

# Brazil News

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Editorial

## **Steps to Victory**

The war which we followed in our daily papers causes our minds to wander...

A surgical war, it is called; a war that emulates the gloved hand as it attempts to remove only the malignancy, with minimal damage to healthy tissue.

A noble war, others call it. Additional billions of dollars were spent, not to destroy the enemy, but to keep from harming innocent civilians.

A needless war, a senseless war, voices loudly shout; an imperialist war with ulterior motives.

War is war. No matter how noble or ignoble, war brings death and destruction. Seen from this perspective, there are no true victors in war; the dead are forever silent and those who inflicted death and destruction often spend the rest of their lives trying to forget.

Yet war consistently splashes pages of human history. We insert here that the concept of a surgical war is very, very recent. History shows that in most wars terrible atrocities have been committed, not uncommonly, by both sides.

Old Testament history is dotted with wars. Repeatedly the Israelites were attacked. And often, in compliance with a direct command from the Lord, they initiated holy wars.

It is fortunate that CNN and NBC weren't there to cover these holy wars. If present day viewers could see a replay of just one of these wars, there would be both shocked silence and vehement outrage. Time and again Israel was commanded to annihilate life. "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

Holy wars—wars commanded by God—were meant to preserve and shield the chosen people. The invasion of Canaan had an additional element, to provide Israel with a homeland, an occurrence loaded with spiritual significance. We want to notice a specific incident in this campaign.

After crossing the Jordan River, Israel's first objective was to establish an extended bridgehead by destroying Jerico. So that all heathen nations would fear and recognize that the Almighty God was the Supreme Commander, the massive walls of this city were breached in a supernatural way. All the inhabitants, with the exception of Rahab and her household, were laid to the sword.

Next came the small city of Ai which, after an initial debacle, was also utterly destroyed.

Word spread like wildfire among the neighboring cities and kingdoms. Canaan had been invaded by the nomadic people that for 40 years wandered in the wilderness. Greatly alarmed, the Canaanite kings united to resist the invaders.

One neighboring city did not become part of this coalition. The Gibeonites, an offshoot of the Amorites, understood (through divine revelation?) the futility of fighting against the people of God. Shrewdly they devised a plan to deceive Joshua and the elders of Israel. After initial doubts, Joshua and the elders signed a non-aggression treaty with the Gibeonites, guaranteeing their physical safety. Once again, we are unaware if, or to what extent, this was part of God's plan.

Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem, took the lead, assembling a large army made up of his own soldiers and those of the five kings of the Amorites and of the kings of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon. Their first undertaking would be to march on Gibeon and eliminate this traitorous neighbor, after which they would descend on Israel.

When the Gibeonites became aware that neighboring armies were marching against them, they sent messengers to Joshua, requesting his immediate assistance, as agreed upon in the pact signed only days before.

Joshua didn't hesitate. The fact that he had been hoodwinked by the Gibeonites didn't cause him to drag his feet, or to say, "Let the enemy clean up on them. We'll take our time and get there when the action is about over." A man of character, he and his soldiers marched all night, arriving when the enemy least expected any resistance.

What followed was a most unusual battle. Not only was the coalition army taken by surprise, but "the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah."

Seeing there was no hope of victory, the enemy "fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

Yet the battle raged. "Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day

like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.”

Weary, Joshua and his soldiers returned to camp in Gilgal. The battle was not yet over, but after an all-night march and a double day of heavy fighting, fatigue got the best of the men.

While resting a report was taken to Joshua, “The five kings are found hid in a cave at Makkedah,” to which he replied, “Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them: And stay ye not, but pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them; suffer them not to enter into their cities: for the LORD your God hath delivered them into your hand.”

Rested up, Joshua’s men pursued the enemy and “made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they were consumed.”

With the battle over, “then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave.”

Notice what happened next: “And they...brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave... And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them. And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight. And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening. And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave’s mouth, which remain until this very day.”

The conquest of Canaan has deep spiritual significance for the Christian today. It can be applied to our conversion experience, but in a broader sense, to the battles which must be fought and won if we hope to someday have an eternal home in the heavenly Canaan.

While in this life, in a body of clay, we often err. Paul so aptly describes not only his condition, but ours likewise: “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.” When this happens we must repent.

Repentance, true repentance, the sackcloth and ashes type repentance, is an endangered species.

