

Brazil News



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Editorial

Black, Brown and Red

The Monte Alegre Congregation has two Portuguese Sunday School classes for the brethren (another two for the sisters), made up of Brazilians, Americans and one Briton. Needless to say, this provides excellent fuel for the generator of stimulating thoughts. In a recent lesson on the cultural aspect of our church society, the British brother, who isn't of Mennonite background, commented how that some enshrined customs and practices in the church are hard to understand.

The example was given of everyone wearing black shoes—and in the case of the men, black belts—to church. Should some brother come to church some bright Sunday morning with brown shoes and a brown belt, he would be hit by an avalanche of admonitions. Should he persist in preferring brown over black, his spiritual rating would plunge together with the avalanche.

The British brother also pointed out that he soon found out that Bibles must be black. All this made for an interesting discussion. An American brother, in an effort to not let things drift out too far in left field, came up with a bit of a quixotic analogy. He said that if a goat would get converted, it would probably feel an urge to take on some of the characteristics of the sheep with which it would henceforth congregate.

A Brazilian brother with an agile mind—and mouth—didn't miss a beat. He said, "When the Americans take the gospel to Africa, the blacks don't try to turn into whites." (Some chuckles followed—and this editorial was born.)

We seldom question or fear that which has always been part of our life. A number of years ago my wife and I visited a tucked-away fisherman's village on the ocean front in the state of São Paulo. What impressed me most were the little children playing in the surf. It was just as natural to them as it is for landlocked children in Kansas to play catch on the school ground. There were no mothers wildly yelling, "Get away from the ocean! The waves are going to carry you to sea and you'll drown." If I would have told

Brazil ² News

those children to be careful, that the ocean is dangerous, the effect would have been the same thing as telling a couple of children playing catch to be careful, that what they're doing is dangerous.

Another recollection comes from a visit made to the Arizona mission when a youth, quite a few moons ago. In a VW Kombi (that didn't have synchronized shifting) loaded to the gills, bro. Eryv Goossen took us up a steep, narrow road to a Hopi Indian village perched atop a small mountain with at places almost perpendicular sides. As we timidly gazed down one of the cliffs with no protection of any kind, someone asked a mother if this wasn't dangerous for their children. Her shrugged answer indicated she wondered what we were talking about. If a family raised in Kansas—or most any place in the world, for that matter—would have taken up residence in that Hopi village, the parents would doubtlessly have put their children on a leash, and even so had a nervous breakdown within 12 hours.

Undeniably, habits and customs that are part of our earliest memories are very, very real to us. So real, in fact, that we have a limited tolerance for any questioning or criticism. This “steadfastness” may be seen as a plus in our own circles, but it doesn't especially endear us to those who don't share our particular set of values.

When Min. Patrick Enike from Nigeria was here recently for revival meetings in the Rio Verde (town) Congregation, he remarked that the Mennonites here seem to be wearing uniforms. This would be especially true of the sisters, whose dress, we hasten to point out, is basically no different from that worn by sisters in N America. We were somewhat taken aback by this observation. Uniforms, we understand, are clothes of essentially one color and pattern. We have a wide variety of colors, prints and patterns.

Yet, it took but one look at Patrick's colorful, flowing garb, which he used most of the time he was here, to understand why he saw our clothes as quite conformist.

It is not the policy of BN to expose problems that should remain in Brazil. However, when the incoming tide from the north litters the beach here with “What's this we hear...?”, “It sounds like things are really bad...”, explanations can be in order.

It is true that the church in Brazil is going through a period of analysis. Needless to say, in some cases this analysis does not proceed from an overdose of sound thinking. In most cases, however, we feel sincerity in the questions that are being aired. The comments that follow are limited to those we feel are sincerely analyzing some established patterns, who believe in the church and pray for her prosperity.

To understand what is happening, we are going to view this time of analysis from a different perspective. We are going to assume that back in 1968, when the first N Americans migrated to central Brazil, unbeknown to the Americans, a group of Nigerian brethren would have settled in southern Brazil. (Yes, the Nigerian church was then in its infancy, but with a bit of imagination you can make the pieces fit.)

