

Brazil News



No. 129
February 2002

Editorial

To Get Home

Three men, Americans, Canadians or Brazilians, whatever you prefer, in their middle forties, board a plane for Paris. While each is quite different from the other, they do have some things in common:

Their parents are still living, as are most of their uncles and aunts.

They are happily married and have three or four children, plus several grandchildren.

They enjoy life and have large circles of friends.

They are successful businessmen, which is why they are flying to Paris. All three hope to be home in a little over a week.

Their names are Alpha, Beta and Kappa. Oh yes, and they don't know each other. They are just three of many businessmen on this flight.

Upon landing in the Orly Field International Airport, they take a taxi to the hotels where they have rooms reserved.

The following days are a sequence of meetings with clients. Each evening they call their wives and exchange news.

Coincidentally, all three men are booked to leave on the same flight, which is to leave late that night. They have had dinner, packed their bags, checked out and are now in the lobby waiting for the shuttle to take them to the airport.

Suddenly the windows rattle just as a deep boom is heard in the distance. Frightened, everyone turns to the television, where the regular program is interrupted. An announcer comes on and in a visible effort to control his voice announces that terrorists have struck worldwide. They have zeroed in on transportation and communication. The explosion heard, he informs his listeners, was from the Orly Field International Airport, which no longer exists. "According to information just now coming in, all major airports and ports, worldwide, have been—or are being—destroyed, at this very moment. Communication centers are being hit..."

Brazil News

The screen goes blank and moments later the windows again rattle. Some shatter. The Eiffel Tower, where the antennae for many of the local TV and radio stations are mounted, is now a shambles of twisted steel.

The only consolation Alpha, Beta and Kappa glean out of their situation is that they weren't at the Orly Field when the satchel nuclear device was detonated. And that is all.

No one in Paris sleeps that night. By the following morning jury-rigged radio stations are operating, and twenty-four hours after the attack television stations are also broadcasting local news.

The next several days show that the blow struck at transportation and communications was far more successful than the terrorists themselves imagined possible. Powerful laser guns, designed by clandestine scientists, have zapped virtually all communications satellites in orbit. It will require years, decades, to restore order.

Globalization no longer exists...

Obviously, this never happened—and probably never will. What we have just written isn't meant to strike terror in anyone's heart. Rather it sets the stage for our little story about three exiles in Paris.

Like most travelers, Alpha, Beta and Kappa carry little cash—just a little spending money and enough to satisfy potential aggressors, should they be held up. Everything else is purchased with credit cards.

The week following the attack is a series of nightmares as reality presses tighter and tighter on the citizens of the world. Our three men sit tight in their four-star hotel. They take the receiver off the hook every few minutes, hoping to somehow get a connection to their families, until the hotel simply shuts down its PBX exchange.

The worst is yet to come. Individually they are called down to speak with the manager, who solicitously expresses his deep regret about their being separated from their families. “But life must go on”, he says with a deep sigh, “and this hotel must also go on. You have now been here for over two weeks and I am sure you will understand when I ask that you bring your account up to date.”

Alpha apologizes. “Please forgive me. In my anxiety to make contact with my family, I overlooked this little detail. Yes, surely, we shall settle immediately.” He opens his wallet and places his American Express card on the counter. With a pained expression, the manager says, “I'm sorry, but because of recent events, credit cards are no longer being used...” Beta and Kappa have the same experience. In a gesture of goodwill, the manager offers to overlook their overdue bills if they agree to leave their rooms. “Ah,...I know this is a bit unpleasant, but...ah...possibly you will feel more at ease with less expensive accommodations.”

Even less expensive accommodations do cost something. And all three of our men are the same as broke. The only solution is to find cheaper lodging, a boarding house, to be more specific, where they can stay for several weeks on what it would cost them one day in their four-star hotel.

These three men didn't get where they are in life by sitting in the shade and watching

the world go by. They are used to being in the middle of things. And they are used to crises, although this one is unique: having to work for food and shelter. All three face this new challenge with typical vigor.

Kappa gets a job at a telecommunications firm. Because of the worldwide crisis, his wage is but a fraction of his talent. But it is enough to keep peace with the owner of the boarding house, which, given the circumstances, isn't half bad.

