



Jess Holm family.

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Holm, Jess C. (1917–1989)

FELIX GOSAL, AND ADLAI WILFRED M. TORNALEJO

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Jess C. Holm was a soldier, missionary medical doctor, medical director, educator, and writer who served in Far Eastern, Afro-Mideast, and Inter-American divisions.

Early Life, Education and Marriage

Jess C. Holm was born in Burns, Tennessee, in the United States on October 3, 1917. His parents, Christian Holm and Mabel Babcock were both Adventists. Christian Holm immigrated from Norway and became a naturalized United States citizen. Jess Holm spent his early childhood in Tennessee and his early teen years in Portland, Oregon. He was baptized during a camp meeting at the Gladstone Campground Oregon in 1930.¹

In 1929 and 1930, Holm attended Portland Junior Academy, Portland Oregon. He enrolled at Deary Rural High School in Deary, Idaho, from 1932-1934 and finished his secondary education at Walla Walla College Academy, College Place, Washington, in 1936. He attended Walla Walla College, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration in 1942² with minors in math and religion.³

Holm served in the United States Army for four years beginning in 1942. He was a staff sergeant when he separated from service in 1946. After his discharge, Holm began pre-med courses at Walla Walla College. In 1947, he began medical school at the College of Medical Evangelists (CME, now Loma Linda University) in Loma Linda, California. After graduation in 1951, he served as a resident at the Deaconess Hospital, Spokane, Washington, from 1951-1953.⁴

On January 30, 1943, Holm married Juanita Helen Wagner in Farmington, Washington, a small farming community. A registered nurse, Juanita Wagner was born on January 13, 1917, in Farmington to August and Lillian (Alder) Wagner.⁵ She spent her early years in her birthplace, attending Farmington public schools from 1925 until 1937, although for a year in 1929 she attended a church school in their community. She was baptized in Farmington by Elder Meier. From 1937 until 1939, she attended Walla Walla College, followed by nursing school at the College of Medical Evangelists School of Nursing from 1939 to 1942. Juanita graduated with her nursing degree in 1942.⁶

Juanita's nursing career included time at Rockford Memorial Hospital in Rockford, Illinois, between 1943 and June 1944, and Tacoma General Hospital in 1944. From January 1945 until February 1946, she was a nursing secretary in Dr. T. L. Hanson's medical clinic. She worked part time in the Loma Linda nursery department from 1948 until 1949. From June 1950 until May 1951, Juanita was the part time relief supervisor at Glendale Sanitarium and Hospital. Between 1953 until 1957, she also served as a nurse and taught nursing courses in the hospitals where her husband was assigned during their foreign missionary service.⁷

The Holms were blessed with twin daughters, Jeaneen Jo and Kathleen Rose, and one son, Robert Stanley.⁸

Career and Ministry

As a student, Jess Holm engaged himself in ministry and was very talented in music. He was enthusiastic to spread the third angel's message even while in the army.⁹ While studying at the College of Medical Evangelists, Holm was under contract with the General Conference for mission field service.¹⁰ In 1946, he was called to the China Division to serve as treasurer of the west China Union. Whether he accepted the call is unconfirmed.¹¹ After finishing his degree at CME, Holm and his family were under appointment for Java to enter the medical work under the direction of the General Conference in the Far Eastern Division.¹² Holm began his foreign missionary service in 1949.¹³

The great progress of medical work in Indonesia demanded nurses and workers. In 1953, Holm was called to join the staff as assistant medical director of Rumah Sakit Advent of Indonesia Union (later known as Bandung Mission Hospital),¹⁴ while Juanita Holm taught at the institution's school of nursing.¹⁵ In collaboration with Dr. Donald N. Holm (no blood relation), medical director of Bandung Mission Hospital at the time, J. C. Holm were doing a great in their medical mission and many precious souls have found the true light of the gospel through this ministry.¹⁶

