

Brazil News



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Editorial

Lackofin Terest

A strange name, admittedly, but then Lackofin, or Lucky, as he was known, had a strange trait. Very strange.

When Lucky was just a little fellow, his mother noticed something different about him. Unlike her other children, he never begged to go along when she went shopping. When it didn't work for him to stay home, or with his grandparents who lived across the street, he would disappointedly go along. Invariably he would ask to stay in the car while his mother did her business. Unless she planned on being gone for just a few minutes, he was expected to accompany her.

Mothers are often frustrated, sometimes almost to desperation, by children who want everything they see in a store. Every chance they get, they sneak off and head directly for the toy section. Entranced, they wander about, totally oblivious to the rest of the world, and more specifically, to what mom might be thinking.

Not Lucky. He wasn't interested in a solitary thing in the store. He would dutifully follow his mother around the store and about the only comment he would ever make was a wistful, "Mom, are you about done shopping?"

At home Lucky was a normal child. He got along well with his siblings. He was an obedient little chap who enjoyed helping his parents with whatever his little hands could do. He enjoyed playing games. Once he began going to school, he was liked by his teachers and playmates. He made good grades and was always a good sport when playing games at recess.

Lucky's parents worried about his strange apathy to stores. Sometimes they would take him to the toy department and offer to buy him any toy that would fit his fancy. Knowing that his parents would be disappointed if he didn't look around, he would perfunctorily give the shelves a once-over and say, "Really, I didn't see anything that interested me." Or maybe, strictly for political considerations, he would point to a toy—

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any toy—and say, “That would be tops.” His languorous voice said what his words didn’t: If it makes you happy, go ahead and buy it.

Lucky turned teen. He was well liked by his peers. In fact, few of them were even aware of his idiosyncratic behavior.

Lucky got married to a nice girl from another congregation in a distant state. As fate would have it, her favorite pastime was spending an afternoon or evening in a mall, just ambling around. Often she would go home without having spent a cent, but as happy as if she had spent a thousand dollars. When she would come home from her job up tight, she would call her younger sister and together they would head to the mall, to unwind.

During their honeymoon, every time they stopped at a service station, Lucky’s wife would head directly for the quick shop. Ecstatically she would show him all the interesting items on the shelves. He tried to act interested, but on about the third stop she couldn’t help but notice his less than enthusiastic response to her “Oh! Look at this!” or “How clever!”

Once married life settled into a routine, a tacit agreement was reached: She would continue her outings to the mall, alone; and he would stay home, alone.

This awkward solution to Lucky’s unusual problem might have succeeded, if it wouldn’t have been for its secondary effects. Lucky’s wife grew up believing that a penny saved is a penny earned. In her expeditions to the mall and other stores, even though she often didn’t buy anything, she knew where the best prices were. So, if she needed a new pressure cooker, for example, she knew exactly where she could get it the cheapest.

Not Lucky. If he needed a new pickup tire, he would head to the closest store that sold tires, walk in and tell the salesman, “Set me up with a 16" tire for my pickup.”

At home his wife would ask, “How much did you pay for that new tire?” He would tell her and then she would ask, “Why didn’t you go to the Farm Center? They had their entire stock of tires marked down 30 percent.”

Lucky would shrug his shoulders. It was worth paying an extra 10 or 15 dollars to not have to shop around.

When Lucky needed to buy a new tractor, he might lose several thousand dollars because of his aversion to stores and to shopping around. Because of his strange way of doing business, money never seemed to go around. When his wife’s old vacuum sweeper burned out, she was told, “Honey, we’re plumb out of money. Try to get along as best you can with a broom.”

One day when a close friend of Lucky’s wife asked her why they didn’t seem to be getting ahead financially, she answered, “Lack of interest.”

Some fiction is true to life; you can fit yourself into the plot and hitch a ride. Other times this isn’t possible; you sort of stand to a side and watch the plot whiz by. This little story we just made up about Lucky would fit the latter description. It’s hard to believe that someone could actually be totally disinterested in stores and detest going shopping.

Unfortunately, the little piece of fiction you just read may not be quite as far out as

you would like to believe. In fact, we might all be appalled to know how many in our midst are afflicted by the lack-of-interest syndrome.

