

THE TRIP TO LYON, FRANCE, OF CARLO GUADAGNI AND FRANCESCO CARLONI

Told by Francesco Carloni

SEPTEMBER 26 – OCTOBER 1st 2005

Carlo and I left Denver on a Lufthansa flight on Sunday September 25th 2005 in the afternoon. After a peaceful night flight we arrived in Frankfurt, Germany, the next morning. We got on another plane and arrived in Lyon, France, at the airport Saint-Exupery at 2:10 pm.

Professor Edouard Lejeune and Mr. Yves Pellet were waiting for us at the airport. Professor Lejeune, 82 years old, is a retired doctor of Lyon. His parents were originally from Belgium. Edouard was born in France, in the “Department du Nord” (North Department), at Ferriere la Grande. He studied medicine at the University of Lyon and lived there the rest of his life. He became a doctor for the Hospitals of Lyon and University Professor of Rheumatology and Therapeutics. He was also The President of the French Society of Rheumatology. When he retired he happened to read a book “The Vendetta of the Gadagne”, written by a Catholic Priest, Father Louis Vignon. This book relates the story of the killing of their neighbor, count de Levy, by three Guadagni brothers and their relatives at the beginning of the 17th Century. The Count had haughtily despised the Guadagni for being of Italian descent and bankers (At that time a noble considered any kind of work, even banking, as despicable). The Guadagni had avenged their honor by killing the Count, his son and his nephew in an ambush, while the latter were going hunting in the proximity of their castle. As a punishment the three Guadagni brothers were sentenced to death by torture. However they were able to escape to Florence, Italy, where their Florentine cousins sheltered them. After many years, thanks to the intervention of powerful friends, they were eventually pardoned and returned to France.

Professor Lejeune got so enthralled by the book and by the proud and adventurous traits of the Guadagni Family, as recalled by the story, that he decided to spend the rest of his life doing research on the history of the Guadagni Family. He gave many lectures on the topic and wrote essays on it. He met two Italian students of architecture who were doing their doctorate thesis on the influence of the Italian Architecture on the French Renaissance. One of their chapters was on the Guadagni Family. While many Florentine who emigrated to France were influenced by the French Renaissance style, the Guadagni proudly kept to their Florentine architecture thus influencing the French Renaissance Style. The Guadagni castle of Beauregard at St-Genis-Laval, very similar to their villa of Masseto, close to Florence, is a striking example of it. Eventually Lejeune went to Florence and met the descendants of the French Guadagni, Marquis Vieri and Adriano Guadagni. Thanks to their help and consulting the Family Archives in the Villa of Masseto, he was able to start writing the history of the Family, who originated in Florence over nine centuries ago. Returning to Lyon, Lejeune enlarged his research, specializing mainly on the history of the French branch of the Guadagni, who lasted in France over four centuries. In France the Guadagni were called “Gadagne”. The last Duke of Gadagne died in 1925.

In the meantime, in Denver, Vieri Guadagni, of Antonio, cousin and godson of the Vieri Guadagni of Florence, I shall call the latter from now on Uncle Vieri, had asked his cousin Francesco Carloni, whom he had hired to work in his company a few years before, to translate in English an Italian book of history of the Guadagni Family. This book had been written by a certain Passerini, in 1872. Carloni offered Vieri to update the book to the present generation and Vieri agreed. Word spread among the Guadagni family and many Guadagni members sent Carloni their memoirs, including Adriano, Tecla Guadagni Bartolini Baldelli, Isabella Guadagni Carloni (Francesco's mother), Antonio Guadagni (Vieri's father), and Franco Guadagni's widow. They also sent Francesco old family pictures and documents. Neri Guadagni, of San Francisco invited Francesco to his home and spent a week-end telling him about the family.

A few years ago, Adriano and Uncle Vieri met Father Vignon . This is how it happened. Father Vignon was the Parish priest of the little town of Charly, close to Lyon, and had written the history of Charly in four volumes. In the 16th and 17th centuries Charly and its castle were owned by the Guadagni Family for many decades. In his research on the history of the town , Vignon was surprised by the sudden silence on the Guadagni Family, most of all on Claude de Gadagne, the Lord of Charly, during many years of the 17th century. Digging in historical papers he found out the unknown story of the murder of the Count de Levy, by the Guadagni brothers, and their condemnation to death and their escape to Italy. This explained why their names disappeared from the official documents of the town during that period . From this research he wrote the above mentioned book "The Vendetta of the Gadagne". This book was on display and on sale at the Guadagni Museum of Lyon. A friend of Adriano saw it and gave him a copy of it. Intrigued, Adriano contacted its author, Father Vignon, and this is how the whole history of the new relation between the present Guadagni Family and Lyon started. Adriano talked about it to Uncle Vieri, and Uncle Vieri invited Father Vignon to Masseto. The description of Father Vignon's stay in Masseto is told in a fun and lively way in the last chapter of the fourth and last volume of Vignon's:"History of Charly".

