

Brazil News



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Special Edition

50 Years

Is someone who has celebrated his 50th birthday old or young?

It depends.

Ask a teenager. He will shake his head and say "Old." And maybe, after a bit of a pause add, "Quite old!"

Ask some one who is 85 and he will stare into space and add, "Young." And maybe add, "Quite young."

Is a settlement or congregation that has crossed off 50 years of existence old or young?

Again it depends.

To get an idea, start out by checking the cemetery. In 50 years there should be a sizable cemetery.

In 50 years the congregation or settlement should be self-sufficient, prospering and growing.

In 50 years there should be a palpable feeling of permanence. Those living there should have adapted to local culture, and when the case, be at ease with the language. In just a word, "feel at home."

In 50 years there should be well-established means

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Brazil ² News

of making a living. There should be neither poverty nor a great accumulation of wealth.

In 50 years, and possibly most important, there should be a solid spiritual foundation. The initial differences of opinion and objectives, so inherent to new congregations, should have been amalgamated into a united body with a functional leadership.

When all this has occurred, the group will be both young and old.

Young, because it will be vigorous and dynamic with a will to work.

Old, because many victories will have been won, much experience gained and there will be a “Bank of Wisdom” with a lot of deposits and substantial saving accounts.

In the report that follows, Arlo Hibner was the moderator of these sessions, with Myron Kramer and Duane Miller as assistants. This took place June 13 and 14 of 2019.

Now, just a word on what you are about to read. In this issue we will present the transcript of what was said in the sessions. The sound system was supplied by the folks who rented us a tent large enough to comfortably seat everyone. They also supplied the sound system. At times it worked quite well, sometimes not so well, and occasionally the recording device didn't work at all.

My niece, Leanna Santana, transcribed the entire proceedings, some in Portuguese, some in English. Her task was complicated by the problems in the sound system, as well as effects of stage fright in some of the talks. As a result, there were some ambiguities which I have attempted to improvise into something readable. It is possible that a few speeches, or parts thereof, were unrecorded, which explains their absence in this transcript.

We recognize that this report doesn't follow all of the editorial guidelines normally used in BN; there will be some discrepancies and errors.

And so we begin...

Opening and prayer

Myron Kramer

When I was a youngster 12 years old in 1969, we moved to this area. For me it was an enormous adventure. True, it was a lot of work, but it was only years later that I understood what this cost my parents. They

left their homeland and its surrounding customs to seek out a land that my dad had seen only briefly. They faced a lot of difficulties. All of us who live here today are reaping the benefits of their sacrifice.

The hymn we just sang, *Seguirei a Meu Bom Mestre* [Where He Leads Me I will Follow] says that if Jesus is by our side showing us the way, we will go anyplace He leads. I imagine that is how my folks [Daniel & Anna Kramer] felt when they made this move. Together with this I would like to quote 1 Samuel 7:12, where it says, “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.”

When we moved to this area, brother Denton Burns and others spent days and weeks measuring the land purchased and dividing it into plots for each owner. Since I was only 12 or 13 years old at the time, I wasn't very involved. Then when we purchased land in the state of Mato Grosso we had to go through this same procedure.

When a tract of land is being measured, the surveyor starts at point A and places stakes at regular intervals, as well as at angles. Occasionally he looks back to see if everything is lining up. I see this happening during this event. We look back to see if we continue on the path God chose for us. This helps us to chart our path for the future.

[Prayer]

Talk

Daniel Kramer

Before this move we lived in the eastern part of the U.S. At this time the bulk of the church was in the Midwest. It was on a visit there that I had my first encounter with this idea of a move to another country. It happened one evening when I was in the home of a brother by the name of Clarence Wedel. We discussed some of the concerns of the brethren in the Midwest. He asked me this question: “Have you thought the time may come when we feel the need for emigration to another country because of the humanistic influences in our schools?” He then asked me directly, “Do you think there will be another emigration?”

I said, “Yes!” and lifted my hand, pointed toward heaven, and said “It'll be up, not out.” Then I added, “Brother Clarence, where would we go? The world has been populated. When they left Europe, they came to America. Those living in Russia came to America.”

Brazil News

He said, “Oh, there are large areas in Australia and in South America.”

To me it didn't make any sense. Later I met another brother in Georgia. And he brought up the same question, the same concern. But I still didn't see light. I thought at that time that the way things were going in the world, with all the things creeping in, that the next exodus of God's people would be up.

In 1964, there was a meeting called of all the ministers in the United States. And it was a large group and there was a deep discussion concerning humanistic spirit that was creeping in and wanting to take over the world. It was evident that it was affecting the public schools and its curriculum. There were also concerns in the military area. There was a concern that this could affect our position as conscientious objectors. That was the basic reason for calling the meeting.

As the meeting came to a close, minister Abe Toews took the floor and informed those present that there was a group interested in going to South America to investigate the possibility of colonization. The group was asked if they would support this project. He made this statement: “What we have discussed here today makes this more urgent.”

After that meeting I was in Min. Harry Wenger's home. There was a large world map on the wall. There was a group of brethren standing around the map studying South America and discussing the meeting we had just come from. I was standing on the outside edge of that group and as I listened to what they were saying and looking at the map, something stole into my heart way down deep. I came to the conclusion that if such a move would take place. I wanted to be part of it for the sake of my six children. And then when I opened up to that I discovered that there was a wave of concern among the brotherhood, especially in the Midwest. That is where my interest in the project began.

When I returned home, I told my wife about the birth of this movement and the support it had from almost the whole ministerial body of the United States. I put forth an effort to keep up with what was going on. Those brethren who asked that permission made it clear they were not asking for financial support. Each one was willing to pay his own expenses. This group then brought a report to the Conference of 1967 in which a decision was made that the General Mission Board and the Colonization

Board be responsible for this project. With this authority of the Conference, based on that ministerial meeting that I talked about, step number one and step number two were set into motion. They decided to send another group to investigate Brazil because of its permission for conscientious objectors.

They then came back in 1968 at the annual meeting and brought their report on Brazil. These two boards, the mission board and colonization board, were authorized to send a group to Brazil to begin this work. Our beloved brother Denton Burns and his family, Dick Toews and his family, were sent to Brazil by those two boards. And that's how it started. They moved to Anápolis, here in the state of Goiás. Soon after they were here, Homer and Hazel Unruh came to Brazil on a tourist visa. Harold Dirks and family also came. These four families set up temporary headquarters in Anápolis. They bought themselves a vehicle, fitted it out with camping equipment and made a trip.

I have heard different reports, but the only one that I remember them talking about, was the trip from Anápolis to Goiás Velho. From there they continued until they crossed the river into Mato Grosso. They sent word back to the U.S. they felt the need for more help. They had not come to any conclusion. Back in the U.S. the word went out asking for volunteers. I don't know how many volunteers actually appeared, but there were five brethren that were accepted: Min. John Penner, Daniel Martin Sr., Deacon Enos Miller, Daniel Coblenz and myself.

We got here about in the middle of the week in the year of 1969, probably about the middle of February. We spent the rest of the week until Saturday night discussing our plans or what we were going to do. On Saturday night we had purchased a new VW Kombi, had all our camping equipment ready, and were ready to start out on Monday morning.

During this time it happened two or three times, that we newcomers would ask, “Well, where have you been? What have you seen? Where are you going to take us?” At that point the only thing they really had to present to us was on the other side of the river in the state of Mato Grosso.

Since Denton was the interpreter, he was the one that had contacts with different people and land to look at. And as I remember it, this land over in Mato Grosso was a contact that he had. But he would always end up like this: “Someone said you

Brazil News

need to go to Rio Verde and look at land over there.”

We asked him different times why he thought we should go to Rio Verde. What do you know about Rio Verde? Why don't we go where you've been and look at what you saw? And he always answered that he felt we should go to Rio Verde. As we look back we can't help but feel that the message about Rio Verde was the good Lord speaking. And what did we do? On Monday morning we didn't start out for Mato Grosso. We went to Rio Verde instead.

When we left on Monday morning we went straight to Rio Verde. In Rio Verde we looked at four different fazendas. Nestor Fonseca was the mayor of Rio Verde; he showed us his fazenda right on the other side of the creek, I think they called it the Sapo. When we got there we went to the corral where they were milking cows with the calf tied to the leg. We went to his house in town and had café da manhã with him.

After that we went to the fazenda of João Artino, and some of you will remember him. And then we went to Carrinho Cunha's fazenda, Fazenda Laje, it's called today yet. But the fazenda right next to town was not interesting to us. We didn't want to be right next to town. And the other two fazendas were too big. Where would the money come from to buy them? So we were getting ready to go back and go to Mato Grosso. But having bought a new vehicle, Brother Denton figured we needed to have the first checkup. So we went to the Sudoeste Volkswagen place. There by chance we met a man by the name of Manoel Norberto. He also had a piece of ground he wanted to show us. And so we went. Back then there was not a road straight to Montividiu like there is today. We had to go way up around to get there. We spent the night at his fazenda. A little hill between the fork of the river. And he showed us this place where we are today, known as the Monte Alegre. There were several of us that were ready to call it done. But they still wanted to show us Mato Grosso and there were several that were not happy with this ground; it was too weak, too sandy. So, after looking at this place, over yonder out beyond Montividiu and out that way and we set up our tent on the land that Jake Loewen bought later on.

We had a real interesting experience there before the sun came up. Someone asked, “What's this all about?” I got up put on my clothes and headed outside. Dan Coblentz was right behind me. Pretty

soon everyone was outside. We couldn't finish the night because of an invasion of cutter ants. One of the brethren had part of the seat of his pants taken out. Another's bath towel was pretty well done in. It was an exciting experience, but we got everything straightened out, had our breakfast and devotions and headed off. And we ended up at Iporá. From Iporá we went to Piranhas. From Piranhas we turned right and headed to the place where we were going to cross the river. We were really close to the river on Saturday night.

Remember we left on Monday morning and by Saturday night we were at that place. And then on Sunday we had our devotions and Sunday school. We had lots of time to discuss what we had seen and what we were looking for. So it was that on Monday morning we were going to cross the river into Mato Grosso. I don't remember whether they said it was a ferry boat or a bridge, but there was a little creek with a beautiful little valley, maybe about 25 acres, and a bridge where there were two logs on which to cross. And a nice little place of water there to wash our clothes and take our baths and everything and get ready.

Monday morning we were going to cross the river to go to Mato Grosso. And would you know that on Monday morning at about four o'clock in the morning, there was a terrific thunderstorm. Water poured down and finally one by one we got out and ran for the car. And we were there all but Denton he said the only place that wasn't leaking was right at the peak of the tent. All at once there was a stroke of lightning, the kind that is blinding and it looked like it was right on that tent. We were worried, but about that time Denton popped out of the tent and came running.

The next morning we saw that it was a buriti palm tree just on the other side of the tent, and lightning struck that tree and not the tent. Before our breakfast was over and we had finished our devotions, we had to move the tent and the Kombi uphill. That little valley was filling up with water. The next day was beautiful sunshine. It took time to get everything dried and ready to go. By lunch it was over and somebody said when can we cross this river? There was still a meter of water over the bridge. And then somebody said is this the Lord telling us not to go to Mato Grosso? And it created a discussion and it was tossed back and forth. Some were in favor, others

Brazil News

were ready to leave. In the end, it was a united decision that God had closed the door to go into Mato Grosso. We should turn around and go back to Rio Verde. That's what we did.

On the way back to Rio Verde, we took the same route to get to Rio Verde to go back to Anápolis, and there are other interesting details that I think everyone would be interested to know but there's not time for it. When we got back, there were still two in the group that had quite a stiff resistance and we got in touch with Manoel, the owner of the land. Together with him we made another trip around this place called the Fazenda Monte Alegre, and as close to the water as we could get we took the kombi through bushes and tall grass. At the end we told him we need a little bit more time. We said, "Tomorrow morning we will tell you yes or no."

We made it a matter of special prayer that night, next morning after breakfast and devotions, we sat in a circle and discussed the past week. We got to the place where it was decided that we would begin and each one was supposed to give his personal opinion about the matter. Five of us had already spoken in favor of saying yes. And then our beloved brother John Penner began speaking in his slow and careful way. He made a quick review of our trip and came down to this point. He said "We are right on the edge of development. In Santa Helena 45 km away, they are already planting soybeans and corn."

He made this statement. "It is true that we found land that was more fertile, but he said we are right here. The road will be coming. Electricity will be coming and with modern technology that is available, we can make this land produce. We need a place to start."

We knew that both João Artino's fazenda and Carrinho Cunha's Fazenda had much better soil. But for the price of the land and the size of it, where would the money come from? Before us was this tract of land, Fazenda Monte Alegre, the price that the owner was asking for it, and which we agreed to pay, was twenty thousand US dollars. There were eight of us. Divide that between us and it came to two thousand five hundred dollars each. That was a deciding factor. It was within our reach. (Brother Daniel Martin Sr., was not in it, because he was not ready to commit himself.)

We felt at ease with the deal. After John Penner

was finished, the other two brethren who initially weren't in agreement, with teary eyes and a trembling voice, joined with the rest of us. They were convinced that God had put his hand on this place

One of the things John Penner said was: "We have come to the boonies to buy some good land, but we can't take the road with us. We can't take the electricity with us." He had a prophetic vision of what would happen in this region. When I see the roads we drive on and the electric lines coming through, I remember John Penner and the presentation that he made.

We now all felt God's hand was in our decision. He had closed the door for us to go to Mato Grosso. And that's how it came about that this piece of ground where we are today, with the Monte Alegre river down there, Piripitinga Creek over there, and to think we paid two dollars and a half an acre for this ground.

Oh! I could tell a lot more about this experience but I guess this is enough. I honestly believe that was the leading of the hand of God. John Penner also said in his little speech that this ground with all the water we have and with modern technology we can make it produce. This is our starting place. Others can come and buy land. And that's what happened. Lots of land was bought around the Monte Alegre. Most of it better land than what we had. But the good Lord took care of us.

In a way I could say, we didn't meet Manoel Norberto. He met us at the VW agency when we stopped there for the first inspection of the new vehicle here in Rio Verde. How did it happen that Manoel Norberto showed up and we went with him to his fazenda? And then we didn't come on this road. There was a trail across the Piripitinga. And from that trail we came to his fazenda and he showed us this place.

We went back and then we went to Jake Loewen's fazenda that he bought later. And there's a real story that goes with that when we came back, but there's not time to tell that here. I don't know if that answers your question but we can talk about it later. I didn't think we had time to talk about that, but when we came back, we set up our tent at the same place we had set it up the first time at that fork in the river, and then his cowboy got on his horse and rode over here to the waterfall to tell Manoel that the gringos had come back. And the gringos had told him that

we would come back and tell him the answer yes or no in about ten days.

Before that first time we came there was a man from Minas Gerais had looked at this fazenda and was going to buy it. I picked up this story that Manoel Norberto had offered this ground to this man for 40000 cruzeiros. When these gringos came around he doubled the price to 80,000. And at that time the exchange rate was 4 to one. That's where it comes in that it was 20,000 US dollars.

Well now Norberto went home that night yet, and it was the next day that we made that circle on this place, when we got down to the falls, there was a beautiful camping tent set up. The night before the hippies left there about midnight and someone told us they were taking fish to the fish market to sell. This man was buying this place for a hunting and fishing reserve. He went to Minas told his friends he was buying a hunting paradise over in Goiás. And he brought his friends and they were down there hunting and fishing.

João Souto was with that group, he was up on top of the bank there where our big lake is now, there was just a small natural lake there and he was digging fish worms. I went up there to see him and talk with him.

But anyway I went there to help him dig fish worms and we couldn't talk together, I couldn't talk Portuguese he didn't talk English. But this way I motioned, you take this put it on a line and throw it in the river. Years later after João Souto was already among us people he told me, "You don't know how close you came to not buying that place."

It was he who told me later this story, but when that man came back, he had bragged to his colleagues back in Minas that man told them this man is in financial trouble. He's asking 40,000 but I feel I'll buy it for less. He came back in the week that we were traveling and were going to buy this place. Manuel Norberto told him it's not for sale now. Some gringos came by here and they promised to come back and until they come back it's off. Then he offered more money. But Manuel Norberto said no, I'm waiting on the gringos. And then we came back and then after that meeting that morning, I had forgotten to say this, it was like a little members meeting that we had there, when everybody had spoken, then it was time to take a vote. It was 100%. That's part of this story about this place. And a lot more.

Publication Work

Kevin Warkentin,

Chairman Publication Board

This is truly a great work and many of you have served on this board. I remember the time when my dad served. As a youth at the time, I thought it entertaining. Since some of the other board members had young people, during these board meetings we had our own "youth meetings."

We have asked Charles Becker to present a history of the work, as he was our translator right from the beginning.

Charles Becker

What have been the basic functions of the Publicadora Menonita? We will mention four:

- 1) To translate and publish the Mensageiro (Messenger) and Sunday School quarterlies
- 2) To translate and publish doctrinal material
- 3) To translate and publish story books suitable for children, youth and adults.
- 4) To serve as the central office for affairs relating to the Colony and church in Brazil.

The first Mensageiro was published on 30 September 1984. It was printed on a spirits duplicator, which accounts for the blue ink. Since then a 16-page issue has been published every two weeks. The next issue to be released will be number 917.

Charles Becker was the translator/compiler of the Mensageiro from its inception through issue number 642, when Stephen Kramer assumed the responsibility. Eduardo Vieira assisted in the translation for a period and at present Leanna Santana is translating most of the articles.

Stephen Kramer will now give us a rundown on Sunday School material that has been translated and published.

Stephen Kramer

The Youth and Adult Sunday School lessons are translated directly from the English and are published chronologically with the original.

The children's and intermediate lessons have been translated and are recycled every three years. By using this system, during their time in Sunday School, until they begin studying the Youth and Adult lessons, they study the same lesson three times, but on different levels. Each time the memory verse is more complete.

Brazil News

Charles Becker

Doctrinal material and for church use.

Right from the beginning a great deal of importance was given to doctrinal material, the main one, of course, being *Bible Doctrine and Practice*. Especially on doctrinal books, great care was taken in the translation and the proofreading. There were many sessions with the proofreaders to assure ourselves that the Portuguese would transmit the exact meaning of the English.

The first doctrinal booklet translated was Principles of Faith, which 50 years ago was the official doctrinal publication of the church.

In terms of importance, the next book published was a translation and adaption of The Christian Hymnal. Myron Kramer headed this project and will give us a rundown of how this came about.

Myron Kramer

The *Hinário Cristão* was born out of a desire to have our own hymnal. However, before that became feasible, we had to find an existing hymnal to be used in our church services. I think it was bro. Pete Loewen who was asked to check this out. Different hymnals were presented to the church. The hymnal used by the Baptists in Brazil was selected as the most viable. This book was used for many years. It was during the 90s that the subject of our own hymnal was discussed. It was decided that we would begin working toward the compilation of our own hymnal. A committee was chosen to begin this work and select the hymns to be used. The brotherhood was asked to translate beloved songs out of the Christian Hymnal.

[At this point Myron asked all those who were involved in the selection, translation and proofreading of hymns, as well as setting up the hymnal, to stand to their feet. It was amazing how many had been involved. It was mentioned that a number who were involved no longer living in Brazil.]

In 1997 I purchased a Finale music program for setting up the songs. Carman Loewen and I worked on this. As Charles mentioned, this is a work that is very dear to me. Days and days were spent working on setting up the hymns. When the day came that I handed Charles the final song so he could set up the hymnal, I told my wife, "I don't know what I am going to do with my time now." For so long my life had circulated around this phase of the work.

