

Brazil News



No. 138
November 2002

Editorial

The Model T Ford

The Model T Ford is one of the highlights in the industrial history of the United States. In an effort to produce a popularly priced car that even lower-income families could afford, Henry Ford began looking for ways to lower the \$825.00 price tag of his original Model T touring car. Thus the assembly line was born, forever changing the way in which not only cars, but industrialized goods would be assembled thereafter.

Henry Ford did not invent the car. When he organized the Ford Motor Company a hundred years ago, in 1903, a number of different brands were already on the market. Ford's first cars were expensive, tailored to wealthy customers, as were his competitor's models. This, however, didn't fit into his vision of a popular car. In a demonstration of the most pure entrepreneurship, Ford looked for innovative ways of cutting costs:

The assembly line, which we have already mentioned. In 1912 it took approximately 12½ worker hours to produce one Model T. By 1914, this time had been whittled down to 1½ hours.

Qualified labor. Ford knew that to mass produce quality cars, he would have to have qualified workers. His solution is a testimony to what capitalism is—or should—be all about. He simply doubled the \$2.50 a day salary that industry paid its workers at the turn of the 20th century. Workers flocked to Ford Motor Company to apply for jobs, which meant he was able to skim off the very best. Also, he reduced the workday from nine hours to the present eight. Finally, he introduced profit sharing, another incentive to productivity, a strategy effectively employed by Sam Walton many years later.

Affordable transportation. As production costs dropped, Henry Ford also dropped the cost of his cars. In 1913, Model Ts were being sold for \$550, by 1915 for \$440, and by 1924, for \$290. By this stroke of genius, he was able to tap the pocketbook of the average family. Hereafter the automobile ceased to be the rich man's toy and became the poor man's servant.

Brazil News

Admittedly, the Model T Ford was not a luxury car. It was transportation—basic transportation. Note the following description of a Model T:

“The early Model T was a four-passenger vehicle with an open body. For power it had a four-cylinder engine that produced about 20 horsepower and ran close to 30 miles on a gallon of gasoline. The car had a planetary transmission with two forward speeds and one reverse. There were three pedals: the right one operated a transmission brake; the middle one controlled reverse gear and the car brake; the left one provided low (pedal all the way down) neutral (halfway up) and high (pedal all the way up) gears. The throttle was a lever on the steering wheel. A rather unique lighting system utilized a low-tension magneto that was a part of the flywheel. No battery was used on the first Model T. While this lighting system was fairly satisfactory at speeds above 20 miles per hour, it was not good at lower speeds when the engine did not turn rapidly enough to generate the proper amount of electricity for the headlights. In the early days many owners pushed the pedal into low gear to increase the speed of the engine and thus provide better lighting. The Model T was the first automobile to have an engine with a removable cylinder head, to provide easy access to the pistons, and a steering wheel on the left side of the car.

“Starting a Model T Ford, or any of the other early crank-starting automobiles, was a chore. In addition, cranking could be dangerous, and many a broken arm or collarbone resulted from forgetting to let go of the crank that kicked back when the engine started. Also, if the brake were not on securely, the car could run down the driver who attempted to start it. Because a friend of his who was injured while cranking a motor, Henry Leland asked Charles Kettering to design an electric start, which Leland introduced on his Cadillacs in 1911.” —Colliers Encyclopedia

I called my dad and asked him what he could tell me about the Model T Ford. He remembered distinctly when his dad, my grandpa, Dave Becker, from Moundridge, bought his first Model T touring car in 1918. Grandpa stopped at the Dave Roth Motor Company and the owner, Mr. Roth, told him, “Dave, you need to own a car.” Grandpa quickly informed him he didn’t know how to drive.

Not to worry. Mr. Roth promised to teach him how to drive. In just a jiffy Grandpa knew which of the three pedals to step on and how to manipulate the throttle lever on the steering wheel. When they pulled to a stop in front of the agency, Grandpa was a qualified driver. He wanted the car, so the only options he had were to say no, and walk out, or say yes, and write out a \$290 check.

He wrote out the check. Dad says that when his grandpa, my great-grandpa, Benjamin Becker, would need to be rushed to the doctor, they would quickly jerk off the canvas top to get more speed out of the car, in a perverse application of aerodynamics.

At the beginning of the last century, for the average person to purchase a car, there was really but one choice, a Model T Ford. And that is where the choices ended. The color? Black. Engine? A four cylinder engine with about 20 horsepower. Transmission? Manual on the floor. And so on. The only choice was to buy or not buy a Model T Ford.

