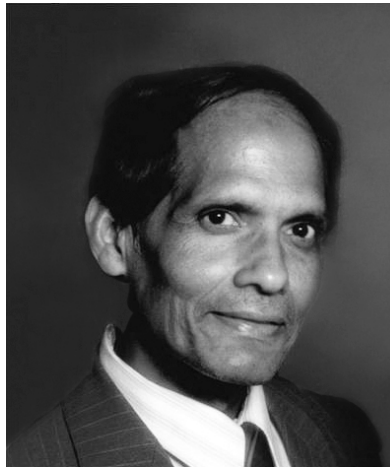


A LIFE SKETCH OF MIR MASWOOD ALI

R. AYESHA ALI

Department of Mathematics & Statistics
University of Guelph, Guelph, ON N1G 2W1, Canada
Email: aali@uoguelph.ca



Dr. Mir Maswood Ali

It is with great honour that I am writing this life sketch in memory of Dr. Mir Maswood Ali. Not only was he my mentor, and a fellow statistician, but he was my father. As was announced in the previous issue of the *Journal of Statistical Research*, Mir Maswood Ali, Professor Emeritus at the University of Western Ontario, died of pulmonary fibrosis at the age of 80 on August 18, 2009 in London, Ontario, Canada.

He was born in Patuakhali, Bangladesh and completed his BSc (Honours) in mathematics and MSc in statistics from the University of Dhaka in 1948 and 1950, respectively. He obtained first class and stood first in both of his BSc (Honours) and MSc examinations and obtained a gold medal for his performance in his MSc examinations. He then lectured in the Department of Statistics at the University of Dhaka for two years.

Over the next few years, Ali worked as an Actuarial Assistant for Norwich Union in England (1952 – 1956), and Canada Life in Canada (1956), before returning to academia. He obtained a second MSc, in Applied Mathematics (1957) from the University of Michigan, and remained there as a Teaching Fellow for another two years. Dr. Ali then moved to the

University of Toronto, where he simultaneously pursued his PhD in Statistics and lectured as a Teaching Fellow. He obtained his PhD in 1961, after only two years into the program.

Dr. Ali immediately assumed a faculty position in the Department of Mathematics at the University of Western Ontario (UWO), as the university's first statistician. It was here that he spent the remainder of his career. He single-handedly developed the undergraduate and graduate programs in Statistics - an accomplishment that eventually led to the creation of UWO's Department of Statistical and Actuarial Sciences. His achievements did not go unnoticed as he was rapidly promoted to Associate Professor in 1963 and to Full Professor in 1966. He became Professor Emeritus in 1994.

Throughout his illustrious 33 years at UWO, Dr. Ali not only published in several leading statistical journals, including the *Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, and *Biometrika*, but he also published on a wide variety of topics ranging from ordered statistics and multivariate statistics to spherically symmetric and elliptically contoured distributions, and n -dimensional geometry. He was well known for providing short and elegant proofs that often relied on geometrical arguments. He was a brilliant statistician and a passionate teacher. There are few who could see and explain statistics with such clarity.

He also played a key role in establishing this journal, the *Journal of Statistical Research*, the first issue of which appeared in 1970. In 2008, Ali received the Qazi Motahar Husain Gold Medal Award in recognition of his great contributions to statistics, and the December 2008 issue of the JSR was dedicated to him. Subsequently, the Department of Statistical and Actuarial Sciences at UWO held a celebration in honour of his 80th birthday in March 2009.

Throughout his life, he continuously contributed to his community, which included persons from all walks of life. He sought the good in people, and was always ready to offer gentle words to those who asked for sound advice. He was a founder and lifelong trustee of the London Muslim Mosque, as well as president of the Bangladeshi Association of London for many years. Within the statistics community, he supervised many notable Bangladeshi statisticians, including A.K.M.E. Saleh, A.B.M. Lutful Kabir, B.C. Sutradhar and A.H. Joarder. He was also instrumental in bringing another notable statistician, his brother, Dr. Mir Masoom Ali, into statistics, and most certainly helped me to see the beauty in the subject.

He touched the hearts of all who knew and loved him. He was a dedicated son to his parents, and mentor to his 7 brothers and sisters. He was a loving husband to his wife, Suraiya Ali, father to his 8 children, and grandfather to his 7 grandchildren. Just shy of his 47th wedding anniversary, Dr. Ali was a caring individual with high moral standards. He shared with his family and friends a thirst for knowledge, a sense of adventure and a life of humour and stories. My father was an eternal optimist with a kind and generous heart. His love for his family knew no bounds and was always first for him. All of our lives have been forever enriched by his limitless love and support. We will miss him dearly.