The years would have gone by and then in 2007 we would have discovered that in southern Brazil there were a number of congregations with about the same amount of members as in central Brazil. Of course, a jubilant get-to-know-each-other meeting would have been set. Facilities would have been rented half-way between the two communities. And then, on an appointed day, coincidentally at exactly the same time,

Brazil ³ News

the busses from southern and central Brazil would have met at the pre-arranged location.

Now, folks, if you have any imagination, put it in gear. The doors from the busses from Central Brazil open and three hundred and some Americans and Brazilians, all dressed in American garb, step down. The doors from the busses from the south open and three hundred and some Nigerians and Brazilians in Nigerian garb emerge. The Americans magnanimously say, “Isn’t it wonderful how there are no cultural boundaries in God’s church.” The Nigerians say, “They all look alike.” And the Brazilians say, “And now, are we going to be Americans or Nigerians?” Then a brave soul (who knows, the same one who spoke out in Sunday School), says in a loud stage whisper that ripples through the six hundred and some assembled Mennonites, “Or is it time we become Brazilians?”

Some chuckle...but not everyone. And soon no one. The idea that Brazilians should be Brazilians, just like Americans are Americans and Nigerians are Nigerians picks up steam. Among the Brazilians, at least. The Nigerians, with the diverse cultural background, pragmatically say, “Ido State, Osun State, Ekiti State, Brazil State...Why not?”

The Americans, on the other hand, are a bit uneasy. Isn’t American dress scriptural? Isn’t it decent and modest? Why are some Brazilians sisters dissatisfied with American dress? That’s why! Because it’s American. And so...?

A young Brazilian sister, lightskinned, tells me that when she goes shopping in town or meets strangers, they ask, “Oh, are you an American?” Her dress identifies her first as an American, and then, after explanations, as a Christian. Is she right or wrong in not appreciating being identified as an American? In searching for an answer, we ask: Why don’t Nigerians dress like the Americans who brought them the gospel?

So much for dress.

The analysis the church is undergoing in Brazil doesn’t center around dress. It centers around ideas and principles that we have grown up with and are just as real to us as black shoes, black belts and black Bibles. Except in a few situations, we aren’t viewing doctrinal issues. The issues are cultural.

Some of you will remember the battle cry of “Back to the Farm!” that was used some 50 years ago in an effort to revert the migration of farmers to the city. The farm, it was said, was more conducive to Christian living than the city, never mind that through the ages God’s people have lived mostly in villages and towns.

In the analytical process that today is present in the church in Brazil, an idea is emerging that the Mennonite faith is essentially a rural faith, not suited for urban survival...

There is a basis for this thinking. First of all, no American families have settled in town on a permanent basis. Secondly, as urbanites get converted, many of them are drawn into a vortex that inexorably shunts them to rural areas (read as: the Colony). While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this, it effectively strangles the growth of fledging mission posts or congregations.

A case in point is the congregation in Pirenópolis, near Brasília. It rapidly

Brazil ⁴ News

metamorphosed from a mission post to a vigorous congregation with their own elected minister and deacon. Exactly when the loaves and fishes should have begun to multiply, one by one they floated down the river to the Colony. These brothers and sisters have been a blessing to the central congregations. But their leaving has not been a blessing to the congregation in Pirenópolis. Unable to maintain their own school, their children are now studying in public schools. The little church building has become emptier and emptier, and unless there is a significant change, will probably soon be boarded up.

This is not a problem with a simple solution.

Culturally, there is a way that seemeth right unto man. Shoes, belts and Bibles should be black. And business meetings should be conducted by Robert's Rules of Order. In spite of the fact that Robert has no rules of order in Brazil and that the Brazilian way of conducting a meeting and keeping minutes is different, it has apparently never occurred to the Americans that there might be another way of making decisions and electing brothers and sisters to the different offices that would come more natural to Brazilians.

Black shoes, black belts and black Bibles. It's a sign of unity, someone says. Maybe. But when our herd of little sacred cows become the identifying mark of the church—a igreja Americana—then perhaps we should stop and take stock.

