



EGERTON UNIVERSITY

NEWSLINK

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The 41st Graduation

80 Years of Transforming Lives through Quality Education



■ New Chapter for Egerton
University as Diaspora Alumni Visit

■ I Was there at
the Beginning

Busts of Life
and Colour

Contents

New Chapter for Egerton University as Diaspora Alumni Visit	1
Message from the Chancellor	2
Message from the Chairman of Council	3
Office of the Vice-Chancellor	4
Message from the Vice-Chancellor	4
I Was There at the Beginning, by Paul R. Nixon	7
Once upon a Dream, by Sadru Nazarali	9
My Small Window to the World Opened Wide at Egerton College, by Shiraz Nasser	11
From Egerton Students Union Vice-President to Presiding Officer in the Government of Alberta, by Shiraz Shariff	14
My Journey from the Lecture Hall to Biovision, by David Mulama Amudavi	16
Beyond the "Ivory Tower": My Experience as a County Executive, by Catherine Kitetu	18
Division of Academic Affairs	20
Message from the DVC (AA)	20
Division of Research and Extension	48
Message from the DVC (R&E)	48
Division of Administration, Planning and Development	53
Message from the DVC (APD)	53
Ph.D. Graduands	62

Front cover photo: The Vice-Chancellor, Egerton University, Prof. Rose A. Mwonya, with the Cabinet Secretary for Defence, Hon. Amb. Raychelle A. Omamo (centre) and Mr. Sadru Nazarali, the team leader of the visiting Egerton Diaspora Alumni, at the Nairobi Grand Banquette held on 20 August 2019

Vision

A world-class university for the advancement of humanity

Mission

To generate knowledge and offer exemplary education and training to society for national and global development

Core Values

The University's activities and decisions will be guided by the following core values:
National unity and social fairness; Integrity, transparency and accountability; Professionalism; Internationalism; Passion for excellence and devotion to duty; Team work; Passion for environmental conservation; Innovativeness and creativity

Editorial

In the course of the development of any cultural institution that is worth its name, there are invariably sign posts that it leaves behind. The sign posts attest to its most important achievements and the contributions it has made to society.

The 80th anniversary of Egerton University, which we are celebrating this year, is such a sign post. The anniversary caps all the efforts that Egerton has put into establishing itself as the exemplary institution of higher learning that it is recognised to be today.

One way of celebrating this anniversary would be to dig into the University's historical origins. This is critical because there are certain blind spots in the available knowledge about Egerton's past that require our intellectual input. One such lacuna has to do with the way we talk about our pioneering students. All too often, we do not go beyond merely mentioning the number of the students who enrolled into the original farm school. It is as if all that we are interested in is the mere fascination with the fact that Egerton started off with "only three students." We rarely make any attempt to establish the identities of these three historic figures.

Fortunately, this is no longer the case. As a result of the ongoing research into the history of Egerton University, the University has discovered and made contact with the students in question, and we at the *Newslink* are happy to report that one of them, Paul R. Nixon, is a contributor to the current issue of the magazine.

In addition, the University is in touch with some of the early-generation students of the multi-racial Egerton Agricultural College which came into being in 1961 who are in the diaspora. As we explain in the cover story of the current issue, they took the initiative to hold their 2019 re-union in Kenya and to visit Egerton University.

In the section on "Egerton in the Wider World", for instance, we have included a story by Mr. Nixon in which he reflects on how his brief study at the Egerton Farm School shaped his professional life as an Engineer and a Research Leader at the United States Department of Agriculture.

Furthermore, we are publishing autobiographical essays by three Egerton alumni from the diaspora – Sadru Nazarali, Shiraz Nasser, and Shiraz Shariff – who attended the Egerton Agricultural College between 1965 and 1976. The three alumni are of particular significance to Egerton because they share a common background in that, as students, they all came from Tanzania and were sponsored by the Aga Khan Department of Education, Tanzania. The implication, of course, is that His Highness the Aga Khan has made a major contribution to the development of Egerton University as well as to the international character that it has come to acquire.

Finally, we are publishing a historic photograph of an early Egerton building being constructed with the participation of students.

GRADUATION STATISTICS

Doctorates	18
Masters	65
Bachelors	2,555
Diplomas	242
Total	2,880

New Chapter for Egerton University as Diaspora Alumni Visit

By the Newslink Team

One of the most important components of a university community is its alumni. Any examination of the history of an excellent institution of higher learning will reveal that among the reasons it succeeded was the contributions that its alumni made to its evolution. The relationship between a university and its students does not end on the day they graduate. It continues – or should continue – for ever through the university's involvement of them in its activities and plans, and the alumni's input in its growth. For example, the alumni could support the infrastructural and financial welfare of the university.

