uganda. My parents could have afforded to send me to a more prestigious school with better facilities, but their commitment to Adventist education was

unwavering. Once again, I was blessed in my new school. I never felt alone.

My educational journey led me next to exchange life in Africa for the United States. I knew some English by this time, but still hadn't had the benefit of my own textbooks or exposure to a wide range of subjects.

With the help of Wisconsin Academy's dedicated Christian teachers and kind, supportive classmates, however, I was able to succeed.

Still the only foreigner, I did



Rayno Victor

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SOME MIGHT SAY THAT ADVENTIST EDUCATION IS LIMITING. I CONSIDER MY ADVENTIST EDUCATION TO BE A MIRACLE AND THE BEST POSSIBLE EDUCATION.

not suffer the acute loneliness that one might expect in someone so young and so far from family. When my classmates left campus each month for homeleave, a Wisconsin Academy faculty member always welcomed me into their home. Later, as I made friends among the student body, my classmates invited me to their homes. In the most practical way possible, I was reminded that I belonged to a large yet tightly knit Christian family.

Thanks to the prayers and support of my family in the Congo and my new family at Wisconsin Academy, I was honored at graduation with not only a diploma, but with three medals—The Caring Heart, Best Four-Year Student Worker, and Member of the National Honor Society. Even more important was my deepened commitment to Christ and the beliefs and ideals of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Today I am studying aviation at Andrews University in Michigan. As a young child, on flights from the Congo back to Pakistan with my parents, I was inspired by the pilots. I wanted to do what they were doing. I met missionary pilots, too, specifically Bob Roberts and his son, Gary Roberts. I

saw the smiles they brought to the faces of the people they served by delivering much-needed supplies, and providing access to services and expertise not readily available nearby. I decided to pursue a university major that would prepare me to be like these pilots while also honoring my parents' legacy of missionary service.

Some might say that Adventist education is limiting. I consider my Adventist education to be a miracle and the best possible education. Every step of the way, it was there for me, providing learning, community and spiritual development. It continues to inspire me to serve others where I am and wherever God and my degree eventually lead me. As my favorite verse of Scripture reminds me, *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* (Philippians 4:13). ■

Nathan Gulzar is in his first year at Andrews University. Together with his parents, Amir and Shabnam Gulzar, and his twin sisters, Nathalie and Natasha, Nathan now calls Milwaukee home. Story was edited by Beverly Matiko.

Nathan received a \$100 scholarship for this article. If you're a youth or young adult interested in submitting an article for consideration, please contact: heraldlakeunion.org.