

# Brazil News

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Editorial

## Men of War

War changes men. Historian Stephen Ambrose tells of the difficulty he often has getting soldiers to open up and tell their experiences. Soldiers—those who spent endless hours in foxholes, those who marched into withering enemy fire, those who flew countless sorties over enemy territory, those who were cooped up in uncomfortable submarines while the enemy dropped depth charges overhead—these soldiers emerged from war changed men.

Like the plowshares that the blacksmith used to heat in his forge and then hammer into usefulness, so these men had their lives tempered in the smoke and heat of the battlefield. As these men enter private and public life, we note in them a steel, a determination and a courage that give strength and credibility to their actions and decisions.

The best of soldiers and officers hate war. They live for the day when they will be able to go home. This doesn't mean they aren't enthusiastic or that they find no satisfaction in what they are doing. A true soldier sees war as a deadly job that must be gotten out of the way the quickest and most efficient way possible.

Soldiers, especially officers, don't calculate their actions in terms of dollars and cents, but in the harsh terms of lives that *will* be lost. As a battle or campaign is planned, strategists calculate how many companies or divisions will be needed to reach their objective. Included is an estimate of casualties, which may be five percent, fifteen percent, or even, depending on the objective, fifty percent; sometimes even higher.

Battles are full of surprises. In some, casualties run below the official estimate. In others, above. And in others, companies are virtually wiped out. Thus it is, as the war progresses, that some companies and divisions accumulate a 150 or 200 percent casualty rate.

(To the civilian this may sound strange. Mathematically, if a thousand men are sent

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into battle and a thousand men are killed or injured, that would be one hundred percent casualties. We must remember, however, that usually the casualty rate was much lower and that the dead and wounded were replaced by new troops. And so, over a period of time, it was possible to have over one hundred percent casualties.)

For these soldiers, the line between life and death often became blurred. When they were rudely awakened from a fitful sleep, it often wasn't to face life, but to stare death in the face, to see, hear and feel the explosion of bombs and shells.

A case in point are the valiant RAF pilots who defended London during what Churchill called its "darkest hour," when Hitler unleashed his diabolical fury on this city in nightly bombing raids. As hoards of Nazi bombers approached the Channel, British radar would pick them up and operators would send the coordinates to inland airfields, where hundreds of aircraft and pilots were waiting. In minutes they would be airborne, often in total darkness, with lights turned off to remain hidden from the enemy.

After these aerial battles, barracks were never a happy place. On many nights, thirty, forty, or more cots had no one sleeping in them. The next day the buddies of the dead had the unpleasant task of going through their lockers and boxing up their scant belongings so they could be sent to their wives or next of kin. This they did knowing that on the following day, someone might be going through their lockers....

There were the sailors who never knew when a well-directed torpedo, or a mine, would send them gurgling to the great beyond.

There were the infantrymen who would look the enemy in the eye. And pull the trigger—or die. Maybe both.

It's no wonder these men have locked their wartime experiences in a tightly guarded chest. Nor is it a wonder that these men returned home changed men, many of them with a fortified character, some as misfits, unable to handle their past.

Not only are soldiers changed by the fortunes of war. Individuals and families living in war zones often have their lives profoundly marked by the atrocities of war. This is especially true of those surviving the Holocaust, almost all of whom lost loved ones in concentration camps, and sometimes were the sole survivor.

Even those indirectly touched by war are changed. Brethren who followed their non-resistant convictions during the two world wars, especially during World War I, didn't have an easy road. Some were tried and given lengthy prison terms (suspended after the war). Many were derided and humiliated. In most cases a number of years were lost in civilian service...

Lost?

By no means! These brethren—not all—came out stronger than they went in. Through the years we have noticed in them a caution that all too often is lacking in the new generation.

For many centuries the martyr brethren lived in a virtual state of war. Or better said, the state declared a virtual war against these brethren. Often the only thing they were absolutely sure about was their salvation. For them to say they had their material goods

as though they had them not wasn't mere rhetoric, it wasn't a verbal exercise in self-deceit. They knew, often through experience, that the title they held to home and land wasn't worth the paper it was written on. Citizenship to a natural country didn't entitle them to due process of law.

As these families knelt for family devotions, they must have fervently thanked the Lord "that we are all here." All it took for a family to be separated was a knock on the door, approaching hoof beats, or a shout, "You there... Halt!" Once again, laws were a mockery.

