

Brazil News



No. 202
1 FEBRUARY 17

Editorializing

Samson

We sing, “Dare to be a Daniel / Dare to stand alone...”, but never “Dare to be a Samson / Dare to stand alone...” Mothers read the stories of David and Samuel and Paul and Silas to their children and tell them that when they are big they should be like these men of God. But it is doubtful a mother has ever told her children, “Now, when you grow up, be like Samson.”

Samson is surrounded by some interesting facts.

He was undisciplined and rejected advice or counsel of others.

He was vengeful and resorted to draconian measures to vent his wrath on adversaries.

He was unscrupulous and frequently acted on impulse.

Some of his actions were bizarre and at times carried the whiff of derangement.

He was hated and misunderstood (or maybe hated because he was understood) by virtually everyone, including those closest to him.

He was anything but lily white in his interactions with those of the opposite sex.

He was determined; when he set his mind on something he would spare nothing to reach his objectives.

He was absolutely fearless; afraid of no one.

Here are a few more facts:

He was conceived and born with a divine mission. “He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines...for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.”

And even more incomprehensible, he is listed in the book of Hebrews as a hero of faith, along with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David...

It’s a Biblical fact that God is interested in politics. We use the word “politics” in accordance with Merriam-Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, which defines politics as “*the art or science of government : a science dealing with the regulation and control of men living in society : a science concerned with the organization, direction, and administration of political units (as nations or states) in both*

Brazil News

internal and external affairs.” Daniel tells us that God “removeth kings, and setteth up kings.” We believe this continues to be true and that kings, presidents, prime ministers, rulers in general, even dictators, are divinely chosen according to a master plan that our finite minds often fail to understand.

We have reason to believe that the North American continent was pristinely preserved for thousands of years to host a nation that would become a city of refuge for millions of Christians fleeing persecution, famine and poverty, especially from the European continent. This nation, founded on Christian principles, did not only become home for multitudes seeking a spiritual sanctuary, but doubtlessly because of this Godly influence prospered morally, financially, socially and scientifically, becoming the most advanced and wealthiest nation in the history of mankind. This could suggest a certain kinship with the kingdom of Israel under Solomon’s rule.

Never to be ignored is the fact that the United States, until recently, could unreservedly be classified as a Christian nation. What makes this so outstanding is that there has been no state religion, no enforced religion. There has been freedom of religion throughout the entire nation for over 200 years. I know of no other nation—other than Canada—that has historically permitted churches of all persuasions to openly exercise their religious tenants without state interference or coercion. Possibly this, more than anything else, explains America’s greatness.

We believe that secular men were divinely chosen for this to become a reality. Let us notice...

The Puritans.

My knowledge of world history is limited, but I know of no anno domini nation being initially populated by zealous Christians. Yes, it has happened repeatedly that Christians have migrated to nations already inhabited. In some cases they have exerted a very positive influence on these countries. In the case of the United States of America, I believe these profoundly religious souls (even though their beliefs diverge from ours) were handpicked by God.

The Framers of the Constitution.

To affirm that the United States Constitution was divinely influenced could raise eyebrows, so let’s just say it is arguably the most comprehensive and durable of all governing documents ever elaborated by man. This Constitution has been emended and a Bill of Rights added, but the original articles, signed by the delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia and presided by George Washington, continue to be the corner stone to all subsequent laws created (although at times abused by misinterpretation). Briefly, we believe that among other framers, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin deserve the high distinction of having dedicated their talents to fulfil the design of the Creator.

Presidents

We believe that at least three presidents have been hand-picked, each for a specific time and mission in United States history:

George Washington, who was a chosen vessel in the revolutionary cause, in the framing of the Constitution, and during the first presidency. (His purported vision of the Union would certainly vindicate this belief.)

Abraham Lincoln, an autodidact, without whose influence the United States would doubtlessly have become the Divided States.

Ronald Reagan, who assumed the presidency during the Cold War and had a direct hand in the dismantlement of the atheistic Soviet Union and courageously combatted liberal influences at home that threatened to subvert the moral and economic structure of the nation. The Reagan revival was authentic, but short-lived. Yet it provided a breather.

