

# Brazil News

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No. 116  
January 2001

## Editorial

### **Lost!**

When dealing with converts, we make a point of asking them if they felt lost before finding the Lord. This is a pertinent question that deserves more than a mumbled answer.

Lost!

Sailors and pilots, especially of small craft, know the panic that grips their heart when they believe they are lost. So do people lost in a blizzard or small children lost in a large mall.

This feeling of panic, or desperation, can trick the mind into making foolhardy decisions, as it can also give an infusion of strength and resourcefulness that lead to an eventual solution. Desperation can also anesthetize the mind, causing it to ignore the seriousness of a situation and impassively stare fate in the face.

Lost!

This term is also used in situations in which the location of the victims is known, but because of the difficulty or impossibility of rescue, are considered to be lost: miners trapped by a cave-in, the recent case of the disabled Russian submarine on the ocean floor with 118 sailors aboard.

Few happenings arouse more public sympathy or create bolder headlines than word that someone is lost, be it an individual or a group of individuals. Indeed, seldom does one's imagination synchronize with someone else's need more vividly than when attempting to identify with the victims.

What is it that causes us to have such intense feelings for someone who is lost?

In the case of a lost child, we look at our own children or siblings and involuntarily shudder as we imagine them out in the darkness and cold, possibly injured. We hear their desolate cry and draw our own close, in an almost painful embrace.

In the case of the *Kursk*, we projected ourselves into the titanium prison on the bottom of the sea, and again we shuddered. Mentally we ticked off the obstacles:

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No communications with the outside world, cold—one degree above freezing, utter darkness, a rapidly dwindling oxygen supply, and probably serious wounds.

No, it isn't hard to empathize with the lost and with their families.

Yet it is possible to become hardened to human distress, to suffering and pain, to death itself.

A physician in a large hospital was overheard coldly informing anxious family members, "I have bad news he died," without so much as a punctuation break, or further comments.

During the siege of Leningrad (as no doubt has happened in many other besieged cities in the course of history), with hundreds of daily deaths during the winter months, and no way to dispose of the bodies, other than to often place them in the streets to be collected, which often didn't happen, passersby would unemotionally walk around or step over them, like so many logs.

Professionals who daily deal with life and death situations can become calloused to the human aspect of their work.

Hitler's henchmen, impregnated with the philosophy that *mercy is weakness*, deliberately, and cold-bloodedly sent over six million Jews and other "undesirables" to their deaths, without a twinge of remorse. An executioner was observed sitting on the edge of a long trench, waiting for yet another set of Jews—men, women and children—to file in, lie down on top of dead and twitching bodies, and then, cigarette dangling from his lips, nonchalantly press the trigger on his machine gun, sweep the length of the trench with a spray of bullets, and then wait for the next set...

Man's sensibilities are quickly touched by distress and pain. The outrage felt by the world when Russian officials rejected offers of help from other nations to rescue their imprisoned submariners is proof of this. Their delay, whatever their motives may have been, has indelibly blotched their reputations and credibility.

We are deeply touched by isolated suffering and distress, but contrary to what humanists teach, and to what we would like to believe, as suffering and distress around us increase, so does our callousness and indifference. It is only with a divine unction, and a concentrated effort, that we can keep our sensibilities from being seared.

We open our Christian Hymnals to page 194 and zealously sing *Rescue the Perishing*. Our voices ring out on the last verse:

*Rescue the perishing,  
Duty demands it;  
Strength for thy labor  
the Lord will provide;  
Back to the narrow way  
Patiently win them;  
Tell the poor wand'erer  
a savior has died.*

This beautiful hymn, by Fanny J. Crosby, strikes a tender cord in our hearts. We are inspired to rescue the perishing.

Why is it that after the last notes of the song have faded away, the hymnbook closed and replaced in the rack, the benediction said, and Sunday over, that our zeal recedes like the tide?

As we look the world over, we of course cannot say who is saved and who is lost. Yet there is a consensus among sincere Christians that many are lost. We say that the multitudes are steeped in darkness and sin. If this is true—which we believe it is—then there exists the very real possibility that we have become overwhelmed, calloused to something far worse than being trapped in the *Kursk* on the ocean floor.

