

Brazil News



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Editorial

Navigation

We Mennonites are a landlocked race. Tillers of the soil we are... We were. The ingrained belief that the farmer has just a bit more of a lease on holiness than those of less worthy professions, has largely dissipated. We today exercise a wide range of occupations. Interestingly though—and significantly?—in the church at large, we continue to live inland. Only a handful of our people make their living at sea, i.e., as fishermen or sailors.

Because of our earthbound predilection, we can't really imagine what it would be like to navigate, in the true sense of the word, from one point to another.

To a dyed-in-the-wool Kansan, the world is square, a checkerboard.

“Where do you live?”

“Three north and two and a quarter east of Wherever, on the south side of the road.”)

A Kansan, the kind we have just described, becomes frantic if he loses his sense of direction—becomes turned around. He has no use for a compass. In his quadrilateral world there is no need for navigation.

(Some 55 years ago, as a small boy living in Kansas, I accompanied my parents and grandparents on a trip to Missouri and Texas to visit relatives. Probably knowing that roads in the Ozarks seldom follow cardinal points, like in Kansas, Grandpa purchased a small compass.

One morning we left our motel and had traveled some 40 miles when it became very evident we weren't getting where we wanted to go. Dad pulled over to ask how far it was to the town that just didn't show up. He found out we were going in exactly the wrong direction. Dad asked Grandpa if his compass hadn't indicated we were heading in the wrong direction. Almost belligerently he answered that the compass *had* indicated we were heading the wrong way, but he figured there was something wrong with it...)

Brazil News

According to my GPS manual, to navigate one must be able to answer three questions:

- 1) Where am I?
- 2) Where am I going?
- 3) How am I going?

Let's do a bit of navigating in Kansas. We're on the intersection of a country road and want to navigate around the section in our car. The instructions are easy: Go north one mile, turn right and head east for one mile; turn right and head south for one mile; turn right and head west for one mile. There we are, right back where we started. We can hardly call that navigating.

Here we go again. Our car windows have been blacked out and we can see absolutely nothing outside of the vehicle. The instructions are a bit more complicated. Using compass and odometer, head north at 0° (or 360° , the same thing) for one mile; turn right and head east at 90° for one mile; turn right and head south at 180° for one mile; turn right and head west at 270° for one mile. There we are again, right where we started.

One more step. Our car continues blacked out and has no odometer, so now we must use the compass and the speedometer. We are going to travel at exactly 30 m.p.h. That means it will take us precisely eight minutes to make our four mile circuit, or two minutes per mile. Now we follow the former instructions and make a 90° right turn at every 120 seconds until we reach our starting point.

What we have just described, in the most rudimentary form of navigation, is called dead reckoning (DR). We have determined distance by speed and direction by compass bearing.

Now that we know how to navigate by dead reckoning, we'll see if we know enough to get our navigator's certification. Everything will be the same as the last exercise, except the vehicle and location. We will use a boat two miles offshore, right where the Mississippi, or Amazon, River spills into the sea. We will place a buoy at the starting point.

Here we go: 0° for two min. at 30 m.p.h.; 90° for two min. at 30 m.p.h.; 180° for two min. at 30 m.p.h.; 270° for 2 min at 30 m.p.h....

Where's the buoy?

We're not even near the buoy. To navigate on stable land is one thing. To navigate aerially or at sea, where winds or currents take us off course, is an entirely different story.

The masters of the old sail ships were very much aware that the course of their ships was influenced by both currents and winds. In fair weather, when it was possible to take frequent sightings of the sun and stars to determine their exact position, frequent corrections could be made and thus remain on course. It was when inclement weather set in, making celestial sightings impossible for days or weeks, that things became serious. Even though the captain kept the ship on the proper bearing, it could all the while be imperceptibly drifting far off course. And toward disaster.

During the sail ship era, and when aviation was in its infancy, navigation was dependent on...

Brazil News

1) Rudimentary instruments. In the case of ships: compass and sextant; in aviation: compass, air speed indicator, altimeter and artificial horizon.

2) Charts and maps. These were often woefully inaccurate and many times non-existent.

3) Landmarks. For a landmark to have significant value, it must be recognized by the navigator; it must tell him where he is.

4) Intuition and experience. This was frequently the determining factor. When all else failed, seat-of-the-pants navigation is what in many occasions saved the day.

5) Plain luck.

All that we have just said is especially true in the case of early pilots who flew in open-cockpit planes. Their success, and survival, was directly proportional to their ability to make the best use of a minimum of helps and constantly improvise.