There is no doubt that God's blessing has been upon this work.

We knew from the beginning that improvements would need to be made on this hymnal. And that is what is happening right now. We feel that more songs need to be added. We don't know if the present hymnal will be enlarged or if we will make a supplement.

I would like to point out that it takes more than a committee to come up with new songs. To write or translate a song is different from writing or translating a text or a tract. The good translation of a song depends on an inspiration from on high. Different times I have decided to translate a song, but nothing happened. I prayed about it, but even so there was no inspiration. There is a song He Makes Me Worthy that I would like so much to see in Portuguese. Maybe someday the Lord will give me an inspiration. Or maybe someone else will be inspired.

I wish so much we had some song writers in our midst who could start a song from scratch. And here is a word of advice. If you translate or write a song and it doesn't go over, don't despair. Back in the 70s and 80s, when I was a youth, a serial publication dedicated to songs written by church writers was published in Canada. I think it came out every three months and prospective song writers could send their work to be published. I think I have all, or at least most, of the issues. A tremendous lot of songs were printed, but in the end I doubt if over ten percent actually are sung today. It is like an ore mine in which tons of rock are extracted to come up with just a small amount of metal. That is how God's gift works in the writing and composition of songs. It is through practice that we learn. Let's not despise the gift God has given us.

Charles Becker

Myron gave us a true-life picture of what is involved in the translation and writing of songs. I might add that the songs he has translated are top-of-the-line.

When someone asks me for advice on how to become a writer or translator, I give the first requirement as buying a large waste basket. If you begin writing and the waste basket remains empty, look for something else to do.

I understand that for wine to be top quality, it must be placed in storage for a prolonged period of time. When I write something of a more permanent

Brazil News

nature, I like to file it away for at least several months and then look at it. This permits me to see what I have written from a new perspective and I end up making corrections—or tossing it in the waste basket.

The same principle should apply to song translators and writers. Put what you have produced in cold storage for several months and then review it. Don't head to the printer before the ink is even dry. Give what you have done "some time to age," give it to some experienced writers or translators and ask for their honest opinion.

The Publicadora Menonita has published over 70 books and booklets that we have translated. Approximately half of these are for children. In N America you have an abundance of good children's stories published by other religious groups. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Brazil. There are very few children's books on the market that meet our standards. As a result we have translated and published approximately 70 books, with around half of them being for children, which include:

Hurlbut's Story of the Bible

Pilgrim's Progress

The Shining Sword

Visions of Heaven and Hell

Mary Jones and Her Bible

10 volume Summer Bible School Course

A few of the adult books translated and published are:

Bible Doctrine and Practice

Keeping the Faith

The Martyrs Mirror (condensed version)

The Mirror of Truth (condensed version)

The Christian Home and Child Training

Just a note on Hurlbut's. Over three thousand have been printed, most of which are destined to free distribution. The printer in São Paulo has made us a special price for a soft cover version. Nearly 1,500 have been handed out to date.

We have had a proofreading committee from the onset of our literature work. It has worked efficiently and a lot of man and woman hours and days have gone into this work. I say "woman hours" since it isn't unusual for the wife of the proofreader to become actively engaged in the projects. Also, almost all of our literature has been carefully revised by a Japanese lady, Marilsa Akemi Nakayama, who has a God-given talent for this kind of work. Faith has carefully checked all these books and tracts.

The 40-plus tracts translated and printed here have gone through the same proofreading process.

[Marilsa was present in this meeting and spoke a few words.]

Literature work involves quite a few people, but as in many undertakings, there must be an undergirding of individuals who have voluntarily prepared themselves. This is true especially in both translation and revision. Myron Kramer, Stephen Kramer and Eduardo Vieira fall into this category. It has been a pleasure to work with them. When I relinquished my duties as translator and editor of the Mensageiro, as well as of Sunday School quarterlies, Stephen picked up the work. Leanna Dirks Santana has studied the language extensively and now is also being used as a translator.

Stephen Kramer

My involvement with the publication work began in early 1990. We were just back from 8 months on the mission field, trying to teach Portuguese to 3 missionary couples. In that experience I possibly learned more Portuguese than they did and that had awakened my interest in language and grammar.

There was a vacancy on the proofreading committee, left by a brother who moved to the States, so Charles Becker took to handing proofreading work to several brethren, including me. At that time Gospel Tract was in the process of re-writing their tracts to improve readability and understandability. Because of that, Charles was re-translating the ones we had in Portuguese as well as translating several new titles.

He would hand out these translations with a pretty short deadline. They were short texts, well-written in the original and well translated, but still needing a careful proofreading, both for spelling and grammar, as well as consistency of the message and meaning. At that time the proofreaders used a color coded system, using a red highlighter for obvious typos and spelling/grammar errors, yellow for content issues considered serious, and green for suggestions of personal preference. It so happens Charles is colorblind, so he could see the red pretty good and most of the yellow, but most of the time said he had not seen the green.

Charles would do the first set of corrections based on the suggestions of all 5 proofreaders, then hand out the corrected copies. We would check the corrections and mark further suggestions, then get together

Brazil News

in a meeting of the proofreaders and translator to discuss the corrections.

That dry season we were having a meeting twice a month. Charles would walk into the meeting carrying a candy jar, which he would put conspicuously in the center of the table. We would go through the material line by line and each one could question changes that had been made and/or make suggestions and defend them. If a majority supported a suggestion, Charles would make a note on his copy to include it in the document. If someone began to talk too much or make too many suggestions that did not find support, soon someone would pointedly shove the candy jar over in front of them as suggestion they might better suck candy and listen.

All of this was a highly dynamic process. If we made a suggestion in the first reading that Charles did not put in the corrections, we could bring it up in the meeting, but best be prepared to defend it vigorously. Because of that we would end up researching, studying and learning a lot. I believe it was also a learning process for Charles & Faith. There were a number of issues that we hashed over during those years and formed concepts and guidelines that we still use today.

In the next few years I took a break from that work for lack of time while working as office superintendent in the Tract Office. But after leaving the Tract Office I again became involved in the proofreading work and was privileged to help on quite a number of books, both of children/youth literature and also historical and doctrinal works.

Just a little about O Mensageiro. In the 80's when publication of the Portuguese Messenger was begun, it seems the main focus was to provide reading material for our brethren. For many years there was a children's story column, and also serial publication of many of the books that were in translation.

In the 80's and early 90's, there was a growing correspondence at the Tract Office with interested contacts in various parts of Brazil. As part of that correspondence, copies of O Mensageiro were sent to a number of those contacts. This led to requests for subscriptions and as part of the tract work, Gospel Tract began to pay the printing costs for Messengers sent to several of these contacts on a regular basis. This "subscription" list grew, and with it there was a growing correspondence of these contacts with Charles Becker, the editor of O Mensageiro.

Around 1994 the General Tract Board felt it was time to begin withdrawing their involvement and funding from the Brazil field to apply it to other, newer, fields. As part of the process of scaling back the Brazil tract work to a scale that the Brazil church could handle, it was decided to quit funding subscriptions to O Mensageiro. Readers were offered a subscription at cost, but very few of them subscribed. In that way the circulation of O Mensageiro was again limited almost entirely to the Brazilian membership.

In 2006 I began helping with the actual translation work on a part-time basis and after a few years started working almost full-time with translation and editorial work. I feel it has been a real privilege to be involved in this work. I thank God for this privilege and also want to thank Charles & Faith for their patience and forbearance in these years of collaboration.

I would like to challenge our young people. If there is someone who enjoys this type of work, it is a worthwhile work to which you can dedicate yourself. It will not be wasted time.

Daniel Holdeman

[active on the Brazil Publication Board for a number of years.]

This work has progressed quite a bit since I was on the board when Charles was responsible for the work. We as a board didn't know much about how things should work and what kind of equipment we needed, so we had to rely on him quite a little.

End of publication session

João Souto

I may not have played such a great part in the establishing of the Colony, but I was the first one to work up some small plots so crops could be planted. At the time I was working for Manoel Norberto [from whom the original tract of land was purchased]. I did this for John Penner, Dick Toews, Jona Dyck and Denton Burns. When I finished working up the plots, Dick Toews asked me to disk a roadway through the trees, since at that time there was no road to the Colony, other than a fisherman's trail. I started at where the Literature Center now is located and disked all the way down to the river, where Dick and Denton lived. I could say a lot more, but time doesn't allow it.

Brazil News

John Unruh

There are so many things I would like to say, but just make a few comments. I agree very much with what Myron Kramer said in the opening. My wife and I and our two oldest children were on the same plane that Daniel Kramer's were on when they moved here. Daniel has covered quite a few of the initial happenings, so I won't repeat what has been said.

We were here on a tourist visa, but I was involved in the surveying of this initial tract of land. We wouldn't move on a permanent visa until the end of 1980.

Now I'd like to comment on something different. We are a nice group of people here this morning. There are a lot of young folks. When I say "young folks," I am referring to those who are 40 years old, or less. Those of you who are in this age bracket today are enjoying a life that you take for granted. But it is important to remember that all these comforts have come about because of the efforts and sacrifices your parents and grandparents made in the beginning. I want to encourage you young people to take this seriously.

Years ago my great-grandparents left their home in Russia. I was able to enjoy the benefits of many of their sacrifices, but even so, we have it better financially here today than when I was a boy at home. So when you hear about how hard it was here in the beginning, let it soak in. This is why we are having the 50th anniversary celebration. We want to remember and make the best of it.

Harold Holdeman

I was 11 years old when my parents moved to Brazil. I am sure my Dad would have liked very much to be here today. There are some here who came in 1969 and 1975: Charles Becker, Daniel Kramer, uncle Jake Loewen, uncle Ike Loewen, Richard Mininger. Would you all please come up here to the front.

Now I am going to call some to the front who are now the age you were when moving to Brazil.

[A number of young men came to the front.]

When Charles & Faith moved to Brazil they had 2 children; Daniel & Anna Kramer had 6, uncle Ike & aunt Rosalee had 7, my dad & mom had 9. They bought their tract of ground from seu Ademar, who is here today. Please stand up, Ademar. He was 28 years old when he sold us our place. Daniel Kramer told me their family now numbers 127, with grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

All of these who moved did so because they had a conviction.

Ike Loewen

I'm not here in front to talk about all that has changed. We had hard times here, but we have had hard times in the US as well. I want to mention what has NOT changed during the years. The only way we can have salvation is by giving up our will. That truth is worth more to me than everything we went through in our years here.

Mark Loewen

Before moving to Brazil we as a family would sing the song, How Much Farther Can We Go? We also sang it a number of times over here. We felt it reflected the situation in North America. There were three basic reasons for our move to Brazil. As brother Daniel has already said, he wanted to live in a place where he could raise his children on the farm. Land in the US was very expensive and we heard about the cheap land in Brazil. We checked this out and found it was true. This was our first reason for moving to Brazil.

Next came the possibility of "mission work through colonization." This vision was very much alive in those who made the move to Brazil and is the second reason for the move.

The sixties were a time of change in North America. Public schools were beginning to use television in the classrooms and sex education was being taught to young children. We must remember that at this time we did not have our own church schools. Also, society was becoming liberal and materialistic, which was having an effect on the church as well. We felt that a more isolated environment would have a positive spiritual effect. This was our third reason for making the move.

We will now sing the song.

Zaida

Good morning to everyone. My name is Zaida. I am Ademar Mesquita's daughter.

I want to take this opportunity to thank God for the opportunity of being here and sharing a few thoughts with you. At the time the first families moved to this area, I was some six years old. When I heard this family sing it filled my heart with gratitude because God made a place for them in our

Brazil News

lives. I am thankful for the opportunity of learning to know not only them, but other families as well. This friendship is precious to me. And I want to thank everyone for the invitation to be here today. I thank God that I have learned to know and have contact with you. Thank you very much.

Mim Dirks

I am Denton Burns' youngest daughter. I was very excited about our moving to Brazil, and so were my friends at school. They asked many questions, for which of course we didn't have the answers. It seemed to take a long time but finally the last paperwork was done, the last things were bought, and we had said goodbye to everybody.

There we all were in the airport in Miami; that whole bunch of children, looking in the stores to see what there was to see to pass the time. What really interested us was that each gift shop seemed to have a bunch of stuffed alligators dressed up like people: teachers, doctors, bride and groom and so on. We thought we were going to be seeing a lot of alligators soon. We didn't know it would be 25 years before I ever saw an alligator in the wild.

Then we were finally on the plane, and after we were in the air a while someone said "Look! look there's a light; it must be Cuba." So we got out the binoculars and here it was just a light on the end of the wing.

Of course, we were going to stay awake all the time but first thing I knew Daddy was saying "Wake up Toots we're almost there." And the first sight I had of Brazil I thought "red." Red roofs, red dirt and the sun coming up, so the sky was reddish too. Now, whenever I think of arriving I think of red. We were already down in Brazil, but we kept saying "...when we get to Brazil" because the truth is that it wasn't the Brazil we were expecting. We were ready for houses on stilts, woods and wild animals and instead we were in one of the fanciest hotels of that time in Brasília, the capital. But it was great; the hotel people let Tim and me go up on top of the hotel to fly our kites. We turned them loose, but they didn't go up, they went down. But when you are way up high it doesn't matter so we had a lot of fun. Sometimes Mama would let us go to the TV tower. Back then they would let you climb the ladder so we'd go way up and look around. Or we would go visit the Crown of Thorns Cathedral,

which at that time was only the crown with red dirt underneath.

After a couple of weeks we rented a *chácara* (a small plot of ground in the country with a house) close to Anápolis. It had a big old house on it that had been built by an American woman.

Later on we met Dr. Gordon, who started the evangelical hospital in Rio Verde. He told us that one time when they were coming to Brazil, this woman was on their ship too. She was 17 and was the captain's girlfriend. They later got married. I don't know how she ended up in the interior of Goiás. The house had round windows to look like portholes. The Dyck Toews family was the largest, so they lived in the main part of the house. Our family lived in the part that my dad called the slave quarters; it was one big room and a bathroom, and above that was another room the same size with another bathroom. The room had two walls of windows and had been the dance hall. That is where Homer and Hazel stayed.

That was a fantastic *chácara*. It had fruit, flowers, woods, a waterfall, a little lake and marmosets. There were all kinds of things that children enjoy. On the second day Leroy and I found a lemon tree. We got some and snuck into the house, got some sugar and made some lemonade just for us. The Bible says, "Bread eaten in secret is sweet" and so is lemonade. But that was the only time we enjoyed that, because we woke up to the fact that we were living in a country that had all kind of fruits in abundance. There were plenty of lemons. We could even use the little green lemons in our slingshots.

There were two neighbor boys, Tião and Rosa, who helped us enjoy ourselves. They taught us an easy way to fish. That was to shut one of the doors of the irrigation canal that came out of the lake. When it all got dry we just had to pick up the fish. But what we didn't know and they did know was that it supplied water to three or four houses farther ahead. When we heard some women coming hollering angrily, the boys told us to quickly shut the irrigation gates and get out of there, then we began to wonder. They made lots of fun of our Portuguese too.

After 6 months we went to Rio Verde. We had a breakdown, so didn't get there until on a Sunday. There were cars parked on the streets but the only other vehicle we saw driving around was a jeep. It seemed like it was a really dead little town.

June on the fazenda (hacienda in Spanish) without

Brazil ¹² News

any tent or a house was very cold, since we had to sleep in the open. The covers were wet with dew and the macaws flying over yelling seemed to be saying, "What weird people! They don't seem to have the good sense to get under the trees."

What really stands out is when more people start getting there. When we got back from Brasília, after getting John, Alma and Eldon Penner from the airport, it was a beautiful moonlit night. Eldon was 18 or 19 at the time. Tim and I played tag with him.

Next Charles and Faith arrived. Tim and I were so excited that we were really cutting up, we were so happy. And then one wonderful day a white pickup drove up. It was the Dirks family. They had driven all the way from Bonners Ferry.

There were the animals too... My little monkey that came to school and one time to church. Sometimes, riding on our dog and dressed in her little dress that Sue Kramer made for her, she would come to where I was swimming.

There are many good memories; weddings, births, baptisms. But one day the sad news came that my dad was had been killed in a car accident. To a certain point my youth was over. The people were so good to us, especially three people that really tried to help me out and fill in a little bit for the lack of a dad. I am grateful to them to this day. One was minister Reno Hibner, one was Jake Loewen and even now Ike and Rosalie treat me like a daughter. Sometimes thinking of the past we think things were better than now, but the Bible says, "Don't say why were the former days better than the ones now because you never do that with wisdom" I want to use my memories as bricks to construct a better future.

Charles Becker

I want to say a few words about the difficulties the first settlers faced here in Brazil. I have listed a few of them.

Language. This is a good place to start. Daniel Kramer said that he and João Souto, strictly through gestures, discussed how to put a worm on a hook. That worked, but when feeling a bad pain, in the head, the stomach, a leg, and it became necessary to go to the doctor, it became more difficult to explain these feelings by gestures.

To share thoughts was a real problem, especially when we had Brazilian members in the church. We

learned how to ask for a glass of water, but were unable to express the deep feelings of our heart, which was actually a lot more important.

A different culture. We could talk all day on this, but I want to mention only one aspect. There are those who believe Brazilians don't value the truth. That isn't true. It's just that when a Brazilian tells something at times his version of the truth is more elastic than what we are used to. Americans, on the other hand, are considered very rude by Brazilians because of their tendency to blurt out things that in their culture is considered offensive. We would ask someone how he felt about something. He would answer us and then later we would find out this wasn't exactly how he felt. Why did this happen? The Brazilian felt that to blurt out the truth, American style, would be offensive. It took us a while to get used to this.

A different currency and inflation. Here is a quick rundown of what has happened with Brazilian currency since 1942:

1942 The official currency called Réis became the "Cruzeiro"

Three zeros removed

1967 The "Cruzeiro" was renamed the "Cruzeiro Novo"

Three zeros removed

1970 The "Cruzeiro Novo" assumed original name of "Cruzeiro"

Three zeros removed

1986 The "Cruzeiro" was now called the "Cruzado"

Three zeros removed

1989 The "Cruzado" was named the "Cruzado Novo"

Three zeros removed

1990 The "Cruzado Novo" now returned to the original name of "Cruzeiro"

No zeros removed

1993 The "Cruzeiro" was now called the "Cruzeiro Real"

Three zeros removed

1994 The "Cruzeiro Real" became the "Real", and continues until today

Three zeros removed

Now for a little explanation. Going back to 1942, when the currency was the "Réis, it would take **2.750.000.000.000.000.000** Réis to be equivalent to one of our current "Reals", which has lost 83% of its buying power since 1994.

Brazil ¹³ News

All this came about because of high inflation, that for a time was over one percent per day, hitting almost 2% for a short period — and compounded.

I remember the time I wanted to buy some clay roof tile for a project. I went to a fellow who sold tile and asked the price. He told me. I thought it rather high, so I told him I would look around. Nonplussed, he returned to his work and made no effort to convince me his price wasn't all that bad.

I went around town from one business to another and finally returned to the original seller. I told him, "Well, I guess I'll take the tile. Your price is the best."

Showing no sign of smugness, he said, "That's fine. But there is something you need to know. The price has gone up."

That was inflation. Prices went up every day. And not just a little bit.

Banking. I think about the worst was going to the bank. Back in those days there was no electronic banking. The Banco do Brasil had some 15 teller windows. The Bradesco bank nearly 40. This only begins to make sense when we remember that with high inflation the amount of bills we must carry can almost become a burden. Thus it wasn't unusual to see customers carrying attaché cases and paper bags filled with money, not to mention pockets bulging with bills. I remember one fellow who stepped up to the teller window, who after emptying his pockets, unbuttoned his shirt and in a monetary caesarean, begin removing packets of bills from his abdominal area.