Today the average buyer can access the Internet and purchase a new car. First of all, he can choose between a number of major manufacturers, each with a variety of models from which to choose. And on each model there are hundreds of choices to be made: color, motor, transmission, upholstery, accessories, and on and on. For each combination of options chosen, the computer spits out the exact price and delivery date. It is possible to put together an infinity of different combinations before making a final choice, a far cry from buying a Model T Ford a hundred years ago, when the only possible choice could be resumed in two words: yes or no.

Man was created with the unalienable right to make choices. Stripped of this right, his lot would be worse than that of a prisoner in solitary confinement. He would be shed of his ability to display love, tenderness, or any other emotion, for that matter. There are those who question why the angels were endowed with the power of choice, or why God placed the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden. Why weren't angels, and then man, confined to lesser choices, to choices that wouldn't affect their eternal destiny?

This same reasoning can be used as a solution to today's disastrous marriages the world over. Why doesn't the Lord pair young people up and force them to live with His choice? Needless to say, the pairing would be perfect. Once consummated the marriage, the two young people would have the privilege throughout life of making all the choices couples normally make.

It sounds like a reasonable deal—really, quite a good deal. But would it work?

The fact that the marriage was made in heaven would soon be forgotten. Those who remembered God at all, would constantly be asking, "Why hast thou made him/her thus?" Balefully, the husband would eye his wife and thunder, "You don't love me. I know you don't. If you could, you would leave me this very instant. In fact, if you could have chosen, you would have never married me." The wife would shriek similar words to her husband.

Yes, happiness depends on choice. But that's only half of the story. Some choices are choices of commitment. By voluntarily assuming this commitment, we relinquish our right to make certain choices. A prime example is the young man who decides to join the Marines. He makes the choice of his own freewill, because he believes that is where he will be happiest. He sees himself in uniform, saluting, aboard a ship, the noble defender of his nation's freedom.

Yet, once he has raised his right hand and sworn the oath of allegiance of the United States Marines, he discovers that many choices previously taken for granted, have vanished into thin air.

He now gets up at a set time (or is assisted in doing so by a sergeant somewhat less gentle than his mother); he eats what is set before him (or goes hungry); he marches (whether he feels like it or not); he comes to inspection with his shoes shined (or finds himself doing pushups in front of his bemused buddies).

That's life. Major choices invariably are package choices. We *make* the big choice and *accept* the accompanying choices. The Marine who has difficulty accepting the package, finds himself doing jobs he wouldn't have dreamed of doing before joining the Corporation, or possibly spending time in the brig.

This basic rule of life, make your choice and accept the package, holds true in many areas. It's true that some businesses and institutions encourage their workers to make decisions on their own, but always within the basic guidelines of the organization.

How many choices can the child of God make?

During the time of Billy Graham's famous crusades, those converted under his preaching were told to go to the church of their choice. Since Graham's specialty was conversion, not indoctrination, at first glance this seems to be a logical solution for an enormous challenge. Yet for many, it must have been a difficult choice. For others it must have been an opportune choice. Difficult or opportune, the new babe in Christ was able to go church shopping, much like a lady shops for a new pair of shoes. They could choose between modest pumps or spike heels.

We believe that many were truly converted under Graham's preaching. We also believe that the mortality rate was very high.

Billy Graham's powerful preaching no longer shakes the tent, but people continue to get converted, albeit on a much smaller scale, and then go church shopping. Many of us have had the joy of meeting a newly converted soul. A beautiful experience is told which witness to our spirit. We feel tenderness, a desire to be a true Christian. Our words are carefully followed as we point out the rigors of the way and the need of a solid church home. Possibly some of our services are attended.

But mixed in the enthusiasm, we begin sensing a slight unrest. Questions are healthy when asked in the search of truth. Some of these questions, however, seem to be probing for concessions. "I was talking to a friend of mine, and he/she says the Bible doesn't say anything about..."

No, the shoe is just a bit tight, and plain. So some shopping is done and just the right pair is found.

The idea that doctrine is a package, just like the old Model T Ford, that offers you but one choice—take it or leave it—is considered outdated. Doctrinal inviolability is rejected as narrow-minded. Like the modern day purchase of a vehicle on the Internet, the brand can be chosen, the motor, the transmission, the interior, the accessories. No matter how many options come into play, in the end it will still be a Ford, Chevrolet, Volkswagen or Honda.