Kappa misses his wife and children. His work in a telecommunications firm shows him firsthand how very successful the terrorists were in destroying communications. But after several months, when the first precarious links are reestablished with the rest of the world, because of his position he is occasionally able to speak to his wife, for up to three minutes at a stretch. If emotions can be controlled, a lot can be said in three minutes. So on the first several calls, very little is said.

Kappa immerses himself in his work. Completely. He works 16 hour days and sleeps only five or six hours a night. He thrives on this. His superiors recognize his superior talents and he is given a number of promotions in rapid succession. Obviously, this means pay increases, and soon he has rented a small apartment in a nice section of town. Next he buys a good used vehicle.

By now Kappa could call his family once a week and speak for five to 10 minutes each time. Unbelievably, because of his busy schedule, he ends up calling only once a month, sometimes not even that. His wife asks him if he couldn't possibly call more often, but he gives to understand he's squeezing out every minute of air time he can. She believes him.

As Kappa rises through the ranks and becomes part of management, he reduces his work day, not because he doesn't enjoy working, but because he has developed other interests. To begin with, he is enchanted with life in Paris. After all, it is a vibrant city with a charming social life.

A year goes by, then two. Every two months or so Kappa calls his wife. He tells her how much he misses her, but sometimes she has the impression he is reading from a script. He asks less and less questions about the children. When he says he hopes things will soon improve so he can call more often, she doesn't know if she believes him.

Kappa continues to be an asset to his company, but he no longer lives to work. He now lives from one social event to another. He is well known, and liked. He now handles the French language with ease. And yes, he is making payments on a very nice house.

If Kappa's talents haven't gone unnoticed at work, his social graces haven't gone unnoticed in social circles. Especially by the opposite sex. He is very popular and has his pick of some of the finest ladies of Paris. They are frequently seen at his home...

One day Kappa is contacted by his embassy. He is told that an organization has established a sort of underground railroad to repatriate those who would like to return home. Would he like more information?

It doesn't take Kappa more than two seconds to answer. No, he plans on making

Paris his home. Oh, maybe someday, but not now. It has been six months since he has called his wife. He tells her he always gets a busy signal. She doesn't believe him.

Beta too finds work, in the aerospace industry. He does well, but isn't aggressive like Kappa. Nonetheless, within a year he is able to rent a small flat. He never misses a chance to call his family, even though many times they can talk only a minute or two. He is very lonesome.

Beta gets some promotions at work, but never makes it into management. This doesn't bother him. His salary is sufficient to guarantee him a decent living. And not only that. Beta is a history buff. At times he regrets not having majored in history during his college years. His plan was to take night classes and work toward a degree in history, but between his job and family, there was no time for this.

Now this has changed. He has enrolled in night classes and is doing very well. On holidays, weekends and during vacation he visits historical sites, not only in France, but in neighboring countries as well.

Beta finds this highly satisfying. In fact—and he will never admit this—he is enjoying not having to dedicate any time to his family. He still hopes to one day return home and be reunited with his family. “When that day comes, I hope to have my degree in history...”

By hard study and great dedication, Beta is able to get his degree in less than three years. He immediately begins working on his masters degree.

Then one day Beta is contacted by his embassy. He is told that an organization has established a sort of underground railroad to repatriate those who would like to return home. Would he like more information?

He asks for a few days to think about it. He would like to go home; he still misses his family. But with his new career taking shape before his eyes, his thoughts resemble a gold fish just placed in a tiny bowl.

On the third day he returns to the embassy with his answer. Yes, he wants to return to his homeland, but not yet. He is told there may not be another chance, but remains firm in his decision. (At this point he doesn't realize that once he has his master's degree, the next logical step will be a doctor's degree...)

Alpha is just as talented as Beta and Kappa. He lands a job in the engineering department of a large shipyard. He works methodically, but without enthusiasm. He shuns overtime and while he could easily work himself into management, shows no inclination to do so.

Alpha gets along well with his fellow workers, but at a certain distance. He makes little effort to improve his sufferable French and has no social life. When well-meaning co-workers question him about his family, he becomes reticent.

Alpha is lonesome, lonesome beyond words. When he gets home from work, he writes his wife and children a letter. Every day. He does this even knowing there is no postal service. Somehow it makes him feel better.

Brazil News

Then one day Alpha is contacted by his embassy. He is told that an organization has established a sort of underground railroad to repatriate those who would like to return home. Would he like more information?

Alpha doesn't have to think twice. Eagerly he answers, yes, he would like more information...

