

# Holm, Donald Nathan (1916–1986)

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Lois and Donald Holm and child.

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Adventists Archives.

Donald Nathan Holm was a medical doctor and a missionary who served his calling to the people of the Far Eastern and the Afro-Mideast Divisions and helped pioneer the medical mission work there.

## Early Life

Donald Nathan Holm was born in South Haven, Minnesota, on August 15, 1916.<sup>1</sup> He was born and raised in an Adventist home by his father, Lewis Nathan Holm, and his mother, Elena Hanson. His father served as president of Oshawa Missionary College<sup>2</sup> and Atlantic Union College.<sup>3</sup> D. N. Holm spent his early childhood years at Maplewood Academy in Minnesota.<sup>4</sup> In 1920 his family moved to Oshawa Missionary College in Ontario, Canada.<sup>5</sup>

## Education and Marriage

D. N. Holm attended Oshawa Missionary College Elementary School from 1923 to 1930.<sup>6</sup> As a child in elementary school, he attended a camp meeting in Ontario wherein the speaker spoke of the Great Physician and His example of doing good. The speaker also emphasized the place of the medical missionary in making friends with the people so they would be receptive to the message.<sup>7</sup> These words kindled a fire in D. N. Holm's heart, making him want to be of such service one day.<sup>8</sup> He was baptized at Oshawa, Ontario, in 1928.<sup>9</sup>

When his parents moved to a farm for several years, and the secondary school was too far to attend, his goal of being a medical missionary kept him away from tempting activities. It made him courageous in doing work. He became a colporteur and he worked at farms, woodshops, printshops, and later in hospitals and laboratories to earn money for his education. His goal also caused him to study hard, and he got good grades in school.<sup>10</sup> He continued his studies at Emmanuel Missionary College in Michigan for his secondary school and premed from 1932 to 1939.<sup>11</sup> In 1940 he pursued his medical degree at the College of Medical Evangelists, and he completed this degree in December 1943.

While pursuing his studies, D. N. Holm worked as a student colporteur. He canvassed in the Canadian Conference during the summers,<sup>12</sup> engaging in faithful work and putting in a substantial number of hours. During the summer of 1939, before he pursued his medical degree at CME, now known as Loma Linda University School of Medicine, he canvassed in the Canadian Conference.<sup>13</sup>

On June 4, 1939, D. N. Holm married Lois Eunice Puels who was born and raised in Rock Falls, Illinois. She was a nurse who received her education from Loma Linda School of Nursing.<sup>14</sup> They were blessed with six children, namely: Edward, Raymond, Roger, Karen, Rickey, and Linda.<sup>15</sup>

## Career and Ministry

After completing his medical degree, D. N. Holm served his internship and residency at St. Joseph's Hospital in South Bend, Indiana, from 1944 to 1945.<sup>16</sup> He was also a medical officer in the U.S. Army from 1945 to 1947.<sup>17</sup> In 1947 he pursued post-graduate studies in surgery, plus filling in for other doctors as needed at the College of Medical Evangelists Graduate School.<sup>18</sup>

Prior to World War II there was no organized medical work in Indonesia except for an obstetrical clinic and a small orphanage operated by Adventist nurses.<sup>19</sup> In 1948 Donald Holm was appointed to go to Indonesia,<sup>20</sup> and he began work as the first Adventist doctor there.<sup>21</sup> He officially opened the medical work in 1949 by converting a house into a hospital of 20 beds in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia.<sup>22</sup> The bed capacity was gradually increased so that by 1960, the hospital had 116 patient beds.

Regarding the progress made, Donald Holm noted: "at the present time (April 1960) we have beds for 116 patients, plus surgical, obstetrical, and all other departments associated with such institutions."<sup>23</sup>

While doing his medical missionary work, Donald Holm also served as secretary of the medical department of the Indonesia Union Mission,<sup>24</sup> and he was a member of the Executive Committee of the Indonesia Union Seminary of SDA in Gadobangkong Tjimahi, Java, Indonesia, and the Board of Management of Sekolah Pendidikan Sulawesi Kawangkoan, Celebes, Indonesia, established in 1948.<sup>25</sup>

The pioneer medical work in Java began in 1907 with the leadership of Anna Nordstrom. This was continued by Dr. D. N. Holm in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>26</sup> In 1952 a nurse's training school was begun with only six students and

inadequate facilities. With the help of Miss Mote and the reorganizing of Wilma Leazer, the school gradually grew to an enrollment of 55 with improved facilities.<sup>27</sup> The first graduates of this school were sent to a clinic in Pontianak, Borneo, which officially opened to the public in April 1958.<sup>28</sup> Dr. Holm also operated a clinic in Bandung that treated 80 to 100 patients every day, assisted mostly by native Indonesian nurses. They served and treated patients equally with a mission purpose.<sup>29</sup>

The total number of cases treated in 1953 was more than 35,000,<sup>30</sup> and many precious souls found the light of the gospel through this medium.<sup>31</sup>

In 1957 Dr. Holm visited Penang to talk with Dr. C. E. Randolph about the plans for the new hospital to be built in Bandung.<sup>32</sup> Before he left, Donald Holm helped to plan the new hospital building<sup>33</sup> which would be officially opened on January 24, 1963.<sup>34</sup>

In 1960 D. N. Holm requested a permanent return from Indonesia to the United States and this was authorized.<sup>35</sup> He was replaced by Dr. N. R. Thrasher, a former member of the Bangkok Sanitarium and Hospital staff of physicians, as the new director of the Bandung Mission Hospital.<sup>36</sup>

In 1976 Dr. Donald Holm was appointed to be a physician in the Nairobi Medical Center, Kenya, Afro-Mideast Division.<sup>37</sup> He was then reassigned to be the medical director at Heri Hospital, Tanzania.<sup>38</sup> Later, in 1980, Donald Holm moved to Arusha, the central part of the country, where he opened a medical practice in conjunction with the dental clinic being operated by T. S. Flaiz in the city center.<sup>39</sup>

## Later Life

Donald Holm moved to La Sierra Campus, Riverside, California, in 1981 as a faculty member of the department of family practice.<sup>40</sup> A year later he volunteered to move from Grand Terrace, California, to Guam. He would serve there as a physician at the Guam Seventh-day Adventist Clinic in Tamuning, Guam. He and his wife departed from Los Angeles on May 26, 1982.<sup>41</sup>

A few years after his voluntary service, Donald Holm died at the age of 69 on February 18, 1986, in Grand Terrace, California, United States.<sup>42</sup>

## Contribution

Dr. D. N. Holm was a missionary doctor who served his calling to the people of the Far Eastern<sup>43</sup> and the Afro-Mideast Divisions and helped pioneer the medical mission work there.<sup>44</sup> He was not satisfied merely to operate a Christian hospital and nurses training school. His vision, which he first had as a young boy attending a camp meeting, was of active soul-saving through public evangelism, working hand-in-hand with the medical field.<sup>45</sup>

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