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No. 197
20 JULY 15

Editorializing

The Richter Scale of Untruth

We who have been raised in a Mennonite home in N America see the truth as black and white with no intermediary hues. Truth is truth and untruth is untruth. A lie is a lie. And period (or pretty much so). However, as we deal with people from different backgrounds and cultures, we soon find that our concept of truth is not understood nor practiced by everyone. Indeed, our concept of truth and untruth can be as foreign and mysterious to them as theirs is to us.

“Train up a child in the way [of truth]: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” A child raised in a solid Christian home in which learning to speak means learning to speak the truth will always feel a twinge of conscience when telling the untruth, “even when he is old.” No polygraph operator can match the acuity of a virtuous mother who can detect an untruth on lisping lips, even before the words are spoken. Those of us who have had the privilege of being raised in such a home will never understand what motivates someone to indulge in what Edmund Burke charitably describes as “being economical with the truth.” For us truth is truth and untruth is untruth.

When rubbing shoulders with those whose nay is not necessarily nay, nor whose yea is always yea, our charity is taxed when this results in a severe inconvenience or financial loss for us. But what throws us in a veritable tailspin is when such a person tells us a blatant untruth and looks us in the eye with absolutely no trace of compunction. If pressured, they are able to



effortlessly slip into the role of victim and with tears in their eyes show their distress at being falsely accused.

The people we are describing see the untruth as a necessity, as a virtue. One questions if their conscience has been seared with a hot iron. In truth, it would appear they were born with a lobotomized* conscience. The only difference in their conception of the truth and the untruth is which will serve them best. To tell the truth when the untruth would have been more beneficial, would bring on serious self-recriminations.

To better understand the inherent destructiveness of untruth, we are going to use the Richter scale.

Richter number	Increase in magnitude
1	1
2	10
3	100
4	1,000
5	10,000
6	100,000
7	1,000,000
8	10,000,000

The Richter scale is used to quantify the intensity of earthquakes on a scale that ranges from 0 to 9.9. A base 10 logarithmic scale, each step is magnified by a factor of 10, as can be seen in the displayed chart.

Think of the first chart as the speedometer on your car. When the needle of your speedometer is on 1, you are driving 1 mph. When it is on 2, your speed is 2 mph. If your speedometer

worked on the base 10 logarithmic scale, at 2 you would be traveling 10 mph; on 3 it would be 100 mph, and on 4, 1,000 mph. 5 would be over five times the speed of sound.

The large chart below gives interesting information on the destructiveness and frequency of each category of earthquakes.

When the news media reported that on January 12, 2010, at 4:53 pm, an earthquake rated 7 on the Richter Scale had struck some 25 kilometers from Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, we also experienced tremors as we viewed the photos of the area. Keep these feelings in mind as we convert the seismic Richter Scale into a moral Richter Scale to measure the destructiveness of the untruth.

First we ask, what is untruth? *Untruth is a deliberate alteration of facts in an attempt to mislead or deceive.* This, of course, has many degrees, which is why the Richter Scale provides the perfect backdrop for this issue.

Micro (2 or less) continual, not felt

Micro untruths do not fit into the above definition of *a deliberate alteration of facts*. They are honest misrepresentations because of not having understood correctly or simple memory glitches. No one, not even the most devout Christian, is exempt of micro untruths, if indeed they can even be listed as untruths.

Minor (2.0–3.9) Some felt, little or no damage

These are deliberate attempts to evade the truth without an outright untruth.

[*Lobotomy: incision to the brain (as into the frontal lobes) to sever nerve fibers for the relief of certain mental disorders and tension [as well as the discernment of what is truth, we add]. —Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Dictionary]

Less than 2.0	Micro	Micro earthquakes, not felt	Continual
2.0–2.9	Minor	Generally not felt, but recorded	1,300,000 per year (est.)
3.0–3.9		Often felt, but rarely causes damage	130,000 per year (est.)
4.0–4.9	Light	Noticeable shaking of indoor items, rattling noises Significant damage unlikely	13,000 per year (est.)
5.0–5.9	Moderate	Can cause major damage to poorly constructed buildings over small regions. At most slight damage to well-designed buildings	1,319 per year
6.0–6.9	Strong	Can be destructive in areas up to about 160 kilometres (99 mi) across in populated areas	134 per year
7.0–7.9	Major	Can cause serious damage over larger areas	15 per year
8.0–8.9	Great	Can cause serious damage in areas several hundred kilometres across	1 per year
9.0–9.9		Devastating in areas several thousand kilometres across	1 per 10 years (est.)
10.0+	Massive	Never recorded, widespread devastation across very large areas.	Extremely rare (Unknown/May not be possible)

“Did you remember to fill the car with gas?”