This world is full of interesting places, things and happenings. Even for those of us who don't have television, through magazines and newspapers we can keep up to date on current events. With rapid and economical transportation, we are able to be present at many important happenings. Weddings, reunions and funerals are just a ticket away.

On a more local level, especially for youth, there are enough activities for nine evenings a week. Planning a week isn't so much a matter of deciding what *to* do, as to agonizingly decide what *not* to do.

When the apostle Paul visited Athens and bumped into idols at every turn, he singled out one of them, the *unknown god*, and erected a sermon on it.

We today would like to believe that idolatry is a pagan's plague, that we would never, never stoop to heathen behavior. Yet one cannot help but wonder what the apostle's message would be to us. Would he say, "As I walked among you, I found many altars with this inscription, 'The god of activities.'...?"

Through the ages the enemy has devised a host of idols, tailored to the exact weaknesses of God's people. Each era there have been specific idols. A rapid reading of the history of the judges and kings in the Old Testament can envelop one in a shroud of gloom. Even after reminding ourselves that the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out, we find it difficult to understand how quickly the people could slip into idolatry. Such ridiculous idolatry. If some morning we would find a dozen of their idols lined up in our back yard, we would turn up our nose to every one of them. Temptation zero.

Similarly, if today's god, the god of activities, could have been placed in the backyard of the Old Testament people, without exception they would have probably turned a cold shoulder. Such a ridiculous idol.

The idol of activities will probably be listed in the annals of eternity (if remembrance of such things will exist) as subtlest of all idols. When the wisest man who ever lived began worshipping his wife's idols, he knew exactly what he was doing. We can be sure he was never heard to exclaim, "Would you believe? I've been worshipping this idol for a year and didn't know it!" Back those days an idol was an idol, a god was a god. And God was God. He was I AM. No confusing.

The idol, or god, of activities is space age; a virtual god, if you please. It is nothing more and nothing less than an overplay of a virtue. The Bible commands us, in no uncertain terms, to keep busy, or shall we say, to have activities. So when the idea of turning a virtue into an idol hit the drawing board, the evil one knew he had a winner.

A winner it is. For him. But for us, a deadly idol. It is this god, the god of activities, that saps our interest in that which is eternal.

It is the god of activities, of being gone every evening of the week, that primes us for sitting through a sermon straight from heaven, and then, after the final amen, turning around and saying to the brother at our side, "How much rain did you have last night?"

It is the god of activities that makes us work ourselves to a frazzle to keep our bank balance from turning red, that severs our spiritual antenna so that we can't hear the call to service.

It is the god of activities, of having too many irons in the fire, that makes us willing to give money to the church, so that we won't have to give time.

It is the god of activities, the same god that makes young people wish a week had nine evenings, that makes the Bible so dry.

It is the god of activities, the god of personal interests and hobbies, that sweeps over the soul like a hot wind, parching the precious acre to where spiritual seeds die before they sprout.

It is the god of activities, of having stacks of literature at our disposal, that make church literature unsuitable for 21st century reading.

It is the god of activities that is soundlessly killing, stealing and destroying some of the best talents in our midst.

Unlike the idols of the past that caused men to bow their knees before them, the god of activities permits its subjects to stand up straight and act like everything is okay. And to sincerely believe that everything is okay.

Lucky could go into a store and see candy bars, but feel no hunger; see toys, but feel no desire; see an implement he needed, but have no desire to take it home. We say that Lucky was a strange fellow.

But what about us, who can walk into the Holy of Holies, and not be touched? Who can read the Sacred Writ and not be moved? Who can kneel to pray and have nothing to say (beyond a prerecorded message)? Who can sit through Sunday School and worship service and not be fed?

Do you suppose that on the final day God will turn some to the left for lack of interest? ▲

Learning About Brazil

Population

The official estimate of the population in Brazil in 1998 was 161,790,311. Now let's do a quick review of the demographic growth during the last century and a quarter.

1872	9,930,478
1890	14,333,915
1900	17,438,434
1920	30,635,605
1940	41,236,315
1950	51,944,397
1960	70,191,370
1970	93,139,037
1980	119,002,706
1991	146,825,475
1997	157,079,573

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The annual rate of growth is 1.38%. In 1970 couples had an average of 5.4 children. In 1996 this was down to 2.3.

