

Brazil News



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Editorial

The Art of Deceiving

Deception is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas. When inhaled, it seldom produces an immediate reaction. Deception is a mortal gas, a silent, merciless killer. Its victims die with a smile on their lips, “for there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.”

Deception is a penetrating gas. Masks and protective clothing are totally useless, as are gas detectors.

Deception is never benign. All deception is malignant. It isn’t something that comes and goes, like the flu or malaria. No vaccine has ever been produced that immunizes against deception.

Yet deception is totally avoidable.

We all agree that Christian life is a warfare. What we all too often don’t realize is that this warfare has never been more intense, more bloody, more deceptive, than it is today. The fact that we don’t hear the whistle of bullets doesn’t mean we aren’t being shot at, the absence of bombers in the sky doesn’t mean we aren’t being bombarded. The pealing of bells in the distance doesn’t mean an armistice has been signed. No. It means only one thing: Warfare today has changed and is *far* more deceptive than it has ever been in all the history of mankind.

In 500 B.C., Sun Tzu, a Chinese military tactician, wrote, “All warfare is based on deception.” Masters at this art, a military advisor to the Chou emperors gave the following advice:

When able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe that we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near. Hold out the bait; entice the enemy. Feign disorder and crush him.

This bit of advice was given by a mortal man. How much more cruel, how much more terrible, must the orders of the Emperor of Evil be when he gives his soldiers orders to “Crush that soul!”?

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As you continue reading, remember that you—you personally—are being given special attention by the Emperor of Evil. This very instant. He has his specialists working on your case day and night. He is patient. What he can't achieve today, he will try and do tomorrow. He will never withdraw his agents so long as you retain the breath of life. If you are unaware of this, he already scored a direct hit.

Most deception is carried out through camouflage. According to Seymour Reit: “Camouflage in warfare—the fine art of misdirection—...has a two-part mission: depending on military needs it can *conceal* from an enemy the true picture, or *mislead* an enemy into accepting a false one.”

General Sir Archibald Wavell, in a memo to the British Chiefs of Staff, expressed his views:

“...the elementary principle of all deception is to attract the enemy's attention to what you wish him to see and to distract his attention from what you do not wish him to see.”

During World War II, artists and interior decorators were recruited and put to work as camoufleurs. One of these, Lieutenant Colonel William Pahlmann, a prominent interior designer in civilian life who became an instructor in the art of deception, wrote, “Every man who went through there had to work, and work hard...We kept emphasizing that camouflage meant fooling the eye—not only covering things up, but *diverting* the enemy's attention.”

With the nation's best men using their exceptional talents to deceive the enemy, results were to be expected. One of the most brilliant demonstrations of deception through camouflage took place in the summer of 1942 in North Africa. The situation there was desperate for the Allies. Field Marshall Rommel, the superb, wily German military strategist, known as the Desert Fox, was at the gates of Alexandria and the Nile Delta with his armies. He was hoping, with a strong thrust, to push through the Middle East and on to a linkup with the German armies in southern Russia and the Caucasus. This for the Allies would in all likelihood have marked the beginning of the end.

In spite of having captured sixty thousand prisoners, as well as two thousand vehicles and mountains of provisions, Rommel's situation was by no means comfortable, and he was aware of this. He was also aware that the Allies would use every means at their disposal to deceive him. What he wasn't aware of was the extent of these means.

What Rommel didn't know was that Allied cryptographers had managed to break the Axis secret war codes. Each time a convoy of ships loaded with supplies left harbor, Allied forces would know their exact route and lie in wait. Thus in a four month period over 200,000 tons of Axis shipping ended up on the bottom of the sea, instead of on the front lines, where lack of supplies and defeat are often synonymous.

So, while Rommel's supplies were steadily dwindling, Montgomery's were increasing. Even outnumbered in both troops and armor, the Desert Fox was not to be trifled with. Montgomery knew this and took no chances. To defeat this enemy he must gain the upper hand, and this he meant to do through deception.

Once again fate smiled on Montgomery. A team of Axis spies operating near Cairo

had for a number of months been sending critical information to Rommel on enemy strength and troop movement. A British security unit succeeded in capturing these spies and discovering the code they were using in their dispatches. After this, with the spies securely locked up, the Allies, in the name of German spies, cleverly furnished Rommel with corrupted information. Just enough authentic intelligence was included as bait to give credibility to the crud.