The United States of America cannot be compared with any other nation on earth. Just as in the Old Testament period of history, the standards set for Israel were infinitely higher than those for other nations, so America, for the nation to which “much is given [. . . much shall] be required.” For years America has been as a nation set on a hill. One of her most notable achievements has been a vigorous middle class in which almost anyone willing to accept hard work and honesty as a requisite to prosperity and progress can rise out of poverty and enjoy a comfortable lifestyle—indeed, ascend to the presidency. When America was founded no other country in the world believed that all men are truly created equal (or if they did, it was with the unspoken qualifier that “not all are as equal as others.”)

Is the United States at a crossroads? Is it in a time of extreme crisis? No matter how you answer these two questions, there will be those who agree with you and those who disagree (possibly the majority). For the sake of this little writing, humor me and at least consider for a few moments the possibility that the United States is in the midst of an unprecedented moral, social and financial crisis (exorbitant national debt). If that is true—and maybe it isn’t—the time has come for extreme measures, call them unorthodox measures, if you will.

Is Donald J Trump the man picked to carry out this critical mission? Yours truly is certainly not the smartest boy on the block, but he is smart enough to make absolutely no predictions, explicit or implied, on this subject.

[Ending one, reached during Trump’s performance on the campaign trail]:

One need not be a rocket scientist to conclude that the only thing truly predictable about Donald J Trump is that he is totally unpredictable. And fearless. ▶

[Ending two, after observing Trump as president of the United States for two weeks]:

If there is one thing that is predictable about Donald J Trump it is that he is totally predictable. No matter how shocking or unorthodox, what he says is exactly what he means and exactly what he plans to do. He is fearless and bows to no one, neither friend nor foe.

Neither did Samson. ▶

Life in Brazil

Rio Verde

Rio Verde, as most of you know, is our local town, really a city of approximately 215,000 inhabitants, in the central state of Goiás.

The year 1969 marks the beginning of the Colony in Rio Verde. The population at that time was between 30 and 40 thousand inhabitants. The 220 kilometers from Goiânia, the capital of the state of Goiás, where our closest commercial airport was located, was dirt, except for the first 15 kilometers. Depending on the road conditions, it could take three or four hours to make the trip, taking three or four *weeks* off the life of a vehicle in that short time.

Brazil News

There were no paved roads leading to Rio Verde. In fact, there were no paved streets. A few of the streets in the business district were cobblestone.

Needless to say, the road to the settlement was also dirt. Since it meandered from one farm to another, it was circuitous, ending up with the faint tire marks of a fisherman's trail that lead to the falls where the Colony was born, for a total of some 35 kilometers and a dozen gates to open.

This trip usually took upward of two hours. Shovels and hoes were standard equipment, as frequently work had to be done so we could get through. It was even possible to have to spend the night on the road.

Rio Verde officially came into existence on August 5, 1848. Goods were brought in from Uberlândia, state of Minas Gerais, by caravans of ox teams, a distance of approximately 400 kilometers one way. Thus a round trip could take three months or more.

When we migrated to South America 120 years later, oxen were still used locally. Merchandise was brought in on single- (bobtail) and tandem-axle trucks. I remember when the first semi-trucks began making the run. People would gather around and gawk at this marvel of modern technology.

Fifty years ago there were no “grocery stores” in Rio Verde. Instead there were lots of “armazens,” little corner stores that sold staples to those living nearby. Many of their customers paid up only at the end of the month, so frequent purchases were entered into a lined notebook. When the customer would come in to pay at the end of the month, the proprietor would pull his little stub pencil from over his ear and then go down the list, which could be quite long, adding in his head. The result would be written down, and then repeated, just to make sure.

Today, I doubt if there are any corner “armazens” left, the kind that operates with a stub pencil instead of a computer. If the floor space of all these little businesses were jigsawed together and superimposed on the floor space of any one of our dozen largest supermarkets, there would be space left over. In some cases I suspect there would be room for a half dozen or more superimpositions.