Eventually the construction of an important avenue, called Avenue des Gadagne, in honor of the Guadagni Family, was started in Saint-Genis-Laval, and Uncle Vieri and Adriano were invited to inaugurate its beginning. They went to France with Aunt Giuliana, Uncle Vieri's wife, and officially inaugurated it.

Knowing that Carloni was updating Passerini's book, Adriano sent him the address of Father Vignon. Francesco and Father Vignon started writing to each other and soon became pen pals. They exchanged their works. Thus Francesco learned a lot more on the French branch of the Guadagni.

When Francesco finished the translation and updating of Passerini's book, Vieri asked him to go to Florence and take pictures of the Guadagni palaces and villas. These pictures would have been used as illustrations of the updated English version of the History of the Guadagni Family. Francesco offered to go to France also and take pictures of the Guadagni houses and castles there and Vieri agreed. In Florence Francesco stayed with his mother Isabella and took pictures of Guadagni palaces and villas. He also saw Uncle Vieri who showed him around Masseto and all that area, full of Guadagni villas and chapels. Luckily, Charles Migliore (Chuck) Guadagni was there too for a visit from the U.S.A., and Francesco and Chuck renewed the family bonds which they had many years before. Francesco also met Giuseppe Torrigiani, who was very pleased to hear

about the American Denver based branch of the Family, and showed him palace and park. Francesco also spoke with Aunt Tecla and Adriano who showed him old family paintings and papers. He also met the two aforementioned Florentine Architects, who had done their thesis in Lyon, and exchanged his work with theirs.

In France Carloni met Father Vignon at Charly. Father Vignon showed him the Guadagni castles of Beauregard and Charly. Charly was in good shape, used as an orphanage by nuns, while Beauregard, a few miles from Charly, had lost its roof a few years before and was falling apart. Nobody was living in it or taking care of it. A few years before it had been bought by the City of Saint-Genis-Laval, in whose heart it was located, surrounded by a beautiful park of 11 acres, full of fountains and grottos with statues but the City did not have the money to restore the castle. The following day Francesco went to Lyon and visited and photographed the Guadagni Palace, now a museum, in Guadagni Street. At that time Carloni did not know that in France there was so much more to see about the Guadagni's historical past.

Adriano and Father Vignon told French historians about Francesco's work. Thus Professor Lejeune and General Roure sent Francesco their works on the Guadagni Family. Lejeune sent Carloni excerpts of the book he was writing on the Guadagni. Francesco sent him a copy of the updated Passerini and other informations on the contemporary members of the Family, and Lejeune was able to add a chapter on the 20th century Guadagni in Italy and in America, at the end of his book.

General Roure sent Carloni a copy of the book he had written: "Little History of Chateauneuf de Gadagne". Chateauneuf de Gadagne is a little town, nine miles from Avignon, of which the Guadagni had been the owners for over a century. However, reading the book, Carloni discovered to his amazement, that Chateauneuf was not only a little farming town in the neighborhood of Avignon, but had been for one thousand years, from 780 to 1791 the capital of a little independent state. Said state was ruled by the same family, the Counts of Vedene, until 1665. In that year, the count of Vedene, who had married his first cousin and had ten children, went bankrupt. He could not upkeep any more the standard of living of a head of state. So he put his country on sale. Charles Felix de Gallean, Count of Gadagne, heard about it and bought the whole country. Charles Felix was the second son of the Count of Gallean and Luisa Guadagni. Luisa was the sister of the three Guadagni brothers who killed the Count de Levy. As Charles Felix older brother inherited his father's title, Charles Felix added his mother's last name and title to his and became Charles Felix de Gallean, count of Gadagne. When he bought Chateauneuf he renamed it Chateauneuf de Gadagne, and quickly the country was simply called "Gadagne". At that time neighboring Avignon belonged to the Pope. A civil strife started in Avignon between Italian and Jewish silk merchants and the local population. The count of Gadagne, who was also a famous general of the French Army, pacifically invaded the city of Avignon with his army and calmed the two enemy factions thus avoiding a civil war. The grateful Pope made him "Duke" (which is more than Count) and thus the County of Gadagne became the Duchy of Gadagne (a bit like nowadays we have the Grandduchy of Luxembourg, or the Principality of Monaco).