All too often what we see today is *report card repentance*. Son comes home with a D on his report card. When questioned, he confesses that a D really isn’t a good grade and that henceforth he is going to be more dedicated in his studies. The idea is to try harder.

There is the *scale repentance*. The person steps on the scale and finds he is 10 pounds overweight. “This won’t do,” he says to himself. “I am going to have to skip suppers until I lose these ten pounds.” The idea is make a sacrifice.

There is the *public confession repentance*, in which the person openly and tearfully lists

all his sins, possibly even adding a few for good measure, asking everyone for forgiveness and asking for prayers to do better in the future. Such confession often brings an emotional high, a euphoric sense of relief.

All pseudo-repentances have an element in common; they fail to recognize the sinfulness of sin. Instead of seeing sin as an enemy that must be destroyed, they see it as a horse that must be broken, as a wild beast that must be tamed.

Let's notice how Joshua went about destroying his enemies:

### **Urgency.**

*Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night.*

When Joshua was made aware of the presence of the enemy, he lost no time. He mustered his troops and marched all night long. He could have sent out scouts to see if the report was really true, and then held a war counsel to discuss strategy. Should the enemy be contacted first through diplomatic channels? Wouldn't a negotiated peace be better than a destructive war?

How often don't we lose precious time trying to decide if our sin is sinful enough to require a destructive war? Instead of spending the night marching in prayer and supplication, we hope to sleep the enemy away. But enemies don't go away while we sleep. They dig in. They lay mines. The precious hours and days we waste, they dedicate to *our* destruction.

### **The enemy discomfited.**

And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter.

When we call sin, sin, and march all night, the powers of Heaven go on alert. They discomfit (To thwart the plans of; frustrate. –AHD) the enemy, thus giving us the upper hand. All too often we tarry, we pray—when we should be marching—we look for a face-saving solution, and all the while the enemy is preparing for attack. Then when we finally decide to do battle, we are defeated. Why? Because we didn't march that first night, and consequently our enemy wasn't discomfited.

### **A special intervention.**

And it came to pass...that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven... and they died.

The enemy is always powerful, but at times victory will only come through a special intervention. But of one thing we can be absolutely sure: This special help is reserved for those who first march all night. It is only after the Lord sees that we have done all we can, and still are no match for the enemy, that He will send hailstones.

When God sends hailstones, man must take refuge in the cleft of the rock, lest he himself be consumed. It is for this reason that such experiences are often so precious, so intimate, that the story will only be told in heaven.

### **Divine intervention.**

Then spake Joshua to the LORD...and he said..., Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed... So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down

about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.

Even today, in our spiritual warfare, this is a rare experience, an experience known to very few Christians. Yet it is a consolation to know that if we ever find ourselves in such a strange and overwhelming situation as to seem utterly impossible, we have the right to petition God for a miracle. The *Martyrs Mirror* relates such experiences, when prison doors were miraculously opened and the prisoners led to safety.

Hidden kings.

“But...five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave.”

This is where we so often lose the battle. We mistakenly believe that if we could somehow pick off the kings, the soldiers would flee and the battle would be won. Interestingly, Joshua doesn't seem to have placed a high priority on the king's heads. In fact, he doesn't seem to have taken notice of the fact that they fled.

We feel that if we can slay a king, we will have an impressive experience to tell. But if that is all we have done, the battle is far from won. Joshua didn't shout, “Great! Take me to the cave so I can slay those heathen kings.” Nor did he say, “Go slay the kings and we'll wind up this war real quick like.”

He said, “Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them.” Joshua probably knew that if he immediately slew the kings, his soldiers would cease fighting, believing the battle was won. We too must be careful to not cease fighting so we can slay the kings. A false victory is far more dangerous than a fiery battle.

Joshua told his soldiers, “And stay ye not, but *pursue after your enemies.*”

This brings us to the fine line that divides between true victory and eventual defeat. In modern warfare, military men have learned, often at a high cost, that not all victories are final. After the white flag has been raised, groups of soldiers, unwilling to admit defeat, retreat and strategically dig in, waiting for the victors to approach, when they open fire and destroy those who are crying victory. These isolated groups of resistant soldiers are called pockets of resistance. It is evident that Joshua was very much aware that even though the majority of the enemy soldiers had already been slain, and the kings now in his power, a permanent victory had not yet been gained.