Non-resistance has through the centuries been a trademark of the Mennonite faith. While working at Hesston Corporation some 35 years ago, a Mennonite took a position as security guard, which required carrying a firearm. One day another Mennonite, from the same church, told of their Sunday School discussion. The question of their security guard brother was brought up. They tossed the subject back and forth, but were unable to decide if their brother was really out of order. The package was broken and the precious non-resistance teaching of Jesus and the apostles spilled on the ground.

Needless to say, the old Model T Ford was before my time. At the beginning of the last century, there doubtlessly were many who walked into the Ford agency, put 290 dollars down on the counter, and walked out with a brand new Model T Ford, identical to thousands of others that were being sold. It doesn't take a lot of imagination to

believe that there were those who drove their car home and soon were making small cosmetic changes, just enough to give their Model T a certain individuality.

Today we don't advocate a restructuring of the "package." But we stand in danger of believing we have the right to dress up our "Model T" just a bit. We see this as inoffensive, for when we finish, it will still be a Ford Model T. So we change this and we change that, until finally we are driving a Ford Remodel T.

The question is: How much can we remodel and retain the original nameplate?

It should be clearly understood that the comments being made are in no way suggesting an exterior uniformity. We are referring to infringements on basic issues of doctrine. Just a little here and just a little there. And then a little more, and a little more. Until finally we are driving a Remodel T Ford, but calling it a Model T. ▲

Imagining Out Loud

The Wedding

During the last several months we had the enjoyable experience of having our niece living with us as she was preparing to get married. It definitely changed the atmosphere of our home, as first of all we ticked off weeks, then days, then hours, and finally minutes (As she and her husband-to-be were standing in the entry, about to walk in, I asked, "How many minutes?" She said, "Five!")

The wedding service was something like this (I insert here that the entire service was in Portuguese, interpreted into English, except for the closing prayer and some songs):

Seven couples sang: *Perfeito Amor, Where Would I rather Be, Silêncio.*

Congregational song, led by Eduardo Vieira da Silva: *Eterno Deus Consolador.*

Opening: Min. Arlo Hibner

Congregational song, led by Edinei Alves: *Oh Happy Home, Where Thou Art Loved*

Message and vows: Min. Mark Loewen

Special song by 11 young girls: *Onde Tu Fores.*

Announcements

Special song by 12 young men: *Heavenly Father*

Special song by 16 youth: *Agora e para Sempre*

Trio: *Dear Lord Today*

Special songs by seven young couples: *De Mãos Dadas, As You Promised Each Other, Em Amor.*

I suppose maybe because of my matrimonial saturation these last weeks, and especially now, during the service, my imaginator (not a word, but ought to be) kicked in, and I beheld another wedding:

The church is jammed and the choir is singing. As they begin the solemn strands

Brazil News

of the walk-in song, there is a faint rustle as heads turn to see the bride and the groom make their way to the front of the church.

When the singing stops, a preacher gets up and has a short opening in which he welcomes everyone to the service, makes a few comments on marriage, prays and returns to his seat.

A congregational song is sung and another preacher arises to deliver the message. He reads related scriptures and makes appropriate comments.

After he has taken his seat, the choir sings another song.

Then the preacher arises, the one who had the message, and invites everyone to stay for the reception, then closes with prayer.

Again the choir begins to sing. On the second song the couple arises to walk out. The bride smiles sweetly. The groom smiles embarrassedly (That's how it usually is).

They position themselves at the church entrance and shake hands with well-wishers. A few tears are shed when parents, grandparents and close friends wish them well.

The reception goes well—a little too slow for the young couple, anxious to be to themselves. Finally, after a round of last good-byes, the young man gallantly opens the door on the driver's side so the young lady can slide in. He takes his place at the wheel and soon they are leaving the church yard.

The wedding is over.

The couple heads home, quickly changes clothes and their honeymoon begins. After several miles, they hit the Interstate and are on their way to a town some 150 miles away, where they have a motel room reserved.

Even though both are tired, very tired, in fact, they chatter happily during the entire trip. When they arrive at their motel, he goes to the desk to check in while she watches the luggage in the lobby. The receptionist hands them the key to the room which the motel has reserved for them.

After a short walk down the hall, they arrive at their room. He unlocks the door and they walk in. He locks the door and extends his arms to the young lady...

Instead of accepting his embrace, her hand slowly goes to her mouth. "Ooooooh, no!" she exclaims in a low voice. "Ooooooooooh no!"

Alarmed, the young man reaches for her, but she backs toward the door. "We must get out of here...immediately!" she informs him.

He calls her by name. "What's the matter, dear? Please, tell me."

"Oh, how could this happen? Oh, how terrible, how simply terrible..."

Totally beside himself, the young man says, "Honey, shall I call for an ambulance?"