In 1980 there were 98.74 men for every one hundred women. In 1991 that number dropped to 97.50, and in 1996 to 97.26. In the Central West region where we live, that figure stands at 100.16 men for a hundred women. (This last Sunday, at the Monte Alegre Congregation, there were 20 young men in the youth boy's Sunday School class, and 20 girls in the youth girl's class. Statistically we're right on course.)

In 1980, 14.65% of the heads of homes were women. In 1991 that rose to 18.12%, and in 1996 to 20.81%. This is nothing to brag about.

Age-wise, Brazil is a relatively young country, although things are changing, as can be seen in the following figures:

In 1940, 55.42% of the population was in the 0-19 age bracket. In 1996 that number dropped to 42.16%

In 1940, 42.58% of the population was in the 20-59 age bracket. In 1996 that number had risen to 49.69%

In 1940, 4.5% of the population was 60 or over. In 1996 this had risen to 7.89%

Just a little comment on this. When we travel to N America, one of the things that really get my attention is the amount of people, men and women, 60 years and older who remain on the work force. In one of the ironies of third world countries, here a lot of people are retired by the time they hit 50. It used to be that the mean age of workers in banks was something like 25. Today that would probably be between 30 and 35. Congress has recently enacted legislation that will bring the retirement age up to 60.

At any rate, in shopping malls, restaurants, etc. here in Brazil, one sees far less senior citizens than in N America. Combining the early retirements and the longer life expectancy, Brazil's Social Security system is totally inadequate and unprepared for the load it will soon have to bear.

When we moved to Brazil, divorce was non-existent. This was due to a strong Catholic lobby that countered all attempts by congress to introduce legislation that would permit divorce. The fact that there was no divorce didn't hold families together. Human flesh isn't strong enough to hold together two people who no longer love each other. The legal solution to this problem was to get a legal separation, even though it didn't permit remarriage. The practical solution was to find a new partner (which I believe in most cases had already been found at the time of the separation) and be joined in...well, by a contract.

This legally binding contract would set in order the financial aspect of the marriage. Totally contrary to all the teachings of the Catholic church, a couple, in which one or both had been married before, would seek out the priest and explain their dilemma, ending up with their deep desire to be united as man and wife in his presence. At least in some cases, the priest would be moved by their pleas and make a way. The bride and the groom would make up their contract and get it to the priest before the wedding began. A normal wedding would then be held, except for one small detail. When they would come to the part of the ceremony in which the papers required by civil law to make them man and wife, they would sign the contract surreptitiously placed on the altar by the priest.

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Today divorce is legal and can be followed by one remarriage, which for today's standards really is quite tightfisted. But on the other hand it isn't, as the following statistics show, more and more people aren't even going to the bother of getting married.

The numbers given are in thousands.

Year	Marriages	Separations	Divorces
1986	1,007.4	77.9	31.7
1987	930.8	86.5	31.3
1988	951.2	91.4	34.0
1989	827.9	79.1	67.1
1990	777.4	70.4	78.2
1991	743.4	77.6	82.6
1992	748.0	82.2	88.6
1993	747.2	87.8	94.8
1994	763.1	86.0	95.9
1995	734.0	88.1	99.8

Now we get to the color of Brazilians, here divided by the five regions (which we will review in a future issue). We live in the Central West area.

Region	<i>white</i>	<i>black</i>	<i>brown</i>	<i>yellow</i>	<i>red</i>
North	28.5	3.7	67.2	0.4	0.2
Northeast	30.6	6.1	62.9	0.1	0.2
Southeast	65.4	7.4	26.5	0.6	0.1
South	85.9	3.1	10.5	0.4	0.1
C. West	48.3	4.0	46.6	0.6	0.5
Total	55.2	6.0	38.2	0.4	0.2



Então a aeromoça me perguntou se eu estava sentindo falta de ar. Eu lhe respondi: “Não, minha filha, estou sentindo é falta de terra!”

—Milton Campos, político mineiro

BN Tour

An Ambitious Tour Group

Several days before BN Tour IV arrived, my fax came to life in the office. The short little message that stared me in the face told me things would soon become interesting.

Dear Mr. Editor-Becker

We just wanted to throw in our hat before we arrive. We are very anxious to visit you expatriates in your newfound land of promise.