There was the time I entered the bank, looked the long lines at each teller window and saw one with only two customers. I thought it strange that with so many long lines, this one was so short. It was a no-brainer to pick the short line. Looking around, I did notice that the other customers seemed to be struggling not to smile as they watched me smugly take my place as third-in-line. Soon I became the most enlightened customer in the entire bank. Resting on the floor before the customer in front of me was a bulging satchel, which he picked up, placed on the ledge of the teller window and began removing packets and packets and packets of bills. Like the United States Marines, I don't believe in retreating, so I did an about-face and carefully studying the floor tile, marched forward to the end of another line. The fact that all of the customers

contained their humor was a tribute to Brazilian propriety.

And I can't forget a gentleman known as the "Barão." He had an enormous midriff, partly because of a gigantic hernia and partly because the revolvers he had tucked into his waistband. He would look for a prospective customer, reach under his shirt and pull out a firearm. Bank officials all knew him and would indulgently smile as he tried to peddle his wares to bank customers.

Grocery shopping. A special trial to the women-folk was going shopping in the grocery stores. Fifty years ago they bore no resemblance to stores they were used to in N America, or to supermarkets in which we purchase our groceries here today. To begin with, everything was "Greek." The packages were different from those in N America. With mounting frustration, a product was finally chosen, believing it was the equivalent of what they would have purchased back home. Alas, when arriving home and opening the container, it was not! And so it went.

Climate. Back then people didn't talk about the four seasons. It was basically the dry season and the rainy season. The dry season is considered to be our winter. When we moved here it got colder than it does now. Global warming? Maybe. I do have a different idea. Back those days virtually no ground was farmed, except for a bit of slash and burn hand farming. Much of the ground was "campo" with little vegetation. Some was cerrado with trees large enough to require a bit of clearing, usually by pulling a long cable or chain between two tractors to knock the trees down. Then a tractor with a blade would push them into long windrows, left to dry, and then burned. Finally there were woods in which the trees were cut down by axes, the underbrush would be cut down by long scythes, left to dry and then burned. The fallen trees were cut into manageable sizes and snaked out with long cables, to take to local sawmills.

Every year the entire countryside was burned. Most of these fires were set. The reason was that once the native grass dried up, it was almost worthless as pasture. So, when the rainy season was about to begin the fires would be set. When the rains began the tender sprouts made really good pasture grass. These fires were so extensive that it was impossible to put them out. They would burn for days, indeed

Brazil ¹⁴ News

weeks. The result was that for at least two months the sky was darkened with smoke. This of course meant that without direct penetration of sun rays the temperature dropped. At least, that is my theory... My version of *global cooling*.

Vehicles. Almost all cars had only two doors. So far as I know, there wasn't a single automatic transmission in town. Most of the vehicles were canvas-topped Jeeps, VW bugs, VW kombies, and an assortment of prehistoric Chevy pickups and other cars. None, of course, with air conditioning or heaters.

Especially in international airports quite a few of the taxis were VW bugs with the front seat removed. That space was reserved for luggage, together with the space under the hood. Depending on the size of the family, it could require two vehicles to transport a family of eight or ten.

Banking today. When our banking system was updated, it became one of the most efficient in the world, especially for online banking. I can comfortably and efficiently do almost all of my banking anywhere in the world where there is internet access. I talk with my manager by WhatsApp. When the manager for my chicken barns needs supplies or parts, he simply goes to the store, asks for what he needs, signs his name, and several days later I get a barcoded bill. I open my Banco do Brasil, scan the barcode, insert my code (with my thumbprint) and request that it be paid. This I do on my PC. Immediately a QR code appears on my screen. I then open the BB app on my iPhone, scan the code and in instants I receive a numeric code, which I insert on the PC. The bill is paid and I attach the receipt to the invoice that I got from the store where the supplies were purchased. It goes into my stack of stuff for income tax and everything is settled, in a matter of several minutes.

Bureaucracy. I think that of all that raised our blood pressure here in Brazil, this is at the top of the list. Some 40 years ago to travel to the US—which wasn't only for foreigners—it took going to some 10 or 12 different offices (which included several in Goiânia) for documents.

The metric system. It took a while, but once we got used to...

Meters instead of yards,
Centimeters instead of inches,
Kilometers instead of miles,
Liters instead of quarts,
Celsius instead of Fahrenheit,
Hectares instead of acres,
Sacks of grain instead of bushels,
Kilos instead of pounds,

...once we got used to it, well, let's just say it's light years ahead of the complicated antiquated English System.

Driving laws and practice. Don't ever stop at a stop sign (PARE), if no one is coming. It is the perfect formula to get the rear end of your vehicle bashed in. STOP means yield. And YIELD means step on it and take your chance.

When we moved to Brazil there was a store called Casa das Louças. The owners were from Lithuania. Jonas Pagyris, together with his wife, son and daughter-in-law, ran the store. It was a cluttered place with literally thousands of items... pots and pans, silverware, appliances, toys—well, you name it. The amazing thing is that they apparently had all the prices in their head. I never saw them consult a price list for anything. I suspect they analyzed the buying potential of the customer and then set the price accordingly.

Anyway, it wasn't unusual seeing them in the doorway (remember that in Brazil the entire store front often is a series of roll-up doors). One day when I came to the intersection where their store was located there were two cars side-by-side, each pointed in a different direction. The drivers were chatting through their open windows, blocking the street. I made the unforgiveable mistake of honking. After all, I had business to do and needed through. The one fellow paused the conversation long enough to glance at me with an almost compassionate look that clearly said, "Please, can't you see we're talking? What is the hurry?"

Well, Mrs. Jonas Pagyris took it all in and loudly enough for everyone to hear, proclaimed,—referring to me, obviously—"He's the most obnoxious man on the Colony!" I plead no contest. And no longer honk.

Roads and streets. Fifty years ago, when Rio Verde was a little town of approximately 30,000 residents. I'm not sure there were any "paved" streets—that is,

15 Brazil News

with asphalt. A few streets were cobblestone. There were no paved roads coming in from any direction. This meant that, depending on the weather and condition of the road, the 220 km to Goiânia could take between three and six hours. Vehicles that made the trip very often soon had gray hairs. During the dry season we would arrive covered in dust and almost unrecognizable. During the rainy season it was in and out of water holes for almost the entire stretch.

Farming. When we moved here farming as we know it now was nonexistent. The first soybeans planted in this part of the state was here on the Colony. Harold Dirks planted a few acres, but after he harvested the beans, there were no local buyers. There was a buyer in Goiânia, but the freight to transport the grain would cost more than they would pay, so he roasted the beans and fed them to his hogs.

Fertilizers and lime were not sold here. The first lime used had to be trucked in from a company near Goiânia—nearly 200 km on a dirt road.

The combines—if you could call them that—had no bin. Rather there was a platform off to one side where one or two men could stand to fill sacks and sew them up. They were then pushed off onto the ground to be picked up later by a tractor and trailer.

The first rice planted here on the Colony was harvested by a little combine with a four-foot header and run by a Volkswagen engine, the kind used in their famous beetles.

The sacked rice was hauled to town and stored in large sheds. In some cases the stacks were up to 30 feet high. These towering stacks of rice were absolutely vertical, as if a plumb line had been used to stack them. Since there was rice from many different owners in each stack, an identifying number was painted onto the sacks. When a grain buyer would want to check the quality of the rice he wanted to purchase, he would punch the bag with a pointed narrow stainless steel tube and remove a sample. This sample he would place in the open palm of one hand and with the heel of the other exert a rotary grinding motion. This would show him the quality of the grain. When finished, he would blow the hulls away and put the rice on a flat surface, where the whole grains would be separated in a small pile, the half-grains in another and the fragments in yet another. Based on the size of these three little piles, the buyer would give a price. And then the haggling would begin.

Cattle. When we moved here there was a race of brahma cattle called Indubrasil. I think they originated in India. They were large and their outstanding feature was the ears. They were so long that they hung down well beneath the neck and were curved inward. Thus, they would cross and create a truly amazing spectacle. I believe that some of these ears were a foot and a half long.

So far as I know there were no dairies in the area. All milking was done in the corral. To make this system work, the calves had to be separated from the cows towards evening and penned up overnight. The next morning the cows would be milling about outside the corral, anxious to be reunited with their calves. Often this milking session would begin at three o'clock in the morning. The only light was a small conical tin lamp with a thick wick protruding from the center. These lamps—called *lamparinas*—could burn kerosene or diesel fuel. When fueled by diesel fuel, a dark plume of smoke would float into the breeze.

After penning up the cows in the corral, the cowboy would open a small gate to an adjacent pen, letting just one calf out. Hearing its baaaaaaah, the mother would jostle its way through the other waiting cows and in seconds be reunited with the calf.

It needs to be pointed out that these Brahma cows do not let their milk down so they can be milked. They must be primed. The calves were born for this task. They would apply several vicious head butts to the udder to get things going and then latch onto one of the teats for satisfying gulps of warm milk. The cowboy would be standing by with a short rope of braided tail hair, and after maybe a minute, with a deft flick of the wrist toss the rope over the neck and then around the nose, forming a quick hackamore. Now he would jerk the calf away from its meal and tie the head to the front leg of the mother.

Thus, with the milk now flowing, he would squat down with a small bucket held between his knees and begin milking. Often there were no more than two or three liters in the bucket. If the cow was really a good milker there might be five or even six.

Again with a flick of the wrist, he would release the rope tied around the cow's leg and from the calf's neck, letting it go back to the source of milk and suck. When it appeared the cow was being stingy, the calf would deliver a few more vicious butts to the udder to get its point across.

One by one the calves would be released and the cows milked. After milking 30 or more cows, there would seldom be more than a hundred liters of milk that could be used for making cheese or churned into butter.

Construction. Except for the very poor sections of town, virtually all construction is hollow tile or brick, which is then plastered or covered with ceramic tile. All this being nonflammable, residential fires are extremely rare. So rare, in fact, that a town with 25 thousand inhabitants in N America has a much larger and better equipped fire department than that of our local town of 250 thousand inhabitants. Most occurrences are either from automobile accidents or industrial fires.

Dr. Jerônimo. We insert here that when we first moved to Brazil all lawyers were addressed as Doutor. And so we have Dr. Jerônimo Carmos de Moraes, who merits special mention in the history of the Colony.

The Brazilian legal system was about as foreign to us as the Portuguese language. We soon discovered that many of the routine transactions made in N America here required the help of a lawyer. Dr. Jerônimo was our lawyer from the onset and faithfully served us for over 40 years until his retirement.

We soon discovered that land purchases were never as simple as having the seller signing a title and the land was ours. To begin with most of the land had not been accurately surveyed and often transactions sloppily recorded in the land office. For example, someone with a thousand hectares of land might sell 500. The land office would give the buyer a clear title for the 500 hectares purchased, but neglect to record the amount subtracted from the original plot. Thus, the seller's title would show that he still owned a thousand hectares of land that could again be legally sold. And that is where Dr. Jerônimo would come in. He would go to the land office and check out the abstract. It wasn't unusual for him to tell us: "The land you want to purchase has a problem. It can easily be solved and you can get a clear title, but to do so we will have to go to law. I know that you people don't believe in going to law, so I advise you not to purchase the land." In the thousands of hectares of land Dr. Jerônimo checked out for us, never did we have a problem.

(There was the case of an American—not of our group—that wanted to purchase land in a neighboring state. He wanted to hire Dr. Jerônimo, as the lawyer, and me as interpreter, to check out the title. Since this American was, to put it mildly, a complicated fellow, we gave a rather steep price for the job—and for putting up with his disagreeability. He felt the price was too high and hired a lawyer in the local town. Too late, after the final payment had been made, he discovered that the seller and the lawyer were in cahoots. He lost everything.)

Dr. Jerônimo was not only our lawyer, but our friend as well. When Denton Burns and Pete Loewen were involved in a fatal accident near Goiânia, and Chris Stoltzfus critically injured, Dr. Jerônimo happened to be in Goiânia (or rather, God "happened" for him to be there). He found out about the accident and took over, arranging for the bodies to be taken to Rio Verde. This was in the dry season and the roads were extremely dusty. It was in the middle of the night when Dr. Jerônimo and his wife led the hearse to the Colony. Dr. Jerônimo was very light-complected, but that night he and his wife were a dark red.

Many of the early adoptions on the Colony were handled by Dr. Jerônimo. He recently died and we owe him an enormous debt.

Electricity. When we moved to the Colony there no houses, no roads, no telephones, and no electricity. Needless to say, there were no refrigerators. During the first days, we learned how to use candles, lanterns and 12-volt light bulbs connected to the car battery. Then came generators that were run part-time and especially in the evening for lights.

After a number of years, the big news was that the Banco do Brasil would furnish the financing to build an electric line to the Colony. Here consumers must foot the bill to have the line built. We had a big meeting and decided to go ahead with the project. The interest would be 9% per annum. Then when it came time to sign the contracts, the bank informed us that the interest had jumped to 13%. We felt this was too high and had another big powwow. Finally, somewhat tremulously, we decided to go ahead and sign for 12-year financing.

After 12 months we made the first payment. It wasn't as bad as we thought it would be since inflation had just begun to show its talons. Then it really

Brazil ¹⁷ News

took off. Since 13% was a fixed rate, by the end of the second year the payment didn't amount to much. After the fourth year people were going to the bank and paying off the entire loan, as it didn't make sense to mess with what now amounted to pocket change. So, basically we got our electrical line almost for free.

It was a glorious day when the transformer was installed and we had electricity 24/7 (except when the power was off, which happened rather frequently). No more running out to turn off the generator in a rainstorm before going to bed.

Uncertainty. This was the virus that kept people awake at night, and all too frequently, caused them to have sale and return to N America. The result of these sleepless nights produced some disturbing personality aberrations. For some it became difficult to think objectively. At times they made both premature and immature decisions.

I recall a particular incident. Our neighbor, Aristóteles Mesquita Lima, from whom some of the Colony land was purchased, still worked with an ox team and he had a trail he followed through the land that now belonged to the colonists. When roads were being built they followed the new boundary lines, and not the trail used by the neighbor. The question was: Would the trail, used maybe three or four times a year, need to be kept open, possibly fenced in as a corridor? Or should Aristóteles begin using the new roads, that would soon be in place?

Would we fence the oxen off? Or did they have the right-of-way to their old trail? We discussed it in meetings held for this purpose, in Sunday School, anyplace where two or three were gathered inside or out. The subject in itself was appropriate, but hardly the heat it created. In the end the ox cart had to follow the roads.

The uncertainty was endemic which mushroomed on the fateful day that changed everything. Denton Burns had lived in Mexico a number of years and spoke Spanish. Since Spanish and Portuguese are first cousins, as well as because of his organizational abilities, he became the ex officio Colony representative in governmental, legal, commercial and internal affairs, not to mention his skills as a carpenter. This was more than a full-time job, relegating his own projects to the waiting list. When the Pete Loewen family moved to Brazil, things improved for Denton. Pete, the logistical specialist, who with a five-minute

notice was ready to hit the road. Thus, on his frequent trips, Pete would take the wheel of the car and let Denton catch up on some much needed sleep, or to catch up on his paper work.

When tragedy struck and Denton and Pete were killed in a car accident some three years after the founding of the Colony, and Chris Stoltzfus was critically injured, we didn't have so much as a cemetery. In no way were we prepared to be set adrift by these two leaders. This is a story for another time, but suffice it to say, this did nothing to calm jittery nerves.

From something to nothing. In N America we had a source of income, a home, a congregation, relatives — in many cases both parents were still alive, and at times grandparents — comfort, reliable cars, good roads... the list can go on and on. But then there was the day in which the auctioneer repeatedly shouted, SOLD! SOLD! SOLD! as earthly goods were transformed into greenbacks. Part of them were then delivered to an international banker who transformed them into cruzeiros. The rest were carefully stashed away in a special emergency account for a rainy day.

When the US dollars finally were deposited in a newly opened account in the local Banco do Brasil, they had undergone the miracle of the loaves and fishes. The amount shown on the balance sheet was enormous. The bubble soon burst. The price charged for anything that needed to be purchased was also enormous. Then the day came in which the money in the bank was no longer sufficient for what needed to be bought. With a sickening feeling, the decision was reached that some dollars still in the US, stashed away for a rainy day, would have to be brought in. And then the scene was repeated. With each repeat the anxiety increased. If this kept up, soon there would no longer be enough dollars left for return tickets. It was decision time.

Arlo Hibner

I want to insert something here. When moving from one country to another, there will be new situations. One is what people eat. I remember the first hotel we stayed in when arriving in Brasília. The food served at breakfast was different from what we were accustomed to. I had never seen a papaya before in my life. What were we supposed to eat? The yellow part or the seeds? So I watched others to see how to go about eating papaya.

Brazil ¹⁸ News

Daniel talked about how the Lord led us to where we now are. I was young and had nothing to do with this decision. But now, 30 or 40 years later I can see that God placed us right in the middle of one of the most blessed places in Brazil. With present-day technology we can see maps with rain patterns. It is evident that when we buy land, we also buy the climatic patterns of that area.

Stephen Kramer

I want to talk about two memories that I have. I was six years old when we moved to Brazil. Right from the beginning an effort was made to learn the Portuguese language, especially by the younger ones. As I remember it, right in the beginning a lady came out from town and gave us some classes. It was mainly the women who studied, since the men were outside working. I remember that in the first class we learned the little chorus *O Povo do Senhor*. I hope we can sing it here sometime while we are together. It starts out: "The people of God are a happy people..."

The second thing I want to mention is the first time my dad (Daniel Kramer) had the introduction in an evening service in Portuguese. As I remember it, this happened during the first year we were year, even before the Pete Loewen and Reno Hibner families moved here. I don't remember much of what he said, but then before kneeling to pray, he said, "Vamos arar." Afterwards my buddies kept teasing me, since instead of saying "vamos orar," he said, "Vamos arar." Arar means to plow; orar means to pray. What I remember is that my dad wasn't ashamed to use the Portuguese he had learned. And thanks to God, we pulled through even that kind of mistakes.

Clifford Warkentin

Well, I thought I'd leave some thoughts here too. My wife and I are the only Canadian couple that came to Brazil. Some of them mentioned that you had to get used to different customs. Well I think we had to get used to more customs than anybody else maybe. But that never was a hindrance to me. I always thought that to learn somebody else's customs is a privilege.

What brought us to Brazil? When I was 25 years old and my wife was 24, we went to Mexico to serve in the mission field. I was the administrator of the hospital there in Rubio for seven years. And the other three years were dedicated to social work

and mission work. And we loved Mexico. We even considered staying in Mexico. But, when our children got to the age of 13, we realized we needed to have a church home. Not just go here and there. Then we went back to Manitoba, where I started farming. After the wheat price dropped to 80 cents a bushel we built a chicken barn for ten thousand layer hens. Then the prices of eggs dropped to 15 cents a dozen. I told the bank I couldn't make any payments. They said don't worry it will come yet. I told them afterward, I couldn't even pay interest and I'd have to work out to put bread on the table. They said no problem, we'll see you through. They saw us through and they even loaned us money to buy land here in Brazil.