In the course of its eighty years of existence, Egerton University has produced thousands of graduates who have gone out into the world and constitute its community of alumni. These former students of the University are found in every corner of the globe – not only in Kenya and other African countries but also in Europe, the Americas, and, to a certain extent, Asia. Furthermore, because of the excellent training they received at Egerton, most of them hold important responsibilities in the institutions where they work.

This is particularly so with respect to those alumni who attended Egerton in its early days as a college because of their long experiences in the marketplace.

In recent times Egerton has stepped up its efforts to involve its large number of alumni in its day-to-day activities. The University has gone to great lengths to streamline the operations of the its Alumni Association. In addition, during graduation ceremonies, the University makes a point of inviting outstanding members of the Association to provide guidance to the graduands on their future lives. Similarly, Egerton alumni feature regularly among the speakers at the public forums the University organises. Finally, the University never fails in reminding its graduating students that they should never cut their ties to Egerton on entering the job market. The University aims to rely more forcefully on the wide-ranging expertise that its alumni possess to move to the next level in its quest to fulfil its Vision and Mission.

Egerton University is fortunate because its alumni have shown increasing patriotism and willingness to engage with it more deeply, particularly through hands-on participation in its

Turn to page 2



Some of the diaspora alumni (accompanied by family members) and Members of the University Management Board at the Nairobi Grand Banquet held on 20 August 2019 at the Concord Hotel and Suites

Setbacks are Stepping Stones to a Rewarding Future



Dr. Narendra Raval

It is an honour and a privilege to preside over today's Graduation Ceremony, which is a celebration of the efforts you have made to accomplish your academic journey. Egerton University has a foundation of core values that I believe have motivated you to complete your

studies successfully.

The core values of passion for excellence and devotion to duty, team work, innovativeness and creativity, integrity, transparency and accountability will take you far as you progress in your life. You are now about to enter a highly competitive world whereby these values will give you a head-start and will be a guiding light for ever.

I call upon you to join and be active members of the Egerton University Alumni Association. Through the Alumni Association, you will be in a position to encourage, empower and assist current students. The qualifications conferred and awarded to you today should give you the confidence to make meaningful contribution to the life of others.

I urge you to have faith in the knowledge that you have acquired at the University as well as in your capacity to overcome challenges. Never succumb to negative mental attitudes. Rather, use any setbacks that may occasionally occur as stepping stones to a rewarding future.

Thank you, and God bless you all. ■

Diaspora Alumni Visit

Continued from page 1

practical activities. Kenyan universities are currently going through a very trying period in their history, chiefly because of the rapid expansion of higher education versus the limited government resources available to them. The alumni can alleviate this problem through whatever contributions they can make.

There is every indication that Egerton's expansive pool of alumni, wherever they are around the world, is rising to the occasion in this respect. A good example is a visit that a group of alumni from Canada, the US, the UK, and Africa made to the University on 21 August 2019.

The group was made of former students of Egerton College who graduated in the 1960s and 1970s, most of whom have made outstanding achievements in their professional lives, for the most part in industries related to agriculture but also in other areas. Among them, for example, were Mr. Sadru Nazarali, who is currently the President and CEO of TECHNOsource International Inc, Canada (and who coordinated the visit), and Dr. Jack Githae, who is a practitioner of alternative medicine. The visitors were more than fifty in number, including members of the

families of some of the alumni.

The re-union meeting at Egerton was not the first time that the Egerton diaspora was meeting. They had been holding regular meetings outside Kenya over the years, for the most part in North America.

The situation began to change three years ago. At a conference on agriculture held at the University of Iowa, USA, Mr. Nazarali met another Egerton alumnus, Mr. Kenneth Ayuko. The two agreed that it was crucial for Egerton alumni to hold some of their meetings at Egerton University itself. As such, they decided to work together to organise Egertonians around the world to pay a visit to their alma mater soon. The visit to Egerton was the culmination of those efforts.