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Please remember we come bearing scars of the old country and are kind of set in our ways, still loyal to the mother country, the home of the brave and land of the free. However, we come with great anticipation and open minds, trusting time, distance and exposure to your enclave in the southern hemisphere has not outdistanced us to any great degree.

If you would be so kind as to let us visit you all, we will greatly appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Brazil Tour Member

E. E. Schmidt

BN Tour IV was made up of 24 people from 5 different states and Canada.

Canada—Gerald & Audrey Toews.

Nebraska—Albert & Violet Baerg; Lee & Carol Nikkel and dau. Elizabeth; Melodi Ensz; Irene Giesbrecht.

Texas—Leonard & Vada Friesen.

Mississippi—John & Janet Jost; Eldon & Winifred Schmidt; Pete & Georgerene Unruh.

Louisiana—Charles & Beth Koehn and children Johathan and Melissa.

Kansas—Jerrell & Alfrieda Nightingale and son Jared

To say the least, this was an adventurous bunch, determined to pack as much into their stay as possible. For some this meant a land/air trip to the colony in Mato Grosso, a bus trip to Iguazu Falls, and visiting around on the Colony in Rio Verde. For others it was all this, plus a trip to Manaus, to see the Amazon river and jungle.

We shall now turn the meeting over to Vada Friesen, who will give us her report of the trip.

We have just finished a very interesting tour of Brazil, enjoying the beautiful rolling green countryside. We were nine couples, one widow and five young people—two boys and three girls. After meeting in Miami, we flew overnight on Vasp Airlines to São Paulo, and then on to Goiânia. Laura Costa, a sister from Rio Verde, greeted us as we disembarked and welcomed us to Brazil. There was a bus waiting to take us to Rio Verde. Since it was nearly 2:00 p.m. by the time we got there, the bus stopped at the Panelão restaurant, where we had our first Brazilian meal with Guaraná to drink.

It was around 3:30 p.m., on Tuesday, when we arrived at the Monte Alegre school, where our hosts were waiting to pick us up. The school children were all lined up in the breezeway, together with their teachers, to sing us a welcome song, the Brazilian version of This Land Is Your Land.

We soon realized we were in a tropical country when we saw emus (ostriches) running wild, monkeys crossing a bridge, toucans and parrots flying around. We listened to stories of anteaters on the front porch and tapirs in the woods in back of the house. We saw the scars on the foot of a young man who had had a close brush with an anaconda.

On Wednesday evening there was a welcome supper for us at the Rio Verdinho

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social hall. Our taste buds had to adjust to the Brazilian menu, which invariably included rice and beans. A typical desert was a custard made with brown sugar sauce. Then there was always lots of fresh fruit. We especially enjoyed the time we spent becoming acquainted with the brothers and sisters from this congregation.

Thursday, about midmorning, seven of us couples left for the colony in Mato Grosso in two vans, one belonging to Daniel Holdeman and the other rented. We drove over slushy red dirt roads, because it was raining, and through Indian territory. The pavement was full of potholes. Georgarene says, "I believe I could have lived my life without this excitement." This experience gave us a new respect for the missionary.

We spent the night in the town of Primavera, which is only 12 years old. We were amazed at the huge breakfast they served us in the hotel. We did find out, though, that we had to pay for the snacks in the fridge in our rooms.

The next morning two planes were waiting to fly us the rest of the way to the settlement, a 45 minute flight in twin-engine planes. One of the planes had to make two flights. Since it could haul only five passengers, one of the couples had to split up. John & Janet Jost were willing to do this.

Soon after the first load was dropped on the airstrip near the settlement, Dennis Kramer appeared to welcome us and serve us a tiny cup of strong *cafézinho*. Others came to visit with us until the rest arrived.

We piled into pickup trucks to go to Glenn & Elizabeth Hibners, where we drew names to see where we would be staying. This family would also be responsible for showing us around.

We saw the waterwheel in the spring that pumped water for some of the homes. They showed us the church and the school. Dete, Mrs. Stephen Kramer, let us taste a strange fruit that is used to flavor rice. Freda, Mrs. Dennis Kramer, made *pastelão*, sort of like meat-filled half-moon pies.

Antônio Carlos, a Brazilian brother, gave us rides with his horse and cart.