Except for shoppers with really exotic tastes, the variety of products on the shelves is much greater than some of our bank accounts. There is talk that the French chain Carrefour is planning to open a megastore in Rio Verde in the near future. Carrefour, I might add, is a direct competitor of Wal-Mart.

We have two shopping malls. Only the one in the middle of town—Shopping Rio Verde—has a large supermarket. The other one, on the BR060 highway (the one from Goiânia to Cuiabá), is relatively new and is suffering from severe growing pains. Only about 70 percent of the floor space is occupied by stores and many of them are struggling to stay afloat. The food court seems to be doing fairly well. Since Buriti Shopping is a corporation with a number of successful malls, we have reason to believe that adjustments will be made to attract more customers—and stores.

When we moved to Rio Verde there were, as I remember, four car agencies:

Jeep
VW
Ford
Chevy

Brazil News

The agencies I can think of right now (and I'm sure I'm missing some):

VW

Ford

Chevy

Fiat

Toyota

Renault

Nissan

Honda

Hyundai

Peugeot

Citroën

KIA

Almost all the vehicles sold are “Flex,” which means they will run on gasoline or ethanol, or a mixture. All petrol stations are obligated by law to sell both.

It is interesting that the van, the family-car van with a sliding side passenger door so many drive in the US, has never caught on here. The one exception would be the KIA vans and the VW Kombi, which I don't believe is being manufactured anymore.

Vehicles here are somewhat more expensive than in the US, but are of excellent quality (at least in my opinion). And finally, finally, many models are available with an automatic transmission. ▶

An Illiterate Mayor

In Brazil, mayors are responsible for the administration of the entire municipality. Since municipalities quite often are large and include a number of towns, this gives mayors a lot of clout. So much, in fact, that federal congressmen will often resign their position to run for the job of mayor.

In the northeastern state of Pernambuco, the municipality of Quixaba [pronounced *kee-shab-bah*] has an illiterate mayor. If it's amazing that an illiterate would win the election, it's even more surprising to know that he is doing an excellent job as mayor. This took place over 40 years ago and a lot has changed since then, including the wages.

VEJA Magazine interviewed Antônio Ramos da Silva, age 49.

VEJA – According to the Constitution an illiterate cannot run for a public job. How did you manage to become the mayor of Quixaba?

Silva – Before I became mayor, I was a commissioner. This was possible because before I ran for public office, I hired a teacher to go to my house at night and teach me how to *draw* my name. So when I went to register as a voter, I was able to sign my name instead of leaving a digital impression. Since I can sign my name and count, before the law I'm no longer illiterate. But, for all practical purposes I'm totally illiterate.

VEJA – Didn't anyone challenge your legitimacy as a candidate?

Brazil News

Silva – During the campaign some of my adversaries did some mud slinging. They said that someone who can't read or write can't possibly be a good mayor. Ridiculous! I'm illiterate, but I know the difference between what is right and wrong. This is a lesson that life teaches better than schools. I have never stolen, nor am I intimidated by someone who has a diploma. I have a good idea of what needs to be done to up the standard of living of my constituency. I decided that my first priority as mayor would be education.

VEJA – How were the public schools in Quixaba before you became mayor?

Silva – Things were so bad that I had to take office in the church building. The judge was afraid that the roof of the city hall would come down on us if we had the ceremony there. But even that was good in comparison with our school system. Quixaba had eight phantom schools, that is, schools that existed only on paper. Every school in the surrounding towns had a teacher, some more illiterate than I. Some of them didn't even know how to *draw* their names. Yet they were all on the municipal payroll as duly qualified teachers, even though they got almost nothing. Ten teachers had to split one minimum wage [of \$300 USD a month]. The students had no desks to sit in.

VEJA – What did you do about it?

Silva – Education isn't something complicated and it doesn't require a lot of money nor big projects. The first thing I did was buy two truck loads of desks. I had to buy them on time, but at least we got our desks. Next I hired some college trained teachers. I had to cut costs in other areas so that I could pay the teachers better wages. Today a teacher that works an eight hour day gets \$600 USD a month. Only the mayor and his immediate helpers make more than that. In the neighboring municipalities the teachers are still making only \$30 USD a month.

