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Editorial

A Restoration Point

For thousands of years, man showed his ingenuity by building bigger, longer or higher: a bigger castle, a larger ship, a bigger steam engine, a longer bridge, a higher skyscraper, a taller rocket... Better yet, get out your Guinness Book of World Records and see for yourself what man has accomplished.

The first truly electronic digital computer, completed in 1946, used 18,000 vacuum tubes, interconnected by an incredible maze of wires. This first computer, developed at the Moore School of Engineering of the University of Pennsylvania, was a humongous affair, yet capable of a paltry 5,000 additions or 500 multiplications per second, actually more of a glorified calculator than a computer.

These vacuum tube computers required the patience of Job to operate. All it took was one of the 18,000 vacuum tubes to blow to bring a complex calculation to a halt. After the faulty tube was identified and replaced, calculations had to be resumed from zero.

Contrary to normal procedure, in which an increase in power or capacity means an increase in size, as computers became more powerful, their size decreased. The electron tubes used in the first computers gave way to semiconductors, which in turn were replaced by integrated microelectronic circuits. Today, small chips, less than four inches square and a quarter of an inch deep, make up to two trillion calculations per second, light years ahead of the original computer that filled a room and had 18 thousand tubes. The small palmtops, weighing a pound or less, have infinitely more computing capacity than the old behemoths.

A modern computer is totally worthless without an operating system—OS. In the case of a PC, the OS is Windows, the latest version being Windows XP.

Because of radical changes introduced in Windows XP, programs designed for prior versions sometimes create a conflict which can cause the computer to become

unstable. Whenever an attempt is made to install a new program that has not passed the Windows XP test, a warning is given. However, knowing that many users will install these programs in spite of the warning, an interesting feature has been built into Windows XP Professional. When this happens, a short message appears on the screen informing the user that a restoration point will be established in case there are any problems.

What is a restoration point?

The computer stores on its hard disk an exact copy of the configuration of Windows and programs installed when everything was working. Thus, if the system suddenly becomes unstable and no solution can be found to get it operating properly again, there is the option of choosing a restoration point and requesting that the computer restore itself to that point. It takes less than five minutes for the system to be purged of whatever was causing the conflict and have everything functioning like nothing ever went wrong.

By now some of you more alert readers are possibly thinking: Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a restore option in our personal lives?

My grandparents were born toward the end of the 1800s. One of the finest gifts received from my parents was the privilege of often spending time with my grandparents. The vivid memories I have of those times, today are a window through which I glimpse a vanished generation...

(I enjoyed reading to Grandpa and Grandma. One evening I read a poem that ended up with the words, "They've all gone away; There's nothing more to say." In deep thought, Grandpa quietly repeated to himself, "They've all gone away; There's nothing more to say..." Was he looking into the future and seeing that soon his generation would vanish?)

Life today is agitated. We often complain that there aren't enough hours in a day. We get in from work after dark. We have supper. Then we sit down at our desk and begin making phone calls. We plan our activities for the following day. Or maybe we even go out to the shop to get a little more work done. We go full stream until bedtime. Then we lie down and can't sleep.

My grandparents life was different. Day began winding down at sundown. Grandpa told me he never came home from work after sundown. He didn't want Grandma to be by herself. After a simple, unhurried supper, dishes would be washed and then Grandpa and Grandma would go to the living room and sit down at a small table by the window, facing each other. They would discuss the happenings of the day. They would read, the Messenger, the Prairie Overcomer, the Bible. Or Grandma would go sit on her rocker and in her plaintive voice sing old German songs.

The house was quiet. Totally quiet, except for the ticking of the clock on the wall. The metronomic ticking of that old clock translated us from the reality of the earthly, which had filled our day, to a subtle remembrance of the eternal; it made us aware, once again, that life is real and life is earnest; it brought us face to face with ourselves.

My Grandma was a talkative person. Because of this, her interaction with others,

she would occasionally end up saying things that weren't edifying. My uncle tells me that he remembers, as a boy, that when this happened, in the meditative silence of the evening, Grandma would say to Grandpa, "Dan, let's go to such and such a place; I have something I would like to make right." They would get in the car, drive to the neighbors, where peace would be restored. After returning home, the clock would be wound and Grandpa and Grandma would go to bed. Restored.

Grandpa and Grandma's world was very small; their general knowledge extremely limited. Should they suddenly reappear and have to fit themselves into today's reality, one can only guess what would happen. Conversely, if we were to attempt to live in today's world with their knowledge and pace of life, we probably wouldn't last very long.

