

I: Woman interviewing

A: Man being interviewed; Ayman

Ayman's story

I: Hello Ayman.

A: Hello. Hi, Linda.

I: You've got quite an unusual name, haven't you? Where do you come from?

A: That's right. My name is Ayman and I'm actually British.

I: Okay.

A: However, I have an Egyptian father.

I: Were you born in Egypt or were you born in the U.K.?

A: Actually, I was born in England. I was born in a city called Leicester, in the Midlands, and as I grew up, my father worked in various countries around the world. So as a youngster I travelled quite a bit.

I: Did you? How old were you the first time you went abroad?

A: The first time I went abroad I was six years old and we moved to the Middle East.

I: Whereabouts in the Middle East?

A: We moved to a country called Oman.

I: And did you go to a school, an ordinary state school in Oman, or did you go to some kind of international school?

A: We went to a private school which was especially there for children of parents coming from overseas. So it was an international junior school.

I: Was it a big school?

A: Yeah, it was a fair size. We were about 250 students, which for a small country like Oman was quite big.

I: That's quite a lot. Were you mainly with British or American kids or was it a mixture of all sorts of nationalities?

A: It was a real mix. We had children from Asia, from America, from Britain, from various parts of Europe, so it was a real melting pot of nationalities.

I: What was that like for a six-year-old, leaving England and then going to Oman? Was it very exotic or what was it like?

A: Well, it was a little bit uncomfortable at first. You're used to lots of other English children running around, speaking only your own language, but after a while, after the first few months, you got used to it and you actually enjoyed having a rich diversity of nationalities.

I: Were they all good at English already or did some of them speak very poor English and had to learn as they were going along?

A: Many children didn't speak very good English at all. In fact they only spoke their mother tongue, which was another language, so it was very difficult for them. However, I think at that age it's probably easier to pick up a new language. But definitely in the beginning there were lots of quiet children, struggling to pick up their new language.

I: And how long did you stay in Oman?

A: Well, I left Oman at the age of 11, when I was sent off to boarding school.

I: Which country did you go to for boarding school?

A: I went to England, into the Midlands, to a town called Loughborough.

I: Okay, so it wasn't far from where you grew up for the first few years of your life.

A: That's right. And the reason for that was that I had my grandparents, my uncles, my aunties who were nearby, so it was easier for me to settle into the school.

I: When you went to boarding school, did you live there all the term or did you go to visit your family on weekends, or how did it work?

A: We lived there for most of the time, however every six or seven weeks we'd have what was called an exeat, which was...

I: And what did you call it?

A: It's called an exeat.

I: An exeat?

A: An exeat, and that means it's a weekend where you're allowed to leave the school and go and stay with friends or family. So to answer your question, I was able to get away every now and then.

I: And did you like getting away?

A: It was fun. I think it's always nice to be at school with friends and other pupils, but I think it's also nice to be spoilt by your grandparents every now and then.

I: Yeah.

A: And just to enjoy time with other members of the family.

I: How do you think this kind of international schooling you've had has affected you?

A: I think overall it's affected me in a positive way because I'm very open to different nationalities, different cultures. And I think it's taught me to respect people from all over the world. Just because somebody has a different way of doing things doesn't mean that it's any better or any worse than **my** way of doing things as an Englishman. So I think it's helped me to build stronger relationships with other people from around the world. So it's been really positive.

I: That's very interesting indeed. Thank you.

A: You're welcome.