VEJA – Did you have any trouble getting rid of the *professorinhas* [literally *little teachers*, but really meaning “fake” teachers] and putting the college trained ones in their place?

Silva – I had one awful time. People criticized me because I didn't give work to home people. Some even wanted to throw stones at these qualified teachers. But I didn't back down. I said we had to change the educational level of this municipality. I told them that today they didn't understand, but with time they would have to admit I was right. This went on for a year and then things settled down when they saw our schools were improving.

VEJA – How is life for an illiterate mayor?

Silva – Anyone who has gone to school can't possibly imagine what it is like to be illiterate. It's like living in another world, a world in which everyone speaks a strange language. I'll have to admit that I envy people who can read and write. Whenever I travel I have to take an assistant along, or a teacher. Otherwise I can't do a thing. I can't even read the street names. This is awful. I'd like to be able to read books and learn new things.

VEJA – Why didn't you go to school?

Silva – My dad had the idea that his children needed to work, and only work. He said that people who didn't have anything to do studied. I wanted to go to school, but how? I had to obey my dad. Back those days children didn't challenge their parents. The price of disobedience was a whipping. Today that is different.

VEJA – But once you grew up, didn't you want to study?

Silva – I'm a simple fellow who has always worked in the field from sunup to sundown. I never had time to go to school. What I know in life I learned out in the field. Today I'm happy, even though I have no intention of buying a fancy car or owning a lot of land. My

Brazil News

greatest desire is to learn to read and write. An education is the most important thing in the world. Money is good, but it goes from hand to hand. I know some folks who used to be rich and today are poor. Others didn't have anything and today are millionaires. But an education is different. What a person learns he takes all the way to the grave with him. It's a treasure no one can rob. After my term as mayor expires I want to study. But in the meantime I want to give others the privilege of studying.

VEJA – How was your childhood?

Silva – I have 11 brothers and sisters. I was born poor, but I never had to go hungry. My parents made *rapadura* [a homemade brown sugar that resembles a brick] and planted corn and beans [by hand]. They didn't know how to read either, but they always kept a plenty of grain on hand for the dry season. We were an exception in our community. A lot of the children died of malnutrition before their first birthday. Even though we had enough food, life wasn't easy. I went barefoot until I was 18, when I bought a pair of thongs made out of tire rubber. Until then the only clothes I ever wore was a pair of bermudas. That's all. When I turned six, my dad began getting me out of bed at five in the morning to take the animals [probably goats] to the pasture. I would get up at four because I didn't like for people to tell me what to do. I didn't like to work for others. I knew what my job was. My breakfast was coffee sweetened with rapadura, and corn bread. Once in a while I would get an egg too. I would take a *cuscuz* [a tamale like food] and coffee to work for lunch. For supper we would have beans and rice cooked in lard. We worked non-stop – saints days, Sundays and holidays.

VEJA – Since you don't read and write, do people ever try and take you for a ride?

Silva – I'm always on the guard so that won't happen. When I had a little store, I invented my own little charge account system. I would identify each customer with a letter. Since I knew how to figure, I was able to keep things straight like this. On my job as mayor, I make everything my business. When I have a school built, I oversee everything. When the first brick is laid or the rafter put in place, I insist on being present. I'm the engineer, because I want everything to be done right and so that no money will be thrown away. That way no one takes advantage of me. I don't like to leave my problems in a drawer. The municipality may be owing money, and if a sick person needs help, if necessary I pay out of my own pocket so he can get medical attention. I don't like to see people dying without a chance to get help. When we have a bad drought [something that frequently happens in that part of the country], I furnish school lunches not only for the teachers, but for their families too. If higher-ups think I'm doing the wrong thing, I tell them I'm doing what's right. ▶

Giving the Brain a Break

Tickling the Punny Bone

I have been collecting puns for years. Here are a few that may tickle your punny bone. In case some do not immediately penetrate your brain, pry, pry again.

