

Pen Pals and Referrals

By Brittany Jones Beahm

My companion handed me an envelope and said, “Sister Jones, I think this is for you.” I looked at the return address and was pleased to see my cousin’s name printed neatly in the corner. I had just been transferred to a new city from the other side of southern France and didn’t think anyone back home in the United States was aware of my new address. I opened the envelope and read a short note in which my cousin said that she had recently received an e-mail from her French pen pal after eight years of no contact.

My cousin explained that although

she and Céline had received each other’s address in their high school French and English classes, respectively, they had never actually written to each other. My cousin was therefore very surprised to receive Céline’s e-mail. She didn’t know if Céline lived in southern France where I was serving, but she included her name and address, asking me to contact her if possible.

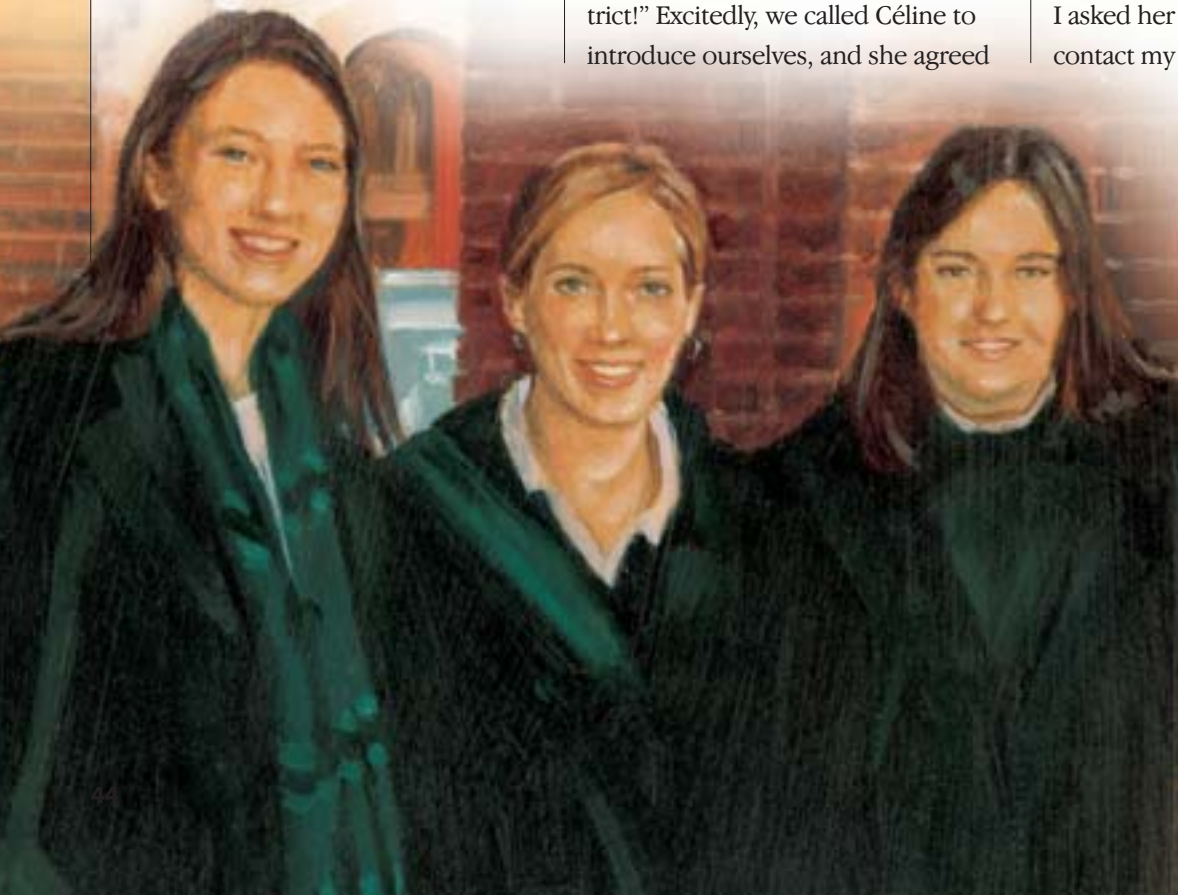
Because I was new to the area, I handed the note to my companion and asked her if my cousin’s pen pal lived in the mission. “Not only does she live within mission boundaries,” she responded, “she lives in our district!” Excitedly, we called Céline to introduce ourselves, and she agreed

to meet with us. We took the short train ride to Montauban.

As we stepped off the train, we were greeted warmly by Céline and her parents. They invited us to their home and asked us to share our message. As we taught them about the Book of Mormon and the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Spirit bore witness of the truthfulness of the restored gospel. The family expressed their appreciation for the values taught by the Church, and after a lengthy discussion we left them with a copy of the Book of Mormon, a prayer, and a promise to return.

That was the first of several visits with Céline and her family. My mission ended while they were still in the process of learning about the Church, but before I said good-bye to Céline, I asked her why she had decided to contact my cousin after eight years.

I marveled at how a loving Father allowed a lost address to be found and an old connection to be made.



Her response surprised me: “When I was cleaning out a drawer, I came across her address on a small piece of paper I thought I’d lost. I felt strongly that I needed to write to her.”

On the way home to our apartment I gazed out the train window and marveled at how a loving Father allowed a lost address to be found and an old connection to be made at the very time I was unexpectedly transferred to a new city for the last six weeks of my mission. He is mindful of all and will make miracles happen, even with such a small and simple thing as a pen pal’s address. ■

Never Too Late

By Sylvia de Moscuí Maldonado

While I was serving as a full-time missionary in my homeland of Ecuador, one day I had a definite feeling that someone special was waiting for us—someone who would accept the gospel.