“You know I’m not in the habit of forgetting.”

Actually, son or daughter did forget. However, the answer is not untruthful. Yet, it is elusive, neither truthful nor untruthful. A keen conscience does not—or should not—feel at ease with these “minor tremors.”

Light (4.0–4.9) Significant damage unlikely

We now have a definite change of panorama. A deliberate attempt is made to blur the truth with an “inoffensive” untruth. In these situations it is considered offensive to not be inoffensive. To tell the truth, in black and white, is considered insensitive, rude, even prudish.

You decide to drive over to your neighbor’s place and discuss an upcoming event that involves both of you. As you walk up to the front door you overhear them in a heated conversation. You listen and hear your own name being mentioned; they see you as part of the problem. When the discussion ceases, you ring the doorbell. The lady of the house comes to the door and her hand flies to her mouth. She blurts out, “Did you just now get here?”

“Yes,” you reply, “I just now drove up.”

The relief on the lady’s face makes the untruth worthwhile. To have admitted to hearing what was said would have created an extremely uncomfortable situation. Just a little untruth and a great diplomatic solution. For the keen conscience this is totally off limits.

Not all of the light untruths are this “noble.” Being deliberate, not infrequently the intended deception is detected and uncomfortable moments follow. Or as the definition of this category states, “Noticeable shaking of indoor items, rattling noises,” which can be translated as: Uncomfortable situations and a frequent need to make explanations, “That isn’t really what I meant,” “I was misunderstood,” “I was misquoted,” etc. Thus one light untruth must be covered with another light untruth.

Moderate (5.0–5.9) Major damage to poorly constructed buildings

These are spontaneous untruths used in unexpected situations. Since they are improvised on the spot, some are poorly masked. Those with a better education and who are higher on the cultural ladder are seldom taken in by these crude untruths. However, anyone who has lived in a culture or society in which there is no stigma to telling the untruth (unless caught), knows that the poor and uneducated are the most vulnerable. Unscrupulous businessmen have their heyday with unsuspecting customers. Since the underprivileged are often operating on a shoestring, such conscienceless acts can inflict major damage to the victim’s already frail financial structure.

Strong (6.0–6.9) Significant destruction

These are individuals for whom untruth is a way of life. Truth and untruth for them has become indistinguishable. Effortlessly and convincingly they extricate themselves from the most complicated webs they have woven. These are professionals. Their facial expressions and body language reveal nothing. Their word is absolutely useless, and yet when they open their mouth to speak they have a rapt audience.

Contrary to the “moderate” liars just described, who have greater success with the unlearned, these have no social, economical or educational barriers. They are, as we have said, professionals.

Major (7.0–7.9) Widespread destruction

Anyone who follows the news—especially in a political year—and pays attention to opposing views, knows that facts become rubber bands. What one proclaims as virtue for the other is vice. What for one is progress for the other is irresponsibility. Both sides cite “facts” to bolster their position. Each is dead sure that the other is a fraud. In times when issues of morality, of security, of sound budgetary projections are being debated, the future of a nation hangs in balance. When the untruth is propagated by the media into homes nationwide, the damage is indeed major.

Great (8.0–9.9) Vast devastation

We could here point to the vast devastation that was wrought by men like Hitler and Stalin, whose lies resulted in the death of tens of millions and inestimable natural

destruction. However, we are now going to exchange our telescope for a microscope and zero in on our own reality, a reality that rates as “great” on the moral Richter Scale.

Loose lips sink ships.

The spiritual death toll registered in our circles, and doubtlessly in other conservative groups, would shock us if we knew how many could be directly or indirectly attributed to loose lips—commonly known as gossip.

There are two kinds of gossip: benign and malignant.