These single-engine, fabric covered planes were able to take an amazing beating, in spite of their fragility. Intuitive, experienced pilots, the kind that lived to a ripe old age, constantly kept an eye on the terrain below, looking for a suitable landing spot—a road, a pasture, a field...—just in case.

The pilots of these little planes knew perfectly well that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. But not always was it advisable to fly a straight line. A thunderstorm had to be avoided like the plague. Fabric wings take only so much rain and hail. So as a storm loomed up before them, they had the option of attempting to fly around, fly over, fly under, turn around and fly back, or simply look for an emergency landing spot.

In the case of a plane that was carrying mail, there was a schedule to be kept, urgent correspondence to be delivered. To turn around or attempt to land wouldn't get the mail to its destination, so that left flying around, over or under, the last two being the most logical solution, as it would mean flying in a straight line. They were also the most dangerous. Even though it meant not flying in a straight line, flying around was the safest, for the ground would always be in sight. Yes, it's true the storm might be of such proportions that even flying around would prove impractical, but it would nevertheless be the safest option.

To fly around means to deliberately fly off course, hoping to eventually get back on course and have a successful flight. Flying off course can mean flying over unknown territory. It means using extra fuel, which can be serious. It can mean having to fly at night. None of these are pleasant options for a pilot in a cloth covered plane.

Navigation today is different. Virtually every square meter of land area has been mapped. Oceans and bodies of water have been charted. Navigation via satellite enables sea captains and airplane pilots to continually pinpoint their exact position with a margin of error inferior to the surface of their craft.

With radar and constantly updated meteorological reports, sea captains, and especially pilots, are able to deliberately sail or fly off course, knowing exactly how much extra fuel and time this will take. "Ladies and gentlemen, we're going to be flying around a bit of turbulence to assure you a smoother flight. We will be reaching our destination...ah, seven minutes later than what our schedule calls for."

It didn't use to be that way.

When Anésio, a young man, got married, he was poor. His bride's parents had sold their farm and moved to town, where they hoped to set up some sort of business. José Gonçalves, his dad-in-law, was illiterate. His business acumen was zero. His two brothers-in-law had a get-by education. His wife and sister-in-law were excellent house keepers, but certainly not businesswomen.

Anésio was poor and homely, with a minimal education. But that didn't keep him from being likeable. Everyone liked Anésio and his ready smile. He was communicative, and yes, intelligent. He was running over with ideas on how to make good in life.

His marriage to José Gonçalves' daughter, Maria, was opportune, to say the least. Here was Anésio, a poor young man full of ideas on how to get ahead in life, but with no cash to make his ideas come to life. And there was José Gonçalves, a man with plenty of cash, but no idea of how to make his cash come to life. Yes, it was an opportune marriage.

We have reasons to believe that Anésio and Maria loved each other very much. Yet we can't help but wonder: If José Gonçalves would have been poor, would Anésio have married his daughter? Really, that is beside the point.

José Gonçalves' money was invested in a business that demanded a real business head—a *máquina de arroz*, literally a rice machine. A "rice machine" is actually a business that involves buying, processing and selling rice.

A rice buyer must be shrewd. This was especially true when Anésio went into business and rice was classified by hand. After taking a sample of the rice being offered for sale, the buyer would carefully place just the right amount in the palm of his hand. Then with the heel of his other hand he would begin to rhythmically rub the rice, constantly increasing the pressure applied.

Quality rice does not break easily. The purpose of the rubbing was to find out what percentage of the rice would break. Thus, the more calloused the hand of the buyer, and the greater the pressure applied, greater would be the percentage of broken rice.

Any rice buyer with a sadistic streak must have enjoyed these little sessions, watching the anguished look on the seller's face as he slowly upped the pressure on the rice in his hand. Finally, after what seemed like a small eternity to the seller, the buyer carefully spilled the contents of his hand on a table with a smooth surface. He blew the hulls and then slowly spread the rice so that not one kernel would rest on another. Now, with his index finger, he would separate the sheep from the goats—that is, the whole kernels from the broken ones. The whole kernels would be arranged in a neat circle. The broken kernels would then be arranged in circles of the same size. If the buyer came up with an equal circle of cracked rice, the classification would be one-to-one, very, very good rice. It could be two-to-one, or three-to-one, or four-to-one. Two-to-one would still be good rice. Three-to-one, not so good and four-to-one quite poor.

Under Anésio's shrewd eye, the business prospered. Soon he had his own trucks that went out to neighboring farms and towns to buy rice. After processing the rice and packaging it up, he would deliver it to outlets where it would be sold.

Brazil News

To understand what we are about to say, we must make an explanation about Brazilian honesty. In Brazil it is possible to be both very honest and at the same time be very crooked, without any apparent conflict of interest.