So, what brought us here? I've always come to the conclusion it was the Lord that brought us here. Before Reno Hibner's moved to Brazil we were in Michigan and he brought a report on Brazil. And that touched my heart. And it just felt to me that it was the Lord that was touching my heart. To accept another culture wouldn't be hard for me because we spent ten years in Mexico and we liked it there. And then I made the Lord a promise I said we right now are in a financial stress. And if you bring us out of this and it's possible, then I'm willing to move. And then the times changed. And the price of eggs went up to 80 cents a dozen. When I put new chickens in, they went up to 95 percent laying. And six months later they still were laying 90 percent. This was about unheard of. Nobody had heard of such a thing before. I just felt it was the Lord. And then when we started planning, I told our deacon there. I had promised the Lord if He'd see us through financially we'd move to Brazil. But I told him, now we have it real good here, what shall we do now? He said better keep your promise and go. And I've never regretted it.

Then when we came here. I should say that before we came we bought land. Charlie Becker got some land for us right beside his place. And that's where we started out on that piece of land. And then when we went to get the land title through, the lawyer Jeronimo didn't get the work done fast enough for my likes. And I asked well can't I do it? Well sure he said you can do all of it. I said then make me a list and I'll do it. And I had it done in one week. The surprising thing was that I learned a lot of things that week. When they asked me at the tax department how much did you pay for that land? Then I

Brazil ¹⁹ News

told them he asked me again but how much did you pay. Then he shook his head and asked his partner there, what shall we do with this man? They talked among themselves, and I talked Spanish to them and I heard what they said to each other and I understood that too. And they were wondering what they would do with this man now. Ah he said we'll treat him just like one of us. We'll get him the same tax bracket as what our people here are paying. And so they gave me the credit, well they accepted me as one of them, and I had no problem doing my business in town and with the land titles and everything with my Spanish.

I just felt this way that the Lord was leading all the way. When we had that land, I found out that land did not produce. I had to call some businessmen from town to teach me how to get that land to produce. And to get the financing at the bank we had to have an agronomist to help us. And that one year I had a good agronomist and he gave me good advice. But some of those things he told me were things I'd never heard before, so I finally asked him if I could go to the farmers that are getting good crops and ask them how they were doing it. I said, "Is that all right?" Yes he said just go ahead. And I didn't know that the advice he gave me was the right advice and what the other farmers gave me was also very good advice. That man became a large land owner, that agronomist. I saw his farm and that was a good farm. He sold his farm here and moved to the state of Minas Gerais and bought a bigger farm yet.

I had yellow spots in my field for a number of years. I had put on too much lime. And then two of the main microelements had disappeared. But it was an agronomist in town just told me what to do. He said take tests and send in the soil and give it a complete analysis. I did that and there were a couple of microelements that I would have to put on. I did that a number of years, but I had to spray it on, because that was the fastest way to get it back to normal. And this agronomist that had given me that good advice met me one day and he asked me one day how did you get all those yellow spots out of there? Oh, I told him I sprayed the microelements that I had kind of neutralized it. Well, today that land out-produces the land I had in Manitoba. And for many years I never got to that amount of land that I was farming in Canada. And I never built a chicken barn here in Brazil either. But I always felt that the

Lord was taking care of us. I didn't need more than what I had. And when it comes to the schools, we had our private schools when we left Manitoba and we were very happy with them. And we are also very happy with the schools that we have here. I think we are going in the right direction.

Arlo Hibner

Will all those who lived here in 1980 please stand to your feet.

Okay Daniel [Holdeman], please sing your song for us.

I was thinking about when I was in the youth group. Those of you who were part of the Monte Alegre congregation at that time—which back then was the only congregation—will remember that we were around 60 youth. When we got up to sing, the rostrum was full and usually there were two or three rows of youth girls lined up in front down below. I have asked Daniel to come up with some of the songs we sang back then.

Daniel (Deke) Holdeman

This isn't about singing but I just wanted to say something. Maybe this is for the younger couples to appreciate how it is now. How it works to go have a baby. Well I'm not getting into details, I mean how to get to town. But we moved here in '73, we got married in '75 and in '76 we were expecting Karla. And it seemed like a long ways to town back in those days. Like they said there were still some gates to go through. It was raining about every day; it was in December. I had a VW bug. And my wife says "It's time to go to town. It was about in the middle of the night. Well so we went down to folks' and I told them we need to get to town." I think she thought we probably wouldn't make it because the roads were so bad. So mom and Dad jumped in their VW Kombi, and we took off in our bug. And back then the road came right by church here and then I don't know if you all remember how there was a road went down through Harold Dirks' place, it went across the Piripitinga stream. It was full of ruts, and muddy and I think it was maybe raining. The holes were so bad we bottomed out. Dad, he jumps out, gets on the back bumper and pushes, and finally we get through that spot. And this is all a new thing; we never had a baby before. And you know, how much time does it take, can we get to town on time? Well, so we

Brazil ²⁰ News

managed to get through there, and got to where the road turns to go down through there. So I turned the steering wheel but it didn't make any difference; we just kept going straight. The ruts were deep, so dad had to get out again push sideways on the front fender. Somehow we managed to get it out of that rut, and then I think he figured we could make it so we went on by ourselves.

Glenn Hibner

I remember when we were children and I was probably 15, 16 years of age. My dad would get a map of Brazil out, lay it on the floor, we'd get down on the floor and we'd look at this map of Brazil. That was the time when they made the first two investigation trips. On one of those trips they went to Paraguay and they found a piece of ground that one tree per hectare would pay for the ground. It was all woods mainly. But one tree per hectare would pay for the ground. They took a—I forget what you call it—a 90-day hold on that place. But when they got back to Brazil and back to the States, and they realized that the military situation in Brazil and in those areas was more favorable than in Paraguay. So they let that piece of ground go, they didn't buy it. João Souto said a few words a little earlier. He's got a writing that's up on the wall over there about the first time that the kombi group-load was here down at the falls. He was there. I found it interesting that he could present it from the other side. We see on this screen here the picture of a combine. Our first harvest that Dad planted soybeans, he must have thought it was going to do good, he planted about a hundred acres. I might be off on that, it might be half that, I'm not sure. And we harvested that, me running the steering wheel and Arlo and Calvin sacking it up as you see right there. The beans were short, we cut them in about half. It wasn't even enough to fill up our 11-11 Mercedes truck that we had. It probably half filled it. No place to sell beans here in town, so my wife and I took that load of beans down to Itumbiara and there we found a place that would, right by the river on the left hand side going, that would buy those beans. Thank you.

Arlo Hibner

The first two years we planted rice and there were no weeds. It was like the Garden of Eden. The only product we had to use was a fungicide for bruzone.

We thought that was paradise. We began to do custom work and the first thing we knew our fields were infested by a vigorous grass called custódio, as well as a plague of sandburs. No more Eden.

I remember when we started clearing land, usually by pulling a heavy disk over the small trees and shrubs. At that time Enos Miller lived in the house that used to belong to Earl & Johanna Schmidt on Eileen Koehn's place. Enos & Clara had a number of young girls. I'm not sure how old Duane was then, maybe still in diapers. What I remember clearly is how those girls worked just as hard as men. They would follow up gathering roots and the small trees. It was Rachel, Dolores and Esther. I'm not sure if Irene was old enough to help.

Enos had an 8BR Ford tractor with a front-end blade. He would go back and forth on the field shoving over the termite mounds that the disk didn't get. Some were so big that the tractor would get hung up on them and the wheels would spin. If one of these mounds would be hit with the tractor, at times it would almost tip over. I remember a time when one wouldn't budge, so Enos backed up and took a run at it. He managed to sheer it off in the middle and kept going until the hitch got stuck on top. I don't remember how he managed to free the tractor.

It wasn't only the Miller girls that worked like that. Practically all the youth, boys and girls, pitched in.

The combines didn't have a big grain bin like they have today. There was just a tiny bin with a spout coming out. Beside it was a platform where a worker would put a sack until it was full. He would then sew it up and place another sack under the spout. When four sacks were full, he would push them off the platform at once, so that there would always be four sacks together when another tractor and trailer would come by later to pick them up.

Towards evening, or in the evening, men with tractor and trailer would pick up the sacks of rice. In our case, Leonard Koepl and his three sons, Gene, Lee and Paul did this. My dad had bought a rice dryer. These bags would be emptied into the dryer, and once dry all the rice had to be sacked up again and stacked for storage.

But before we had the luxury of a dryer, we had a big cement slab where the rice would be spread out. During the day we stirred the rice with a large wooden rake. At the end of the day the rice would have to be re-sacked. The rice would be pushed into

Brazil ²¹ News

a pile in the center of the slab. Then with a shovel or rectangular bucket the bags would be filled. One person would hold the sack and another would do the filling. And finally they would have to be sewn up again. If it was dry it could be stacked up. If not, the following day this process would have to be repeated. Often we were short of people and then the three Loewen girls, Veleda, Keleda and Maxine would help us. They also helped lift the filled bags so we could get them on our heads and carry them to the stack being made. Back in those days we thought all this was entertaining.

Fertilizer came in 50 kg. bags. Usually we would call on our neighbors to help, as this was hard work. Usually there were a number of truckloads of fertilizer to be unloaded. Now with the big-bags this has changed. We enjoyed the work. At the end of the day we would go to the lake in front of Eileen's place and go swimming. Sometimes this was at ten or eleven o'clock at night. We didn't even think about the alligators or anacondas there might be in the lake.

You know, I got converted in the US before moving to Brazil. I thought this would be a wild place. I decided to make peace with the Lord so that if I was swallowed by an anaconda I would be saved. And once we got to Brazil we saw less snakes here than in Georgia. It is true that this kind of wildlife has increased with the passing of the years.

We enjoyed swimming in the Monte Alegre River. And there were other things we enjoyed, including pulling pranks on others. We men know that when we harvest grain it takes maybe 45 seconds for the straw to come out the back end of the combine. So once when we were harvesting where Tim Burns' place is now, we decided to have fun with Mary Burns. My brother Glenn was driving the combine and sometimes, instead of turning around in the field, he would drive out on the road. Naturally, the straw kept coming out of the back of the combine and we tried to convince Mary that we were harvesting just as much rice on the road as in the field. She caught on that we were trying to pull the wool over her eyes and almost kicked me off the combine where I was sacking grain. Later on we made peace.

In the beginning we made sheds with living quarters in the front. I think it was Wayne Miller who built the shed where Jake & Betty live now. Richard Mininger made one of these sheds too. For some reason these sheds didn't stand up to the

strong winds we get at times. Both of these sheds were blown down. Fortunately, they weren't living in them at the time of the storm.

After we got married I decided to build a shed with living quarters. We used cement blocks. I asked the builder to use plenty of cement in the construction. He agreed. We decided to make a trip to the US while the building was in progress. While we were in California we got a phone call from Aunt Selma, who is Jake and Ike Loewen's sister. Someone from Brazil had called her and asked that she tell us that our shed had been blown down by a strong wind. My brother Glenn saw it happen. He says the walls started to shake and then went down. Well, that is where we had hoped to live. Later on I thanked the Lord for this. It could have been so much worse if we had been living in it when it happened.

My dad had a shed with clay roof tile. Every year the wind would blow off some of the tile right in the middle of the shed. It never touched the ends. Everything would get soaked inside the shed. This happened when Pete & Edna were living in their shed. When Jacob & Tina Loewen lived here—in the house Carman & Celma live in now, lightning struck and cracked the asbestos tile covering their house. Everything got soaked inside.

We still have strong winds, but apparently our buildings are more resistant now, as something like this seldom happens anymore.

Priscilla, Mrs. Arlo Hibner

When we moved here, we thought it was quite an adventure. And Aunt Edna was so hospitable. They still lived in that shed there and they took us all in, and we were 20 people living in that shed in front of the house where Wallace lived. And some of the boys slept outside on top of the rice sacks, put some mattresses up there. Well, it was under a roof but it was on the porch part. And then after we moved into our shed, we had no inside bathroom; we had an outhouse. And we had to take showers on the outside veranda. And we had a little chicken house out back and a wolf liked to come and get at those chickens. And we didn't have electricity so my dad went out there with a flashlight and he says he shot that wolf with a flashlight. What he meant is he had a shotgun, but he had to hold the flashlight and the shotgun at the same time. But there were a lot of interesting times back then.

Brazil ²² News

Arlo Hibner

Deke (Daniel Holdeman), can you tell us what happens when a person starts driving an 820 John Deere tractor?

Deke Holdeman

Well we had just got here back in 1973, and it was just the first few days we were there at Uncle Pete's. And they had this 820 John Deere. I wasn't used to that, they were hard steering and had a hand clutch. And for some reason I decided I wanted to see how it drove around. Anyway, so out there in their yard I drove around. There was an outhouse not too far away there. And I was driving that thing, just tooling around there. Then I saw the outhouse was coming up, so I thought I better turn. And I didn't realize how sorry that thing was to turn. Well, you can imagine what happened next.

Mary Schultz

I want to tell a little bit about how things were when we first got here. We were coming on Dick Toews' truck. Before we got to the falls on the Monte Alegre River, where we would make camp, the truck gave out. I don't know if they went back to the truck for supplies, but Dick's had eight children and the Burns four, plus the four adults, made a total 16 of us. They fixed a little place with rocks to build a fire and so the first morning they made pancakes for us. We each got a pancake in turn. It took a long time and we were starved. It took so long to get our pancakes that we kept right on being hungry.

Suddenly the rocks around the fire began to explode. One of the boys suffered a small cut. It is a miracle that it wasn't a lot worse.

What I remember is when large cattle herds would cross the river below the falls. The cowboys would usually make camp there and grill meat on an open fire. It was delicious.

I didn't want to move to Brazil, but we were given such a welcome by the Brazilians that I soon loved the place. In 2013 my husband and I were naturalized. If Christians can have a bit of pride, then I believe I am justified in being just a little bit proud of being a Brazilian.

Dan Kramer

I am Daniel & Anna Kramer's second son. Mary talked about cattle herds crossing the river below

the falls. On one occasion an anaconda was shot and brought to camp. It was over five meters long. Emma Burns smoked the meat and stored it in large tin containers. We like the meat so much that we would embarrassedly ask her if we couldn't have just one more piece. I don't remember her ever refusing our request.

Then came the day that we were approaching the Rio Verdinho River bridge in a truck when an oncoming truck forced us off the road and into the river. This happened on April 1, 1991. All I can say it simply wasn't our time to leave this life. [Sorry the rest of the account did not record. cb]

Leo Dirks

We came to Brazil in 1968 and lived in temporary quarters in Anápolis. From there we returned to the US to get the proper documents for our permanent visas. Then in 1969 returned, this time in a half-ton pickup. There were my parents and five children, plus all our luggage. From the west coast of the US to the middle of Brazil took us 60 days. It would be impossible to go into details on what we experienced. Before leaving we took our pickup to the shop and had reinforced shocks and springs installed, as well as robust tires.

When we finally got here we drove to the falls and made camp. My dad already knew where our piece of land was located. So he and the rest of the family drove up to the head of the stream and then started back down on the other side. I walked up to Dick Toews' camp and they asked where my dad was. I told them that he was driving down on the other side of the stream to where he wanted to make our camp. They told me he would never make it. There was no road and there were trees everywhere. They saddled a horse and gave me an ax with instructions to cross the stream and help open a path for my dad to get through.

It turned out they didn't need my help. By the time I crossed the stream my folks were already parked at the spot they planned on making camp. That is where we later built our house, the same one that the Divino Ismael family now lives in.

For us children everything was an adventure. I learned Portuguese before my dad and he would take me to town to interpret for him as he did his business. Things were really tight in the first years and I remember that for seven years I had to go with my

Brazil ²³ News

dad to the bank and explain we didn't have enough money to pay off our loans. That instilled in me a real fear of making debts, which I still have.

Truly, Brazil has been a special place for us. I love it here. It is one of the few places in the world where farmers can be quite sure of raising two crops a year without irrigation.

We were so fortunate to move to a place where we were received with open arms. And with our patchwork Portuguese in the beginning, like Charles already mentioned, they didn't always understand what we were trying to say. Nor did we really understand what they were trying to tell us. I remember so well the incident right in the beginning with a neighbor on the other side of the Monte Alegre river. Our departed brother, Enos Miller, was talking with him one day and this neighbor, Jerônimo Honório, invited Enos over for Sunday dinner. Enos probably asked, "All of us?" meaning the entire family. Jerônimo answered, "Todo mundo" (the whole world), which he probably meant to mean, "Yes, your whole family." Enos probably understood "the whole world" to mean the whole community. So he invited everyone to go to Jerônimo's place for Sunday dinner. But on Sunday, when vehicle after vehicle drove up, it was very apparent that the meal prepared wasn't for "the whole world." Not to worry. Soon the housewife and the workers' wives were busy at work preparing a feast for "the whole world."

Even after my folks moved back to the US, every time I mentioned Brazil he would get a warm, lonesome look on his face. If it would have been only up to him, he would have never moved back.

Sidney Schmidt

First of all I want to tell you that my parents, Earl & Johanna Schmidt, would have loved to be here today. They sent greetings to you all, as did my dad-in-law, Duane Holdeman.

I grew up feeling it was important to always go to church. There was this one cold Sunday morning when I tried to start the car, but it wouldn't start. So I tried the tractor, but neither would it start. Then I remembered the combine. I turned the key on it and it started right up. When I pulled up to the house, my wife, Irene, hardly knew what to think. She went back in and got our little boy, Sheldon, and soon we were on our way to church on the combine. A number of years later Charles printed an article

about this in Brazil News. His comment was that he was quite sure that the Schmidt family reaped a blessing by going to church on a combine.

Those of you who were here in beginning will remember how that people came to services on Sunday in cars, trucks, tractors, on horseback, or horse and cart, like the Dan Coblenz family. Gasoline was really expensive, so when Harold Dirks would drive up in the white pickup they used to come to Brazil, he would shut off the motor before getting to church and coast the rest of the way. It helped to save gas.

We now live in Pryor, Oklahoma. One day the local New Holland dealer visited one of our church services. He said that he spent some time in Brazil when he was a boy back in the sixties, living on a farm near Anápolis. He said that he was on the plane that had a number of brethren who were coming to Brazil to look for land.

Susan Kramer

I was nine years old when we moved to Brazil. The very first ones who came here learned things that made it easier for us when we came. At that time the families who were here were: Denton & Emma Burns, John & Alma Penner, Dick & Frieda Toews, Charles & Faith Becker, Harold & Emma Dirks, and all their families.

My dad brought a tent along in our baggage which we set up where the Dick Toews family had set up camp. What really made things difficult were the constant rains. I don't know how my mom made it through those days. And to complicate things even more, there was only one crude outhouse for a whole bunch of people. Not being accustomed to the climate and food, there was a lot of tourist sickness for that one shanty. We had to take a lot of the awful tasting paregoric to try to get better.

I remember Frieda Toews making pancakes on a griddle over an open fire for her family every morning. It smelled so good.

There were swarms of pesky gnats that would cause infected sores where they bit us. We used gentian violet to try to alleviate the itching and help them heal.

The only light came from kerosene lanterns. Everything seemed so very dark at night. We missed drinking milk so much, so my mom would fix us some chocolate milk by mixing a bit of powdered milk and chocolate into a kettle of water. Also, in

Brazil ²⁴ News

the US we didn't eat rice, so we weren't real thrilled with our daily diet of rice here.

We soon moved to the tract of land by the falls that belongs to my folks. My dad built a crude shelter out of a kind of wood that soon rotted. We put our tents under them to keep things dryer when it rained. We children thought this all was a real adventure.

What we didn't think was an adventure was carrying all our dirty clothes down to the stream to wash them in the running water. I remember my dad making a table that we had under our shelter where we could sit and have our meals. Then there was the part of buying animals. We gave all our cows names, and even the chickens.