Yes, it is time. If you have followed the This & That's of this little paper, you will have noticed the amount of Americans leaving Brazil, and if you were living here, you would be alarmed by the amount of Brazilians leaving the church. Strange.

Lately I have asked different ones a simple little question: In general—there are exceptions to this, of course—do you feel that Americans are a bit more comfortable around Americans and Brazilians around Brazilians? The answer invariably is yes.

There are those who say that we should have neither an American nor a Brazilian culture, but rather a Mennonite culture. This makes for nice little speeches, but nice little speeches don't usually solve big problems. The truth of the matter is that what we call Mennonite culture, to a large degree, continues to be American culture.

We say that our cultures need to blend. There is some truth to that too. But truth must be based on facts. When a foreigner gets converted and becomes a member of the church in N America, does the congregation become Mexican, or Brazilian, or Haitian, or Nigerian...? Do the brethren begin wearing sombreros to church? And the sisters large shawls? Or is it expected that the Mexican, the Brazilian, the Haitian or the Nigerian assimilate the American way of life and dress? The answer is obvious.

We today must face facts in Brazil. By no means are the Americans to blame for everything. Nor are the Brazilians. But, as the Americans have taken the lead in establishing the church in Brazil, today they should take the lead in analyzing and accepting their share of the blame. Some smoke will doubtlessly drift heavenward as some sacred cows are placed on the altar.

By no means can it be said that no progress has been made. In our local congregation there is an air of change. A very positive air. Our school board today has a majority of Brazilian brethren. They are actively engaged in making the school a success. Changes are being made that involve some of the basic structure of our school. Yet, speaking with an

Brazil 5 News

American board member, he sees these changes as very positive and is working hand-in-hand with the Brazilians—while they take the lead.

Our publication board today has had Brazilian members for a number of years. Again, their contribution is helping open new doors and, as with the school board, they are working seamlessly with the American brethren. In fact, as I sit in on these meetings (as a worker), I see a beautiful picture of unity. The work is progressing.

It has become very clear that once the Brazilians see a green light indicating that their culture is appreciated, they get into the harness and pull as hard and do as well as anyone. It would have been good if this awakening could have come a number of years ago. I believe our losses would have been less.

One of our ministers has said that for the Brazilians to become active in the church, we are going to have to become willing to let them make mistakes. Amen. And I believe there will be a lot less mistakes than we might believe.

For the church to become firmly established in Brazil, we may have to wear brown shoes and belts and carry red Bibles. ▲

Such is life

Your Diploma, Please

I just read the following story, which I will translate from Portuguese. And then tell a few more that I remember:

HAMILTON NAKI, a 78 year old South African Negro, died some time ago. You will have read nothing about his death in your local papers or seen anything on TV. Yet, he played a tremendously important part in a historical event in the 20th Century. He was part of the team that successfully transplanted the first human heart in South Africa.

Even today, with heart transplants becoming almost routine, they nonetheless continue to be a very delicate procedure. Hamilton Naki was probably the second most important man on Dr. Christiaan Barnard's team. But, because Naki was black, not a word of his participation was leaked to the press, and so Dr. Barnard, a white, got all the laurels.

When Naki's picture was inadvertently published, the hospital quickly issued a note explaining that he was one of the cleaning men. Naki dropped out of school at 14 and was hired to do lawn work at the Cape Town medical school. A quick learner and extremely curious, he soon was called on to perform all sorts of odd jobs in the surgical division where white doctors worked with dogs and pigs in their experimental surgeries.

In the beginning he was responsible for cleaning the pens where the animals were kept. With the passing of time, he began assisting in the experimental surgeries. He showed such outstanding talent that Dr. Barnard made him part of his team.

This was a clear violation of South African laws. By law, Naki, a black, could

Brazil News

not help in surgeries of white patients, nor touch their blood. The hospital made an exception in his case, and thus Naki became an underground surgeon.

Soon Naki became a de facto professor, teaching white students, but because of being black, he earned the wage of a lab technician, the maximum the hospital could pay a black employee. He lived in a shanty without electricity or running water in the black section of town.