"No! No! Let's just get out of this room. Oh, I hope no one saw us walk in and shut the door."

By now it is the young man who appears to be needing an ambulance. He kneels in front of the young lady and with tears in his eyes implores, "Dearie, please tell me what the problem is. I must know."

She has composed herself enough to give a coherent answer. "And I shall tell you. We are *not* married!"

“Not...?” Now the young man’s hand flies to his mouth. He seems to have seen a ghost. “Oh, how could such a thing have happened...?”

The young girl, now totally composed, says, “Here, get our luggage and let’s step into the hall to talk.”

In the hall they stand looking at each other for long moments. True. Their whole wedding was an unmitigated success, except for one detail: They weren’t joined in matrimony. How could the preachers forget? Why didn’t any of the guests remember? Why didn’t their folks remember? Yes, and why didn’t they, the bride and the groom, remember?

The two, the young man and the young lady, who love each other very much, look through the open door into the inviting motel room. They look down the hall...

That’s a ridiculous little bit of imagination. It really is.

But wait...!

What is marriage? Marriage—in the Lord, we hasten to say—is the joining of two single persons, be they young, middle-aged or elderly, in a spiritual, material and physical union. They cease to be twain and become one, until parted by death. That’s marriage.

Each day, throughout the world, tens of thousands of marriage ceremonies are performed. In atheistic countries—if there is such a thing—marriages are performed for legal purposes, to keep accurate civil records, and, unfortunately, to aid in the dissolution of wedlock. The same is true in many Christian nations—if there is such a thing. That’s not the kind of matrimony we’re talking about.

Matrimony, the kind the Bible describes and prescribes, is firmly based on the principle that two become one. They become, if you will, Siamese twins, joined at the heart.

No, the Lord didn’t see fit to have marriage partners share their kidneys, for their separation would be a relatively simple surgical procedure. Nor their arms or legs. Even the liver, in desperation, could possibly be surgically separated with each partner receiving his/her allotted part. The heart. The Lord chose the heart as the perfect organ to be fused.

In the case of Siamese twins with a shared heart, there are but two options: live as one or surgical separation, in which one must die and the other probably will die, for one heart cannot be divided in two.

Through the centuries, two Christians, fused as one, did not see separation as an option. They had their disagreements, their disappointments, their heartaches, but separation was not an option. Chronic and disabling illnesses, disfiguring accidents, mental impairments, even irreversible comas, created enormous hardships for the healthy spouse, but separation was never an option.

Sadly, there were occasional causalities even in these marriages. There were those cases in which the husband or the wife became unfaithful, not only to God, but also to his/her spouse. “I guess this is it,” or simply, “I’m leaving,” announces the end of the marriage. The unspoken message is, “Okay, I want *my* heart back.”

But how, if his heart and her heart, have been fused into one?

When two hearts are truly made one in the Lord and a consensual decision is reached to separate, neither survives the surgery. When one spouse grows discouraged and forces a separation, the Lord performs an emergency surgery, in which the faithful one survives spiritually, yet handicapped, for the imprint of the other heart is never erased.

There are those who see this as unfair. For the guilty party life continues with no restrictions. Why should the innocent one suffer? Especially in the case of a young man or lady with life still before them?

No, it doesn't seem fair. But then there are so many things in life that don't seem fair.

It doesn't seem fair that a young mother with three or four children be diagnosed with cancer, with only several months to life.

It doesn't seem fair that a drunken driver should hit a teenager and leave him quadriplegic for life.

It doesn't seem fair that a missionary couple living on a distant continent, sans the many comforts of home, should lose a child to sickness or accident.

It doesn't seem fair that a young couple that is struggling to make ends meet should have to come home to a house and belongings that have been reduced to a pile of glowing coals and acrid smoke.

No, there are so many things in life that aren't fair. So what do we do? Often it seems there is so little we can do. How beautiful when God's children take these heavy loads to the Lord and are succored by a merciful God. Many wonderful testimonies have rung from the lips of those whom the Lord held close during these trying times.

No, it's not fair when a young man leaves his wife of two or three years. It's no more fair than when a young mother is diagnosed with terminal cancer, or when a young man must spend the rest of his days as a quadriplegic because of a drunken driver...

Why is it we can place all these unfair problems in God's hands and testify to His greatness, but when a home is broken, we seek our own solution?

May this article be a tribute to you valiant brothers and sisters who are uncomplainingly facing life alone, doing your best to raise your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. For a few short years you must suffer, but soon, soon you shall receive your reward. Don't grow weary, for on the other side of the pearly gates all broken hearts are eternally mended.