Anésio was an honest man. His word was good as gold. If he closed a deal with a seller, you could be sure he would keep it down to the last cent.

But Anésio was also a very...ah, let's just say, a very shrewd man. The government gets a good share of its tax money through what is known as a circulation tax. All grain, cattle and produce purchased from farmers is subject to a high tax. To not pay this tax is equivalent to just that much more money in the buyer's pocket. And that much faster the business can prosper.

All businessmen detested the circulation tax and very few were a hundred percent honest. Anésio quickly mastered the art of tax evasion.

To begin with, he tried to haul his merchandise at night when there weren't as many *fiscais*, tax inspectors, out. And—although I have no proof of this, we can be quite sure it was the case—he must have a cozy enough relationship with those who were on night duty to where, with a little profit sharing, they didn't hinder Anésio in his reach for the stars.

Anésio began to expand his activities. His “way” with *fiscais* helped pave his way to success, together with a good dose of courage and a lot of hard work.

Some people are crooked because of a flaw in their moral fiber. To them the alleyways of corruption are more challenging, more satisfying, than the paths of honesty.

Not so Anésio. I don't believe he enjoyed hauling rice at night to avoid *fiscais*. I don't believe he enjoyed paying *fiscais* off. I sincerely believe that Anésio would have liked being one hundred percent honest, just like he was honest with his customers. I also believe that if Anésio wouldn't have been killed in an automobile accident on the road to Goiânia several years ago, he would have eventually quit hauling rice at night and bribing *fiscais*.

Anésio had a goal in life. To get there in his lifetime, and enjoy the fruit of his labor, he felt justified in being dishonest for a time. We said that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Anésio believed that deliberately going off course would be more effective than going in a straight line.

He was right.

And terribly wrong.

Every normal human being has a goal in life—a dream, if you will. Conversion doesn't necessarily alter these dreams. Rather, a conversion experience should prepare us to find our place in life, and, of course, place our goals and dreams on the altar. And be patient.

Put bluntly, in this life we navigate from point A to point B, point A being birth, and point B being death. If not careful, in our earthiness we feel justified in establishing our own temporal point B.

For a young man point B may be a girl whom he would like to marry. He believes she is the key to his happiness and success. With her in his life, everything else will fall into place.

Brazil News

For young married couples, point B may be a business, a farm, a ranch, good jobs. Financial security.

For an older couple, point B can become a nice home with a sure income that permits traveling and other amenities of life. Sufficient for emergencies.

The young man, the young woman, who has a clear concept of point B and sets his face like a flint toward this final destination, without turning to the right or to the left, has found the key to a joyful, fulfilling life.

Anésio apparently believed that if he hauled rice at night and bribed *fiscals* for a time, he would reach his point B of financial stability, and then go straight. But he didn't know how close he was to the eternal point B.

A young man sets his affection on a worldly girl. He knows that marrying her will take him off course. But she is now his point B. He believes that once they are happily married, slowly they will get back on course. He believes the desire to be a true Christian will slowly return. And that she will feel the same.

Yet, were this young man to consult the statistics of such marriages, he would find his chances are very slim. In fact, his chances of living with this lovely young lady for the rest of his life are also very slim.

Most people who get off course in life do so gradually. It's a series of little half degree decisions. But after a period of time, possibly years, there is a noticeable change in their course. Others begin to get concerned.

When people get off course, they would like to believe they know exactly how far off course they are and what it will take to get back on course. More succinctly, they, like Anésio, are deliberately off course, doing things they know aren't right, but believing once they have reached their personal point B, they will change their bearing and head back toward the eternal point B.

There is a fatal flaw in this reasoning. Have you ever seen a small plane fly slightly sideways? It's flying an 180 degree course—due south, but the nose of the plane is approximately 20 degrees off, pointed southeast. The explanation is simple. A strong east wind is blowing the plane off course and so it must head into the wind to remain on course.

With today's modern navigational aids that constantly pinpoint the craft's location, this is no great problem. However in the little open cockpit planes with primitive navigational aids, this could be a very serious problem, especially if flying at night or with low visibility. Even though the compass tells the pilot he is heading toward his destination, he may in reality be headed toward open sea or some other inhospitable area with no possible place to land.

Christian navigation isn't like driving around a section in Kansas in a blacked-out car. It's not like trying to fly a 180 degree course and when the compass reads 160 degrees, say, "Oh, I'm 20 degrees off course." No, it's more complicated than that.

And yet...