The objectives of the re-union were not confined to catching up on one another's lives. They incorporated the alumni's concerns about their alma mater in general. To begin with, they were interested in exploring areas of collaboration with Egerton University in agribusiness and facilitating Egerton's market access abroad. And secondly, they wanted to explore modalities of supporting Egerton University's determination to fulfil its mandate through its various

Turn to page 4

Life is a Marathon, Not a Sprint



Prof. Rose A. Mwonya

I am happy to welcome everyone to this 41st Graduation Ceremony of Egerton University. To the graduands, congratulations on reaching this far! You have come to the end of a long journey and are on the threshold of another stage in your life.

You have completed your programmes successfully, and this is a testament of your resilience, diligence and focus. During your stay on campus, you received immense support from your parents and guardians, our academic, administrative and support staff, and the community neighbouring the University. As students, you have also contributed to the advancement of this University in your respective ways. Without you we cannot achieve our Vision of a world-class university for the advancement of humanity, and our Mission to generate knowledge and offer exemplary education and training to society for national and global development.

Education is of particular importance to growth, change and improvement. Please use the knowledge that you have acquired both in the lecture halls and during co-curricular activities, to continually change your communities for the better. One step at a time, you are bound to make an impact on the society at large. Remember this: Life is a marathon, not a sprint. Just as it took you years to get here it will take time to achieve your most significant goals.

I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Diaspora Alumni Visit

Continued from page 2

programmes.

The re-union began with the Nairobi Grand Banquet at the Concord Hotel and Suites, Westlands, Nairobi, on 20 August 2019. The purpose of the event was to celebrate the contribution made by the first African Principal of Egerton College, Dr. William Odongo Omamo, to Egerton's development as well as the profound impact he came to have on the alumni's lives and careers.

The Chief Guest was the Cabinet Secretary for Defence, Hon. Amb. Raychelle A. Omamo, who is also Dr. Omamo's daughter. Egerton University was represented by the Chairman of Council, Amb. Dr. Luka Hukka Wario, the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Rose A. Mwonya, and Members of the University Management Board.

On the following day, the group toured the Njoro campus and then proceeded to the Egerton Castle, where the Vice-Chancellor hosted a luncheon for them.

During the tour of the Campus the visitors were particularly interested in seeing how the University had expanded over the last fifty or so years, especially the

facilities they were familiar with from their days as students – such as Kennedy Hall and the Old Hall. The experience elicited fond memories among them of the good old days when they used to walk around the Campus, attend lectures, study in the library, or visit neighbourhoods like Nakuru Town.

During the luncheon at the Castle, the alumni concretised their ideas about their contribution to the University in discussions with the Management and other Members of the University Community. The pledges they made included financial support for the rehabilitation of some structures on campus, particularly those related to student life (like halls of residence and dining halls), expansion of linkages between the University and institutions in the diaspora, and the establishment of an Egerton University Alumni Association Foundation, through which bright students with limited financial resources can receive support.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the team for making the unprecedented trip back to their alma mater. She emphasised that the event had opened a new chapter in the relationship between the University and its alumni. ■

Once upon a Dream

By Sadru Nazarali

My early years bring for me memories of the hard struggle my parents waged to provide a living for our family. We lived in the village of Makuyuni, a tiny station on the railway line from Tanga to Moshi, and our sole possession was a small duka. We had no electricity, no running water, and we had to contend with a hole dug in the ground for a toilet. Our house provided no protection from the heat wave, which caused such a serious infection in my eye that I nearly lost my sight.

With little understanding of our circumstances, one day I asked my Dad: “Why do you always choose the last train on Sunday night for the trip from Tanga to Makuyuni?” “My son”, he said thoughtfully, “this is when the third class ticket is cheapest, as the train is almost empty. This is all we can afford.”

Despite the hardships, my parents dreamt of a different future for their children, and that meant giving them the best education. Spurred by their dream, I completed my Cambridge O-levels

(Grade 12). Moving ahead would have been difficult, but I was fortunate to qualify for an Aga Khan Scholarship. This took me to Egerton College in Kenya, where I enrolled in the class of 1965 to study Agriculture.

The freedom that college brought dazzled me. There I was, playing the guitar and Beatles music, becoming captain of the cricket team, partying in the Junior Common Room, and having fun travelling to Nakuru, Nairobi, and Mombasa. But lo and behold: At the end of my first year, I got the dreadful “Academic Warning”. The writing was on the wall: I could go home without completing college.