According to Rommel's "trusted spies," Montgomery was preparing to do battle along a ridge *south* of El Alamein, at a place called Alam Halfa. The Desert Fox made his battle plans based on this intelligence.

Montgomery's "deceivers" believed in baiting their traps well. One dark August night, the sound of gunfire and exploding mines were heard on the German front. A patrol was immediately rushed out to investigate. There the Germans found a partially destroyed British scout car. Bloodstains were everywhere and it was apparent that the wounded and dead had been hastily evacuated. So hastily, in fact, that an officer's map case, also blood stained, had been left behind.

Inside the map case the Germans found a map with tattered edges, full of technical annotations and codes. Rommel's cartographers soon deciphered the coded maps and reported the windfall to the general. It happens that the terrain separating the two armies was a treacherous no man's land of drifting dunes and spongy sand in which vehicles would quickly bog down. Since the Germans hadn't been able to accurately map this terrain, the captured map would be worth its weight in gold many times.

The Desert Fox was so enthusiastic with this "inside" information, that he decided to attack. He radioed headquarters, giving a detailed account of his plans.

Allied cryptographers intercepted the message and relayed his battle plans to Montgomery, who moved into position and waited.

Rommel was known among his men for his *fingerspitzengefühl*, which translated roughly means, "intuition in the fingertips," or, in a looser translation, "undeceivability." But deceived he was. The damaged scout car was a hoax prepared by British intelligence. The map case had been "planted," knowing the Germans would find and devour it. The map was actually quite accurate—if read exactly opposite of what the notes said. Where the terrain was shown to be safe, it was soggy, and where it was shown to be soggy, it was safe.

Following the "safe" routes as indicated on the captured map, the Germans were soon bogged down. And then, unable to extricate themselves, the Allies sent out squadrons of Hurricanes and Bostons to strafe and bomb the sitting ducks. The battle was short and gruesome. The Germans lost 4,800 men, 50 tanks and 70 heavy guns before they managed to retreat to safety.

This defeat spelled the beginning of the end for Rommel in North Africa. An even more ignominious defeat awaited him, a defeat which even his *fingerspitzengefühl* was unable to prevent.

Rommel believed that Montgomery would attack on the southern sector of the El Alamein line. This he believed because militarily it was the most logical place for such

an assault, *and* because he had already been duped by his “trusted spies.” In reality Montgomery planned on attacking in the *northern* sector of the El Alamein line. This presented an enormous logistical problem. To attack at the northern extreme of the El Alamein line, supplies would have to be stockpiled in that sector, and not in the south. To do this, however, would be a sure giveaway of what was taking place. Once more deception was needed.

In a few words, this meant stockpiling supplies in the north, and camouflaging them, while making the enemy believe they were being stockpiled in the south, where the Desert Fox believed the attack would take place. It must be remembered that whenever weather permitted, Rommel’s reconnaissance planes were overflying the region, photographing this entire area. To get an idea of the magnitude of the task handed to the camoufleurs, we quote the final words of the briefing to Dudley Clarke, responsible for this Herculean task: “Well, there it is. You must conceal 150,000 men with a thousand [field] guns and a thousand tanks on a plain as flat and as hard as a billiard table, and the Germans must not know anything about it, although they will be watching every movement, listening to every noise, charting every track...You can’t do it, of course, but you’ve...got to!”

To relate how this was accomplished would require the remaining space of this little paper, and then some. Suffice it to say that the ruse worked so well that Rommel, by now totally confused, committed a fatal tactical error. He split his armor between the north and south sectors, thus precluding any possibility of standing up to Montgomery’s overwhelming superiority.

After the victory, Prime Minister Churchill reported to the House of Commons: “By a marvelous system of camouflage, complete tactical surprise was achieved in the desert... The enemy suspected that the attack was impending, but did not know how, when, or where, and above all he had no idea of the scale upon which he was to be assaulted.”

That is literal warfare fought by human soldiers. The apostle Paul declares that we “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” What are “principalities,” “powers,” “rulers of the darkness,” other than master camoufleurs, master deceivers? The fact—not possibility—that we, each one of us personally, are the targets of these master deceivers, should awaken us to the fact that the Nation, the Nation of God, is at war. Unless we, individual soldiers, are also at war, we shall be deceived. And overcome, just as Rommel was in North Africa.