It wasn't until revocation of Apartheid that his merit was recognized and he was given an honorary medical degree. He never complained about the injustice that surrounded his life. ▲

ALTAMIRO DENTISTA. Forty years ago most of the dentists in Rio Verde (and I suspect most of Brazil) were untrained. Some of these “*practical*” *dentistas*, as they were called, were less than competent. Others, like Altamira the Dentist, as he was known, were as good, or better, than many of the dentists who had a diploma tacked to the wall of their office.

Altamiro worked 12 hour days, from approximately seven to seven. Some days, even more. When he would get to his office at seven in the morning, there could easily be 20 or 30 patients waiting. Some would have been there since four or five o'clock. Altamiro worked out of rented offices, seldom staying at the same place over a year. These offices were usually a tiny house with a couple of rooms he would rent in the residential section of town. One room would be his office and the other the waiting room, normally too small to hold all his patients. His dental chair was an old Army canvas field chair. Otherwise the room would be bare, except for a sink and a small table where he would keep his few instruments and a sterilizer.

How could Altamiro see 50 or more patients a day? As is usually the case in dental work, the bulk of his work was filling teeth. Except for rare cases, he would use no anesthesia. With his low-speed drill—the kind with the long arms and a round belt to run the bit—he would gently drill into the cavity. At the slightest flinch, he would stop, fill the cavity with medication. He would repeat this procedure for each cavity and then ask the patient to return in a day or two. By then the medication would have eaten into the decayed area and he would drill some more, until the first flinch, put in more stuff, and ask the patient to return. This procedure would be repeated until no decayed material remained. This could take up to four or five settings.

Altamiro's practice was not limited to fillings. He did extractions, root canals, made dentures, everything that the regular dentists did. What made his practice even more amazing was that he had no X-ray. Root canals were done strictly by feel, no mean accomplishment.

The amalgamate used in fillings was prepared in the palm of his hand. He would pour the proper amount of powdered alloy onto his hand, several drops of mercury, and then with the thumb of his other hand, kneed until thoroughly mixed.

The instruments used in extractions and root canals were sterilized. The others, a half dozen at the most, he would wash each time he washed his hands for the next patient.

Brazil News

Primitive? Maybe. But the truth is that his work held up just as well as the work of professionals. The amazing thing is that he equaled their work without X-ray and other equipment they used. He was our dentist when we first came to Brazil. In fact, I have a tooth with a root canal done by him some 35 years ago.

As more trained dentists came into town, they would report the “practical” dentists to the police and they would raid his office, confiscating his equipment. A week or two later they would release his equipment and he would set up in a different part of town. Today we have plenty of professional dentists in town to take care of everyone’s needs and the “practical” dentists are history... History, but an important part of the history of Rio Verde and many other Brazilian towns. ▲

JOÃO DE DEUS (JOHN OF GOD) is a “surgeon” who works in Abadiânia, a town about halfway between Goiânia and Brasília. João is no ordinary surgeon. And I add, those of you who have never been exposed to a foreign culture, will see this as a bunch of hocus-pocus. It’s possible that only foreign missionaries will give credence to this story.

João has never been to medical school, yet in his impeccably clean compound, he sees approximately 500 patients a day, many undergo surgery. Impossible! you say.

João is a spiritist, or spiritualist, depending on which word you prefer. When not in his office, he is an ordinary citizen with no medical skills. However, at 7:30 in the morning when he walks into his office, with over 300 patients already in the waiting room, he calls two of his assistants to his side and each one takes one of his hands. He begins to shake, his eyes roll, his arms and shoulders move spasmodically, as if a strong electric current were passing through his body. Suddenly he recomposes himself, not as João, but as Dr. José Valdivino, or as one of some 30 other doctors that he incorporates during this strange manifestation. He now has an arrogant look and speaks differently. Until 5:30 in the afternoon, he—now Dr. José Valdivino (or whichever other doctor)—will exercise his profession.

In the waiting room, workers were asking the patients to change into white gowns and to concentrate on their ailments, which helps the spirits to examine them and get together the necessary information to be healed, which is then transmitted to João.