As we read the *Martyrs Mirror*, we tend to pick out the action stories, the ridiculous trials, the tortures endured... We do well to read the letters that imprisoned brothers and sisters sent to their spouses and children. They didn't write, "Carrie, make sure you feed the milk cow plenty of oats; we don't want her to dry up..."

Brethren in prison often addressed their wives as, "Beloved sister." Knowing the final grains of sand were trickling through the hourglass of their lives, they switched from "earth mode" to "heavenly mode," where their spouse would no longer be their wife, but a dearly beloved sister.

They were men and women at war. No, they weren't warring as men of this world war "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

If September 11 would have escalated into a major conflict, Christian life today would be easier. Our Sunday School discussions would have a greater depth, sermons would be less diplomatic, and family worship more meaningful. That's the long and the short of it. War would change us.

But there is no war. At least not in our homeland. By now most of us have fatalistically accepted terrorism, just as we have accepted El Niño. We hope it will blow over, or at least not mess up our routine too much.

Sadly, we today are victims of peace. We have been seduced by the voices crying "Peace and safety!" We ask, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were [as long as we can remember]."

The title to our house and land is good as gold.

Non-resistance is an alternate life style and worthy of respect, like any other alternate life style.

If our goods are stolen or destroyed, we dutifully report the crime to authorities. And then check back regularly to see how investigations are coming.

When the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon our house, we are consoled by the fact that our premiums are all up to date.

A C.O., the kind that General Hershey commended and respected, doesn't go to war for conscience sake, and doesn't do a lot of other things the world does, also for conscience sake. The true C.O. is a C.O. long before war breaks out. The same as a soldier is willing to die on the battlefield to defend his country, the true C.O. is willing and prepared to die at home to defend his faith and conscience.

The draft dodger can eloquently and forcefully elucidate his position. But what does he do if his own life or property is endangered?

War changes men. It tempers their character. War changes Christians. It creates in them a greater awareness of eternal values.

It will soon be 60 years since World War II came to a close. Since, there have been the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Gulf War, all with a lesser impact on civilians than the two world wars. That means that only those who are nearing 70 years of age have vivid recollections of the war, and only those well into their seventies, or in their eighties, were involved in C.P.S. work. This means that most of the population, as well as members of the church, have no recollections of war that radically altered their lifestyle.

And so, war is the secret to solid Christian lives?

Not really. Those exposed to war, directly or indirectly, tend to show more solid character, which is an asset to Christian living. But it isn't only war that builds character. The Dirty Thirties and the Great Depression left indelible marks on those struggling for survival during those desperate years. Physical handicaps and chronic illnesses often blossom forth as beautiful virtues. Parents with an invalid child, or children with invalid parents, many times develop a quiet, balanced fortitude.

We repeat, war is but one of many factors that help build character.

Today we aren't at war (at least, not as I write these words), we're not suffering from an extreme weather pattern, we are not in a depression or recession, nor are most of us responsible for taking care of elderly or handicapped loved ones.

Lamentably, under these circumstances, when life becomes predictable, when we feel we have things under control, it can happen that a table is prepared before us—not in the presence of our enemy—but *by our enemy*. This is strange, very strange. History is repeating itself...but in a very different way:

**The Dirty Thirties** built strong character. People learned to do without. When it didn't rain and they lost their crops, they didn't collect insurance; they didn't sue the government. When they lost their farms, they stoically looked ahead to better times. They pulled through with nothing, but not with less than nothing.

Today there are people in worse shape than the folks back in the Dirty Thirties. They live in a nice house (rented or with payments in arrears), have nice furniture (on payments), drive a nice car (financed), eat out (credit card), travel (credit card), and have only a couple of children (can't afford it!). These people aren't poor (poor is when you have very little or nothing). They have less than nothing. They're on skid row (skidding through life on a row of credit cards). No matter how cheerful or charitable they act, they're in bad shape. Back in the Dirty Thirties, you could tap a hammer to the steel character of those who lost everything, and it would give a deep, sure ring. Tap a hammer to the character of those whom we have just described and it will go right on through and all that can be heard is ripping cardboard.

**The Great Depression** was a national calamity. The great depression we are about to describe isn't only a national calamity; it is also a religious calamity. It is the great depression of the human mind and heart.

Problems can be dealt with in a number of ways:

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- 1) Face and solve, obviously the best solution.
- 2) Face, and if there is no solution, learn how to live with the problem.
- 3) Ignore, hoping they will go away (a few do).
- 4) Procrastinate; put on back shelf (and become a shelf builder).
- 5) Run away, substituting them for even greater problems.
- 6) Blame them on others; sue.
- 7) Drink.
- 8) Take drugs.
- 9) Take antidepressants.