Must Christian navigation be so complicated? Will we either be in one extreme of believing we are on course, when in reality we aren't, or in the other extreme of always feeling we are off course, of never being sure of our final destination?

Brazil News

When we moved from Kansas to Brazil in 1969, our local doctor, a weekend pilot, offered to fly us to Miami for what we as a family would have to pay for bus tickets. With two small children, this was obviously much more attractive than spending several days and nights on a bus. Plus being a more interesting way to travel.

A congenial fellow, Dr. Kauffman—that was his name—gave me some pointers on navigation as we flew along. The one, which I remember best, was a demonstration of how the plane was following a radio beam. He permitted me to take the controls briefly and had me make a slight turn to the left and then to the right. Each time an alarm would sound, telling us we were off course.

The advantage of flying by radio is that the pilot immediately knows if crosswinds are blowing him off course and he can make the necessary corrections.

We believe that whenever a sincere Christian begins to get off course, his little “radio” beeps. We also believe that many Christians heed that little beeping and with just a slight correction are back on course.

But not always is that first little beep heeded. The Lord is longsuffering and the beeping doesn’t immediately stop. But there comes a moment in which the frailty of the flesh gives way to deliberate disobedience. When this happens, the beeping becomes fainter and fainter.

There are those who soon give up making a pretence of being a Christian. Others launch out on a calculated course of disobedience as they navigate toward their personal point B.

Time goes by. Possibly years. Personal point B is reached. Or pretty much so. Yet arrival isn’t as satisfying as had been hoped. Maybe it’s the concern shown by the brotherhood that something is amiss. Maybe it’s the voice of conscience. Or maybe it’s just simply realizing that there is another point B that sooner or later will have to be faced. And then there is the very real possibility that way out in the distance a faint radio signal was heard—which brought to remembrance the times in when this signal was very important.

It is seldom a simple matter to get back on course, especially when years or decades have gone by without radio contact, other than for occasional distant beeps—or rather, alarms—reminding that things are not well.

The soul that sincerely desires to get back on course and cries to Heaven will get an answer. The radio, long stilled, will begin to come to life. And this is where the problem often begins.

Contrary to ships and planes, getting back on course spiritually doesn’t mean making a course correction, or even making a 90 degree turn to either the left or the right, and then when the original course is intercepted, make another 90 degree turn, like navigating in Kansas, and then being back on course.

When the radio begins beeping, it usually indicates a 180 degree turn. And it is exactly here that the enemy begins transmitting on his own radio frequency. He promises a quicker and less painful way to get back on course. It’s attractive. This is why some never manage to get back on course. And why for some it takes weeks and months, even years.

There is only one way to get back on course, and that is to follow the voice of the Spirit, that will lead back to the original deviation. We call this repentance. As the person retraces his route, the beeping becomes clearer and clearer. And suddenly it changes direction. The heart is filled with gladness as the signals once again come in loud and clear. They, like the cloud and the pillar, are now heading forward, toward the eternal point B.

Navigation:

Where am I? This boils down to a clear personal testimony of peace with God. Someone who is in contact with his Maker won't be stumbling around, looking vainly for the way, for Jesus *is* the Way.

Where am I going? So many problems are solved when our point B is the eternal point B. To have a vision of the vanity of life and the seriousness of eternity gives a desire to navigate straight to our destination, without wavering even a fraction of a degree to the left or to the right.

How am I going? It's very, very important that we fly in the little cloth covered planes (earthen vessels) that the Lord furnishes us with. We would like so much to fly something more modern (affluence). We would like to have a full set of last generation instruments so that we could navigate on our own—fly off course for a while if we so desired—instead of being dependent on a little radio that quits working if we get too far off course. If we are having trouble staying on course, we should carefully look over our craft. Only the unmodified, original model will get us to our eternal destination.

May we remember Anésio, a man who believed he could deliberately fly off course for a time, until he reached his personal point B, but was surprised by death before he could correct his course. ▲

On the Subject

The Three Warnings

When José A. Moreno, the pilot of TAM flight 402, took the controls of the Fokker 100 in the São Paulo airport, he knew the auto-throttle wasn't working right. The pilot who just brought the aircraft in from Curitiba, casually mentioned the problem when debriefing Moreno. More of a nuisance than a problem, it meant that the throttles might have to be advanced manually during takeoff.

Because of its excellent service, and in spite of steeper fares, TAM is the airline preferred by many executives. With its fleet of Fokker 100's, not only has it achieved an admirable safety record, but impressive profits as well. Passengers who flew TAM had every reason to feel secure.