The virtues of the life of my grandparents, and of many of your grandparents, are self-evident. Just as an old man cannot return to his youth, so we can't expect to ever return to the unhurried life style of the vanished generation. Lamentably, it may be this fact that is keeping us from realizing that in this metamorphosis from pastoral life to modern life, we have lost something, something that is costing us dearly. We have lost the daily restoration point feature in our lives. We no longer hear the ticking of the clock. We no longer have to remember that time will stop if we don't wind our clock.

Mechanics and farmers who have a shop know perfectly well how nice it is to have all tools in place at the end of the day. There are those who hang tools on wall panels that have the profile of the tool painted on the background. Thus, at a glance, it can be seen if there is a tool missing. The shop owner who at the end of each day checks his tools, will at times, like my Grandmother, have to make a special effort to put things in order.

The most common scenario, that too many of us would probably fit into, is that of the shop owner who builds a new shop complete with wall panels, shelves, drawers, bins, and stores everything away to the last wrench and bolt. He stands back and views the scene with undisguised satisfaction and quietly resolves: This is the way my shop is going to stay. He calls in his wife and children and explains that any tool used should be replaced exactly where gotten.

For the first two weeks not only are all the tools in place, but the floor is swept daily. Then comes seeding or harvest or bailing time and it becomes necessary to take several tools to the field. This is done with a firm resolve to have them back in place at the end of the day.

The next morning when the shop owner goes into the shop and sees empty spaces on the panels, he remembers. He makes a mental note to replace the tools by noon. Instead, there is another breakdown and several more tools leave the shop.

At the end of the day he remembers the tools and takes them back to the shop. It's late and supper is waiting, so instead of wiping them clean and putting them in their respective places on the panel, he dumps them on the work bench. Several days later when he gets around to cleaning the tools up and putting them in place, he discovers several are missing. No one remembers seeing them. When, after a week, it becomes evident that the tools have been lost, he resolves to buy replacements next time he goes to town.

He forgets. And the gaps on the panel no longer disturb him; in fact, he hardly sees them anymore.

Six months later, about the only tools on the panel are those never used. The rest are on the workbench, on the floor, on the tractor, and lost. Around the vice there is a pile of short pieces of pipe and metal. Around the welder it's even worse. What should go out to the scrap is simply dropped to the floor, where it stays.

Then one rainy day the shop owner decides to straighten things up. He doesn't do too bad, although it takes him several days. Tools are cleaned up and put back in place. He goes to the hardware store and buys replacements for those missing—well, for most of them. The scrap iron he takes to the scrap behind the shop, he washes up the floor... The shop doesn't look half bad.

A month later things are strewn out again. This time he waits a year to clean up the shop. After that, shop cleaning becomes a yearly affair...

Ten years later there are no more panels on the wall. No effort is made to count and recover or replace lost tools. Basically, shop cleaning is an effort to clear out enough junk to where the shop becomes halfway useable again.

Halfway is right. Even minor jobs that should take 10 minutes can take half an hour or more. Drill bits are strewn out over the whole shop. The chuck is usually lost. Nuts and bolts are all tossed in one big box, on the workbench and on the floor.

From here on, our man follows the yearly shop cleaning ritual. Good-natured, when a tool disappears, he doesn't become overly upset. He believes that tools always have and always will disappear. When he needs a bolt, instead of digging through the bolt box, he runs to town and buys what he needs. He sort of enjoys the break, even if he loses several hours of precious time.

We could at this point sign off and the message would be clear. But let's continue.

Our lives are cyclic. We think in terms of days, weeks, months and years. Spiritually this is also true. My grandparents—and I suspect many others of that vanished generation—thought in terms of days. The close of each day was time to put the shop in order, and if something was amiss, it was corrected before the winding of the clock. A restoration point was set.

There are those who possibly use Sunday to check over the shop. It's more complicated because a lot more tools can be misplaced in a week than in a day. A weekly restoration point offers less security than a daily checkup.

Alas, increasingly we are lapsing into a yearly shop cleanup. That is why, all too often, we dread seeing revivals come around. We know what a mess we're going to face. As we look at all the tools missing on the panels, at all the nuts and bolts strewn around, at the piles of junk that make it hard to even walk in the shop, we know that two weeks will hardly be enough time to get things in order.