On this last item, we want to, in bold letters, assure our readers that we are not against antidepressants per se. We recognize that there are those who need them. We appreciate conscientious doctors who prescribe them wisely. We are talking about something totally different.

Most of us enjoy modern life with all its gadgetry and timesaving devices. We eagerly snatch up each novelty and calculate the time it will free up for us to do other things. Couple this with small families (interestingly, family size is often inversely proportional to the acquired ease factor), we should have the formula for stressless life.

But we don't.

We have the formula for selfishness, which is why men and women lose their capacity to cope with their problems.

War (read as: adversity)—for both those directly and indirectly involved—always entails sacrifice; it makes people realize their dependence on each other; it tempers character. In just a word, war is the antidote for selfishness.

The Great Depression of the thirties was bad, but it built character. Today's great depression is far worse, for it destroys character; it induces men and women to resort to artificial means to attempt to solve their problems.

The present great depression is not an isolated virus that attacks only non-Christians, or nominal Christians. It thrives in Holdeman communities. Indeed, it may have become epidemic.

Epidemics are medical emergencies. For the children of God, epidemics—the kind we're talking about—should not be a medical emergency. The great depression virus is the result of a way of life we aren't able to handle. To believe we can solve this problem medically, or by extensive counseling, will get us limited permanent results. The solution is to look beyond the patient and get the virus under a powerful microscope. When we do so, we will discover that we are dealing with a deadly virus that won't just go away. To ignore it will merely up the casualty list.

If this epidemic is to be debilitated, it will have to have publicity: the sick will need to realize they are sick and the healthy that they are in danger of being contaminated. Thus, the great depression is everyone's problem.

The first step in finding a solution to this problem is to recognize that we are living in perilous times, times of "peace and safety," and that prosperity is a fertile acre for selfishness. Because of this selfishness, we are losing our capacity to deal with problems.

Step two is taking care of selfishness. How? By medication? By extensive counseling? Or by repentance?

Step three is to realize that God's church is under attack. Thus we are at war. We must ask God to open our spiritual eyes so that we—contrary to the prophet's servant's experience—can see the *enemy* around us. Once we have this vision, we will become men of war. And the victory will be ours. ▲

## Received by Fax

*sent by Richard Dirks*

## Build Bridges, Not Fences

Once upon a time two brothers who lived on adjoining farms fell into conflict. It was the most serious rift in 40 years of farming side by side, sharing machinery, and trading labor and goods as needed without a hitch. Then the long collaboration fell apart. It began with a small misunderstanding and grew into a major difference. Finally it exploded into an exchange of bitter words, followed by weeks of silence.

One morning there was a knock on the older brother's door. He opened it to find a man with a carpenter's toolbox standing there. "I'm looking for a few days work," he said. "Perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there that I could help with..."

"Yes," said the older brother. "I do have a job for you. Look across the creek at that farm. That's my neighbor—in fact, it belongs to my younger brother. Last week there was a meadow between us. He took his bulldozer to the river levee and now there is a creek between us. I suspect he did that to spite me...but I'll go him one better. See that pile of lumber by the barn? I want you to build me a fence—an eight-foot fence—so I won't need to see his face anymore."

The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation. Show me the nails and the posthole digger and I'll be able to do a job that pleases you."

The older brother had to go to town, but first he helped the carpenter get the materials around. Then he was off for the day.

The carpenter worked hard all that day, measuring, sawing, nailing. About sunset, when the farmer returned, the carpenter had just finished his job. The farmer's eyes opened wide and his jaw dropped. There was no fence there at all. It was a bridge—a bridge stretching from one side of the creek to the other! A fine piece of work, handrails and all, and the neighbor, his younger brother, was coming across, his hand outstretched. "You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I've done to you," he said. The two brothers stood, one at each end, and then they met in the middle, taking each other's hand.

They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder. "No, wait! Stay for a few days. I've a lot of other projects for you," said the older brother.

"I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, "but I have more bridges to build."

## Some Things to Remember

God won't ask what kind of car you drove... but He'll ask how many people you drove who did not have a car.

God won't ask the square footage of your house... but He'll ask how many people you welcomed into your home.

God won't ask about the clothes you had in your closet... but He'll ask how many you helped to clothe.

God won't ask about your social status... but he'll ask what kind of class you displayed.

God won't ask how many material possessions you had... but He'll ask if they dictated your life.

