

Brazil News



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Editorial

The Hivite Pact

One of the most poignant scenes in life is that of someone returning home, to loved ones, after a serious accident that has resulted in permanent disability or disfiguration.

It may be loss of a limb, or limbs—a leg, an arm, both arms—a severed spine, loss of vision, or even worse, mental impairment; it may be a body covered with scars from third degree burns.

These occurrences don't destroy only flesh and bones, eyesight and lucidity, but so often they raze precious plans for the future. They can totally upset the usual routine of life, not only for the victim, but for the family as well.

The negative impact and suffering of such tragedies are multiplied when they could have been avoided, when they came about because of imprudence or an act of rebellion. To such, life can become a purgatory.

Many of us have never gone through such an experience, but our heart goes out to those who have, and to their loved ones. In many instances the pain is greater than what we can imagine.

When I worked at Hesston Corporation over 30 years ago, safety glasses were a detested item. Especially on night shifts where supervision was more lax, rules were openly flaunted and glasses were worn in the pocket.

Then one day everything changed. Each department was called into the break room and shown a film that went something like this:

Scene 1: A young man is shown waving goodbye to his smiling wife and two small children as he leaves for work.

Scene 2: He is shown at work sharpening a tool on a grindstone, without safety glasses.

Scene 3: The grindstone wheel disintegrates and he is seen clutching his face.

Scene 4: Inside an ambulance, on the way to the hospital.

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Scene 5: In the operating room; doctors are working on his eyes.

This was all impressive and I believe would have already brought some solid results in the shop, but more was to come.

Scene 6: The young man is home from the hospital and seated at the table, about to partake of his first meal with his family since his accident. As the young wife fills her husband's plate, it's apparent he is now blind.

The men from the shop, including those who detested safety glasses, now watched as the young man attempted to eat the food his wife had put in his plate...

Scene 7: Clumsily the young man manages to get some food on his fork. Then as the wife and children breathlessly watch, he slowly brings the fork up to his mouth, only to dump the food into his lap before it reaches its destination. Mother and children glance at each other with anguished looks. Dad tries again, with similar results...

I don't remember if the film had a scene 8 or a scene 9. If it did, I'm not sure anyone saw them. Everyone was too busy making a very practical application of the first seven scenes. And yes, few workers needed to be prompted to wear their safety glasses thereafter.

It's true that there are those who come through maiming accidents with an undaunted zeal to make good in life. But with the very best of intentions, there will always be restrictions. And frustrations. We tip our hat to those brave souls.

No one in his right mind would desire to enter life maimed, with a disability. Yet many do, many more than we suspect. A disability need not be the loss of a limb or of eyesight. In fact, the greatest disabilities that plague the present generation are not physical, but of a moral or spiritual nature, or shall we say, a simple lack of character, an inability to face life objectively.

It takes approximately the same amount of time to form a character as it does for the human body to reach full stature—some 20 years, the first half of which are largely dependant upon the parents, and the latter, upon the youth. Very few changes will be made to that basic character in later life.

When Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered Canaan as a newly emancipated nation, the order of the day was to conquer by destroying. The cup of sin of the native Canaanites was full and they were to be utterly destroyed—not subjugated, not taken captive. No attempt was to be made to civilize them, for later they would most certainly become a snare to Israel.

Things seemed to be off to a good start when Jerico was reduced to a heap of rubble and with the exception of Rahab's household, not a soul was left living.

Next came the little town of Ai, just a speck in comparison to the immense city of Jerico, where it became evident something was desperately wrong. Instead of destroying the enemy, Israel was not only put to flight, but suffered a number of casualties.

A pall settled over the camp as the dead were mourned that even the pillar of fire was unable to disperse. Had crossing the Jordan been a trap? Was God going to use the Canaanite heathen to further punish them for unbelief in the desert? Instead of destroying, would they now be destroyed? Would their bones litter Canaan, as their father's bones littered the desert on the other side of the Jordan?

After desperately crying upon the Lord, the answer came through. Jerico had not been as thoroughly destroyed as ordered. The offender was sought out and given an exemplary punishment.