The “surgeries” performed can be visible or invisible. In either case, no anesthesia is used. In the visible surgeries, which usually are cataracts or tumors, a knife is used that has not been sterilized. There is little or no blood. Depending on the size of the incision, a few stitches may be required. Most of the surgeries, however, are invisible. João places his hands over the area to be operated and moments later asks imperiously, “Where does it hurt?” Invariably the patients answer that the pain is gone.

When a prescription is needed, João rapidly writes an indecipherable scrawl on a piece of paper, which is then given to one his assistants to be translated. The medication to be taken consists of roots and herbs.

Interestingly, over half of João’s patients are middle- or upper-class foreigners from all parts of the world. He received a real publicity boost in 1991 when actress Shirley MacLaine paid him a visit and believes she was cured of a tumor.

Are João's cures real? Some obviously are emotional experiences. Everything indicates that his success rate is quite good. And so, is it an option for us? Never! Spiritism never has been and never will be of God. Nevertheless, it is a power that works miracles. Significantly, the Catholic Church makes no serious effort to discredit João's work—who considers himself a Catholic. While what João does is blatantly illegal, authorities pretend they don't notice what is going on. The matter, after all, isn't merely ethical, but also economical. Those patients of João's bring in a looooooot of money to a small town like Abadiânia. And money legalizes most anything. ▲

THE UROLOGIST. I read this story a number of years ago and unfortunately have lost the article. What I remember is that this "doctor" was a prominent specialist in a large Brazilian city, performing delicate urological surgeries. He would go to international conventions and return home with certificates. What he didn't have was a diploma proving he had gone to medical school. When the medical association discovered this, he was barred from further practice. His patients were furious, not because he was an impostor, but because they didn't want to lose their beloved doctor. ▲

DR. FRANK W. WILLIAMS. In BN issue 141, in an article entitled I Stand in Line in the Bank, I briefly tell about this born deceiver. I will reprint what was written as an introduction to Dr. Frank W. Abagnale (his real name):

If there is such a thing as a distinguished criminal, Frank W. Abagnale would fit that description. He was high-class, a gentleman, a lady's man, who didn't slink around in the shadows.

Always acting alone, out in the open, Abagnale managed to swindle Pan Am Airlines, banks, institutions and individuals out of some two million dollars by the time he turned 21.

If to love one's job is a virtue, then Abagnale wasn't entirely devoid of virtue. To walk openly, gentlemanly, walk into a bank with forged documents and minutes later (not two hours and fifteen minutes later, like some people) walk out with ten grand of cold cash, that was smilingly handed to him by unsuspecting bank officials, was an accomplishment akin to planting a flag on top of Mount Everest.

Abagnale didn't pull that one once or twice, but hundreds of times, with varying amounts of cash, all over the United States, all over Europe. Abagnale's favorite ruse was to pose as a Pan Am pilot in an impeccable uniform. This handsome teenager, who looked older than his actual age, soon found that when in uniform, his victims scanned his face closer than the false documents he presented. That is where his quick wit and angelic face shone like so many dollar signs.

Abagnale soon knew a lot more about what the long string of numbers on a check mean than most bank managers. Thus he would give a hot check in, say, New York, but only after altering the code to where it would be sent to California for compensation. He knew exactly how many days he would have before his first bouncers would make their way back. Until then, he would confidently go from bank

Brazil ⁹ News

to bank exchanging worthless pieces of paper for live cash. Then, he would skip the country and do a rerun of his act hundreds, or thousands, of miles away on a new set of victims.

Quick wit, honed by innumerable pinches, was Abagnale's greatest defense. Always operating under an alias, he once scribbled his right name and address on the back of a forged check. That evening he suddenly realized that he had carelessly cashed the check in a nearby bank. Knowing that the check would be sent out the next morning for compensation, Abagnale returned at opening time with a hyped up story about how he had cashed the wrong check. His plan was to return the money and get the check back before it was sent out.

He had cashed the check in uniform, and now, in civilian clothes, he wasn't recognized. He asked the bank official if someone had cashed a Pan Am check the previous afternoon. Yes, he was told, and the FBI had been notified...

Without missing a beat, Abagnale told the bank official, "Yes, that's why I'm here. I'm an FBI agent and need to see that check." He went on to explain that by law he would have to take the check with him, but would leave them a photocopy. Did they have a photocopier? Could he use it? He quickly took a copy of the front only, handed it to the official, and left the bank.