The first verse of *Rescue the Perishing* gives six commands:

**Rescue** *the perishing,*  
**Care** *for the dying,*  
**Snatch them** in pity  
from sin and the Grave;  
**Weep** *o'er the erring one,*  
**Lift up** *the fallen,*  
**Tell them** *of Jesus the mighty to save.*

Rescue work is seldom easy; whether performed by organized squads or impromptu groups, it always requires an effort, often a valiant effort. To rescue the perishing *always* requires an effort, and almost always a sacrifice.

Few of us would admit we're doing all we can. Few would admit that we're calloused and falling far short in our rescue duties. Most of us would just a bit uncomfortably admit that we could do better, but that under the circumstances...

Let's look at Fanny Crosby's formula for rescue work.

**Rescue:** The soul of rescue work is to understand what it means to be lost. It means giving more than mumbled answer to the question, "Did you feel you were really and truly lost before Jesus came into your heart?" To remember how it feels to be lost creates within us a deep compassion and desire to help other lost souls.

**Care:** People who spend time in a hospital or rest home soon find there are two kinds of nurses—those who care for a living, and those who live to care. The difference is so great. The first take care of the body, the latter of body *and soul*. Rescue workers must care for the living and for the dying.

**Snatch them:** A truck driver crossing an overpass on the Auto Mall Parkway outside of San Jose, California, saw a man making his way around a high chain-link fence and onto a narrow outside ledge.

The driver was puzzled by this behavior. It wasn't until he had exited on the next ramp and was circling back that he caught sight of the man again, and the truth struck home: That man means to take his own life!

Realizing there wasn't a second to waste, that he must return to the overpass, the driver cut over curbs and sidewalks, through a parking lot, and back onto the overpass.

In those brief moments, the truck driver, now 27, remembered the time when he was

15 years old and decided to take his own life. He knew what the man on the other side of the chain-link fence was feeling.

As he came to where the man was preparing to jump, he parked on the concrete divider and made his way to him. "Hold on!" he called out. "I'm coming out there."

The answer was a menacing "Stay away! No one cares what I do."

"I do," the truck driver assured him, as he also edged around the chain-link fence and over to where the man was clinging to the mesh, looking over his shoulder at the tracks 50 feet below.

It wouldn't be easy. The man was considerably bigger than he, over six feet tall and some 200 pounds. He was shaking like a leaf. Reaching the man, he tightly gripped the fence with his left hand and swung his right leg around the victim. Then with his right hand, he pinioned the man to the fence.

The conversation with the man was not going well. It would take but one sudden thrust of the victim's powerful leg muscles and they both would take their final plunge. While thus locked in a death embrace, two other men stopped and began engaging the victim in conversation. He finally blurted out his story of feelings of total rejection, sobbing like a baby. But he still insisted on jumping.

Thirty minutes had gone by and it was evident the truck driver would not be able to hang on much longer. The police arrived, but felt that the three men had established a strong enough bond with the victim to continue the crisis negotiations.

Finally the victim gave up and made his way to safety, snatched by one who knew how it felt to be lost.

**Weep:** We no longer have time to weep. In fact, often we are so busy we aren't even aware of who is erring. When a condition is brought in church, we are startled. Oh, shame! Where have we been? If we can't see the erring in our midst, how can we possibly see those out in the world? We are counseled to buy eye salve to moisten our eyes, to renew our vision and unclog our tear ducts. Jeremiah was the weeping prophet. What we need today are weeping rescue workers.

**Lift up:** I think that Fanny Crosby would agree to letting us say, "Lift up those who have *slipped* and fallen." No, they're not out of God's grace, at least not yet. But they have fallen. Just a gentle hand often is all it takes to lift them up. It doesn't take a long speech. Sometimes when we fall we find ourselves in the situation of a turtle that has accidentally been flipped on its back. All it takes is just a little lift to get it on its way again. But even a turtle, if left on its back too long, will die. So will our brother, unless we lift up the fallen.

**Tell:** Often we must prepare the heart before we can tell the story. Otherwise people won't listen. Fanny Crosby was surely inspired to place *Tell* at the end of her list. To tell is easy. It takes little sacrifice. If the rescuer on the bridge would have remained safely on his side of the guardrail and preached a sermon to the man about to end his life, would he have listened? Not likely. He had probably heard a lot of sermons in his life and was tired of them. But no one had ever risked his life so that he might live. That is what made the difference.

**Refrain:**

*Rescue the perishing,*

*Care for the dying;*

*Jesus is merciful,*

*Jesus will save.*

The story is told of an incident that took place many years ago in a little fishing village in Holland. The men and young boys would go out in small fishing boats, remaining at sea for several days. The most dreaded occupational hazard was being caught at sea in a storm.