There were some cultural differences we didn't understand. In the US if someone invites you for a meal, you know they really mean it. Here if you get to someone's place at mealtime and they say, *Vamos comer* — Let's eat — it is a form of courtesy. If they really mean for you to eat with them they will repeat it and insist. Now as I look back I can see that when we went to Pedro Pão's place on the other side of the river and they invited, they were being polite. But when we would take them up on the invitation, they would have to catch a chicken, butcher it, and prepare a full meal for us. Today I am ashamed of some of the mistakes we made in the beginning. But on the other hand, I always remember the graciousness of our neighbors and I am so glad that my parents had the conviction to move to Brazil.

Maria Mesquita

I want to tell you that the person who just told about catching and butchering a chicken, this was done from the heart. Often I would serve *pamonha* (similar to Mexican tamales) to visitors who came to our place. Sometimes there were hardly enough places and silverware to go around, but it was all done from the heart. At different times we were invited into your homes. Once when someone in our family was sick and needed to go to Goiânia for special treatment, Mark Loewen went with us. We were so thankful for this.

I remember the time that Pete Loewen, Mark's dad, came over and it was complicated because he didn't speak Portuguese and I didn't speak English. I understood that he wanted to talk to my husband. I got it across to him that my daughters would go with him and show him where Ademar was. But

then, when I saw them leave with that man with an enormous beard in a jeep, I thought, "What have I done? Those are my daughters who left with him!" But it was too late to back out. But I had faith that God would take care of them. And it all worked out. Soon Pete had everyone laughing as they went to where Ademar was.

Arlo Hibner

Just a comment on what Maria said. When we were given the extraordinary Brazilian hospitality, we always felt it really was done from the heart. It seemed that so much of what these people did for us was from the heart. Somehow they knew how to deal with these "gringos" who were unaccustomed to their ways. Yes, often we didn't understand each other, but God seemed to always straighten things out for us.

What I want to say is that God has blessed the people who live in this community, together with our Brazilian friends. I can say the same thing of *seu Aristote* [Aristóteles], *seu Ildefonso's* dad. I remember *seu Saulo Diolino da Silva*, a great person. I just wanted to say thank you to everyone. Even after 50 years, I still am grateful for their hospitality.

André Passos

First of all I want to say that I am thankful for this opportunity that God has given me. My dad, Sebastião Passos, moved to Bert Coblentz's place in October of 1981, when I was one year old. He was acquainted with the Colony people before this when he worked at Fazenda Cascata with Myron Kramer. I believe from the bottom of my heart that dad didn't become acquainted with the people from here by chance. God had a reason for this. As I think of the fact that this Colony has existed for 50 years, I understand all the hardships people went through. I commented to a brother today that I wish we could somehow share in what they went through. Anyway, we all have reasons to thank God for all this.

Mark Loewen

I was asked to talk about the mission outreach here in Brazil. I lived here for 35 years and now am living in the US in the state of Iowa. For me it is a privilege to be here today. As I already mentioned when I talked earlier, the first families who moved here believed that it was in God's plan that they

Brazil ²⁵ News

spread the Gospel here. I know that not all had the same vision on this. And it is true that there are those who openly say they didn't come here to do mission work, but to raise their family. And there may have been other reasons.

Mention was made of João Souto, who is my brother-in-law. The first Brazilian to be baptized here was Nita, Mrs. Carlos Becker, then João Souto, followed by Denise, Charles & Faith's daughter. Maria de Barros was the sixth one to become part of the church. None of this can be considered mission work. It came about because of their contact with the church.

There were some definite activities. I wish I could remember the evangelistic meetings we held in town. I know that in June of 1977 we held meetings in the sports Arena. Min. Dennis Unruh was the evangelist. We also held meetings in a large hall in the Eugênio Jardim school. I think it was Min. Richard Mininger who preached in this school. Meetings were held on Presidente Vargas Avenue, the main street in Rio Verde. At that time it belonged to the Veloso brothers. Open services were also held in some of the main town squares. I know that in one case a Christmas program was presented. A number of our members were converted as a result of these meetings.

In 1975 a vehicle was purchased to haul to Rio Verde tracts that were printed in Goiânia. It was also used to transport people from town to our services at Monte Alegre, since we didn't have a church in Rio Verde at that time. This project developed during the four years we lived in Rio Verde. It began with only two or three people, but the number increased to where we had to make a list and those who went the last Sunday had to stay home so others could go the following week. They would have lunch in different homes, although I remember that quite often they ended up in my mother and sisters' place. I know they did this out of a heart of love, but as I think back I can see it was really a burden for them at times.

After we left the tract work in Rio Verde, Paul & Rachel Yoder took our place. Soon after this an old house was purchased and the internal walls removed so we could have services in town. I think that was in '80 or '81. So many people attended our services that soon the house was too small. The Monte Alegre congregation, together with the N America mission board, decided to build a new church. I think this was in '83.

Now I want to talk a little about the work in Goiânia. Many of us know Jerônimo Barros, who has been the deacon here in Rio Verde for years, and his wife Maria. In a sense, she was our first missionary in Goiânia. As I understand it, they moved to Goiânia for Jerônimo to find a better job. In reality, I believe that he was fleeing conviction. Once she said through tears, "It seems I am so far from the church and am unable to do anything for God."

Different ones went there to hold services in their home. Once Maria told about a woman who was on her deathbed. Different times she talked to her about salvation, but it seemed she wasn't understanding. She prayed with her and when the woman died she was holding Maria's hand. She feels certain the woman found the Lord and died saved.

Jerônimo was working as a city bus driver. He and Maria learned to know Antônio and Maria, who began to attend the home services. They both were converted and continue to be faithful members in the church, now at the Monte Alegre Congregation. That is why I say they were the first missionaries in Goiânia. On March 1 of 1985 Dan & Marlene Kramer were officially stationed in Goiânia as missionaries.

Wanderlúcia Maia

I want to talk a little about the mission project that began in Cruz, in the northeastern state of Ceará. It all started with a tract. I should explain that I am not really from Cruz. I am from São Luís do Maranhão and in 1988, when I was 15 years old, I moved to Cruz. The following years I found a tract published by the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite that someone had tossed to the ground. We had a deep thirst for spiritual literature. My cousin André, who was with me at the time, and I sat down and wrote a letter to the tract center in Rio Verde. At that time Calvin Hibner was the tract superintendent and answered all letters. We exchanged letters for some time. I remember exactly when I got converted. After that Calvin & Donna Hibner, the tract workers, together with Keleda and Velda Loewen and Caleb & Joan Holdeman drove to the northeast in a VW Kombi. They had told us that some time they planned on paying us a visit. But amongst ourselves we decided they would probably never show up. I was living with my uncle and aunt at the time and they weren't receptive to other religions. I was at work when my cousin showed up and said, "Some Americans showed

up and dad is really upset.” Then, a little later, they showed up where I was at work. The visit didn’t go well because I couldn’t leave my work to talk with them. So I saw very little of them. They distributed tracts in our town. Being market day there were a lot of people on the streets who received tracts.

Mark & Susan Dirks were sent to Cruz as missionaries on April 1, 1990. At the time I was 17 years old and there were various people who showed interest in the church. I don’t know why, but in the end so few of us actually went through with it. Right now I am the only one of all those who is in the church.

Arlo Hibner

Just an interesting little bit of information. In Acaraú there is a place called Taverna do Paulo. It has become a favorite place for visitors to have a meal, because in reality it is a restaurant. It just goes to show us that you can’t always judge a place by its name. Things were really complicated at first because Wanderlúcia’s uncle was really opposed to the church. Also, what is interesting is that even though the first contact in the area was in Cruz, the mission was established in Acaraú. One of the brethren married a Monte Alegre girl, Eliamar, Cláudio & Susan’s adopted daughter. As mentioned, the first missionaries there were Mark & Susan Dirks and John & Linda Stoltzfus. From there the work spread to Patos, in the state of Paraíba. Paulo Rufino could tell us more about this.

Frank Coblentz

My parents, Sam & Erma Coblentz, were the first missionaries to go to Patos. I was 14 years old. When we went, there were four who were interested there in Patos. We got there June 2, 1992. It seemed like the work was fairly easy. They had already rented a building, and we just went right in to having services. Paulo Rufino was not from Patos; he was from another area. There were several others that were interested but there were only four from Patos. The first baptized there were Rosimeire Mendes de Souza and Eduardo Vieira. Eduardo married Susan Koehn and they have lived in Canada for quite a few years.

Arlo Hibner

We have a mission in Ruilândia, state of São Paulo. Our first member was sister Valentina. I wanted so much for her to be here today. About all I know

about the beginning in the Ruilândia mission is that her husband found a tract on the roadside. Maybe someone else here can give us more details.

Mim Dirks

It seems that Valentina had a special calling from God. Since she was just a girl she was in search of something. Soon after she got married one of her aunts asked her to go with her to a healer. She said she was a Christian and prayed for people. Valentina asked that she pray for her. The woman asked why she was asking for prayer and added that she couldn’t pray for her. She said it wouldn’t be right.

Valentina was a Catholic at the time and in her living room she had a little table covered with an Italian cloth that her grandmother had given her. There was always a candle burning. One day the burning candle caught the cloth on fire and everything burned up except for the image of a saint. This to her was proof that the saint had power. But none of this brought peace to her heart.

Then one day her sister-in-law told her, “Valentina, what you need is to get converted.” She thought a lot about this. It was about this time that João, her husband, found the tract on the roadside. As it turned out, it was because of this tract that she got converted. Then her mother suggested again they go to the healer. When they got there, the healer said, “Why are you here? I can’t pray for you. You are not one of us.” This strengthened her faith. When she found out the church was going to send missionaries there, she was overjoyed. She said, “I thought they would forget about us over here and I would have to serve God alone.”

Arlo Hibner

Thank you. Yes, we have a number of dear sisters in Ruilândia. They have gone through many tribulations.

Now, back to the Patos Mission. Our sister Silvânia sent us a letter telling how she was inspired by a Sunday School lesson. She said...

“I was meditating on God’s plan for us and how that with the passing of time we can understand them more fully. I thought about the many youth who do not understand the way of the Lord, and it seems they don’t even try. I noticed how different the life of my cousin, Paulo Rufino, was. He seemed so calm and at the time I didn’t know he was walking

Brazil ²⁷ News

with Jesus. The years went by and I found out that he and some youth were gathering to talk about the Bible. I wasn't interested because the Bible wasn't for people like me. More time went by and my cousin Paulo got married, as did I. Life continued, but very different for each of us. Now I lived closer to the Church of God in Christ and even though I didn't know the Lord, I admired the peace I felt in my cousin's home. I wanted that peace, but believed it wouldn't be possible for me to have a life like that. I enjoyed so much being near the people of God. I observed how they did things and learned how to rear my children in the right way with love. But I never imagined that later on I, my mother and sisters could become part of this people. I began to understand that the church came to Patos so that our lives could be illuminated. I want to thank the Lord for bringing us the light from such a distant place. I want to thank all the brethren who had a part in all this. It has been a real blessing for us. God bless you all."

Stephen could have told the beginning of this story when three missionary couples began studying the language. They set up a classroom in Fortaleza, with Stephen as the instructor. The couples were Dean & Deedee Penner, Mark & Susan Dirks and John and Linda Stoltzfus.

So many things happened on the missions and we don't have time to tell everything. But I am thinking about something else. I am thinking about how big the church here in Brazil would be today if all those who came to the church would still be with us. We could talk about the church in Pirenópolis, that used to be a functional congregation, but today no longer exists.

We could talk about those who came to the church before the place of worship was built in Rio Verde. There were so many who began with us, but today are no longer members. When they learned to know the church it was like they had found an oasis in the desert. But time went on and not all stayed with us. We have a deep longing for those who left us to return.

The work continues. We are distributing tracts. This can result in mission posts. We want these missions to turn into congregations. For this to happen we need to consecrate our lives so we can be of service to God. This is important. There are so many souls who are needing the gospel.

We know how the work began. Brethren from N

America moved here looking for a safe place to raise their children and opportunities to make a living. We call this mission work through colonization. Some of these brothers and sisters dedicated their lives to the work of evangelization. We now have a great work that needs to be continued. We may think we don't know how to be a missionary, but I learned when we went to the mission that this is a way the Lord uses to teach us how to be a missionary, to sanctify us and give us a vision of the work. We are living in a world that needs the gospel and we have something to offer. We want to see lives transformed. This creates in my heart a desire to serve my God and serve Him better.

Dan Kramer

What I am going to say is not anything new for anyone. But, at times we forget. As human beings, we are weak and limited in our way of thinking. Sometimes we try to put numbers to our success. But I want to suggest that when we think of our missions we don't rate our success in numbers. We need to remember that one soul is worth more than the whole world.

I want to talk a bit about the mission in Goiânia. When I thought of using numbers I lost courage. I want to briefly tell about two situations. One involves an elderly woman who was on her death bed when we learned to know her. We of course talked with her. The next day one of the neighbor children came over and told us, "Grandma Maria got converted." But when we got the news she was already in her coffin. Her family testified that she died in peace.

The other situation is about a neighbor on the other side of the street from where we lived. It is similar to the one I just told. He too was on his death bed and we were with him the day before he died. We asked those who were with him about his death. They said he simply raised his eyes to heaven and left this life. We believe he was saved. That is why numbers are unable to tell the success of a mission effort. We must live our lives in such a way that we can carry the light of the gospel to those who are in need.

Daniel Kramer

What we have heard this evening has stirred my heart. We had the privilege of spending some time on the Acaraú mission, the Patos mission, as well as the Goiânia mission. What Arlo just said has inspired

me and I wish I could go back to those places again. I think of Jonas who is here tonight. His wife is my brother's granddaughter.

Last Sunday I had a birthday and according to the calendar I have turned 84. I no longer am able to go back and visit the places we were on the mission, even though I wish so much we could. So I put out a plea to the younger ones. Open your hearts to the Lord. Become involved in His work. I know it does no good for me to wish I were young again and still go out.

When I got converted as a youth, I never thought of myself as a missionary. But in a sense, when I was converted, my sins were forgiven and I learned to know the Holy Spirit, I became a missionary. Then as I worked with people, as I met people, each one became a mission field to me. There are those with whom I came in contact who today are ministers and deacons. Do you realize, brothers and sisters, that if you are a converted Christian tonight, you are a missionary. There is work for you to do!

For you young married couples, your first mission post is your own family. If you are going to be successful on the mission, you first must be a success right where you are now. My heart burns when I think about this. Open your hearts to God. That is something that all of us, by the grace of God, can do. It is part of our daily life, of our devotional life. We need to read the Bible and then pray for the mission effort.

Frank Burns

Maybe I'm out of place talking here. I'm not one of those that moved down here a long time ago. But I was probably involved in this movement before most of you were. Reno Hibner came to Hesston for revivals and during those meetings he talked to my dad about coming down here. And a lot of people came over to our place to visit about Brazil. So I listened to everything that was said and I really enjoyed it. But then I went to service before the move down here. And then I got married and after we got out of service, we decided to come down here for a visit. We came down here in 1970. And the day before we were supposed to leave, the travel agency called and said Pan-Am canceled all our flights. I wondered what we were going to do. We got another flight to Brasília. It was raining when we walked off of the plane and there was a bright red carpet there for us to walk on.

Soldiers on each side of it standing at attention with their guns pointing in the air. I don't know if that's the way they did back then, if everybody experienced that I don't know; it was quite a feeling. We got a taxi to Hotel Nacional, to change some money and then we went to the bus station and bought a ticket to Goiânia. And when we got to Goiânia, we had a wait and bought tickets to Rio Verde. When we finally arrived in Rio Verde, it was completely dark already and it was just dirt everywhere. Presidente Vargas Avenue was all dirt and the bus station was just a tiny place. And then we had to find our way out to the colony. In Spanish I explained what we wanted. They got us a taxi driver and he came there and said "I don't know how to get out to the American colony." Everybody was helping and they were talking to different people and finally they found a man that said he had been out there. So we got the taxi and headed out, opening gates every little bit and just seemed like we were going in circles out in the middle of the woods. And we drove into the fazenda and it was Manoel Norberto's place. And they were all excited when they found out I was Faith's brother. So they told the taxi driver how to get to the colony. And I didn't have a lot of faith that we were going to find anything as it was just a trail. But all of a sudden we saw a little lantern so we pulled in there and here it was John Penner's house. And Eldon and I got on the back of the pickup and Jolene got in the front with Alma and John and they took us to folks' place. And I think they were pretty surprised. This is what I was thinking about.

Richard Mininger

My name is Richard, but I like my name better in Portuguese, so while I'm here in Brazil, if you call me Ricardo I'll be very pleased. Yesterday we heard about the difficulties the Americans had when they first came here and we didn't get in on some of those most severe difficulties. We came in 1975 and didn't have electricity or telephones. There was no road to the place where we built. Our place was down here on this side of Doug Ferrell's place.

I want to tell you the other side of the story, how good we had it and how good the people treated us. I'm thinking of something that we might not be so aware of and that is of the difficulties that the Brazilians had with us. Because we didn't know the language, we didn't understand the culture. They

were too nice and polite to tell us about this. But we moved here in 1975. We moved because this is where we wanted to live. We returned to the US in 2000, so we were here 25 years. We returned largely because of the health of my first wife. We had very good doctors here, that wasn't the problem. But there were other things we were thinking about that we thought would be better for her there. The fact is she only lived one year after we returned to the US.

One of the first notable things that happened is that those living here before us built a shed that we lived in for some time.

Silvestre was a close neighbor. One day he drove up in a jeep and he was dragging something that I thought was a long pole. When he got in there closer we saw it was an anaconda snake. And I measured it and it was 17 feet long, and 27 inches around – that's nine inches through it. Sylvester could be somewhat of a joker, so he said he wanted to sell it to me. He said all the Americans could eat off of it. But we didn't buy it.

Okay I want to say that I thoroughly enjoyed our time here in Brazil. I enjoyed the farming, the mission work, the social life, the friends I made in town, and I looked forward to going to town. And for me part of going to town was to drink cafezinho. That was really good.

Now just a few things that happened and people, the Brazilians, helped so good. My mother came to visit us and we picked her up in São Paulo, in that big city. We stopped at one of the main shopping centers, Shopping Norte, and we went to McDonald's there. Then we were going to look for a hotel. We had no idea where we would go in the big city of São Paulo.

Would you believe that a lady soon appeared where we were sitting in McDonald's and she happened to be Otto Baumgart's wife, the owner of Shopping Norte, one of the largest in São Paulo? She said, "You follow me; you can stay at our place tonight." We stayed there for night and she gave us breakfast. She wouldn't have it any other way. You know these rich people have guards and people that work for them. The next morning she said, "This man, my worker, he's going to lead you to the airport." So we'd be sure and get there.

And I can think of so many things. You know the machinery dealers in town. We farmed so every once in a while we would buy equipment and I can

remember especially one case at the Valmet *** (misspelled?) dealer. I was interested in buying a piece of equipment and we was talking about the price and debating how we were going to pay for it. You know what that man finally said to me? He asked me a question. "What will work for you?" He was willing to consider my terms. Another time I think it was Paulo Silva. He put down on a paper the down payment and the following payments. Then Paulo wanted to know if this would work for me.

Another thing I learned by their culture, you know we Americans come here and think that our way is the best way. I think I picked that growing up that there is no country like the USA, that it is the best one in the world. But I learned some good things in Brazil and I really appreciate it. Many times we would go to town. We were in a hurry and had a lot to do. We would stop at the office where they bought our soybeans, stick our head in the door and ask, "What's the price of soybeans today?" That was not nice. That was not polite. They have a better way, you do some small talk, they ask you about your family and after you visit for a little bit you get around to your business. I remember that lesson until today.