Five minutes later a legitimate FBI agent showed up to begin work on the case.

One day while in France, he was recognized by a flight attendant, who, knowing he was wanted by the police, quickly notified the pilot of her plane, who in turn notified the French police. He was arrested, tried, and sentenced to a year in prison. After six months he was released and sent to Sweden to stand trial for his forgeries in that country. The judge took a special interest in the case, and instead of sending him on to Italy, where he was wanted by the police, managed to send him back to the United States, which would avoid his being sent from country to country in Europe and standing trial, something that would drag out for years.

The judge went to where Abagnale was being held and in a singular gesture of kindness, told him he was going to put him aboard a non-stop international flight to New York. Since people don't usually flee from airplanes, he told him there would be no accompanying guards. The flight crew would be notified and he would ride first-class, near the cockpit, so that flight attendants could keep an eye on him. The FBI was notified and would be waiting to board the plane the moment the door opened, to take their man.

Abagnale boarded the plane, wandered about during the flight, but lo! when the door was opened at the destination and FBI agents came aboard, their man was not to be found.

The plane was a VC10 Viscount. Because of his broad experience as a Pan Am impostor, Abagnale was totally familiar with this plane, as he was with the Kennedy Airport. He knew that in one of the lavatories, there was a trap door just above the landing gear. He also knew that after landing, while taxiing to the terminal, at a certain point the plane would come to a near stop. And so, in the dead of night, as the flight was coming to an end, Abagnale locked himself in the lavatory, waited for the plane to slow down, opened the trap door and dropped three meters down to the tarmac. Once again he was free...

Frank W. Abagnale was always just one step ahead of the law. In yet another close shave, he was pulled over and questioned by the F.B.I. As usual, his quick wit saved him and authorities ended up apologizing to him for having inconvenienced such an honest man. Realizing his game might be about up, he quit forging checks and began living on the money he had stashed away in banks all over the nation. He ended up in Atlanta, where he decided to hang low for a while.

First of all, he had to rent an apartment, which was not only one of the nicest in Atlanta, but in the whole USA back those days. While filling out the application, he decided to use an alias for which he already had phony documents: Frank W. Williams. The lady behind the desk asked for his profession. Knowing that putting down airline pilot could easily complicate things for him, on the spur of the moment he said, medical doctor. Inquisitive, the woman asked, “What kind of doctor are you?” Just that quick he selected his speciality: “A pediatrician.”

As the woman counted the twenty four 100 dollar bills, she smiled, “It will be nice having you with us, Dr. Williams. Thus began a new chapter in the life of Frank W. Abagnale.

If Frank believed he would be able to relax in a new life of anonymity, he soon discovered it would be otherwise. Word quickly spread about the handsome new physician who was living in the River Bend apartments. He was soon called Doc by all and was frequently asked what to do about a pain in the foot, in the stomach, or some other place. With his fertile imagine he was able to squirm out of these situations quite easily. But then one day it happened. The doorbell rang and a distinguished looking gentlemen in his middle fifties was smiling at him.

“Dr. Williams?” he asked, and without waiting for a response continued, “I’m Dr. Willis Granger, chief resident pediatrician of Smithers Pediatric Institute and General Hospital in Marietta.”

Frank was aware that the thin ice he was skating on was rapidly melting. As courtesy demanded, he asked Dr. Granger to come in. They sat down. And as conversation probably usually begins between doctors who are meeting for the first time, Dr. Granger asked, “Where did you go to school?”

The only medical school Frank knew about was Columbia University in New York, so that is where he got his training.

“A great school. Where did you serve your internship?”

Frank knew that internships were done in hospitals and at the moment the only hospital he could remember was Harbor Children’s Hospital in Los Angeles.

“Hey, terrific!”

Aware that his lucky answers couldn’t go on forever, Frank was relieved when Dr. Granger began talking about his own responsibilities. Further encounters proved to be less complicated. They discussed everything under the sun, especially women, but nothing professional.

