



I Didn't Give Up

BY CARLOS A. DEL LONGO

A year after my baptism in 1963 in Argentina, I was called to serve as branch clerk. One day I came across some blank family group records and pedigree charts. Without any training, I began filling out the sheets with the help of my mother. She remembered the names of her ancestors and my father's, as well as the important dates in their lives, back to the fourth generation. She even remembered some of the people in the fifth generation and one person in the sixth.

I felt the desire to go further in my search, and I worked to verify the information my mother had given me. When I learned the purpose of family history work, I immediately began submitting to the temple the names of my deceased loved ones.

Though I had been successful on my mother's line, I struggled with my father's side. Despite my efforts, for close to 25 years I was unable to confirm the date of my paternal grandfather's birth. His marriage certificate stated that he was born in Udine, Italy, so I wrote about 30 letters to that

town and the surrounding towns. None of the replies confirmed what I was looking for.

In 1988 a branch of the family history library opened in Rosario, and I was called to work as a librarian. It felt like touching heaven, having all of that material within reach. I spent hours reading, and I ordered microfilm records from many cities. In the International Genealogical Index (IGI), I found the exact names of my grandfather and great-grandfather. I wrote to the town in Italy where the two men had been born and asked for their birth certificates. The parish

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priest sent them to me, but the records proved these men were not related to me.

I wrote again—asking this time if the priest had any information on my grandfather. He referred me to the city hall, so I wrote a letter there. My heart leaped with joy when I received a sheet of paper containing the names

and important dates pertaining to my grandparents, great-grandparents, second great-grandparents, and many other family members. This sheet also told me that my grandfather's name had been changed after his arrival in Argentina, explaining the confusion in finding his information.

I wrote to the city again and asked them to send me the sheet that preceded the one they had already sent. They did so, and it included the names of 27 more people. I had the temple ordinances done for all these

family members, with the assurance that they were indeed my ancestors.

Because of wonderful experiences like these, I feel well rewarded for my efforts in doing family history research. Though there have been disappointments at times, I have not given up. I can see that Heavenly Father has surely led me in my search.

I know that our Heavenly Father will provide an opportunity for all of His children to receive temple ordinances, whether now or in the Millennium. But I also know that our ancestors who accept the gospel in the spirit world are longing for us to do our family history work. If we give our best efforts to the Lord, He will provide a way. ■

Family History Reflections

BY STEPHEN C. YOUNG

In the summer of 1979, I was surprised to learn that some of my mother's books and papers were stored in a backyard shed of ward members in my hometown of London, Ontario. In salvaging what I could from several moldering cardboard boxes, I discovered partially completed pedigree charts on my family, some family group records, and a few research notes. The real treasure was a four-page personal history written by my mother, who died when I was 11.

This wonderful handwritten history describes her childhood in England during the 1930s and her life through World War II. Finding these records stimulated my initial interest in family history and turned my heart to my ancestors.

Almost two years later, in April 1981, my father died unexpectedly.

Among his effects I discovered a ring that bore his initials, *CMY*, but I couldn't recall ever seeing it on his hand. He must have worn this ring as a young man while serving on a Canadian Navy minesweeper during the war.

Now, upon his death, I was the only living person appearing on my



I will always remember walking up to the front door of number 32 Oaklands Road—the home built by my great-great-grandfather.

one-page pedigree chart, so I had to rely on extended relatives to gather more information. One of these was Betty, a sister-in-law of my grandfather, still living at the family home in Bexleyheath, Kent, England. I had always hoped to visit and learn more about my mother's family, but as a single college student, I did not have the financial means to do so. Now, with the modest amount bequeathed to me after my father's passing, I could fund a trip across the ocean to visit.

On the day I went to visit Aunt Betty for the first time I felt nervous. Would she understand my great desire to learn more about earlier generations? I looked at my father's ring, now on my own right hand, reflected in the window of the double-decker bus I was riding in. It brought me comfort, as if his hand were resting on my knee in support of my errand.

Happily, Aunt Betty received me warmly and revealed many new and helpful details about my family, including the fact that my great-great-grandfather had built the home she was living in. That night I even slept in my grandfather's childhood bedroom. I never met him, but from the photos she shared, I learned that I bear an uncanny resemblance to him. She generously gave me some of these old family photos, letters, and a family Bible listing the full names, birthdates, and birthplaces of two generations of my ancestors starting in the 1830s.

It has been over 25 years since that rainy September afternoon in

England, when my tentative steps took me from the bus stop to an uncertain welcome at my ancestral home. Since then I have discovered a treasure trove of information from extended family members about my ancestors on both sides of the Atlantic, allowing me to ensure their temple ordinances have been done.

