

DEACONESS BAPTISED IN 1918, EVICTED BY SUNDAY WORSHIPERS

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By Jeff Zhorne

FIUGGI, Italy- One might say Gladys Carnes, who will be 88 March 5, has known God's truth all her life, having been brought up by her father, a Bible-believing minister, and baptized in 1918 at age 21.

Mrs. Carnes, who attends the Brighton, England, church and attended the Feast of Tabernacles here in 1984, was ordained a deaconess April 1, 1980.

Her father, Alfred Henry Wight, was a minister among a people that the world called "Christian Israelites," said Mrs. Carnes. Seven churches existed in London (Holborn, Finchley and Forest-Gate), Southbend and Moorcombe, England, Wales and Scotland.

"A Mr. Sheffield baptized me in London in 1918; I don't remember his first name because when I was young, people didn't worry that much about Christian names," said Mrs. Carnes.

"In England the Church kept the Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread and the Sabbath," she recalled.

But in 1919, the Church declared Sunday as the day of worship, and her family was thrown out because they believed in God's Sabbath. "They literally threw stones at us" she said.

"You know, there is a building by my house (in Holborn) that was built in 1600's, and it is inscribed with 'Church of God'. People were burned at the stake there for keeping the Sabbath".

After eviction by the "Christian Israelites," who continued to call themselves the church of God, Mr. Wight still kept the Sabbath at home. The year "1919 was the end of churches for father," she remarked.

Miss Wight, in 1920, married Thomas St. John Carnes, an Irish Roman Catholic."

"My father was against our marriage," said Mrs. Carnes, but Tom and I agreed that we would never talk about religion and our children would choose (their religion) at the age of 16. They both chose the Church of England, but Tom kept his word- we never argued about religion."

In 1922 Mr. and Mrs. Carnes moved to Colombo, Sri Lanka, where they lived for 12 years. There Mr. Carnes was superintendent of prisons for the British Colonial Service. "Of course there was no church in Sri Lanka, so I gradually lost interest," she said.

"Then Mr. Carnes uncle Leonard Lilly from Seattle, Washington, sent her one of the first Plain Truths printed on neostyle by Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong in 1934. Mr. Lilly told her to take note, "Here is the truth returned."

"I met Mr. Armstrong", said Mrs. Carnes, "and he said I didn't have to be baptized again."

In the 1950's God's Church was raised up at Denison House in London. Mrs. Carnes met Mr. Armstrong's wife, Loma, there.

“I’m telling you now-no joking-God has always looked after me. Just like that snake in Sri Lanka.”

A cobra was once coiled on the kitchen counter of her house. Just when Mrs. Carnes was the snake, a man walked in the doorway and said, “Don’t move” he shot the snake before it could strike her.

Mrs. Carnes told of how her father would anoint sick people with “a small bottle of olive oil.”

Mrs. Carnes husband died in 1976. Today Mrs. Carnes, at her home in Telscombe Cliffs, England, still weeds her garden, paints and washes her curtains twice a year.

During the Feast she walked two miles to the top of Fiuggi-and walked back down again.



BOND OF FRIENDSHIP — Gladys Carnes, 87, a deaconess in the Brighton, England, church, is pictured with Stephen Spykerman, a deacon in the Brighton church, at the 1984 Feast in Fiuggi, Italy. In 1982 the Spykermans moved near Mrs. Carnes' home in Sussex, England, and help her with household chores. [Photo by Jeff Zhorne]

BOND OF FRIENDSHIP—Gladys Carnes, 87, a deaconess in the Brighton, England, church, is pictured with Stephen Spykerman, a deacon in the Brighton church, at the 1984 Feast in Fiuggi, Italy. In 1982 the Spykermans moved near Mrs Carnes' home in Sussex, England, and help her with household chores. [Photo by Jeff Zhorne]

In an e-mail dated 22 January 2006, Stephen Spykerman wrote:

Greetings from England!

Thank you for sending us the article about Gladis Carnes. My wife and I became very closely involved with her, as God moved us just one street away from her home.

She was the deaconess of the church where I was the deacon. She was an extraordinary woman of immense courage and conviction, and she was despised by her family, especially her two daughters as a direct result. Towards the end of her life she had become partially sighted and rather frail, nevertheless she had an indomitable spirit and great zest for life. She lived in constant expectation of the Kingdom, and I believe God allowed our house move to go wrong at the 11th minute of the 11th hour, just so he could move us close to Gladis, as she really needed someone closeby to look out for her.

Thus in her final years we saw an awful lot of her, and she loved our four children playing in her garden. We even took her abroad as a member of our family, first to the island of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea, and then to Fiuggi in Italy where Jeff Zhorne interviewed her. We even took her up to Pompey and Mount Vesuvius on that trip. She always was game for anything. A year later she died in January 1986, and we all attended the funeral on an icecold day with snow all around. We have the most fond memories of her and we are sure we shall meet her in the Kingdom, when our joy will know no bounds.

In a further e-mail, Stephen Spykerman wrote (14 February 2006):

Whilst I was in Israel with my daughter Rachel on our way to Beersheva in the Negev desert our conversation turned to Mrs Carnes prompted really by the email I had from you about her. As we reminisced about her extraordinary life and personality, Rachel reminded me about a story she used to tell. Apparently, it was in 1922 that Gladys was on a tour of Turkey with her father where they visited Mount Ararat. I think it was her fathers idea to go there as he wanted to see Noah's Ark.

They were led by a local Turkish guide to the near top of the mountain to see Noah's Ark wedged between two rocky crags. She recounted that the outline of a huge ship could clearly be see, and claimed that she and her father actually managed to climb onto the flat top of the Ark with Gladys jumping and dancing on the petrified wooden surface. Apparently in those days everybody in the Mount Ararat region knew of the location of the Ark, and a long well trodden steep stony path led to it. She remembers recounting her experience to Mr Herbert Armstrong at Denison House in London.