Then one day Dr. Granger invited Frank to visit the pediatric hospital. This was an enchanting experience as he was introduced to dozens of doctors and nurses as Dr. Williams. It felt good. Really good. He began dating the nurses.

Brazil News

After that he made frequent visits to the hospital. On one of these visits, as he was leaving, Mr. John Colter, the hospital administrator, asked to speak to Frank. Immediately he began seeing little red flags. After he was seated, the administrator began, “Dr. Williams, I want to ask you for a very big favor, a favor I have no right to ask.”

He went on to explain that the resident who supervised the midnight to eight shift, with seven interns and 40 nurses, would have to be gone for 10 days and he had no one to replace him temporarily. Would he, Dr. Williams, be willing to do so?

Frank told him he would be glad to do it, but that it would be impossible. He didn’t have a license to practice in the state of Georgia. No problem, no problem. He wouldn’t have to do anything; just be there as the law required.

Reason told Frank he should refuse, but this was another challenge in life. And so he accepted. A day later he was presented a letter from the Georgia state medical board authorizing him to practice medicine in Georgia with his California medical certificate.

The ten days Frank was to be the head of the pediatric ward turned out to be more than ten months. From day one he realized the secret to his profession would be to bluff his way. He gave the impression of being a brilliant, scatterbrained doctor. Everyone loved him. When called in on a difficult case, he would ask the intern seeing the patient, “What do you think ought to be done?” After being told, Dr. Williams would say, “It sounds good to me; go ahead with your treatment.”

One night a nurse rushed up to Frank: “Come quick, we have a blue baby in 608.” He had no idea what a blue baby was, so he replied, “Just a moment! Just a moment! I’ve got a green baby in 609 that I have to see first.” After the nurse had left, he quickly got out his pocket dictionary of medical terms and discovered that a blue baby was indeed a serious emergency. When he reached 608, an intern had rigged up an oxygen tent and all Frank had to do was compliment him on his presence of mind.

Everything indicates that “Dr. Williams” spent nearly a year as chief resident in the pediatric department without ever raising a serious suspicion. He left with his reputation intact. The most beloved resident of all times. ▲

ONE MORE STORY. Over 25 years ago when I opened a feed and veterinary supply store in Rio Verde, there were only a couple of vets in town and they had no interest in taking care of pets. So when I began seeing the local dogs and cats, they were all too happy to send me their patients. I soon had a thriving practice going.

Then one day a new vet came to town set up a small animals clinic. Pretty quick I got a call from the *Delegado de Policia* saying he wanted to see me in his office. He asked if it was true that I was seeing pets in my store. I told him it was. He then got out a document listing all the different types of surgery I did and wanted to know if that was correct. I told him it was. He told me what I was doing was illegal and that I would have to stop immediately. No problem, I told him. And that was that.

Several days later a military policeman came to the store with his little dog. I explained to him that his superior had just prohibited me from taking care of small animals. Undaunted, he said, “But you will be taking care of my little dog.”

“I’m sorry, but I can’t.”

His voice became steely. “You are going to take care of this dog, do you understand?”

“I’m sorry.”

He didn’t haul me in to police headquarters. I almost wish he would have. It would have made an interesting story to be arrested for obeying the law.

I had other similar experiences, not with policemen, in which people left in a huff because I refused to see their pets. ▲

Readers Contribute

Euro-English

The European Commission has just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the European Union rather than German, which was the other possibility. As part of the negotiations, the British Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a 5-year phase-in plan that would become known as “Euro-English”.

In the first year, “s” will replace the soft “c”. Certainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard “c” will be dropped in favour of “k”. This should klear up konfusion, and keyboards kan have one less letter. There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year when the troublesome “ph” will be replaced with “f”. This will make words like fotograf 20% shorter

In the 3rd year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan be expekted to reach the stage where! more komplikated changes are possible. Governments will enkourage the removal of double letters which have always ben a deterrent to akurate speling. Also, al wil agre that the horibl mes of the silent “e” in the languag is disgrasful and it should go away.

By the 4th yer people wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing “th” with “z” and “w” with “v”.