“And smite the hindmost of them; suffer them not to enter into their cities.” At this point the battle appeared to have been won. But just as a remnant of God's people can do wonders, indeed, carry on the truth faith, so a remnant of the enemy can, with time, return to haunt God's children, as so often happened in the subsequent history of Israel when victory was incomplete.

Joshua ordered, “Smite the hindmost of them.” In other words, catch up with the enemy. Slay him as he flees.

“Suffer them not to enter into their cities.” Once in their walled cities, these enemy soldiers would be much harder to defeat. This is where we so often fail in our repentance experiences. We don't slay the hindmost enemies. We permit them to return to their walled cities, where they soon have a new king. Then, after a period of time,

after they have again built up power armies, they once again go forth to destroy God's children, now with a new vengeance, for they still smart from the earlier routing.

(It should be pointed out that apparently a few stragglers did manage to return to the walled cities. The New English Bible says, "When Joshua and the Israelites had finished the work of slaughter and all had been put to the sword—except a few survivors who escaped and entered the fortified cities..." We understand by this that the enemy can never be so totally destroyed as to no longer exist. But we believe that a particular enemy can be subdued to where he loses his power to constantly harass us.)

"For the LORD your God hath delivered them into your hand."

When the Lord God delivers the enemy into our hands, victory is complete. Then it won't be necessary to get up year after year in expression meetings and mumble the same confession. On the other hand, total victory doesn't mean we will eventually eliminate all our enemies. What it does mean is that instead of being pinned down in the same spot by enemy snipers from year to year, we grow. We became better soldiers. Not only do we become more adroit at self-defense, but become useful on the walls of Zion.

"And all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace... Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave. And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them. And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight. And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening. And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day."

A strange ending to this little story. After the war was over, Joshua sent his men to the cave to remove the stones and bring the five enemy kings to him. Even though these kings were now totally powerless without their armies, yet they were the embodiment of the forces of evil.

Joshua now made a public ceremony of the destruction of the pagan kings, *after* their armies had been destroyed. These erstwhile mighty men, were now lying on the ground, trussed up and defenseless. Joshua called his captains and asked them to place their feet on the enemy's necks. This symbolic act said, for all practical purposes: This is the victory that your God desires to give you over your enemies.

After this peculiar little ceremony was over, Joshua slew the kings and displayed their bodies until sunset, for all of Israel to see what God had done for them.

(Interestingly, not uncommonly in Old Testament times, kings preferred not to kill enemy kings, but to keep them alive in captivity. Apparently they hoped to make use of their military knowledge. We too can keep kings alive, believing they are now harmless, because they apparently are in our power. Spiritually, not so. Man is unable to hold a worldly king captive for any length of time.

Repentance, true repentance, the sackcloth and ashes type repentance, is more than a mental maneuver. It is a life and death matter. A “small” sin submitted to a false repentance quickly grows into a “big” sin. To obtain victory over sin, war must be declared. We must march through the night and overtake our enemy at early dawn, when he is least prepared to fight. We must slay without mercy and when the battlefield grows silent, we pursue the fleeing soldiers and destroy them before they reach their walled cities. Then, and only then, should the kings be brought out of the cave and slain as a public testimony to the victory the Lord has wrought in our lives.

Just a word of encouragement to those who have read these words and feel themselves unequipped for such an undertaking. The most difficult part of repentance is the dread of repentance. Once the decision has been made: *I will repent; I will march to victory*, there can—and should—actually be a solemn joy in repentance, and a true exultance once the enemy has been destroyed and the kings slain.

This is true victory. ▲

## Imagining Out Loud

*Based on an essay by Sylvia Baize*

## Blotched Bills

You are a young mother with three children, the oldest five years, the youngest seven months. One day a week you leave the children with your mother so that you can hold down a house job. Your husband also has a job, but by the end of the month things get pretty skimpy. It’s amazing how many times your check at the end of the month is just enough to get bills paid up. Payments on the house and living expenses for a family of five demand a pretty tight ship.

Sometimes, as you vacuum floors and scrub walls in a house that isn’t your own, you feel just a twinge of rebellion. You remember other young mothers who don’t have to work out and yet always seem to have plenty of spending money. Each time you go to their houses, they show you the latest trinket or gadget they purchased.