When this happened, the enormous breakers made it difficult to beach their boats. It wasn't unusual to become stranded on offshore rocks, where the waves pounded the boats to splinters. It was for this purpose that villagers organized a rescue squad.

Whenever the rescue squad was in action, all the villagers would congregate on the beach, for it was their husbands, sons and brothers who were in danger of perishing.

During a particularly bad storm, the rescue team rowed out to the craft that was stranded on the rocks. Night set in, but finally the anxious eyes on the beach saw a boat approaching. So great had been the exertion, that the rescuers could hardly stand to their feet. Gasping, the squad captain, told the assembled villagers, "There was one we couldn't bring. Someone must go back in a small boat and rescue him before he perishes. Who will volunteer?"

Immediately a young man of 17 stepped up and said, "I will go."

His mother threw up her arms. "My son, you cannot go! Your father lost his life at sea 10 years ago. Your brother Paul left two weeks ago and hasn't returned. If something happens to you, I will be all alone."

"Mom," the young boy said, even as he prepared himself to launch out into the angry waves, "someone is perishing out there. Someone is lost! I must go..."

All alone the young man set out in a small rowboat. He had gone but several meters when he was swallowed up by the darkness.

The minutes slowly ticked by. The mother stood on the shore, wringing her hands. The captain of the rescue squad had his eyes glued on the breakers.

More painful minutes. And more. Hope was almost gone. The captain, braving the incoming waves, was the first to see a small rowboat approaching. He called out, "Did you bring him?"

"I did," gasped the boy. "Tell mother it's Paul!"



This Month on the Colony

## **A Silver Wedding Anniversary**

Divino Cândido Ismael is a brother who lives in Goiânia. He is married and has three teenage children, all members. The oldest, Michelle, is teaching in the Monte Alegre School. The two boys, Isaac and Diogo, are anxiously awaiting the day when they will move to the Colony and begin raising fryers in the first six of the barns they plan on putting in.

For Divino and his sons this will be an abrupt departure from their present lifestyle. Divino is a CPA and has a prospering business right in the middle of Goiânia, a city of over a million inhabitants. After he has sold out, he will be living on the Harold Dirks home place, just upriver from Emma Burns. At present Carlos Ambrósio is remodeling the house which Harold built nearly 30 years ago.

On December 20, 1975, Divino & Corina were married. On October 13, 1992 Divino became a member of the church, where he has been a real asset to the little group in Goiânia. Interestingly, all three of his children had a conversion experience in a 48 hour period. Now just recently Honorina Pedrosa da Luz, his mother-in-law, age 86, was also converted.

In Portuguese we have a term, *educação de berço* (literally “cradle good manners”), which means “naturally polite,” a very apt description of Divino and his family. Not only are they polite, but they are hospitable. Effortlessly they practice Mennonite hospitality, with a Latin flair.

The church in Goiânia will miss Divino and his family when they move to the Colony, but with three active teenagers, a million plus metropolis is hardly an ideal place to raise a family. Their loss will be our gain, and I am sure Divino will pay frequent visits to the little church there. As we have mentioned before, the little church in Goiânia is in reality an incubator. The chicks are hatched and sooner or later most of them fly away to a less populated area. That means that the mission is always small, yet always successful.

A celebration for Divino & Corina’s wedding anniversary was organized for Sunday, the 24th, at the Leo Dirks (Harold’s son) residence. Against all odds, the secret didn’t leak out. The crowd at Leo and Mim’s got bigger and bigger and still Divino had no idea what was going on. Finally, when the program was to begin, he was told that the doings were in their honor.

They were overwhelmed, to say the least. At the end they stood behind a table and opened gifts, just like they would have done 25 years ago if married in the church. I believe their emotions were touched a lot more now than they would have been then. First Corina expressed her thanks, then Divino. Then Corina again and Divino again. Corina, who is not yet a member, asked for prayers. She wants to do what is right and with just a little “knee pressure” I think she will find what she is looking for.

Paulo David had a short speech that included a reading, in which he pointed out how that many times our dreams seem to be frustrated, but as we stand back and analyze our lives, we find they have actually come to pass in a much more perfect way than we have imagined.

## **The Fable of Three Trees**

On a mountain top there were three small trees that liked to dream about what they would be after reaching full stature.

The first tree, looking at the stars, said, “I want to be made into the most beautiful chest in the world, overflowing with riches. If I can be a treasure chest, I am willing to be cut down.”