In a broad sense, anyone who commits sin is deceived. However in a more restricted sense—as commonly used in our midst—a deceived person is one who formerly knew the truth, but now believes, defends and practices a lie. Sometimes we hear the comment, “But surely he knows he’s deceived.” No, he doesn’t know. If he did he wouldn’t be deceived. Indeed, there are those who leave our midst and live an aberrant life that frankly admit they are wrong, that they have left the true way and that hell awaits them at death. Such a one is lost, but not deceived, at least not in the more common acceptance of the word.

Deception comes through disobedience. When Jesus said, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,” he gave the best anti-deception formula yet: Watch and pray. Without disobedience there is no possible way for a sincere soul to be deceived. The colorless, odorless, tasteless gas of deception has no power over a pure, obedient soul.

How can deception be detected, if it is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas?

All deception is preceded by disobedience, and disobedience by a twinge of conscience. That initial twinge—pain—is not easily forgotten. The soul that sincerely asks the question, “Am I deceived?”, must be willing to go back—or be led back by someone else—to the “place of pain.” The question that then must be answered is: “Why is it that that which pained me a year ago, or ten years ago, or fifty years ago, no longer pains me today?” When that old disobedience is brought up and exposed to the light, the Holy Spirit will be right there, ready to help.

This brings us to what this article is really about. Why is it that so many leave our midst, live a life of sin, and believe they are saved? Involuntarily we exclaim, “But surely they know they are deceived!” No, many of them don’t. They sincerely believe they are saved.

The problem is lack of a benchmark, of solid reference points where lasting values were established.

The heaviest object in this world is a newborn child. As sincere Christian parents cradle such a one in their arms, they realize that they have but a few short years in which to prepare it for another birth. That, incidentally, is exactly what parenthood is all about. So often, after parents have “blown” these precious years and their child doesn’t have strength to be delivered, they desperately call for forceps, they entreat the congregation to assist in a Caesarian, they try to make up for lost time. It may appear they have succeeded when a puny, blue, almost motionless child comes forth. This ICU baby struggles along, maybe through most of adolescence, maybe through several years of married life, but finally it succumbs.

Time continues. Slowly (and maybe not so slowly) but surely, this young man or woman drifts further and further into the world. Nothing seems to touch them. The most well-intentioned admonitions and warnings given by concerned brothers and sisters are rejected. All too often, they speak of hope of eternal life which they are sure is theirs. Then comes the classical question, “But surely they know they’re deceived.” No, unfortunately, they don’t know. They have no benchmark to go back to. The true joy of salvation was never present in their lives. They seem unable to recollect a twinge of conscience, a “pain,” way back there, where they lost the way.

To paraphrase 1 Peter 4:18, we ask: “And if those who had good upbringing scarcely be saved, where shall the ICU children and those who had no training at all appear?”

Deception, to believe and practice a lie, is a terrible thing. Deception places a cloak of righteousness over sin. Deception resists admonition, indeed, the voice of the church. Deception in Christians without benchmarks is usually fatal.

If Montgomery could hide 150 thousand soldiers and their armor in the desert, if Pharaoh’s magicians could imitate most of Moses and Aaron’s divine miracles, if Delilah

could deceive the mighty Samson, then what will keep Satan and his host of fiends from deceiving us today?

Obedience. There is no power on this earth, or beneath this earth, that is strong enough, or subtle enough, to deceive a faithful Christian who daily watches and prays.

And yet today there are those who have been crushed by the enemy. Some many years ago. Their case looks absolutely hopeless. We know that any efforts to help will be rebuffed, possibly in no uncertain terms.

So what can we do? We can pray. If ever there was a time in which the injunction to pray without ceasing should be meticulously followed, it is when attempting to rescue a deceived soul. To pray without ceasing can mean praying for months, for years, for decades. It means never giving up, never closing a case while there is life. It means being watchful. It means remembering that for some deceived souls, the key to deliverance may be in our prayers.

Could the problem sometimes be that we have ceased praying? Have we grown weary and written them off? If we would rescue these souls, our faith must be greater than their deception; our perseverance stronger than their obstinacy.

