

## Realizing God's will

by Deanna Doran

You are in the car, running late for work, and something in the rearview mirror catches your eye. You look at it, get closer to the mirror, and suddenly realize that you need to look forward, quickly! Someone once said, you can't drive forward while looking back. However, what's behind you is just as important at times as what is in front of you. I am a fairly recent graduate, having received my Bachelor of Social Work in 2009, and Master of Social Work in 2010, but my rearview mirror reflects farther back than my own college experience.

He saw her a few times here and there, but met her for the first time when roller-skating at Johnson Gym, at what was then Emmanuel Missionary College. They skated for a while, and he helped her take her skates off. The rest is history, and my family was born. My grandpa graduated from Andrews University in the 1950s (after hitchhiking his way to Michigan), and he and my grandma spent their life in ministry—their Andrews rearview mirror.

My own rearview mirror experience began when I was graduating from high school and had no idea where I wanted to go to college. My grandpa continued to suggest Andrews University, but I didn't really want to go there. It took visiting another sister university for me to realize that I needed to give in and visit Andrews. One of my good friends, Kristin Denslow, suggested I come to see what it was like, and I gave in.

As soon as I drove on campus I had a peace that I knew could only come from God. My parents dropped me off at Chan Shun Hall, and I was hurriedly shoved into Mosaic Café and handed a tray of cookies. The first person I met was Erica Slikkers, goofing off with Erik Brown, who is now her brother-in-law, pretending to be spies. She is now my

dearest friend and sister, and the manager of Andrews' own Howard Performing Arts Center. I met other best friends on move-in day at Lamson Hall, and saw my life transform the way God had always planned.

It was at Andrews University that I realized God's will. I started out as an accounting major, and He encouraged me to try social work. I wanted to work in Enrollment Management, and He opened a door for me



Left—right: Deanna Doran (BSW '09, MSW '10), Darlene Doran (BSN '12) and their grandfather Alvin Richard Klein (BA '54) at Darlene's graduation, May 2012

at the Howard Performing Arts Center. The list goes on. Each of those encouragements came with tearful frustration, as I didn't understand God's plan at the time. After graduating with my MSW, I moved home to Illinois for approximately two months. I really began to question God's plan because I didn't want to be another statistic, someone who couldn't find a job post-graduation. Twenty minutes after I sat on my parents' deck in tears, praying for God's guidance, my phone rang, and my journey to Tennessee began.

Two years later, I still reside in Tennessee where I live with my cat and work as a specialized crisis counselor. I have found an amazing church family, and often can't

believe that it has been seven years since this journey began. I recently attended my younger sister's graduation from Andrews, when she received her BSN, and was asked, "Do you wish you would have gone to a community college or state university to trade out your extensive amount of private/federal loans?" It takes me about five seconds to answer with the word, "No." I wouldn't trade anything for God's will.

I often pause and praise God for how far He has taken me. I look back into the rearview mirror and see a stubborn girl who didn't want to go to Andrews. Andrews University changed my life. And were it not for Andrews, perhaps my grandparents wouldn't have met or also led my sister to attend Andrews.

I truly began to understand God, and His true will for me because of Andrews. If I had gone to another university, I wouldn't have had the privilege to stand up for my dearest friend at her wedding in June. Tears and laughter were shared, smiles and pictures taken which money can never replace.

At times I want to live in the rearview mirror again, but now realize the current opportunity to have such seasoned friendships based on a solid love for God. Unless you have fallen out of the shower with roommates in college, had suds in your hair when the fire alarm went off, fell down the hill in the snow, experienced probation in the residence halls, been to hundreds of chapels, and eaten Sam's Chicken, you won't understand the priceless value of an Adventist education at Andrews University.

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### What's your story?

We'd love to hear your reflections on the time you spent at Andrews University. If you're interested in contributing, please e-mail [focus@andrews.edu](mailto:focus@andrews.edu).