The second tree looked at a nearby stream and sighed. “I want to be made into a large ship that will carry kings and queens over the sea.”

The third tree looked at the valley and said, “I want to stay here on top of this mountain and grow and grow and grow...reaching up to the heavens, so that all who see me will think about God.”

*Many, many years went by and one day three woodsmen with no appreciation for the beauty of nature came and cut down all three trees. It happens that woodsmen aren't usually able to know what trees are dreaming.*

The first tree was hewn into a large trough that was used to feed hay to cattle and sheep.

The second tree was used to make a little fisherman's boat and everyday it was used to catch fish in the sea.

The third tree, in spite of its dreams to remain on the mountain top and point men to God, was cut into timbers and stored away in a shed.

*All three of the trees asked themselves: “Why has life treated us thus?”*

But on a certain night when the stars were shining brightly and the air was filled with melodious voices, a young mother arranged the hay in a trough and placed her newborn babe in it. So it was that the first tree realized that it was overflowing with the most precious treasure that has ever existed.

Some years later the second tree, now a small boat, was out on the raging sea with a man fast asleep on a mat. When it appeared the boat would capsize, the other men aboard awoke him. He arose and said, “Peace! Be still!” At that moment the second tree realized it was carrying the King of kings as a passenger.

Just a few years later, on a Friday, a timber from the third tree was sawed into two pieces and made into a cross. A man was nailed to this cross. The third tree felt like absolute scum. Could it possibly have been used for anything more terrible than a cross, all stained with blood? But on Sunday, when it saw the miracle that took place, it realized that the man whom he had held between heaven and earth was the Savior of all humanity, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God.

All three of the trees had dreams of greatness, but what really came to place was a thousand times better than what they had imagined. We too have our dreams and plans, that many times aren't in line with what God really has in store for us. But when His plan unfolds, we are amazed at His generosity and mercy.

It is important that we understand that everything that comes from God is good and perfect, for He knows what we need much better than we do. ▲

## A Story

by Sarah N. Cleghorn

## United Nation

When your grandmother's grandfather's grandmother was about your age, the thirteen states were in a peck of trouble.

It was because the United States weren't yet united; they weren't even called *United*.

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There was a loose string of an agreement, called the “Articles of Confederation,” tied around them; but it could easily have slipped off, letting the States spill out in every direction. They might have turned into three or four different nations, or even eight or ten. They had several different kinds of governments, and they had already gotten into several quarrels with one another.

The war with England, their mother country, had lasted seven years. It was only four years now that they had been at peace. And they felt anything but peaceful! Tired, edgy, hating to realize how run down their farms and houses were, and their stores and mills and schools, they probably also missed the excitement of war, much as they hated its danger and dirt and disease.

The first time they tried to hold a meeting, to which every State would send one or more representatives in an effort to combine into a real nation, it had been a complete failure. Nobody—literally nobody—came.

But there are generally one or two persons who continue trying. And so Benjamin Franklin and George Washington and several others kept on until they persuaded their discouraged neighbors to join in one more effort, and to meet in Philadelphia the first Monday in May, 1787.

Washington was there the first day. (You’d know he would be.) And though hardly anybody else came that day, he was there the next day. Again, hardly anybody came. You know how hard **it** is in such a situation not to say “Goodbye! I’m leaving!” Washington didn’t leave. He came again the next day.

Washington kept a diary. In its pages he said right out how discouraged he felt. One day there would be perhaps two persons; the next day, maybe three; but the next, only one. Washington kept on coming, although one day he was the only one there. And on the twentieth day, enough were there, according to law, to do business.

So, having a quorum at last, they made Washington chairman. He said he didn’t know much about being one, and hoped to be excused for any mistakes he made. The first thing the Convention did, was to lay down very careful rules to keep everybody polite and perfectly fair. How well these rules worked was another matter! But at least they honestly tried to guard against their own quarrelsomeness.

And then those delegates went to work, doubtful as most of them felt, to dig the cellar and lay the foundations for our country: its Constitution, its central laws—with which all later laws would have to agree—unless the whole country, by a sizeable majority, voted to change some part of the Constitution itself. They provided exactly how these changes *could* be made, when the people in general wanted them, without breaking or weakening the union of the country. And all the time they wondered, “CAN it possibly last?”