To avoid deception we must watch and pray. When trying to help someone who is deceived, we must *pray and watch*—pray without ceasing and then watch for a crack in the door, for that brief moment in which the heart is tender. This may take years, it may take hundreds or thousands of prayers, it may take tears, but it's a small price to pay to deliver someone from death. ▲

B/N Tour

by Irene Giesbrecht

Our Visit to Manaus

After our stay on the Colony, we flew to Manaus. After we had collected our luggage, we stood there. Where was our hotel? How were we to get there? What were we doing here anyway? To tell you the truth, we felt a little bit lost.

Then this man by the name of Gero comes and asks if he can help. Some of us were suspicious of him, but Lee considered it an answer to prayer. He worked for a company that caters to tourists, arranges tours for them, etc. He delivered us to our hotel and took us under his wing the whole time we were there. He even went back to the airport on our departure date and got us on the right plane. We appreciated him and naturally he appreciated our dollars.

We were in a hotel that had been reserved for us. It was a five star hotel and I have never been in such a classy hotel before. My room reminded me of those old plantation homes. It had a dark, rich looking wooden floor, nine or ten foot ceiling, closets that reached to the ceiling in dark, rich looking wood also. The TV and fridge were hidden in closets.

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Everyone that worked there was very smartly dressed in beige colored uniforms. They looked well-dressed in their suits. They all talked Portuguese, but switched to English when we talked to them.

They also had a breakfast bar that came with the price of our room. It was two big tables filled with a large assortment of breads, cheese, ham, scrambled eggs, cold and hot cereal, watermelon and other tropical melons, juices, coffee and hot chocolate. It was a feast!

The next day Gero showed us some of the sights of the city: the waterfront, the fish markets, the zoo and the sidewalk merchants.

The next day we were on a boat. First our van driver took us to the docks and showed us which boat we were to get on. But something wasn't in order and the driver returned to his van and left us. We stood there not knowing what to think. We noticed that at least 80 percent of the people carry cell phones. Lee said Brazil is way ahead of the US in electronics, and if that is what Lee says, I believe him.

Anyway, here we are standing on the dock, and now what? Had the fellow taken our money and dumped us here to fend for ourselves. Maybe we shouldn't have trusted Gero...

No, everything is okay. The van driver merely went back to get Gero so that he could get us onto the right boat. He introduced us to our guide and we were soon on our way.

Our first stop is at the markets to pick up some food for lunch, and then on our way to what they call the "Meeting of the waters." This is where the Negro and the Solimões Rivers meet. One is black water and the other brown water. They flow side by side for miles without mixing. Why I don't know, but intend to find out some day. The guide didn't seem to have a very plausible reason for it.

At places along the riverbank we saw the locals drinking, bathing, washing clothes and dishes in the water. They are immune to the diseases that would kill us if we tried that.

We had two meals on the boat, went for a couple of walks in the jungle, went piranha fishing and alligator hunting. The alligator hunting was done in the evening after dark. We were sitting in a canoe type boat that was quite a bit smaller than our other boat. The guide had us sitting two on a seat with about 12 inches in between us. He told us to stay on our side and to be very quiet. Then we drove slowly along the edge of the river by the swampy reeds. The guide is shining his flashlight into the reeds. All at once he motions the boat driver to go into the reeds. He has seen one.

Naturally all this is rather spooky in the dark. Then the ladies on the opposite side of the boat start to scream and come towards our side of the boat. Of course I have to see what they have seen and there is this long brownish thing beside the boat. I joined the screaming. How do we know the alligator won't jump in the boat?

But it was only a log. We are once again instructed to be very quiet or we won't get to see any alligators. We are also told to stay on our side of the boat or we will tip and be in the water with the alligators.

We are doing our very best to be quiet, but Carol and I are nervously giggling. Quietly. We inch slowly into the reeds and all at once the guide, his name is Josephus, gets down and reaches into the water. There is a loud thrashing around at the front of the boat and once again we are sure this alligator is out to get us. Naturally, there is some screaming again.