I tried wrapping Christmas presents, but I didn't have the gift.

Brazil 8 News

A bacteria walked into a bar and the bartender said, 'We don't serve bacteria in this place.' The bacteria said, 'But I work here, I'm staph.'

I had tried passing myself off as my twin but I couldn't live with myself.

I did a theatrical performance about puns. Really it was just a play on words.

Anyone hear about that dictionary that fell into the river? It was un-a-bridged.

If you wear a blindfold at the shooting range, you won't know what you're missing.

Reassembling the skeletons of prehistoric mammals can be a mammoth undertaking.

I wanted a car but I couldn't a Ford one.

[The next one is not all that punny and should be taken seriously by all *speachers*.]

Biscuits and speeches are better when made with shortening.

Did you hear about the pilot who always had work? He was great at landing a job.

Did you hear about that new drug that makes people angry? It's all the rage now.

Worms are so scared, they just don't have the backbone to stand up.

My hematologist said my outlook is good since I'm a B Positive type.

I was studying in an apiary class. This resulted in my receiving a bee on my exam.

I saw gasoline selling for one dollar a gallon, but then I saw that March had just ended. It was an April fuel's joke.

Navy regulations prohibit underwater promotion to the ministry; doing so would constitute insubordination.

Bugs have very diverse religious views, because they are all in sects.

The lawyer had trouble with the fine print on some documents, so his doctor suggested contract lenses.

The electrician and the air hostess got on really well together. Sparks flew!

The new weed whacker is cutting-hedge technology.

How do I handle change? I put it in the parking meter.

Sleeping comes so naturally to me, I could do it with my eyes closed.

I work in a sweater factory. It's a very clothes-knit community.

I can never wear glasses. They make me see-sick.

The man was always leaving himself voice mail messages. He was very self-sendered.

I wanted to lose weight so I went to the paint store. I heard I could get thinner there.

Optometrists live long because they dilate.

Mathematicians are sum worshippers.

It's raining cats and dogs. Well, as long as it doesn't reindeer.

The medical term for owning too many dogs? A roverdose.

Bear fights can often turn grizzly.

She got fired from the hot dog stand for putting her hair in a bun.

Why did the capacitor kiss the diode? He just couldn't resistor.

My new theory on inertia doesn't seem to be gaining momentum.

The orthopedist said that working with fractures isn't all that it's cracked up to be.

My wife uses a kitchen implement to shred garlic and parmesan cheese, which I hate. It really is the grater of two evils.

[*Deere Mennonite farmers, the next one is just for you.*]

John Deere has just released its most powerful tractor yet. It is the torque of the town.

Eggs make lousy comedians. They always crack up at their own yokes.

The waiter was shocked when I asked for my salad to be served naked. I explained, no dressing please.

I don't find health-related puns funny anymore since I started suffering from an irony deficiency. ▶

Sayings

And here are some sayings I have collected.

When you lose, don't lose the lesson.

He who the gods would destroy puts in his head that he will solve the Arab/Israeli dispute. —An old saying in the Middle East

Too much show, and not enough go. —Tom Clancy

History is whatever the victors say it is. —quoted in *All the Light We Cannot See*, p. 84

If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog. (popular saying)

The conqueror who makes me learn his language makes me a slave. —The Covenant

If you make people think they're thinking, they'll love you; but if you really make them think, they'll hate you.—Harlan Ellison

It is easier to fool a person than to convince that person he has been fooled. —Anonymous

Getting from point A to point Z can be daunting unless you remember that you don't have to get from A to Z. You just have to get from A to B. Breaking big dreams into small steps is the way to move forward. —Sheryl Sandberg

Never be afraid to laugh at yourself, after all, you could be missing out on the joke of the century. —Joan Rivers

The less people know how sausage and laws are made, the better they sleep. —Unknown

Science is like a compass. It can tell us where north is, but it can't tell us if we want to go north. That's where our morality comes in. —Unknown

The only way God can show us He's in control is to put us in situations we can't control. ▶

A Book to Read

Three Days in January: Dwight Eisenhower's Final Mission

Historians consider Dwight Eisenhower to have been a mediocre president. I suspect that if they were to grade him, he would get between a C- and a B-. This is both unjust and lamentable. Fame sought Eisenhower; he never sought fame—in fact, as this book makes clear, he didn't even dream of one day becoming famous.