Once again Ai was assaulted, this time with a well defined strategy which included an ambush. The city was reduced to a pile of rubble and the inhabitants utterly destroyed.

Following this victory, an altar was built and sacrifices offered in the presence of the entire congregation. In a beautiful ceremony, Joshua read the full law of Moises for all to hear.

While this was taking place, events that would force the Israelites to aggressively face the enemy were in motion. Neighboring kings were joining forces to resist the “invasion” of their territory. This in turn brought about a novel situation that would both perplex and vex the people of God.

The Hivites inhabited the cities of Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjathjearim. Word soon reached them of the utter destruction the Israelites were leaving in their wake. These “invaders” didn’t take captives, they didn’t subdue their enemies, they didn’t demand that they pledge their allegiance to their conqueror. No, they destroyed men, women and children and leveled the cities.

We can’t help but grudgingly admire the Hivites for their sound reasoning. They had no doubt but what in a matter of days or weeks they too would be but another statistic in the annals of the conquest of Canaan. Even the prospect of joining up with powerful neighboring kings and fighting for freedom didn’t attract them. They were thoroughly convinced of two things: First, to survive they would have to ally themselves with the invading nation, and second, this wouldn’t be possible through normal diplomatic channels; they would have to resort to subterfuge.

Thus it was that one day the Israelite sentinels cried out the warning: “A small company of men approaching camp!” Trumpets blared, calling men to battle stations.

The men who were approaching camp were coming slowly, shuffling. They were raggedly dressed and had a haggard look. Seeing the heavily armed guards awaiting them, they dismounted from their tottering donkeys and weakly raised their arms in supplication, showing they were disarmed and coming in peace. One of the men began rummaging through his knapsack and produced a rolled up parchment. Falling on his knees, he inched his way forward, offering what was obviously a precious document, to the nearest guard.

Somewhat chagrined by these clearly inoffensive strangers, the burly guards sheathed their swords and received the extended document. It was evident they were some sort of emissaries, probably from a distant kingdom.

Surrounded by guards, the bizarre group of strangers was led through the middle of camp, up to general headquarters where Joshua and the princes of the tribes of Israel formulated policy for the entire body.

An urgent request was sent out for polyglots who might possibly be acquainted with the language of these strangers. It wasn’t until an aged Egyptian, now a proselyte, who

had spent many years travelling through Canaan, tried his tongue on the strangers that any progress was made.

Scarcely giving the translator time to render their words, the strangers blurted out their mission.

Translator: They say it is a great honor to be in the presence of those who worship the true God of heaven and that they bring tidings from their king.

Joshua: Tell them we want to know something about their king.

Translator: They say their king wishes for our king to read the message which he has sent.

Joshua: Tell them we will read it presently. Right now we want to know more about their king. What is his name?

Translator: They say their king rules a mighty kingdom a long, long way from here...

A prince (interrupting): Ask them, if they are emissaries from such a mighty kingdom, why they are so poorly clothed.

Interpreter: They say that when they left the presence of their great king, their clothes were new, that the now brittle wine skins were taken from freshly slain goats and that the moldy bread which they carry was taken hot out of the ovens.

Joshua: Who has the document which they brought for us? (To interpreter) Please read to us what the document says.

Translator: It says, "To the great king of the true God of heaven, greetings. The emissaries whom you have received bear my good tidings, as well as my signet, which they are empowered to affix to any document that would establish a permanent peace between our kingdoms."

Joshua: Is that all?

Translator: That is all.

Joshua: Is there no signature?

Translator: There is no signature.

A prince: This whole thing seems fishy to me. These men won't say where they're from and their king doesn't so much as sign his name to an official document."

Joshua (to men): We'd like to know exactly where you're from, that is, the name of your country and the name of your king.

Interpreter: They say they have traveled many, many days and that their king is a man of peace, that he wants to sign a mutual non-aggression pact with us.

A prince: What makes them think we plan on harming them if they live in a distant land?