We had a basket supper at Glenn Hibners. The meal was delicious. The dishes are scrubbed with a suds filled nylon dish rag and then rinsed with cold water. After supper the ladies visited on the porch. Daniel Holdeman got the youth together and sang with them. It was a special time of fellowship for all of us. We wouldn't have wanted to have missed this just because of the bad roads.

The next morning many came to the airstrip to see us off. Marlene, Mrs. Dan Kramer, gave us each a small package of candy made with sweetened condensed milk.

On the return trip, it is Pete and Georgarene who are willing to separate for 45 minutes. We miss the red slush road on the way back and the road doesn't seem as long.

We went to church at the Monte Alegre Congregation on Sunday morning. The older sisters have plenty of room for the Sunday School class, seated in a large circle on the front porch. We enjoyed the sermon by Min. Arlo Hibner.

We had a carry-in meal at the Monte Alegre social hall, where we got to learn to know each other. Charles & Beth Koehn went to town with some other brethren to attend the funeral of a Brazilian lady, and then stayed for the evening service, which

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was all in Portuguese. Others went to the Rio Verdinho Congregation for evening service, which was a C.E. service, the topic being, The Value of a Soul.

Tuesday morning our group met at the Monte Alegre social hall at 4:30 to board the bus that was waiting to take us to Iguaçú Falls, on the border with Argentina and Paraguay. It was a 40 passenger bus, so beside the 24 of us from the tour group, 16 from the Colony also went along: Adejenes & Aparecida Lima (he is the recently ordained deacon from the M.A. Cong.), Stan & Kathy Holdeman and three children, Kevin & Elizabeth Warkentin, Ann Miller, and six youth: Delton Holdeman, Robert Warkentin, Sara Passos, Keila Souto, Yvonne Martin and Wanda Schultz.

We arrived at the Florença Hotel in Foz de Iguaçú at 2:30, Wednesday morning. We had our meals at restaurants that were prepared for large bunches. Once we stopped at a McDonalds and ordered ten each of four different meals and then ate on the bus.

Iguaçú Falls is one of the seven natural wonders of the world. It is simply fantastic!

We toured the Brazil side of the falls the first day. It has well over 200 falls. Then we took a boat ride below the falls, getting soppin' wet. We had a quick lunch at McDonalds and then drove to the Itaipu hydroelectric plant, which is the largest in the world.

The next day we had to get an Argentine bus to take us to the Argentina side. We took a boat to look at the Devil's Throat, where the water swirls into a hole. Then we went on the higher and lower walks. Some of the group went down a bunch of steps, across to a little island, to view the falls. Melodi lost her glasses there.

We went across the bridge to the Paraguay side to shop. It was pouring down rain and when we wanted to walk across the street, bags of trash and all sorts of garbage came swirling down the street.

We stopped at a grocery store before we went to the hotel and bought a bunch of fresh fruit for our supper. The evening before we had pizza delivered to the hotel. There was a place in back with tables where we could eat.

The next morning we left at 8:00 o'clock to go back. We stopped at a few roadside shopping places. Towards evening we needed something to do, so some gave riddles, some told how they met their spouses and other experiences. The youth made up a C.E. program. At 11:00 p.m. we stopped at a McDonalds.

We arrived at the Colony at 8:00 the following morning. Saturday was spent doing some final visiting.

Sunday morning we listened to a sermon at the Monte Alegre church by Min. Mark Loewen on experiences in our lives, the wind and the spirit, our feelings and faith. The service was shortened so that the tour could leave early and get to the airport on time. We had lunch at the Panelão Restaurant in Rio Verde and then continued on our way to Goiânia.

It's a trip we will never forget, thanks to our brethren in Brazil who went all out for us.

We hope more of you people will tell about your experiences to both Mato Grosso and Iguaçú Falls, as well as you folks who went on to Manaus.

Now here's one of the riddles that Georgarene made up.

What is red on green, life unseen?

(Just a hint: The answer can frequently be found in the Brazilian countryside. Find the answer in the next issue of BN.)

The School Mailbox

Our Expedition

[I received the following report from Rosie, Stephen & Dete Kramer's daughter, an 8th grader, who studies in the Von Den Stein School, on the settlement in Mato Grosso.]