Most leaders, secular, political and military, believe that to achieve their goals in life they will of necessity have to elbow their way to the top. This means pointing out their own merits and the demerits of their opponents. Both their words and attitudes proclaim, "I am the better man."

Eisenhower attributes much of his success in life, as a military man and then as the president of the United States, to the Godly influence of his mother.

Those who give Eisenhower low marks fail to recognize the pressure he was under as Supreme Commander of the Allied forces in World War II. His first problem was the fact that he was not given a commission during World War I, a deep disappointment. His superiors, recognizing his outstanding bureaucratic and organizational skills, felt he could do more for the war effort in Washington. Thus, when he was assigned a post in Europe he had never led troops into battle. Especially when he was promoted to Supreme Commander to lead

the invasion of fortress Europe, some of the experienced generals resented this, especially English Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, now a folk hero because of his spectacular defeat of German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel in the North African campaign.

As president of the United States, was not given to theatrics, neither did he attempt to project himself as a great leader. Many did not appreciate the delicacy of the moment. During World War II, the Allied Forces united with the Soviet Union to defeat fascism. Even before the fall of Hitler the Cold War had begun. There were those who felt the Allies should turn their guns on the Soviet Union and finish the war by defeating communism. Thus when Eisenhower assumed the presidency, not too long after President Truman ordered nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he had to take a nation out of war mode and return to peacetime activities. He believed this could best be done by keeping a low profile. This led to accusations of being a weak, do-nothing president—never mind that the interstate highway system, the greatest public works project in history, was his brainchild.

Three Days in January: Dwight Eisenhower's Final Mission, by Bret Baier and Catherine Whitney (available in Kindle), show the gentlemanly way in which Eisenhower transmitted power to his successor, John F. Kennedy, and the bond that developed between them, in spite of being in opposing political camps.

I have a high regard for President Eisenhower and when in Kansas make the short pilgrimage to Abilene to spend a day in his museum. ▶

Remembering

Fond Memories Take Me Back To Yesterday

by Sylvia Baize

My feelings about my childhood are clear and precise. It was wonderful! I am biased, I suppose, but it seems to me my childhood had to have been the best ever lived. Brasil in the late 1970's and the 1980's was a wonderful place to spend a childhood!

To my childish mind we lived a long ways away from most of our congregation. We had only a handful of families that lived in our area. Clifford and Naomi Warkentin were our closest Mennonite neighbors. Their farm was one of my most favorite places on earth as a child. The minute I crossed the cattle guard and was heading down their lane I felt a delicious thrill of anticipation. They had huge clumps of towering bamboo by the sheds. Hundreds of blackbirds would be singing in their swaying stalks. I loved their song. They might have been an uncomely bird and a menace to Clifford's crops, and I happen to know they made great shooting targets for the boys, but for me they were only a source of delight. My favorite time was near sunset. Those blackbirds would fly in from all over and perch in the bamboo and sing like their heart would burst for joy! Then as the sun would set and darkness would creep in a sudden hush would come.

I also loved it when someone would be mowing their beautiful green lawn when I got there. The smell was so fresh and wonderful!

Brazil News

They were a big family. The girls were always ‘the big girls to me even though Norma Jean was just a few years older than me. She was the big 8th grader at school, owned a beautiful doll and had a cute little suitcase for the doll clothes. I loved playing with that doll. Sometimes it took me a while to get up the courage to ask to play with it. I knew she wanted it kept nice and clean, so I was very careful when she let me.

I can still smell how their house smelled and hear Naomi’s voice as I would walk in the door. Her voice always sounded like music to me, even when she was at the back door hollering for the boys to come in it sounded like a bell pealing forth.

