

Brazil News



No. 124
September 2001

Editorial

When the World Stops

Sílvio Santos is the owner of a major television network in Brazil. A philanthropist and the host of a popular talk show, he is a national household word.

Early one morning, approximately a month ago, Sílvio Santos's daughter was abducted by several men posing as telephone repairmen as she prepared to leave for class in her car.

In compliance with the family's request, the press gave the incident low-key coverage. After a week in captivity, Patrícia was released physically unharmed, yet with symptoms of the Stockholm syndrome. She praised her kidnappers while severely censuring the social inequalities that caused this type of action.

Several days after Patricia's release, police discovered one of the fugitive kidnappers in a hotel. There was a shootout in which two of the policemen were killed, another wounded, as well as the kidnapper himself.

What followed next will someday probably make its way into a film. After the shootout, the kidnapper caught an elevator down to one of the lower floors, crawled out a window and somehow made his way to the street, commandeered a vehicle, and—unbelievably—drove up to Sílvio Santos' mansion, managed to sneak past the guards, and took the Santos family hostage.

Except for Santos, all the family members were either released or managed to slip away. In a matter of minutes the entire area had been cordoned off and was jammed with policemen and emergency vehicles.

It was said that that day Sílvio Santos was the owner of *all* major TV networks in Brazil, for during the eight hours he was held hostage, and for some time after, he was the sole attraction on television—no commercials, no other news—only Sílvio Santos.

That was BIG news, that is, until that fateful Tuesday. Once again the airwaves were dominated by a single situation—terrorism.

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The kidnapper demanded that either the governor of the state of São Paulo come to Santos's mansion to be present in the negotiations or he would put a quick end to everything. The governor complied and soon Santos came out to wave at the TV cameras, while the kidnapper was being whisked to jail.

Today that whole episode, including the *mere* two lives that were lost, seems like a kindergarten skit, when compared with the utter terror, destruction and death that took place a few days later.

The editorial in BN 23, April 93, was on Predictability. Following are some excerpts:

The desire for accurate predictions is as old as mankind...

In modern society scientists have assumed the role of the prophet in a frightening manner.

Frightening, because of the unconscious dependency we are developing on their predictions...

Science has indeed become a powerful prophet.

And the problem isn't that science is off most of the time, but rather the opposite. It's becoming entirely too easy to believe what we read and hear.

So what's the problem?

The problem is that we're being seduced by predictability... The threat of nuclear war seems to be blowing over. Epidemics are a thing of the past. The danger of dying on the operating table during a routine surgery is extremely low. The same is true of childbirth.

This creates self-confidence, a feeling of mastery. Our future is predictable and we are in charge.

We dread the unknown, that which isn't in our predictions. No one predicted that the ferryboat Neptune would sink on the Haitian coast. But it did sink. Our prediction that God won't let such a thing happen to brethren who are engaged in religious activities was shattered, or at least shaken...

The question isn't how we would react if a similar tragedy befell us. Rather we should ask ourselves what will happen if things go according to predictions for the next 20 years...

How long can we survive where life is predictable?

Terrorist Tuesday didn't detonate the seductive predictability only of those living in or around New York or Washington, or in the United States. The tremors of the collapsing Twin Towers were felt around the world.

(They were felt here on the Colony. Differently from other crises when there is a tendency to look North, this time the only option was to look Up.)

As I sit here in my study writing these words, I recognize there is a strong possibility that by the time this little paper reaches you readers in N America, more chapters may have been written in this gruesome story. Of one thing we can be fairly certain: This problem won't just ooze away.

Why did this happen?

It would be naïve indeed to believe that all this came about because of a fanatical people, to believe that if they could be subdued God's alarm clock would quit beeping and life would get back to normal. The world is not in crisis because of the Moslems. God has used a small faction of this people to break the glass and pull the handle on the fire alarm. While the world desperately searches for those who tripped the alarm, let us search for God. Indeed, let us ask ourselves: Is God trying to awaken the world? Whose attention is He trying to get?

As we face a world considerably less predictable than it was a month ago, we do well to mediate on Isaiah 8:12.

Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

A confederacy is “a group of people who have united for unlawful practices; a conspiracy” (AHD).

Now reread, substituting the term “a confederacy” with terrorism. Does it make sense?