I will always remember walking up to the front door of number 32 Oaklands Road and seeing my own reflection in the glass. Now I know that the familiar face reflected back at me was not unlike the young face of my grandfather welcoming me home. ■

Searching in Finland

BY JUDITH ANN LAURUNEN
MCNEIL

My sister and I felt an emptiness because we had no idea who our Laurunen forebears were. All we knew is that they had come from Finland to America in 1901. So in August 2004, my sister Janice and cousin Sandy joined my husband, Charlie, and me on a trip to discover our ancestors.

In the process of researching for our trip, Sandy discovered a two-page report on the Laurunen Homestead, built in 1605. The earliest mention of our family was in 1569 in the town of Kauhajoki.

Once in Finland, we rented a car and left early the next morning for the long drive to Kauhajoki. We had a hard time finding it and were about to give up when Charlie caught sight of a small airport. We drove there to ask for help. Sandy showed a young man our report, and he kindly offered to take us to the town library. I am sure we would never have found Kauhajoki by ourselves since it is well hidden down a forested highway. It seemed the Lord was leading us in our journey.

At the library a young woman gave us a map, circling the Lutheran church and cemetery. We found the church easily. After two hours of research, with the help of the pastor and several clerks, one of them called our Laurunen relatives and told them they had visitors from America. They came immediately with family genealogies dating back to the year 1550.

With the church bookkeeper as our interpreter, we walked through the beautifully manicured cemetery. Sandy stood at her grandfather's grave for the first time. Later, she saw a picture of him and held his violin. We were all deeply touched as the void we had felt before was being filled.

Then our Finnish cousins drove us to the family homestead, which was pictured on our two-page report. They told us that our family had owned as much land as the eye could see. The house on the family homestead was enormous and had housed Laurunen families as far back as 1550. When the Russian military came into

Kauhajoki, they used the homestead for military headquarters. They burned down the church and all other homes in the area. Everyone, including our family, fled to the woods for safety. After the Russians left, our grandfather led the building of the new church that we had seen earlier. Eventually the land around the homestead was divided and sold.

In 2005 Janice, Sandy, and I returned to

Kauhajoki for another visit with our newly found cousins and more research. In 2006 we had our first Laurunen family reunion in America, and 15 of our Finnish cousins joined us. Eighty-nine family members celebrated the lives of our grandparents.


What a joy it has been to discover such a rich, fascinating family history and know more about who I am and where I came from. Family history is the work of the Lord. ■

Mom's Journal

BY EDNA F. CHANDLER

Mother had been living with me for almost five years. In love and gratitude I was glad I could care for her just as she had cared for me for so many years. But I missed her smiles and humorous comments. I longed to have her experience again the joy and excitement she had once felt when she went on rides with me. It hadn't really mattered where we went. Mother never missed pointing out the flowers, the birds on the telephone wires, or the children playing.

I missed the companionship we had enjoyed as we peeled potatoes, snapped beans, or read together. I



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longed to share childhood experiences with her and tell her news about my siblings and her grandchildren. She had always enjoyed family dropping by, especially the grandchildren. But now her dementia had changed things. She really wasn't sure anymore who I was, other than someone special who cared for her.

It had been a particularly difficult day with Mother. She gave me the usual blank stares when I tried to make conversation and distrustful looks when I tried to assist her. I was exhausted and frustrated as

I sat down on the couch to think. I began to read aloud one of Mother's journals in hopes that she might be entertained by it and perhaps remember a little. My efforts proved futile, but as I continued to read to myself, the memories surfaced in me.

In those pages Mother repeatedly expressed the joy she had felt when her family would visit and the void she had felt when they left. She wrote of how hard it had been for her when my father became ill and, after a long struggle, had left her a widow at the age of 59. She wrote of how she missed Father and of how she worried about my older brother, who was stricken with the same disease.

Mother wrote of happy, fulfilling experiences like teaching Church classes and participating in single adult activities. She wrote of the satisfaction she had received in going to Dilkon, Arizona, to teach the gospel once a week on the Navajo Indian reservation. This brought to my mind how she had always emphasized the importance of being dependable when someone was counting on you. Sometimes her entries were short because she had been helping someone; they reminded me of how she often took food or gifts to anyone she thought needed help or cheer.

Many times in her entries she bore her testimony of the gospel.

I was especially touched by how she expressed the sorrow and worry she had felt when my daughter was born with Down syndrome and associated problems. Had she really spent almost a whole month feeding and caring for our other children as my

I felt an overwhelming surge of love for my brave mother and deep gratitude for the words of her journal that had brought her back to me.

husband and I went back and forth to the hospital while Debra Sue underwent open-heart surgery and related complications? Yes! And she had done it at age 70! I remembered

how she had always been there for me when I needed her. Through the years I learned that if she could not be with me in person, her faithful letters and prayers would sustain me.

That night, as I sang hymns to Mother to calm her to sleep, I had an overwhelming surge of love for my brave, always-sacrificing mother and deep gratitude for the words of her journal that had brought her back to me. ■

