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## PROFILE

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# Hantono Tandikin

### Dialogue With a Dentistry Professor from Indonesia

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**D**r. Hantono Tandikin is a dentist and a senior lecturer at the North Sumatra University in Indonesia. For the past 26 years he has served the university, which has an enrollment of more than 10,000 students, as a faculty member in the School of Dentistry. He has also held positions of responsibility such as assistant dean of the School of Dentistry, chairman of the school's Public Health Department, and currently as a member of the university's Curriculum Development Committee.

Dr. Tandikin is actively involved in guiding our Adventist young people through organizing Pathfinder clubs and sponsoring the Adventist Medical and Dental Students Association for the past 20 years. While a full-time lecturer, he has also served the church in various capacities such as local church elder, local mission executive committee member, and health and temperance director of both the North Sumatra Mission and the West Indonesia Union Mission.

**C**ould you tell us, Dr. Tandikin, how you joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

On my mother's side, I am a third-generation Adventist. My father was not baptized into the Adventist Church until I was grown. Because of my mother's strong influence, I was baptized during my first year in dental school.

**You are a graduate of Gajah Mada University, one of Indonesia's most prestigious state universities. What did you plan to do after graduation?**

When I graduated from high school I had a great desire to continue my studies at Indonesia Union College so that I could be prepared to serve the Lord full time. Unfortunately, my parents were not in favor of that, and for that reason I pursued my studies in dentistry. Therefore, immediately after my graduation, my plan became to serve the Lord and humanity by working as a dentist, which I did at the Medan Adventist Dental Clinic in 1964.

**How did you come in contact with the State University of North Sumatra?**

In 1965 I was requested to serve as a part-time lecturer in the

university's School of Dentistry. Knowing that it was a great privilege to witness for the Lord in a government university, I made the decision to serve as a full-time lecturer in 1968.

**Do you have any problem in Sabbath observance while working at a government university that operates six days a week?**

I don't think I have any problem with Sabbath observance. I remember when I was a student, occasionally I had to make some difficult choices when confronted with classes and examinations on Sabbath. But thank God I was able to work it out by approaching the lecturers. And now as a government employee, I have clearly shown others my identity as a Seventh-day Adventist from the very beginning. In most cases, the university has been very cooperative and has even occasionally arranged or adjusted the schedule of my lectures or committee meetings so that I could still contribute to the university without working on the Sabbath day.

**As an Adventist serving a public university, what kind of influence can you exert?**

I believe much can be ac-

complished if denominational workers and lay leaders work together to support each other. Aside from being a witness for the Lord by not participating in any university functions on Sabbath, many times my colleagues ask me about Adventist beliefs. Even the university president called me and asked about the church's position regarding attending classes, lab work, or examinations on Sabbath. The university graduation is always held on Saturday. However, the university president has recently told me there will be a special Wednesday graduation once a year so that Adventist students will be able to participate in graduation exercises. On several occasions, we have been able to make our church better known by inviting Loma Linda University professors to present continuing education courses for the university. As a result of their acquaintance with our church, the university administration has sent a few of the lecturers to pursue post-graduate studies at Loma Linda.

**Is there any assurance that our students will not have Sabbath problems at the North Sumatra University in the future?**

No. However, the Spirit of

Prophecy says that we shouldn't worry about the future as long as we remember God's leading in the past. In the past 26 years, more than 60 Adventist doctors and dentists have graduated from the university without taking classes or examinations on Sabbath. The Lord will surely continue to lead our young people to be faithful to Him.

**As one of the founders of the Adventist Dental and Medical Students Association, please tell us its history and the benefits of that kind of association.**

The Adventist Dental and Medical Students Association was initiated by Dr. Elisha Liwidjaja (Lic Sek Hong) who was serving as health and temperance director of the West Indonesia Union Mission and president of the Medan Adventist Hospital at that time. We started the association together in 1971 with the objective of fostering unity among the medical and dental students so that they could support one another in facing Sabbath problems and also to instill a missionary spirit in them. We are very happy that, through the association, students can fellowship and pray together in times of difficulty as well as in times of joy. We have also organized various community-service activities such as medical rallies, Five-Day Plans to Stop Smoking, and health lectures both in and outside of the church.

We encourage older students to help the younger students, especially at the beginning of school when special tutors are given to high school graduates interested in taking the entrance examinations to the dental or medical schools. The student association's success in instilling the missionary spirit among its members is evident from the fact that several of them are now serving the Lord and humanity as physicians and dentists in Adventist hospitals and clinics throughout the country. They also serve as health and temperance directors at local mission levels, and even at

the division level.

**I admire your activities in organizing Pathfinder Clubs. Could you please tell us why you have initiated these clubs?**

I was a scoutmaster for many years, and I really appreciated the good things the scout program had offered me and my friends. My desire to start a similar program with the local church finally materialized in 1977, and the program has spread throughout the country.

The Pathfinder Club is an important part of the educational program of the church, for it provides the opportunity to take children away from a classroom into nature and outdoor adventures. They learn to live and to work together. They develop leadership abilities and self-discipline, to do the right thing at the right time in the right way.

Children learn best by example rather than precept; the whole Pathfinder philosophy is built on this premise. Our junior youth need to know that their church cares for them and that they are secure inside the church. Junior youth need to be led, polished, and molded to become men and women who will be able to withstand the time of trouble and tribulation. Junior youth need leaders who, through the power of Jesus Christ, will help shape their characters.

**Dr. Tandikin, as a layman, how often do you preach, and what is your favorite topic?**

I preach quite frequently. There are 20 churches in the city of Medan, and many of them schedule me to preach at least once a quarter. Several churches in other districts often invite me to preach, also. My favorite topic is health and temperance. I believe that as God's people, we have to be healthy physically, mentally, and spiritually. The happy, healthy, and holy Adventist life-style needs to be promoted more and more as living testimonies among God's people as well as the people outside of our church. I believe

that relieving people's physical suffering will give us the opportunity to minister to their spiritual needs. Jesus' method of treating disease will open the door for the entrance of present truth.

**You seem to have a very busy life. How do you balance your professional life with your church activities?**

I work five days a week for the university, mostly in the mornings and afternoons. I operate my private clinic five days a week in the evenings. I have short devotions every day in the morning and evening. Sabbath is totally given to God, for my private devotion, teaching in Sabbath school, or preaching. I always devote my Sabbath afternoons to our young people and Sunday mornings for Pathfinder activities. We schedule camps for Pathfinders as well as special meetings for the Adventist Medical and Dental Students Association. I try to keep my program as balanced as possible. However, I consider it a privilege to give something to my country and my church, where I can glorify God and make a contribution to humanity.

**What kind of advice would you like to give to the Adventist students attending non-Adventist colleges and universities?**

Spend time with God every day, and you will be strengthened from day to day. Don't isolate yourselves from the community of believers. Join the Adventist student associations and participate in their activities. Be friendly and build good relationships with your professors, because many Sabbath problems can be solved by friendship. If you face difficulties, be persistent. The Lord will open the way for you in His time. ◊

**Jonathan Kuntaraf**

*Jonathan Kuntaraf (Ed.D., Andrews University) is Youth Director in the Church Ministries Department of the Far Eastern Division and regional representative of Dialogue.*