An effort is being to made to allay the intensity of this problem by a weekend of mid-year meetings. The effort is noble and there is no doubt but what there are results. Yet, we must admit that a six-month restoration point still leaves a lot to be desired.

“Revivals,” as used in our circles, transmits the unmistakable idea of a spiritual

renewal. To suggest that our revivals have been a failure, or that they are being a failure, would be unfair. The Lord has used revivals mightily to preserve His people. However, we must be on the guard that our revivals don't degenerate into "confessionals," a time in which we rub our nose in the dirt by openly and painfully confessing our wrongs. And then believing we are ready for communion.

The time of the year has come for the shop owner to clean up his shop. For the last six months he has been dreading it. But now it's time to get to work. He remembers the time when there were panels on the wall with the profile of the tools painted on them. He remembers the time when nuts and bolts, welding rods, bits, you name it, all had their place. He knows that there are shop owners who still use that system. He even asked one of his neighbors how he managed to keep his shop so clean and organized. When he was told, "I try and clean it up at the end of every workday," he just shook his head and said, "I don't have that kind of time."

Now we see him standing in the doorway looking over the mess. His mind is in a jumble. To really clean things up so that his shop is like his neighbor's shop is out of the question. Nor, as he sees it, is it necessary. If that were all a person had to do, fine...

Yet, something needs to be done. But where does one start. Should he begin by replacing lost and damaged tools? Or should he begin tossing junk out the back door? Maybe a little of both?

Our man knows that even this will take a lot of work and when he gets done his shop will still be a mess. Suddenly he has an idea; he will open up his problem to other shop owners and see if they can give him some good advice.

So during the next week he visits all the shops in the area. When he gets to a shop in which everything is clean and organized, with the tools hanging on wall panels, he feels both bad and good. He tells the shop owner what an absolute mess his own shop is—and that makes him feel bad. He also tells him how much he would like to have his shop in order—which makes him feel good.

After visiting the last shop in the area, our man returns home and walks into his own shop, sits down on the work stool and looks things over. The fact that everyone now knows for a fact that his shop is a mess and that he plans on getting things cleaned up somehow consoles him. He decides that during the coming year, each time he has a little spare time, he will work on getting his shop straightened out. He smiles. What an ingenious solution to a big problem.

During the following years, at shop cleaning time our man visits his neighbors and tells them about his shop and how that he plans, during the coming year, to get everything in order.

We could also end the article here, on this sad note. But we won't. Rather we'll do an edited rerun of what we have just written.

Our man is tired of his messy shop. Sick and tired. He does a few mental calculations and finds that he would lose far less time straightening out his shop every day than he does trying to find lost tools and nuts and bolts. With the money he spends running to town, sometimes just for a washer, he could replace his lost tools.

He goes to the house and tells his wife and children of his decision. There is going to be a real shop cleaning. He asks his boys to help him.

“Okay, boys, let’s take all this junk and pile it in front of the shop...”

“In the front dad? Why not in back on the scrap pile?”

“Because after we have a big pile out front, I’m going to call in the fellow who buys scrap metal and sell him all this junk.”

“Dad, what if you happen to need some of this stuff again? You might be able to fix that old transmission.”

“Maybe I could, but I never will. And so it will stay right there for another ten years if I don’t get rid of it.”

It doesn’t take long and the fellow who buys scrap metal is called. Our man says, “You can come back again. I have more scrap that has to go.”

On the second trip he begins loading scrap from the back of the shop. On the third and fourth trip too. The fifth trip is to pick up another pile of metal in front of the shop. There is no more junk left. Nor is there much of a shop left.

“Now, boys, let’s get all the tools and put them in front of the shop...”

“Dad, are you planning on selling all the tools and the welder as scrap too?”

“No, we’re going to take everything out and wash down the shop with the high pressure pump. Then we’re going to paint it, put up new panels, and then I’ll go to town and buy more tools.”

When our man finishes his project, his shop is just like it was in the beginning.

“Boys, every day when we close down for the day, we’re going to make sure everything is in its place. If something is missing, we look until we find it.”

Ten years later, that shop looks like it did when it was first built.

Two stories; in the first our man confessed his faults to everyone. Every year. No one had much confidence anything would change.

In the second story, our man rolled up his sleeves and went to work. Even though he didn’t talk with anyone, neighbors who drove by would comment, “Looks like there are going to be some real changes here.” Time proved they were right.

It is frequently said that we are in danger of becoming revival Christians. The solution is to have a weekend of mid-year meetings. Like regular meetings, these also do a good work. But the concerns continue.