Several days later, as Alpha is walking home from work, a man falls in stride beside him. He asks, or rather states, "Your name is Alpha."

Startled, Alpha resists an impulse to run. The man quickly continues, "My name is Mike. The embassy has asked me to contact you about returning to your homeland. Are you still interested?"

"Yes, very much so."

"Good. Let's find a place to sit down and talk."

The two men walk to a nearby park and find a bench in a secluded spot. Mike begins by explaining the current situation.

"Alpha, as you are very much aware, the world hasn't recuperated from the initial terrorist attack. In spite of all that has been done, and is being done, terrorist organizations continue to disrupt virtually all international transportation. I think that you are aware that their struggle is against globalization—and I must say they are being extremely successful. This is a fact we must face."

Before continuing, Mike looks around to make sure they are unobserved.

"You have said you would like to return to your homeland. Could you tell me why?"

"My family. That's the long and short of it. Even though I appreciate my homeland, if my family were here with me, I would be happy to stay here. To tell you the truth, I miss my family so much that sometimes I have a hard time concentrating on my job. I tell you, Mike, I would do anything to be reunited with my family..."

"Just a moment, Alpha. Are you sure of what you just said? Are you really ready for *anything*?"

"Yes, anything. Absolutely anything."

"Good, Alpha. The word *anything* is our starting point. Please don't become impatient if I ask you some questions to make sure you are as sure as you think you are.

"To begin with, our escape route is very dangerous. Not only dangerous, but very, very uncomfortable. You see, we have..."

Here Mike carefully looks around again. "You see, we are adapting a French navy submarine to carry 50 passengers. It is not a nuclear sub, which means it will have to surface at night to recharge its batteries. This will make for a slow trip, and very uncomfortable. Are you ready for this?"

"I am."

"Good. The second condition is possibly more difficult than the first. How long are you willing to wait to be able to make the trip? A year? Two years? Five years? Ten..."

"Hold it, Mike. Are you serious? Wait ten years? I thought we would head out to the port from here."

"No, Alpha. It's not that simple. To begin with, we have only one sub. A round

trip will take at least six weeks because of the circuitous route we must take. The possibilities of losing a sub are high. And if we do, it could be years until we are able to find and equip another. Are you willing to wait whatever amount of time it takes?”

Alpha doesn't answer. He is sweating profusely. He is battling with this unexpected disappointment. After several minutes, he suddenly raises his head and gives a clear answer. “Mike, I'll wait the rest of my life if I have to. What I want is to see my family.”

“Good. Now for the next condition. You will take no promotions on your job. You will continue to live in a simple rented house. You will continue driving the old car you are driving now. You will totally avoid any mingling with local society. Don't make an effort to become proficient in the French language. Don't have a bank account. Cash your check and use the money for your daily needs. At the end of the month, if any is left over, give it to the needy. Are you willing for all this?”

“I guess I don't understand...”

Mike smiles. “That's understandable. It seems quite rigid, doesn't it? It's for your own protection. Today you are almost sick with lonesomeness. But, with the passing of time, if you begin to feel at home in France, if you cease to feel like a foreigner, your desire to return to your family and homeland will diminish. Then, when the call comes, which may be in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening, or in the dead of night, you will say, ‘Wait a moment, while I get a few things straightened out,’ and you will be left behind.

“I am sure you are aware of countrymen who have...well, they have become Frenchmen. Today they act like Frenchmen, they think like Frenchmen, they talk like Frenchmen. They have married Frenchwomen, have French children and are perfectly happy to spend the rest of their lives in France.

“Others have become less involved and maintain that they would like to return home, but when the call comes, they will say, ‘Wait!’ So I ask again, are you willing to remain a total foreigner in France until such a time as you are called to return to your homeland?”

This time Alpha doesn't hesitate. “I am.”

In the following weeks and months, Alpha's resolve is severely tested. We will remember that like Kappa and Beta, Alpha is a skilled professional. One day at work, he is called into the office, where he is questioned about his technical qualifications. Several days later he is called in for another interview. This time, unbelievably, he is ushered into the president's office. The president wastes no time. “For some time we have wanted to get into a new area, but we haven't been able to find anyone with the expertise to get things going. We were about to ditch the program, when someone remembered you. Everything indicates you are our man.”

The president goes on to describe the project and explains that if he is interested, he will have five hundred men working under him. He will be elevated to management and will have a salary that he never dreamt possible.

