



LOIS RODDEN

A Personal and Professional Recollection

by Frank C. Clifford

It is easy to be inspired by Lois Rodden and her 40-year commitment to data collection. She dedicated her career to setting professional standards by classifying data sources and demanding that astrologers take accountability for the data they presented in lectures, articles, and books. She motivated me and countless others to question and record sources, and to hunt down accurate data and share these with others. In her first data volume, *Profiles of Women* (AFA, 1979), she wrote:

Accuracy of data is essential to sound research, as well as to skillful delineation ... Presentation of rectified data that are not designated as such is careless or presumptive and is an insult to the intelligence of our community.

Following the publication of *Women*, Lois became the central source for collectors to send in their contributions and to access and exchange data. In addition to incorporating the work of many collectors into her files, by 1980 she had also created and developed a classification system to rate the integrity of data. Her simple coding system — the Rodden Rating — would become her most significant, enduring legacy to the astrological community.

I was always tickled by the story of Lois's timely discovery of astrology. When she moved to Los Angeles in 1961, she walked three blocks from her house to the Church of Light and asked when the next astrology beginners' class was due to start. The answer was "20 minutes." Later, she would quip, "That's called Uranus trine the MC." Seven years later, she began her professional career in astrology — seeing clients and ghost-writing forecasting annuals for well-known names.

Although I missed Lois's first trip to London in 1990 ("I was treated with such abysmal indifference I thought I must have just fallen off the turnip truck," she later confided), I did write to her in mid 1992, and this began a decade-long correspondence of letters, faxes, and e-mails and an association that lasted until her death on June 5, 2003 (at 8:30 a.m. in Yucaipa, California).

Our friendship developed fast from the summer of 1994, and by late 1995, I had offered to proofread and contribute to her new edition of *Profiles of Women*, which was published

shortly before my stay at her home. After the series of edits, she sent me a note that read: "*Muchas Gracias*. That's Spanish for: If I were any more grateful, I'd give you my car."

During my stay at her home in Yucaipa, California, in June 1996, she took me to meet Ed Steinbrecher, Dana Holiday, and Marc Penfield. We also had a special afternoon at Marion March's home in Encino, and had fun being entertained at the world-renowned Magic Castle in Hollywood. "I'll pretend that you're my young gigolo rather than a grandson," she winked. Back in Yucaipa, we embarked upon a hilarious trip to a trailer park where she met with a laconic UFO investigator in less than salubrious surroundings. Lois interviewed him briefly and made a quick exit. As we stumbled out of the trailer, she turned to me and used two of her favourite phrases, "Oh, for heaven's sakes ... he was so *ungracious!*"

An ever-curious child of Mercury (with the Sun at 0° Gemini), Lois had a deliciously wicked sense of humour and loved *bons mots*. (See **Chart**, following page.) And travelling around California with her, I heard *all* the gossip — mostly about astrologers I had yet to meet. She revealed her tender side when she spoke poignantly of how cancer and surgery had punctuated much of her adult life. And she wept when she recalled the fundraising undertaken by the astrological community to pay for one particularly important cancer operation. At her home, Lois showed me folders of letters and reviews from people all over the world who had written admiringly to share their appreciation of her work.

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Lois hated seeing speculative and rectified charts in publications, particularly when presented as fact. She didn't know her own time of birth — an irony that perhaps contributed to her choice of specialism as a “data freak,” as she called us collectors. She had rectified her own chart to 12:22 a.m. and later tweaked it to 12:27 a.m. — joking that it *couldn't* be any later as she wouldn't allow Neptune closer to her Descendant. Her rectification placed Saturn, the handle of her Bucket chart, at the MC in Sagittarius. It reflected the nature of her life's work and the relentless responsibility that came with it.

At one point, she wrote to me: “Ed [Steinbrecher] and I have agreed to adopt you as our data-child, probably not as deliciously scandalous as our love-child, but the best we have going.” Looking at our synastry, it's not hard to see why we connected, worked so well together, and shared a passion for research and data. I suggested that she name her data collection AstroDatabank, after her wonderful series of five Astro-Data volumes that had long been invaluable, standard reference books. Her data books had encouraged me to research the lives of well-known people — and I still learn with a biography in one hand and a birth chart in the other.

Lois's last trip to England was for the Astrological Association's memorable Eclipse Conference in Plymouth, August 1999. After another bout of cancer — and vocal cord damage from explorative surgery — she nevertheless soldiered on and gave a lecture in half a voice. A few years later, although terribly ill, she took time out to write the foreword to a book of mine.

Lois wasn't easy. With the Moon in Cancer conjunct Pluto, she needed a terse, tough shell to protect herself from the daily grind of data requests, family dramas, and numerous bouts with major illness. As a woman who lived alone and supported herself and members of her family, she had to focus on earning a living and paying for her medical care. I admired

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how she managed to reply so diplomatically to the various brusque letters, phone calls, and e-mails she sometimes received from people who insisted on “farkling” around, as she put it.

With Aquarius–Leo on the natal horizon, Lois avoided councils and committees and the politics and monstrous egos that thrive therein. “Groups are not my favorite environment. I think committees in particular are designed to allow just enough balance of power as to ensure impotence. May the strongest Pluto win, regardless of quality of judgment,” she once wrote to me.

Lois had a great deal of wisdom, and many of her astrological gems were throwaway lines in conversations or letters. From her non-data books, it was easy to see that Lois was a great astrologer, too — one who was most at home with the occupational and business concerns of her clients. Her research into vocational astrology formed the basis of *Money: How to Find It with Astrology* — an all-time favourite of mine for its thorough research and sharp insights. Her books *Money*, *The Mercury Method of Chart Comparison*, and *Modern Transits* attest to her practical astrological skills and perception. And true to her chart, she was also bright, inquisitive, and individualistic. She confided, “As we get older, if we are able to be rude with élan, it's called ‘eccentric,’ and if we are able to carry it off with grand style, we may even be called a ‘character.’”

That made me chuckle, and it still does, knowing what an unforgettable character she truly was.

Chart Data and Source

Lois Rodden, May 22, 1928; 12:27 a.m. MST; Lang, Saskatchewan, Canada (49°N56', 104°W23'); C: Rectified by Rodden from her mother's statement of “after midnight.” The chart has been cast with Equal house cusps (the author and the subject's preference).

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