

APPENDIX E

EXCERPTS FROM "THE LIGHT SHINES IN DARKNESS"

In 1978 descendants of #5 (Louis) Philippe Cardon, LaVerne Cardon Bott (now Johnson) and her daughter Paulette, visited the descendants of #1, Anne Cardon Rivoir. Paulette had just completed a mission in the Milan Italy area, and since she spoke Italian fluently, they were able to have an extremely pleasant visit in Prarostino, Torino, Italy, (Prarustin in French). They were also able to get vital statistics on more of the relatives than we knew about. LaVerne has written a complete account of this exciting visit. Here are some brief excerpts.

"We were about the only ones left on the train when we arrived about 10:30 p.m. in Torre Pellice. The conductors ... helped us at the station to find a hotel..they told us this was as far as the train went. We soon learned that there were no buses or other means to get to Prarostino, about 45 minutes driving distance up the winding mountain roads. We also learned that there were very few phones up in these tiny hamlets."

"Up at 7:30 we had prayer before we went down to breakfast. Our hotel room..was darling. Very quaint, complete with shuttered windows and balcony, with a great panorama of lofty Alps on one side...We began offering people money to take us up to Prarostino. We were surprised. No takers! They all rather snickered at us... "Why do you want to go up there?"...We could just see the wheels turning.."Dumb Americans! "We want..locate our ancestral home. "Where do the Rostagnottos live?" "We really don't know."

"That evening, tired and discouraged after traipsing all over Torre Pellice, we passed by a shop..There was a Polenta stick...I must have a Polenta stick..The shop keeper was most friendly. Paulette told him our plight. He..was the first one who was really determined to help us. He called the home of a school teacher who used to teach some of the children who were bussed here from Prarostino. The school bus run had been discontinued but the sister of the school teacher insisted on coming to the shop and taking us to her apartment to wait for the teacher to get home from the library. She was so kind, and insisted her sister call the Pastor of the Vaudois or Valdese Church in Prarostino and see if he could help. No help. He said so few had phones and he was not familiar with the name. In other words, he...didn't want to cooperate.

"Then one of the sisters happened to remember a phone list of some of the people up there and it just so happened that the Rostagnottos were one of the few who had a phone. The call was made and they were to meet us at 9 a.m. the next morning to take us to Prarostino. They were excited, and so were we!

"At the appointed time and the appointed place, we met Marina. Somehow we had sort of expected to see her in the native garb - maybe a little pudgy, shy and a little older. Instead, Marina, 19, was standing there in hightop boots, corduroy jeans and a black sweater. She was a little surprised too. She expected two older ladies. She insisted we take our suitcases and stay with them. They had made all the preparations for us to stay and before we could even get into their tiny Fiat, she and Paulette were carrying on like they had known each other a life time.

"What a treat we had! Many gathered every night to ask questions and to find out..."How do you know we are your relatives?" This was our opportunity to tell them of our Great Great Grandfather Philippe and..a history of their ancestors. They were amazed that we knew more about them than they did."

"The grandmother, Eveline Rivoire, who was fixing dinner and had kept within ear shot, all of a sudden rushed into the living room, and in her polite and loving way, said, "I have heard this same story!" We began naming some of the names..Eveline's eyes widened with excitement and then she said, "Oh, you are my relatives. Those are my people!" Eveline is tall and statuesque, very quiet spoken with a twinkle in her eyes. She reminds me so much of my Aunt Ethel Cardon. I loved her from the start."

"I was given Marina's bedroom and poor Luciano got the tiny sofa in the living room...Paulette was invited to sleep with Marina and her mother Clara in the parents king size bed. It was so fun. They giggled half the night like teenagers at a slumber party.

Right after dinner the first afternoon we were there, we were taken higher up to a little cluster of houses called San Segundo (San Secondo in French). This is where Eveline's brother Egidio Paschetto (Pasquet in French), lives with his wife Ilda and recently married son, Claudio.