It really isn’t that you would like to buy all kind of stuff you don’t need. It’s just that once in a while, maybe just once in a year, you would like to splurge, buy a few things you don’t really need.

And yet, when you do your shopping and carefully choose your items, trying for the most quality for the least money, you feel good. More than once you heard one clerk

## Brazil 8 News

remark to another, thinking you were out of earshot, “If I would be careful with my spending like that Mennonite lady, my husband and I would eliminate seventy-five percent of our squabbles, or, “I’m not strong on religion because I can’t see it does most people any good, but that Mennonite lady is a different story...”

But then one day, the last Friday of the month when you get your paycheck, the lady you work for pays you in cash, in “Andrew Jacksons”—crisp twenty dollar bills. As you usually do, you thank her and put the bills in your purse. This time, however, the lady does something strange. She says, “Count the money; make sure it’s right.”

She has never done this before... Yet, as you look in her face, you think you see just the twitch of a smile on her face. You count the wad of bills.

“You’ve made a mistake!” you tell the lady. There’s an extra hundred in here.”

Now there is no doubt. The lady is smiling. “No, honey, I didn’t make a mistake. That extra hundred is supposed to be there; it’s yours. I just can’t imagine what I would do without you. When my co-workers in the office talk about the trials they have with cleaning girls who always seem to be walking off with something, I tell them, “You ought to see the girl who does my cleaning...”

As you leave the house with that wad of Andrew Jacksons, you are on cloud nine. That was totally unexpected. The light turns red at the intersection and you stop, but in your mind just the opposite happens. A light turns green and your thoughts are soon way past speed limit. “You work, work, work, and everything you make goes toward necessities and making ends meet. It isn’t fair. Treat yourself to a little spending. Just this once, spend your hard-earned money on something *you* would like...”

When the mall exit is reached, the power steering seems to be in cahoots with the mind and the car just sort of coasts right into the parking lot.

As you walk the aisles, you suddenly realize that all your Andrew Jacksons aren’t going to go very far if you start buying things that catch your fancy.

That mental green light that took you to the mall, now begins to flicker amber. You suddenly remember your husband, saying the evening before, almost as talking to himself, “The house payment is due tomorrow, but with all the doctor bills, we’re a hundred dollars short. I don’t know how we’re going to manage...”

The ten Andrew Jacksons seem to be a bit uneasy. But just as we often hit the pedal to squeeze through a yellow light, you do the same; you ignore the warning and decide to look around some more.

Then you see them. A pair of shoes. On special. Half price. Just one pair left. They fit perfectly. Could that be a sign...? Just one little problem. They’re a little far out. Well, there is one sister who has shoes something like this, but... Only \$39.95, a giveaway for that kind of shoes. A red light comes on. Just blinks and then goes off. You put the shoes back into the box. And the box into the shopping cart. Really a bargain.

From now on things go better. Those annoying lights hardly come on at all anymore. You buy a watch you don’t need. On special. And a purse, which you also don’t really need. That comes to \$107.56. Just \$7.56 over the bonus.

This is fun. You buy clothes for the children. They always need more clothes, but



down deep you know they could get along quite well for at least another three or four months without....

Two hours later the cart is top-heavy. You head to the checkout counter. Suddenly lights flash, yellow, blue and red. What have you done?! The house payment? Those shoes? You feel faint. Maybe you should put everything back. And the security cameras? Wouldn't that look suspicious?

From a distance, the girl in the checkout counter is eyeing you curiously. It's not like other times, when a guarded respect is shown for a religion they themselves wouldn't accept. This girl—oh, why doesn't she look the other way?—seems to look right through you. She seems to be aware of your inner struggle. You can't quite tell. Is she saddened? Is she amused? Is she scornful?

You would like to go to another checkout counter, but your cart seems to drag you to this girl with the x-ray vision.

With trembling hands you place the articles on the counter. As the girl picks each one up, she looks you in the eye before running it over the scanner. You get the impression she is asking, "Are you sure you really want this item?"

Why can't that girl mind her own business? After all, is she being paid to censor your feelings? Then comes the last item. The pair of shoes. She takes the lid off and actually takes a shoe out and looks at it. She looks at you, and then back to the shoe.

She replaces the shoe, closes the lid, and slowly pushes the box toward the scanner. Then she stops. And asks, "Are you sure you really want these shoes?"