What is the problem?

The problem is that we are rapidly getting out of the habit of establishing a restoration point at the end of each day. We don’t sit still for a little while and listen to the ticking of the clock. We don’t wind the clock, which reminds us of how little time we have.

No, we go into spiritual debt. We don’t pay our dues to the Lord. When we finally stop to take stock of our situation, we are overwhelmed. So we confess and promise to do better the coming year.

What we need is less confessing and less promising. We need to get to business and clean up until the Lord says, “Son/Daughter, that looks good.”

Then we must daily establish a restoration point, for so doing we won't only be ready for Communion, but also for the Lord's return.

The wise virgins are those who at the end of each day establish a restoration point in their lives. ▲

Some Old Stories

[Recently I found a book with some old stories—fables?—that teach some interesting lessons. I have translated them from Portuguese, with the necessary adaptations to make them more readable.]

All Things Work Together for Good

Many years ago there lived a king who didn't believe in God's goodness. One of his servants, however, constantly reminded the king that God was caring for him. Whenever the king was going through some difficulty, the servant would say, "Courage, my king; God is good!"

One day the king and his servant went to the forest to hunt. While there, a wild animal attacked them. Bravely the servant defended the king and saved his life, but through the struggle the king lost his little finger.

The king was furious and instead of showing gratitude to his servant for having saved his life, he angrily demanded, "Now, what do you have to say? I suppose you'll try and tell me that God is good. If God were good, He wouldn't have let that wild beast attack me and then I wouldn't have lost my finger."

The servant replied, "My king, in spite of everything that has happened, I still say that God is good. You have lost a finger, but it will be for your good."

Upon hearing this answer, the king lost control of himself. He ordered that the servant be shut up in the foulest cell in the castle dungeon.

Some time later the king went hunting again. He ventured far into the forest and unknowingly wandered into the territory of a fierce tribe of savages that sacrificed their victims to their gods.

The king was captured and taken to the chief who was overjoyed with the fine specimen presented to him. Preparations were immediately made for the great celebration. As the hour approached, the chief was seen closely observing the king. Suddenly he cried out in a furious voice, "We can't sacrifice this man. Our sacrifices must be perfect and he has a finger missing!"

In order to not further offend their gods, the king was told to leave and never return.

Upon returning to his palace, he immediately had the servant locked in the dungeon brought to him. Effusively embracing the servant, he exclaimed, "God is good! I escaped death because of the finger I am missing..." The king was quiet for a moment and then continued, "But if God is so good, why did he permit you to spend time in that awful dungeon?"

“My king, that isn’t hard to answer. If I wouldn’t have been in that dungeon, surely I would have been with you on that hunt. When the chief rejected you for the sacrifice, he would have turned on me and since I have all ten fingers, I would have been sacrificed to the gods.” ▲

When We Don’t Understand

A man who believed strongly that God cares for His children was crossing the ocean in an airplane when one of the engines caught fire. The pilot had to make a forced landing at sea. Most of the passengers were killed, but the man who believed in God was able to hang onto a buoyant piece of debris and eventually land on a deserted island.

Upon pulling himself on the beach, the first thing he did was to offer a special prayer of thanksgiving to God for having spared his life. Somehow he was able to survive on edible plants and fish he managed to catch. Through hard labor and ingenuity, he managed to drag enough dead logs together to make himself a crude shelter. He even managed, we don’t know how, to light a fire, which he constantly kept burning in his little hut.

One day as he was out gathering food, he looked toward his hut and saw a dark cloud of smoke rising. Dropping everything, he ran back and discovered his hut had been reduced to ashes. This was more than he could take. In despair he sat down on a stone and in great sobs he looked upward:

“Oh God, how could you do this to me? You know how much I need this shelter. Oh Lord, why have you lost your compassion for me?”

As he sat there and wept, someone placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Are you ready to go?” the voice asked.

Astonished beyond words, he looked around to see who was speaking. A uniformed sailor!

“Come on! Let’s go. We’ve come to pick you up.”

“But...but how... I mean...how did you find me?”

“Just as simple as could be. We were sailing by and saw your smoke signal. The captain stopped the ship and asked me to row ashore and pick you up.” ▲

Go Down to the Blacksmith’s House

A blacksmith who lived riotously during his youthful years decided to amend his ways. Thereafter, for many years, he was an example to many people.