Overcome by this sudden stroke of good luck, Alpha is about to accept the offer, when he hears a small voice. “Be careful!”

Brazil News

“I would like to think it over, if I may.”

“Yes, sure,” the president says, visibly disappointed. How could anyone turn down such an offer?

That night Alpha goes through a terrible struggle. Who is Mike to condition his liberation to such radical demands? Since he is in a strange land, just what would be wrong with having a better job and a better standard of living? His mind is flooded with doubts. Finally, at four o'clock in the morning he has an inspiration. He picks up the phone and puts a call in to his wife. Miraculously, in less than a minute he is speaking with her.

The next day, with a light step, Alpha asks to speak with the president, who is waiting for him.

To this day the president tells people about the foolish foreigner who turned down a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Alpha finds himself in a difficult situation. He is to have a simple lifestyle, accept no promotions or substantial pay increases, not mingle freely with French society, in short, he is to make sure he remains a foreigner in France. How can he do all this and not become bored? After all, he isn't a man to operate at half throttle, to just sit around and do nothing, or to sleep his life away.

One day after work as Alpha sits in his tiny apartment trying to fight off despair, Mike shows up. “Hi, Alpha, how's it going?”

“Mike, it's really rough. As you know, I turned down a once in a lifetime promotion that would have put me on Easy Street. At my present job I'm barely making enough to keep going. I would like to have at least a little bit of a social life, but I'm having no success. I go out for a walk in the nearby park. I talk to the children on the playground. The first thing I know their mothers are there wanting to talk to me too. I discover that many of them are divorcees and are out looking for a good time. They invite me to their parties. They even come to my house wanting to visit me. I tell you, it's not easy...”

Mike nods his head understandingly. “Alpha, I have just one question: Are you still fully determined to do everything and anything it takes to return to your homeland and to your family?”

“I am.”

“Good... I think I can help you. Let me tell you just a bit about myself. Alpha, I too am an exile in France. Like you, I have a family abroad that I am hoping to see again...”

Alpha interrupts. “You? You? You are an exile too...?”

Mike smiles. “That's right. Like you, I also have turned down a good paying job; like you I live in a tiny apartment; like you I am tempted everyday to...well, to become at least somewhat of a Frenchman. Do you know what I do to keep my spirits up? I have volunteered my services to the embassy of my country and they use me to contact exiles and tell them of the possibility of returning to their country. I might say that very few are willing to pay the price. But for the few who are, I pay them frequent visits and encourage them to hang in.

Brazil 8 News

“And that’s not all I do. When someone proves himself a true citizen of his homeland, I invite them to work for the embassy too. They are given a list of people to be contacted and do exactly what I am doing... Alpha, are you interested?”

“I am.”

“It will be a lot of hard work, but time will go fast...”

This begins a new phase in Alpha’s life. The longer he works for the embassy in his spare time, the happier he is he didn’t take the promotion. What he is doing is so much more satisfying. He is glad he’s living in a simple apartment, for should he have been living in a nice house it would have been harder to spend his time away from his temporary home. Furthermore, by not having time to spend in the park, he finds that the temptation to enjoy life in France has become much less.

Several years go by and then very early one morning his phone rings. “Are you ready?” a voice asks.

“I am.”

“In five minutes a car will stop at your front door...”

As the car approaches, the door opens. Before the wheels stop turning, Alpha is in and the door slams shut...

The voyage in the small, crowded sub isn’t easy. Nor is it unbearable. Alpha will soon be home...

Good reader, as you have guessed, this little story is imagination from start to finish. But it has a message.

Mark Twain once said that everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it. Sometimes we are tempted to believe that that is how it works with materialism. We know it’s a terrible evil, we see it in others; we may even say we feel it pressing in. But we ourselves never are really covetous or materialistic.

It’s true that as we run our gold and silver through worldly metal detectors, the beeper doesn’t sound.

As we analyze our operation, we can’t put our finger on anything that is sinful.

Our house is nice, but certainly not the best.

And so we carefully look over our entire operation and conclude we are within bounds.

So, is it impossible to know where we stand?

We know that when the Lord calls us, it will either be in death or by his final trumpet. And we know that when that happens, we will have to leave everything behind. So we are willing for that.