Three particularly hot disputes came up. The first was about slavery. That sore spot had started, you remember, only twelve years after the founding of our first settlement, Jamestown, when a Dutch captain dragged African natives to America and sold them to white owners. It had been going on now for one hundred and sixty-eight years, and still the ships kept coming.



The clerk read out, in his clear, slow, uninteresting voice,

“The importation of slaves shall not be prohibited by Congress before the year 1808. But a tax may be imposed, not exceeding ten dollars each slave.”

“What’s this I hear?” asked a Maryland member, (in more dignified words). Wilson, of Pennsylvania, got up.

“Frankly,” he said (in substance) “it’s what northern members, who *don’t* want any more slaves brought in, and certain southern ones, who *do* want them, have agreed on. The northern men agree to let the slave trade go on twenty years more, and by that time the southern states will have all the slaves they need.”

James Madison of Virginia said most Americans disliked the slave trade, and most of the states had already passed laws forbidding it. But, as a few states still wanted it, “well, if human beings are property, why, property can be taxed.”

Baldwin of Georgia said, very quietly, that this branch of commerce was a delicate subject—better not discuss it—each state could pass what laws it wished—and when he sat down he carefully hadn’t used the words “slave” or “slavery” a single time.

No matter how carefully words were chosen, the delegates were getting excited. They forgot their rules, scraped the floor with the legs of their chairs, interrupted each other. Washington had to use his gavel, and say,

“Gentlemen—gentlemen!”

Things quieted down, but soon boiled up again. It wasn’t the north against the south—it was more mixed up than that. Robert Morris of Pennsylvania listened to the tumult awhile, and then said,

“The whole question is loaded with trouble for this country. Are these slaves property, or are they men?” If they were men, he added, why couldn’t they vote?

Mason of Virginia said the New England sea-captains who made money by dragging men, women and children here to sell into slavery ought to be ashamed of themselves.

You see what a wasps’ nest they were in the middle of; every section more or less mixed up in the sorry business, and yet honestly ashamed of **it**. Washington had to strike harder with his gavel, and say,

“Gentlemen! GENTLEMEN!”

Finally, after a great deal of argument, the law which the clerk had read out in the beginning did pass and was copied into the statute books.

This kind of give-and-take helped the delegates through the two still harder conflicts that came up later in the Convention.

After deciding, without any great difficulty, to have a president, they took up, unsuspectingly, the innocent-sounding question of how to elect him? Immediately they found themselves handling a roll of barbed wire.

Most of them believed in democracy—but it was frighteningly *new*, and untried. Of course the president ought to be chosen by a majority of his fellow-citizens. A splendid principle. But—“how very *ignorant* most poor workingmen are!” said the well-to-do, well-educated men who made up the Convention. (Nobody had as yet imagined such a thing as *women* voting.)

It is hard for us to remember that in those days there were no public schools, no

state colleges; hardly any daily papers; no post-offices, or regular mails carried by the government; no telegraph or telephone; no trains or steamships; no broadcasting, wireless, television, or electric signs flashing in city streets. No public libraries!

Thus we can understand that they had reason to be afraid ignorance would cause serious mistakes.

And some of these educated men even seemed to think that these people, because they were poor, were probably dishonest!

King, of Massachusetts, said, "If we allow each penniless man to vote for president, the number of *votes for sale* will be like the sands of the sea.

Alexander Hamilton of New York thought so too; and Pinckney said, to put the choice of president "further away from the common man, we all agree is wise.

Well! Dangers terribly real and important to *them*, it's easy enough for us to laugh at now. *We* know their hard, discouraged plans succeeded! *They* saw those plans from the other end, and didn't know whether they would succeed or fail.

They made so little progress that, at the close of the session one day, when Washington asked,

"Does anyone wish to put a motion?" Morris said,

"Mr. President, the only motion that occurs to me, as suitable for this occasion, is that we give up and go home."

Washington then was inspired to say the greatest words—I think—he ever said:

"Gentlemen, it is too probable that *no* plan we propose will be adopted. But we *must stand firm* on the *best* in us.... Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair! *The event is in the hand of God.*"

And again they found a compromise way. Every man could vote—yes; but not for president. They could vote for an elector—some trusted fellow-citizen of their own state. And those thirteen electors would come together and choose a president, according to their wise opinions.

But now came on their worst problem of all—at least it roused the greatest partisanship. Beside every State's Legislature, there must also be a Legislature of the United States. They decided to call it Congress. How should its members be elected?