When such a person gets converted and ceases to spend money foolishly, normally things begin to go better financially. This wasn’t the case of the blacksmith. He was in a constant struggle to make ends meet.

A worldly friend who was visiting him and saw his struggles, told him:

“I don’t understand what is happening with you. Exactly when you decide to do

what is right and things should be going better for you, everything seems to be going backward. What kind of faith is this that doesn't bring you prosperity?"

The blacksmith remained silent for quite some time, in deep thought. Many times he had wondered about this himself, until he found an answer, which he now felt to pass on to his friend:

"I make knives here in my shop. The steel used in the knives I buy in bars. Do you know how I go about making a knife out of this raw steel?"

"The first thing I do is put the steel in the forge and heat it until it is red hot. I take the steel out of the fire and put it on the anvil. Then, with a large hammer I mercilessly beat the hot steel until it assumes the desired shape. Then I plunge it into cold water and this shop is filled with steam and the sound of sizzling. I repeat this process until I have produced a quality knife. It isn't sufficient to do this only once or twice."

The Blacksmith paused, in deep meditation. After several minutes of silence, he continued:

"Some times the raw steel I buy is poor quality. As I expose it to fire and water, instead of taking on the desired shape, it begins to crack. When this happens, I don't waste any time. I simply throw it onto the pile of useless steel."

Once again the blacksmith paused.

"I know that I am being tempered by the fire of affliction. I feel I must accept the blows that life deals me, as well as the water that causes me to shiver with cold. But I have made a firm resolve to hold still and let the master make of me what he sees fit. No matter how long it takes, or how painful it is, I intend to hold still, for never do I want to find myself on the pile of reject steel.

The Value of Waiting

A wise man was walking through the market place when he was stopped by a man who wanted advice:

"Wise master, this morning my son asked for money to buy something very expensive. Should I give him the money he is asking for?"

"If this isn't an emergency, wait a week before giving him the money."

"But if I have the money available and can help him today, what difference will it make to wait a week?"

"It will make all the difference in the world. It has been my experience that for people to value something, there must be a doubt in their mind as to whether or not they will obtain what they desire." ▲

The Wisdom of Years

An old man was planting a tree by the side of the road. A young man came by and asked:

"What sort of tree are you planting?"

"I'm planting a jaboticabeira tree."

"How long will it take before it bears fruit?"

“At least 15 years.”

Somewhat insolently the young man asked, “And do you think you’re going to live that long?”

“No I don’t. As you can see, I’m an old man, about to finish my course here on earth.”

“Then what do you think you’ll gain out of this?”

“Nothing. What I do know, though, is that if everyone thought like you do, young man, no one would ever eat jabuticabas.” Your Brother Writes

The Far Side of the Church

In a recent article, *The Far Side of the World*, we told the story of a slum dweller. Today our Nigerian brother, Monday Didymus, from the Living Water Congregation, tells a story in *The Voice of Christians’ Fellowship*, the Nigerian Messenger.

As you read bro. Monday’s story, remember that very likely he’s not the only brother in Nigeria who has gone through a time of tribulation. Notice how he matter-of-factly tells his experience with no trace of self-pity or bitterness.

Those of us who have been raised in berths of splendor should stop and ask ourselves: How would we react in a similar situation? If the police—yes, our local police, not thieves or vandals—should threaten us with death and destruction and we would have to flee for our lives, would we like Job, and brother Monday, manage to praise the Lord and thank Him for His blessings?

How God Spared My Life

by Monday Didymus

Greetings of love and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ to you all. I have a testimony to give on the goodness of God towards me and my family. He cared for us that our lives were spared during a communal war in our Local Government Area last year.

This is my story: There was a fight that broke out in my Local Government Headquarters on January 19, 2002. At the very beginning of the fight, a policeman was killed. This was a signal that there was going to be retaliation from the police authority. This made many people to start to park and run away from their homes.

During this time we had a newborn baby in our family. The baby was just fifteen days old. We have a girl living with us to help my wife after she has delivered. After she has gone to school, we began to hear the sound of gunshot in the direction of her school. I decided to go and check on her in the school. On my way going, I saw people running and they were shouting on me to run back for people were being kill in the direction I was heading to. I heeded this advice.

Soon after this, the fight began to spread to our neighbouring village. They were saying it would get to our own village too. Everybody began to run away and our whole Local Government area was almost deserted. My wife and I decided that we should park to her parents’ place in another village. Before we got there, we met that they

were parking away from their own village. They advised us that we should park to my grandmother's place in another Local Government Area.