It was our new Principal, Dr. William Odongo Omamo, who saved me. One day while walking from lecture room A1 to the Administration Building, I heard a voice from behind: “My boys, have you finished your lectures? What are you going to do next?” He was so welcoming, concerned, and sincere that I became all attention. “You may have all the fun you want, but make sure you study hard. Be



Mr. Sadru Nazarali (left) at a Field Survey practical during his diploma studies at Egerton Agricultural College in 1965-1967 (All photos in the story courtesy of Mr. Nazarali)

careful not to waste your chance to become someone of substance and change your destiny. If I can help you in anyway, please do not hesitate to call on me”, was his advice. I instantly knew that I would never let him – and myself – down.

I concentrated on my studies, always driven ahead by the spirit of seriousness that prevailed at the College, and in the end I not only survived but triumphed. I received my diploma in 1967 at a graduation ceremony honoured by his Excellency President Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya.

I was the first graduate of postsecondary education in my family history. My parents felt honoured and were greatly proud of me. But my success was accompanied by amazing responsibilities. The onus was now on me to help my family. I was lucky to get a job with a large farming conglomerate, Karimjee Jivanji Estates, at a tea



Mr. Sadru Nazarali (left) (with Mr. Azim Jaraj, Egerton alumnus, class of 1971–centre) being recognised for his work at the Aga Khan Development Network by His Highness the Aga Khan (right), in Karachi, Pakistan, in 1985

plantation in the Usambara Mountains in Tanzania. I soon qualified to attend the Tea Managers course at the Kericho Tea School, and became an Assistant Manager on the plantation, which had approximately 400 tea-pluckers and 100 field supervisors.

At home in Tanga, with my mother, who was blessed with a green thumb, we went into a seedling plant business as well as a home-based food processing business. Unfortunately, this exciting beginning was suddenly interrupted in a manner that had far-reaching consequences for our family and for the economy of Tanzania.

In late 1970 and 1971, as a consequence of nationalisation, many Asians lost their business assets, farms and plantations, and everything else we possessed. There was a group of Egertonians in Tanzania who had kept in close touch since graduation, and in the spirit of oneness built up over the years, we collectively decided to look for the proverbial greener pastures elsewhere. In the course of twelve months, ten of us landed in Canada, many finding home in Edmonton. Over the next five years we attracted other friends, besides bringing our parents and siblings.

Canada is a country with a strong



Mr. Sadru Nazarali with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada in Edmonton, in September 2019



Mr. Sadru Nazarali, as President of the Canada-Tanzania Business Council, hosts President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania during a Symposium in Toronto, Canada, on May 30 to 1 June 2014 held at the Royal York Hotel.

civil society, respect for democracy, and appreciation for pluralism. It also ensures security of property and business. We started building our new lives there. Over the years, we Egertonians flourished in business, politics, philanthropy, and global citizenship. Our children attended the best schools we could wish for and prospered too.

I have been involved in multiple business ventures, including financial planning, building a chain of retail stores, real estate development, coordinating international recruitment of professionals, and providing advice for other immigrant communities in business and real estate.

I was the first Edmonton Chapter Chair of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), an organisation which provides various types of assistance to the developing world. One of our first activities was to organise a partnership walk in Edmonton in 1985. From an initial number of 145 walkers we have now reached 4,000. These walkers get donation pledges for projects in various countries in Africa and Asia. Our collaborative work with the Aga Khan University in Karachi, Pakistan, has been recognised by His Highness the

Aga Khan.

I was also instrumental in getting three Ismaili Centers established in Edmonton. I am presently involved in setting up a multigenerational housing for senior citizens near one of the Centres.

The Nazarali family has also been supporting political campaigns in Canada for the last forty years. This has led to close associations with many politicians, including Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada.

My joy of assisting development in Africa never stops. As President of the Canada-Tanzania Business Council, I was able to host President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania twice in Canada.

Building capacity for the youth has been another focus in my efforts, and I make sure that my generation as a whole takes pride in this endeavour. In this particular initiative, I have sought and found alignments with many similar organisations.

In all I do, I am deeply conscious of how Egerton College has taught me to resolve local issues with global solutions.

My Small Window to the World Opened Wide at Egerton College

By Shiraz Nasser

I was born in August of 1950 and did my primary and secondary schooling in Tanzania, and I completed Cambridge Grade 12 Examinations in 1966, with a First Division Pass. In my isolated small rural town of Dodoma (today, a big bustling town and the new capital of Tanzania), I had heard something about an eminent institution called Egerton Agricultural College in Kenya and fancied myself studying there. My dream became a reality when, with the help of the Aga Khan Department of Education (Tanzania), I secured admission for a three-year Diploma course in Agricultural Engineering at the College and a scholarship to cover the considerable expenses. To this day I have remained boundlessly grateful to my benefactors.