Carefully reread the last part of the verse: *Neither fear ye their fear.* The world is fearing a cataclysm, war, unbridled terrorism, death... The prophet says, “Don’t fear what the world fears.” In other words, “Don’t be afraid of the confederacy (terrorism).” The prophet ends the verse by categorically stating, “Nor be afraid.”

People who are afraid often don’t think objectively. We certainly aren’t proposing that the recent happenings have come about for the sole purpose of arousing God’s people. But it can be safely said that in the smoke and rubble, God has placed at least a small message for His people.

What is this message?

Very likely this message will unfold with the passing of time. At this point we can but speculate through a glass darkly.

Statistics told us it was safer to ride a plane than to drive a car. And so we would board a large craft, made by man, settle down in our seat, with hardly a thought that something might go wrong. Today we pray—earnestly, not ritually—before we board a plane, and during the flight. We pray for loved ones whom we know are going to fly.

Do you suppose that is one of the first lessons God wants to teach us? That we should quit taking things for granted? That we should realize that maybe we have been seduced by predictability?

God would be pleased...

✓If we would more earnestly thank him for life, yes, for being alive, for His protection during the day.

✓If we would take the necessary time to place our life on His scales and then read the weight slip. Terrorist Tuesday may be but the preface to a large book filled with chapters infinitely worse than what has happened.

✓If we as God’s people would be prepared, like the Israelites on the night of the first Passover, so that if the world begins to crumble—literally—around us, we don’t have to desperately try and have a revival in our own heart, but rather, that *we can be prepared to use the opportunity to bring a revival to those around and about us.*

✓If we as God’s people would remember—and this is so very important—that Moslems have souls. Even terrorists have souls. Today the world is down not only on individuals, but on peoples. God forbid that we fear a confederacy, that we cast a baleful eye on individuals or groups because of their religion or nationality. The world doesn’t care for their souls. If we don’t, who will?

✓If in these evil days we would leave a quiet testimony of peace. In the Chinese language the word crisis means *danger* and *opportunity*.

The prophet tells us to not fear their fear, for then we will fail to see opportunity. When the world stops, God’s people must be ready to start. ▲

Thinking Out Loud

The Race

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. —1 Corinthians 9:24

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses...let us run with patience the race that is set before us. —Hebrews 12:1

New believers are possibly bewildered by the thought of Christian life being a race. *But only one receives the prize.* With whom do we race? With our brother? With our sister? Is it in keeping with the law of love that we try and beat them out of the prize?

Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

A large stadium was filled with spectators for a special event being put on by deficient children. Among the attractions there would be races.

In one of these races there were ten children. At the starting signal, they began running. They had gone but a short distance when one of the children stumbled and fell. Hearing his cry, the children all stopped. A girl with Down's syndrome went back, knelt down beside the little boy, kissed him and helped him to his feet. Then all the children locked arms and *walked* to the finish line.

There was only one winner—the *group*. Since the little boy who fell wasn't feeling like running, the nine, with patience ran—walked—the race, so they could all be winners.

The crowd in the bleachers gave these little children a ten-minute standing ovation.

What a beautiful lesson for us. If we truly run with patience the race that is set before us, we too will link arms and all finish together. ▲

The Problem and the Solutions

The problem:

Elbanosaernu—we'll just call him Elb, for short—was raised in a poor home. Poor in more ways than one. Elb's dad was a poor worker, a poor provider, a poor husband, a poor dad, just all around poor.

His mom was goodhearted, but not a strong woman. She tried to sand the rough edges off of Elb's crude ways, but it doesn't do a lot of good to sand a splintered two-by-four.

So when Elb got to be a man and went on his own, he sincerely believed that life was unfair. Really we can't blame him. During the time he was growing up, while sitting in the house, while walking in the way, while lying down and while rising up, Elb's dad didn't miss an opportunity to tell and retell his endless stories of how others always gave him the

short end of deals, which was why he didn't have anything. Elb believed most of what his dad said.

Yet Elb had a lot more character than his dad. In fact, he was a hard worker, determined to get ahead no matter what it took. He had inherited enough of his mom's nature to where he could be almost pleasant at times. The greatest scar he carried into adulthood was a deep, irrational suspicion of others. This made it hard to do business with him, as we shall see...

Elb, of course, doesn't really exist, nor do the characters whom we shortly will introduce. Any resemblance to someone whom you know, or have known, is pure coincidence.

Here's what happened. Elb saved up several thousand dollars to buy a used car. He watched the classified ads in the daily paper and called the owners of the vehicles that he thought would fit both his need and his pocketbook.