God won't ask what your highest salary was... but He'll ask if you compromised your character to obtain it.

God won't ask how much overtime you worked... but He'll ask if your overtime was for yourself or for your family.

God won't ask how many promotions you received... but He'll ask how you promoted others.

God won't ask what your job title was... but He'll ask if you performed your job to the best of your ability.

God won't ask what you did to help yourself... but He'll ask what you did to help others.

God won't ask how many friends you had... but He'll ask to how many people you were a friend.

God won't ask what you did to protect your rights...but He'll ask what you did to protect the rights of others.

God won't ask in what neighborhood you lived... but He'll ask how you treated your neighbors.

God won't ask about the color of your skin... but He'll ask about the content of your character.

God won't ask how many times your deeds matched your words...but He'll ask how many times they didn't.

God won't ask why it took you so long to see salvation... but He'll lovingly take you to your mansion in heaven, and not to the gates of hell.

God won't ask how many people you forwarded this to... but He'll ask if you were ashamed to pass it on to your friends.

## The Church in Brazil

### An Update

The church has been in Brazil since 1968. That's over 30 years ago. If it were possible to average out our highs and our lows, victories and defeats, we would pretty well fall in line with other congregations.

Just to refresh our memories, the original settlement had its beginning on the banks of the Monte Alegre River, near the waterfalls.

**Monte Alegre Cong.** The first congregation took the name of the river, Monte Alegre—Happy Hill. Today, in a normal service, the church is full. There are 167 members, 94 American and 73 Brazilian, with three American ministers, four American deacons (one on loan to the Rio Verdinho Congregation) and one Brazilian deacon.

**Rio Verdinho Cong.** Originally the Monte Alegre Congregation was actually made up of two settlements, the Monte Alegre settlement and the Rio Verdinho—Little Green River—settlement, sometimes referred to as the Schultz area, in reference to the late Jonas Schultz, who pioneered that area. Because of the distance they had to church, 14 years ago a congregation was established, with Richard Mininger as the Minister and the late Enos Miller as the deacon. Today their membership is 73 members, 53 N Americans and 20 Brazilians, with one American minister and one American deacon (on loan).

**Rio Verde Congregation**, organized on May 19, 1985. The Rio Verde Congregation, often referred to as the Town Congregation, began as a result of the tract work begun in Rio Verde in 1975. After an initial period of fairly rapid growth, there was a substantial loss. For a number of years thereafter, progress was slow, at times nonexistent. Now in retrospect, we see that even through those difficult times, a foundation was being laid. Today the congregation has three local leaders and a membership of 65. The church building, not so small, is often totally filled. Almost constantly there is someone in doctrine class in preparation for baptism.

**Boa Esperança Cong**, organized on August 27, 1996. The Boa Esperança—Good Hope—Congregation in Mato Grosso is made up of members from the three congregations already mentioned. Founded in 1993, the struggles of this congregation have been largely financial, due to its inland localization. Because of high freight, beans must be sold at a lower price, while fertilizer, seed, lime, implements, cost more. With new roads coming through, situation should soon be reverted. There are 18 American and seven Brazilian members, with two elected leaders. This is a solid little group and the prospects for growth in the congregation are good.

**Pirenópolis Cong.** The Pirenópolis Congregation began as a mission effort in August of 1990 and became a congregation in 1996, after Paulo David and others from the Comunidade church in Pirenópolis became Mennonites. The little congregation, with 18 members, has had slow, but very stable growth. Today it is pastored by a Brazilian minister and a Brazilian deacon.

Now for the missions:

**Goiânia Mission.** The Goiânia mission had its beginning in March of 1985. As we have mentioned before, this mission is an incubator. Yearbook statistics on this mission don't look so good, but they don't tell the whole story. As converts become established in the Faith, they begin looking for less populated areas. Some move to the Pirenópolis Cong., some to the Rio Verde Cong and others to the Colony. This keeps numbers down, but the results are especially good when we take into consideration the amount of



members whom we have in the church today due to the direct influence and testimony of those who got converted in Goiânia. Membership: 7.

**Acaraú Mission.** Located in the northeastern state of Ceará, just a few miles from the coast, this mission, organized in 1989, made slow progress for a time—so slow, in fact, that there was talk floating around about whether it would be continued. Today it is a prospering mission with good prospects for growth. Membership: 7.