But let’s suppose that some night your phone rings and it’s the Lord calling. You answer and he calls you by name and asks, “Are you ready to serve me however I see fit? If you are, meet me in front of your house in five minutes.”

Notice that the Lord isn’t terminating your life; rather he is calling you to follow Him, just like he called His disciples.

What would your answer be?

It doesn't take five minutes to give an answer and be in front of your house if you are prepared.

On the other hand, if you have taken promotions, if you have bought a nice house, if you have ceased to be an exile in the country in which you are living, if your operation has gotten bigger and bigger, is five minutes enough time to give an answer and be waiting in front of your house with only your clothes?

We believe that God will separate the sheep from the goats on the final day of judgment. Actually, that is when He will give the sentence. It is during this life that He calls us and asks, "Are you willing to give me your whole life *now*, and serve me, so that someday you can come live with me?"

He may have asked you this question years ago and you simply put the phone back on the hook. That's what the rich young ruler did. Once he got over his initial disappointment, he probably lived out his days as an honest, hardworking, model citizen of the country in which he was living. ▲

Your Brazilian Sister Writes

by Rosemere M. de Souza

My Work With the Hearing Impaired

[Rosemere is a young sister from the Patos mission who is confined to a wheelchair.]

I would like to share some experiences I have had these last two years here in the city of Patos, in the state of Paraíba, where I have made friends with hearing impaired youth while taking computer courses. I was enchanted by how they were able to talk with their hands and hear with their eyes.

Once they have mastered sign language, they are, for all practical purposes, no longer hearing impaired. There is just one problem: they can only communicate with those who know LIBRAS (Língua Brasileira de Sinais), known as ASL (American Sign Language) in English speaking countries.

Here in Patos there are very few people who know LIBRAS. In a city of over a hundred thousand inhabitants, there are only two qualified sign language interpreters. The hearing impaired have told me that we need to learn LIBRAS so that they can be taught about the Word of God, for very few of them do much reading.

I have been studying LIBRAS for more than a year and enjoy tremendously being able to communicate with the hearing impaired. I am totally at ease with their basic language and when I run into them we always have something to talk about. With passage of time, things are getting easier for them, in society, at work, when doing business.

One thing I have noticed about the hearing impaired is that they have a lot of patience and enjoy teaching their language to others. I want to encourage others to

learn sign language, for this will help them to quit feeling like foreigners in their own country.

“Open thy mouth for the dumb” (Proverbs 31:8).

The Sound of Silence

They speak with their hands
And hear with their eyes;
What you are seeing
Is LIBRAS—It’s beautiful!

In the grammar of silence,
Words have a strange eco;
Hands that never are still
Are doing the talking.

In silence I hear you,
Speaking with your hands;
You tell me what you think,
And what your heart feels.

In the language of signs,
Hands perform a ballet;
In silence they sing,
What they feel in the heart.
The sound of silence—I love it!
A smile, a look, a gesture
Full of expression—this is
Their way of communication.

[Would some poetically minded soul like to take this poem, which I have translated without rhyme or rhythm, and turn it into real poetry? If you have the inspiration, send me a copy of your finished product.] ▲

Brazilian Stories

by *Cláudio Corradi*

[Just a word on the author. Cláudio is a professional well driller who in the last 24 years has worked in 17 Brazilian states and in four neighboring countries: Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Bolivia. Recently he was here on the Colony drilling a well for Luís Fernandes, who will be putting in chicken barns. I had the privilege of learning to know Cláudio and have him spend several days in our home. The man is a walking storybook. Listen to one of his stories.]

The Tramp

In June of 1989, I went to a *fazenda* 800 km (500 miles) from Matupá, in the state of Mato Grosso. The entire trip was made on a dirt road cut through heavy woods. We made the trip in a tractor and trailer that belonged to the Zanette family, from São Miguel de Iguaçú, in the state of Paraná. He was taking supplies to his *fazenda*.

In one of the towns we went through, we came across a tramp who was begging for something to eat. For some reason we took pity on the man and gave him a ride. He was dirty—or rather, filthy. His hair and beard were long and matted. His clothes were mere rags and he was barefoot. As can be imagined, his body odor was unbearable. We thought we were giving a tramp a ride, but we found out differently...

We had traveled some 300 km (185 miles) when a branch poked a hole in the tractor radiator. It was near midnight when this happened and we were out in the middle of nowhere. We had no idea how we would fix the radiator. This is where we found out more about our tramp.