When making a deal, Elb had a photographic memory. He could reconstruct the entire conversation with the seller, without missing a single comma or period. In the deal we're talking about the seller answered Elb's questions in all honesty, unaware of how literally every word he spoke was being taken.

A month after purchasing the used vehicle, the seller got a registered letter in the mail:
Dear Sir:

You will remember that on the 10th day of June I purchased your used car...which I paid in full.

You will also remember that I asked you what shape the motor was in and you replied, "It's never been touched and by the way it is running, it could easily go another 50 thousand miles."

Well, I am informing you that I drove that car a mere 500 miles—not 50 thousand, like you guaranteed—when the motor blew...

I have spoken to my attorney and he tells me that I have every right to demand that you, the seller, pay for a complete overhaul job at the shop of my choice, which happens to be the local Ford agency...

If I haven't heard from you within five days, I will instruct my lawyer to begin legal proceedings against you...

That's the letter. We are now going to assume that six different people received this letter: a farmer, a lawyer, a card carrying Mennonite, a diplomat, a hothead and a non-resistant Mennonite. You will be reading the rough draft of their letters. Words and phrases that have been ~~crossed-out~~ struck out, will obviously be removed in the final draft.

The Farmer

Dear Elb,

I got your letter in the mail a couple of days ago. ~~If that motor blew up on you,~~ it's ~~because~~ I remember telling you that that motor could easily go another 50 thousand miles. But you know how it is, we can't see into a motor and know what is

happening. ~~Even so, it doesn't take a lot of common sense to know that if you don't check the oil and the radiator~~ I assume you did check the oil regularly and watch the heat gauge.

So far as paying for your repair bill, ~~I really don't feel any responsibility~~ I suppose I could contribute a hundred dollars to the cause....

The Lawyer

Dear Mr. Jones

I received your letter...and hereby inform you that ~~I have absolutely no intentions of paying one cent~~ what I said was not, I repeat, **not**, a guarantee, but merely an opinion. Consequently I don't feel any obligation to repair the damaged engine on the car you purchased from me. ~~I can assure you that if you take this case to court, the judge will throw it out so fast and so far that~~ If you continue to feel I am owing you something, I will be most happy to meet with your attorney....

The card carrying Mennonite

Dear Elb,

~~When I sold you my used car, I took you for an honest man~~ I am sorry the car you bought from me has given you motor problems. I know there are plenty of people who sell used cars, trucks, etc., knowing all the while they are selling a bagful of problems.

Elb, I want you to know that I was totally honest with you. When I said the car could easily run another 50 thousand miles, this was merely a way of saying the car seemed to be in good shape. ~~I didn't realize you can't understand plain English.~~

So far as paying for the motor overhaul, I have checked with a lawyer friend and he says ~~he would love to have you take this to law so he could rub your nose in the dirt~~ you really have no case, since there were no witnesses to our conversation, nor was anything put in writing. I think if you stop and ~~use your head~~ think for a few moments, you will realize that what you are asking is ~~totally ridiculous~~ isn't reasonable. I don't feel it would be right for me to pay for your engine repair, as it might make you believe that dishonesty pays....

The Diplomat

Dear Mr. Jones

I was truly sorry to hear about the problems you have had with the car I sold you. I appreciate dealing with someone who takes negotiations seriously. Thus when you remind me that I said the car should be good for another 50 thousand miles, I can understand your frustration when a mere 500 miles later the motor blew.

Mr. Jones, I would like to sit down with you and discuss this problem and find a solution, which I ~~believe~~ am sure we will. If this meets your approval, ~~please suggest a place we can meet~~ how about coming to my office tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock. Since your car isn't working, I will gladly send my personal chauffeur to pick you up at 8:45....

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The Hothead

I won't begin this letter with "Dear Mr. So-and-So" or "Dear Sir." I save that kind of talk for civilized people...

I sure did tell you that that car was good for another 50 thousand miles. It was too. I could have gotten another ~~50 thousand~~ ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND MILES out of that car, no sweat.

~~If that motor blew~~ YOU blew that motor, it's probably because you didn't check the water in the radiator. ~~Don't blame me for your ignorance.~~ It's too bad you didn't have your head under the hood when the motor blew.

If you want to take me to law, go right ahead. I'll do the same. Only my law is different than yours. You'll find yourself looking into the business end of a 38....