The two youngest boys were closest in age to me, and hours of play were spent under the mango tree in the backyard or in the jabuticaba trees when the berries were ripe. The berries resembled a grape that grew right on the trunk and on the branches, so we had to be careful not to squoosh them or knock them off. What we didn’t eat would likely be made into jam. Which is still the best jam in the world, in my opinion.

I must mention the little red wagon Clifford made for his boys. My love for that wagon went pretty deep. I don’t believe I coveted that wagon but I did want one just like it with all my heart. And one day, after longing for one for years, Clifford made me and my brother Otavio our own beautiful little red wagon.

I loved our home place too. We had many different kinds of trees in our orchard. We lived close to a creek. Ah, the swimming and fishing my siblings and I did there! The smell of freshly baked buns would find its way to us as we made our way back to the house dripping wet from a good swim. We would go to the kitchen window and my mom would give us warm buns filled with strawberry jam to fill our empty stomachs. Swimming always had a way of creating this enormous cavity in our stomachs. I think my mom thought that my brother Lucas had several cavities in his stomach.

Lucas and I would spend hours on the horses exploring in the woods or racing across the lawn. All went well until the saddle would suddenly slide to the side and dump me. I really liked it when we were allowed to ride up to Cliffords for a few hours to play. One day we were on our way there and we decided to take the horses through a field instead of on the road the way we usually went. When I tried to get my horse to cross over the tall weeds bordering the field, she refused to budge. I kept trying to get her to go, but to no avail. So Lucas came back to see what was wrong. He was going to help me by hitting my horse so she would go, but as he came up to the weeds from the other side, he saw why my horse wouldn’t obey me. There was a big snake in the weeds ready to strike. I put my horse in reverse in a hurry and Lucas found a rock and killed the snake. He had to show off the snake to the boys so he somehow carried the snake draped over a stick the rest of the way to Cliffords.

One thing I did hate with all my heart was riding bike up the hill to school. We lived down in a valley so we had a nice steep hill to climb when we left our yard. It was uphill most of the way except for a short stretch that was flat and a short down hill where we would get up our speed to make it up the next steep little hill. Then a few more meters of almost flat and we were on the school yard! We had a one room school with one teacher and most every grade plus Clifford’s hired man’s boys, who couldn’t speak a word of English and our Canadian teacher knew no Portuguese. She focused mostly on teaching them how to hold

Brazil ¹² News

a pencil and learn to write the alphabet. She had her hands full! My sister Sandy would aid at school sometimes. I loved it when she was there.

A tramp came by one day at lunch time. He was hungry. The way we did lunch was each family brought a pot of food. One would bring a pot of rice, another a pot of beans, and someone supplied the meat. We had white enamel plates with our names written on the bottom. After we ate we would each wash our plate at the faucet and put it away. There were no extra plates. So when Mr. Tramp came along we were happy to share our food but sharing our plates was another story. Somehow we thought that if he ate off of our plates they would be soiled and germ-infested forever. The teacher asked for a volunteer. We eyed each other guiltily.

Who would sacrifice their precious plate for a hungry man? The teacher finally got up and washed her own plate, filled it with food and handed it to the hungry man. We always eyed her plate after that with suspicion. She was brave indeed.

One day on the way home from school Sandy and Lucas were riding their bikes hands free. Down the first little hill we went. Sandy was singing at the top of her lungs with her arms spread wide. She was picking up speed. I couldn't keep up on my little bike. Those little tires just couldn't go around fast enough to keep up with their big bike tires. Lucas was ahead of Sandy. I tried to go faster as I kept an eye on them and the widening distance between us. I just hated being left behind.

Sandy wouldn't have heard me if I had yelled for her to wait up with all the singing she was doing. But suddenly it was dead quiet and ahead of me was Sandy sprawled on her back on the road! By the time I caught up with her she was laughing her wild, carefree laugh. She always could laugh at herself. Lucas came back to make sure she wasn't hurt. She was just a bit scraped up and dusty. I was glad she wasn't hurt, but I was also glad it gave me a chance to catch up and she was less eager to speed after that so I could keep up.