And I could tell you so many things, so I will just say it this way: I love the Brazilian people, I appreciate and value the culture, I have learned things. And when they talked about the missions here, we had so many good times. I think I was to all the mission places like Ruilândia, Goiânia, Acaraú, I was to Patos once or twice and we just had a lot of good times.

So I'm going to close with this, there is another thing that happened that really enriched my life and you see if you can figure it out. I'm an American. My wife was an American; my first wife, Edith. Ok I'm to sidetrack just a little bit. Some people talked about the difference in cultures, how it made a problem. It only made a problem because we let it make a problem. My wife Edith did not change over to all the Brazil ways. She didn't know the language that well and I don't either. But she loved the Brazilian people it was hard for her to leave here. Sometimes she would say to me we need to go to town and visit the people there. She meant the members. And I don't know what you picked up, but I perceived by the way they responded, they loved her. So I don't think that culture made a problem.

Okay, we're going to hook onto this thing again.

All of my children are Americans and this is what has greatly blessed and enriched my life I have three grandchildren that are Brazilians. That are pure Brazilians. I have two grandchildren that are “Brasicanos” (half Brazilian, half American). I have one great-grandchild that is Brazilian. I have two great-grandchildren that are “Brasicanos). Thank you.

Tony de Lima

I think most of you know me. My story begins when I came to this area in 1971. I began working for a man who lived close to the road to the Colony. He was our sister dona Otávia’s son, Luiz Duarte’s brother. When he went broke I was out of a job and looking for work. Dona Otávia said she would find work for me. She asked me, “Would you like to work for the Americans?” I answered, “Yes, of course.” She said she would find me a job, that when Harold Dirks came through she would talk with him. And that is what happened, when he came through in his pickup on his way to town, she stopped him. She came right to the point. “Do you need someone to work for you?” The look on his face made it plain he wasn’t understanding. So she repeated her question and told him that he should stop on his way back from town and that I would have my suitcase packed ready to go with him. He nodded his head and said okay.

I was ready to go when Harold came back from town. We placed my suitcase in the pickup bed and left for his place. When we got there it was towards evening. Supper was ready and I ate with them. But it was an uncomfortable situation. I didn’t know them and we didn’t understand each other. When it came time to go to bed, they fixed a bed for me in their shop. They blew up an air mattress for me to sleep on, placing it on two benches placed side-by-side. I thought to myself that this should make for a comfortable night. But I was wrong. I had never slept on an air mattress and wasn’t used to the floating sensation each time I turned. The light was on and I saw the place was infested with rats. They were running so close to each other that it seemed they would be bumping together. All of a sudden the lights went out. They had turned the generator off and I was in the dark. I could no longer see the rats, but I could hear them! I felt like I would be falling off my “bed” and I was unable to sleep.

Finally the day dawned and they called me for breakfast. As I remember, that morning they served

pancakes, something I had never eaten before. But, I soon found I liked their kind of food. We had devotions, which also was something entirely new for me.

After devotions we went to work. They gave me a machete and told me to cut milo heads and put them in a wheelbarrow. I thought that was really an odd way to do things. It almost seemed a joke, but I told myself that if that is what my boss wants, that is what I am going to do. When the wheelbarrow was full, I would dump it on the shed floor and go back for another load. I spent the entire day in this strange activity. I asked myself if the next day would be like this one. What really made things complicated was that I didn’t understand anything they said. It made me nervous. I got to the place that I asked myself what I was doing there if I couldn’t understand my boss. Maybe I should find a different job. I didn’t even know if they were satisfied with my work, but decided I would keep on trying.

The next day my boss, using sign language, told me I would be doing something different. It helped that his boys knew a little Portuguese and could explain some things. He told Leslie, his oldest son, that he was to lay up some brick pillars for a shed they were building. I had worked as a mason’s helper for years, but I couldn’t understand their way of laying brick. Instead of a plumb line, they used a long level. Each time they laid a brick, they checked with the level. It was really slow. I watched, but didn’t say anything. By the time the pillars were about a meter high, they were as crooked as could be. I think that he called his dad to take a look. I couldn’t understand the conversation between the two, but it was evident that he told his dad he was quitting.

Harold came to me, put his hand on my shoulder and indicated that now I should take over. With the help of the boys to interpret, I told him that if Leslie couldn’t do it, neither could I. He said that I was older than his son and that I could do it. So I asked him what would happen if I wasted some material. He said it was okay and that I was to take over. That is what I did. In the beginning I worked even slower than Leslie since I had to learn how to work with their tools. Several days later the pillars were laid up. He told me, “You said you didn’t know how to do it, but did it!” That to me was a challenge. It taught me something I have never forgotten. If you don’t try you will never know if you are able to do it. The only way is to try and find out.

Brazil News

Some years later I was working with John Unruh in his shop. We had a really difficult job to do. I told John, "Well, let's try it." He told me, "Tony here we don't try, we DO it." I learned another lesson. To get something done one has to put forth an effort.

Then one year Harold rented some land from a neighbor called Jorge. It was a ways from where we lived, but one evening I decided to spend the night at home. He had a tractor, a CBT1000. It was getting dark and the tractor had no lights. When I got near home, where Daniel Kramer lives, I had to cross the stream that runs between the Kramer's and Emma's. I think the stream was probably a half meter deep and there was a little bridge for crossing. They were working on the bridge and the decking was off. I would have to cross on the beams. By now it was around 8:00 o'clock and really dark. I couldn't see, so I got off the tractor and went to the front to see if my wheels were lined up with the beams. I don't know how I did it, but I managed to cross without slipping off into the stream. The only explanation I have is that God was there and helped me.

So I went through a lot of difficult times, but they are good memories I have today. Together with the Dirks family I learned a lot. When I stop to think about why I didn't quit right in the beginning, I realize God was directing my life. It was His hand that kept me there. And today I am thankful for this.

Freda Kramer

My parents were Leonard and Moselly Koepf. They moved here in 1972. I remember during the couple of years before moving whenever we would be together with the Loewen family it was all plans about moving to Brazil. We had some pretty wild imaginations about how it was going to be; maybe we would have to live in a stockade to keep jaguars off or I don't know what all we thought it might be. But anyway when we did come, I remember Uncle Pete was at the airport to pick us up there in Brasília. It was early morning and he took us to a hotel for breakfast, and there were different things there that we had never eaten before, but we expected things to be different. One thing I do remember is that he ordered guarana soda, even though it is not a common breakfast food. And it was the Antartica already that brand, but anyway it said champagne on it. He was wanting my mom to think it was an alcoholic beverage so she'd get really worried.

Well I don't remember details about the whole trip out, I remember it was asphalted up to Goiânia and after that it was dirt. But I do remember that it was dark before we got to Rio Verde, and Uncle Pete showed us when the lights of Rio Verde were appearing, we could see it down the road a ways, and it was a very cheering sight because it seemed like a long trip. When we got to Rio Verde it was Saturday evening and he took us to a restaurant for supper there in Rio Verde. And then we went out to the farm and got to their place about nine o'clock in the evening. And it was pretty awful nice to see our cousins and be around people that we had known.

So then of course the next day was Sunday we went to church. It was 17 of us in their VW Kombi. The church was down there at what we called Eldon's shed. I guess it was Dick Toews' shed. And I do remember that since the church was so full, Dennis' mom's family, Fanny and Bert's and Chris' had just moved there about ten days before us or hardly that long. And so I sat on the very back bench, which there wasn't a door in the middle of the back, the door was on the left side and at that time the men sat on the left instead of the right because the right side had a door for the ladies to get out with the babies. And the ushers usually sat on the back bench next to the door and Uncle Pete was one of the Ushers, and Dennis Kramer was one of the other ushers.

I remember that when we came home from church, while Sunday dinner was being prepared uncle Pete and the boys would be singing. And I also remember different times us youth girls going to the church and painting windows for the new church building or varnishing benches. And when it was time for us to move onto our place, I remember that it was on my birthday, my sixteenth birthday. Carman was out there with his well-drilling rig digging a well for us. And my dad had not been a builder nor a farmer, I believe the building we moved into was a little bit strange by most standards around here. It was made with 5 sturdy posts along each side, they were about shoulder high, sank into the ground. And then it was an a-frame.

In the beginning we had some hard times, cooking on a fire outside, we lived on a dirt floor up until the time I got married but lots of good memories. And I also felt very welcomed by the Brazilian people. I know that my feeling was that I was born to come here this was where I was supposed to live.

Tim Burns

My mom named me Timothy, but almost everyone calls me Timóteo. The people in town pronounce my name as Tímoti (TEE-mow-chee), as does my brother-in-law Charlie. And of course there are those who call me Tio (TEE-oh) Tim (Cheen) — Uncle Tim. Other names used on me I won't mention here.

I was eight years old when we moved to Brazil. In the States I studied in a public school. One day when I got home from school I went to my room to change clothes. Then I heard something strange from downstairs. We often spoke Spanish at home, but now I heard a voice speaking something that sounded like Spanish. I ran downstairs to see what was going on. I found out that my dad had bought a record player and was playing a course on how to learn to speak Portuguese. That is my first memory of our intentions to move to Brazil.

I could tell a lot of different things, but I want to mention some that stand out to me.

When we moved to where the Colony is now, called Fazenda Monte Alegre, there was nothing. I mean absolutely nothing. There were no houses and much less electricity. There was no telephone nor roads, only a fisherman's trail. We made our first camp near the Monte Alegre River. Since I have always loved adventure, to me this all was a big party.

After we had made our temporary camp my parents said they were going to look around for a place to build our house. They crossed a stream and when they found a place they liked, my mom, who always wore an apron, tied it to a tree to mark the spot. The following day we drove around the head of the stream to the place folks had chosen. Since there was no road and there were some small trees, when dad couldn't go around them he would run over them. The Kombi, of course, left tracks, so we could find our way back again.

The first thing we did was to clear a spot with hoes where we wanted to build the house. The temporary shelter was made of some very thin Masonite. It got real cold at night and we would build a bonfire outside where we could warm up and drink some hot tea to try to warm up. Being in the dry season, there were no clouds in the sky.

We enjoyed going to Manoel Norberto's fazenda, the man from whom we bought our land. He told my dad, "Seu Denton, get ready the whole countryside is going to burn. As we get to the end of the

dry season, everything is set on fire. Then when the rains come the grass sprouts and makes good pasture for the cattle."

Then one evening we saw the sky out toward Manoel Norberto's place glowing red. My dad and Charlie and Mim and I jumped into the Kombi and drove to the woods near the house to get some firewood for cooking. Dad and Charlie were cutting the wood while Mim and I loaded it into the Kombi. Suddenly we noticed the strong smell of smoke. The glow of fire we had seen in the distance could now be seen as jumping flames. We knew it was a dangerous situation. Manoel had told me, "Be careful! If these fires are driven by a wind, they can travel faster than a running horse." From where we were outside of the woods we could see how close the fire was. We ran and told Dad and Charlie. They left what they were doing and ran out of the woods to the Kombi. The fire was already on Daniel Kramer's fazenda and he was our neighbor. We beat it to the house and began to clear out the grass from around the house and light a backfire.

By now the flames had gotten to the stream near our house and dry leaves at the top of tall palm trees were catching fire. The fire was monstrous. We kept backfiring and throwing water on the flames that got near the house. We thought we would lose everything, but the fire went around the house and continued down the hill. Everything was black. We were all shaking with fright. We didn't lose anything.

We had read in the Laura Ingalls Wilder books about prairie fires. We thought it was really interesting, but never dreamed we would go through something similar.

Manoel Norberto gave us a frango caipira (jungle fowl). We took such good care of it that it became a pet. It grew into a good-sized rooster. Then one day Dad said he thought we should butcher it and have it for dinner. I decided that no way were we going to eat it.

Then I found an interesting solution to the problem. It happens that often cattle drives would come through the fazenda, crossing the Monte Alegre River below the falls at Daniel Kramer's place. These weren't 30 or 40 head, but easily ranged between four and eight THOUSAND head. They came from the state of Mato Grosso and went to slaughterhouses in Uberaba, or maybe even in São Paulo. They would be on the road for two or three months.

Brazil News

I absolutely loved when these enormous herds of cattle came through. But, I am telling this to get back to my rooster. It was a beautiful specimen with delicate golden feathers. I got my rooster and took it to the cowboys who were camped by the falls and offered it to them. They gave me four cruzeiros. When I got home I gave my folks the money and told them, "Well, we aren't going to eat that rooster!"

I remember the first word I learned in Portuguese. Papel higiênico. Toilet paper. It happens that the hotel we were staying in while living in Anápolis was really third-class. I was only eight years old at the time. I don't remember what I did, but somehow I ruined the roll of toilet paper in our bathroom. When my Mom found out about it she said, "Since you are the one who ruined it, you will have to go downstairs and ask the cleaning lady for another roll." I told her I didn't know what toilet paper was called in Portuguese. So she got out the dictionary and showed me: papel higiênico.

I memorized that and went downstairs repeating, papel higiênico, papel higiênico, papel hi... Anyway, I came back up with a roll of papel higiênico.

I have another memory from Manoel Norberto's place. In the area there was a bird with a peculiar song, which unfortunately I am unable to imitate. One day a number of us went to Manoel's place and they invited us for dinner. The beans had a lot of greasy pork rind in them. Daniel wasn't feeling the best and it really upset his stomach. He went out to the corral and lost his meal. Later on he told me that that bird with the distinctive song was singing all the time and from then on he never liked hearing that song again.

I, on the other hand, like to hear the bird song since it reminds me of Manoel's place and all the good times I had there.

Another thing I remember is that after I got out of school I had my own horse. I would herd our cows and one day they decided to go to school. It had two classrooms with a breezeway in between. As I remember it, Mary Esther Martin and Maxine Loewen were the teachers. I was driving the cows home, but sometimes they had ideas of their own. This time they decided to go through the breezeway. It scared the willies out of the teachers. They herded their children into the classrooms and locked the doors. I kept on chasing the cows and they just went around the schoolhouse and right through the

breezeway again. Finally they decided it was time to head home.

The road the cows were now on had been graded and a deep ditch left on one side. All of a sudden the cows had another one of their spells and headed into the woods on one side of the road. They made it through the ditch, but my horse apparently didn't know, or forgot. Anyway, we both ended up in a pile at the bottom of the ditch. Back then I wore glasses. I lost them and never found them again. My horse took off and I had to run after him until I finally caught him again.

Carlin Wiggers

This won't take me more than a minute. I've enjoyed listening here. And I wanted to echo Richard Mininger's thought. He said, "Culture isn't a problem unless we let it be a problem." For those of you that live here or have lived here, it's a privilege to learn another culture, another language. And no matter whether you're a N American or a Brazilian, if you have the opportunity to learn another culture and another language, take it. I have learned a lot of things here that will help me the rest of my life. I'm thankful for the privilege.

Myron K

I have here a little note from Elias Stoltzfus. He asked that it be read here.

I want to send greetings to the church in Brazil. I wanted so much to be there for this occasion, but circumstances here at home didn't permit it. I have good memories of my time in Brazil. May God bless all those who are present for the event, including all of my spiritual brethren. Thank you.

Daniel Kramer

I used to get to what is now the Colony, there was a washout and usually when it was dry we'd go down through it and up the other side. He forgot about that. When he went through there and up the other side the pickup drove out from underneath the barrel. I don't remember how he got it back on.

Richard Mininger

Christian greetings to each one of you here. And let's be prayerful that God will speak that which He wants us to hear. Our subject tonight is worthy of considering in prayer. I believe it's more serious than

many of us think. And I really appreciate all of you family people and young couples. It's a good situation. You're at a good and important time of life. So our subject tonight, our point to talk about, is the importance of being headed in a direction so as to arrive at the proper destination. Actually I should say it is the only destination we want to arrive at... [Very unfortunately the remainder of Ricardo's talk was lost due to a problem with the recording mechanism.]

Harold Holdeman

This morning we have a topic that is of interest to all. Someone may think that our schools are a dull subject. But I doubt it. If today you are able to read, it is because you went to school. When we sing a song and you can sing in English or Portuguese, it is because you studied. This should be of great interest to all of us. When I was thinking about this opening, I remembered 2 Timothy 2:15, where it says that we should be a workman who should "study to shew himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

The Bible teaches us that we should study. And so today we want to hear about our schools. I have here the minutes of the school meeting held on September 17, 1969 to study out the possibility of setting up a school. The three brethren responsible were John Penner, Dan Coblentz and Denton Burns. It was asked of them to check out the laws regulating parochial school here in Brazil, which courses should be administered and in what language, as well as how such a school is financially supported.

So we can see that right from the beginning there was this desire to give our children the opportunity to learn. The fact that we can read and talk is proof that we went to school. I am thankful for the privilege of going to school in the US when I was a boy, even though they were not our church schools. I would like for all those who didn't study in our church schools to raise their hands. I find this interesting.

[The following session is dedicated to our schools. Since this English copy is dedicated to N American readers, it has been condensed because of details that would be understood only by those living here.]

Duane Miller

I have some thoughts about our schools. They always were important to the people of God.

Importance was placed on the basics of learning how to read and write. I don't know how many were literate in Old Testament times. We do know that the scribes were important people. I do know that in Jesus' time it was common for the synagogues to also serve as schools. The majority of the people went there to learn the basics of reading and writing. We know that even in those days there was a difference. The more learned people knew more than the mere basics. It was said of the apostles that they were "unlearned and ignorant men." But everything indicates they knew the basics of reading and writing.

I have been thinking about how really important this is. In the Martyrs Mirror we read about how one of the leaders was being interrogated. The interrogator exclaimed, "You are of the devil. These people don't know how to read and write, but when they gather with the Anabaptists they already know how to read and write. That has to be of the devil." The martyr responded, "No! This isn't of the devil. For us it is important to know how to read the Bible so we can teach others." So we can see that even in the time of the Anabaptists being able to read and write was important.

As I understand it, in the beginning the Mennonite churches in Europe had their own school. In the US I don't know how it all came about, but for years our children went to public schools. As was mentioned yesterday, the public schools were becoming increasingly worldly. This was a church concern. We know how God blessed the effort of the church to establish our own schools.

So it was when we came to Brazil that we wanted to have our own schools. We considered this very important. A school isn't only a place to learn to read and write, but also to learn to be courteous, to play together, and to be in an environment where there is discipline. All of this is important to us as the people of God.

Charles Becker

We began having classes in the shed that Dick Toews built out of cinva ram blocks that were made down by the falls on Daniel Kramer's place. Later school was moved to the particle board house that Jona Dyck & Doris lived in below Emma Burns' house. The first desks were quite crude and built here on the Colony. We bought some books in town that were very cheap. Dan Coblentz built the outhouse behind

the school. He didn't so much as make a foundation, but simply scraped the native grass away with a hoe and began laying up the hollow tile that would be the walls of the one meter by one meter shanty. A hole, of course, was dug. Add to this my salary of 50 USD per month (today around R\$250,00) and the cash outlay for our first school, together with operating costs, was quite insignificant.

Even though some of the students lived a few kilometers from the school, no one came by car. They came on foot, by bicycle or on horseback. There were 15 students in six grades with only one teacher, which meant that classes had to be meticulously planned out the evening before so that everyone would be able to come up front and recite. Depending on the subject, some would come up front for two minutes, three or four minutes. Possibly the most interesting student was my mother-in-law, Emma Burns.

Daniel Kramer

I want to give a report on the beginning of our schools. When it was announced yesterday that this morning would be dedicated to this subject, it provoked many thoughts in my mind.