On the way to this place, there is a bridge, which we must cross. This bridge was too narrow and many people were crowded there. They have to wait for each other and take turns to pass the narrow bridge. As I was there, my mind reminds me of the day of the coming of Jesus Christ as said in Zeph.1:14-16. Many people including me were crying that day because there was no easy passage. But God always make a way for His children and there was a way where we finally escaped. When I reached my grandmother's place, I kept our properties with her, the little I was able to carry. I returned back home to take my children over there. Then it remained my wife and the little baby. I returned back to stay with my wife and the little baby. We thought there would be no more problems that the fight will not spread any further. Some days later, I went back to my grandmother to bring back the other children, not knowing the big problem was yet ahead!

By this time there were only few people that remained in our village. There was no market, nothing to buy, no place to sell, no borehole to get water unless we go to a stream. One morning, there was no water in the house. My wife Christiana told me there was no water with which to give the baby a bath. I took my bicycle with a container to go to the stream. As I was going to the stream, I saw a big lorry coming in front. I stopped and my mind told me that it has been more than two weeks when there has been no vehicle coming or going out of the village. As it came nearer. I noticed that it was a lorry full of policemen. I turned round through a bush path to my house. I told my wife what I saw. By the time they got closer to my house, I saw that they were four lorries full of policemen and two armored cars along with them.

We parked and ran to the grandparents of my wife to stay with them. After we had stayed there up to four weeks, somebody came to tell us that policemen were going round the villages with some people looking for Ika people of my Local Government Area. On hearing this, my mind was not settled. I began to think what to do next. I went inside the house to share with my wife. In this little village there is a river we must cross to get out of the village and there is only one road leading in and out of the village. And there were policemen on the watch arresting or could shoot those who may attempt to flee away. My wife encouraged me that what is impossible with man is possible with God. We had a prayer and my mind referred me to the Bible where it says we should not be in trouble in the days of war (Matt. 24:6a). Then we go to sleep.

The following morning after we had our prayer, I encouraged my wife to take care of the little baby who was a month old by this time. I was able to leave little money with her, for I do not know when next we shall be able to see!

By 6.00a.m, I heard the sound of a motorcycle passing on the road. I took my bicycle and my Bible and started to leave the village. My mind was telling me I should either go to Owo-Elu where our church is in another State or I go to Port-Harcourt to be with my nephew. As I passed the first compound, I heard one man called upon me to stop. They were running after me and I began to run faster with my bicycle. I

diverted to another direction to see one of my neighbours. The landlord of the place told me to run into the bush that there were policemen around there. I left my bicycle behind and ran into the bush. I ran through the bush and find my way to get to my father in-law's house. My brother in-law also passed through the bush to bring my bicycle for me.

I started on my journey again. The police were still burning houses, shooting people and arresting others. As I was going, I saw some people who did not run away from their home. When I asked them why, they said that the war would not reach them as they were at a boundary between our State and Abia State. I left these people immediately. Soon after I heard the shooting of gun in the direction I just left. I came to a brother's house in Owo-Elu, Abia State. He received me very well and entertained me with food and drink.

I saw the man we've just talk in his house with his leg shot and had his house burned to ashes just few minutes after I left there. Many others were arrested in that village. What a narrow escape that was for my life!

I got to brother Friday and sister Beatrice's house where I stayed for two weeks without seeing any member of my family. I managed to find a way to bring my motorcycle to where I was. "Brother Friday advised me that I should use the motorcycle for Okada - taxi work. After doing this for about two weeks, I was arrested one day by members of Okada Union. They accused me that I did not register with them before doing the work. They demanded of me to pay a fine. I began to plead and explained my situation to them. They didn't want to let me go. But a man who was passing by intervened and released me from their hands without paying any fine.

When I returned home, I shared my encounter with brother Friday. He said that if that be the case, I should stop the Okada work; which I did. I lived with them for one full month. They took good care of me. They supplied all my needs.

One day the news came that our village was full of soldiers. Since the anti-riot policemen could not restore peace, soldiers were brought instead. They said that my house was destroyed and my properties left behind were looted. I asked the person whether my house was burnt, he said no, that I should not worry about that. Two days later, my wife came and she gave me the same report like I heard before. She told me that many of the men and women who have been arrested have been released so long they confessed they do not know the youths that caused the problem for the community.