As flight 402 was taxiing to the runway with 91 passengers and five crew members aboard, the first alarm sounded in the cockpit. Believing it to be related to the faulty auto-throttle, the captain facetiously remarked to the copilot, "Is that thing already starting to give us fits?"

Brazil News

“We haven’t even left the ground,” was the copilot’s rejoinder.

The second alarm sounded moments after acceleration for takeoff. Apparently still thinking the problem was the auto-throttle, the pilot remarked, “That’s it all right.”

When the plane was rolling down the runway at 64 kilometers an hour, the third alarm sounded—a double alarm. No effort was made to abort the flight and soon the copilot called out, “V1,” which meant takeoff speed had been reached.

Seconds after leaving the ground, a loud clang was heard in the cockpit. The right throttle recoiled violently from its forward position, striking the rear housing.

“It’s stuck!” the copilot exclaimed as he tried to push it forward.

Still believing the problem was the auto-throttle, the captain ordered, “Disengage [the auto-throttle] and advance [the throttle] manually.”

Seeing the craft was losing altitude, the captain, with a trace of worry in his voice, repeated the order. The copilot tersely responded, “It’s off, it’s off!”

The plane continued to lose altitude and the yoke began to shudder, indicating a stall. The right wing began dropping and the captain’s last words were registered in the black box: “Oh, my God!”

A strident recording now came on informing the flight crew that the plane was crashing, ending with the words, “Don’t sink!”

By now the wings were perpendicular to the earth and the bottom one, the right wing, hit a building, ending flight 402. There were no survivors.

Flight 402 need not have crashed. After all, there were three warnings. With our magnificent hindsight, it’s easy to see everything that captain Moreno did wrong.

The Indians used to say that one shouldn’t judge another without first walking in his moccasins for a mile. And so, before judging captain Moreno too sternly, let’s sit down in the pilot’s seat and see how we do at the controls.

Captain Moreno knew the auto-throttle on his craft needed to be repaired. Since accelerating manually was a simple procedure, he hardly gave the problem a second thought. He felt he had the situation under control.

We often face problems in life that seem quite insignificant. Like the faulty auto-throttle, they seem to be more of a nuisance than an actual problem.

What Moreno didn’t know was that it wasn’t the faulty auto-throttle that was setting off the alarm in his craft. The real issue was a very serious problem in the thrust reverser of the right turbine.

Like Moreno, we tend to place too much confidence in our knowledge. We forget that life, like a commercial jet, is very complex. We forget too, that behind apparently simple problems there often lurk much greater problems which we are unable to see.

When the first alarm sounded, Moreno could have—and should have—returned to the terminal. True, it would have been unpleasant to inform his passengers: “Ladies and gentlemen, due to technical problems we are returning”

Unpleasant yes, but quite simple. After all, he hadn’t reached the main runway yet.

Our first alarm is usually our conscience. A sound conscience seldom—if ever—lets us down. It too warns us before things have gotten serious, while there is still a simple solution, albeit unpleasant at times.

It's true that our conscience is programmed, just like the alarm system on a modern aircraft is also programmed. The alarm on flight 402 didn't identify the problem—just alerted the pilot to the fact that something was amiss. Likewise our conscience at times doesn't specify exactly what the problem is. Alas, like Moreno, we sometimes feel we know what the problem is and have it under control. And so we ignore the voice of conscience.

The second alarm occurred on the main runway just as the turbines were accelerating. The auto-throttle was still working. It would have been a very straightforward procedure to abort the takeoff at this stage. But everything indicates that Moreno still didn't consider the possibility that maybe the problem was more than a mere nuisance.

The second warning sounded just like the first. The simple fact that it was repeated increased its urgency. The same is true for us. Only more so. The second warning is usually the voice of the Holy Spirit. We shouldn't think it strange that sometimes we can't distinguish between the voice of conscience and the voice of the Spirit. After all, they do work hand in hand.

What we may think strange, though, is the fact that at times the Spirit sounds an alarm without really pointing out the danger. What He wants is that we return to the terminal and check out our life. Our human nature would like a printout of the problem, a recording. We would like to know if we're up against a real problem or merely a nuisance.

The third alarm—the double alarm—sounded at a time when the takeoff could still have been aborted. Once again it was ignored and soon the plane was airborne.

For us this third warning frequently is of a forceful nature. It may be some unexpected situation, the voice of man or of the church. It may seem rude or unjust. We may dislike it, dispute or disregard it, but the fact remains that this third warning—the double warning—should never be ignored. Just as the Spirit works through the conscience, it also is present in this warning.