No one in my family knew anything about farming, as I was a town person and my parents were small-time shopkeepers. My parents were third-generation immigrants to Africa. My ancestors migrated from the Indian subcontinent in the late 1800s and early 1900s and established their roots in Tanzania. They worked hard to settle in the new country, facing language and culture barriers.

Arriving at Egerton College, my little closed world literally opened. I got to meet students not only from different towns and cities from across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, but also from many far-away countries of Africa. I loved to interact with them and learn their diverse cultures, histories, geographies, economics, politics, and food.

At the College, I gained a wealth of knowledge about agriculture. I learned from some of the finest lecturers there could possibly be, again from different

parts of the world. My lecturers were Ackland and Ngugi for Agriculture, Orie and Khan for Animal Husbandry, Pupius and Nguyo for Economics, and D'Costa and Mwangale for Soil Chemistry. Among my Agricultural Engineering lecturers were E. B. Collins, J. L. Wagner, C. R. Grafton, and Mr. Candelet (all from the USA). Capable demonstrators like Mr. E. G. Kihurani taught me welding, metalwork, and carpentry, while Mr. N. Reuben made me understand field surveying. Many of these great educators and experts are not alive today, but I am enormously thankful to all of them for having shaped me. I hope their souls are listening!

After joining the College, I felt that I was part of an elite community and had a proud sense of belonging. This identity has not eroded in me with the passing of

time. Without realising it, I was building a character, gaining confidence, and becoming a responsible adult.

During my time (1967–1969) Sir Michael Blundell was the Chairman of the Board of Governors and Dr. W. O. Omamo was our wonderful Principal and the first African Principal of the College. He had a great sense of humour and a larger than life personality.

Students at Egerton College had to study hard in all the three years of their respective programmes and maintain a high Grade Point Average (GPA). Failing to do so got one the dreaded “Academic Warning” and a resit of exams. Approximately 10-15 per cent of students would not return to College at the end of any given teaching semester due to academic under-performance.

I graduated with a Distinction



Mr. Shiraz Nasser receives an award for the Best Student in Agricultural Engineering, as a second-year student, from His Excellency Dr. Milton Obote, President of Uganda, on 29 November 1968, during Egerton College's Graduation Ceremony. (Both photos in the story courtesy of Mr. Nasser)

Diploma in Agricultural Engineering in 1969 and won many academic awards through the three years of my study. I was fortunate to have been selected to sit for the East African Diploma in Agriculture, whose exams were set at Makerere University, Uganda, which I also passed and thus graduated with two diplomas.

I remember all the pomp of graduation ceremonies. Guests of Honour were such personalities as His Excellency Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, the President of Kenya, His Excellency Dr. Milton Obote, the President of Uganda, and the Honourable Derek Bryceson, the Minister for Agriculture, Tanzania. My sibling, parents and other family members attended my graduation. That was a great moment for our family.

In hindsight, choosing to study at Egerton College was one of the most wonderful decisions of my life, as besides receiving high quality academic education, the College equipped me with noble values and intangible tools to prepare me for the life ahead.

What do I remember most vividly? I remember sometimes rushing from class to class not to ever be late. I remember many College field trips during our study terms and particularly a major class trip to Uganda to visit the large commercial farm estates, many manufacturing industries, and the Hydro Dam on River Nile.

I loved the newly built sound-proof library: it had great ambiance and lighting, where we could study and access many reference books.

I remember the Junior Common Room (JCR), where we could relax and chill out in the evenings. We would watch popular TV episodes on a black and white television set. We would also watch different movies every Tuesday on a screen through a movie projector for a nominal movie club fee. I remember the College bus picking up and dropping students from campus to Nakuru and vice versa at the beginning and end of the semesters. The bus schedules for students were posted on the notice board close to the entrance of the “C”

Residence Hall. I remember, on weekends, many of us students walking from College Campus to Njoro and then taking a public bus to Nakuru. Sometimes we even hitchhiked and got rides from the College staff.

We appreciated the service of laundry one day a week, and having never to worry about washing and ironing our clothes. I remember the three daily meals served in the famous Kennedy Hall. It was compulsory to wear black gowns for dinner or no food would be served. I was not always impressed by the boiled potatoes and slabs of meat served repetitively for lunch and dinner. Breakfast was my favourite meal. An option of vegetarian food was eventually introduced at the request of Asian students.