He asked us for four flashlight batteries and some steel wool. With these unlikely makeshift supplies, he was able to solder the radiator and we were soon on our way again. We discovered that our tramp was a mechanic of rare skill.

We kept on traveling and one day we were going by the *Fazenda Chapéu Preto* (Black Hat Farm), when the owner stopped us. He said he was looking for two hired men who had run away. Had we seen them?

We found out this man had a virtual slave camp way out in the boondocks. His workers got room and board as wages, and that was it. To ask for money was a mortal sin which he punished in a strange way. The “offender” was put on a wild horse with his feet securely tied underneath the horse’s belly and his hands tied behind his back. The horse was then turned loose. No one ever came back alive to tell the story.

It happens these two men the owner of the *fazenda* was looking for had asked for money. They were locked up for the night wearing only their underclothes, knowing full well what awaited them in the morning. Somehow they managed to escape during the night. They fled into the dense woods. This had happened a number of days before we got there.

Leaving *Fazenda Chapéu Preto*, we traveled several days and had stopped for the night, when we heard voices somewhere in the woods, crying for help.

We didn’t know what to do. It could be an ambush, something that happened in this part of the country. Finally another fellow and I decided we would investigate. Heavily armed, we headed out toward where we could hear the voices.

We soon discovered we had nothing to fear. They were the two young men who had fled the wrath of their boss at *Fazenda Chapéu Preto*. We helped them back to our camp, bathed them and got some clothes around. Then we gave them food so they could get their strength back.

As we traveled, the tramp began to open up and tell us his story.

He was from Santa Vitória do Palmar, in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul.

When he found his wife was being unfaithful, he took vengeance on both her and her paramour in a most terrible way. He immediately fled, leaving behind his mechanic shop, his house and all that he owned. After that he never took a bath or washed. He wore the same clothes for a year and seven months. He would sleep out in the woods and sometimes go up to four or five days without food. When he did eat, it was usually table scraps from restaurants.

João Batista Zanette shaved the tramp's head and beard. He gave him soap and had him take a real bath in the river. When he came back he was drenched with perfume, but even so it was a week before his terrible body odor was worked out of his pores. When we finally got to Zanette's fazenda, he gave the tramp—or rather, the mechanic—a job driving tractor, where once again he showed his superior skills.

Here I left Zanette and continued my trip for another 200 km (125 miles) to the border between the states of Mato Grosso and Pará. One night we set up camp, strung up our hammocks and settled down for a good night's rest. In the morning we discovered that while we were sleeping an *onça* (jaguar) had walked right under our hammocks on its way to the river to drink water, and then retraced its steps.

We were now near to where we needed to deliver our supplies. There was no road on the last stretch, so we had to put them in a rowboat and go downriver for six km. (about four miles), with 21 rapids. The boat was heavily loaded and we were low in the water. Before my buddy and I left, we were told there were some vicious otters in the river and that so long as we made no noise they probably wouldn't bother us.

At one point my paddle struck the side of the boat, making a loud noise. Just that quick we saw the head of a huge otter emerge from the water a number of meters in front of us. We were in a desperate situation. It could easily swamp our boat and neither my buddy nor I could swim. If we weren't killed by the otter, or didn't drown, we would very likely be devoured by the piranhas and electric fish that infested these waters.

My buddy grabbed his revolver and took aim, but his hands were trembling so bad he was bound to miss. So I grabbed a *carabina*, stuck the barrel over my buddy's shoulder, took aim, and killed the otter just before it got to the boat.

We got to our unloading area at 5:30 that afternoon and we still had to carry the goods another two km. through the woods. We had only gone a little ways when we ran across a herd of wild pigs. Once again we had to do some shooting before they left us.

We didn't get back to the boat until nine o'clock that night and by the time we had rowed back to our camp it was two o'clock in the morning.

As we were returning to the Zanette farm, a bridge we were crossing over a stream gave way. I got out the chainsaw to cut a tree down so we could fix it. I hadn't paid enough attention and when the tree came down, a branch struck my head a glancing blow, leaving a gash that my four fingers would fit in. When we got to Zanette's farm, it was still oozing blood. Again the tramp showed a new skill. He packed the wound with finely ground coffee, said a prayer, and the bleeding stopped.