Captain Moreno chose to ignore this third warning and proceed with takeoff. The craft was barely airborne when the right thrust reverser was activated for a brief second, which is what caused the right throttle to recoil, creating the loud clanking noise in the cockpit. Six seconds later it happened again. Another four seconds and the thrust was reversed for the third time—and remained that way.

It couldn't have happened at a worse time. The Fokker 100 can take off with only one turbine. But it definitely cannot take off, or even maintain altitude, with one turbine reversed. With only 50 meters of altitude, and sinking, there was no possible way to return to the runway for an emergency landing.

The plane was in the air exactly 24 seconds before crashing into a residential section of São Paulo, miraculously killing only three residents.

Why did TAM flight 204 crash? Preliminary returns on the report being drafted by aviation authorities place the bulk of the blame on the faulty thrust reverser. After opening for the third time, the teleflex, a cable which connected the reverser to the turbine, separated, precluding any possibility of saving the flight, no matter how dexterous the pilot might have been.

But that does not vindicate the pilot. Nor the copilot. After all, there were three warnings. The preliminary report cites this fact, which, of course, places a blemish on captain Moreno's otherwise impeccable record.

Ninety-nine souls died (including the three on the ground) when the Fokker 100 crashed. Looked at mathematically, for each warning the pilot ignored, 33 people perished.

That makes a warning look quite important.

(You older readers, think back to spiritual crashes that took place 40, 50 or 60 years ago. Today, how many casualties are there per warning?)

All spiritual crashes involve at least three warnings. So often the pilot is a fine looking young man or woman. Like Moreno, they have a good record. But then one day they ignore a small warning.

Nothing happens.

A second warning, which also is ignored. There is an uneasiness, but again nothing happens.

And so it is forgotten

A third warning. A double warning. They recognize that there is a problem. But they've built up enough momentum in what they're doing that it would be sort of awkward to apply the brakes. So they proceed at full throttle.

V1. They become airborne. They lose altitude and crash. But contrary to what happens in an aviation disaster, where charred bodies tell the story, they imagine they are soaring above the clouds.

They say all is well.

Yes, before being too hard on captain Moreno, let's remember the warnings we have ignored, the narrow escapes we have had. Even now, is it possible that we have heard the third warning—and yet we rush down the runway at full throttle?

The last words captain Moreno spoke were, "Oh, my God!" The last words he heard were, "Don't sink!"

Three warnings had been ignored. And so he sank. ▲

Brazilian Stories

by Dean Mininger

The One-eyed Pilot

It has been said many times that Brazil is a land of contrasts, which is true. The old and the latest are very much a part of life in this country. For example, horses and carts ply the streets of town along side of modern cars, trucks, and multitudes of motorcycles. More than that, you may observe a man guiding his horse and cart in town with a cell phone on his belt. He makes small freight deliveries around town and so a mobile phone becomes very useful. Another aspect, whether proper or not, is that when we

face certain church, school, or other issues here, we say that we are living in a unique situation. So, supposedly some of the rules that apply in North America don't apply here. All of this has brought to pass some very interesting and strange experiences in the years that we have lived here. Some things happen here that would not be allowed or accepted in more developed countries. May I tell you one of our experiences that fall into this category?

This is the story of the one-eyed pilot. Beside being interesting to me, I think this experience brings out an important lesson or two for life. This goes back a few years ago when my brother-in-law and his family were here on a visit. I wanted to do something special with them while they were here. Somehow an inspiration came over me to hire a small plane and view the colony from somewhere besides the ground. I also had been wanting to search for a fabulous 250 meter high waterfalls in an area east of here. I went to the municipal airport to see what would be available. The airport manager gave me the phone numbers of several private pilots. I contacted them and got price quotes from them. And it came to pass that I chose to deal with the one by the name of Dirceu. Sounds quite harmless, don't you think? So we arranged a time to meet at the airport to get on with our mission.

We, knowing practically nothing about this man, were unprepared for what follows. We soon met up with someone that we had understood was supposed to be him. Our thoughts were in kind of a whirl for a little there. This *pilot* was wearing flip flops, had his shirt tails out, and had a disconcerting look out of his eyes! While I was striving to collect my thoughts, my brother-in-law broke the ice with a simple question. "Are you the pilot?" I fear I detected a tone of doubt in his voice which, by the way, mirrored some of my feelings. The man's response caused to develop within me an urge to laugh but fortunately I managed to bring it into subjection. It was something like "That's the way it's supposed to be." I'm convinced he detected a little bit of an incredulous manner about us. The disconcerting look in his appearance was caused by an apparent deficiency in one of his eyes. At the time I didn't want to stare to confirm my suspicions, but a person couldn't keep from thinking "Is that eye an eye that doesn't function?"