Interpreter: They say that they worship a god of wood and stone, but that we worship the true God of heaven and He alone will triumph in this world. Therefore they want to be part of His kingdom.

A prince: That sounds good to me.

Another prince: It sounds good, but can anyone explain why they refuse to identify themselves. (To interpreter): Ask them point-blank what the name of their country is.

Interpreter (after a brief discussion with the men): All I can get out of them is that they are from a far country and desire to sign a non-aggression pact with us.

Joshua: I agree that it's strange that these men won't identify themselves, but I'm impressed by the fact that they recognize our God as superior to their idols and that they are willing to be our servants, if necessary, to be under the canopy of Jehovah. I think we can take a vote on this. How many of you men agree that we should sign a non-aggression pact with them?

A strong majority votes in favor.

Joshua (to interpreter): Tell them we have just voted to accept them as our allies. Do they have anything to say?

Interpreter: They say that if we are attacked, they are willing to come to our aid, and would like for us to do likewise for them should they be attacked.

A prince: Big deal! How will they ever come to our aid if they live out on the other end of the world?

Joshua (to princes): Can we include this mutual defense provision in our pact? All in favor, please raise your hands.

Another near majority vote.

A pact was drawn up and signed by Joshua and the princes. A copy was given to the strangers, who immediately began the long journey home.

Word of this rather strange incident spread over the entire camp. That night in one of the tents, an elder who spent many years as an aide to Moses, quietly commented to his wife, "I don't understand this non-aggression pact that was signed with an unknown country. It's so different from what Moses would have done. The first thing he always did was consult the Lord, *not his princes*, to come to a decision. I'm afraid this isn't the end of the story."

It wasn't. Within three days the entire camp was abuzz. "Have you heard? Those fellows that showed up from *a far country* several days ago actually live on the other side of that mountain up ahead. Their old clothes, brittle wine skins and moldy bread were just as fake as the day is long. I hear that Joshua and the princes are catching it from every side."

Several more days and the Israelites came upon the four cities of the Hivites. Furiously they demanded an explanation from their leaders, who, in an admirable demonstration of candor, frankly admitted to their duplicity. They calmly took the severe sentence—indeed, curse—given by the elders of Israel, that they should forever be their slaves.

They said, "We know God is with you and that you will deal with everyone as you dealt with Jerico and Ai. We would rather be your slaves than dead. Do with us as you please."

This was bad, extremely embarrassing, but the worst was yet to come. When the neighboring kings who were joining themselves together to fight against Israel heard about the disloyalty of the king of the Hivites, they were furious and decided to begin their campaign by attacking the rogue nation that had betrayed them.

As soon as the Hivites got word of what was afoot, they sent messengers to Israel asking that they honor the treaty made between them and come to their rescue. Which Israel did.

The casual Bible student may well regard the story of the Hivites as an “incident” in the conquest of Canaan. Perhaps it was only this.

On the other hand, it may have been much more than this. Once the Canaanite’s cup of sin was full and God decreed that they be destroyed, their situation was comparable to that of those who remained outside the ark once the door had been closed. Just as it would have been unthinkable for Noah to drop a rope over the side of the ark and save a few souls who insistently pounded on the hull, so it should have been unthinkable to make a pact with the idolatrous Canaanites.

We of course have no way of knowing how much the Hivite Pact influenced later events in Israel. But we do know that after a number of very successful campaigns against the Canaanites, they became more interested in living in the houses they hadn’t built and reaping the fruits of fields and vineyards they hadn’t planted. The Canaanites must have breathed a sigh of relief when they saw the Israelites beating their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks. The Lord must have been grieved.

Why did they do this?

Could it be that they discovered how useful Hivites could be as “hewers of wood and drawers of water?” Why not subdue instead of destroying? Not only would it be more merciful, but it would bring definite side benefits. It would be a simple matter of replacing a divine command with a human pact.

The Hivites with whom the Israelites made a pact were idolaters, as were other peoples whom they spared.

The thought of a young man or woman suffering an accident that will maim, or at least restrict his or her usefulness, for the rest of their lives is distressing. It is even more distressing when the “accident” is spiritual.