**Patos Mission.** Also in northeastern Brazil, in the state of Paraíba, this mission, begun in July of 1992, is also turning into an incubator. Flávio is teaching school in Pirenópolis; Vilmar, now a member at the Monte Alegre Cong., works on the Colony; Eduardo is my office assistant, doing translation work. This brings the membership down to six, which statistically doesn't look so good, but this mission is making a very positive contribution to the overall operation of the church in Brazil.

**Mirassol Mission.** Located in the state of São Paulo, Mirassol was started in 1989 and has been a tortoise mission: slow, but well grounded, with few losses. The slow part can be distressing to missionaries, but as happened in Acaraú, one never knows when the moving of the waters will set off a new era of growth. Membership: 5.

**Curitiba Mission.** Curitiba the capital of the southern state of Paraná. Because of the large concentration of Mennonites in and around Curitiba, which includes the Witmarsum Colony, we have for a number of years hoped to get something started in that area. When Roberto Amorim became a member, action was taken and a missionary couple sent to Curitiba. At this early stage, any predictions we make will be of little value, especially as to the local Mennonites. We notice three kinds:

The majority, for all practical purposes, have abandoned the Mennonite faith.

A minority attempt to stumble along in Menno Simon's footsteps, but frankly admit they are losing out. Their drift has carried them far enough out to sea to where they show no real desire to return to shore.

The few; the scattered ones, that is where our hope lies. There are those few who are searching. Slowly they are coming to the surface. We hope that a small nucleus can be formed, which will set off a chain reaction, as happened in Goiânia, and other missions. Started in 1999. Membership 1.

Through the years a number of attempts have been made to start new settlements in other states. Only the Mato Grosso settlement materialized. At present another attempt is being made in the adjoining state of Tocantins. It appears that this time something will happen. One family has already sold out on the Colony and several more are making a serious attempt to do so. This is an excellent opportunity for people in N America to buy developed farms on the Colony. If no one from the church buys these farms, they will go to outsiders, which will be most unfortunate.

Keep tuned for more news on this new settlement. The state of Piauí is also being checked out. It seems there are opportunities everywhere. ▲

## Experiences

### How a Little Family Was Rescued

*[For the benefit of those of you who are somewhat acquainted with the Colony, Iara is the daughter of Nelson & Waldete Barros, who have worked for Daniel Kramer for over 20 years. Iara and our daughter Sylvia were baptized the same evening. Iara ran into turbulent weather and left the church. While out of the church, she married Romualdo Carlos Vieira (known as Carlos). Last Sunday morning we listened to their experiences, after which he was baptized and she was reaccepted.]*

#### **Carlos...**

My experience with God and the church began more or less five and a half years ago. I knew about the church before this, but had never had any kind of experience with God.

After we got married, I found work with a brother at the Rio Verdinho Congregation. Iara and I decided we'd go to church. This was an important time, for God showed me many things that were wrong in my life.

I had some kind of an experience, but even so things weren't going well for us. I became discouraged and didn't get along with some of the members of that congregation. I would talk to the preachers, but it seemed to me they weren't giving me the attention I deserved.

The devil knew how to use all this and was able to get me totally discouraged. That was when I decided to move to the city of Uberlândia, where my brother and sister lived.

From the day that Iara and I left the Rio Verdinho community, our lives became a dreadful mess. It seemed to me that God forgot that we existed—and we forgot that He existed. Not a thing that I tried to do worked out. Every time I got a job, it was just a short time until I was out of work again. Our marriage was on the rocks, to the point that Iara left me a number of times. In the end, I would always go after her and we would get together again.

Now as I look back, I can see that God was directing our lives through all this. Incredibly, He was giving me another chance to change my life. But at the time I didn't understand this. This went on day after day and often I would ask myself where God might be.

I tried to find a church where I could at least try and pray, but each time I walked through the doors of a church, I couldn't feel God's presence inside. I would go home with a heavier heart than before.

Then one day we received the message that my cousin had died. We immediately left for Rio Verde to be present at her funeral. We decided to spend several days with my folks-in-law. Several of my aunts who live in Italy came out and when they went back, they encouraged me to go with them, saying they would find me work.

I told them I was game, but I couldn't come up with enough money to pay for the tickets. Then Myron, Daniel Kramer's son, said he had work for me planting grass around his chicken barns. I decided to take the job and try to make enough money to buy our tickets to Italy. It was during this time I worked for Myron that I was able to

take stock of my life. I began to see that someone who serves God from a pure heart is happy. This helped me to see why I was never happy, why nothing ever seemed to work out for me. As all this began to sink in, I also saw that God had never forgotten me, that He was getting things lined up so that He could help me.