Friday, the 7th of January, was an extra ordinary day! Our neighbors, Brianezi, had a spray plane spraying foliar fertilizer. The plane kept us from concentrating on our school work. So at art time Miss Elaine went down to our place where Uncle Dave was helping cut up a pig. She asked him if we could go up to Brianezi's to watch the airplane. He said we could. My Dad took us in our pickup. As we were going there we saw it take off. When we got there my Dad asked Lair (straw-boss) if we could watch. He said we could so we went up ahead where they put foliar fertilizer and water in the plane. We watched them mix the fertilizer and some water with a chainsaw and a beater on the end of it! When the airplane would take off all the men would have to turn their backs to the plane because it would throw dirt in their faces.

After awhile the airplane got closer to the edge of the field, so we had to move further down the edge of the field. Soon after we were at the other end of the field a wasp came and stung Miss Kramer on her ear. It got beat red!

The pilot waved and blinked his lights at us when he flew by to land.

Then we headed back to school, got our things and went home. ▲

A Brazilian Sister Writes

by Valdinéia Rufina Souza Costa

My Conversion Experience

I want to share with all of you that which God has done in my life. I hope that my experience may help someone else to be saved.

My childhood was very turbulent. My mother was constantly mistreated by my dad, and there was nothing I could do to help her. This made me rebellious.

When I turned 18, I went to Goiânia and got myself a job as a nurse in a hospital. Everything was going real well, and then one day I received a call and was told that my

mother was very sick. I dropped everything and came back home, where I spent two months with her in the hospital. After this my life was filled with sorrow and anguish again. I felt so lost and had no idea what I should do with my life.

One day my cousin, who lives in Rio Verde, invited me to spend a few days in her home. It was there I met a young man who began to show interest in me. We began to go steady and soon after I moved in with him. For a short time we were happy, but then we began to fight. I was very jealous and feisty, and he had a violent nature. Life for me became a torment.

We both began to work for a doctor and his wife, he as a private chauffeur and I as a maid. We already had our first child.

This doctor and his wife helped us a lot. They were the first ones to talk to us about the love of God. They invited us to begin attending their church. For a while I believed that I was on the right track. My husband and I were baptized in that church, but nothing changed in my life. That empty feeling never left me.

I had a deep desire to know more about God and His ways, but I still didn't know the truth. The doctor's wife had told me about the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, so I decided to go to one of their services. The moment I stepped in the door, I noticed something different. What impressed me the most was the love the sisters showed me.

Just a short time later God sent someone from the church to be my neighbor. It was sister Alice, who helped me greatly to know the love of God. But during that time, even though we fought a lot, I worshipped my husband to the point where I had him above all else in my life. And since he didn't agree with the church's doctrines, I gave up trying to be a Christian.

This gave the devil a new grip on my life. In one of our fights, he fired at me with his revolver. The bullet just grazed me. I believe it was God who delivered me from death.

The sister who lived in my neighborhood moved to another town and once again I felt so alone. Now there was no one to give me a word of encouragement, but God was good and sent me another sister to be my neighbor. She helped me to see that the devil was having the victory in my life, but that God was just waiting to forgive my sins, that everything depended on me. She explained that I had to make a full surrender. I always went to church, but at the same time kept on doing that which was evil, because that was what made my husband happy. I would dye my hair, use makeup, wear stylish clothes, among other things. I went to church less and less, choosing rather to go out with my husband.

Today I can see how merciful God was to me. Every time that I went to a place that I knew was wrong, a voice would tell me that I shouldn't be there. At different times God spoke to me, but I didn't have strength to resist the temptation of worldly pleasures.

Each time that I felt down low, I would look up my Christian neighbor. One day as we were talking about the things of God, I began to feel a condemnation for my

sins. It became more than I could bear. One night I dreamt that Jesus had returned to claim His own. I tried to hide because of all of my sins, but there was no place to hide. I was beside myself with fear, and then I awoke. It seemed the whole bed was shaking, together with the house. I called my husband and told him what was happening. He told me that nothing of the sort was happening.

I was so frightened that I got up and ran over to my neighbor's house to tell her what was happening. She encouraged me to pray and ask God to forgive my sins. That is what I did. I went back home and prayed and wept for a long time. When I finished praying, I felt such a great peace!