These are some little incidents in my life that I, Cláudio Corradi, have told to my friend Charles Becker. ▲

A Brazilian Story

by Mário de Moraes

The Wardrobe of Troy

A fairly old delivery truck parked in front of an expensive house in the city of Campinas, state of São Paulo. One of the men got out and rang the doorbell repeatedly. He then loudly clapped his hands [as is custom in Brazil], but no one answered the door. All the shutters were closed on the house, giving the impression no one was at home.

Seeing what was going on, a neighbor lady came out and asked, “What do you need?”

“We’ve come to deliver a wardrobe to this address.”

“There is no one at home. They’re all on vacation.”

Politely the men explained to the neighbor lady that they had come all the way from the city of São Paulo and that to haul it all the way back would complicate things for them. Was there anything she could do to help them?

The woman excused herself, went inside and talked with her husband. Minutes later she returned.

“I don’t know if I’m doing the right thing, but it happens the neighbors left the key to their place with me. I’ll open up so you can deliver the wardrobe.”

About this time the lady’s husband showed up and together they opened the front door of the house.

“You can leave the wardrobe right inside the door.”

“We are so very grateful for your goodwill.”

“Don’t mention it. When the owners return, they can put the wardrobe wherever they want it.”

The wardrobe was well built and heavy. It took three men to remove it from the truck and get it into the house. The neighbor lady and her husband watched their every move like hawks. She even whispered to her husband, “Keep an eye on them. These days you just can’t be too careful...”

But everything went well. The men left the wardrobe just inside the door and immediately stepped outside, where they asked the neighbor lady to sign a receipt saying they had delivered the furniture. Courteously the men thanked the couple and were on their way.

“Let’s make sure this door is locked. After all, it is a big responsibility to take care of a palace like this.”

Early the next morning the couple heard a truck stop in front of their house. Soon the doorbell rang. Opening the bedroom window, the lady saw it was the same delivery truck from the day before.

“What do you need this time?”

“Lady, we’re sorry to be bothering you again, but we need to speak to you or your husband.”

Quickly dressing, she went to the front door.

“Lady, we’ve got a real problem. We delivered that wardrobe to the right house number yesterday, but the wrong street.” They showed her the address on the invoice and it was true; the house number was the same, but the street was one block down. “Could you open the door so that we can get the wardrobe out?”

Once again the lady consulted her husband. Soon he returned with his wife, they unlocked the door of the neighbor’s mansion. Three men carried the heavy piece of furniture to the truck. Again the men asked that they sign a document saying they had picked up the wardrobe. Courteously they thanked them and were on their way. The couple went back to bed, hoping to get a little more sleep.

About a week later the doorbell rang and there were their neighbors, returning from their trip and wanting the key to their house.

“Come with us. We’ll show you some of the stuff we picked up on our trip.”

The couple helped their neighbors bring their suitcases in, which they left in the living room. They would unpack them later. The lady went to her bedroom for something, when she cried out, “WE’VE BEEN ROBBED!”

Sure enough! Thieves had gone through everything and stolen all their jewels and other valuables. Yet none of the doors or windows had been forced open.

The truth came out several days later when the police caught the thieves—the same men who had delivered and picked up the wardrobe. We remember that it was quite heavy. Inside, a fourth thief was hidden. That night he went through everything, carefully stored it in the wardrobe, then got in himself, closed the door and waited for his three buddies to pick him up, together with the loot.

That is the story of the Wardrobe of Troy. ▲

Life on the Colony

Electricity

When it comes to electricity, you folks in N America have it made. In the rare occasions that electricity goes off, you expect the power company to be out in a matter of minutes and get things back in order.

Apparently you don’t worry about your voltage; you just assume you are getting 110 or 220 volts. You plug electronic equipment directly into your wall receptacles without any kind of voltage stabilizer.

Not here.

Electricity here is like the weather. It’s unpredictable; it’s interesting, and thus something to be discussed when we get together.

“How’s your voltage been these days?”

“Terrible! It was down to 165 the other day (remember that here we operate—or are supposed to—on 220).”

“At my place it was between 170 and 180. I burned my pump motor out.”

“At my place the florescent bulbs wouldn’t go on.”

Then there are the days when a neighbor calls at three o’clock in the afternoon and asks, “Do you have electricity at your place?”

“No. It went off several hours ago.”

“Mine did too. Did you call CELG (the power company)?”

“I called them and they said they would try and come out today yet.”

