

ROBERT RANDOLPH JONES, Jr., M.D.
= Oct. 17, 1902-Nov. 18, 1941. =

Dr. Jones was born in Newport News, Va., October 17, 1902; first-born son of Robert Randolph Jones and Sallie Orgain Blackwell. At the time, the father was Principal of the Newport News High School and also worked in U.S. Customs Service.

The family moved to Petersburg, Va., the summer of 1907, where Randolph's father became Superintendent of the Public Schools. The first home was in town, but in 1910 they moved outside the town some four miles to commute, barefoot and all, to Jackson School inside the city limits. Farm work balanced school work and chores involved all aspects of such a life.

Mother's illness in 1912 necessitated drastic changes and after some months in a Sanatarium, she was sent home not expected to live but a year or two more. An uncle, Dr. Bolling Jones, suggested she might survive longer if she sought a western climate, and the entire family "migrated" to El Paso, Texas, in the hot August of 1914. The hot, high, border town became home, and the mother's life was extended some forty-three years - to her death in 1957. R. R. Jones, Sr., had died in 1951.

Randolph attended public schools in El Paso with his two younger brothers, and the school work and chores continued for the three of them. He led the way as a street corner newsboy until he could buy a horse and gain a regular route. ROTC was compulsory with war threatening. There was a summer stint as wrangler on the "Flying X" ranch, another summer selling Bibles, and other odd jobs sandwiched in through the years of High School and even until his graduation from Davidson College in 1924. He had entered college in 1920, and in his four years there he was a leader in scholarship and in campus life. He served as President of the senior class, and among other honors were awards in Phi Beta Kappa and Omicron Delta Kappa.

Anecdotes liberally sprinkled these formative years, and they are still being re-told in the family constellation.

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The next move was a major one. Randolph was accepted by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, which he entered the fall of 1924. Here as at Davidson College he did well as he earned his M.D., and also membership in A.O.A., the honorary medical fraternity. He was near the top of the class in 1928. (Here it is added in retrospect that he was a member of his father's social fraternity at Davidson, IKKA, and the AKK fraternity at Hopkins.

During his last year in Baltimore, he did part-time work as externe in the City Hospitals at Bayview, and with the Brady Institute at Hopkins. His first year of internship was with the Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, N.Y. His next year was spent back at Hopkins, and he lived nearby on Broadway with his new wife, Miss Virginia Murray, R.N., whom he married 1929. She continued her duties at the Church Home and Infirmary, some blocks away on Broadway. It was in 1930 they came to Durham, as Randolph had become one of the select group that was to pioneer the staff of the newly completed Duke University School of Medicine and Hospital. Here he was an Assistant Resident in Surgery and his wife a member of the Nursing Staff.

The group picture of the new Staff, April 1, 1931, is a striking reminder of the strong cadre that had been selected to launch this new school and hospital. Stalwarts they were and giants they became. Randolph was one of these. His contributions during the ensuing ten years will ever bear witness in records and memorabilia: in the lives of students taught, the innovations in plastic and reconstructive surgery, treatments of burns and other traumata, resections and supportive care of malignancies, and the pervasive influence of his God-fearing and mission-dedicated service. All these have combined to leave an indelible imprint of a magnificent life.

This life was cut short in November 1941, by bullets from the gun in the hands of a former patient; a demented man who died thirty years later still incarcerated as criminally insane.

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(Summary by Thomas T. Jones, M.D., a younger brother, who still remembers. Durham, N.C., 28 Feb. 1978.)