This took place during the time of revival, so I invited the ministers to come to my place. I told them about the dream I had had and how that now I felt peace. They told me that this was a new birth experience. I thought to myself: This is the beginning of my Christian life.

I began going to church again, but the devil kept trying harder and harder to destroy my home. This struggle went on for seven years.

One day I was at home by myself. I felt so burdened and began to weep. Then I heard a voice that asked me to pray. I knelt and prayed, but still didn't feel the peace that I had felt seven years earlier. I was overcome with grief and once again looked up my neighbor. Her words were a great encouragement. I went home and prayed again. This time I heard a distinct voice that told me I should be obedient. I asked God to help me to be obedient and told Him that I was willing to leave all for His sake. Once again I felt that wonderful peace that I had felt seven years earlier.

After this victory, I always found grace to carry me through the trials of each day.

One of my greatest trials I faced after my last experience had to do with our marriage. I was wanting to be baptized, but since we weren't legally married, this wasn't possible. He refused to legalize our marriage, because to him there was no need for it. That's what he said, but down deep he didn't want me to be a Christian, because he was ashamed of me as a Christian. He said that my dresses were horrid and that my covering was ridiculous.

I prayed a lot about this and finally my husband agreed to legalize our marriage. We set the date and I invited some brethren to have supper with us on our wedding day.

On the day we were to get married, we were both happy. The first thing in the morning we went downtown to buy new clothes for our wedding. Since our wedding was to be later in the afternoon, after we bought our clothes, he went to work. I stayed home, overflowing with joy.

When he came home after work, he had totally changed his mind. He said that the wedding was off. Someone had come up with all kinds of accusations against me and he believed it all. After throwing the most outlandish things in my face, he left the house. I was beside myself and had no idea what to do. I looked up my neighbor and she managed to get me calmed down. After we had prayed together, God showed me very clearly that my husband had made up all that stuff and that this was just one more pitfall the devil managed to come up with.

Slowly my husband recognized his mistake and so we went to the courthouse to set a new date for our wedding. There they told us we could be married right there and then, that all we had to do was come up with several witnesses.

Once again the devil was defeated. Since then I have never forgotten the verse from James 4:7, which says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

It’s true that God let me go through some real trials, but through it all He not only gave me everything I asked for, but also gave me a Christian husband. [*He today is also a member of the church.*]

I want to thank all the brothers and sisters who never ceased praying for me during all this.

By the grace of God I can now say that as for me and my house, we are all serving the Lord.

Keep on praying for my home; the devil is going about roaring as a lion, seeking whom he may devour. ▲

A Brazilian Story

by Mário de Moraes

A Time to Sleep and a Time to Stay Awake

The stories I tell are true, unless otherwise stated. Some time ago I told the story about two thieves who decided to do some “shopping” in a furniture store in the wee hours of the morning. They were quite looped, so by the time they managed to break the door down, they were plumb tired out. Before they began their official duties, they picked out one of the prettiest beds in the store and stretched out for a nap. That is the way the cops found them.

The story I am about to tell is similar to the one I just told you.

Armed with a 38 revolver, Cláudio Antônio overpowered Carlos Alberto Gimenes, the owner of an apartment in the Morada dos Pássaros condominium in the city of São Paulo, just as he was walking out of the front door into the hall. The thief quickly turned him around and invited him to return to his apartment.

When Carlos tried to resist, the thief gave him a persuasive tap on the head with the butt of his revolver and then, once inside again, escorted him into one of the bedrooms, where he tied him up with a stout rope. Then he went to work.

Cláudio gathered up everything that he felt would be of value and made a pile in one corner of the living room. Then before heading out, he decided to take a nap on the divan. In a jiffy he was sound asleep.

Two hours later, after a good deal of effort, Carlos Alberto managed to untie the knots on the rope and real quietly he made his way out the front door and to the neighbor’s apartment, where he called the police.

When the law arrived, Cláudio was still asleep. He didn't awaken until he felt the police putting a pair of bracelets on his wrists.

The *Delegado de Polícia* later commented that never had he made an easier arrest than that one.

Cláudio was booked on three different charges and treated to a nice stretch of free lodging in the local slammer. ▲

A True Story

by Pastor Rob Reid

The Crocheted Tablecloth

The brand new pastor and his wife, newly assigned to their first ministry to reopen a church in urban Brooklyn, arrived in early October, excited about their new job. The church was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve.