What a hunt! The guide stands up and is holding an alligator about two feet long. He then shows it to us by coming down the center of the boat. The alligator did bite his hand and didn't want to let go. He explains that you can see the alligator by their eyes shining red in the light of the flashlight. It was released and he caught two more, but the excitement was over. I'm sure he made sure he didn't catch a really big one. He said these were about two or three years old.

The next day we were on the plane heading for home. We were ready to go home.

We arrived home at nine o'clock in the evening. It had been an exciting three weeks. Been to a foreign country, saw a totally different culture. Tasted and enjoyed new dishes. Had plenty of beans and rice. At times was very warm. Different types of homes. Spent a day making pamonha, which is a Brazilian dish made from field corn. Reminded me a little of tamales, but not the same. Impressive yards and trees. Exotic birds and animals in the jungles. And oh yes, at times lonesome for the family back home.

But most of all was very impressed with the hospitality on the Colony and enjoyed meeting new acquaintances. Also enjoyed renewing old acquaintances.

I want to say a big thank you to anyone and everyone who had a share in making this trip so enjoyable. It was something that I had never dreamt of doing and I consider it a chance of a lifetime to go on a trip to Brazil. ▲

Learning About Brazil

The State of Roraima

That's pronounced "hoe-rye-mah." It's the northernmost state in Brazil, with just a tip of it south of the Equator.

Tucked in between the South American countries of Guyana and Venezuela, and the Brazilian states of Amazonas and Pará, Roraima bears some distinct similarities with the American Wild West several hundred years ago.

To begin with, it is so sparsely populated that it only gained statehood in 1988. Even now there is just a shade over one inhabitant per square kilometer, for a total population of less than 300,000, of which 200,000 live in Boa Vista, the capital, and another 50,000 in other towns. That doesn't leave just a lot of people out in the rural areas.

Over half of the state of Roraima, an area the size of the country of Portugal, is set aside as a reservation for the 9,000 Ianomânis Indians. Thus the rural population is made up of Indians, prospectors, ranchers and a few farmers. Their coexistence hasn't been especially peaceful.

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Now we will turn the meeting over to six Colony brethren who recently made a visit to Roraima, and listen to their version of things. They are: Jair da Costa, Chris Stoltzfus, Ben Koehn, Eugene Koehn, Bira Bernardes and Bill Miller.

The first part of their trip was made by bus from Rio Verde to Brasília, and then by plane to Boa Vista, the capital.

Both the federal and state governments are making a giant effort to attract farmers and ranchers to the area. So much so that there was a limousine and chauffeur awaiting the six brethren when they arrived at the airport at 2:30 in the morning, offering to take them to the best hotel in town—all expenses paid. During the week they spent in Roraima they were carted around in helicopters and vans, met bigshots galore, even the governor of the state.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. We return to the Boeing 737 that flew these men from Brasília to Boa Vista. For some reason—some deep, unfathomable reason—these men, intelligent men, decided to haul a jug of water from Rio Verde out to the Amazon Basin. Did they think there might be a water shortage out there...?

In all justice, and to keep the record straight, we affirm here that these six men tried to check their jug of H²O as baggage, but airline officials wouldn't have it. No way, they said, the container might be damaged down in the hold. Take it aboard!

And so, the water from Rio Verde, was toted aboard the Boeing 737 and, in strict compliance with airline regulations, placed in an overhead bin. In a horizontal position.

The cockpit crew went over the preflight checklist, revved up the turbines, taxied out to the end of the runway and soon the craft was airborne. The flight attendants went through their little rigamarole of what to do in case of emergency, how to use the oxygen mask in case of cabin depressurization, and how to inflate the life jacket or hang on to the seat cushion to remain afloat in water. It's doubtful that anyone paid the slightest attention to what they had to say.

Have you ever noticed how seasoned travelers act when they settle down in their seats? Some are sound asleep before the plane even hits the air. Others bury themselves in a newspaper or a novel and only briefly look up and say Coke when the flight attendant asks what they want to drink. Some talk and laugh non-stop from airport to airport. A few just stare into space. And of course, there are those who glue their nose to the window and occasionally exclaim about some river or lake.

We don't know what kind of passengers were seated in the seats beneath and behind the overhead bin that cradled the jug of Rio Verde water. Well yes, we do know that some of them were from Rio Verde.

Folks, then it happened.