Low voltage even had an influence on our revivals. The staff would get together in the conference room on a scorching hot day. With low voltage the air conditioners wouldn’t be working up to capacity. Then the juice would suddenly plummet to 160 volts for several seconds, just enough for both units to kick off. Then it would hang in at 170 volts for the rest of the day, not enough to get them to kick in again. Talk about a sweaty bunch of preachers and deacons....

For many years almost all electricity was generated and distributed by government agencies. Today many of the hydroelectric plants and distribution agencies have been privatized, with very positive results. An effort was made to privatize CELG, but it is in such bad financial shape that there were no bidders. Governor Marconi Perillo is hoping to give it to the federal government, which would be an indirect route to privatization.

Yet it isn’t as bad as it sounds. With the threat of privatization hanging over its head, CELG is definitely improving its service. A big step forward was taken when a substation was built on the Colony—between Glenn Hibner’s place and the Pirapitinga stream. Now instead of 170 volts, we are having to put up with 250, which isn’t ideal, but at least better than having it so low.

For those of us who work with computers, we go into the electrical outlet with a stabilizer/transformer which brings it down to 110 volts, and then go through an uninterrupted power source which kicks in when power goes off or there is a surge. Beside the internal battery, we use a car battery to give us better coverage. Between work and home, I am presently using seven car batteries.

Some of us have permanent voltage meters set up so that we can always see what kind of voltage we have. However, we can get a pretty good idea by how fast our fans run, by how much light our bulbs put out and by how our microwave ovens heat. ▲

This & That

Visitors for January and February:

Ardis & Rosalie Litwiller

Lee & Lorraine Friesen

Melvyn & Janet Mazelin

Rosa Koehn

Rosella Dyck

Brazil ¹⁶ News

Glenn & Charlotte Schultz

Leland & Mary Lou Dirks

Clyde & Vesta Koehn

Several of Howard Martins' children and spouses

Sharon Unruh

Joni & Ryan Holdeman

Ashley & Carlin Giesbrecht

Fran & Norma Giesbrecht

James & Susana Nikkel and son

Don & Joan Giesbrecht

Robert & Rose Giesbrecht

Ike & Rosalie Loewen

Flávio & Flávia Oliveira had a girl, Felícia, on Jan. 15. They recently moved to Pirenópolis, where he will be teaching in their newly established school. A born teacher, Flávio should do an excellent job at getting the school off to a good start. Now all the congregations in Brazil have their own schools.

Talking about schools, the Rio Verde School—Town School, as it is frequently called—is up to 24 students and has three teachers. Initial worries that there would be a lack of teachers and money have been proven false. Three classrooms have been built at one end of the church fellowship hall, which gives the children a fine play area for rainy days. Oh yes, the school has even hired a gatekeeper, a 77 year old brother who recently got converted. This is to avoid people from the street walking in unexpectedly. He takes his duties very seriously.

John & Sheila Kramer, missionaries on the Acaraú mission, had a daughter, Elena, born January 25.

Chester Hibner attended the boy's preparatory class at Fleetwood, PA. His class program was called into the Monte Alegre Cong.

Edinei & Janete Alves had a girl, Lívia, on Jan. 31.

Jeff & Marion Kramer had a girl, Kaylyn, on Feb. 16.

Luís Fernandes, the dentist from Pirenópolis, moved to the Colony several months ago and has now hung out his shingle. He does excellent work at very reasonable prices. You folks from N America who need to have extensive dental work done can come here and have Dr. Fernandes do it—and possibly get a free trip out of the deal because of the lower dental fees here.

Paulo & Valéria Rufino and children from Patos, Paraíba were out for several weeks to visit her family and the church here. Paulo is a pediatrician and works in a government hospital.

On Feb. 21, Perdigão and Pioneer Seed Co. had a field day in which they showed the benefits of using chicken bedding to fertilize corn and soybeans. John Deere had their equipment on display. It appears we are going to see more and more of them in this country.

Stanley & Mary Schultz and Tim & Deanna Burns spent a weekend on the Mirassol, São Paulo Mission.

Brazil 17 News

Dave & Roxie Miller visited the Curitiba mission.

On Feb. 28, the Monte Alegre Cong. had a meeting to look at plans the planning committee drew up for a new social hall. A plan was decided on in an admirable display of brotherly love. If this same love can continue when we try and decide who is going to pay for it, we should be up for a