Contrary to natural accidents, which usually draw a lot of attention, spiritual accidents can easily go practically unnoticed—for two reasons: 1) They take place within the heart, and 2) we aren’t alert to the subtle symptoms that tell us that something is happening.

Youth, the time during which a permanent character is formed, can be compared to the conquest of Canaan. It is a time to conquer and take possession. Kings (temptations) that aren’t dealt with during youth will have a special power over this youth when he becomes an adult. They will be to him what the Hivites and other Canaanite kings not destroyed were to the Israelites.

Happy the youth that destroys the Hivites and all other pagan kings during youth—the years of conquest. Instead of having to continually deal with the attacks of pagan kings, they have time to be useful. Men who are struggling with pagan kings make very poor leaders. (In fact, they don’t usually get to be leaders.)

It should never be supposed that if Israel would have faithfully fulfilled God’s command to eliminate the Canaanites that that would have put them back into Eden, into a no-temptation situation. They would still have had struggles; they would have had to battle enemies, but their history would have borne less resemblance to a roller coaster. Similarly a youth who is faithful during the years of conquest will still

encounter struggles and temptations, but they will not be a full-time occupation. He will have time to be useful.

Cain asked, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” We older brothers and sisters may unconsciously ask, “Am I my youth brother or sister’s keeper?” We feel that we’re on different wave lengths and therefore aren’t in a position to get a good reading of what is going on in their hearts.

Wrong. Totally wrong. No one is in a better position to zoom in on their hearts than we, for we, unlike they, have walked this road and are perfectly aware of the many Hivite kings that wish to make a pact with youth.

There are those—adults—who somewhat blithely accept the inevitability of a “fool’s hill” in youth’s life. So when they see a youth behaving himself somewhat unseemly, they shrug it off as something they all have to go through, as growing pains. What they don’t realize is that that youth is probably being visited by the Hivite emissaries. And like Joshua, instead of seeking the Lord’s face, flesh and blood is being consulted. A non-aggression pact is being made with the Hivite king.

When it’s all said and done, there will be no bloody face, no trip to the hospital in an ambulance, no surgery, no trying to eat at the table for the first time with blind eyes. What there will be, though, is a pact with a heathen king, a non-aggression pact. This means that the life of this youth, and later as an adult, will be an ongoing struggle with this king just to survive, never mind to be useful in the Kingdom.

We can’t afford this kind of causalities. We can’t have youth risking their eyes because they’re unwilling to wear safety glasses, or their usefulness because they are negotiating with Hivite emissaries.

The price that we are paying for neglecting our youth is entirely too high—far higher than we think. We say that our youth are the church of tomorrow. The strength of that church will be directly proportional to the love and interest which we show for our youth today, for it is today that their character is being formed. ▲

Your Brazilian Brother Writes

by Roberto Amorim

My Conversion Experience

I was born on August 12, 1961, in the state of Minas Gerais. My parents were Catholics and we were 10 children. In 1967 we moved to Curitiba, in the southern state of Paraná.

My mother taught us children from little on up that we should go to mass every Sunday. My parents are from a traditional Catholic family and my mother has two brothers who are priests and two sisters who are nuns.

When I was 14 years old, the Baptists gave me a Bible and I began to go to their services, much to my parents displeasure. I kept this up for two years, when my twin

brother and I decided to study for the priesthood in a Catholic seminary. Needless to say, my parents were thrilled with our decision, and for me this was a new experience.

I became quite rebellious in the seminary. What the priests tried to teach me didn't make sense and a lot of what they said was a direct contradiction of what I had learned from the Baptists. Not only was I uneasy about all this, but I felt a deep anguish in my heart. Even though it made my parents quite unhappy, I decided to drop out of the seminary.

Soon after this I joined the army and began to serve in Brasília. During this period of my life I laid religion aside. I didn't want to have anything to do with God or His Holy Spirit. I gave myself over to the world, to drinking and to smoking. When I had it in for someone, I would go out of my way to make his life miserable.