When two people are joined in matrimony, the vision of the inviolability of marriage must be intact; it must be an unmovable conviction. This is the moat around the castle that subdues even the thought of separation, and much more the act.

Unpleasant facts tell us that not all those who speak their wedding vows are sufficiently grounded on this doctrine. Unlike the imaginary couple described, they have been legally married, but like the Liberty Bell, with a fissure. As this earth twirls to a stop enveloped in sin and corruption, will such couples survive?

Thanks be to God, such couples can walk back down the hall, knock on the door of repentance, and then return to the open door of a happy, lasting marriage. ▲

Several Stories

Justice, Mercy and Grace

In the Portuguese language, the word *graça*—grace—also means free. The Portuguese equivalent of “it’s free,” is *é de graça*, literally, “it’s of grace.”

An interesting article, written by Leonardo Teixeira, recently appeared in *O Popular*, the Goiânia daily paper, which also circulates in Rio Verde. Following is a loose translation:

A school-age boy was told he must spend the afternoon studying for two important tests. This hardly met his approval, since he had hoped to spend this time with a friend who had a video game.

His folks had to leave, which left him at home all alone. So great was his indignation, that he soon found a box of crayons and began decorating the spotless walls of the apartment. Even this didn’t satisfy his inner rebellion, so he looked around for some other forbidden fruit.

Seek and ye shall find. There it was! The large cuckoo clock that had been handed down from several generations, a veritable heirloom. What was it that made that clock tick? What made the little cuckoo come out at regular intervals and emit its soothing little call?

Screwdriver in hand, standing on a chair, the young boy began disassembling this family treasure. Soon the floor was scattered with screws, springs and assorted parts. Alas, he didn’t find out what makes a cuckoo tick (although he most certainly did discover what makes one *quit* ticking).

Late that afternoon, the young boy heard familiar footsteps in the hall. A key was inserted in the door. His parents walked into the room and surveyed the desolate scene. The son, by now aware of the enormity of his transgression, stood quietly, intently studying the floor.

Trying to contain himself, the father gave a curt order: “Son, up to your room. You will stay there until this time tomorrow. You may go to the bathroom and we will bring you water to drink.”

That evening the boy cried himself to sleep, totally aware he deserved what he was getting—and more. He slept fitfully that night and by morning his pillow was moist with tears.

With daylight came hunger pangs. But there would be no breakfast, no lunch... maybe supper, but that was a long way off.

There was no cuckoo clock to tick off the seconds, to sound the passing hours. By twelve o’clock the young boy’s only consolation was a countdown of hours. “Six more hours and I’ll be out of here. Oh, I hope there will be something for me to eat.”

Just then the boy heard familiar footsteps coming down the hall. The door opened and father stood smiling at son.

“Son, wash up your face. We’re going for a walk.”

Bewildered, the boy obeyed the command, washing his tear-stained face. Emerging from the bathroom, dad took son’s hand and together they walked to the elevator. Once on the street, still hand in hand, they walked nearly a block, to the community ice cream parlor.

Seated at the counter on high stools, the little boy heard his dad say, “Son, order whatever you want. Would you like a banana split...a strawberry sundae...?”

Never in his life, before or after, did that little boy taste better ice cream. When he finished, his dad asked, “Would you like some more?”

A little tummy will hold only so much, so the two of them slowly walked home. As they neared their apartment building, the little boy tugged on his dad’s hand, indicating he wanted to talk. They stopped and hesitantly the boy began, “Dad, I...I guess I don’t understand. I know...I know I was naughty—very naughty—and deserved staying in my room until six o’clock...or even longer... Why...well...why did you let me out early...and give me this ice cream...?”

“Son, what you did was very wrong and justice demanded that you be punished accordingly. That is why you were supposed to stay in your room for 24 hours. Without justice, we would keep right on doing what was wrong.

“When I opened your door and let you out before the 24 hours were up, that was mercy. It was something you didn’t deserve, but that I did because I love you.

“When I took you to the ice cream parlor and told you to choose whatever you liked, that was grace. It was free; it cost you nothing. This free gift proves I have forgiven you and that nothing stands between us.” ▲

[The following stories a friend in town sent me by fax this afternoon. I have translated them so you can enjoy them too.]

A Horse Story

Years ago a farmer worked hard and managed to buy some horses to help him with his field work. One day one of his hired men came running and told him one of his best horses had fallen into an old abandoned hand-dug well.