If every State sent just one representative, there might easily be more votes from the thinly populated states than from the populous ones. In that case, the minority would be ruling the majority. An upside-down way for having democracy! exclaimed the representatives of the big states.

Well, but if they were chosen according to population, the big states would *always* be the majority! and what would become of the little ones? They would only last as long as "an icicle in June!" said fiery Mr. Brearly of Delaware. "One representative from every state alike," demanded all the little states, declaring that otherwise they would soon be "gobbled up." "Rhode Island will be a county in Connecticut," they prophesied.

Amazed at these demonstrations of distrust and fear, the delegates from the large states protested that after all, a majority was a majority, and anybody who could count could prove it. Was Virginia to have no more representatives than

Maryland? than Delaware? Why, she had sixteen times as many people as Delaware! Was a Virginian only one-sixteenth as good as a Delawarean?

This thunderstorm went on for two weeks or more.

When Paterson of the then sparsely settled New Jersey demanded, for the nth time, “One state, one vote,” Wilson of Pennsylvania said:

“I see no reason to think States’ Rights are the idol of this people. I wouldn’t think **it** any comedown (or words to that effect) from being a citizen of Pennsylvania to being a citizen of the United States!” He received applause, but Lansing of New York (another sparsely settled state) said *his* state probably wouldn’t have sent any representative if any such idea had been dreamed of! And the word “Liar” was heard.

Old Benjamin Franklin rose.

Washington said, “Gentlemen, Dr. Franklin wishes to address you.”

Franklin spoke first about the shared dangers of the war, the danger the infant Republic was still in, touching skilfully on their common love of country; and as he talked, the delegates began to feel like one family. Then he said what a *small* thing, compared with the cause of freedom, and the past efforts they had made for **it**, was now dividing them!

“What is it? a mere detail! Shall we confess ourselves beaten by a difference of opinion over a detail?” It was eloquent, moving; but what he next said was a hundred times more so.

“May I make a statement of my own position? I’ve felt from the beginning that we should be represented according to population. I’ve voted with the larger states, convinced that I was right. But, gentlemen, as this debate has run on, a great IDEA has come to me—the idea that I MIGHT BE WRONG!

“Gentlemen,” he went on, “we have been trying, like wilful children, each to get his own way. . . it came over me today like a conviction of sin. Look into your hearts, my brothers, and see if you don’t find the same fault there.”

It must have been like a spring thaw in a frozen river, his saying that. He went on to suggest:

“—that we now adjourn for the rest of the day. (and) each one of us spend every waking hour. . . until we reconvene tomorrow, *not* with those who agree with us, planning how to win, but in humble, open, sincere talk with men of the opposite opinion, trying to invent some way in which *both sides may win*. Mr. President, I move we adjourn.”

Dozens seconded the motion. Washington, lightly touching his gavel to the table, said “The motion is carried.” He and Franklin went out together.

Whether Wilson and Mason talked with Brearly and Lansing that night, and with whom Franklin and Washington talked, we can only guess; but **it** wasn’t long before the luminously simple inspiration developed, of having two Houses of Congress; every state having the same numer of Senators, regardless of population; and representatives to the House elected one to every so many thousand.

And that was the way that both sides won! ▲

*With that kind of wisdom, is it any wonder the United States of America became the greatest country in the world?]*

## A Story for Children

by Jason Warkentin

### The Ultralight That Was Too Light

On November 17<sup>th</sup> of the year 2000, Pilot Sandro, age 25, was flying his ultralight he had just bought in Goiânia to the Pantanal [in the state of Mato Grosso]. He was flying along the highway because this was unknown territory to him and he was worried he would get lost. He stopped in Rio Verde to fuel up and then he kept on going from Rio Verde to Jataí. He was flying by my Grandpa Warkentin's place when suddenly a strong gust of wind hit his ultralight and nearly brought him down, but he kept on and decided he would land on my Grandpa's lane. And so that is what he did.

After school I went over there for a ride. Robert had wanted one too, so I told him to go first. The ultralight had two seats and the back seat had a 40 liter tank for reserve, so he took it off, but it was drizzling, so we had to wait.

While we wait I'll write something else. His ultralight was very economizing; it uses 20 liters per hour.

Now let's get back again, at the reason why he couldn't go with the least drizzle, was because there were two air intakes for the motor that could not get wet. His motor was 85 H.P. and 500 C.C.s.