After I got out of the army, I returned to Curitiba and a year later I learned to know the young lady who was to become my wife. We went together for a year and then we got married. Marriage didn't change me and I still wanted to have my way in everything. I wanted my wife to be happy, but at the same time I kept on running around with other women; I drank, smoked, lied and was constantly at odds with someone. I thought that to get ahead in life I would have to fight for my own rights. During eight years we were constantly on the move because of my work. In 1991 we returned to Curitiba and then I received a job offer to work in Goiânia the following year.

Before we left for Goiânia we decided to spend Christmas of '91 with one of my sisters. We were all together when a terrible thing took place. One of my brothers, who had mental problems, lost control of himself and killed another brother who was then 20 years old. I had never witnessed such a tragedy in my life of someone being stabbed to death, not even during the time I was in the army. I rushed my brother, who was still breathing, to the hospital, but he died an hour later.

February found me in Goiânia working for an American company. I was the sales supervisor for the states of Goiás, Minas Gerais and Mato Grosso. I had a number of salesmen working under me, but something had changed in my life. I kept asking people why they thought that tragedy had taken place and what we could have done to avoid it. I went to different churches in Goiânia to see if someone could answer my questions. A number of times I went to a spiritist church. I tried going to different evangelical churches, and even to the Mormons.

One day in a meeting with my salesmen, I brought up this subject and said that it looked like there wasn't a single church that could answer the questions that were troubling me. One of my salesmen, by the name of Benedito, said that he knew of one that might have the answers.

Immediately I became interested and asked what church that might be. He told me that during the time he lived in the U.S. He learned to know a people that the locals called *The People of God*. That sounded strange to me and so I asked what the reason for this was. He said it was because of the way they dressed. Everyone dressed simply, the women always wore dresses and a head covering; the men had beards and he never

heard that they got into fights or quarrels. When I heard this explanation I laughed. I told him that I wouldn't be going to the U.S., because if that was the only place that God had a people, then something was wrong.

Time went by and this salesman spent some time in the Rio Verde area. When he returned, he told me that the very same kind of people he had learned to know in the U.S. also lived in that area. Curiosity got the best of me and I quickly decided to go to Rio Verde to try and sell our product.

On the second day I went to the local co-op. One of the supervisors I talked with gave me his impressions of this people. He said, "They are a separate people, a good people, that don't fight or quarrel. Without a doubt they are the same kind of people that your salesman told you about."

I asked the man how to get to the Colony and then drove out as fast as I could. I spoke to Min. Mark Loewen and told him of my desire to learn to know someone who could answer some of my questions. He gave me Cameron Goertzen's address, who was then the missionary in Goiânia. The following week I looked him up.

During three months I attended services in the mission church. Sometimes it seemed my head was swimming with all the questions and answers I had to think about.

Then the company I worked for decided to shut down operations in Goiânia and I was again transferred to Curitiba. I received some letters from the brethren in Goiás, but I didn't answer them.

During this time my heart wasn't at rest and I was extremely irritable. I began going to services in an evangelical church. Also I quit my job and began working in a soft drink factory. For a while things seemed to be going better and because there wasn't that constant turmoil, I figured I was at peace with God. But I wasn't. Within I was still sinning like always; my desires were unholy. Because of all this I began to fall into depression.

The year 1993 rolled around and I felt like I had a ton of stones weighing on my heart. I felt awful and I knew something had to change and in my heart there seemed to be a fire that wanted to get rid of all the dross. I began looking up people whom I had harmed and asked their forgiveness. Also I started reading the Bible and the only time I felt any peace at all was when I was meditating on spiritual things. My wife thought I had lost my mind.

One evening during the third week of May the weight on my heart became more than I could bear. Even though I had gone back and straightened things up with everyone whom I had hurt, I still felt a big, burning lump in my breast, like an avocado seed. I knelt down in the bathroom and cried to God. I asked Him to pardon my sins and told Him that if He wanted to take my life He could do so, for there was no reason to continue this life without Him. I told Him that I loved Him from the bottom of my heart for all He had done for me, for having sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for me, and promised that from that day forward I would give myself only unto Him, and to no other. All this I promised if only He would relieve me of my torment.