For over a century Charles Felix and his descendants ruled over the Duchy of Gadagne. Strange as it may seem, in a period where most European monarchies were absolute, the Guadagni duchy was a constitutional monarchy. There was a Congress, whose members were all the male heads of family of the Duchy, and an executive power

made of two Consuls, elected by the Congress for a year each. This was to avoid the danger of long reigning consuls becoming dictators. The Duke could veto the election of a Consul, but could not choose them himself. He had to respect the decisions of the Congress. General Roure's book goes into a lot of fascinating details on the relationships between the Guadagni Dukes and their subjects, which were altogether friendly, except when the Dukes wanted to raise the taxes.

Gadagne was a small country, made of four farming towns, a few miles apart from each other, and the surrounding countryside. Chateauneuf de Gadagne, the capital, is the most imposing of the four. It is built on the slopes of a hill, that has the shape of a large Egyptian pyramid. Around its base the hill is completely surrounded by a set of middle-aged walls, with a few old doors to enter the town. The houses are built on the slopes of the hill, around narrow and steep streets. On top of the hill there is a square, where the Congress of the Duchy meets, a church and the castle of the Dukes.

The castle of the counts of Vedene was a fortified Middle Age fortress with big thick walls and towers. When Charles Felix de Gadagne bought Chateauneuf, he kept the huge walls of the castle but on top of them built a large Renaissance style palace. Building a large palace in Chateauneuf de Gadagne was an expensive task because there were no stone quarries in the proximity. The stones had to be carried on horse drawn carts from very far away. The Guadagni however were still one of the richest families of France so the cost of the construction did not matter. The palace on top of the walls was a very tall construction and it seems that in the late afternoon the body of the Guadagni castle, on top of the hill, blocked the rays of the setting sun and the Eastern part of the town was in the dark before sunset. The Guadagni filled the castle with beautiful furniture and artistic masterpieces.

Gadagne was an independent country but was under the official protection of the Pope, who still ruled the neighboring city of Avignon and all the surrounding region. The Papacy had moved to Avignon from Rome in the Middle Ages and even after it returned to Rome it kept the ownership of the region of Avignon. The only sign of submission that the Duchy owed the Pope was the following: everytime a Duke or a Pope died, the Duchy gave a mule to the Pope, who returned it the next day.

The Duchy of Gadagne had a population of only a few thousand inhabitants and an army of maybe one hundred. That's why it never declared war on anyone and lived a peaceful and prosperous existence. The Guadagni spent most of their time in Paris, where they served the Kings of France as officers in the French army or navy, and returned to the Duchy every once in a while or on solemn occasions. The government of the Duchy would often greet them with presents. Once they gave the Duchess twentyfour pairs of gloves for example.

In 1789 started the French Revolution. A few years later the King and the Queen of France were beheaded and France became a Republic. Many French nobles were arrested and beheaded also, others fled to neighboring countries. Both the Papal state of Avignon and the Duchy of Gadagne were surrounded by French Territory. The Duke and his brother quietly emptied the castle of Chateauneuf de Gadagne of all the valuables, leaving only the bare walls and took them to their palace in Avignon. Then they moved to Switzerland. Their wives however did not feel threatened and remained in France to keep an eye on the Guadagni properties. The French Government however passed a law stating that the wives of the fugitive nobles could keep their husbands' fortunes only if they

divorced them. The Guadagni wives found a friendly priest who signed two fake divorce documents and could thus keep the Guadagni properties.

In Avignon two parties were organized: one wanted to remain faithful to the Pope, who was in Rome, the other wanted to join France and become part of the French Nation. In Gadagne, many were afraid of losing their independence and uniting with France, lest their men were drafted in the French Army who at the time was fighting all over Europe. However in Avignon, after a short and bloody civil war, the party in favor of union with France won. At that point Gadagne decided to follow Avignon and become part of France, after over ten centuries of independence. The Dukes were abroad so they could not try and stop it.

The French Revolutionary Government decreed that any property belonging to a noble, would be put on auction sale. Thus the Guadagni castle of Chateauneuf was put on auction sale. However the government did not put any soldiers to guard the empty castle. So the first night the inhabitants of Chateauneuf quietly invaded the empty castle and took everything they could easily take away like doors, windows, gates, tiles from the roof and so forth, to redecorate or enlarge their own private homes. The next morning the authorities decided that it was no use to put on sale the castle as it appeared then and thus abandoned it. So in a few months the inhabitants of Chateauneuf completely destroyed the two floors added by the Guadagni on top of the old walls and used the stones to build new houses or fortify their old ones. They used the abandoned Guadagni castle as a stone quarry, which as we said above did not exist in the area.