Benign gossip often begins with the innocent repetition of a conversation or happening—even of impressions. Since both memory and audition are imperfect, what is told deviates slightly from the truth. When retold by another, gaps are filled in with “So it would appear...,” “My guess is...,” “It looks to me like...”

No one maliciously changes the story, but frail lips alter the facts with each telling and finally when the gossip—for that is what it has become by now—falls on the ears of the one involved, the effect frequently is discouragement.

The lesson to be learned is that when something is repeated, great care should be taken to not add nor subtract, to not surmise. When this is done, when the conversation or incident is repeated with pure lips, with concern, instead of degenerating into gossip, the effect can be salutary as others are made aware of a need in the community.

Malignant gossip sinks ships. It sinks men and women. It sinks young people. It sinks neighbors. It sinks even strangers. Alas, it sinks spiritual brothers and sisters. Yes, there are those whose spirituality and emotional maturity enable them to survive the ravages of gossip. All too often, though, gossip targets those whose resistance is low. And they sink.

Malignant gossip deliberately gives what is said a negative slant. “I have no doubt but what...,” “That’s the way he/she is...,” “You just can’t trust some people...”

Malignant gossip is propelled by the ghoulish side of undisciplined human nature. It thrives on whatsoever things aren’t honest, whatsoever things aren’t just, whatsoever things aren’t pure, whatsoever things aren’t lovely, whatsoever things aren’t of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise... *forget it.*

Malignant gossipers do not see themselves as untruthful. Like a chef who seasons the food he prepares, they *season* their “conversation” concerning others who are not on their Christmas list. Worst of all is when gossip is cloaked in a Pharisaical robe of “concern.”

When hearing or reading about the devastation wrought by despots like Nero, Ivan the Terrible, Joseph Stalin, Adolph Hitler, Mao Zdong, Idi Amin, Pol Pot, we shudder and ask ourselves how one man can ruthlessly destroy hundreds of thousands, or even tens of millions of innocent lives. At times our mental breaker flips.

God loves everyone, even the souls of the despots we have named. But, as Old Testament history abundantly shows, He has a deep hatred for the enemies of His children. He severely punishes individuals and nations with plagues, starvation, exile and death. Modern history shows us that nations that most actively promoted atrocities

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against Christians during the centuries of martyrdom, today—while economically prosperous—are increasingly amoral and closed to the gospel.

God is not mocked. Three Gospels tell us that “whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.” We paraphrase: “Whoever shall gossip about one of these little ones that believe in me, *so that he become discouraged and lose his salvation*, it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.”

Vast devastation. It can be argued that someone who is living close to the Lord will not permit gossip to take him out of God’s grace. We agree. However, we are talking about “these little ones,” those who have not yet matured spiritually, those who find themselves in the Valley of Discouragement. If we knew how many souls will be eternally lost because of loose lips, again our mental breaker would flip.

Unconsciously we categorize the persecutors out of the Martyrs Mirror as the scum of the earth. Yet, we forget something very important. Persecution was fertilizer. It caused the church to grow and prosper. Many souls were saved because of persecution—which obviously does not justify the perpetrators.

Now, good reader, answer these simple little questions: How many souls do you believe have accepted Jesus as their Savior because of gossip? How many have deepened their faith in Him because of gossip? (Admittedly, it may have happened, but would certainly be a rare exception.)

Vast devastation. Viewed microscopically, that is, on a slide prepared only with those who believe they are true followers of the Master (forget about the rest of the world), would you agree that spiritual seismographs would swing way over when registering malicious gossip?

But wait!

Massive! (10.0+) “Never recorded, widespread devastation across very large areas... extremely rare (unknown/may not be possible,)” is what the chart says.

This has already occurred. Read Genesis chapter 3. Until today we are feeling the consequences of the terrible untruth told by the serpent in the Garden.

And it will happen again. Read Revelation 6:12-17.

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a [MASSIVE] earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand [the massive earthquake]? ▲



and souls

Colony History

They Also Came

Since the Colony was established in 1968, some interesting people have shown up here. I'm talking about people who heard about the Colony and ended up spending some time here. We'll use their initials to protect their privacy.

One of them was a fellow by the name of JN. That was in the early 70's when I had an English school in town. I wrote Macmillan Publishers in New York to get some information on a language course they published.