When I finished that prayer, I felt as if I had been anesthetized, my body felt numb. I

went to bed and slept. When I awoke my spirit was no longer afflicted. What I felt was a feeling of peace and joy, and a strong desire to live only for Him.

I ask the brethren to pray for me, for your prayers are very precious to me. May God bless us.

[On May 28, Roberto was baptized, thus becoming our first member in the large city of Curitiba of some two million souls, where he lives with his wife and three children.

At present Roberto has his own pest control business. He specializes in commercial establishments, which includes hotels, restaurants, storage areas.

Roberto speaks English and if you ever get an urge to call him some evening (he's on the job during the day), the number is 011 55 41 242 7389.] ▲

Zigzagging Around

How Do You Feel About Questions?

Have you ever listened to a speech, or read an article, that was just loaded to the gills with questions? Did the speaker or writer try to make his or her point with all sorts of questions? Instead of positive statements, was there an endless series of questions?

The question is: are a whole series of questions more impressive than just normal speech? Or do too many questions make you wonder if the writer or speaker doesn't know what to say for sure? And that he writes or says it anyways?

Would you agree with me that questions are like salt that is sprinkled on potatoes, that it is possible to overdo a good thing? And that when overdone it turns you off?

Is that how you feel about this little article? Would you believe me if I told you that even I am thoroughly fed up with it too?

Any more questions? ▲

The Conscientious Debtor

[I ran across this little letter in our local co-op paper. It was received by the Businessmen's Credit Bureau in Carazinho, in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul. The Bureau made copies of the letter and sent it to all of the writer's creditors.]

Gentlemen:

This is the eighth letter I have received from your collecting agency...

I am fully aware that my payments aren't up to date. It happens that I am owing other businesses that are also expecting to be paid.

However, my monthly income is such that I can make only two payments each month. Everything else gets pushed over to the following month.

I am convinced that I'm not being unfair, for I'm not like some people who will pay only certain businesses and make the others wait. No way!

Every month when I get my pay check, I write the name of each of my creditors on little slips of paper and roll them into a tight wad, which I place in a basket.

Then, while looking the other way, I reach into the basket and retrieve two paper wads. They are the lucky ones who will get their portion of my precious money that month. For everyone else, the word is patience. Theirs will have to wait for another month.

Gentlemen, I can assure you that every month your business shows up in my little basket. If you haven't gotten your money yet, it's a simple matter of bad luck.

In conclusion I want to leave a word of warning: If you gentlemen keep on with this bad habit of sending me insolent and threatening letters, I shall be obligated to remove your name from my monthly drawings. ▲

Better Safe Than...

Sayings, maxims, adages, proverbs, call them what you will, are very much a part of our daily communication. In fact, they make a strong contribution to the richness of a language. The English language has borrowed sayings from many other peoples and cultures, including from native Americans. (Is that the politically correct way of saying that?)

The right saying, used at the right time, can be both powerful and devastating, depending on the situation. Conversely, the right saying, misquoted, can be...well, most anything, including hilarious.

A grade school teacher wanted to test her small students' knowledge of popular sayings. She wrote the first part of the saying and they filled in the rest (shown in italics):

Better safe than...*punch a 5th grader.*

Strike while the...*bug is close.*

It's always darkest before...*daylight savings time.*

You can lead a horse to water but... *how?*

A miss is as good as a...*mister.*

You can't teach an old dog new... *math.*

If you lie down with dogs, you'll... *stink in the morning.*

The pen is mightier than the...*pigs.*

An idle mind is...*the best way to relax.*

Where there's smoke there's... *pollution*

Happy the bride who...*gets all the presents.*

A penny saved is...*not much*.

Two's company, three's...*the musketeers*.

Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, cry and...*you have to blow your nose*.

Children should be seen and not... *spanked or grounded*.