I began to pray. I would pray while working, even though I couldn't feel that He was actually hearing me. I kept this up for a number of days. I would sing songs, making up my own words—songs that would reflect what I was feeling in my heart. I asked God to guide me.

It was about this time that revival meetings began at the Monte Alegre Congregation. God had everything worked out so that we would be here at this time. Different ones invited us to church, but I would either tell them we weren't planning on going, or tell them we would see.

Then one day, after I got off work, I went home, showered, had supper and got ready for bed. It seemed I had just lain down, when I had a very vivid dream in which I saw a brilliant ray of light, which I feel was God's first distinct call that I understood. The dream was so real that it was more like a vision. This happened before I had decided we would attend the meetings.

In this dream, or vision, I saw ahead of me a brilliant beam of light which swept back and forth, covering the entire earth. All around this beam everything was total darkness. As I beheld this, something told me that my only hope of salvation was to follow this beam of light, which I understood to be the way of the people of God and of His church. I understood that I would need to follow the many scriptures that Daniel Kramer would quote as he tried to point out the way.

After God called me in this way, I decided to begin going to church. As I walked through the doors, it was so different from the other churches; everything felt so peaceful. I wasn't able to explain how this came about, but I knew it felt good.

Revivals had already started when we went to church for the first time. The following evening we went again. My wife wasn't liking the idea very well and decided she wouldn't go anymore. She said she wasn't ready to give up everything and serve the Lord. Her attitude discouraged me somewhat. The following night when I got home from work I was dead tired and didn't feel much like going to church. Our little squabble didn't help any either.

I sat down and tried to decide what to do. She was right in front of me complaining that she didn't have appropriate clothes to go to church. She had only one church dress, which she had used two times. As I sat there, it seemed I heard a voice that said, "Carlos, go to church! I have something special reserved for you today." I distinctly heard this voice, so I told Iara to get ready, that we were going to church.

That evening the sermon was on being saved or lost. The song was sung that talks about Jesus knocking on the door and asking to come in....

As I already mentioned, I had offenses in my life and felt it was simply impossible to pardon those whom I felt had wronged me. I had no desire to live with them on the same planet.

That night God said to me, “Turn everything over to me and I’ll take care of you.” During that invitation I decided to stand to show my decision. I told the Lord that once and for all I was surrendering everything to him. During that invitation my wife also stood.

Afterwards Daniel came and encouraged me. I told him, “I would like to tell you something that happened to me some time ago.” He was anxious to hear, so we set a time in which we could talk together. I then told him about the vision I had and what I felt during the invitation. Daniel was overjoyed and told me, “God is calling you.”

At this time all our household goods were still in Uberlândia. So I decided to get them and find a place to live closer to the church. I thought that once my life was straightened out, then I could consider other things, like moving to Italy. But once again God had other plans for me.

When I went to Uberlândia to get my things, God again spoke to me in unmistakable tones, showing me again how He was guiding and taking care of me.

I had bought *Hurlbut’s Story of the Bible* in Portuguese and was reading about Joseph and how he interpreted dreams. This really impressed me, and the night before I was to leave for Uberlândia I had a dream. I can’t remember a lot of the details; I only remember that in this dream God told me everything would work out and that on the third day, I would be back in Rio Verde. I feel it was an angel that revealed this to me.

The next morning when I awoke, I told my wife, who worries over nothing, that she could be at ease because God had showed me during the night that everything would work out.

She didn’t seem to put a lot of stock in my dream, but that didn’t keep us from going to Rio Verde, where we went to the last service station on the highway coming into town to see if we could catch a ride; we didn’t want to pay bus fare.

We waited from nine 9:00 o’clock until 11:30, but not a soul would give us a ride. Finally we decided we would have to go by bus after all. About that time an old Ford station wagon stopped not too far from where we were waiting. Iara said, “Ask them if they are going to Uberlândia.”

I said, “No, by the looks of that old car, they aren’t going that far.”

But she insisted, so I asked the driver if he was going to Uberlândia. He said he wasn’t, but was going to a nearby town. However, if we would be willing to give him 20 reals (a little over eight dollars), he would take us to where we were going. We took him up on his offer and at 5:00 o’clock that afternoon we were in Uberlândia.

The man dropped us off in the industrial section of town where there are always a lot of trucks looking for a load. We started looking for someone who could take our things back to Rio Verde. We found several who were interested, but their price was too high.