I remember the only telephone kiosk outside “C” Hall. It was our sole emergency life-line for communication with our family back home. We had mail delivered on weekdays at noon near “C” Hall and would be looking forward to it. We would walk to the Njoro Post Office to use telegram services (30cts a word) for sending messages to our parents that we had arrived safely or sending festival greetings.

I remember the sombre mood in College in July 1969, when we heard about the assassination of one of the founding fathers of the Kenya nation, Cabinet Minister Hon. Tom Mboya.

After finishing Egerton College, I enrolled at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and got a Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture with Honours and won various awards. I was honoured to have my Bachelor's degree conferred to me by President Dr. Julius K. Nyerere.

The degree truly opened a door for me to apply and be successful as a Lecturer in Soil Science at Egerton College, under the Head of Chemistry Department, Mr. A. M. D'Costa. The College secured my Kenya work permit. I enjoyed teaching at the College, where I had once been a student and was now respected as a young lecturer. It gave me great satisfaction. However, my teaching

job did not last long.

The milieu at that time in Tanzania and Uganda was very difficult for people of Asian origin. President Idi Amin had expelled all Asians from Uganda in August of 1972. In Tanzania, many properties belonging to Asians were nationalised by the government, and there was a lot of stress, anxiety and tension amongst the Asian community. Earlier, in 1964, there was a coup in Zanzibar, and many Asian civilians were robbed, women were raped by soldiers, and many were killed and expelled. My parents were very worried about our family's future.

Since I was one of the elder of six siblings, I had to make a big decision for my family. I applied to immigrate to Canada and was granted a landed Immigration Visa. Many Asians started leaving the East African countries for Canada, USA, UK, or Europe for their safety.

Settling, adjusting, and getting a job in a new country was very difficult. My breakthrough came several months after my arrival, in 1974, when I applied for an opening of a topographical field surveying position in a consulting engineering firm, in Toronto. The surveying skills I had acquired at Egerton College in my second year came to my rescue. This was my first job in the new homeland.

I worked for many years in the field, topo-surveying, sometimes in harsh and uncomfortable cold winter weather. I subsequently upgraded myself with many Civil Engineering Design courses at the Ryerson University and finally got my full Ontario Civil Engineering certification credentials.

I worked for 28 years for a renowned consulting engineering firm designing and constructing highways, airports, municipal roads and sewers, and railway tracks, as well as developing industrial sites for major companies like Ford Motors, General Motors, Caterpillar, Honda Motors, Hyundai Motors, Union Carbide, and CNR. I was also involved in Storm Drainage Design work, creating,



Mr. Shiraz Nasser (left) at the Geospatial Information Day in the city of Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, on 15 November 2018. The Day is organised by his Department (Geospatial Solutions) to explain to city residents the infrastructure work done at the municipality for their benefit as taxpayers.

estimating, and administrating Design Tender Contract Documents for many infrastructure projects, and in computing volumes of earthworks.

Over the last 17 years, I have been working for the municipality of the City of Mississauga, in the Geospatial Solutions Unit, doing GPS, mapping and preparing contract drawings for capital works for the City.

I met and married my wife Tazim, also born in Tanzania, in Canada. As parents, our great success was raising our daughter Farah, who is today a renowned TV anchor with Global News, Toronto, and raising our son Latif, who currently works for the National Public Radio in USA, as Research Director. Latif's Ph.D. dissertation at Harvard University was on "The Tanganyika Laughter Epidemic". He spent a lot of time at the border towns of Uganda and Tanzania, to research and explore the laughing mystery of the late 1950s.

My most cherished achievement in Toronto was that I received the 30+Years

Voluntary Service Award by the Ontario Government, Canada, for many small acts of kindness, leadership, and volunteerism in our community in Toronto.

I continue to inspire and motivate young members in our community, and I use my knowledge and long experience to uplift members of the community who are marginalised.

In 2015, I initiated teaming Egerton alumni across different major cities in Canada in walking, raising funds and awareness in the Annual World Partnership Walk, to alleviate global poverty and to raise the quality of life in parts of Africa and South Asia through the Aga Khan Foundation, Canada. The alumni are very supportive of this annual cause.