When the blind lead the blind...*get out of the way*. ▲

Learning To Know Brazil

Soybeans in the State of Mato Grosso

If you take a look at the above map, right in the middle you'll find the state of Mato Grosso. It doesn't look too big on paper, but put it down on solid earth and it's just a tad bigger than the combined area of Kansas and Texas. (If such a union should ever take place, the resulting state would be known as Kanxas. The southern part of the state would continue to brag about being the biggest and best. The northern part of the state would quietly prove they were right.) The population of Mato Grosso is approximately that of Kansas.

Just as a refresher, a number of families from the Colony have started a settlement in Mato Grosso.

EXAME Magazine ran a cover story on Blairo Maggi, the largest soybean farmer in the state of Mato Grosso. And in the world.

He is more than a farmer. He has to be. Even though Maggi is only 44 years old, he has learned a tremendously important lesson in the world of commerce: If you want to sure enough get things done, don't depend on the government. Do it yourself.

Speaking to EXAME, leaning over a large map and drawing imaginary lines, we get an idea of the world in which Maggi lives: "The waterway begins here and goes all the way to the Amazonas. We want to build two more. Now over here is where the railroad will come through to the southern part of the state. The BR-163 highway needs to be asphalted and then we'll have a hookup between Cuiabá and Santarém. That's where we'll ship our grain out. Do you know how many tonnes (metric ton of 2,200 pounds) of grain Brazil produces annually? Eighty-five million tonnes. We have the potential to produce that much in the state of Mato Grosso alone. But to do it, we will have to build a highway right over here..."

Maggi plants 40,000 hectares—100,000 acres—of soybeans. He continues: "Brazil and Africa still have land that can be opened in areas that have a good climate. If all we do is complain, we'll turn into an Africa. We over here prefer to work."

Of the 85 million tonnes of grain produced annually in Brazil, 31 million are soybeans. That is 27% of the international market. The US produces 55%, twice as much as Brazil. It remains to be seen how long this 2:1 ratio will continue. Brazil is coming up with a new breed of farmers. They are industrious men and women (that's right), often with a degree in agronomy and/or business administration. Contrary



to their N American counterpart who must purchase expensive land from smaller operators to enlarge their own operation, these men have at their disposal hundreds of thousands of acres of cheap land that have never been in production.

When asked what he thought about transgenic soybeans, Maggi answered that he has nothing against them, but rather is in favor of these varieties. Why then doesn't he plant transgenic beans? Because conventional beans are a hot item in Europe and parts of Asia. He says that never has he sold more beans on the European market than today, often with a 5% premium.

One of the greatest challenges Maggi faces is getting his product to market. It's true that there is an abundance of rivers, but there is also an abundance of environmentalists prepared to fight against progress just as hard as Maggi fights to create progress. (Some of you American farmers may end up falling in love with those pesky environmentalists. At least the ones in Brazil.)

Another problem is the difficulty of building ports on rivers where the water level varies up to 14 meters between the rainy and dry season. The solution has been to build floating facilities that adapt to the water level variations.

Also special barges had to be made that would take the severe pounding of immense

logs floating on the rivers. These barges must have a very shallow draft for at places the rivers are only a meter deep.

The tugs used to propel the barges are expensive, approximately five million dollars each, but they are equipped with the most modern navigational paraphernalia available.

There are those who are critical of big operators like Maggi. It should be remembered, however, that in developing countries, men like Maggi operate like a private government. They do what the government won't do—and much more efficiently. Without these big operators, large areas of Brazil would possibly remain undeveloped for years to come.

To resist big operators is like resisting the wind. They're here to stay. A relatively honest private enterprise, no matter how big, is much better than a dishonest government. Indirectly, if not directly, small operators will reap benefits from the progress brought on by the big boys.

Or will they simply shove the small operators out of existence? Maybe, but not likely. Throughout the free world big business is beginning to assume some of the functions of government. It used to be that governments told business what to do. More and more, big business is calling the cards, with the government limiting itself to more of a judiciary role. It sets and enforces general guidelines. It's very true that for the little man to survive surrounded by big business will not always be easy. When a community is invaded by Wal-Mart, some businesses go under; others survive. In farming the same thing will happen.

