

# BAPTIST FEATURES

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Linguist, Musician, Scholar  
Follows Dream to Panama

by Jacqueline Durham

ATLANTA, Ga.--(BP)--The blond, gentle-featured man stands, stretches, then tosses the German classic he has been reading onto the sofa beside him. Moving across the room to the piano, he flexes his hands above the keys; then a vibrant, flowing chopin concerto fills the room. The door bursts open revealing a six-year-old. The music ceases just in time for the hands to catch the boy as he leaps into his daddy's arms. He has been summoned by his wife for an errand. On the way, he stops at the corner delicatessen for a chat in Hebrew with the proprietor. He is just as at home with the Greek at the Laundry.

Up the street, in the neighborhood church, a motion picture is being shown to a group of people who cannot speak or hear. The man's serene face and graceful movements speak to them from the screen. After dinner, he and his wife muse quietly over a game of chess, and he later pens a letter in Japanese to a friend.

This is A. Jackson Roddy. In August, Jack, his wife, Jane, and their younger sons Plunkett and Robin, will leave for Panama as Southern Baptist missionaries under the denomination's Home Mission Board. It is the fulfillment of a 20 year dream.

New mission work in Panama City and teaching at Panama Baptist Seminary will fill the life of Roddy. The Spanish and Cuna languages spoken there will be no barrier. Prejudice will never form a barrier, for in this brilliant linguist and accomplished musician, one becomes aware of the ethereal and aesthetic combined with human love, kindness, and compassion.

The question, "Why does 'Jack' not do something greater with his brilliance and talents?" can be heard among his acquaintances.

Once in a great while men of keen intellect and rare talents exhibit "foolishness" in the eyes of men. These break with the conventional seeking of professional, social, political, and economical gain and yield their lives to a greater cause. Thus is the case with Jack Roddy. He is the epitome of humility. He cares less for using his capacities for personal position, power, and fame than for yielding these capacities to the glory of God and the betterment of mankind.

Let him speak for himself.

"This wish to go to Panama is no new desire," he says. "In school in Cincinnati in 1937, Jane and I were drawn together by a common interest in missions in Latin America.

"This action (their appointment as missionaries) is the result of that interest and follows four months of deliberation, prayer, committee discussion, and doctor's reports. The fact that God has not checked the progress of this move strengthens our confidence that He has been leading. Jane and I are jubilant in the face of this dream about to be realized and are grateful to God for this opened door."

Jack goes to Panama after six years of working with deaf people and using dactylogy, the sign language, for communication. He was, at first, minister to the deaf in the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Tex. He assumed Southern Baptist leadership as superintendent of deaf work with the Home Mission Board in 1957, from which work he requested transfer to central America.

Programs for silent people have been established in local churches and several missionaries to the deaf have been appointed by the Home Mission Board. Four motion pictures of sermons in sign language and sound have been made by him. His enthusiasm for work among the deaf has heightened interest throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Before becoming a Baptist, 'Jack' went to Latin America as a missionary-- first to Costa Rica, then to Panama. After a doctrinal change, he embarked for many years of study.

"Jane followed suite (doctrinally) when we were married in October of 1939 and we started all over as new Baptists," he said.

Next on the agenda for him were four degrees (a bachelor and master of arts from Tulane University in New Orleans, La., and a bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) and three boys (David, Plunkett, and Robin).

"Too old for Foreign Mission Board appointment by this time and ignorant of the Home Mission Board's central American work, we gave up hope of getting down there." That was in 1953; again in January of 1960 he speaks: "A trip to Panama in January not only revived old fires, but it revived the hope that this dream of 20 years might be possible of fulfillment."