

MEMORIES OF AN EARLY MISSIONARY TO ITALY

By John Hoopes

Jwas in the first group of missionaries called specifically to the Swiss Mission to labor in Italy.

The first place I served on my mission was in Pordenone, a little town near the Aviano air base. (That is why we were sent to Pordenone, to be near the American members at Aviano) I was there from December 1965 through April 1966.

Almost every Sunday we took the bus to the countryside, where we met Brother Luigi Pettini, who rode his old bicycle from his home. We walked together (he walked his bike) to the home of Brother and Sister Pietro Snaidero, an older couple who joined the Church when they lived in France.

Brother and Sister Snaidero had a large old farm house with a special room in which they held church meetings. Brother Pettini was converted while working for them.

After church we ate together. Sister Snaidero fixed dinner. Usually we had rabbit, which they raised. In fact, after dinner they usually asked us to come to see the rabbits and choose the one they would fatten up to eat next week.



Pordenone, 1965: Anz. John Hoopes, Luigi Pettini, Sis. and Bro. Snaidero and Anz. John Blazard in the Snaidero's Home Chapel.



Florence, 1966: Pres. and Sis. Benson with Anz. John Hoopes.

I was in Piacenza at the time President Benson went to Torino (Turin) to dedicate Italy, so I did not attend the dedication. However, later in my mission I was able to spend a day in Firenze with President and Sister Benson as their interpreter -- I took him to get a haircut and to buy gifts for their grandchildren.

I also spent time working in translations and put together the first children's hymn book and edited "*La Stella*," a newsletter that became a Church magazine.

Eight years after I was released, my younger brother, Fred Hoopes, was also called to Italy, where our father had served as a medic during the Second World War. My father, Grover Lamro Hoopes, has now had two grandchildren also serve in Italy.

We wrote a little article, published on the back of the Church News, a few years ago about our father wanting to do missionary work and being unable to do so because of the war. ["Missionary Moments: All Humble Prayers," LDS Church News, Saturday, August 19, 1995]. His prayers were answered though, in that his two sons and grandchildren have been able to serve in Italy.

My brother baptized Mario Vaira, who has served as a Mission President in Italy and President of the Swiss Temple.