This morning I woke up at 4:30 and I got up and I made a fire in the fireplace. And I sat on a chair and watched the flames go up a deep conviction dropped into my heart that I should say something. I was impressed to go and get my conference report book. I was impressed about the many references to the school. In the 1967 conference, the dangers in school environment were discussed. A resolution was made that reads: "A) that because of the dangers inherent in tv education, the church shall continue to carefully watch developments and study alternatives for the future."

I wish I had the gift that Abraham Lincoln had, to say something important in a few words. There was a good discussion. It was evident that there was a general concern over the conference body about this subject. But nobody really had an answer to present on what are we going to do. The school issue was crowding in on us over in Ohio. And we already had studied this subject. We were concerned about our future and our children. And I received a paper that was sent out to each congregation and then it was to be filled in if there was any interest or concerns from that congregation, for possible consideration on a conference level. There was in our congregation

a strong movement towards that we should start our own school. That question was sent in to the conference. Will the conference give permission for congregations to set up their own schools? We as a congregation from Homeworth, at that time known as Hartville, were looking for a solution now. We wanted permission from the conference to set up our own school. Something interesting happened there. When that petition was read, Min. Harry Harms was the chairman at that moment behind the pulpit. He opened it up for discussion. Nobody said anything. There had not been time yet to study this thing and look forward to the future. We had just finished discussing the matter and now this was already the future. He hesitated, he tried again, and nobody said anything. Pretty soon he spied me out there. He said brother Kramer, you're the one that sent this in. Come up here and tell us what you had in mind. I wonder if there is anybody here today that was at that conference in Canada in 67.

I got up there and I spoke from the bottom of my heart. I shared the concern that we as a congregation had. The system there where we lived was such that soon our oldest child would be asked to go to another school. In my deep concern I had made a statement I'll go to jail before I send my child to that school. As I began to speak it became very evident that the concern was general in that conference body. There was a deep concern. Many others had also been thinking about this. I saw people out there in that audience nodding their head. It was not a private concern only of Homeworth or Hartville. And it opened up a real discussion that was heartwarming. At the end of that discussion, another decision was made in article "B) the general conference gives permission to any local congregation to set up their own elementary or primary school upon the condition that such can operate without offense to civil government and without violating any tenets of our faith." At Homeworth we set up a school.

Duane

Thank you. We continue to work in the spirit of this decision.

[Duane called up all who had been teachers – apparently more than half the adults present were.]

Mary Schultz

I was the first unofficial school teacher in Brazil

36 Brazil News

here. At Anápolis I taught the Dycks children and not Irene, but the boys and Mim and Tim. All I remember is that we concentrated on learning Portuguese. Then I was the second school teacher here in Brazil. I had I think it was 15 to 16 students at the time. Everything was supposed to be in Portuguese. Charlene Loewen came to help me. And what I remember most about that was that we were supposed to teach modern math out of a Portuguese book and it was pure Greek to me. I'm not good at math to begin with and so what I remember most about that year she took over the younger ones and I did more with the older ones and I know I concentrated on grammar. And we conjugated verbs, we learned how to spell those verbs. We would have spelling bees amongst us of how to spell those verbs and conjugate them and I think that's about all the good I did that year.

We had some ornery students, and not to embarrass anybody I'll just tell one thing. Charlene and I decided things were getting out of order and we were going to lay down the law to them. When we were done talking this one student stood and asked, "are there any testimonies?"

Clifford Warkentin

I wanted to say a little bit about our Chapadão school which was located on the BR060 highway that goes from Goiânia to the state of Mato Grosso. When we moved to that place where we live now our neighbors were Charlie Becker's and Verle Koehn's who lived close to the Posto Chapadão service station. And there was a little house there by Charlie's that we used as a school house. Faith was the teacher and I believe there were at least 8 or 10 students. We also had several teachers from town come out and teach our children.

My brother, with his whole family, was at our place at that time. That would be Eldon and Geraldene Warkentin. One day we heard a terrible crash. The sun was shining and that crash was thunder that came from some very dark clouds that hadn't covered the sun yet. Then after just a little while we heard some shouting. Then we started running to the school to see what had happened. Before I got to school they told me to get a vehicle to take some students to the hospital. We found four lying on the ground. Charlie & Faith's daughter, Yolanda, wasn't breathing. Their daughter Denise was unconscious. James, Eldon's boy, was confused, as was Ben, Veril & Eileen's son.

The children had been playing outside under the tree and the lightning hit the tree and hit the children too. We took them to the hospital right away, but Yolanda was pronounced dead on arrival. Denise and James were hospitalized. Our daughter Donna was the teacher there at that time.

Charlene Loewen Souto

I was an aide in the school for a short time when Mary was teacher. But soon I went to work in the local hospital. When my dad was killed in an accident I quit my job so I could be with my family on the fazenda. It was at that time the board asked me to be a teacher. My sister Maxine was also a teacher. I had the three upper grades. We had problems with the Portuguese modern math, but I had brought a math book from the States, which we began to use for our lessons.

Maxine Loewen

Stephen Kramer was my first graduate. My first contact was with the Monte Alegre School down there in the white building when Charlie was teaching. I hauled the school children down there in Dan Coblentz' jeep and stayed and learned Portuguese under Charlie. I want to thank him for bending over backwards. He let me study and take tests on Fridays.

When Charlene and I started teaching the school was exactly where this cement is now.

The German Baptists had just arrived here in Brazil, so they were all coming here to our school that first year. So we had 50 students, Charlene had 25 and I had 25. And we didn't have books. The only thing in the school was a little bookcase with some National Geographics in it. We only went to grade six. I don't know if that included all education that was needed. I had first, second, and third grades, and she had four through six. We bought science, math and Portuguese textbooks in town. Those three books that I taught in the lower grades. We struggled with Portuguese of course because I didn't know it that well. We didn't get a curriculum here in our school until 78 when Mary Esther Martin brought the Beka curriculum. We didn't have teacher books. Before that we wrote all of our worksheets and tests out by hand. There was a time when we used an alcohol duplicator to make copies. I learned to sew the covers on softballs with a special curved needle. We had to haul all the drinking water and water

Brazil ³⁷ News

to wash hands. The water was hauled to school by tractor in 20 liter cans.

I think the school board when I started teaching was Harold Dirks, Reno Hibner and Daniel Kramer. And I just enjoyed teaching and enjoyed watching children learn. Somehow we made it through those first years. For quite a while we washed and waxed our own classroom floors, I loved the smell of that. I remember mending boys' jeans down at the social hall. I remember when Brent Flora broke both wrists when he fell from a swing or a rope up here on a big tree. I enjoyed the programs. They were special and I feel like they were extra good in that old school.

Clinton Unruh

My experiences with the school don't include ancient history. I just want to say that I was on the school board for a number of years. For me the high point was when on second Monday of each month we would sit down with the teachers to discuss how things were going. I don't know if the teachers enjoyed these meetings as much as I did. I always enjoyed working together with the other board members.

Marie Unruh

I think I have exposed to or involved in the complete history of our school system. I went to school down below in the little white schoolhouse in 1972. I graduated in this school. Later I was a teacher. All my children have studied here. Now I hope my grandchildren will study here too. I just want to say that without God's blessings this school would not exist.

Ruth Unruh

I just have a memory from when I went to school. And this was when things were more modern. One thing that I remember was that our teachers used to just sit on a hard chair kind of like these plastic ones only it was wooden. When I was in 7th grade our teacher had the habit when he read stories to us after lunch after we came in from the noon recess, he would tip his chair back against the chalkboard behind him and sit that way reading to us. Then the schoolboard decided it needed to be a little better and bought him a rolling chair. And the first time that he was going to read to us, he took his chair leaned back against the chalkboard and was reading. And all of a sudden, he disappeared behind the desk and

only his hands and feet were above the desk. I don't think there was ever such a loud roar of laughter in that school before or after.

Steve Holdeman

I was reading some minutes from 1971 to 1984. It is interesting to note that they recommended that the chairman of the schoolboard visit school once a month. Today we feel it needs to be a lot more than that.

[Session dedicated to tract work]

Duane Miller

Now we are going to go to the part of the tract work. As we have heard, it had a strong influence on our mission work. We know that tracts can go where we can't.

Wellington Pereira

Good morning to everyone. I am a member of the tract board. We are going to be limited by time on what can be said. I want to give time to those who have worked in the tract office to tell their experiences. At present there are 4,100 who are getting tracts. We send them their tracts every two months. First of all, I want to give Mark Loewen the opportunity to tell us how it was right in the beginning.

Mark Loewen

In about July of 1974 two brethren from the tract board in the US made a trip to Brazil. The chairman was Dean Becker and the other one was Eldon Smith from Burns, Kansas. They came to Brazil and said they would like to see a literature center opened here. There was a meeting here at the Monte Alegre church, where they told about the work and said they were looking for volunteers. I was a young man of about 23 years and of course at that age most young men would be thinking about getting married. I maybe thought about that some too, but it seemed pretty impossible. There were no houses available, money was scarce. I was not a builder to make my own house, as some did. It all looked pretty dark. So I thought well maybe I should be willing to give my name to tract work, because I had often been interested in mission work and the like. I went and talked to John Penner about it.

A week or two after that meeting they sent the

message back that really they were looking for a couple and wondered if I had any plans of getting married. So when my proposal reached Glenda, it was a dual-purpose proposal because she needed to have a feeling for the tract work too. Because if that didn't seem open to her then the proposal was on hold of course. But that's just a little bit how it came about that we started with the tract work a week after we got married in January 19 of 1975.

They were getting a lot of letters from Brazil at the office in Moundridge, and so they began sticking all of their letters in a large envelope and sending them here. But it was quite difficult to find someone to print those tracts. Initially we had them printed in Goiânia. It grew tremendously from the first year to the second year, by about one hundred percent. And the letters started increasing. Some of the people that were asking for tracts thought we were not giving them enough attention here, so they kept sending letters to Moundridge too. And I think they were a little disappointed and surprised when they got an answer here from Rio Verde.

We thoroughly enjoyed our four years there. We did make a couple of quite lengthy tract tours or trips. The first one was to Rio de Janeiro. Richard and Edith Mininger went with us and Curtis Kramer and Lynn Schultz. We visited a number of contacts and also distributed a lot of tracts. I think we made another one to Cuiabá, in the state of Mato Grosso. The last one would have been at the end of 78. We took Daniel & Anna Kramer along and Tony de Lima. And that's when he was able to meet some of his family again that he hadn't seen for 25 years. So that was a very interesting side note on that trip. But we went all the way from Vitória in Espírito Santo all the way to Fortaleza and then back down through the interior. That's just some of the major points. We started out with just a handful of letters per week, or I guess we counted them per month, I remember right at the end we were getting about a thousand letters a month, both to send tracts to and also to answer questions. But I know it grew a lot after that.

Calvin Hibner

I took over the work in 1988. Up until then the tract work had been done in town, the office was there. When I started in January it was moved out to our home. We closed off our garage and made

an office there. We began doing the work from this home office. And in 1989 we took a tract trip route. By then we were corresponding with a lot of people and wanted to visit some of them. Dean & Esther Lou Mininger and Keleda Loewen and Sharon Holdeman-Unruh. We went to Salvador and Petrolina, João Pessoa, Natal, Fortaleza. And when we got to Cruz we visited Wanderlúcia. She told you about our little surprise there. And from there we went to Teresinha, São Luís and Belém. And it was a real enjoyable trip, about three weeks. One thing I noticed was that it kind of divided between the people. There were those who continued on writing and were interested. And those that slowly backed off. Like the time we visited in Campina Grande there in Patos too. We thought Paulo was living at his folks' place so we went there first. But he had gone to Campina Grande so we met him there. And we visited with Rosemeire and Eduardo too.

And one thing that changed when we started doing the tract work, it was a little more modern. I couldn't bear the idea of learning how to type on one of those old manual things. So I bought an electric typewriter. It was such a big improvement, and finally Gospel Tract paid me for it. We didn't have a tract board here that I remember. I was responsible to the U.S. Roger Unruh was my boss. And we received our money in dollars. Back then we had a quota of about 60 to 70 thousand dollars per year we could spend.

I believe the tract work is a very important work. We just went to Bolivia with folks-in-law, and there a tract distribution program is underway. They're not doing so much tract work but they're doing a lot of visiting. But they're laying ground work for a future mission. And we know most of our operations have begun with a tract. And that's the way it was in Pirenópolis too, I believe. Just a tract somebody got ahold of. We began corresponding with Paulo David then. And it slowly developed into what it was. So, when you take a box of tracts to distribute, you don't know which of those two thousand tracts may be the one that will bring somebody to the church.

Stephen Kramer

I was in this work from 1991 to 1995. It is hard to know which of my memories I should tell here. I can say with certainty that they were the four most intense years of my life. I'm not sure Mark had his

figures right when he said they get getting a thousand letters a month. I believe it was considerably less.

During the first weeks I went to Calvin's place so he could teach me how things were done. Different time he would say to me, "We have a snowball here that keeps growing. We don't know how we will handle it." At that time everything was done manually. All the addresses were listed on little cards. It was a tremendous lot of work. The big problem was that we didn't know to whom we had sent tracts the week before, or anytime, for that matter. People soon caught on to our lack of organization and began to send letters every week asking for more tracts. That means they could end up getting their allotment of tracts a number of times per month, instead of only once every two months.

Another thing Calvin told me was that the 70 thousand US dollars had to be very carefully spent, or it would end up not being enough. During this time we still had hyperinflation, which complicated things even more. I don't remember if it was during my first or second year on the job that they increased our budget to 90 thousand USD. At the same time they told us to begin getting a better grip on the tracts being sent out to reduce costs.

I began by putting back into service the first computer used in the publication work by Charles, which had been replaced by a more advanced model. The first program used was Microsoft Works, which we soon found was inadequate for our needs. Discussing this with Dale Koehn, from Gospel Publishers, I found out he had developed a program for the tract work in Moundridge. He made a trip to Brazil and set us up with the system they were using at the office in Moundridge. From there we made the necessary adjustment to fit our needs and we are still using it now over here. Because of our ability to keep tabs on who was receiving our tracts, we were able to correct the imbalance on who was getting our tracts.

When I took over from Calvin, our average for letters received was just a bit under a thousand per month. That number went up to 1,500 per month. Then with our new system we dropped to just over a thousand.

Then we got another visit from the tract board in N America. They explained that they were beginning to fund a number of new distributors and because of this we would have to reduce to a number that we

could fund and administer ourselves here in Brazil. We were obligated to take some drastic steps. We sent out a flyer offering tracts to those who would be willing to pay the printing costs. It was astounding how the requests for tracts dropped. I suppose that in a way this was both good and bad.

Another item of interest, that probably you aren't aware of, is that during this same period the tract work in Ukraine was facing a situation similar to ours, only five times worse. They were getting an average of 4,500 letters a month in their office. They were still using the old card system and the workers were beside themselves. Like we had some time prior, they now asked Dale Koehn to help them develop a more efficient system. He knew how we had worked over his system to fit our needs, so he suggested we give the people in Ukraine technical assistance. We sent them a copy of our modified program which they began to use. With this they were able to bring under control the snowball of incoming requests. Even after I left the tract work here, I continued giving them technical assistance. We have become good friends and he likes to say that I saved his life. So this was a contribution that Brazil was able to make to the work in a foreign country.

When I left the work, Clinton Unruh took over.

Cláudio Silva

I am happy to be part of this great literature work. I was responsible between 1983 and 1987. Then in 2014 I took over the work again. Most of our work is behind the scenes. Even so, we must always do our best. It is necessary to study the Scriptures and this because of the many questions we have to answer in the letters we receive. We must always be sure to transmit only the truth. The work in Ruilândia, São Paulo, where sister Valentina is a member, came about through a tract. Susan and I, together with Arlo & Priscilla Hibner, Dalva Pereira Maia and Keleda, made a trip down south. We wanted to make contact with Valentina, but were unable to locate her. We continued to Rio Grande do Sul, where we met Zelinda Sperb, who is now our sister. Even so, we were able to continue contact with Valentina and the Mission Board asked us to have doctrinal studies with her. Later she was baptized. This trip took almost three weeks.

It was through the tract work that the mission was established in Acaraú, as well as in Mozambique. We

know the work has really prospered in this African country. I thank God for the privilege of being in this work.

Stephen Kramer

When I started the work in 91, one of the things I was totally unprepared for was the cry coming out of Mozambique. During that time we were kind of in a holding pattern and letter after letter we'd tell them hold on, hold on we're going to send missionaries and eventually we did. The way I understand today the Mozambique field is one of our most dynamic mission fields at this time.

Sergei Schultz

This is a bit of additional information on the tract work here. Officially it began in 1974. As I remember it, my brother Weldon found the first letter that was written to the tract board in N America, asking for permission to translate tracts into Portuguese. Correspondence was found between my grandpa, Denton Burns, and Rueben Buller. When grandpa was killed in an accident, my uncle Charlie took on the translation of tracts. I thought all this was interesting.

Wellington Pereira

I see we have run out of time. If there are any questions, you can contact someone from the tract board or visit our site. This work is proving to be a real blessing, not only in Brazil, but in other countries as well. May God continue to bless the work.

MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES

Carlos Henrique reads a letter written by Laura Costa

When I think of how our schools got started, it seemed like something impossible. To begin with, money was scarce, but there were brethren who supported the project and helped to get it going. I especially remember the help that Min. Elias Stoltzfus gave us. On my classroom door I had a sign that read: "I and my classroom will serve the Lord."

Some of the spontaneous help we got impressed me. Ann Miller donated a refrigerator and Charles Becker gave me a nice chair to sit on.

I always remember something really special. A man by the name of Geraldo often helped at the school in

town. His support was so important to me. He held the vision that the children were the future of the church here. He became a member of the church.

As things got underway, we could feel the hand of God on our efforts. Today it is amazing to see spiritual men and women who studied in our little school. I am thankful to God for this.

Carlos Henrique Arantes (Kaike)

There are many men and women here today, married men, housewives, that came through that side door of the school to meet their future. The future! We are the future! We are here today. I am one of them. I remember when we played right over there. And that wasn't enough space, we could run around outside all we liked.

This Geraldo that Laura wrote about was a watchman at the school in town. His nickname was Nenê. Many of you knew him. He was a pioneer in this area and died in September of 2005. He was my dad. That is what Laura wanted me to tell you.

Myron Kramer

I want to tell you a little story that I was part of. This probably happened in 1970. My dad had a little Chevrolet truck. It had a six-cylinder engine and I believe could legally haul up to seven tons. But we would often load it down with ten tons, or even more.

To make some money to buy food, my dad hired several men from town to cut down some trees to sell as firewood. We would load the old truck with firewood and haul it to a brickyard in town that belonged to seu Nico. With the money from the firewood we sold we would buy groceries. The first load we sold to him he paid up fine. I'm not sure what happened on the second and third loads, but I know the day came that he got behind. As I remember it, he was owing us two loads of firewood. He simply told us he was out of money.

During that time my cousins, Dennis and Curtis Kramer, were living with us. Then one morning my dad came out and said, "Alright boys, this is what we are going to do. We are going to load the truck with firewood and take it to the brickyard in town. If the man pays us we will be able to have lunch, buy groceries and return home. If he doesn't pay us, we will have to go back home with the firewood and without groceries." I knew we were down to about nothing on food.

We loaded the truck and headed out to town. When we got there the load of firewood was measured, since they paid us by the cubic meter, and not by weight. Then we went to the office. My dad went up to the counter. My cousins and I stayed in the doorway. My dad told seu Nico that we needed money. As usual he told us that he was out of money. My dad pointed to me and my cousins and said, "Do you see those three boys in the doorway?"