JN answered my letter and added a personal note of interest concerning the Colony. We corresponded for some time and the day came when he decided to move to Rio Verde. He obtained a permanent visa, which was extremely easy back those days, and showed up here one cold day.

He was a nice fellow, but really a fish out of water. With his education, Rio Verde at that time had no opportunities for a man of his caliber. After a number of months, he returned to the US. We have good memories of JN.

Another family in their late 30's with two children from Idaho had learned to know the Harold Dirks family. They came down on a tourist visa, but with the thought in mind of possibly staying on a permanent basis. They rented a house in Rio Verde. We had good relations with this family, although at times the man acted

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rather strangely. He seemed to really be down on some aspects of the American government, a point he constantly made to his two teenage children. They suddenly returned to the US. Some years later we heard the man was serving a life term in prison for homicide.

The one that takes the cake is BJ. I doubt if anyone who learned to know BJ ever forgot him.

BJ read a little piece in Grit Magazine about the Colony. The first thing we knew he was here in Rio Verde—on a tourist visa.

BJ was an imposing character, well over six feet tall, a born entertainer. He was acquainted with all the states of the Union and had lived in approximately half of them. There were very few things he hadn't done in life, including working in Hollywood as John Wayne's stunt man, whom he resembled a lot.

One might have been tempted to believe that he was just pulling our leg, except that everything he said hung together. Time and again I was amazed when he would strike up a conversation with someone who would be visiting from the States and within minutes he would discover something they had in common, a place or person they both knew. They were conversations that couldn't possibly be faked.

It was truly amazing what BJ could do with horses. I can still see him slowly walking up to a rearing horse, speaking in a low but firm tone. He would grasp the bridle and the horse would settle down.

He lived with us for a while. One day a Brazilian neighbor showed up on horseback. BJ looked the horse over and said, "Ask the man if he wants to sell the horse." Yes, he would sell. In a matter of minutes BJ was the proud owner of a horse that to me was just about as common as they come.

It didn't take very long for that horse to be anything but common. BJ trained it to be a choice cart horse. When he sold it on auction some time later, it brought a good price.

Why was BJ constantly on the move? Why did he move to Brazil? He was searching for a place to live where the people would live up to his rigorous standards. His ability to handle horses didn't extend to people. As misunderstandings began to accumulate, so did his urge to move on.

After a year or so in Brazil, BJ headed back to the US. The last news we received about him, he was thinking Paraguay might be the elusive place he has been searching for all his life.

One day word began circulating on the Colony about a Dutchman who was around town. About the only thing people knew for certain about him was that he was the tallest person they had ever seen in their life.

Unfortunately, I don't have the exact details of what happened at this point. I know that he and Ike Loewen met. Ike invited him to spend a few days at his house. During this stay Ike asked SH a question that would change his life: "Have you had an experience of the new birth?"

Since SH had no idea what that was, he didn't know what to answer. But it was a question that wouldn't go away. Being fluent in English, he began reading church

literature. He came to understand what the new birth was—and to know he wasn't born again.

This resulted in a real searching and the day came he was able to answer Ike's question in the affirmative. He was baptized, becoming a member of the church. He moved to the States, got married and now has a nice family. ▲

by Mário de Moraes

The Onça's Revenge

Just a little Portuguese lesson before we tell our story. The first "o" is long, as in "bone". The letter "ç" is always pronounced like English "s".

Onça means jaguar. We have both the black and the spotted jaguars here in Brazil. In fact, when we moved down here in 1968, there were still a lot of onças around here. As you will read in this story, they too killed livestock on the fazendas. Onça hunts were big events.

Now the story.

His name was Euzébio and he lived out in the boondocks in the Amazon Basin.

Euzébio was the owner of a rubber plantation. Whenever he had a little time to spare, his favorite pastime was going hunting. He would kill anything he came across. It didn't matter to him if it was big or small. He felt the same satisfaction in killing a rabbit that he did in killing an onça. As can be imagined, whenever he went anyplace, he was well armed.

On weekends Euzébio would forget about his rubber plantation and together with a buddy or two, head out into the dense jungle to see what he could kill. He killed for the sheer joy of killing, not because he needed or wanted the meat. He didn't care what became of the animal he killed. Time after time, he would leave a "paca" (edible rodent) or a fat deer lying where he killed it along some stream, without the slightest thought of making use of the meat. It was for this reason that a lot of hunters didn't like to go out with Euzébio. To them he wasn't a hunter, but rather a killer.