The farmer followed his worker to the old well. As he peered into the depths, he saw that the horse was still alive and apparently uninjured. The well was of a large diameter and the bottom spongy, which saved the horse’s life.

It was apparent that a rescue operation would be extremely dangerous, as the well was about to cave in. Rather than risk his own life, or that of his hired man, he decided to put the horse down by filling the old well with dirt.

With a sad heart the farmer and his hired man began shoveling dirt in. After shoveling for some time, they stopped to rest. The farmer peered into the hole again to see if the horse was covered up. Imagine his surprise when he saw the horse

shaking the dirt off his back, now closer to the surface as he rose with the falling dirt.

Farmer and hired man immediately resumed their work and didn't stop until the horse was able to walk out of the well.

Like the horse, we too at times find ourselves in a desperate situation. And then, when we most need help, we are showered with "dirt." We can give up and lose the battle, or we can, with our last feeble effort, continue trying and come out of the "hole" victorious. ▲

The Frog Race

Once upon a time some frogs decided to have a race up a very steep hill. Many people showed up to watch the race. The starting shot was fired and all the frogs began hopping, hopping, hopping, anxious to win the race.

Oh, how they hopped. But the hill was high and steep. The spectators began shouting, "You'll never make it!" "You just as well save your breath!"

The more the people shouted, the more the frogs became discouraged. One by one they dropped out of the race. That is, all but one. He kept right on hopping, hopping, hopping, until finally he reached the top of the hill.

Immediately he was surrounded by people wanting to know his secret to success. They soon found out. The frog was deaf!

We too will lose the race if we begin listening to the negative voices that tell us that the obstacles are too great. ▲

Colony History

The Old Shed/Church

Catholics have something over us. They preserve their old churches. We tear ours down. I suppose there is nothing really wrong with this...and yet...that old sod dugout where the Lone Tree Congregation first met, the one where John Holdeman used to preach... If it still stood, who of us wouldn't like to walk through the low door, sit down on one of the rough benches, bow our head and try to hear echoes of the past?

But then, that isn't what this article is all about. Someone came up with the idea the other day of having a carry-in dinner at our social hall for all those who attended services in the first church in Brazil. There was a nice little group, although admittedly hair and beards showed a lot more gray than nearly 33 years ago.

The first church building in Brazil wasn't a church. It was a shed that Dick Toews and his boys built down at the end of Broadway*, several hundred meters from the Monte Alegre River.

Brazil ¹² News

Poles were cut out of straight trees in nearby woods and dragged to the building site with the aid of a small tractor. Once firmly sunk in the ground, rafters and sheeting were put in place and covered with baked clay tile. Since the poles used had a relatively short life in the ground—five or six years—it was the block filling that would eventually support the structure, and not the poles.

The blocks used were handmade. Before moving to Brazil, Denton Burns purchased a Cinvaram block maker. Back then, nearly 35 years ago, this machine was touted as the solution to Third World housing shortage. (I believe that even *READER'S DIGEST* published an article on the Cinvaram machine and what it would do). Now with dirt, just plain dirt, a little bit of cement and a lot of sweat, this little hand operated machine would make good, strong, durable blocks.

Durable they are. The first permanent house on the Colony was built by Denton Burns in 1970. Today his widow, Emma, continues to live in the house. So far as cracks, it has far less cracks than most of the more expensive houses built out of kiln baked bricks, and certainly less cracks than the churches and other community buildings.

The first Cinvaram blocks were made down by the ford, below the falls, on what is now the Daniel Kramer home place. Equipment needed for this block factory to operate: Several wide-blade hoes, several heavy narrow-blade hoes, a round ¼ inch mesh screen hung waist level under a sapling tripod, several buckets for carrying water, several shovels, a watering can, a wheelbarrow, and, of course, the Cinvaram machine.

Okay, let's tour our factory. It's seven o'clock in the morning and the workers are assembled, a rather motley lot—a couple of youngsters, several teenagers, both girls and boys, and a married couple or two.

Some of the stronger boys or men are loosening dirt in a hole with the narrow hoes, Some of the children are loading this dirt into the wheelbarrow and hauling it to the mixing area. This dirt is tossed onto the screen one shovel at a time, while one of the heftier teenagers or adults vigorously shakes the suspended screen, reducing the dirt to fine consistency. Now cement is added, one shovel-full for every nine of dirt. With the lighter hoes, dirt and cement are thoroughly mixed. The humidity of this mixture must be exactly right; if too dry, water must be carried from the river and added with the sprinkling can, and mixed in.