My wife encouraged us to return back to our place as peace was returning to the village gradually. When I went back, I saw six soldiers coming towards me with full force. They asked me, "Who are you?" I told them my name is Monday Didymus. Another said I am among the youths causing problems for the people. I answered no that I am a Christian. Another said that from the look of my face, I am a good person. After this interrogation, I share some tracts for them - Avoiding Deception and Your Life is a Posted Letter.

Four of these soldiers left, leaving two behind. They began to confess to me that

two days after they came to the village, they were the one who came to my compound and destroyed the doors into our house and went away with our chairs and kitchen equipments. He said they were very sorry for the destruction they have done to my house. They began to encourage me that there are some of our people who were now in detention, many lost their lives, and some had their houses burnt because of the community war. But for me I was very lucky from all such incidence. Since my life was spared, God would provide me with money to fix my doors again and to replace the properties that were lost. Few days later, the rest of my family came back home. This is my story!

How wonderful God is! This is the goodness of God over my family and I. The mercy of the Lord endureth forever (Psalm 23:6). What shall I render unto the Lord for all His goodness towards me? There is nothing sufficient to give unto the Lord, than to have our lives all surrendered unto Him; and to faithfully serve Him all the days of our lives. Our life is full of joy and thanksgiving to God for sparing our lives through those difficult times. May you all thank the Lord for us.

Our thanks also go to our brothers and sisters whom God used to care for us during those times. Your prayers are very much appreciated, for God answered them all. We are now living in peace in our community and we could worship in our own congregation. Thanks be to God. ▲

Life in Brazil

Parking in Rio Verde

In spite of being a city of nearly 130 thousand inhabitants, Rio Verde in some respects is 50 years behind much smaller cities in other parts of the world.

For years we have had a problem finding parking space in the business district. Our mayor did some investigating and found out that 70 percent of the parking space was being taken up by store owners and employees. In an effort to eliminate this problem, he had parking spaces painted on the streets and put up signs designating sections of town as area verde, that is, paid parking areas. Tickets had to be bought beforehand and filled in with ink when parking, showing the time, day and month, plus the tag number. To park for one hour cost 17 US cents.

The result was miraculous. Overnight it became possible to find a parking space without going around the block three times and then heading out to another part of town. If there were such a thing as patting a town on the shoulder, Rio Verde would have had a sore shoulder. I figured my local town had finally awakened and smelled the coffee.

And that's when things started coming apart. Local merchants began protesting, saying sales were down 40%. Whether sales were actually down that much is questionable. But it is a fact that customers were protesting. Rather than pay 17 cents to park for an hour, people began parking on off streets where the área verde hadn't been

implanted. The large area in front of the igreja matriz, the large Catholic church in the center of town, was loaded to the gills with cars (I suspect, at the invitation of priests, who seem to believe that one of their divine prerogatives is to contest civil authority).

Our mayor, perfectly aware of what today's public opinion can do in tomorrow's polls, gave a demonstration of his political acumen by suspending the área verde until January 1, so as to not mess up the merchant's commercial Christmas. It's anybody's guess what will happen on January 1.

So here I am, circling the block again. And again. And again.... ▲

Motoboys

In BN143, we wrote about motoboys—office boys who run around town on cycles. We mentioned that there are approximately 100 of these motoboys—don't confuse with mototaxi—in Rio Verde.

In a recent film, Motoboys—Vida Louca—an attempt is made to accurately portray their lives. According to Roberto Pompeu de Toledo's review of the film, there are between 170,000 and 300,000 motoboys in São Paulo. These motoboys are everything from office boys to pizza boys.

What makes these motoboys so successful in a large, congested city like São Paulo is their mobility. Places where cars inch along at 10 k.p.h., these motoboys zigzag in and out of traffic at speeds of 50-80 k.p.h. On a particularly congested 2.8 km. stretch in São Paulo it takes cars 30 minutes, while motoboys manage in eight minutes.

The motoboys do not have an easy life. Rather, as they zigzag in and out of traffic, they are in constant danger. Some of them begin work at three or four o'clock in the morning, such as paper boys who must have the morning paper delivered by 7:00 o'clock.

Drivers consider motoboys to be a pain in the neck, which they are at times. But on the positive side, think of how many young men have jobs and are making a decent living, plus carrying out an important social function as delivery boys. And then there are the indirect jobs created in the motorcycle industry.