Egidio was not quite so ready to receive us with open arms as the others had. He was very cordial, but a little reserved. He had not had the highest of opinions about "Mormoni's" as he remembered an uncle (this would be Jean Gonnet) who came back from America telling of polygamy, etc. (This uncle settled in California in the Los Angeles area, so he was back fora visit.) After Paulette had answered his questions...and told of our plight to find our ancestral home, he seemed to soften and said he knew where the Borgata Cardon (Cardon Village) was and would take us there the next day. It seems that the history of these people...had all but been forgotten. Marina had never heard of it. We seemed to have sparked anew an almost dying ember of the history of the valiant Valdese (Vaudois).

The next morning, Marina, Paulette and I drove back up the mountain in the tiny Fiat to Egidio's. There he was, out in the yard waiting for us. I wondered how in the world all four of us would fit in the Fiat as I had to literally fold up to get just me in the tiny back seat. Egidio already had that one figured out. He was going to lead us on his moped.

I tried to put myself back into time. How Philippe must have loved these mountains. The mountains and their God were their only refuge when thousands of soldiers, priests and monks marched against them. The mountains and their God were their only protectors, providing caves and hiding places. The mountains and their God were their only providers, yielding grain and food from nooks and crannies. The mountains and their God were their only defenders, sending great avalanches thundering down upon the enemy. No wonder the hearts of our family have always been turned to the mountains.

Egidio pulled to a stop as the heavily wooded area opened up to reveal a valley and across the valley a tiny cluster of houses nestled in the side of the mountain. Borgata Cardon!

The road finally narrowed to a path so we decided to abandon the car and

take the winding path on foot. The excitement mounted as we turned the last bend to the homes -- what a tug at my heart! The homes were preserved quite well. They had been abandoned for a long time. They were well built - meant to stay. The springs and wells still have water. A few plum and apple trees are all that are left of an orchard. There were five houses in all and just a few hundred yards away, a tiny one-room schoolhouse. The structures themselves were made of stone and wood by experienced and skilled hands. They were all two and three story homes. Most had their mangers for livestock taking up the bottom story.

I was overwhelmed with emotion and had the strong impression that we were not the only Cardons visiting those homes that day. I felt very close to my kindred dead. My father, my great grandfather Louis Philippe, his sister Anne who stayed and never had the Gospel in this life, and my great great Grandfather Philippe, who loved and cherished the Gospel, and I'm sure wanted Anne and her posterity to have it also. What about Anne? Is this why I just happened to think to call Genevieve Johnson before I left for Europe and was given the name Rostagnotto? What this why John Russon had felt so inclined to make it possible for me to come? Were we to build a relationship as forerunners, to plant seeds and to keep them nourished until the missionaries reached that area? I believe so with all my heart.

(About a year later LaVerne and Paulette received word from a former mission companion of Paulette's telling them that the LDS Elders were now in Torre Pellice!)

Every evening we were there, more and more people, relatives came to see and to ask the inevitable, "How do you know we are your relatives?" and always the one that followed, "Why did our ancestors join another church - how is it different from ours?" Thus opening and granting us the answer to our prayers: a chance for Paulette to explain the basic doctrines of the Gospel and the story of a great latter-day prophet named Joseph Smith. All eyes were upon Paulette and complete silence as they listened to every word she said.

The last day we were there, we had dinner at Egidio and Ilda's. It is hard to express the love and happiness these people shared with us. (They gave LaVerne and Paulette many gifts, among them Egidio's gift of a hand-blown glass kerosene lamp decorated with flowers that had belonged to Jenny Constantin, his mother - "Egidio, the skeptic, still with his little shy reserve, but with much love and warmth. Annarita, his daughter gave them her gold pin with the motto and picture of a light shining in darkness. "This pin is presented to each 16 year old child on the day of their confirmation.")

There were lots of tears shed and promises made as we left with Luciano who drove us back down the mountain to the train. How I love these people! A little branch of the House of Israel - "a light shining in darkness."