You feel like shouting, "No, I don't want these shoes! Stick them under the counter—anywhere!" But the words won't come out of your throat. You stand there, looking like a fool.

After several embarrassing moments, the girl shrugs her shoulders, as if to say, "I guess it's your decision," and rings up the shoes. \$39.95, for shoes worth \$80... No, no, no, for shoes not worth a dime, for shoes not worth a wooden nickel.

You hope to quickly pay your bill and get to the car, so with trembling hands you remove the sheaf of Andrew Jacksons from your purse. You plan on counting out 16 bills, but the moment you pick up the first bill, something strange happens. While the checkout girl gazes at you, you have a vision. You see:

Your husband, as he says, "I'm going to be a hundred dollars short on the house payment. I don't know where I'll get that money..."

Your husband again, as you walk through the shoe department with him in a previous shopping trip. He stops to admire a pair of work boots. "They sure would be nice," he says wistfully. "My old ones are just about shot." Straightening up, he resolutely says, "But I can make out with the old ones for a while. This money can be spent for things more necessary..."

The mission report, during which you decided that if ever you had any extra money, you would put it in the mission collection. Doors were opening and souls were being saved. You could be part of the work...

Scene after scene flash before your eyes. Suddenly you are back in the mall. The

girl continues to scan you with her penetrating gaze. Oh yes, count out the money.

You grasp the first bill and are handing it to the girl and face of Andrew Jackson catches your attention. It is fading into the background and in its place a cross seems to be emerging out of the shadows. And on the cross you see the Savior. Sadly He looks at you, as blood drips from His wounded hands and feet.

Those shoes. \$39.95. A bargain.

A bargain? As you see the drops of blood slowly falling, you understand the price of those shoes. A merciful God answered your husband's prayer. But now, instead of coming home and shouting to your husband, "Honey, guess what! I have the hundred dollars you are needing for the house payment," you must slink into the house with a pair of shoes you know you will never wear.

A bargain? That shopping cart full of articles you don't need, is this a bargain?

A bargain? Once again you look at the blood that is dripping from the cross, running down the bill and staining your fingers.

The checkout girl looks at you, the young Mennonite wife in Mennonite clothes. She looks at your purchases. She looks at your bloodstained fingers. Slowly she shakes her head. Her look clearly shows what she is thinking, "So that's how you pay for things you shouldn't buy?"

You don't recall how you paid for your purchases, how you made it out of the store, or how you arrived home. You do remember rushing to your bedroom and falling on your knees. When you arose your fingers were clean, spotlessly clean, as if washed with fuller's soap.

A bargain? Only if drops of blood spilt by the Innocent One for our sins are a bargain. No, when we buy what we don't need and shouldn't have, with money the Lord has earmarked for something else, there is no bargain involved.

We know that to walk into a saloon and order a beer is a sin. We also know that to visit a casino and place a bet is sin.

When we take money the Lord has graciously given us and misuse it, that is also a sin.

It's a sin because...

First of all, because we have disobeyed the Spirit.

Secondly, because we bought what we didn't need, or shouldn't have, with money that the Lord had earmarked for something useful.

Thirdly, when we have surplus money, even that the Lord has earmarked. There are mission collections, there are brethren who need a helping hand, there are many opportunities in which we can quietly reach out to others.

Fourthly, how many times don't we blotch up our witness with unnecessary purchases?

Blotched bills. If each time we spent money for that which God doesn't approve, our bills, checks or credit cards would drip blood, would we change our spending habits?

## Statistics

### **Brazilian Members**

What prompted the move to Brazil?

If you would have asked—and some of you did—this question 35 years ago, when the move was still in the talking and investigative stage, you would have heard some very positive answers, both from interested parties and skeptics. Today, in retrospect, it can be said that neither the promoters nor detractors of the move had all the right answers.

But in spite of this crossfire, the Lord's will was incontrovertibly unfolding. Today it's evident that He didn't open the door for the move to Brazil because the US was about to go communist (Communism is in its death throes), because our children would be corrupted in public schools (the church now has its own schools), or because the church itself was decadent (an effective revival took place) and a remnant needed to exit. No, none of these real or supposed reasons seem to have been why the Lord wanted a few of His children to move to Brazil.

As mission board members and missionaries know so well, to establish a functioning, indigenous church in a foreign culture is not an easy task. At times it seems growth and stability are hitched to the continued presence of the missionary. Needless to say, this is not always the case and today we have clusters of interacting congregations that began as missions.

