

# Lois Gunden Clemens



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## **LOIS GUNDEN CLEMENS, 1915 – 2005**

In 1942 during World War II, twenty-six year old Lois Gunden of Goshen, Indiana accepted the call to serve with Mennonite Central Committee in southern France. As the Germans invaded European countries, Jewish residents fled south. Along the Mediterranean Sea a camp was opened to house adult refugees. Close-by was a Villa where the children of the refugees were housed. Lois, a French teacher from Indiana, volunteered to become the director of the children's center.

One incident during the two years she worked there displays her ingenuity and intuitiveness. One morning while the children were out for a walk, a knock on the Villa door revealed that a policeman had come to take three of the children. Lois said the children would not return until noon.

At noon the policeman again appeared and told Lois to pack the children's belongings and

prepare them for travel. This time Lois said that their clothing were being laundered and would not be dry until late afternoon. At five o'clock the enforcement officer returned again saying he would get the children that evening.

Through the day and evening Lois prayed for wisdom and guidance, and for the safety of Louise, Armand and Monique. That evening although Lois and the children stayed up late, the officer never did return and the children remained safely at the Villa.

When the Germans occupied southern France, Lois was interned in Germany. As the war was ending in 1944, she returned to her Indiana home. In addition to teaching French at Goshen College and Temple University, Lois ministered in the Mennonite Church through various leadership positions and through her writings.