We lived far enough from my grandma's [Emma Burns] that my parents would sometimes let me go spent a few days with her so I could have some grandma time. One time I stayed for two weeks! I was so excited! The first thing I did was come down with a very bad sore throat. Grandma made me some strong lemon tea with honey. I wasn't too sure about the flavor but I was glad for the bit of relief it gave me. My grandma milked old Bell and had plenty of milk, so for supper she would make us some chocolate pudding. We ate it hot! We would pour a fine flaky cereal (*farinha lactea*) over our pudding. I would start eating the edges first real slowly so I wouldn't burn my tongue. The flavor was simply intensely wonderful. As we ate we could hear the many toads and bullfrogs croaking and cherumping.

The water from the *bica* made a musical soothing sound as it splashed on its way out to the pond. I loved the sound from the many night creatures as long as I had Grandma by me. But when we went to bed and all was quiet and I knew Grandma was asleep, then a little chill of fear would sometimes creep up my spine for all that unknown world out there.

Breakfast was a special delight. We would gather kindling for the wood stove and Grandma would fry up some eggs over easy and toast us some bread on the grill top. We would have devotions then and a somewhat lengthy prayer and then at last the warm delicious food!

Then down to the barn to milk the cows and feed the pigs and chickens. I drank in the

smell of eucalyptus trees and the sound of the rooster crowing. I seldom have heard a rooster crow in my life but that it wouldn't transport me back to Grandma's again, if but for a second.

Another place I loved was my oldest sister's house. She got married and moved to her new home. So I was more than delighted when I was allowed to stay with her and Fred for a few days. She would often be sewing and I would want to know who it was for. I loved it when it would turn out to be a dress for me!

Sometimes we would pack up a lunch and take it to the field for Fred. I was always game for a picnic, and a picnic in the field was hard to beat!

Best of all was when she would take me swimming with friends! How many happy hours I spent playing and splashing in the water!

In a sense it is hard to write my memories... there are so many that I scarcely know where to start or stop. I was blessed with a keen memory of events that meant a lot to me or touched me especially. Some people have equally as happy a childhood, but are not able to remember it. I feel blessed to have had had the happy childhood and to have the memory of it too! ▶

Notice

50 Year Commemoration

June 1, 2019 it will be 50 years that the first Mennonites settled on the Colony in Rio Verde. As we near the half-century mark, I assume there will be some kind of commemoration. There are lots and lots of experiences to be told. And not only told, but recorded too.

For this to happen, they must be put on paper or disk. You are invited to send these experiences or stories to my e-mail address (charlesbecker@outlook.com) so they can be organized for a future book.

If you are able to organize your thoughts on paper, that is wonderful. However, if you feel you were overlooked when the gifts of writing were being handed out, make a list of your recollections with the following information:

- Your name and that of others involved,
- Location
- Your recollections of incident(s)
- Date of incident(s)
- You may also include...
- How you made the decision to move to Brazil,
- Your age (important, when not a state secret),
- Your first days on the Colony,
- Setting up housekeeping,
- Special adaptation problems,
- Linguistic challenges,
- Shopping,
- Getting started financially,
- Milestones,
- Conversations,

Brazil ¹⁴ News

Most memorable experience,
Etcetera.

You may send your contribution to my e-mail address:

charlesbecker@outlook.com.

Or my post office address...

C.P. 35

75901-970 Rio Verde – GO – Brazil

Questions can be sent to my e-mail address or my WhatsApp number +55 64 99900 0009 (because my eyes function better than my ears, I prefer to communicate in writing rather than by telephone, whenever possible). I will attempt to arrange your thoughts and send you a rough draft for your approval before printing.

We are interested in both positive and negative experiences. However, the negative should not reflect on the country, on people involved, or the culture.

If possible, send me your contributions by the end of this year. ▶

Brazil News is published only in electronic and audio format. Charles Becker, editor. For a free subscription, send your name and e-mail address to **charlesbecker@outlook.com**. This same address can be used for correspondence. Please ask for permission to reprint articles in other publications. You may request a free subscription for friends or relatives. Thank you for reading BN. cb

Brazil News

Brazil News