We went to our house and spent the night. Early the next morning a trucker called and said he was ready to start loading, but like the others, his price was too high, so I turned down his offer and decided I would look around some more. Iara and I went to the grain elevators to see if we could find a truck. When we finally found one

it was 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon. The driver said he would unload his grain and immediately afterward we could load and head out for Rio Verde. We would get there the same day.

Now I was confused. The price was good and I felt we would be satisfied with the man's services, but something wasn't right. In my dream I was told we would return on the third day, but if we left today, we would get back on the second day. Not knowing what to do, we told the driver we would wait while he unloaded.

About that time there was an accident in the elevator. A wall gave way and one of the workers was injured. Everything was shut down. Iara and I, together with the driver, waited to see when they would get back into operation. It got dark and finally at 5:30 the next morning, the truck was unloaded. We went to our place, loaded our furniture and headed for Rio Verde. We arrived at 2:00 o'clock that afternoon, on the third day.

I was impressed by the way that everything turned out exactly as I was told in my dream. This showed me how God is able to lead us in this life.

Seeing how God was answering all my prayers, I began to pray in behalf of my wife. In a conversation that I had with the ministers, I told them I was praying for my wife and had placed her in God's hands, so that according to His good pleasure, He should give her back to me, not necessarily the way I wanted her to be, but the way He saw best. I placed her in God's hands and then stood back.

I kept on praying for her, and then one day when I went to work real early, she stayed in bed. She had a dream in which she saw the TV and the stereo on the shelf. The stereo was turned on. In her dream she began to feel that this wasn't right and decided to turn off the stereo, but no matter what she did, it kept on blaring away. Then she saw the reason: the devil was right close by having a party and needed the music. This is how God showed her that it was wrong for us to have a TV and a stereo.

When I got home, I immediately noticed something different about her. Then she told me what had happened that morning. I knew that God had heard my prayers and given me back my wife with a transformed heart and mind. I was overjoyed with all this.

After lunch I told Daniel what had happened and he also rejoiced with me.

In the afternoon I took the tractor and went for another load of sod to plant around the chicken barns. I began to remember the details of my past life and the many wrong and ugly things I had done. I stopped the tractor and pled with the Lord to forgive me. I remembered Jesus on the cross, dying for my sins. I couldn't hold back the tears and I realized how totally unworthy I was of God's forgiveness. But there, on the tractor, I was able to see clearly that God *had* forgiven and saved me. I was able to understand that it was through His only Son that I can be saved, which showed me how much God loves me.

### **Iara...**

Today I am 27 years old and as I look back I see myself when I was 13, just beginning my Christian life. I remember so well the day of my baptism. I don't

remember a lot of details of my conversion experience, except for the deep desire I had to do what was right. I have no doubt about my conversion experience.

Another thing I remember about that time in my life is how I loved to read—anything and everything I could get my hands on. This wasn't good, because I would end up hardly ever reading the Bible. The result was that I soon wasn't taking Christian life seriously. I graduated from school and the day came I was part of the youth group. During this time I simply didn't take Christian life seriously. It isn't that God didn't call me, but I would ignore that still, small voice.

The ministers seemed to *always* be at my folks' place, wanting to talk with me, but I always lied to them, telling them everything was okay with me. This kept on until finally I was separated from the church. Then I was able to see things clearer and that same week I had a good reconsecration experience. That is when I had my last visit with the ministers. I opened up and told them how I had lied in the past. When that visit was over, I felt light and free. I was at peace...but didn't know it.

I weep when I think about how different my life would be today if I would have been a stronger Christian, but I wasn't.

I gave up, I lost my peace and gave myself over to the world. I left my home, my dad, my mother and my sister. With tears my mother begged me not to leave, but I hardened my heart and took my own way. It's more than I can take to remember this time of my life and I ask God to erase this from my mind.

I got a job and lived in town, which is where I met Carlos. We began living together and Carlos got a job on Douglas Ferrell's farm. Later he went to work for Lynn Schultz, which is when we began going to the Rio Verdinho church. We still weren't married and the ministers encouraged us to get married as quickly as possible.

It was there I had an experience and God showed me how sinful it was for us to live like this. One night while we were sleeping, he awoke and said he was going to the bathroom. He turned on the light. He didn't shut the bedroom door. Just that quick the devil slipped through the door and lay down in bed with me where Carlos had been sleeping. I was paralyzed with fear. He stayed there for only a few seconds, when he got up and left through the open door. Carlos came back and said it was a strange thing, but he didn't even go to the bathroom.