On this particular day they ran across the tracks of an onça and were hot on its trail. Its tracks indicated it was a monstrous animal. Euzébio asked his buddies to let him have the first shot.

They hadn't traveled very far when suddenly they came face to face with the monster on the banks of a river where it had killed a small deer. The onça pintada (spotted jaguar) was enormous. Never had Euzébio seen one that size before.

Euzébio steadied his rifle on a tree trunk, aimed, and squeezed the trigger. The wounded animal jumped high and let out a shriek that froze the hunter's blood. It came down on its feet, turned, and faced the hunters, who were but a few yards from the animal. They were close enough to see the terrible hatred in its eyes.

What happened next was worse than any nightmare. It took several steps right in Euzébio's direction. He didn't move. Both he and his buddies were paralyzed by fear.

Even though they were all armed, it didn't occur to any of them that they should try and kill the wounded animal.

Euzébio began backing up, but tripped and fell over the trunk of a fallen tree. Everyone thought that was his end, when, mysteriously, the onça turned and disappeared into the heavy jungle, dragging one hind leg that had been mangled by the shot.

When they got over their scare, the three men who were with Euzébio decided to turn around and go home. Euzébio wouldn't hear about it. He wanted to track the onça and kill it. Even though the onça inexplicably saved his life, the hunter felt no gratitude.

When the others threatened to leave him in the jungle by himself, he grudgingly decided to go with them.

With the passing of time, the men forgot about their narrow escape with the onça and life went on as usual.

Euzébio sold his rubber plantation and moved to a city quite some distance from there. He didn't leave behind his morbid desire to kill wild animals. But there was one problem. Where he now lived the game was small. He had to satisfy himself killing small alligators. He didn't so much as try to salvage the hides. He killed because he enjoyed killing.

One day the talk of the town was an onça pintada that had shown up in that area. No one knew from where it had come. All they knew was that it had to be eliminated, as it was killing their livestock. Euzébio volunteered to take part in the expedition that would hunt the onça pintada down. It would be he and two others.

After hunting for quite some time, they ran across the onça's tracks. The dirt was soft and by the indentation left by the tracks, it was evident it was an enormous animal.

There was no doubt about it. The onça was huge. Euzébio saw it first. He took careful aim and squeezed the trigger. He, who bragged about his good marksmanship, missed! Before the other hunters could do anything, the onça gave a tremendous leap and slashed Euzébio's juggler.

With several shots, the other two hunters were able to kill the onça. When they got to Euzébio, he was dead. Beside him was the dead onça. It was then they noticed the large scar on its one hind leg. ☒

A Book Review

Tigrero!

by Sasha Siemel

(In Brazil the jaguar is called a *tigre*, and in the jungles of that country Sasha Siemel is known as TIGRERO – the man who kills *tigres* with a spear. This book has been out of print for years and can only be found on rare book sites—and is very, very expensive.)

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In America you have the legendary Wild or Far West, which existed during the eighteenth hundreds.

Frontier life still exists in remote areas of the Amazon basin. The story Sasha tells is about a period when much of Brazil was still frontier. He and his brother Ernst, apparently Germans of Russian descent, lived in the Pantanal in the present states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul.

Sasha's story deals with especially two aspects of frontier life: The natural dangers and the dangers of living in a society governed by men who applied to themselves the divine injunction, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." In fact, it was to this human justice (or injustice) that Ernst lost his life.

Sasha and Ernst made their living as traveling repairmen. In most villages their first job was to repair firearms, for as Sasha says, if there were 200 inhabitants, there would be 200 revolvers. They fixed anything from sewing machines to revolvers to sugar cane presses on the large fazendas.

While yet in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, a one-eyed thief catcher told Sasha about an Indian in Mato Grosso who hunted jaguars with a spear. The desire to meet this Indian became an overwhelming obsession. As the two brothers worked their way toward Mato Grosso, fixing whatever was broken, Sasha began finding people who had heard about the old Indian.

