

*In The*

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TLIGHT

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*Hatim Vali Class of 1992*



*Hatim with his wife, Gausia,  
and his daughter, Maliha*

“Carpe Diem” is still one of Hatim Vali’s favorite expressions. He even shared the rousing quote with me during our virtual interview, conducted through AOL’s Instant Messenger. “Yesterday was the past, tomorrow is the future, and today is a gift...that is why it is called the present.” This was Hatim’s auto response message he sent to me before our interview began. The quote immediately told me something about Hatim – *he is a positive person who enjoys life and is thankful for his blessings*. And he has been blessed. He has a beautiful wife, Gausia, and a healthy baby girl, Maliha, who was born this past August. Hatim also has a good job at Gallaudet University where he works as the University’s Web Master. His family means everything to him. When asked about his goals in life, he quickly responded, “I want to make sure my family is taken care of and enjoying life.” Hatim, just like most of us, would do anything for his family. But sometimes doing what is best for the people we love can be difficult, even heartbreaking. When Hatim was only three years old, his parents discovered he was Deaf. Living in Tanzania, Africa at the time, they knew Hatim would not receive the education that he needed or the opportunities that he deserved. They had to let their little

boy go. With heavy hearts they made arrangements for Hatim to attend a school in London. And so his journey began - a scared little boy on his way to a new country, and one step closer to finding a second *family* that he still feels part of today.

After spending a couple years in London, Hatim made the journey to the United States to study at St. John School for the Deaf in Milwaukee. But it still wasn’t the right place for Hatim, so in 1983 he traveled to Cincinnati, Ohio where he was welcomed into a new family - the *St. Rita Family*. It was soon after Hatim arrived at St. Rita School for the Deaf that he met Ruthanne Grant, who at the time was the head counselor. She believed Hatim needed stability and personal care. She wanted him to have a real place to call home while he was away from his mother and father. So she took Hatim home to her family and helped raise him for the next nine years. Ruthanne remembers Hatim calling her “Mamma Ruth” and her husband “Papa Paul”. Hatim usually spent three nights in the dorm at St. Rita and four nights with Ruthanne and her family. Ruthanne says Hatim was an exceptional child who was very bright. For his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday present he told her he wanted a subscription to both Time and Newsweek Magazines. Ruthanne’s children even learned sign language so they could communicate with Hatim, and when Ruthanne’s children got married, Hatim was in their weddings. It was at Hatim’s wedding in 2001, that Ruthanne felt her love for Hatim come full circle. Hatim’s mother stood up and said, “I want you all to know what a fine man my son has become. And now I want you to meet the woman who made him that way.” She was of course referring to Ruthanne Grant, who 18 years prior, welcomed a little boy she had just met into her own family. She opened her heart and gave Hatim a *home away from home*.



*Ruthanne & Paul Grant with  
Hatim as a young boy*

*“In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past,  
bridge to our future.” - Alex Haley*

Hatim says he still feels like he is part of the St. Rita family and hopes to visit the school with his wife and daughter someday. One of the last things Hatim shared with me during our interview was his gratitude to all the people at St. Rita who showed him love, support, generosity, and acceptance. He said some of the best experiences of his life were with the St. Rita family. He is especially thankful to Father John Bok, Ruthanne Grant, Maryann Barth, and his parents who helped him *seize the day* and learn to cherish the gifts of the present.” *Carpe Diem! Carpe Diem...*