

Williams, Benjamin Jack (1917–2009)

CHERYL CHRISTO HOWSON

Cheryl Christo Howson earned a graduate diploma in computer aided interior designing at the Dr. Bhanuben Nanavati College of Architecture for Women in Pune, India. She co-founded an interior design company in Sri Lanka and worked as a copywriter. She contributed to the morning devotional published by Women's Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the *Shepherdess International Journal* magazine, and the *Adventist Review*. She has written several plays. Currently (2020), she lives in Hosur, India while preparing for a piano exam.

Benjamin Jack Williams was a school and church administrator who with his wife, Ada, served the Seventh-day Adventist church in India and North America.

Early Life

Benjamin Jack Williams was born January 13, 1917 in Uniontown, Alabama, USA, to Jack McDonald Williams¹ and Sarah Elizabeth Hudson. The couple also had five other children, all girls.² Sarah accepted the Adventist message in 1929,³ and had great influence on her son's life, which, combined with evangelistic meetings, convinced him to be baptized in 1931.⁴

After baptism Jack Williams wanted to study in an Adventist institution, and so in 1933 he moved from Gilbertown Academy, Alabama, to Fletcher Academy in North Carolina, and graduated in 1936. Then he moved to Southern Junior College (Southern Adventist University), Collegedale, Tennessee until 1937⁵

Education and Marriage

After Southern College, Jack enrolled at Washington Missionary College (Washington Adventist University) in Takoma Park, Maryland in 1939⁶ but his studies were interrupted in 1942 by World War II draft into the US Army⁷ and served in the army clinic until 1945.⁸

After the war, Benjamin Jack Williams married Ada Blanche Noble on March 4, 1945 in Columbia, South Carolina. The couple had met while they were studying in Washington Missionary College⁹ Ada was born in an Adventist home to Lauren Oliver and Orpha E. Noble¹⁰ on Feb 13, 1924 in Los Angeles, and was baptized in 1935. She completed the 12th grade at Fletcher Academy & Mountain Sanitarium, North Carolina, where she also obtained a Nurses Training Certificate.¹¹ In 1946 Jack Williams returned to college¹² and graduated as president of the senior class in 1948¹³ with a B.A. degree in business administration as major and religion and history as minors. Ada graduated the same year with a B.Sc. in nursing education.¹⁴

Not long after graduation, Jack and Ada set out as missionaries to Poona (Pune), India,¹⁵ where the couple had their first two children: Blanche Elizabeth (Ford) born March 21, 1949 and Evelyn Violet (Greccian) born May 5, 1951. A third daughter, Jacquenette Marie (Sanner), was born in Loma Linda, California on August 18, 1954. On March 1, 1958, the couple had a son, Lauren Bruce, when the family was serving in Shillong, a city tucked in the Northeastern hills of India.¹⁶

Benjamin Jack Williams completed his post-graduate studies on two separate furloughs. In 1955 he attended the SDA Theological Seminary in Washington D.C. after which during a subsequent furlough he joined Andrews University at Berrien Springs, Michigan, where he completed MA in education in 1963.¹⁷

Career and Ministry

Shortly after their graduation in 1948 Jack and Ada Williams accepted a call to work at Spicer Missionary College (Spicer Adventist University), Poona (Pune), India. Jack was to teach¹⁸ and serve as head of the Commerce Department in 1948. Later he served as treasurer from 1949 to 1951, and then as Business Manager of the college in 1952.¹⁹

In February 1953, Jack was transferred to Jowai in the Northeast India Union, where he served as the principal and



Seasons Greetings

Benjamin Jack Williams with family
Photo courtesy of Gordon Christo.

manager of the Assam Training School until December 13, 1954. After a year's furlough, on December 31, 1955, the family moved to the headquarters of the Northeast India Union in Karmatar as the Secretary/Treasurer until August 1957, when he became president of the Assam Section with headquarters in Shillong²⁰ During his tenure there, on January 11, 1958, in Shillong church, Jack was ordained to the ministry, with E. E. Roenfelt, A. R. Appel and W. F. Storz as officiating ministers.²¹

In September 1960 the family moved back to the Division headquarters at Salisbury Park, Poona, where Jack Williams became the Publishing Department director. In December 1963 after a brief study leave and furlough, Jack returned to Karmatar to become president of Northeast India Union until June 7, 1966²²

At this point, Jack and Ada Williams decided to move back permanently to the U.S.A. to meet the educational needs their daughters, Blanche and Evelyn, who were just completing their secondary education at Vincent Hill, Mussoorie, in North India. Back in the U.S.A., Jack Williams joined the Pacific Union College as assistant business manager, from August 1966.²³ In June 1967 he was appointed president of the Mountain Sanitarium & Hospital and Fletcher Academy, North Carolina, until 1975.²⁴

However, it seemed that the Williams family had not said goodbye to India forever. On February 21, 1977 they were back in Pune at the Southern Asia Division Headquarters as their Financial Advisor until July 28, 1980²⁵ Later that year the family returned to the U.S. permanently for the second time,²⁶ although he was called back as Business teacher at Spicer Memorial College (Spicer Adventist University) on November 2, 1987²⁷

Benjamin Jack Williams passed away on November 12, 2009 in Portland, Oregon²⁸

Contribution, Legacy

Jack and Ada Williams spent 18 years as missionaries in India in several crucial posts: teaching at Spicer College, principalship of Assam Training School, heading up the Division Publishing Department, serving as president of Assam Section and the Northeast India Union, and finally as financial advisor of the Southern Asia Division. In the U.S. he served for 8 years as president of the Mountain Sanitarium & Hospital and Fletcher Academy.

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3. *Ibid.*?
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 23. Ibid.?
 24. Lewis E. Nestell, "The Fletcher Story," The College Press, Collegedale, 149, accessed April 2019, http://www.fletcheracademy.com/about_us/history/The_Fletcher_Story.pdf?
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 27. "Bulletin Board: To New Posts," *ARH*, Jan 22, 1987, 22.?
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