Finally the area was reached where Joaquim —that was his name — hunted for the local fazendeiros (fazenda owners). When Sasha found Joaquim in a miserable little hut in the middle of the jungle, the old Indian was stone drunk. After he sobered up, he took Sasha on his first jaguar hunt.

Sasha was an excellent disciple and the old Indian knew it. He spared no pains in transmitting his knowledge to his young disciple. And a good disciple he was. During Sasha's 30 years as a professional hunter, he killed over 300 jaguars, many times narrowly escaping death. And like his mentor, the majority of these hunts were carried out all alone, except for a small pack of hunting dogs.

Once when giving a lecture in Philadelphia, a young lady confronted him afterwards. He tells it like this:

"It was splendid, Mr. Siemel," she said, regarding me with deep brown eyes, in which there was the faint suggestion of a smile. "We are quite gullible here in Philadelphia, you know — we are quite glad to believe anything."

After being reprimanded by her startled mother, the girl continued, "Obviously you have killed these jaguars, Mr. Siemel," she said. "But killing them with a spear — when you could use a rifle — is a little fanciful, don't you think?"

We may think the same.

Sasha goes into detail to explain why many times — not always — he hunted with a spear.

To begin with, the Pantanal, where he did his hunting, is jungle. Many places the ground is spongy, covered with a lattice of roots and branches. This means that often it is impossible to move rapidly. The jungle, of course, is dense, sometimes impenetrable. And where the jungle becomes sparse, tall grass grows. Obviously the tiger holds a definite edge over the hunter in this setting.

Because of the dense vegetation, at times the cat had to be killed, literally, at arm's length. As the cat would spring, there might be time for one shot. And what if the cartridge in the chamber of the gun didn't fire? It could happen only once in the life of a hunter. Walking through the boggy jungle, stalking a cat, it was more than possible to trip on a root or vine and the rifle land in the muck. To face a man-eater with a soaked, mud caked firearm wasn't a pleasant situation. The spear, on the other hand, was impervious to water and mud.

In a typical hunt, some fazendeiro would notify Sasha of a tigre that was killing his livestock, or worse, had killed someone. Long before sunup, Sasha and his dogs would be moving through the jungle. Finding the tigre's tracks, he would stop and carefully study them. Besides knowing what size animal he was hunting, he would also know approximately when it had been through there, where it was probably going, among other things.

Sasha tells of hunting a jaguar that was known as Assassino — Murderer. A true murderer, he had just killed José Ramos, the foreman of a cattle ranch in the area.

Sasha's plan was to turn the dogs loose and follow on foot. The idea was to get close enough to where Assassino would attack him!

After running after the dogs for 10 minutes, their yapping became shorter and then there was a terrible scream. Reaching the spot, Sasha found Pardo, his lead dog, with its side ripped open. He followed after the remaining dogs and soon there was another scream. Another dog had been eliminated.

Assassino was using a sophisticated hunting technique. He would run ahead of the dogs and then quickly circle back, waiting beside his own trail for the pack to arrive. Then, with one sweep of his enormous paw, he would eviscerate one of his pursuers. Running ahead a short distance he would repeat the operation, thus, one by one, exterminating his enemies.

Within minutes Sasha found himself in the middle of the jungle, alone — and without a single dog. Everything indicated this would be his final hunt, for without the dogs to harass the tigre, so that he could get into a favorable position for the kill, he was no match for Assassino.

Then something totally unexpected happened. Tupi, a little fox terrier that Sasha left tied up in camp, had somehow managed to break loose and now came bounding up, happy to see his master again. At the same instant there was a rustling in the high grass on the other side of the clearing. Assassino was preparing for the final attack.

Acting on impulse, Sasha stepped on Tupi's paw, causing him to yip shrilly. The idea was, with all the noise, to induce the tigre to attack from where he now was, from the front, keeping him from circling around and attacking him from behind.

Besides his spear, Sasha carried a bow and arrow. Quickly he strung the bow and shot an arrow at the spot where the grass was moving. A hit. But not being able to see the animal, he had no way of knowing how much damage he had done. Tupi continued his frenzied yipping. Once again there was movement in the grass and another arrow was shot.

Distraught by the pain of the arrows, Assassino did something he had by

experience learned not to do. He turned and began running toward a low tree. It was exactly because he had learned not to permit himself to be treed that he was still alive and had managed to create so much havoc.