He said, "Yes, I see them."

"Well, I told them before we loaded this truck that if you would pay us we would have lunch and return home. If you don't pay us they are going to have to go to the fazenda hungry and without groceries."

I don't know what went through the man's head. He looked at each one of us. Then he looked at the truck. Then he looked at each one of us again, from our shoes to our hats. Then went into the back room and about ten minutes later he came back out. He counted out the money for all that he was owing us, right down to the last cent.

We had lunch and went home with groceries. Even now, years later, I would like to know what kind of thoughts went through his head as he looked us over.

Naomi Warkentin

I want to tell an experience that Clifford and I had. Our neighbors that came from the States and lived not too far from us gave us a rooster and a hen. This was in the beginning of our stay here in Brazil. And it didn't take long and we had 50 chickens running around our yard. And then one night when we were in bed already we heard a chicken squawking and oh, something was getting that chicken. And we had no screens on the window and Clifford just jumped through the window and ran after whatever was getting the chicken. And he got ahold of the chicken and took it away from the fox. Then he came back to the house and he couldn't get in because the front door you could only open it from the inside. So I went and opened the door and he said well how did I get out of here? And I told him he jumped through the window. He does things so fast he doesn't always remember what he does. And I was expecting Robert at the time and this was on a Saturday night. Clifford and I stayed home from church and the children all went to church except Kevin, who was a little toddler but the rest all went to church at Monte Alegre but we stayed home. We

butchered that chicken and ate it for dinner. And that was one experience that we had right in the beginning. I said already that I was expecting Robert, it was right in the beginning. When we moved here Kevin was nine months old and I was 40. Clifford was 41 and then here I happened to have another little boy. Robert came two years after Kevin and it was the same month. My birthday is in August, Clifford's birthday is in August, and Kevin and Robert's birthdays are in August. And I thought when we were kind of thinking of moving to Brazil, well surely if I had a baby we couldn't move to Brazil. But Clifford, with him nothing is impossible. And then to have another baby here. But they have been our greatest blessings. The fox got away.

Anna Kramer

This was in the beginning and we were still living in our tents. We lived in the tent five months until we got our house built. And I don't remember which month it was, but I think it was January. Daniel went to town one day with Dan Coblentz in Dan's jeep. He bought some groceries, took care of the business and got home after dark. The children and I were already in bed, so he put the purchases in the kitchen tent on the table. The next morning I put the groceries away and asked him, "Where's the folder you had your documents in?" He said, "It's there with the things I brought in." I said, "No, I put everything away and I didn't find it anywhere." So he tried to remember. He said he remembered taking it out of the jeep and laid it on the hood or on top of the jeep. But that folder was nowhere around. We walked the road over to Dan Coblentz' place. We looked in the ditches and looked in the creeks, and nothing. All our money, our cash that we had on hand, his passport, all his documents, our traveler's checks that hadn't been spent yet – everything was in that folder. I guess maybe some people would have thought that was a sign we should go back to the US, but we weren't smart enough to think that way. I don't exactly remember what the first step was, but Daniel had to make several trips to Brasília to get another passport and I had records of our traveler's checks that were spent and were not yet spent, he took the stubs and things back to the bank in Brasília and they honored the traveler's check receipts that had not yet been spent. With time he managed to get all his documents again and two years later when

42 Brazil News

one of the boys was working in that soil between us and Emma's house, they found the folder. The only answer we have is that Dan Coblentz remembers that when he left the house and going toward the creek a fox ran across the road ahead of him. And it must be that fox carried that folder off. We had a large roll of bills and the termites had gotten into the folder and partially eaten the bills. But we came up with enough bills with two matching numbers that the bank replaced them for us. And his passport was in there but it was all messed up, but we still have it if you want evidence of the story.

Juanita Loewen Lima

I just wanted to say that in the beginning things were really complicated. Since we were living along the Pirapitinga stream, out to one end of the Colony, a lot of the time we didn't find out what was going on.

My brothers would go out into the pasture to bring the milk cows home. There were a lot of bot flies that would deposit their eggs on skin. The larva would hatch underneath the skin and create red bumps. These would have to be removed. I remember the time that Wayland, my brother, came up with 14 of these larvae on his head. When anything of this nature occurred, we would look up Charles & Faith. It took him a while to anesthetize and remove these larvae. Another time Wayland dived into the river and got a deep gash on his head. He came into the house without saying a word, but his head was covered with blood and had a fold of skin that was hanging down. My folks weren't at home, so we beat it to Charlies again so that he could stitch him up. This time he said it would be better to take him to town and have a doctor take care of him. Another time he took care of our dog that got run over. He lived for years after that. I am thankful that he was our doctor here on the Colony.

Tony de Lima

I said before that the first night at Harold Dirks' place I slept in the shed, and that it was kind of a rough night. The next night they put me into a bedroom that was just the opposite. I think that the first night I slept in the shed because they didn't have time to fix up something better. I can say that I felt so much at home with them that it was like I was one of the family. I knew they cared for me. The first Sunday they invited me to church. We walked because it was

just a little ways. It was an experience I will never forget. It felt so good to be in church. Even though I didn't understand anything, since the sermon and the songs were in English, I received my portion. I came to church empty and left full. By the time it was Wednesday or Thursday, I was wishing it was Sunday again. It was wonderful, a true blessing.

Jake Loewen

We spent our first month in Brazil in Brasília, in the Hotel das Nações. Denton and Pete and I were walking down the hall on the third floor and all of a sudden I noticed that the next step was a hole in the floor. There was no sign nor guardrail. I asked Denton what in the world was going on. If I would have stepped into the hole I would fallen down two floors. I told him that in the States they would sue the hotel for a million bucks. He told me that here if you don't watch where you are going and fall through you will have gotten what you deserve.

One more thing. Someone said that there are those who think Brazilians are liars, but that in reality they aren't. It is that they have a more elastic version of the truth.

There was the day that we were at Manoel Norberto's place. We were eating watermelon around a water trough. We were going to walk around and decided on a time to meet again. Manoel said, "Let's meet here at exactly more or less six o'clock."

Daniel Martin

There are a few things that I would like to say here. When we moved to Brazil it was kind of like getting married — for better or for worse. And in good times and bad times.

I thought I would explain a little bit since we stated here that my father wasn't in on the original land purchase here. In 1968 when the first group of men came here, we had lived in Mifflinburg, Pennsylvania. We had moved there from Kidron. My father-in-law, John Penner, together with his wife Alma and my future wife had moved there a few years before that. So then in 1968 the Mifflinburg Congregation was just getting started. We were in the process of building a new church. There were people that were attending church and were interested. It was and still is a good mission field. When we moved there we were the second family that lived there of our people. Today there's a congregation there of over

130 members. But anyway, when this movement here to Brazil came up my father-in-law was quite interested. And then to think about moving out of Mifflinburg and move to Brazil presented somewhat of a problem, as you can see. So therefore, when my father came along with this group, we boys told him not to buy any land. We were not ready for that. We wanted to see first how things would work out.

So I'd like to tell a couple of stories that happened to us in Brazil and I think the older people can well remember it. My brother Howard was here for a visit, and one night at four o'clock in the morning a real storm came up. I knew that it was pretty serious because the water was pouring through the asbestos roofing in buckets. But our roof stayed on. My folks, who lived down close to the woods, didn't make out so good. And my mother said that when it started raining, all of a sudden the water started coming in she thought she had left the window open. So she jumped up to close the window and then looked up and that was when she saw that there was no roof on the house. We had just recently built that house and the roofing was aluminum and it was pretty light, and we had neglected to fasten the roof down. My mother said when she looked down at the bed later, there was quite a big brick lying right there where she had gotten up from. And so can only imagine what would have happened to her if she hadn't gotten up right at that time.

Another time we had some cattle, we got a big storm there, after it was over the next day I went down to look at the cows, and when I got a little closer some of the cows came running over and it looked like they were wanting to tell me something. And so I got to looking, and we had kind of a woods around there. There were 30 head of cattle dead in there. Lightning had struck, they were in the woods to take cover and they were hit.

A couple weeks later I think there were another three along the fence that got electrocuted. So that was some of the bad times. We had a lot of good times too. When we went to the US, people liked to hear snake stories, so I'd tell them about how Arthur would catch little anacondas in our little pond there, and he had one that was about 8 feet long and he kept it in our restroom there in our shed in a bucket. And one day I went in there and the snake was gone. The door was shut but nobody knew what had happened to the snake. Somebody

said that a while later when they looked in the stool they saw the snakes head in the stool, sticking out from the bottom there. So that was a little different feeling for anybody who saw that.

Anyway, as far as the moving here to Brazil was concerned, there are a lot of things we don't understand about it. But there are a few things that we can understand and the most important is that the church is established here in South America.

All those that were there at Evaristo's tour the other day and listened to what he had to say about our people here and the help that our people gave in developing the country and also spiritual help, made us feel real good. And you could feel that after all, there is a purpose for us coming here.

Evening closing session:

STONES IN THE RIVER

Myron Kramer

In the book of Joshua, chapter 4, we read about how the children of Israel were crossing the Jordan River after 40 years in the desert and were about to take possession of the land of Canaan. It was during this crossing that God told Joshua to choose a man from each tribe who was to pick a rock from the dry riverbed and take it to their camp on the other side of the river. They were to be piled up as a memorial.

In verse 24 God gave an explanation. He said that when future generations would ask the meaning of the monument of stones, they were to tell what God had done for them. We can ask what this has to do with us. I would like to give just a little example of where these thoughts are going. Last week I was talking to a grain buyer in town. I had just closed a contract for future delivery of corn. He wanted to know when I would be able to deliver the grain. I told him that this week it probably wouldn't work, but that I believed that next week I could. He asked if I would start harvesting on Saturday and I told him it wouldn't be possible. Then he said, "But you could start on Sunday...?" He stopped and said, "But you don't work on Sunday." The people in town know we don't work on Sunday. This is just an example. I didn't even have to answer his question. He already knew the answer. I hope we have left many memorial stones of this kind for the people here. And I hope that our descendants will have a scriptural

basis on why we do things as we do. Needless to say, not everything we do has a “thus sayeth the Lord” attached to it. They are, however, based on basic principles of life.

Let’s pray.

Leo Dirks

It is a privilege to be here and talk about the things God has done for us. I confess that I enjoy talking about the things God does for His people, both now and in the past. I was asked to talk about our inheritance of the last 50 years and how we can pass these lessons on.

When I began to think about this it seemed to be an impossibility. An inheritance is something we get after the death of another person. And God’s people continue very much alive. We don’t have to lose a generation so that we can begin another. It is something continuous with some always replacing others. It is God who put this plan into motion.

Jesus said to Peter, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” We are this church and our inheritance continues. It isn’t something that is passed from generation to generation. It is a continuous process and will always continue.

How can we pass this forward without losing it? This is where the stones in the river come into the picture. God gave explicit instructions as to how many stones should be taken out of the river, who should carry them and how they should be carried. I found this interesting. A chosen man from each tribe should pick up a stone, put it on his shoulder and carry it. On the opposite side of the river an altar should be erected on which to offer sacrifices to God. Why all this? Why not 24 stones instead of only 12? We know there were 12 tribes. God wanted all to be included. All of those who entered the Promised Land came from one of those 12 tribes. They would all be part of the sacrifices that would be made. It is in this way that God saw fit to continue to unite His people. All of His children were represented on that altar. To me this is the secret of how to go on. There needs to be unity. We all need to gather around that same altar. I can’t take the stone assigned to my tribe and carry it wherever I will, and there attempt to serve God.

We are a united people. That is the only way to meet the future. If we begin to make various piles out of these stones, we will lose the way. We need to

act as one body. I am not thinking only of those of us who live in Brazil when I make these remarks. We can’t become exalted and say that we will serve God differently from those who live in other countries, that we will find a more perfect way to serve Him. We need our brethren in other countries. We need our brethren in Africa. We need our brethren in the United States and Canada. And all those brethren need us. As we work together harmoniously, we will all worship at the same altar. It will be a balanced life.

These stones give us stability. They all had the same origin. They came from the same riverbed. They were the result of a miracle by which His people were able to enter the Promised Land. I believe that it isn’t only in Brazil that we have this vision. We shouldn’t say that we are part of the church from N America, but rather that we are part of the church that was established by Jesus Christ. And we want to continue this way.

It is so sad when we see people leave the church and proclaim that they will set up an altar in another place. It simply doesn’t work.

We have an interesting account in chapter 22 of the same book, verse 10. God’s people were now in the Promised Land. However it happened that two and a half tribes decided to live on the other side of the river and not in Canaan, the land the Lord had promised them. They had helped the rest of the tribes conquer the Promised Land, so they felt they had done their part. Joshua agreed with them. The river would separate the two and a half tribes from the rest of the tribes.

When these two and a half tribes crossed the river to take possession of their land by inheritance, they wanted to make sure that everyone understood they were not separating themselves from the rest of the children of Israel. So they decided to build an altar on the bank of the river as a monument to their unity. When the ten tribes in Canaan saw the altar they were confused. They saw this as an act of rebellion and prepared for battle. Fortunately, they had the good sense to go and talk with the leaders on the other side of the river before going to war. They were happy to discover that the altar was just the opposite of what they had thought, and that it was a monument to their desire to remain united.

I believe this is a good example for us. Let us keep alive the desire to always be united. The land inherited by the children of Israel was a marvelous

land, a land that flowed with milk and honey. They had tremendous challenges to overcome. And we too have had great challenges. But God promised the Israelites that the land He was giving them flowed with milk and honey. So too, this land in which we live flows with milk and honey. This is a fact we can't deny. God has richly blessed us. But we are going to have to continue fighting swarms of bees. But like the hymns that were sung here, with God all things are possible. The inheritance you younger ones are receiving is what you see has been done — something you can keep on doing. If you have the same spirit of courage that your parents and grandparents had, you can be successful. And above all, if we carry the stones the Lord has chosen for us, we will have a complete religion. We will have a complete faith. What I am trying to say, is that we can have a perfect faith in God.

That which we have transmitted to you of the younger generation, you must preserve and pass on to future generations. But, for this to happen we must have our life in order today, keep a firm grip on the perfection of our belief. To maintain perfection means that we keep alive the process of purification. This is necessary so that any contaminations in our lives be eliminated. This is reality. If we ignore some things, disregard a doctrine that we believe no longer applies to our modern times, the dross will not be eliminated. We are possibly five generations represented in this meeting. What will happen five generations from now if we don't take this seriously? Our religion will be nothing more than what we see in the religions around us. I'm not trying to say that the other religions have nothing. They still hold to the name of God, which is good. We must understand that our calling is special. If you believe, as I believe, that we are part of the church that Jesus said to Peter would endure to the end, then we have something very special to transmit to our descendants. This is the pearl of great price. We must continue to keep it safe within our hearts. May God bless us.

Mervin Loewen

Let's look up Psalm 116. I would like to read this Psalm for us this evening as a tribute to our God. The question is: What will we give to the Lord for all the benefits received from Him? He has showered them not only on us, but on many peoples throughout the ages. The Word overflows with references to these

benefits. We have heard about them during these last two days.

We have heard about extremely difficult experiences. I remember when my uncle Pete was killed in an accident, together with Denton Burns. I don't think we can really imagine what the families went through in the following days. But God was present and saw all that was happening. Some of us will remember the death of Yolanda, Charles & Faith's daughter. I was around six years old at the time, but it had a profound impact on my life. I and my brothers and sisters were walking home from school to our place along the Piri-piritinga stream when a car, a black Dodge, stopped and told us what had happened. "Tell your folks that Yolanda Becker was struck by lightning and killed at the Chapadão School. Once again, God saw all that happened. He knew all about it even before it happened. But God was present and helped the families through these difficult times.

The people started getting converted, people who gave their heart to God. They felt the call of God and responded. The faith once delivered to the saints began to take root in this country. Today we can say it is a growing plant. This God who has existed since eternity used these happenings to mold us, to instruct us. The Bible says we are as the apple of His eye. We can say that God has been with us all this time. We have been richly blessed.

We return to the question: What will we give the Lord for all the blessings received from Him? After this meeting some of you will return to the United States or Canada, or wherever. Many of us are going to remain in this country. What will we give to the Lord? Does God have need of anything?

I now want to read Psalm 116

So then, what can we give to the Lord for all that He has done for us? "I will take the cup of salvation." Have you taken this cup of salvation? Has your family taken this cup of salvation? Speaking to the Samaritan woman, Jesus offered to quench her thirst with water from the fountain of life. He offers the same to us. He offers us peace and spiritual tranquility. He gives us the certainty of eternal life. He has promised us a home in heaven. To many He has given a happy home. He has given us the church. He has given us brothers and sisters who care for us and want to help in our needs. All of this included in the water from the well of salvation, the things that bring joy

46 Brazil News

to our life. They are things so precious that feeble words are unable to do them justice.

The Psalmist says “I will take the cup of salvation... I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the LORD’s house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.” What vows are these? These vows are promises. What promises have you made to the Lord? I remember the vows I made when I was on my knees before the church. I remember that I promised to abandon the world and all its lusts and pleasures. I have promised to take my cross and follow the Lord until death. The Psalmist says, “I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.” These vows we made are literal, made upon our knees when we received the water of baptism. We must also keep the vows we made when we were married.

Above all, I want to keep the personal promise I have made here in my heart. I want to value the cup of salvation. This is so precious to me. I remember the many funerals we have had here on the fazenda and in town and the feeling of peace and rest that can be felt in those who have suffered the loss. When our brother Leovaldo passed away, Mark greeted one of the daughters or granddaughters, I don’t remember which, and said, “You have my sympathy.” She responded with a simple, “God bless you.” That is so expressive; it is contained in the cup of our salvation. “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” This has repeatedly happened here when we have the privilege of laying a loved one to rest with total certainty that heaven is now their home.

Let’s remember the promise we have made, keep the vows we made before God and the church.

Current News

Coronavirus

Doubtlessly some of you readers have been following the coronavirus news here from Brazil. While other countries were being severely hit, we had only a spattering of cases. It was said that the heat and humidity of a tropical country worked as an inhibitor. I think we hoped this would be true. While the US and some of the European and Asian countries were hard hit, business went on as usual, including for the undertakers.

Then the day of reckoning came and we found out

that the claims of a tropical climate didn’t apply to Brazil. The first death occurred on March 17. Now, over 50,000 deaths later, this is our story:

Week 1	45 deaths
Week 2	155 deaths
Week 3	466 deaths
Week 4	865 deaths
Week 5	1,209 deaths
Week 6	2,276 deaths
Week 7	2,904 deaths
Week 8	4,479 deaths
Week 9	5,008 deaths
Week 10	7,104 deaths
Week 11	6,687 deaths
Week 12	7,298 deaths
Week 13	6,959 deaths
Week 14	4,602 deaths
TOTAL	50,057 deaths

After an initial power skirmish on who would have the last word on isolation, our Supreme Court ruled that municipalities and states would be authorized to determine the rigidity of the measures implemented to best suit their situation.

In our local town of Rio Verde, except for essential services, we had an almost total lockdown for one month. After that we had two weeks in which practically all business were allowed to operate. There was spike in contaminations during this period and our mayor, who is a physician, decreed another lockdown of two weeks, which will end on the 22nd of June. It is probable that after that there will another two-week partial lockdown.

Virtually everyone wears a face mask in town. There is a fine of approximately \$50 USD for anyone caught without, and in the case of recurrence, the fine doubles. Stores permitting clients to enter without pay a hefty fine, and can be shut down.

More on this in the next edition.

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