Brazil is a hybrid situation. Most of the original settlers agree that mission work was not the motivating force that brought them to this country. They were by no means anti-mission and right from the beginning an effort was made to visit neighbors and invite them to services. From the beginning services were translated into Portuguese. (Actually, a mixture of 30 percent Spanish, 20 percent Portuguese and 50 percent Holy Spirit. But it worked!)

Because of the hybrid situation here, our ingathering was somewhat unconventional. Today we have 205 Brazilian members living in Brazil. Following is a rough breakdown of how they found their way to the church. We repeat that it is a rough breakdown, because in some cases it's hard to know just what happened first. Yet a picture does emerge.

**Neighbors.** Eleven neighbors got converted. This includes neighbors in the Boa Esperança Congregation in Mato Grosso too. The first one to get converted was João Souto, who was working for Manoel Norberto, from whom we purchased our initial tract of land. João married Charlene, daughter of Pete & Edna Loewen.

Adejenes Lima, who is now a deacon in the Monte Alegre Congregation, is the grandson of Aristote Mesquita, from whom the second tract of land was purchased, by Reno Hibner and Pete Loewen.

Richard Ferrell is the teenage son of Douglas Ferrell. Richard studied in our schools, which gave him an added boost.

In Mato Grosso, Eudes Reinor, who was working for some Russians on a neighboring farm, began attending our services. Today he is married to Julie, daughter of Glenn and Elizabeth Hibner.

**Tracts.** We don't have real definite information on this one. The mission in Mirassol, São Paulo, came into existence as a result of a tract found by Valentina Caldana Bonifácio. I think at least several other missions are the results of tracts sent out.

**Adopted and fostered children.** Eighteen children who were either adopted or fostered by church families got converted. Some of them now live in N America.

**Hired help.** Twenty-seven hired men have gotten converted. As reported before, in the early days of the Colony we got off to a somewhat bumpy start with hired men. In a generous effort to give them a start in life, they were given a small tract of land to farm with the employer's machinery and financing. Some were possibly hired more with the thought of helping someone get started, than because of an actual need. In spite of all the good intentions, the results were negative. However, as men were hired because of an actual need and paid a wage that would permit them to get ahead with good stewardship, we began seeing strong Christians, Christians who today are active in the church.

**Relatives.** Our Brazilian members are missionaries who don't go unto the uttermost part of the world. They show a deep concern for their own relatives. Seventy-seven relatives of our Brazilian members have gotten converted. In some cases, the relatives of brothers and sisters who got converted 20 or 25 years ago are still finding their way to the church. The open door that these brethren have with their relatives and friends is a tribute to their stability and growth.

**Member's children.** Seventy-eight of our member's children have gotten converted. If you add that number to the 77 relatives of members who have gotten converted, you get an idea of what mission work is all about. These member's children are now getting married and have children of their own.

**Missions.** When talking about the mission work in Brazil, missions seem to come almost as an afterthought. Thirty-three souls have gotten converted as a result of our mission effort. That number may seem sort of low, but remember that many of them have turned missionary, bringing their relatives and friends to the church. Sometimes we almost get discouraged when numbers don't seem to grow on a mission, but if the faithful few are raising families in the fear of the Lord and witnessing to their relatives and neighbors (even though they haven't as of yet gotten converted), the work should not be despised.

What does all this tell us? Maybe nothing. On the other hand, could it possibly tell us that colonization is an efficient way to do mission work? And that this is possibly the main reason the Lord led a few of his people to Brazil?

The Rio Verde (Town) Congregation, 71 members, continues to grow. This is an excellent example of missionary-members. Constantly there are converts in doctrine class. The leadership consists of a rotating committee of three brethren, elected for a nine month term. Dean Mininger is the non-resident minister and Adejenes Lima the non-resident deacon.

The Pirenópolis Congregation, membership 17. Antônio Oliveira is the minister and Sebastião de Sá the deacon.

It is true that the success of mission work, contrary to so many other projects, cannot be calculated in terms of dollars and cents, or in months and years. Yet there is an interesting little item that emerges. Starting with the first missionaries in Brazil, until today, there have been a total of 72 missionary-couple/years. That means that if you add the years each couple spent, or is spending, in Brazil, the result is a total of 72 years.