The Non-resistant Mennonite

My good friend,

I was sorry to hear about the problems you are having with the car you bought from me. I really thought it might run another 50 thousand miles without any major problems.

~~I didn't expect you would take what I said as a guarantee, nevertheless, I want to help with the repair bill.~~ If I'm not mistaken, that car is your only means of transportation, so this must have put you into a real bind. I would like to loan you my car while yours is being repaired.

~~So far as paying for the repair bill, I agree to do so.~~ You have requested that that I pay for your repair bill. I have called the local Ford agency and authorized them to install a new engine in your car—at my cost. As already mentioned, you may use my car while yours is in the shop.

I apologize for what has happened....

Which now of these [five], thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that [blew his motor]?

Intercepted Fax

To the Richard Mininger Family

I'm not in the habit of praying for the dead, but the last couple of days I have found myself doing so. I ask the Lord to be with Richard & Edith...and then I stop, and realize that that term has passed into eternity. Edith no longer needs our prayers. I then pray for Richard and his family.

The Mantle

When someone is taken from us whom we have known particularly well, a single word or phrase, which epitomizes the life of that person, will often waft down from

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somewhere, like a snowflake, and gently settle on our mind, sort of like Elijah's mantle which fluttered to earth when he was carried upward in a chariot of fire.

Knowing that his end was near, three times the prophet Elijah asked Elisha to "tarry," to permit him to continue alone to his rendezvous with death. And three times Elisha refused.

Because of the deep love for his assistant, Elijah not only permitted him to accompany him to the other side of the Jordan River, but also asked if he would like to make a final request. Elisha requested a double spirit of his beloved mentor's spirit, and then as they continued walking, horses and a chariot of fire suddenly swooped down and separated the two prophets. One arose and the other remained. In a final gesture of love, the old prophet dropped his mantle, which the young prophet retrieved.

As it became evident that Edith was slowly walking toward the Jordan River, like the young prophet, Richard and the family asked not three times, but many, many times, that God would grant the blessing of walking with her just a little longer. We don't know how many times the Lord granted these requests, possibly many more times than we suspect. But finally the time came when the Lord sent his horses and chariots of fire.

As Edith rose heavenward in the chariot of fire, she also dropped a mantle. For each of us it will have a slightly different meaning. I find it a pleasure to write what this mantle means to me, to reveal the word that settled on my mind when I heard of Edith's passing.

Cheerfulness.

When Richard & Edith moved to Brazil in March of 1975, conditions were still quite primitive in the Rio Verde area. Many of the amenities which we enjoy today didn't exist back then. There is no doubt but what pioneering was harder on the ladies than it was on the men. As was custom back those days, a shed was built before a house. One end of the shed was partitioned off as living quarters. In the other end, just a wall away, were piles of fertilizer, seed, insecticides, tractors and equipment, a shop, and at harvest time, possibly grain. The block wall separating the living quarters from the shed proper didn't do a very good job of shutting off noises, dirt and smells. Yet through it all, Edith was cheerful.

Edith was the minister's wife. I suppose it's never easy to be a preacher or a preacher's wife, but back those days it was especially difficult. We moved in from all over, with an enormous assortment of ideas of how things should be run in this new country. This made for a lot of confusion. The isolation, lack of telephone communication, made matters even worse. Yet through all this Edith was cheerful.

All of Richard & Edith's five children, the youngest being only two, were still at home when they moved to Brazil. To pioneer, be a preacher's wife and raise a family certainly wasn't an easy task. Yet none of that kept Edith from being cheerful.

A number of years after moving here, the doctors told Edith she had a rare, incurable disease. The symptoms were light in the beginning and we hoped things wouldn't get worse. But slowly they did. With the passing of the years, it became

increasingly difficult for her to do the housework. Hired girls would come in several days a week, but often the heaviest load would fall on Richard. I'm sure that for Edith to see others do the work she so much wanted to do was much more difficult than doing the work herself. Yet Edith was cheerful.

It wasn't unusual for Edith to stop at the literature center to give me a clipping or a story she found interesting. Other times she would call and tell me something that she had heard or that had stirred her imagination. Even when it became difficult for her to get around, she lost none of her enthusiasm. And she was always cheerful.

With no local facilities capable of giving Edith the special care she needed, they moved back to the US. Then came the blow of finding out that in addition to her chronic problem, her body was plagued by a more violent and unforgiving illness. I didn't see her during this period, yet I am confident that she remained cheerful.