A drop of water. Yep, then another. And another... It began pouring. People started jumping up from their seats to get out of the rain. The girl sitting next to the window, beside Bill Miller, hadn't brought her umbrella aboard and was getting a soaking. She made an attempt to crawl over Bill, but Bill isn't real crawl-overable.

By now Bill had a pretty good idea of what was going on, so he jumped up and retrieved the jug of Rio Verde water from the overhead bin, which of course let the cat out of the bag.

Bill is mechanically minded enough to know that if something is leaking you have to stop up the leak if you want it to quit leaking. In the case of a water jug leaking Rio Verde water, the idea was to tighten the lid. To do that he had to remove the screw-on cup that covered the lid.

Bravely, knowing that at that moment he wasn't exactly the most popular passenger aboard the Boeing 737, Bill gave the cup covering the lid of the jug with Rio Verde water a twist...

Behold! The lid was full of water and the girl who didn't manage to crawl over Bill was now treated to a second application of Rio Verde water.

It wasn't only Bill Miller who was having problems. Jair, sitting on the other side of the aisle—the dry side, if you will—saw things from a different perspective from those who were seated on...well, the rainy side. He and several other passengers, also on the dry side, were looking beyond the raindrops and seeing the humor of the situation. The less than amiable looks bestowed on them by the doused passengers helped them quickly wipe their faces clean of any trace of a smile.

By now the flight attendants were on the scene. All luggage was removed from the overhead bins and an effort was made to sop up the Rio Verde water and assess damage to permeable luggage.

I asked Chris Stoltzfus, who also was on the dry side of the aisle, how things went after that between Bill Miller and the girl who took the dunking. He said things looked quite cool for the duration of the trip.

As the group was leaving the plane, one of the flight attendants asked, "Do you reckon there's any water left in that jug?" I'm still trying to figure out if it was a valiant attempt at a bit of humor, or a veiled form of sadism.

Can't you just imagine a flight attendant finishing her little emergency procedure presentation by saying, "... and in case of an internal rainstorm, if you had the presence of mind to bring an umbrella aboard, please open it. Now. And don't forget that the flotation cushion you are sitting on may be of help. Thank you for flying...?"

Okay, we're now in Roraima again. Following are some of the notes I took during the report:

The state of Roraima is self-sufficient only in rice. Everything else must be imported. Apparently even water.

All those who join the co-op have a 20 year exemption from all taxes. Since most co-ops in this country have a strong political arm, it is a question whether this option would be open to us.

The land title situation isn't the best. A legal title can't be gotten to all land. In some cases a document is given permitting that the land be mortgaged.

It is only 250 kilometers to Venezuela. All petroleum is imported from there. Soybeans produced in Roraima can be exported to Venezuela and sold for a very good price.

Since Roraima straddles the equator, days and nights are of equal duration the year round. The group took along a good supply of tracts, which were eagerly received by the people. The elevation is 85 meters (276 feet). The normal daytime temperature is 27°C

(81°F), with relative humidity hanging in at 65-85%. The rainy season begins in April (or whenever a bunch of Colony people travel on a 737), exactly when our rainy season in Rio Verde comes to a close.

The nearest port is Georgetown, Guyana, which is 600 kilometers from Boa Vista. No storms in Roraima.

Most of the land is quite flat. And sandy. It has a good pH.

To fly to Miami costs half of what it costs to fly to Rio Verde.

A huge power transmission line from Venezuela to Roraima is nearly completed. At present power plants are run by diesel engines.

With so many disadvantages, what is the attraction? The price of land. An acre of flat land with a legal title costs in the neighborhood of 10 US dollars an acre. The land will vary from some that needs practically no clearing, to heavily wooded plots.

Any of you folks in N America interested in cheap land? Want to take a look? The men from Rio Verde plan on making another trip to Roraima, possibly in July. Why not fly to Caracas, bus to Boa Vista, and meet them there? It sounds like opportunity for people with a pioneer spirit.


In case you're interested in the project in Roraima, here are some people you can contact:

Bill Miller – 011 55 62 613 9101

Chris Stoltzfus (...) 9093

Jair Costa (...) 9214

Eugene Koehn (...) 9164

And please, folks, on the plane don't only tighten your seatbelts. Tighten the lid to your water jug too 

A Story

Only a Fragment

[My granddaughter, Michelle Dirks, gave me this story. She believes it isn't protected and so it is being published in good faith. Should we unknowingly be infringing on anyone's rights, we apologize and offer to make amends.]