In 1957 until 1958, Holm served as staff physician of Penang Sanitarium and Hospital in Penang, Malaysia.¹⁷ In the latter part of 1958, the Holm family returned to the United States for furlough during which Dr. Holm did postgraduate work at the Virginia Mason Hospital,¹⁸ which extended until 1961.¹⁹ Neil R. Thrasher, formerly a member of the Bangkok Sanitarium and Hospital staff of physicians, became the new director of the Bandung Mission Hospital.²⁰ When Holm returned to Indonesia in 1961, after completing his residency in surgery, he served as chief surgeon at Bandung Mission Hospital.²¹ He was later appointed director of Adventist Bandung Hospital.²²

The Adventist medical work in Indonesia continued to advance with the inauguration of the new hospital building for Bandung Sanitarium and Hospital on January 24, 1963. Mrs. Hartini Soekarno, wife of the president of the Republic of Indonesia, graced the ceremony.²³ Both local and national government leaders were also present during the inauguration.²⁴

In the same year, twelve nursing graduates from prior years were allowed to take and passed the government accredited-nursing examination and were assigned to support medical work in Sumatra, Borneo, South Celebes, North Celebes, Bangka, and Maluku. Thus, the Adventist medical mission in Indonesia expanded.²⁵ In spite of his busy schedule at the hospital, Holm was very missionary-minded. In 1964, fifty people were taking Bible studies, and an average of thirty or forty patients were attending Sabbath school weekly. Of these, twenty were eventually baptized, seven of whom were Muslims.²⁶

In 1968, Holm became medical director of Saigon Adventist Hospital in Vietnam.²⁷ Aside from the hospital a Practical Nursing School was opened to train young girls to provide nursing care. The medical work in Vietnam was challenging due to the civil war embroiling the country.²⁸ Nevertheless, amidst the battles of Saigon, the first classes were held with fifteen girls enrolled. Juanita Holm directed the program. Only three of the students were

Seventh-day Adventists, and the remainder being Buddhist.²⁹

He served as medical director of Saigon Adventist Hospital until the early part of 1970,³⁰ when the General Conference voted on February 5, 1970, to appoint him medical director of Andrews Memorial Hospital in Jamaica, West Indies.³¹ Weeks later he was released from that call and granted permanent return on April 30, 1970.³² However, that vote was also rescinded, and he was instead given a “furlough-residency” in the Afro-Mideast Division effective April 20, 1970, with assignment as medical director at the Empress Zauditu Memorial Adventist Hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.³³

Apparently, Holm did not begin his new responsibility immediately as he remained in Glendale, California. In July 1971, he was called to the Southern Asia Division as medical director at Surat Hospital, India.³⁴ However, a few weeks later he was released from that appointment and placed under deferred appointment.³⁵

In 1973, Holm finally moved to and assumed medical directorship of Empress Zauditu Memorial Adventist Hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.³⁶ In 1976, he became the temperance director in Ethiopian Union.³⁷ In the middle of the year, Holm was connected briefly with Davis Memorial Hospital in Guyana before going to Montemorelos University in Mexico,³⁸ both institutions in the Inter-American Division. In between these two appointments, he returned to the United States.³⁹ In 1977, Holm became a professor and chief of the department of surgery at Montemorelos University's School of Medicine.⁴⁰ Towards the end of 1980, he was appointed health department director of the Washington Conference.⁴¹

Later Life and Contribution

Jess C. Holm was recognized and appreciated by the General Conference for his twenty years of dedicated service and medical missionary work in the Far Eastern, Afro-Mideast and Inter-American divisions.⁴² Little is known about his retirement years. Holm died on October 28, 1989, in Kirkland, Washington.⁴³

Jess C. Holm, a fellow of the American College of Surgeons greatly contributed to the progress of the medical work in the Far Eastern Division, especially in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam, where he served as physician and medical director. With his wife, Juanita, he helped develop the Bandung Adventist Hospital in terms of upgrading its facilities and in training nursing students, who later greatly helped in running medical clinics in several key places in Indonesia. While serving as medical director of the Bandung Adventist Hospital, Holm used his influence for evangelism. He was involved directly in the soul-winning programs of the church through Bible studies and tract distribution in addition to his medical ministry.

Aside from his medical service in the Far Eastern Division, Holm also served in Ethiopia and in Mexico. He made significant contributions to the School of Medicine at Montermorelos University.

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