The mantle Edith left behind as she was swept away by the horses and chariots of fire has fallen on many of us. We in Brazil are deeply indebted to both Richard & Edith for their dedication during the years spent here.

And so, as I think of Edith, I see her smile. I hear her voice. I remember her stoutheartedness. But most of all I remember her cheerfulness. That is the mantle she left for me. In her absence, it will be a comfort. May it be to all who knew her. ▲

Life in Brazil

Casas Populares

Casas, as anyone who understands even a little bit of Spanish knows, means houses. The word popular, in English, can mean "Suited to or within the means of ordinary people: *popular prices*" (AHD). So casas populares means housing for ordinary people.

Rich people, of course, aren't ordinary people, so they build themselves or rent nice houses. Ordinary people, in Brazil, often have no way to build a house, not even a simple little house. So they are obligated to rent a cheap house. Rare indeed, is the soul of any nationality, that finds joy in renting a house.

As you travel in Brazil and near a city, it isn't uncommon to see a housing project covering a number of acres. There are dozens, maybe hundreds, of tiny, identical houses. Often they consist of a kitchen/living area, a bathroom and two small bedrooms. That's all. You go by a week or a month later and there are people living in all the houses. Everything looks quite crude and crowded. The houses are unplastered, the streets are unpaved—either dusty or muddy. You wonder how anyone could possibly want to live in such a place.

Five years later you drive past the same section of town. You don't recognize it. Almost all of the tiny houses have apparently disappeared. In their place are attractive homes. The streets have been paved. While by no means will anyone confuse this

section of town with the section where the rich folks live, they certainly won't call it the poor section either.

I tip my hat to the Brazilian government for this very successful housing project, present in most towns and cities. The monthly payments are very low, very much within the financial capabilities of lower wage earners. The fact that they must work and sacrifice to pay for these houses gives the people a sense of ownership.

Different ones of our people live in this type of housing. It is fascinating to see how they carefully add to the original shell, one room, then another, and yet another. Interestingly, when they finish—if they ever finish—these houses don't look cobbled up.

The day comes that a motorcycle is parked in the garage, and then a car—an old car, it's true, but a car. Time goes by and the old car disappears and in its place there is a nicer car. Thus the poor people turn into middle class. A good, solid middle class, because they know that progress costs money, and that money is acquired by working. Not by government handouts. ▲

Brazil's Reaction to Recent Events

In spite of frequent commercial squabbles, Brazil is very closely tied to the US. The North American way of life exerts a strong influence on the Brazilian culture. Because of this proximity, the initial reaction to the terrorist attacks was of indignation and outrage. I suspect this has been the case in most civilized nations of the world. People are perfectly aware that terrorism knows no boundaries.

The fact that a number of Brazilians died in the Twin Towers, brought the tragedy especially close home. We were constantly asked if any of our relatives or friends were among the victims.

Brazil has over a million Arabs, many of them Muslims. In fact, there are a number of Arabs living in Rio Verde. I personally have a very high regard for these Arabs. My impression is that they are very loyal friends. I always remember the time Faith was shopping in a department store in Goiânia a number of years back. When she went to pay, the clerk didn't want to take her check. An Arab merchant from Rio Verde happened to see what was going on. He stepped right up, asked Faith for the check, pulled a wad of bills out of his pocket, counted out the right amount and paid the bill. I call that a friend.

I have often said, and now repeat, that Brazil is one of the safest places in the world for truly non-resistant people. I realize not everyone may agree with me, but I feel that so long as we live our religion, we have nothing to fear from the Arabs, or anyone else, for that matter.

From what I have been able to glean from the news, the US has a strong ally in Brazil. There seems to be a real confidence in the Bush Administration's ability to deal wisely with the crisis.

It should be our prayer that God will bless well-intentioned men and governments with wisdom and courage. After all, they have been ordained to lead their countries in the ways that will bring peace. ▲

Thirty Years Ago

Washing Clothes...

I have been reading in Faith's diary. It makes me realize how drastically things have changed in the 32 years we have lived in Brazil.

"Washed clothes," is an entry that constantly pops up. The reason for this is that washing clothes was a BIG job. When camp was first set up on what is now the Colony, clothes were washed by putting dirty clothes, water and homemade lye soap in a large basin, and then stomping them until clean. The only thing that kept this job from becoming unbearable was the fact that it was possible to read while stomping.