Once there was an old man who lived in a tiny village, although poor, he was envied by all, for he owned a beautiful white horse. Even the king coveted his treasure. A horse like this had never been seen before, such was its splendor, its majesty, its strength. People offered fabulous prices for the steed, but the old man always refused. "This horse is not a horse to me," he would tell them. "It is a person. How could you sell a person? He is a friend, not a possession. How could you sell a friend?" The man was poor and the temptation was great. But, he never sold the horse.

One morning he found that the horse was not in the stable. All the village came to see him. "You old fool," they scoffed, "We told you that someone would steal your

horse. We warned you that you would be robbed. You are so poor how could you ever hope to protect such a valuable animal? It would have been better to have sold him. You could have gotten whatever price you wanted. No amount would have been too high. Now the horse is gone, and you've been cursed with misfortune."

The old man responded, "Don't speak too quickly. Say only that the horse is not in the stable. That is all we know; the rest is judgment. If I've been cursed or not, how can you know?"

The people contested, "Don't make us out to be fools! We may not be philosophers, but great philosophy is not needed. The simple fact that your horse is gone is a curse."

The old man spoke again. "All I know is that the stable is empty, and the horse is gone. The rest I don't know. Whether it be a curse or a blessing, I can't say. All we can see is a fragment. Who can say what will come next?"

The people of the village laughed. They thought that the man was crazy. They had always thought he was a fool; if he wasn't, he would have sold the horse and lived off of the money. But instead, he was a poor woodcutter, an old man still cutting firewood and dragging it out of the forest and selling it. He lived hand to mouth in the misery of poverty. Now he had proved that he was, truly, a fool.

After fifteen days, the horse returned. He hadn't been stolen; He had run way into the forest. Not only had he returned, he had brought a dozen wild horses with him. Once again the village people gathered around the wood cutter and spoke. "Old man, you were right and we were wrong. What we thought was a curse was a blessing. Please forgive us."

The man responded, "Again, you go too far. Say only that the horse is back. State only that a dozen horses returned with him, but don't judge. How do you know if this is a blessing or not? You see only the fragment. Unless you know the whole story, how can you judge? You read only one page of a book. Can you judge the whole book? You read only one word of a phrase, Can you understand the entire phrase? Life is so vast, yet you judge all of life with one page or one word. All you have is a fragment! Don't say that this is a blessing. No one knows. I am content with what I know. I am not perturbed by what I don't.

"Maybe the old man is right," they said to one another. So they said little. But down deep, they knew he was wrong. They knew it was a blessing. Twelve wild horses had returned with one horse. With a little bit of work, the animals could be broken and trained and sold for much money.

The old man had a son, an only son. The young man began to break the wild horses. After a few days, he fell from one of the horses and broke both legs. Again, the villagers gathered around the old man and cast their judgments.

"You were right," they said. "You proved you were right. The dozen horses were not a blessing. They were a curse. Your only son has broken his legs, and now in your old age you have no one to help you. Now you are poorer than ever."

The old man spoke again. "You people are obsessed with judging. Don't go so far. Say only that my son broke both his legs. Who knows if it is a blessing or a curse? No one knows. We only have a fragment. Life comes in fragments."

It so happened that a few weeks later the country engaged in war against a

neighboring country. All the young men in the village were required to join the army. Only the son of the old man was excluded, because he was injured. Again, the people gathered around the old man, crying and screaming because their sons had been taken. There was little chance that they would return. The enemy was strong, and the war would be a losing struggle. They would never see their sons again

“You were right, old man,” they wept. “God knows you were right. This proves it. Your son’s accident was a blessing. His legs may be broken, but at least he is with you. Our sons are gone forever.”

The old man spoke again. “It is impossible to talk to you. You always draw conclusions. No one knows. Say only this: Your sons had to go to war, And mine did not. No one knows if it is a blessing or a curse. No one is wise enough to know. Only God knows.” ▲

This & That

Lee Nichols says that Brazil is way ahead of the US in electronics. I just got a notice in the mail saying that if we notify our carrier 48 hours in advance, they will extend our roaming service to the US, or more than 80 other countries, for the duration of the stay. I haven’t found out yet what the rates are, but I suspect they will be a bit on the expensive side. Even so, to be puttering down some back road in Kansas and get a call from Brazil isn’t all that third-worldish.