I was one of the founders and a co-chair of the first Grand North American Egerton Alumni Reunion (Classes of 1961 to 1974) in Toronto in 2005, which was attended by over 115 alumni and their spouses from all over Canada and

the USA. Subsequently, reunions in Vancouver – the Alaska Cruise reunion (2014), the Calgary Stampede reunion (2016), and the Aga Khan Garden-Edmonton reunion (2018) – were organised by other enthusiastic Egerton alumni leads, uniting the supportive alumni base. Earlier mini reunions of Egerton alumni were held for classes of 1961 and 1962 in the USA and Brazil.

The August 2019 Egerton alumni Legacy Safari Reunion was glorious. The visit was meant to celebrate and honour the late Dr. W. O. Omamo and the Gilani family at a Grand Banquet in Nairobi in the presence of the Cabinet Secretary for Defence, Hon. Amb. Raychelle A. Omamo, and the Omamo family, to meet other Kenyan alumni, and to visit the Egerton University, Njoro. We were returning to Egerton University, having been away for some 50+ years. We came from Canada, USA, and the UK. The University received us with amazing kindness and hospitality. We had arrived home. ■

From Egerton Students Union Vice-President to Presiding Officer in the Government of Alberta

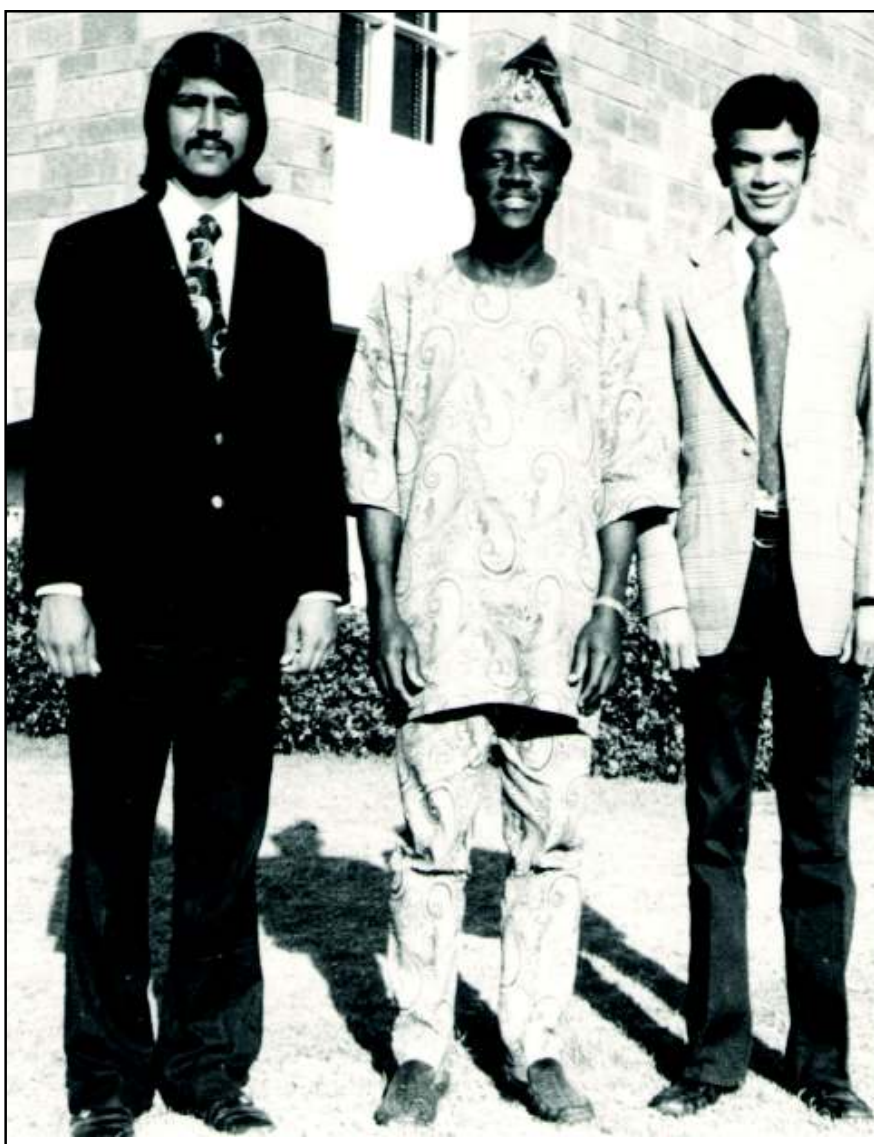
By Shiraz Shariff

A good number of years ago, in 1973, I received a bursary from the Aga Khan Department of Education (Tanzania) to study Dairy Technology at Egerton College, as it was then known. I recall tracking from Moshi to Nakuru with Naushad Jan Mohamed, who had also received a bursary to study Agricultural Engineering and would thus be my college mate. Upon reaching Nakuru we looked for Mr. Alibhai Gilani. We had a confidence-building letter of introduction to him from his contact in Moshi. Mr. Gilani arranged to have his son take us to the college. I remember being dropped off just outside the Kennedy Hall, which would become our meal centre for the next three years. Everybody called it the Mess. We donned a gown every time we went to it for dinner. The greenery of Njoro with its crisp evening chill and fresh air was instantly welcoming.

I had heard numerous stories of Egerton College: of how it had begun as an agricultural school for children of colonial farmers; how, in 1961, the college had opened its doors to students of colour; and how elitist it had been in the colonial-era treatment of its students. Every evening the students left their shoes outside their room to have them polished for next morning and dropped their dirty clothes in a bag to have them washed and ironed. None of these privileges existed in 1973. However, the pristine environment and pride in upkeep were evident. I was assigned a corner room at Old Hall and marvelled at the flowers and green shrubs growing outside my window. The magical atmosphere

inspired me to write a few poems.

By 1973 the College had built a reputation for itself throughout Africa, and there were students from all over the continent in its various programmes. I came across and interacted with students from Nigeria, Botswana, and Tanzania, all of whom were in the Dairy Technology



Mr. Shiraz Shariff (left), Vice-President of the Egerton Students Union, together with the Union's President, Mr. U.A. Salau (centre), and Treasurer Moez Fazal, during the 1974–1975 academic year (Both photos in the story courtesy of Mr. Shariff)