As the tigre neared the tree, it saw Sasha and changed his plan. He would attack instead. This was dangerous. At this stage of the game, Tupi was worthless. And worse, Assassino was wounded and in pain. His actions would be totally unpredictable.

Out of the corner of his eye, Sasha saw vultures sitting in the nearby trees, apparently believing they would be the ultimate victors of this duel. Sasha tells what happened:

“A single second of diverted attention can be fatal in a spear-fight; and this missed being fatal by a single step. I had been caught off guard, and perhaps the cat sensed that momentary lapse. As it lunged toward me, I managed to pivot and drive the spear at the charging animal’s neck. The spear did not bite deeply, but it was enough to throw the cat off balance. One paw, cutting through the air, actually grazed my right shoulder, and the force of my side-step threw me off balance. Had the cat swerved toward me, continuing its charge, I doubt if I could have met the attack. But it drew back, possibly from the new pain in its shoulder, and I had a chance to roll over and get on my knees. I still had the spear firmly in both hands, and I rose quickly to meet the next charge.”

At different times Sasha tells of the tremendous drain of energy on the hunter when fighting with a tigre. At this point he realized how exhausted he was. But Assassino was also exhausted — and bleeding from the spear wound in his chest. He too seemed to realize there would be but one more clash. It was now a matter of whether the vulture would have one or two bodies to feast on.

Sasha continues:

“The big cat was sideways to me, its head turned and the white teeth flashing, but it did not charge. I could not attack, since he might escape into that tall grass. I was breathing rapidly, and sweat was pouring down my face, almost blinding me, but I could do nothing about that. I tried kicking dirt at the tigre, but this had no effect. Suddenly, while I was desperately casting about for some way of provoking a charge, the cat gave a terrible, snarling roar and leaped straight at me.

“I barely had time to lift the point of my spear, and then it was a bit too high on the throat. I could feel the hot, foul breath against my face and arms as the spear-head drove into the animal’s throat, high over the chest; and for an instant I had the horrifying thought that I had misjudged the distance and was too close to the raking claws.

“With every ounce of strength I had left, I rammed the blade deeper into the dying animal’s chest. Any other tigre I had fought would have had the life drained away by this combination of wounds; but Assassino clawed furiously, even after I had gotten a downward thrust on the spear-head and was literally driving the point into the ground.

“I do not know how long this last furious phase of the fight lasted. Perhaps it was only a few seconds. Suddenly I realized that I was grinding the life out of a dead cat.

Assassino had gone limp and the great, slashing claws that had ripped the life out of perhaps three or four hundred cattle – and had destroyed all of my hunting dogs except Tupi — were numbed forever.”

To this list of trophies, Sasha could have added José Ramos, the foreman on the ranch where the cattle were killed. In fact, immediately after the fight, Sasha went to recover his mangled body and return it to the family. Only after this did he go back to the scene of the battle with Assassino. The vultures had already begun their feast. He writes:

“Assassino’s carcass was mostly eaten away, but I salvaged the head as a trophy. I measured the torn carcass, and it was a hundred and twelve inches from nose to tail tip – almost ten feet! I could only estimate its weight, but it must have been close to four hundred pounds.” ▲

This & That

American Consular Officials from Brasília spent July 15 on the Colony issuing and renewing American passports, among other things. Every three or four years the Consulate comes to us from Brasília, a distance of 400 kilometers from the Colony.

This is one of those dry seasons in which we get enough rain to keep things green.

This means that the second crop of corn is yielding very well, helping offset the lower yields of the first crop. Temperatures are mild.

The political scene is quite agitated at this time with reflexes on the economical situation. The justice department is beginning to dig into the lives of corrupt politicians and businessmen. A number have had their preventive prison decreed while investigations take place. The president’s approval rating is at a historic low with increased clamor for her impeachment.

It appears there will be some on the Colony who won’t go to the General Conference in N America in November.

The annual TecnoShow in Rio Verde, which took place April 13-17, registered 104,000

visitors from all over Brazil and a number of foreign countries, with sales of approximately 350 million US dollars. The event is extremely well organized with all major farm machinery manufacturers displaying their equipment. Seed, chemical and fertilizer companies display their products and latest developments. This farm show is Brazil at its best.

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