After the rain was over, Robert got on and they headed for Grandpa's field road. He gunned the engine and tore down the road, but suddenly a gust of wind caught the tail and sent the ultralight into the field. The pilot tried picking it up, but it was not going fast enough, so he kept on across the no-till field with sorghum and he tried picking it up again, but it fell right down again. Then finally it picked up and slowly glided into the wind like a free, extinct and clumsy bird. What a beautiful sight! I looked at Robert's wife and her face was *red, red, red!*

Pretty soon they came down again and everything went fine until a wind caught them and turned them into the field, or rather, they headed into the field because of a bump.

I could not go for a ride, just like in my dreams I never get one either. He promised me a ride in his spray plane when he comes. He said if anyone here needs a plane for spraying to call him. His boss owns 110,000 hectares [275,000 acres] of land in the Pantanal in Mato Grosso, but it is all in cattle.

Oh, the reason I couldn't go was that it was gusting too much.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> I was talking to Robert and he said, "I like airplanes better than ultralights because they take off on runways, not in sorghum fields." He admitted he was worried.

The next morning Sandro took off in half of what he did before. He said if the weather was bad to leave, he would come over in his plane to our school and give me a

ride, but of course he could leave so off he went. His ultralight cost 10 thousand reals [five thousand dollars] and it is very neat. He has an Ipanema spray plane, a Cessna, an Ag-tractor and an ultralight.

▲  
Jason Warkentin  
8<sup>th</sup> grade, Rio Verdinho School

*[Jason is Lowell & Sharon Warkentin's son. Robert is his uncle, and Robert's red, red, red wife is his aunt, of course.]*

## Imagining Out Loud

### The Diary

We have just come through what is known as “the season,” in which we try to refresh our minds on something that happened two thousand years ago.

It's not very likely that Mary kept a diary, but that doesn't keep us from imagining that she did...

Dec. 12. A customer came to the shop today to order a table. He told Joseph that the government is coming up with some kind of a census, apparently for tax purposes. If what the man said is true, it's going to be quite rigid, with a steep fine for anyone not complying. We don't know any more details, but hope it is just a rumor.

Dec. 13. I had just got the morning house work done and was making dinner when Joseph came in from the shop. I could see something was really worrying him. He would look at me, at my full figure, and crease his brow. Finally I asked, “What is it, Joseph?” He was quiet for a few more moments, and then said, “Mary, that rumor we heard yesterday, about the census is true...” He stopped again. “...The problem is that instead of coming to each town and village and counting heads, everyone is going to have to go to his family headquarters...” “Which in our case is Bethlehem,” I interrupted. Gloomily he nodded his head. “The official that brought the news is still in town. I want to go see him and ask if there couldn't be some sort of exemption for people in your situation.”

Dec. 14. It was about dark when Joseph got to talk to the official yesterday. He was merciless; told Joseph that he was leaving orders with the local police to arrest anyone who doesn't comply with the king's order. So, here I am, over half way through my eighth month, needing to go to Bethlehem. Joseph is almost beside himself. He doesn't know how I'm going to manage.

Dec. 15. We stayed up late last night trying to decide if we should go immediately, hoping to return before the baby is born, or if we should go afterwards. We feel we have no option but to get ready tomorrow and leave the following day.. If we wait until the baby is born and I can travel, we'll run past the deadline and that would really complicate things for us here. Making this trip now was really weighing heavily on us.

It fact, it seemed almost impossible. It's a good 70 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The road is very bad and there are no inns or facilities for travelers, no place to buy food. In fact, drinking water is going to be a problem. Joseph says we're going to have to take food for the entire trip, and plenty of water.

Dec. 16. After we had gone to bed last night, neither of us was able to sleep. Everything was quiet, totally quiet, when all of a sudden it became so quiet it seemed we could hear the silence. In that silence we both heard a voice that said, "This is my plan." We both slept.

Dec. 17. Both relatives and neighbors who found out about our dilemma came over to help get things around for the trip. By evening we had everything ready to go. Needless to say, neither Joseph nor I look forward to this trip, and yet, neither do we dread it...

Dec. 18. We could still see the morning star when we hit the road. Several other families started out with us, but soon left us behind. Our donkey is so loaded down that I'll have to walk, which is very slowly. We tell the others to not worry about us, that we'll make out. Apologetically they go on ahead. Joseph and I figure we'll do good to make ten miles a day. We have to stop for a short rest every 30 minutes or so.

Dec. 19. Joseph thinks we made our 10 miles yesterday. We slept under the stars. It's fortunate that his mother insisted on each of us taking an extra blanket as the night was quite chilly. With our water severely rationed, we could only wash up our hands and faces.

