

Navigating the Andrews days

by Bjorn Karlman

“Your card was declined, sir.” The waiter looked at me and I looked at my date. The evening wasn’t exactly going as planned. I was on one of the very few dates of my college career and this less-than-glamorous development was more than a little embarrassing. We were at an Indian restaurant in South Bend, Ind., and the casual banter between my date and me had awkwardly halted. Frozen for a second, I fished for another card which fortunately worked. We hastily exited the restaurant for the next part of the evening—an independent film. Far from redeeming me in the eyes of my date however, the movie proved to be eye-crossingly boring and, if I remember correctly, shot entirely in black and white. Could the evening get worse? It did. I got lost on the drive back to Andrews and only regained my bearings after an entirely charmless tour of suburban South Bend, complete with a dramatic series of ill-advised turns,

bad cover-up commentary from me and bewildered looks from my date who, by now, was doubtless questioning the wisdom of her original decision to accept my invite for a night out. A genuine college disaster.

To her credit, my friend was gracious about the incident and, to this day, we joke about our crazy evening in South Bend. The episode gets added to the list of adventures that made life at Andrews interesting.

Andrews adventures were unique because for every local one there seemed to be another

adventure of an international flavor. Whether I was consuming alarming quantities of food while standing in the Indian food line for the third time at the International Food Fair or if I was buying trinkets in an outdoor market while on a class trip to Havana, Cuba, Andrews opened up the world for me.

I was constantly surrounded by friends



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from all over the world and opportunities to experience their cultures. Being Swedish, I appreciated the fact that there was an unofficial Scandinavian club on campus that would get together around Christmas time to sing Nordic carols and consume Old World desserts. I was able to brush up on my French by attending French-language Sabbath School. I got recruited into serenading someone I barely new with a group of my Latino friends one week after starting college. I crashed countless potlucks with cuisine

ranging from Korean, to Indonesian, to Caribbean.

Wherever I travel nowadays, I know there is probably an Andrews alum nearby. I emceed an Andrews friend’s wedding in Lima, Peru. I randomly bumped into a classmate in London, England. I learned Spanish while living with Andrews pals in Buenos Aires, Argentina. A couple Christmases ago I met an old Andrews friend for pizza by the seaside in Hong Kong. Last May, I visited my first Andrews roommate in Paris. I’m planning a

trip to Korea as I write this and it occurs to me that I have a couple college buddies with family there that could help me navigate the kimchi options.

For all the international spice, though, some of my most meaningful experiences at Andrews took place close to home. Take the time my friends and I were able to spend with our “adopted family” in Benton Harbor. It all started innocently enough my second semester at Andrews. It was freezing cold and we were all huddled in an upstairs apartment in downtown Benton Harbor, Mich., one Sabbath afternoon. A little six-year-old boy came over and sat with me as the group sang songs and told stories. He said his name was Dontay. I told him a little about me and when it was time to go, I told him I’d see him the next weekend. This promise to a six-year-old, renewed weekly, kept me coming back to Benton Harbor and, through my friendship with Dontay, I was introduced to his mother, brothers and extended family. Almost every Saturday, Dontay, his family, my Andrews friends and I, would do something. We would go to playgrounds; slide down a hill during the winter on makeshift sleds; hit the beach on warmer days and find any excuse to get ice cream. I genuinely enjoyed myself and, as my years at Andrews came and went, Dontay and his family were a constant in my life.

I’ve kept up with Dontay and the other day we talked on the phone. He’s 13, starting seventh grade and doing well. When I talk to Dontay, I feel transported back to the Andrews days and the web of classes, friends, professors and activities that made college special. Life goes on but there was something about my time at Andrews that makes me smile and indulge the urge to reminisce about the adventures of the past. I’ll have to come visit sometime soon. I’ll probably get lost in South Bend, Ind. again.

Bjorn Karlman (BA ’07) now lives in Chico, Calif., and works at Feather River Hospital as a development specialist. He would have rambled endlessly about the withdrawal symptoms he still suffers from being cut off from his beloved Terrace Café Sam’s Chicken, but was told that he only had one page. (Photo by Courtney Rasmussen)

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.