Now take the present 205 members and add the approximately nine members who are currently living in N America, plus the eight who passed away, and we have a total of 222 members (this doesn't include the approximately 40 who have lost the way). Divide 222 by 72 and you have approximately three converts per missionary year. What does this mean?

Nothing.

And yet... Compare that with other fields. I suspect that a 3:1 ratio would be rather high. Is that because we had better missionaries or a more efficient mission board? Probably not. About all you can do is chalk it up to mission work by colonization. And if you do that, no one gets the credit—unless it's the Brazilian people for their outstanding response to the gospel.

Those of us who moved to Brazil in the beginning have seen a lot of changes. We now have electricity and telephones; we raise good crops, and broilers for Perdigoão. However, none of that compares to the satisfaction of seeing a healthy, stable group of Brazilian brethren who are just as Mennonite as any of us.

If any of you would come to Brazil and walk the streets of Rio Verde, Pirenópolis, Boa Esperança, among many other towns, you will see sisters, some with little pigtail girls, walking down the streets. They will be dressed and look just like sisters and little girls in N America. The big difference will be that they don't speak your language. The same is true of brothers. Somehow, their appearance, their beard, is different from that of others who wear beards. They aren't self-conscious or the least bit ashamed about being different. They are happy.

Sunday our brother Luís Fernandes, who is a Sunday School superintendent at the Monte Alegre Congregation, spoke about "our" forefathers who were faithful and handed the gospel to us. No, his last name, Fernandes, certainly isn't Mennonite, but he claims the Koehns, the Unruhs, the Wengers, the Holdemans, as *his* forefathers. That, folks, is what the gospel is all about.

Taps

## **Marilyn Hibner 1923-2003**

When the first Mennonites moved to Rio Verde, things were quite primitive: no electricity, no phones, no roads out to the farm, no stores that even came close to those left in N America, and last, but not by any means least, no houses. Pioneering wasn't an option. It was a tool for survival.

Some people love pioneering; some take it in stride; others put up with it. Marilyn, Mrs. Reno Hibner, decidedly didn't love pioneering. Not being able to have a house that made a distinct demarcation between inside and out hardly fit into her concept of tidiness and organization. Being surrounded by more inconveniences than conveniences was a trial.

Yet, you don't have to like being a pioneer to be a pioneer. Thinking especially of the womenfolk, a pioneer is one who can successfully raise a family in an inhospitable environment. Seen from this perspective, Marilyn was—without a doubt—a great pioneer.

The ladies got by far the worst end of the deal in the early days of the settlement in Rio Verde. Men, more adventurous by nature, had their lives enriched by new experiences and acquaintances, while the woman at home tried to build a fire with damp wood. Doing business in town, visiting with neighbors, or working with a hired man, the menfolk soon were soon picking up a rudimentary knowledge of a new language. Not the women. In fact, I suspect they were at times almost irritated with the strange words that husband and boys increasing used in their conversation—words which they could neither understand nor pronounce.

Today, as we look back, those first pioneer ladies get a lot of credit for making the Colony a success. It simply wasn't easy to keep house without a house, to cook without a proper stove, to make a meal without the necessary ingredients, to wash clothes without a clothes washer, to iron without an iron, to keep the house warm on cold nights without a heating stove...

These ladies were expected to make do without, and at the same time be a wife, mother and host. We tip our hat to Marilyn. She managed all three out on the frontier, plus fulfilled her duties as a minister's wife.

## Brasília

### **Economy and Roads**

President Lula, the man many believed would steer Brazil onto the fast-track to ruin, is surprising everyone. Those who believed he would be a rotten president are amazed at the vision and courage he is showing. His erstwhile supporters, those who believed he would turn Brazil into a leftist society, are dismayed, so dismayed, in fact, that they are becoming his principal opponents in Congress.

Lula has some tremendous challenges, and he is taking the bull by the horns.

**Social Security.** Brazil has a 10 billion dollar yearly deficit on retired government workers, and eight billion dollars on all others. Taken at face value, this is bad enough. Worse is the fact that government workers are a small percent of those drawing social security. Eighty percent of the population are drawing less than 150 dollars per month. On the other hand, some government workers are drawing over 16 thousand dollars

a month, and these have probably worked a lot less in their lives than those drawing a paltry 150 dollars.