Dec. 21. Joseph is so helpful. At times he rigs up a backpack to carry most of the water and food and insists that I ride on the little donkey, poor thing. I think I'm about more than it can take. Last night several families caught up with us and we camped together. Joseph thinks we came nearly 12 miles today.

Dec. 22. We haven't come quite halfway yet and I am plain tired out. The road is rocky and uneven. With my weight, I must watch each step. My feet are already so sore. I don't dare even think about what would happen if I twisted my ankle...

Dec. 22. How many days is it since Joseph and I have had a bath? I'm losing track of time. We walk and rest, walk and rest, walk and rest... When we get to Bethlehem, the first thing we're going to do is get a room at an inn, wash our sweaty clothes and have a good bath. Then we'll do our business, rest another day or two, and return home—hopefully before the baby is born.

Dec. 23. As we get nearer to Bethlehem, more and more people pass us. They look at us sympathetically and probably think, "Poor, dirty people." We are covered with grime. If it wasn't for the hope of soon getting to an inn, I don't know if I could go on. Since we haven't been making good time, it looks like we'll be getting in after dark tonight.

Dec. 24. As we got nearer to Bethlehem, and then finally saw a few dim lights in the distance, I noticed that Joseph got quieter and quieter. Something was bothering him. I was too tired to ask what he was thinking. Then as we struggled into town, it dawned on me. The town was packed. What if...what if...there was no room available

in the inn? Worse yet, I was having some new pains, sharp pains, that maternal instinct told me were labor pains. Time was running out. We struggled up to the inn door and I waited outside while Joseph made his way inside to talk to the inn keeper. When he finally returned, the grim look on his face told the story. The inn keeper was sympathetic, in fact, he even went from room to room to see if anyone would be willing to give up a room for a woman about to have a baby. Each one had his own excuse. In desperation, Joseph said, the inn keeper suddenly put his finger on his forehead and said, "I'm ashamed to offer this, but I do have a stable in back of the inn. It's where people put their donkeys while staying here. But at least it has a roof, several walls, and a well with good fresh water, just in case you folks would like to get cleaned up." Gratefully we accepted the stable. By now my pains were coming quite regularly. Joseph fixed me a place behind a stack of loose hay that would give some privacy. Then he drew some water from the well so we could clean up.

Dec. 25. Shortly after midnight the child was born. Joseph proved that not only is he a good carpenter, but a good nurse as well. He padded one end of the trough with hay, covered it with my shawl, and that's where he laid our son after we had both held him for a while. That's where he was lying when some shepherds showed up toward morning...

*[Now, just a hint for next Christmas. When your local paper begins printing the X days until Christmas notices, and you get into a stew because there doesn't seem to be time to get everything done before the 25<sup>th</sup>, think of Joseph and Mary, and how they did it.]*

## This & That

Dec. 2 was Alma Penner's garage sale at Daniel & Betty Martin's place.

Dec. 3 the youth from both congregations had a farewell for Micha Dirksen at Lynn & Kathy Schultz's place. She returned to the US after spending several months visiting here.

Dec. 6 was the Rio Verde School's end-of-the-year program. On the 9th they had their playday at the Monte Alegre School.

Dec. 13 the Monte Alegre youth gathered at Mark & Glenda Loewen's place to plant tifton grass. They got rained out before the job could be finished and some returned the following day to finish.

Dec. 16 the Rio Verdinho Cong. youth and their leaders took food boxes to ten poor families in Rio Verde.

Regina Miller and Kendra Schultz, both presently living in Kansas, were out for the holidays.

Kent & Karla Holdeman from Georgia are out to visit relatives here.

By the time you get this, Bert & Ada Coblentz's gray hair will probably have turned white. Children and grandchildren from the US out to spend the holidays with them

## Brazil News

are: Danny & Verna Stoltzfus, Phil & Jeanie Coblentz and children, Lovina and son, Galen & Cleuza and children.

Dec. 19 was the Rio Verdinho School's Christmas program.

Dec. 20 was the Monte Alegre School program.

Other visitors: Wayland & Rita Loewen and family, Rowland & Ruth Loewen and family, Lester & Sharon Holdeman, Craig & Monica Redger and sons.

Did you notice that *Kursk* was spelled correctly this month?

Teresa Hibner, the school teacher on the Curitiba mission, was out to spend Christmas with her family.