After the clothes were clean, they were either taken down to the stream and rinsed, or more water was carried up from the stream in buckets and they were then rinsed by more stomping—and reading.

Needless to say, there were some girls and ladies with mighty clean feet after the clothes were washed.

Then things got more modern. We went upstream and put in a ditch, diverting a stream of water right up to the house, which then flowed through a bica (pronounced *bee-ka*). The bica—sometimes called a 30 foot kitchen sink—was usually a very tall palm tree cut down in the marsh and dragged to the home site.

For a bica to work, it had to be set up on a hillside. The one end would rest on the ground, right where the water ditch ended. The rest of the bica was propped up at regular intervals on short pieces of logs cut to the proper height.

Now came the most difficult part. Someone skilled in the art of hollowing out bicas would take a sharp ax and begin shaping the "sink." The outside, approximately one fourth of an inch thick, is extremely hard and fibrous. The inside is soft, so soft that it can easily be cut with a pocketknife, and easy to work with. After several days of hard work, the "sink" would be finished.

Once chain saws made their appearance, making a bica became much easier and faster. They did, however, have one inherent danger. Since the inside was soft and fibrous, there was always the danger of getting a sliver under the fingernails.

Rich people made their bicas out of large hollowed out trees. These would last for years and years and were much safer. As can be imagined, it took a tremendous lot of work to hew these logs out by hand.

A bica is tremendously practical. Since it is level and the ground is on a slant, it works for people of all ages. Children find their place up near where the water runs in, middle-sized people in the middle, and tall folks toward the end.

Bicas almost always are covered by some kind of a roof. Thirty years ago it was usually a thatch roof, made of palm fronds. Sometimes there would be walls on several sides.

Bicas work for washing dishes. My mother-in-law, Emma Burns, still does all her dishes in the cement bica, lined with ceramic tile (very modern) that runs the length of her porch. And no, bicas don't have hot water, only cold—unless the day happens to be extremely hot, when the water does become warm.

Bicas are great for washing clothes. A wide slab of log is leaned up against the other side of the bica, which functions as a washboard. By leaning over the bica, clothes can be scrubbed in a way that puts the old stomping tub to shame. Rinsing the clothes is a snap.

Bicas are unbeatable on butchering day. There is no better place to clean pigs, chickens and fish. Wastes are washed away in a flash. Anyone who has cleaned entrails for making sausage in a bica knows what I'm talking about.

Bicas are tops for washing hair. Children love to play in the bica and in the calabouço (the pond created by the dropping water at the end of the bica). In fact, a bica occupies a precious place in the memories of children raised back in the "old" days.

Most bicas have a small cement or wooden slab running at least part of the length. That is where older children and adults took their baths. This was an artful procedure that required well-defined strategy. Even with several walls closed in on the little bica house, there was ample chance for unpredicted disclosure. So the first rule was to only bathe at night. If light was needed it would come from a little lamp with a small wick sticking out the top, burning either kerosene or diesel fuel. Especially the latter made more smoke than light, which made for greater safety. The real safeguard, however, was a state of alert in the home during bathing time. Everyone knew that John or Sally was taking a bath and would remain religiously cloistered inside the house. It may have not been a perfect system, but it contributed to the general cleanliness of the nation.

Bicas were tremendous coolers. Buckets or cans of warm milk placed in the bica would soon be nice and cool, especially in the morning when the water was cooler.

Bicas are fabulous for mental health. The sound of the water falling in the calabouço is truly tranquilizing. In fact, if a heavy rain would wash out the ditch during the night and the water ceased flowing in the bica, one would awake and find it difficult to get back to sleep (partially because of knowing the work involved in patching the ditch up at daybreak).

Some bicas were set up to run through the back porch of the house. In John Penner's house it ran right through the utility. This means that oranges or pineapple could be peeled and the peelings dropped in the bica, where they would swiftly be carried away. Eggshells, most anything that needed to be thrown away, could be disposed of in the bica, and then turn into fish food downstream.

No, bicas aren't all flowers. When the weather would get down near freezing, taking

a bath in a bica isn't all that exciting. In fact, it's plain miserable. Washing dishes is no fun either.

Bicas in our area have gone the way of the Mohicans. I suspect this is the case in most of Brazil. It's a shame. A bica is a bica. ▲

Homemade Sugar

On Friday, Sept. 22, 1972, Faith wrote: "Charlie got ready to go to Geraldo's place for sugar..."