Fortunately it so happened that the weather didn't permit us to fly at the time appointed. Now at least we could reconsider our ambitions to fly! We arranged to meet again a little later in the day.

As soon as we were safely by ourselves we didn't hesitate to discuss some very nagging questions. Is that man blind in one eye? If so, can a one-eyed pilot fly safely? Are we going to go ahead as planned? My brother-in-law had managed to get a good enough look that he was sure that one eye was useless. Even so, he bravely said he was game to go. What could I do? I grasped for the comforting thought that this man had flown many times before and that he was living proof that the worst hadn't happened. I grasped for the comforting thought that I could trust our lives into God's hands. I did actually manage to put on a calm front. Why sure, let's go. It will probably turn out all right. Now that it's safely over with, I can say that fortunately the weather permitted that we were able to fly when we met again at the airport.

Brazil ¹³ News

The plane was a Piper Arrow. It looked nice except for the tires. In my estimation they had seen too many runway kilometers. One more straw on the camel's back! And yet apparently they had held up under the former takeoffs and landings. Besides, it was kind of late to chicken out now. As the one-eyed pilot checked his plane, got her out of the hangar, and started her up, it appeared like he knew what he was doing. That's not really saying much, since it comes from one that doesn't know what all needs to be done for a proper preflight checkup. Anyway, it looked good enough to us to keep us going.

So now we're taxiing out and soon getting lined up on the runway. Now it really becomes a blessing to trust in an almighty God. If it's his will that we continue to abide on this earth, surely he will take over the flying of this plane if necessary. The roar of the engine and the safe solid ground going ever faster past us helps keep us from worrying about any one certain thing too long. As I observe him fly, I begin to relax some. This man is totally at home in the cockpit of an airplane! We barely clear the runway and he is reaching for his cell phone to receive an incoming call. And throughout all the flight, I notice that he doesn't appear to be straining to see because of half vision. I get a strong impression that this pilot flies as much by feel as by sight. Maybe this will come out all right after all! But wait! It might even be possible for a one-eyed pilot to fly a plane from the ground into the air with apparent expertise. But what about landing! In my mind if there's ever a time that you need two-eyed vision in flying, it's when you bring a heavier than air object back into direct contact with the earth. Having your vision potential cut exactly in half drastically reduces your depth perception, And we *have* to land now that we have taken off. Either well, poorly, or disastrously. Oh well, we can put those thoughts off for the time being. Let's enjoy the flight while we can.

So we head out east and enjoy all the sights below. He shows us his farm on the way out. We do manage to see one nice falls but we doubt if it's the really big one. And then he offers to give us a thrill. We'll fly into the canyon, head straight for the falls and pull up at the last minute. Normally I would enjoy such a maneuver. But I can't seem to rid myself of the memory of that one eye. We defer. He doesn't appear to be offended. We head back towards town and the colony. Now once again my confidence is put to the test. We are flying over the school and waving at the children. We are low and our one-eyed pilot puts his plane into a bank so we can really get a good view. Sharper, and then sharper he banks the plane. Perhaps he doesn't know what he's doing after all. It truly feels like we're going to slide sideways out of the sky and crash right there! Right in the school yard with a bunch of horrified spectators for witnesses! But is it luck or is it skill? Before that happens he levels out and away we go to buzz some of our friends' houses on the colony. This is being quite interesting and enjoyable. But wait! We still *have* to land.

It's time to head back to town and the airport. Now the test of all tests is at hand. Will he have to make a few tries? Will he mess up? Now comes a total resignation of our fate into God's hands. He aligns his craft with that narrow strip of asphalt below and ahead of us. So far so good. He brings her down smoothly on the first try. His landing is just like his flying. Totally in control and as if he has three eyes instead of

one. We survived to tell this story! Let me assure you that once we had slowed to an uncrashable speed, we were quite relieved and getting more and more impressed. How could this be? What was this man's secret? Was good vision not as important as I thought it was for flying safely? Did this man have extraordinary powers?

My curiosity caused me to talk this over with the airport manager. He told me the history of this man's flying and revealed to me his secret. It was very simple with no miracles involved. And does it not serve for all of us? He explained it like this. He just tries that much harder. He meets a greater challenge with a greater effort. Is not the solution to overcoming our handicaps and difficult circumstances simply to strive that much harder? I think again of how the one-eyed pilot was at home in the cockpit of his plane. Of how he was skilled at flying his craft. And when he had graciously offered to me the chance to take the controls which, by the way, was met with no resistance, of how my two eyes couldn't seem to accomplish what his one eye could. I tried to fly a straight, level line. In my estimation, I was about one percent successful. My brother-in-law has never informed me that he experienced the onset of air sickness during that time, but maybe he's just being nice. Anyway, it was quite clear that this man has been successful in putting into practice an important principle.

