



Just Because I Am an Adventist . . . | BY BONNIE DWYER

There is a scene in the movie *Boyhood* where the divorced father is having a heart-to-heart conversation with his two children, who are in their early teens. He asks what they remember of their childhood, of vacation trips and their times together. Do they remember going to the Alamo? Well, no, idyllic events are not what's memorable to them. "What I remember," says the daughter, "is you and Mom yelling and fighting all the time."

Ah, the child's perspective, ever surprising to the parent expecting agreement with his own ideas. But the scene also made me wonder if negative experiences are always more memorable than perfect "Kodachrome" moments like Paul Simon used to sing about. They give us the nice bright colors, but, yeah, the kids have a point. Kodachrome moments are not all there is to growing up. What about the other kinds of moments? What do we do with bad memories? Can we heal from them? What about the embarrassing memories of social faux pas? When can you laugh about what you did in high school?

Stories of growing up Adventist that capture well the culture of our past can charm, inspire, and validate us all at once. They make room for emotions in a cerebral religion defined by truth. They provide the backstory, the rest of the story. They can challenge us in the same way that a child challenges a parent's memories of good times together. Stories in the genre are some of the most memorable articles that *Spectrum* has carried over the years. So, it is a pleasure to add four more in this issue. Two are from recent college graduates, the third is from a woman with a little more distance between her present life and the earlier years she recalls in humorous fashion. And the fourth adds the parent's perspective on growing up.

Just as individuals grow and change over the years, so do Adventist institutions. Adventist hospitals today have come a long way since the sanitarium days of the 1800s.

Samir Selmanović celebrates the innovations of Adventist hospitals in the public square, asking questions that look to their future growth.

And with the growth of the church has come diversity—and division. Geoff Patterson frames the story of the Tower of Babel in a totally new way (to me) and helps us understand why there will be divisions among us until Jesus comes, no matter how much we talk about unity.

On a recent trip to 826 Valencia, a writing center for young people in San Francisco's Mission district, I picked up one of the center's literary journals and was charmed by the structure given to young writers to compose a poem about themselves. The set-up began, "Just because I am a Mexican _____", or, "Just because I am an athlete _____." The formula seemed like a good way to explore what it means to grow up Adventist. As I drove home, my own poem began taking shape.

*Just because I am an Adventist
Doesn't mean that I am a fundamentalist
Doesn't mean that I am a Master Guide
Doesn't mean that I love prophecy*

*Yes, I love the Sabbath
Want Jesus to come and end war and hunger and greed
Yes, I've had disappointments
Controversies, both great and small*

*Hope trips me up, though
Confounds expectations
Just because I am an Adventist
Doesn't mean that I can explain it all*

It's a fun exercise. Try it. And while you are trying things, we have a puzzle in this issue too. Along with all the stories, Caleb Rasmussen is back with a uniquely Adventist crossword puzzle. As summer slides into fall, happy reading. ■

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