Geraldo was our neighbor who owned the place on the other side of the falls from the Daniel Kramer fazenda.

I don't remember how I went, probably by horse. There were no roads and we forded the river just below the falls where the water was fairly shallow, although quite swift. Once across the river, it took possibly 45 minutes to get to Geraldo's place by horse.

Geraldo was an interesting neighbor. Semi-literate, he believed that if we gringos didn't understand his Portuguese, the problem was that he wasn't talking loud enough. So he would turn up the volume. If we still didn't understand, he would turn up the volume even more, and more... Since we usually ended up getting the drift of what he had to say, I believe he must have thought that his loudspeaker approach was successful.

Geraldo owned a large spread, probably between five and ten thousand acres, and raised cattle. Piece by piece he sold off his place, separated from his wife, and finally died penniless.

In our dealings with Geraldo, which included buying some land from him (Enos Miller bought the land on the other side of the falls), he was always totally honest with us, a pleasure to deal with.

Geraldo was a hard worker. He thought nothing about getting up at two thirty or three o'clock in the morning and going out to the corral and begin milking cows by hand (a story in itself). Or he would harness up his horses and hitch them to a long pole attached to a capstan, which would turn the press that would crush the sugarcane used for making sugar.

The sugarcane would have been laboriously cut the day before and hauled home in an oxcart, possibly many loads.

I don't remember the entire process of what it took to make sugar. I know that the juice extracted from the sugarcane was poured into enormous copper kettles and boiled for a certain amount of time. Finally this syrup was poured into wooden troughs hollowed out of logs, allowed to cool and harden, and then a thick layer of a special white clay was plastered over the top.

When the curing process was over and the clay removed, the top sugar was white and coarse. The sugar from the middle was darker and the bottom the color of brown

sugar, but very coarse. Since the top sugar was considered the best, it was the most expensive. Needless to say, the sugar from the bottom was the cheapest. Since money wasn't plentiful, we would buy the bottom sugar.

This "brown" sugar had a very distinctive taste to it. Anything made with it also had a distinctive taste. We enjoyed it tremendously. Then. I think we would be less enthusiastic about it today. ▲

Mattresses

On Saturday, Sept 23, 1972, Faith wrote in her diary: "I made a corn husk mattress for Lucas' crib. The children helped me shred the husks. I used an old sheet and made it double and quilted it..."

Thirty years ago most mattresses in the Rio Verde area were stuffed with grass. Mattress making was an honorable profession.

New grass mattresses have a beautiful prairie smell to them. And yes, a well-made grass mattress is actually quite comfortable. Plus, they are—were, that is—quite inexpensive.

That's about all the nice things I can think to say about a straw mattress...

With wear, straw mattresses have the unpleasant little tendency of flattening out. Thus it becomes necessary to take them out and fluff them up.

Sleepers who have the habit of lying in a certain position soon find the mattress has shaped itself to the contour of their bodies. It becomes a personalized mattress. This would seem like a virtue, except for the fact that the dips made by hips and elbows can become very thin and hard. For anyone else to use such a mattress can be an unforgettable experience.

During the rainy season when the humidity soars, straw mattresses tend to become musty. Then they no longer have a sweet prairie smell to them. In fact, they can become a nightmare for people who have allergies.

Grass—and especially corn husk—mattresses have a final inconvenience. Ticks and mites love them. They feel at home in them. And to get rid of them, there is nothing better than a good bonfire. In fact, it's about the only solution.

Back when straw mattresses was all we could get, or rather, all we could afford, they were mighty fine. Maybe those were even the good old days. Yes, I believe they were... but I'm glad that the days are even better today.

Faith's Diary

Monday, Sept. 25, 1972

...We got home [from town] late. It had rained good here. Pete Loewen's four boys were in the field and it started raining, so they got under the trailer. Lightning struck it and knocked them all out...

Sunday, Oct. 1, 1972

...Charlie and I walked [to church] this morning...Reno preached. He mentioned about having a thanksgiving service because Pete's boys were still with us.

I got more of the story today. All four of the boys were under the trailer [when the lightning struck]. When Carman came to, he heard Jesse praying out loud and he thought something must really be wrong. Then he saw Dennis and Mark, both trying hard to breathe. Dennis was just staring and Mark's eyes didn't focus... [Carman had to give them artificial respiration]. When they both started breathing, Carman went to the house and they went back with the Jeep...