And so, does Mato Grosso have anything to offer to the Mennonites? Doubtlessly. The settlement in Boa Esperança has proved that good crops can be raised. The problem—the big problem—is transportation. Because of poor roads, lime, fertilizer, seed, etc., are expensive, while their crops must be sold below the going market value. The brethren there have good hopes of a highway coming right through, or nearby, their settlement in the near future. Electricity should follow the road. ▲

This & That

On May 1 a group of men went to the state of Roraima to check out the possibilities of buying land.

On May 2 Marcelo & Juliana Passos had a girl, Letícia.

May 7 was Delton Holdeman & Amy Stoltzfus' wedding.

May 11 was the Rio Verdinho School's end-of-the year program. The graduate was Verlyn Martin. The following day was their play day.

Maxine Loewen, who teaches school in the US, is spending her vacation here with her family.

May 18 was the Monte Alegre School program. The graduates : Cheyanne, Carman & Celma Loewen's daughter; Emily, Elias & Colleen Stoltzfus' daughter; Jakelline, Adejenes & Aparecida Lima's daughter; Julia, Myron & Martha Kramer's daughter;

Kendall, Jesse & Delores Loewen's son; Kimberly, Tim & Deanna Burns' daughter; Leslie, João & Charlene Souto's son; Richard, Doug & Celina Ferrell's son; Roseane, Stephen & Dete Kramer's daughter; Starla, Harold & Irene Holdeman's daughter; Winfield, Caleb & Joan Holdeman's son. Play day was on May 19.

May 20 some of the Colony youth, as well as some adults, hired a bus to take them to the São Simão lake for an outing.

Susan Koehn, the teacher for the missionary children in Patos, spent a few days on the Colony, together with her brother Loren, who came to accompany her home.

Ashley Janae was born on May 21 and is now Bill & Gracie Miller's little girl. Talking about some exciiiiited people.

Paula Schultz and Amy Wiens from the US are visiting the Colony.

Different ones from the Colony were in Curitiba during the short series of meetings conducted by Min. Elias Stoltzfus, when Roberto Amorim was baptized.

Wanda, daughter of Stanley & Mary Schultz, is spending some time in the US helping Cris, Mrs. Clarence Giesbrecht, from Hillsboro, KS, take care of her new baby .

May 30 Wendy, daughter of Eldon & Bonnie Penner, returned after teaching school in the US for a term. She will be teaching in the Rio Verdinho School next year.

The oldest woman in Brazil, Maria do Carmo Gerônimo, an erstwhile slave, died at 129 years of age. In 1997 she was introduced to the pope during his visit to this country. Some of you who have visited Brazil have flown VASP airlines. 1,8 billion dollars in debt, without the slightest chance of getting out, Wagner Canhedo, the owner, is being forced to sell. Among the prospective buyers is the conference of the Assembly of God churches. If those folks would ask me what I thought about the deal, I'd tell them that it's going to take more than talking in tongues to pull that business out of its nosedive.

Talking about airlines, Transbrasil and TAM have fused (and should be known as Tambrasil). They in turn will probably be flying with Varig. This should eliminate some of the long layovers in São Paulo when flying to Brazil.

Can someone explain this one to me? Why is it that in the US, a country with harsh winters, convertibles are in style? While in Brazil, with its tropical climate, they are almost nonexistent?

During a recent cold snap, several of the parrots that were raised in the house and have now returned to the wild, did their best to get into the house.

For you folks who work with computers, the 250 MB USB Iomega Zip drive comes with a software called QuikSync, which, when activated, backs up files in real time from a specified directory (normally My Documents) as they are changed.

For maximum protection, all data files need to be installed in subdirectories in My Documents. 100 MG disks can also be used on this drive. Check if you have a USB port before parting with 149 bucks.

Sun Microsystems has come up with some excellent shareware to compete with Bill Gate's Microsoft Office. Here in Brazil we pick up Star Office—that's what it's called—for around five dollars. I feel the word processor is superior to MS Word. Proof of this is that I have ditched Bill's program. ▲