I was crying and beside myself with fear. After I told him what had happened, we knelt and prayed together. That same week we began the paperwork for our marriage.

We kept on going to church for some time, until Carlos got totally discouraged and we moved to Uberlândia. We lived there more or less five and a half years—years of sorrow and loneliness. I never did feel at home there.

It seemed as if God left us in Uberlândia. I smoked and drank. Carlos drank a lot and we fought constantly. We separated a number of times, and then got together again. That is how we lived—until that Monday when my sister Ionara called and said my cousin Kátia had died.

Carlos hardly knew her, but even so he quickly arranged things so we could come to the funeral, which is when he began working for Myron so that we could save up

money to move to Italy. This wasn't my idea, but Carlos couldn't think of anything else.

In the past, whenever my dad invited us to church, I always answered with a firm "No!" Carlos would do the same. But when we finally broke down and went to church and listened to the sermon, it felt to me like I was coming home. It was wonderful! I thought everyone would stare at me and I would feel all conspicuous, but it wasn't that way at all. The second night was the same, although I lived in constant fear that there might be an invitation, which would force me to make a decision one way or the other.

That is exactly what happened. An invitation was given and I could feel clearly how God once again was calling me, maybe for the last time. I stood, because this is what my heart desired, but it wasn't easy. Afterwards different ones told me they would be praying for me. They asked me if I was determined to go through with this decision. I told them I was, but at the same time I could feel a real weakness as I thought about really changing my life. I loved my worldly clothing, my jewelry, my makeup, and most of all, my cigarettes. How would I make out without my stereo and TV?

Carlos was very firm in his decision and when he came to encourage me, I let him have it. Down deep I was still very rebellious and didn't want him to know I was still smoking. I knew that it would be for my good to give all this up, but wasn't willing.

Finally I decided to sell all my clothes to my sister Ionara. We both went to my bedroom so that she could see them, as she was leaving the following day. That is when the devil began whispering in my ear. "How dumb can you be?! Just put your clothes away... Who knows, one of these days you may need them again..."

I knew it was the devil speaking, but sadly I did exactly what he asked me to do. I told Ionara that some other time she could get the clothes.

I kept on praying, but unwilling to make a full surrender. That is when we returned to Uberlândia to get our things. All the time the Lord was talking to me. When we got back to Rio Verde, I was able to see how absolutely wrong I was. He gave me grace to really pray and to repent of all these things. This came about when I had a dream about turning off the stereo, but the music kept coming. I pulled the plug and the music continued. Finally I threw it down on the floor, but the music wouldn't stop. Then I saw the devil was needing the music for the party he was having right close by.

I prayed earnestly; I called upon the name of the Lord and asked Him to come to my rescue, to make me willing to give up everything. I asked Him to pardon me for all my wrongs. I felt clearly when God extended His hand and delivered me; He pardoned me for all my sins and in my heart I felt at peace with Him and with everyone. After this it wasn't hard at all to get rid of my worldly clothes. I had managed to buy a pack of cigarettes unbeknown to Carlos and every day I would smoke just one. I tossed them all into the fire. For several days I missed my daily cigarette, but the Lord helped me to lose the desire to smoke. The Lord helped me get rid of a lot of small things, such as my photos.

God has continued to help me. Recently I had a great victory in the area of my reading habits. I am an avid reader and in Uberlândia it seemed like I read most of the books in the public library. Now, after my experience, a friend of mine brought me

some books to read. I took one look at the covers and knew they weren't for me. God has also given me a desire to wear my head covering and to go back and correct my mistakes where I had left a bad witness in the past.

I want to be a faithful and useful Christian; I want to be a light to my sisters and unconverted relatives. May God grant me grace and strength so that I can be faithful until the end. ▲

## **This & That**

March 1, Gilson & Viviane, from Anápolis, had a girl, Sara.

March 18, João Carlos & Sirlei Guimarães had a boy, Natanael.

March 30, Milton & Cindy Loewen had a boy, Alex John.

Pedro Nascimento, 73, our brother from Goiânia, died on March 21. A group from here went to help with the funeral. Pedro now fills a holy grave in an enormous cemetery in Goiânia. His wife and children have been members for years. He wanted to be, but couldn't get over his smoking habit. Victory finally came and in May of 99 he has baptized and became a member of the church. Those who knew this white-haired old gentleman will agree: The money and time invested in the Goiânia mission are not in vain. The numbers may be small, but the eternal results are great.