As my companion and I walked, we came to a humble house. An elderly lady, perhaps 80 years of age, smiled sweetly at me. I smiled at her in return. I was ready to keep walking, but the woman looked so happy to see us. Something told me to stop right there.

Many people in that little town were illiterate, so I asked her if she could read. Her answer was an enthusiastic yes. I was suddenly filled with



excitement. I felt that she was the person the Lord wanted us to teach. I took a Book of Mormon from my bag and showed it to her. I was surprised when she began to read aloud from the first page without needing glasses. I asked her if she would like to have the book, and again she answered yes. Happiness glowed in her tired eyes—eyes that had long been seeking a better life.

We began to teach her the gospel, and the Spirit bore witness to her of its truthfulness. Such tender feelings filled my heart.

As we concluded our lesson, I showed her chapter 11 of 3 Nephi, which tells about the visit of Jesus Christ to the Americas. She promised to read it. She marked the page herself and kissed the book,

beaming with an unspeakable joy.

We made other visits to our new investigator, and we were delighted to find she read everything we assigned her. After completing her daily work, she would read the Book of Mormon late into the night. She also started attending church, although it took two hours for her to walk slowly to the meetinghouse. Her feelings about the Book of Mormon and Jesus Christ grew rapidly and deeply. After hearing all of the missionary lessons, she wanted to be baptized and pay tithing.

What great blessings this dear woman received! Her heart was ready to follow the Lord, and His Spirit guided us to her. She taught us about love, courage, sacrifice, joy, and obedience. Above all else she taught us that it is never too late to change. ■



If you will allow the Spirit to magnify your callings, you will be able to work miracles for the Lord.”

Speaking the Language of the Spirit

By Sergio Adrián López

As missionaries in the Argentina Buenos Aires South Mission, my companion, Elder Allred, and I received a referral card to contact a family from Russia. When we found the house, the woman recognized us as missionaries and invited us in to meet her family.

We quickly realized the Balva family understood very little Spanish, and it was difficult for us to understand them as well. From their broken Spanish, we gathered that they had been in Argentina only a short time but were eager to learn about the Church. We adapted the first lesson into simplified Spanish, and the family flipped through their two Russian-Spanish dictionaries as we slowly taught our message, but we weren't sure how much of it they really understood.

After making an appointment to return, we walked home, discussing how difficult it had been to convey the meaning of our message. We wondered if the family would understand the other lessons any better or if they would get frustrated and ask us to stop coming.

We returned to visit the Balva family the following day to see how they were and if they had begun reading the Book of Mormon and praying to know of its truthfulness. To our surprise and joy, they excitedly showed us a paper on which they had written in Spanish the principles we had taught them. They also shared with us what they had read in 3 Nephi 11 regarding the Savior's visit to the American continent, assuring us that they had understood all we had

discussed the day before and that they were excited to learn more.

Over the next few weeks my testimony was strengthened as the Holy Ghost witnessed to the Balva family of the gospel's truthfulness and enlightened their understanding in Spanish. Heavenly Father knew the desire of their hearts and recognized the sincerity of their prayers to find truth. Together, the Balva family, Elder Allred, and I experienced the joy described in D&C 50:22: "Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together"—not because we spoke the same language but because of the universal language of the Spirit.

The Balva family introduced us to another Russian family, whom we were also privileged to teach. Both families made covenants with Heavenly Father by entering the waters of baptism not long after we met them.

I am a witness that the words of

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) are true: “The influence of the Spirit is the most important element in this work. If you will allow the Spirit to magnify your callings, you will be able to work miracles for the Lord” (new mission presidents’ seminar, June 25, 1986). ■

The First of a Thousand Souls

By Norie Tsubaki Murae

My companion and I, serving in the Japan Fukuoka Mission, were working in an area known as Kasuga, located near the Kumamoto Station. The people who lived in this area were very skeptical about religion. But knowing this, our mission president told us, “There are a thousand people in Kumamoto who have been prepared by the Lord. Please find them.”

One rainy day we decided to try to find Noboru Yamagata, a less-active member we had never met. Approaching his house, we noticed a sign that read, “No religious solicitation”—a common warning in Japanese culture. But heeding the promptings of the Spirit, we knocked on the door.

Brother Yamagata’s mother answered the door and informed us that her son was out of town. She went on to say that she would be friendly to anyone who had ties to him, as is traditional for Japanese families, and she consequently invited us in. But despite her surface hospitality, her face wore a threatening expression.

As we sat down, she warned, “I don’t want to hear anything about religion.” She then began to talk about herself and expressed how strongly she felt about certain values in her life.

To our surprise she talked about faith, love, and the Beatitudes, and we took the chance to tell her that these principles were also important to us. We recounted the glorious vision that resulted from Joseph Smith’s faith, and we described the importance of the Book of Mormon in the Restoration of the gospel.

It was interesting to observe the change that took place in Mrs.

Yamagata as she listened to our message. Tears ran down her cheeks as we testified of the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith. She replied, “Joseph Smith was a lucky man.”

When we said good-bye at last, her face shined and her eyes sparkled with happiness. She said, “Thank you for coming today. My son must have led you to me.” We shook hands, and she jokingly said, “I won’t be washing my hand today!”

As we walked home we realized that this woman was one of the people our mission president had described as being ready to receive the gospel. Clearly, the Spirit had prepared her heart for our message, and we knew she was the first of a thousand souls we needed to find. ■



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