A few years later, the French Government forgave all the nobles and allowed them to return peacefully in France and regain their properties. So the Guadagni brothers returned to Chateauneuf but not any more as Dukes and rulers, but only as private citizens. They did not try to restore the half destroyed castle but lived in a big farmhouse. Later on they moved to another castle in the neighborhood, called Montellier, and have lived there ever since. The only child, a daughter, of the last Duke of Gadagne should have married Uncle Vieri's father, Great Uncle Guitto. This was the project of Great Grandfather Guadagno, to reunite the Italian and the French branches of the family. However Guitto married Dorothy Schlesinger, and the French Gadagne heir married the Marquis of Galard. The de Galard inherited the Guadagni castle of Montellier and still live there. Guy de Galard, a young member of the Family came and visited the Carlonis in Denver in 1994.

The abovementioned Guadagni Avenue in Saint-Genis-Laval was finished in September 2001. The Denver Guadagni and Carloni were invited to preside at its inauguration. However the inauguration was to take place five days after the Nine Eleven terrorist attack and no airplane could be there on time flying from the United States. Both sides of the Atlantic expressed their regret at the missed opportunity to meet each other. Uncle Vieri was dead, Adriano did not seem interested in traveling any more, the Denver Guadagni and Guadagni offshoot (Carloni) were now the only live Guadagni the French Guadagni fans and specialists could get a hold of. The correspondence between Francesco and Lejeune, Roure and Yves Pellet continued. For a while there was also a correspondence between Francesco and the de Galard Family, the descendants of the last Duke of Gadagne, still living in the Guadagni castle of Montellier. Francesco was invited to all of their weddings. However Francesco got tired of sending expensive cables of

congratulations for each wedding and ended up by sending a simple congratulation card. He never got any more invitations.

Lejeune sent Francesco a copy of his book on the French Guadagni, with a brief introduction on the Italian ancestors of the French Guadagni and a conclusion on the American descendants of the same, which he got from Francesco. The book is called "La Saga Lyonnaise des Gadagne". It sold one thousand copies in France. Vieri and Francesco ordered extra copies for their families. When Francesco called from Denver to order the copies of the book, at the words "I am calling from Denver" the French receptionist asked: "Are you part of the Guadagni Family?" "How do you know?" asked Francesco surprised. The girl answered: "I read the book." Francesco was impressed because the fact that there is a branch of the Guadagni Family that lives in Denver is only specified in the last paragraph of the last page of the book. The receptionist had really read the whole book and remembered such a seemingly secondary detail.

END OF THE FIRST PART OF "TRIP TO LYON"

Yves Pellet lives in Saint-Genis-Laval. He is a member of the Association of Saint-Genis-Laval of the Patrimony of Arts and Literature. Every Christmas he would send Francesco and his mother Isabella Guadagni a calendar of Lyon or a book on certain cultural or artistic aspects of Lyon. Thus Francesco learned more and more on the city of Lyon and on the important role the Guadagni Family played in its history and the history of the surrounding region. Antonio Guadagni, Vieri and Carlo's father, once gave Francesco a book of the famous British historian Morrison, who stated that the explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano, the first European to discover the Bay of New York, was either the husband or the son of a Guadagni. After many researches, Francesco opted for the hypothesis that Verrazzano was the son of Giovanna Guadagni and Bartolomeo da Verrazzano and so a Guadagni offshoot. To Francesco's surprise in a book given to him by Pellet this hypothesis was considered a proven fact known and accepted by everyone. Yves would also keep Francesco updated on the important events of the region. In 2002 for example a delegation from the University of Sorbonne in Paris came to Saint-Genis-Laval to study the renaissance aspects of the Guadagni castle of Beauregard.

Every year the Guadagni enthusiasts of Lyon were hoping the visit of the American Guadagni to their city would take place and so, as Lejeune put it, "the Guadagni would return to Lyon". In 2005 Vieri decided to send Carlo and Francesco. Carlo would stay three days, Francesco a week. Immediately Lejeune organized a detailed plan of the visit to be able to show everything of importance concerning the Guadagni history in Lyon and Avignon. And so now we will go back to where we started, on September 26 at 2:10 pm at the Saint Exupery airport of Lyon.