Mark and Dennis were wondering around and didn't know where they were... The Jeep ran out of gas and they walked home. All afternoon Mark would ask [what had happened]. He would only calm down when his sisters sang...

We walked home after church... We were just finishing eating dinner when it started to rain. It got so dark we almost needed the light. It blew and really rained. The palm trees bent way over and really swayed. We had 2½ inches of rain...

[This evening Charlie and I caught a ride to church with Enos Millers.] John Penners and Eldon, folks (Denton Burns'), Harold Dirks' and boys, Dennis and Curtis Kramer were already there. Then Urah Yoders came in their everyday clothes. They had fought water in their house. Pete Loewen crawled over the river on a fallen tree to tell them that while Reno Hibners and J.B. Litwiler (here on a vist) were at Grandpa Loewens (J.G. Loewen), lightning struck the house and broke everyone of the asbestos roof tile. Thanks to God, no one was shocked. Water ran in the house. They weren't going to spend the night there.

Petes' south windows blew out and the house got all wet. Part of the wardrobe was blown out and they never found it...

Parts of Renos' house and shed roofs were blown off. The rice stored in the shed got wet. There was water in the house. Glenn Hibners' carport roof blew clean off. Jair da Costa came up crying in the rain. He said their roof blew off and his dad wasn't at home. Renos went down and they were standing knee deep in water inside the house. The water washed the road out leading to Glenn Hibner's new bridge and no one could get across the stream.

We had a few songs and John Penner had a sermonette about being struck down (Psalms 39). ▲

This & That

We're supposed to go on daylight saving time on October 14. The majority of the people living in the state of Goiás are dead set against DST. A congressman is trying to get Goiás exempted.

Duane Miller and Eugene Koehn, Rio Verdinho Congregation youth, paid the Acaraú and Patos missions a visit. We hope more youth will do the same.

On September 4, Luiz & Maria Duarte celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. Luiz manages Walt Redger's farm.

Edith, Mrs. Richard Mininger, passed away on Sept. 5. Their children, Elias & Colleen Stoltzfus, Dean & Esther Lou Mininger, and Wagner & Aletha Machado, were there for the funeral. The service was phoned in to the Monte Alegre Cong. The building was nearly full.

On Sept. 7, Darcy Eugene was born and became Anthony & Wynelle Koehn's son. Sam Coblentz, a former missionary from the Patos mission, flew out from the US to spend a few days with the brethren there.

Harold Dirks was out for a short visit to take care of some business and visit his children. The church in Brazil owes much to Harold & Emma for their contributions as pioneers.

Laura Nikkel from the Pipestone cong. is teaching school at the Rio Verdinho School. What do Bert & Ada Coblentz have in common with the birds? They migrate. Right now they are here, after spending a number of months there.

Mark & Glenda Loewen and son Victor have returned to the Monte Alegre cong., after spending several years in the US engaged in mission work while they sought medical help for Victor.

On Sept. 28, the peace talks given in Georgia were phoned in to the Rio Verdinho cong. Quite a few attended.

Sylvia, Mrs. Pat Baize, from S Dakota called and said American Airlines has a special on for flights to Brazil: Chicago/São Paulo/Chicago, for 204 US dollars. I don't know the duration of that special, but it's something to check out. Call your travel agent, or Pat at: 605 546 0244.

FACTS & FIGURES

Temperatures

High	37.8°C	100°F
Low	6.8°C	44°F
Av high	33.4°C	92°F
Av low	16.8°C	62°F

Rainfall

78.5 mm — 3.09 inches

Everything indicates that rainy season has begun. At least you don't see any farmers sitting around twittling their thumbs. They're busily working their fields and planting corn.

Not only are farmers glad for the rain. EVERYONE is. It means the water level in the reservoirs is coming up and our energy crisis is becoming less critical. Actually, we made it through this dry season better than we expected. The goal of reducing

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consumption by 20% was met and there were no brownouts. Most of us on the Colony had good quotas and this didn't affect us very much.

Relative Humidity

Hi 81% — Low 38% — Av 57%

Exchange Rate

One US dollar buys 2.7 reals

All the turmoil has kept the exchange rate up in the clouds, with daily fluctuations. This brings up the price of anything imported. It also makes traveling in N America very expensive for anyone planning on using a Brazil credit card, or buying dollars here to spend there.

On the other hand, Brazilian exporters are having their heyday. Their products are extremely competitive on the world market. Grain producers have nothing against the high exchange rate either.