President Lula, together with 27 state governors, were present in a joint session of Congress, where a proposal to reduce this deficit was given to lawmakers.

**Roads.** A farmer knows that if he doesn't do maintenance on his machinery and buildings, finally the day comes that everything is shot, and he has absolutely no way of digging up the money to put things back into shape.

That is the situation with many of Brazil's highways. They are shot. Absolutely shot. For a while holes were patched. Often not even that is being done anymore. On some stretches of highway, the original asphalt is gone; all that is left is a contiguous concentration of potholes, many of which have lost their "fillings." It simply wrecks vehicles to drive on these roads. Since over 50% of Brazil's freight is shipped by truck, the road situation is critical and the cost to repave them is astronomical.

**Currency exchange.** During our last presidential campaign, when it became apparent that Lula would win the election, foreign investors began pulling hundreds of millions of dollars out of the country, which, at it's worst moment, brought the exchange rate up to 4:1, that is, one US dollar would purchase four Brazilian reals. This was tremendous for exporters, but bad for importers.

Once it became plain that Lula was going to adhere to capitalist doctrine, foreign investors began cabling dollars back to Brazil. Slowly the exchange rate began dropping. Today it is down to 1:2.90, that is, one US dollar buys 2.90 reals. Now exporters are becoming concerned. If this tendency continues, they will lose competitiveness on the world market. Today Lula admitted he might have to step in to keep the exchange rate from dropping more. Six months ago, when the exchange rate was rocketing, no one ever dreamt that one day the brakes might have to be applied to keep the dollar from dropping too low.

## **This & That**

Cláudio & Susan Silva handed the keys to their restaurant, Country Kitchen, to its new owner. They have moved to the Colony, where as a family they will be taking care of their poultry barns.

The beginning of March, Min. Arlo Hibner and Dea. John Unruh went to the new settlement in Tocantins for revivals, after which they organized as a new congregation.

The new Tocantins congregation went through a time of mourning when Anthony & Wynelle Koehn's newborn son, Michael Isaac, died. Fortunately, Wynelle's brother, Min. Mervin Loewen, was able to be there to conduct the funeral and comfort the bereaved.

Recent visitors were: Harold Dirks and Paul Koepl, both here on land business; Ardis & Rosalie Litwiller, J.B. & Susan Litwiller, and Alvin & Erla Schneider, to visit their

sister, Marilyn Hibner, shortly before she passed away; Delbert & Beverly Penner and son Marcus were here to visit his uncle Clifford Warkentin, and Phil & Alfrieda Penner.

William Coblentz and daughter Julita, together with Kari and Lisa Shetler, for a short time. They spent most of their time in the Northeast, visiting the missions, where William and his family were stationed for some time.

On April 8, Harley & Adriana Penner had a girl, Janessa Dawn.

We here in Brazil are plagued with tiny little sugar ants. They're almost impossible to get rid of. Now a new product has come on the market that seems to be death on them. One has to find them on the cupboard, in the cupboard, or wherever, and lightly spray them with this new, stinky stuff. The ants all hightail it to their homes and there the stinky stuff creates a fungus which kills all the sugar ants deader than a doornail. I bought some of the stinky stuff and had it on the cupboard, ready to use on the next invasion of ants. Then one day I saw them, a whole slew of them. I grabbed the spray and gave the ants a good misting. But lo! Instead of hightailing it home and killing themselves and their fellow ants, they all keeled over. It was evident that their traveling days were over. My son had been observing my reaction to their reaction to my spray. He asked me, "Dad, are you aware that you sprayed those ants with Johnson & Johnson Band-Aid Spray?" The antiseptic spray and the stinky spray were in containers about the same size, shape and color. Anyway, do you remember the time the editor of Brazil News repaired a squeaking automatic clothes washer belt with cockroach spray...?

## Facts & Figures (for January, 2003)

### Temperatures

High	34.9°C	95°F
Low	19.6°C	67°F
Av high	29.6°C	85°F
Av low	21.2°C	70°F

### Rainfall

401.5 mm — 15.8 inches



# Brazil 17 News

# Brazil 18 News

# Brazil News

# Brazil 20 News

# Brazil 21 News

# Brazil News

# Brazil<sup>23</sup> News

# Brazil 24 News



# Brazil News

# Brazil<sup>26</sup> News

# Brazil News

# Brazil News

# Brazil News

# Brazil News

# Brazil News