They worked hard repairing pews, plastering and painting walls. On December 18, ahead of schedule, they were almost done. On December 19 a terrible tempest hit the area and lasted for two days. On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about six by eight feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do, decided to postpone the Christmas Eve service.

On the way home, the pastor noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity, so he stopped in. One of the items for sale was a beautiful, hand-made ivory colored crocheted table cloth with exquisite work, fine colors and a cross embroidered right in the center. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall, so he bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus. She missed it, so the pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus, 45 minutes later. She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder and began putting up the new tablecloth.

Once the tablecloth was in place, he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was like a sheet. "Pastor," she asked, "where did you get that tablecloth?"

The pastor explained and the woman asked to check the lower right corner to see if the initials EBG were crocheted into it there.

They were. These were the initials of the woman. She had made this tablecloth 35 years earlier in Austria. The woman could hardly believe her ears as the pastor told how he had just gotten the tablecloth. She explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria. When the Nazis came, she was forced to

leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. She was captured, sent to a concentration camp and never saw her husband or her home again.

The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth, but she refused. So he insisted on driving her home, feeling this was the least he could do for her. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was in Brooklyn only for the day because of her housecleaning job.

It was a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. At the end of the service the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return.

One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighborhood, continued to sit in one of the pews and stare. The pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving. Finally the man asked him where he had gotten the tablecloth on the front wall, because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war.

He told the pastor how when the Nazis came his wife had to flee for her safety. He meant to follow, but was arrested and placed in a concentration camp. He never saw his wife again.

The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier. He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door—and saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine. ▲

This & That

On January 1, the Brazil Annual Meeting was held at the Rio Verdinho Congregation.

The afternoon was dedicated to the traditional reports and elections. The theme of the evening session was The Great Commission. All of the congregations and missions were represented, except for the Acaraú mission.

The Rio Verdinho Congregation revivals began on the 6th, with Randy Goossen and Uriah Yoder as the evangelists. Their communion was on the 15th.

The Roberto Amorim family from Curitiba, in southern Brazil, drove out to attend the Monte Alegre revivals. Right now they are without a missionary over there.

The Monte Alegre Congregation meetings began on January 9, with ministers Stanley Johnson and Don Koehn. Don's wife, Aleene came with him. Communion was on the 23rd.

At the Monte Alegre Congregation bro. Adejenes Lima was elected and ordained to the diaconry. Adejenes is the grandson of Aristóteles Mesquita Lima, the man from whom Reno Hibner and Pete Loewen bought their farms. We now have two Brazilian deacons, the other in the Pirenópolis Congregation. Needless to say, these brethren will be a real asset to the work here.

Cristiane Garcia has spent some time at the Bethel Home in voluntary service. The American Consulate was fully aware of her activities and granted her a tourist visa

so that she could carry on this work. Periodically she would return to Brazil to not overstay her visa deadlines. Recently returning to the US for another term, she ran into exactly the wrong customs agent in Dallas, Texas. Turning a deaf ear to her explanations and pleas, he locked her up and then put her on a plane back to Brazil. To compound her misery, in the São Paulo airport she had her purse stolen with her tickets, passport, money and everything else. The final insult is that she is banned from returning to the US for a period of five years.

Brian, Paul & Rachel Yoder's son attended the boy's preparatory class at Iroquois, SD.

He plans on putting in some time in a VS unit.

Wesley, Daniel & Linda Holdeman's son, attended class at Glenn, CA.

Lester & Sharon Holdeman are spending several weeks on the Colony.

On January 29 proofreaders got together at the literature center in the afternoon to proofread the translation of *A Threefold Cord*. We hope to have this book in print shortly. We believe it will be a success here.

Did you know that 97% of the water on the earth is salty and is found in the oceans and seas?

The remaining 3% of the water is divided as follows:

72.2% is frozen and can be found in glaciers and the two Polar caps.

22.4% is underground water.

5.39% is in the atmosphere, in lakes, swamps, etc.

0.01% is found in the rivers.

20% of all the sweet water on the planet can be found in Brazil. Much of this water is in sparsely inhabited regions, like the Amazon basin.

Most of the electricity generated in Brazil comes from hydroelectric plants.