During ze fi fz yer, ze unesesary “o” kan be dropd from vords kontaining “ou” and aft er ziz fi fz yer, ve vil hav a reil sensibl riten styl. Zer vil be no mor trubl or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech oza. Ze drem of a united urop vil finali kum tru.

Und eft er ze fi fz yer, ve vil al be speking German like zey vunted in ze forst plas. If zis mad you smil, pleas pas on to oza pepl. ▲

Great Predictions By Wise Minds

“Man will never reach the moon regardless of all future scientific advances.” —Dr. Lee DeForest, “Father of Radio & Grandfather of Television.”

“The bomb will never go off. I speak as an expert in explosives.” —Admiral William Leahy, US Atomic Bomb Project.

Brazil ¹³ News

“There is no likelihood man can ever tap the power of the atom.” —Robert Millikan, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1923.

“Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons.” —Popular Mechanics, forecasting the relentless march of science, 1949.

“I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.” —Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943.

“I have traveled the length and breadth of this country and talked with the best people, and I can assure you that data processing is a fad that won’t last out the year.” —The editor in charge of business books for Prentice Hall, 1957.

“But what is it good for?” —Engineer at the Advanced Computing Systems Division of IBM, 1968, commenting on the microchip.

“640K ought to be enough for anybody.” —Bill Gates, 1981

“This ‘telephone’ has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us.” —Western Union internal memo, 1876. “The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?” —David Sarnoff’s associates in response to his urgings for investment in the radio in the 1920s.

“The concept is interesting and well-formed, but in order to earn better than a ‘C,’ the idea must be feasible.” —A Yale University management professor in response to Fred Smith’s paper proposing reliable overnight delivery service. (Smith went on to found Federal Express Corp.)

“I’m just glad it’ll be Clark Gable who’s falling on his face and not Gary Cooper,” —Gary Cooper on his decision not to take the leading role in “Gone With The Wind.”

“A cookie store is a bad idea. Besides, the market research reports say America likes crispy cookies, not soft and chewy cookies like you make.” —Response to Debbi Fields’ idea of starting Mrs. Fields’ Cookies.

“We don’t like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out.” —Decca Recording Co. rejecting the Beatles, 1962.

“Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible.” —Lord Kelvin, president, Royal Society, 1895.

“If I had thought about it, I wouldn’t have done the experiment. The literature was full of examples that said you can’t do this,” —Spencer Silver on the work that led to the unique adhesives for 3-M “Post-It” Notepads.

“Drill for oil? You mean drill into the ground to try and find oil? You’re crazy.” —Drillers who Edwin L. Drake tried to enlist to his project to drill for oil in 1859.

“Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau.” —Irving Fisher, Professor of Economics, Yale University, 1929.

“Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value.” —Marechal Ferdinand Foch, Professor of Strategy, Ecole Superieure de Guerre, France.

“Everything that can be invented has been invented,” —Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, US Office of Patents, 1899.

“The super computer is technologically impossible. It would take all of the water

that flows over Niagara Falls to cool the heat generated by the number of vacuum tubes required.” —Professor of Electrical Engineering, New York University.

“I don’t know what use any one could find for a machine that would make copies of documents. It certainly couldn’t be a feasible business by itself.” — the head of IBM, refusing to back the idea, forcing the inventor to found Xerox.

“Louis Pasteur’s theory of germs is ridiculous fiction.” —Pierre Pacht, Professor of Physiology at Toulouse, 1872 .

“The abdomen, the chest, and the brain will forever be shut from the intrusion of the wise and humane surgeon.” —Sir John Eric Ericksen, British surgeon, appointed Surgeon-Extraordinary to Queen Victoria 1873.

And last but not least... “There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.” —Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977. ▲

The weather

Late Rainy Season

Tropical climates don’t have well-defined seasons like in temperate zones. For most Brazilians there are only two seasons: the rainy season and the dry season. For farmers the beginning of the rainy season is the beginning of a new growing season. Normally rains begin during the last half of September. This year they have begun toward the end of October. Instead of having corn a foot and a half tall, farmers are just now beginning to plant. Fortunately, with no-till farming, a lot of acres can be planted in a short time. The prospects of a good crop are still good. ▲