Amos Kauffmans came to visit his sister, Anna, Mrs. Daniel Kramer.

On February 4 the boy’s class program at Glenn, California was phoned to the Daniel Holdeman residence. Wesley, Daniel & Linda’s son, was part of the class.

Answer to last month’s riddle: “What is red on green, life unseen?” The answer: “A termite mound out in a pasture.” Really good. Even Samson would have liked it.

On February 11, the boy’s class at Iroquois, South Dakota was called in to Paul & Rachel Yoder’s place. Their son Brian was one of the students.

Kindergarten classes began at the Monte Alegre and Rio Verdinho schools on February 14. Between the two schools, and two languages, there are 13 students.

The Rio Verdinho youth met at the literature center one evening this month to help package tracts.

Roseane, who lives on the Boa Esperança settlement in Mato Grosso with her parents, Stephen & Dete Kramer, is taking the last semester of her eighth grade at the Monte Alegre School. She is staying with her uncle and aunt, Nelson & Ruth Unruh.

Tim Burns found a *jibóia*, a dryland boa constrictor—a rarity—in a woods near his home. No, he didn’t kill it.

On February 19, Fred & Denise Dirks and children from Iroquois, SD, arrived to spend three weeks in Brazil. Since Denise is our daughter, we had one biiiiiiiiig time. American Airlines managed to lose seven of their suitcases. They finally managed to cough up four of them, but the rest, nada, nada, nada...

Sid & Irene Schmidt were out for several weeks to get things around for their sale. They have returned to the US.

Robert & Violet Koehn and dau. Sherry were out to visit their daughter, Susan, who is teaching the missionary's children on the Patos mission. They spent some time on the Colony too.

On February 22 the ladies had a housewarming for Nita, Mrs. Carlos Becker. They have moved into their remodeled house. Actually, the remodeling was so substantial as to come closer to qualifying as a new house.

On February 25, the Rio Verdinho and Monte Alegre seventh and eighth graders, teachers and board, plus a few others, went on a field trip to the historical town of Goiás Velho. The rest of the students and teachers went on picnics.

Andrew Seiler from Michigan spent some time here with Delton Holdeman, Bira Bernardes and Márcio Ambrósio. The four boys spent several months together in voluntary service in Oregon rebuilding fences destroyed by fire.

On February 29 Roger & Sherilyn Hibner had a girl, Natalie Dawn. The Grandparents are Glenn & Elizabeth Hibner and Paul & Rachel Yoder.

Several months back I told you about two orphan baby monkeys we took in. Zip and Zap. I had begun writing an article about what great electricians monkeys would make, when I was forced to change my mind. Zip, the male, crawled up our transformer post, way up on top where the high tension wires come in, and made contact between the live and ground wires. Yep, Zip was zapped. And not only that, the fuse at our place, as well as two fuses up line were blown and the folks from the power company had to come out to straighten out the monkey business. And no, I no longer recommend using monkeys as electricians.

Perdigão, the company that is setting up the hog and poultry operation in Rio Verde, will soon be receiving the first batches of fryers from local growers. According to EXAME Magazine, the Rio Verde unit will be the largest meat processing industrial complex in Latin America. Last year exports increased 78%, up to 295 million dollars, with 33.8% going to the Far East, 30.5 to the Middle East, 30.1 to Europe, and 5.1 to various other places, including, indirectly, to Wal-Mart in N America. This is possible by the simple fact that Wal-Mart paid out 12 billion dollars to acquire controlling interest in Asda, a distributor which is already a Perdigão customer. Interestingly, a problem Perdigão has run into is that the name is too hard to pronounce outside of Brazil, so they are now trying to come up with an international commercial brand name that will slide over the tongue just as easily as their products. Two strong factors favoring the Rio Verde operation are the tropical climate and the fact that all corn and soybeans needed are grown locally. This makes both hogs and chickens raised here extremely competitive. There are no precise figures yet on how many barns will be put up on the Colony.