Now to make the block. The dirt/cement mixture is shoveled into the open Cinvaram machine and leveled off. The lid is shut and a long lever must be grasped (short people must jump slightly to catch it) and pulled down, way down, almost to the ground.

As the lever was returned to the upright position, the new block would rise up out of the press. It could now be taken to the drying area, where the blocks were lined up to dry in the sun for a number of days.

Since making blocks was a laborious process and not many were produced per day, the walls on Dick Toews' shed went up very slowly. When we began having meetings in his shed, they were only several feet high. Each Sunday as we gathered to worship, we were able to see how much work they got done during the past week. Finally the day came that the walls reached the roof on our shed/church. Needless to say, the walls weren't plastered.

**The designation of the road that goes down the hill to where the shed still stands. The other road that goes down the hill to the Kramers is called Straight and Narrow.*

I don't remember if we exulted or lamented the day in which the walls of the shed/church were finished. The ventilation was definitely better when the walls were only three feet high. The view was definitely better (better than what...?).

The old shed/church served us well. The first two marriages in Brazil were performed in this setting. The floor was particle board, and none too sturdy at that. The benches had no backs. (There was that Sunday when some sturdy Loewen brothers were seated on a bench, when the floor gave way under the legs and they sank to the floor.)

But in spite of everything, it worked. That is where the Holdeman church in Brazil got its start.

We say that God smiles on His people when they are faithful. I don't know if there are any other occasions in which He smiles. Does He sometimes smile when we smile?

We would on occasion smile in the shed/church, depending on the circumstances.

During a wild pig hunt, we ran across a mother monkey with a little baby. The mother was dying, so we took the baby back home with us and Mim Burns—now Dirks—adopted it.

(I might mention here that those who believe there is a cousinship between man and monk have probably never raised one. They do have their funny side and can occasionally be almost tolerable, but nope, to believe that they are in our lineage, that one won't float.)

Anyway, the thing—Mona was its name—followed Mim all over, or rode on her shoulder. Since the Burnses lived only some four hundred yards from the shed/church, she was obligated to pen Mona up for the duration of the church service, for obvious reasons.

Then one Sunday it happened. Mona flew the coop and in an admirable demonstration of religiosity, headed straight for church. Why Mona didn't look up Mim is still a mystery. Why Mona didn't look up some family member—Mim's family, of course—is also a big question mark. Why Mona didn't decide to sit with someone at least a bit benevolently inclined toward monks, still has us baffled.

Mona had a mind of her own and clearly defined tastes. In a state visit of this sort, to snuggle up to a plebian wouldn't fill the bill. It would have to be a preacher's wife.

This brings us to the final mystery. Why did Mona narrow her final selection down to exactly the preacher's wife whose heart was entirely void of tender mercies toward the Primate species? The one whose sense of humor was totally untouched by the benign intentions of a friendly monk?

Just as a bit of information, we inform our good readers that Primates climb the skirts of preacher's wives' dresses with the same proficiency that they climb trees, with the difference, of course, that the tree holds still.

I think it was Mim who rescued the preacher's wife from the clutches of the monk. Happenings of this nature have a curious way of reaching a common denominator. If the preacher's wife's sense of humor wasn't quite up to the occasion, that of the children present in the meeting certainly was.

Then there was the time when a third-grown cat decided to visit the Monte Alegre shed/church during a worship service. It too showed an aristocratic taste. Sedately, it walked up the middle aisle, its tail aloft with just the right twitches to indicate it came in peace. As though if guided by GPS, it headed right up to where Min. John Penner was seated at the front of the church. And stopped. There was no doubt what the cat wanted. And the preacher, proving he was not only a servant of man, but also of the feline species, slowly reached down, picked up the cat, placed it on his lap, and began stroking its fur.

And we can't forget the church choir made up of an assembly of frogs under the floor. Oh, how they sang during services!

We didn't have church in the shed for all that long, from 1971-1972. It also served as a school for several terms. Oh yes, that old shed/church/school still stands. John Penner bought the land and the buildings from Dick Toews when he moved away, and it now belongs to John's son Eldon. His son and daughter-in-law, Harley & Adriana, live in the house, near the shed.

I tip my hat to the Penners for not having torn the shed/church/school down and built bigger. ▲

An Update

More on the Baby Snatcher

We are to be sure our sins find us out. That most certainly wasn't in Vilma's plans (*See editorial BN136*) when she stole baby Pedro out of a Brasília hospital on January 21, 1986. She had other sins she hoped would never come to light.

But back to Pedro, he continues to live with Vilma, although he did spend his school vacation with his biological parents. We wonder if maybe there is a slight shift of loyalty.