programme with me. The Guildford Institute of Dairy Technology was established with funds from overseas donors. We even had professors from Denmark (Mr. Hanson) and India (Mr. Bhanumurti) on the faculty along with Kenyans such as Dr. Peter Shalo, who was the Chairman of the Department of Dairy Technology.

By 1974 I had become quite involved with student advocacy and successfully ran for the position of Vice-President of the Egerton Students Union (ESU). Mr. U. A. Salau of Nigeria was elected as President, and Mr. Moez Fazal of Tanzania was elected as Treasurer. We put in a lot of effort to develop the Junior Common Room (JCR), a recreational centre for students and a party place with a lounge for entertainment. ESU made profits from the JCR



Mr. Shiraz Shariff as Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Government of Alberta, Canada, where he served between 1995 and 2008

canteen, and the money was used for celebrating year-end events and Christmas parties. It was at such functions that the students were able to socialise and make friends.

Upon graduation in 1976 with a Diploma in Dairy Technology, I made applications to the agricultural faculties of the University of Strathclyde in Scotland, the University of Iowa in the USA, and the University of Guelph in Canada. It felt great to be admitted to all three universities. This success was a confirmation of the recognition Egerton College had achieved on the international academic stage. I accepted the University of Guelph because of the scholarship I was offered. However, I ended up doing my undergraduate and graduate studies in Social Work at the University of Calgary.

Calgary is a city at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Alberta, Canada, which is home to my family. In 1995 I ran in a by-election for public office as Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for the Government of Alberta and served for four successful terms from 1995 to 2008. At the beginning of each term the MLAs elected from among themselves three Presiding Officers – the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, and the Deputy Chair of Committees. For two of my terms I was also elected by my peers as Deputy Chair of Committees. It did not take me long to realise that the skills I had built as Vice-President of ESU had prepared me well for the leadership role I assumed in Alberta.

During my days as an MLA I worked on projects of Good Governance in various parts of the world, and especially in South Africa, which had just dismantled the apartheid establishment. Alberta had twinned with the Province of Mpumalanga, formerly Central Transvaal of South Africa, and I worked on building capacity in the senior bureaucracy of that province. We had identified ten departments to which we provided mentors and training at the University of Alberta. President Thabo Mbeki acknowledged to me the positive impact our mentorship programme was having on the new cadre in the Mpumalanga government.

When in August of 2019, after 46 years for me and 58 years for the first interracial class, some of us alumni had a reunion at Njoro, I was deeply moved to re-live the memories of my youth, all of which were invigorating and a source of pride. The University was a most generous host. We are grateful to it as we also pay tribute to the memory of Dr. William Odongo Omamo, the first African Principal of the College which has given to the world thousands of agricultural practitioners.