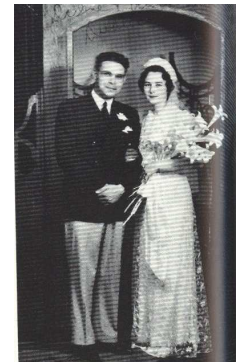


Darlene Deibler Rose—Among the Kapauku
Missionary to the Netherland East Indies (now Indonesia)
1917-2004

At the age of 10 Darlene attended a church meeting where the topic was the task of taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to the remotest parts of the earth. The speaker asked, “Who will go?” Darlene watched as several people stood and walked toward the front to dedicate their lives mission work. As she looked on, she felt a gentle hand grasp her shoulder. She looked around and saw no one. Yet she knew her Lord Jesus was telling her that she, too, would be carrying His message to far away places. From that moment she wanted to go wherever He led. She was young girl growing up in Boone, IA, a small town west of Ames; Darlene’s idyllic country life stood in great contrast to what it would be a mere 12 years later in the jungles of Irian Jaya.

On August 18, 1938, Darlene’s first wedding anniversary, she and her husband C. Russell Deibler set foot in Batavia, Java and soon traveled on to the island of Celebes, home of the headquarters of the Christian & Missionary Alliance in the Netherland East Indies. Russell was a veteran missionary who wed Darlene when he was home on furlough. He brought his young wife back to these islands with the dream of taking the gospel to a newly discovered people in the Wissel Lakes area in western New Guinea.



Also at the headquarters in Celebes was Dr. Robert Jaffray. Dr. Jaffray was the field chairman of the Netherlands East Indies Mission. With him was his wife and adult daughter Margaret. Their team also included Margaret Kemp, Lilian Marsh and Philoma Seely. Both Lilian and Philoma had been missionaries in China before transferring to the Netherland East Indies.



Darlene was a quick study in languages. She learned Dutch while she and Russell spent six months in Holland. Once she arrived in Celebes she began to study Indonesian. And while Russell made the first trek to the Wissel Lakes, Darlene was translating Sunday school lessons from English to Indonesian as well as teaching Church History in Indonesian to a class of Dyaks from Borneo.

When Russell returned it was obvious that his trip had taken a huge physical toll. He had lost sixty pounds and had an advanced case of jungle rot on the bottoms of his feet. He and the natives who carried his supplies hacked through jungle, forded rivers, climbed mountains, endured rain and mud up to their hips, and shivered in the high-altitude cold. After eighteen days on the trail their trip almost ended in disaster as one of their canoes capsized, but every man was saved and Russell set foot, at midnight on January 13, 1939, on the land of the Kapauku.

While Russell was telling the amazing stories Darlene was treating his feet as the doctor had prescribed—“Do you see this tissue that is sougning off? Each morning take a

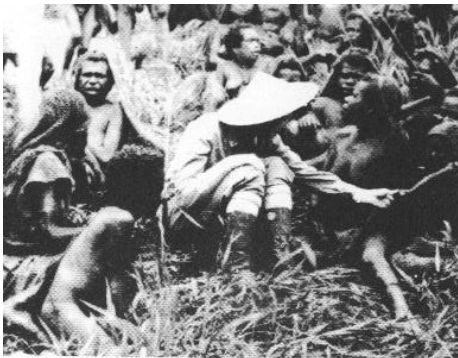
tweezer and tear off every layer until you reach the raw, throbbing flesh. Don't apply the ointment that I'm giving you until that rotting tissue is removed. This will be very painful, but there is no other way to get to the fungus that has caused Mr. Deibler's condition." Morning after morning Darlene worked on Russell's feet.

One morning after Russell had told his companions the final episode of his story, Dr. Jaffray walked into the bedroom and saw Darlene tearing the dead tissue off her husband's feet. The blood and pus were running. Dr. Jaffray hurried out of the room, sickened by the sight, and shut himself in his room for several hours. Late that afternoon he laid a manuscript on the table for Darlene to read. It was an editorial for their field newsletter *The Pioneer*:

This morning I looked at the bleeding feet of a missionary, saw his wife tending them, saw the blood and pus running from them and thought to myself, "What a nauseating sight that is!" But, as I walked from the room, the Lord kept saying to me, "Oh, but to Me they are beautiful feet!"

Then I remembered—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings"—good tidings to men and women like those in New Guinea who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Someday it will all be over. Someday the tired, bleeding feet of the missionaries will for the last time cross those broken-bottle limestone mountains. Someday for the last time they will go down into one of those newly discovered valleys. Someday for the last time they will speak the message of redemption through Jesus Christ our Lord. Someday the last one will turn to Jesus. Then the clouds will part asunder and our Savior will be there.

Darlene knew that someday soon she would be able to join her husband and travel to the Wissel Lakes to live among the Kapauku people, sharing with them the precious message of redemption. She was anxious to begin the work. But first more direct routes must be found and a home built for Darlene and Russell.



When Russell first had contact with the Kapauku people they were convinced he was a spirit because he did not have his wife with him. Russell was anxious to have the Kapauku meet his wife, and Darlene was equally excited to meet the Kapauku. When the day finally came and Darlene stood looking down into a valley dotted with huts and saw the men, women, and children scurrying up the hill to meet her, she was overcome with emotion and began singing, "I'm home! I'm home!" as she ran down the mountain to meet them.

Each of the women bore a gift for Darlene: a roasted sweet potato. These primitive people grew more than thirty varieties of sweet potatoes, making it the main staple of their diet. They also ate pigs, rats, crayfish, tadpoles, birds, and a variety of insects.

Darlene and Russell loved being with the Kapauku and quickly learned more of the language so they could share



the stories of Jesus with these precious people. As the villagers started giving their lives to the Lord a small church was started; Darlene and Russell met with the men and women one-on-one for personal discipleship and prayer.

While Darlene and Russell and their small team were laboring in Irian Jaya world events would soon change their course. In September 1939 England and France had declared war on Germany. Holland hoped to remain neutral during the war, but she started organizing her military resources for possible conflict. On the 5th of May 1940 the Nazis invaded Holland, and in just five days it fell. A greater German naval presence was seen in the waters of the East Indies.

Word came to Darlene and Russell late in 1940 that their missionary outpost must be abandoned; they had to return to Celebes. Their hearts were heavy with grief as they left people they loved. Darlene would not see them again until more than nine years later.

The staff in Celebes continued working in the Bible school, and on December 8, 1941 Russell turned on the radio to listen to the morning news. They were shocked to hear about the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese the day before. Now that America was drawn into the war, the reality of it hit home with the Deibler's. Next came the realization that Japan was about to extend its brutal grasp throughout the Pacific so they could control the vast natural resources in the region.

Guam fell on December 11th, Wake Island December 23rd, Hong Kong December 25th, the Philippines on January 2, 1942. Malaysia and Singapore also fell. Next were Thailand and Burma. Now the islands of the Netherland West Indies began to succumb to the power of the Japanese—Sumatra, Borneo, the Lesser Sunda Islands, Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa, Butan, and Muna. It was inevitable that the island of Celebes be invaded.



Russell, Darlene and all their fellow missionaries sought guidance from the Lord—should they stay or go—and all felt they were to stay on the island. Three days later they heard the ship they would have taken was torpedoed and sunk leaving no known survivors. They knew they were exactly where God wanted them to be, but what would the future bring?

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