Pedro, renamed Oswaldo by his abductor, has four sisters. One of them, Roberta, 23, bears no resemblance to Vilma. On March 2, 1979, Francisca Maria Ribeiro had a baby in a maternity hospital in Goiânia, whom she named Aparecida. Two days later Aparecida was abducted. Both the police and Francisca became suspicious that Roberta was really Aparecida. Vilma was questioned and she affirmed that Roberta was her biological daughter, naming the doctor who did the caesarean. She had witnesses to the fact.

But no one was convinced. Roberta was asked to submit to a DNA test, which she refused. She was called to the police station for questioning. Knowing she smoked, as soon as she left, they picked up her cigarette stubs, which were immediately sent to a lab, where her saliva was retrieved and used for a DNA test.

The result was conclusive. Roberta has not Vilma's biological daughter. Her real mother was Francisca. In a soap opera Vilma's reaction might have been funny. She says that what happened was that her baby was kidnapped and Roberta put in its place, or if not that, then her baby and someone else's were exchanged at birth.

Seeing no one believed her, her blood pressure suddenly went sky high and she was rushed to the hospital. Several days later she was released.

Needless to say, Francisca was overjoyed at the news that her long vigil had come to an end. She wrote the following letter, which was enlarged and printed on the front page of the *O Popular*, the Goiânia daily.

The translation is:

Aparecida Fernanda, my daughter, all these years there wasn't a single day I didn't wait for you. Now I will have all the patience in the world and wait until I can embrace you.

Your mother,

Francisca Maria Ribeiro da Silva

Imagine her surprise the following day when her daughter suddenly showed up at her house and they were able to hug each other.

Francisca will have to have patience. Even though their visit was cordial, her daughter later remarked that nothing would really change in her life, that is, she planned to continue living with Vilma.

Suddenly Vilma's other three daughters have announced they will all have DNA tests to prove that they are really Vilma's daughters. By now no one believes anything Vilma says. Or what her witnesses say, for that matter. Another doctor has given details on the false caesarean and how the unscrupulous doctor set up the whole show.

Keep tuned in. More next month. ▲

Brasília

Our New President

You readers who have watched this column will have noticed there has been some apprehension about our new president. This was because of his past as a union leader and leftist agitator. I also wrote that many political commentators were taking a wait-and-see stance.

This has changed. Increasingly, he is getting good press coverage. The reforms which he is promising are exactly what our previous president was unable to push through congress. He is standing up to the leftist element of his political party, the *Partido Trabalhista*—Worker's Party, and seems to have no intentions to let them in on his policy making.

President Lula has implemented a program called *Fome Zero*—Zero Hunger, by which he hopes to eradicate hunger. Obviously, this will be much easier said than done, but having often gone hungry himself as a child, he seems to have a genuine concern for the very poor.

Today I give Lula a chance of not only being a tolerable president, but of being a very good leader. As mentioned before, no one questions his honesty. Folks, that's a mighty rare quality in politicians, probably the world over.

This & That

Two brethren from the Conference School Committee, Min. Les Isaac and Dea.

Leonard Goossen, spent several days here helping us keep in touch with the tenor of our school system in N America. The results were very positive. Both board members and teachers were out from the Boa Esperança Cong. in Mato Grosso, from the Pirenópolis Cong. and the three local congregations. Two evenings were open sessions for everyone to attend.

Min. Mark Loewen, Min. Antônio Oliveira and Dea. Adejenes Lima, were to the Boa Esperança Cong. for meetings during the middle of February.

We have been getting a lot of nice rains, but for the first time in the 33 years we have been here, the rivers haven't come up. Is it the no-till farming that is stifling runoff? Harvest is beginning here on the Colony.

Dan & Clara Coblentz returned to the US after spending four months here. Dans are part of the original pioneering group. Their son Jonathan, his wife and daughter, also spent a short time here.

Patience

Patience is a virtue which I hope all you good readers possess. As you will have observed, I'm getting further behind, instead of getting caught up with Brazil News. Between my job and the broiler barns that finally went into operation, things are very busy. When I sit down to write for BN, I find my thinker has taken a leave of absence.

Please have just a bit more patience. I think I'm over the hump and from now on, hopefully, BN will slowly return to normal.

Thank you for your understanding.

Brazil 17 News

Brazil 18 News

Brazil ¹⁹ News

Brazil 20 News

Brazil News

Brazil News

Brazil²³ News

Brazil 24 News

Brazil News

Brazil²⁶ News

Brazil News

Brazil News

Brazil News

Brazil News

Brazil  News