I think we could qualify this principle a bit to best fit the spiritual aspects of our life. The Word of God clearly and repeatedly teaches us that we must strive to serve God with all of our heart. That's even more than just trying harder. First of all we must drive away all thoughts of self-pity, that life is unfair, and that others don't face what we do. The one-eyed pilot didn't dwell on those things. Otherwise he wouldn't have had the courage to go after his dream. It's much more important to be a skilled Christian than a skilled pilot. When we face our sinful nature, temptations, trials, difficult circumstances, etc., we must "put our hand to the plow" and not look back. Only such will be worthy to inherit those eternal glories promised to the faithful. Our works don't make us worthy in themselves. Rather, we must first have a heart that is totally devoted to God, which then brings about good works unto Him.

So ends the first part of this story. I hope someone may be inspired thereby. I also hope that our dear one-eyed pilot will successfully apply the same principle to his spiritual life for the saving of his soul. ▲

The Bottle

by Mário de Moraes

A very close friend told me this moving story. It took place on one of the streetcars that used to carry passengers in the Marvelous City [Rio de Janeiro].

It was during the rush hour, when people were returning home from their jobs and the streetcar was headed for the Catete section of town. It was six o'clock and the bus was packed, with some passengers crowded onto the steps outside the bus. The

conductor was squeezing his way through this mass of people to collect fares from everyone, even those hanging on outside.

While he was going about his duties, he heard the pitiful cry of a child. He found the child in the arms of the mother, a middle-aged mother, who did her best to quiet the child giving it a bottle.

After a while the crying became disturbing. Those who were nearby tried to find out what the problem was.

“What’s the matter with your baby?”

“I don’t know.”

“It can’t be hungry because it’s taking the bottle.”

“That’s right.”

“Do you suppose it’s colic?”

“It might be.”

“Do you want me to hold the baby for a little bit?”

“No, but thank you anyways.”

The baby kept right on crying and from where my friend was hanging onto the bus, he was able to see everything that was going on.

By now everyone was noticing what was happening. Some of the mothers thought the baby must have an intestinal infection. There happened to be a doctor aboard who thought the baby might have a fever, as it looked sick.

The streetcar came to a stop and the mother arose to get off with her baby. Helpful hands steadied her so that she wouldn’t fall. During all this the rag that the mother had wrapped around the bottle slipped off and my friend saw that the bottle was empty. The child was crying from hunger. ▲

This & That

A time for sales. The Bible says there is a time for everything and on the Colony it seems to be a time to have sale. On May 22, Stanley & Kathy Holdeman had sale. They have been living in the States for some time and this will probably make it permanent. On June 5, Delton & Amy Holdeman sold their earthly goods at auction and will be moving back to the US. On June 12, Edna Loewen and her daughters had sale. They have been living in the US for some time. I understand that within a month or so another family will be having sale and moving to the US. Does this mean that everyone is going to be moving back to N America? Nope. There may be some more families moving back, but the majority of the people here wouldn’t even consider moving back.

A wedding. A strange one at that. For the first time in ages two young people got married whose parents are Americans. Eugene, son of Veril Koehn and Ileen Koehn, married Laurie, daughter of Calvin & Donna Hibner on June 6 at the Rio Verdinho Cong.

I promised to have something in this issue about the new settlement that is being

Brazil ¹⁶ News

established in the state of Roraima. The ones who are getting things started there haven't come back yet, so the report will have to wait until next month.

When listing the visitors last month, we goofed up and didn't mention Velma Boehs. She was here and we enjoyed having her.

On Sunday evening, May 23, the Rio Verdinho and Monte Alegre Congregations had a joint meeting at Rio Verdinho for a mission report given by two former Curitiba missionaries: Mervin Loewen and Nelson Unruh. At present there is no missionary in Curitiba. Kevin & Elizabeth Warkentin from the Rio Verdinho Cong. will be going to the Patos Mission to replace Milton & Cindy Loewen, whose term is up. Duane & Luciene Miller, also from Rio Verdinho, will be going to Goiânia as missionaries. Edinei & Janette Alves from the Monte Alegre Cong. will be going to Mozambique as missionaries. At present Brazil is supplying all of its own missionaries and picking up the tab. We enjoy immensely having missionaries from N America, but by having missionaries from Brazil, there are definite advantages in sending missionaries to the field who know the language. The same will be true of Edinei & Janete when they go to Mozambique.