Only brave souls are motoboys. To be out in the rain, in the hot sun and in the cold is not for the faint-hearted. ▲

Life on the Colony

The Consul General

Through the years the Colony has in rare occasions received the visit of a vice consul from the American Consulate in Brasília. On November 16, we were privileged to have Mr. Peter Kaestner, Consul General in Brasília, be present in our morning service and for a potluck lunch. In addition to his position in Brasília, he is over all the consulates in Brazil.

This was a rare opportunity to get a glimpse of some of the inner workings of the foreign service.

In the afternoon we had a question and answer session during which he gave us the official position of the US government on different situations we face with passport renewals, visas, etc.

Mr. Kaestner is a professional bird watcher. Of the over nine thousand species of birds worldwide, he has seen over six thousand. In fact, his visit here was due partially to a visit he made to a wildlife reserve in the state of Mato Grosso, where he added yet another bird to his list. There are only two other people who have seen more bird species than he has.

Especially interesting was his analysis of Brazil, that is, the American government's analysis (He made it plain that as a government official his official view must be that of the American government). I reminded Mr. Kaestner that the Consulate occasionally sends out warnings of terrorist activities to US citizens living abroad, yet he travels all over Brazil without a bodyguard or any security provisions. He replied that he is totally at ease in Brazil, that the US government requires that these warnings be issued so that if something disastrous should happen, there could be no recriminations.

Asked about the official position of the US government in relation to President Lula, he says they have no reason to be uneasy, that Lula's macroeconomics are orthodox and they foresee no problem.

Mr. Kaestner will shortly be leaving Brasília and assuming the Consulate in Cairo, Egypt. He assures us that once he retires he will be spending time in Brazil. There are still some 180-200 species of birds here that he must see. ▲

This & That

After at least three trips to Brazil, Lester & Sharon Holdeman were finally able to take their daughter Tonya to the States. The first hurdle was the adoption in Brazilian court. It was believed once that was through, they would be granted an entrance visa by US officials. That wasn't the case. Even though legally adopted, they had to return to the US without Tonya. Officials finally told them that the reason they delayed in granting a visa was that they suspected the child was being bought. After an interview with INS in Kansas City, they realized this was definitely not the case.

It's not easy to be a public figure. Statements made with the best of intentions, can swoop back and strike the speaker on the jaw with the force of a boomerang. In a recent state visit to a number of African countries, President Lula committed a faux pas in Namibia. In the city of Windhoek, he enthusiastically launched into an off the cuff speech by saying, "A visitor to Windhoek gets the impression he isn't in Africa. Everything is so clean and architectonically beautiful with an extraordinary people." Even though the interpreter diplomatically omitted the word clean, the damage was done. What he said was interpreted as: "A visitor to Windhoek gets the impression he

Brazil ¹⁶ News

isn't in dirty and backward Africa..." Yep, he who lives in a house of glass can never be too careful.

New babies. You will notice that most of the names are Brazilian. That is rapidly becoming a reality here as the church grows. Sept. 17, Márcio & Wendy Ambrósio, a boy, Márston; Oct. 13, Milferd & Sandy Loewen, a boy, Jalyn; Oct. 22, Jerry & Vanusa Barros, a girl, Layza; Oct. 27, Vilmar & Roseni Bastos, a boy, Victor; Oct. 29, Jonas & Grace Marques, a girl, Cristina.

The United States' gross national product is 22 times greater than Brazil's. Brazil's GNP is 40 times greater than Angola's and 115 times greater than Mozambique's.

Frances Schultz moved from her home at the Rio Verdinho Cong. to special quarters built on Tim & Deanna Burns' home. Deanna is Frances' daughter.

On Oct. 19, John & Joan Unruh celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary.

Min. Arlo & Priscilla Hibner spent the Oct. 19 weekend visiting the Tocantins settlements.

Min. Mark & Glenda Hibner spent the same weekend visiting the São José do Rio Preto mission in São Paulo state.

Dea. Harold & Irene Holdeman spent the same weekend visiting the Goiânia mission, together with some youth boys.

We are now in the middle of November and rains continue to be sporadic. Since most farmers have gone no-till, the sparse rains do a lot more good than with conventional farming. Corn has been planted and I believe most of the soybeans.

Brazil News

Brazil 18 News

Brazil ¹⁹ News

Brazil 20 News

Brazil News

Brazil News

Brazil 23 News

Brazil 24 News

Brazil News

Brazil²⁶ News

Brazil News

Brazil News

Brazil News

Brazil News

Brazil News