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GLOBE-TROTTING With Ginny

We Bought A Seminary
And Three Families

By Virginia Harris Hendricks

RIVOLI-TURIN, Italy--(BP)--When Ben Lawton, Southern Baptist missionary, arrived here in 1949 to look over the beautiful property Southern Baptists had purchased for an Italian Baptist seminary, he had a surprise awaiting him.

Several families, under Italian law, were entitled to continue living in the newly-purchased buildings. He was successful in "buying out" all but three of the families. And such families!

The Baptist missionary found himself walled in on the property with the families of a communist, an ex-Fascist officer, and a man obsessed with acquiring land for vineyards. These men had no love for each other and the missionary's life was even threatened at one time!

But the Baptist missionary families brought in a quality that had power to absolve all enmity. A Sunday school class that they began grew into preaching services. The preaching services grew into a Baptist church. And among the charter members were the families who lived at the seminary.

The ex-communist became the first treasurer of the new church. The land miser became one of the first deacons. The ex-Fascist became the first national Sunday school superintendent in addition to his jobs in the local church!

The church that was the outgrowth of this drama had the first adult Sunday school in Italy and the first graded Sunday school. It now has 75 members and four missions. The church building was built by the people's own sacrificial gifts.

This story demonstrates the one power that offers a meeting ground for the diversified peoples of the world . . . God's Son, Jesus Christ.

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Outline: The author admires seminary garden.