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Editorial

The Plastic Surgeon

To say that a plastic surgeon runs a body shop might be just a bit too tongue-in-cheek, yet it explains it so well. A plastic surgeon's job is "to remodel, repair, or restore body parts" (AHD). That pretty much describes the work of a mechanic in a body shop, except that he does have at his disposal a better supply of new and used parts for transplants.

Plastic surgeons are medical doctors who have graduated from an accredited school of medicine, followed by three years of residency in general surgery, and then an additional two years in plastic surgery. Add the eight years of grade school, four of high school, four of premed, four of medical school, and five of residency, and the total is 25 years of study. That should make for competency.

It must. In times of war (and for years afterwards) they reconstruct horribly mutilated bodies. So great is the devastation that at times they must first heal the patient's mind, restoring his will to live, so that his body will respond to the treatment. The same can be true of accident victims. In the more serious cases the patient seldom is "restored," but simply made "presentable."

Most of today's plastic surgeons seldom, if ever, see the kind of cases we just described. They are hi-tech men who photograph their patients' features and then show them the digitalized image on a computer screen. With rapid movements and clicks of the mouse, the surgeon changes the shape of the nose or the contour of the mouth, and asks, "Now, do you like it better like this?... Or like this?" With a few more flicks and clicks of the mouse, he asks, "What about your chin? Would you like it better like this?"

Then, of course, there are the middle-aged patients who want to be rid of their wrinkles and other signs of aging. They dig deep into savings, or borrow heavily in the bank, in an attempt to turn the clock back a few years.

Finally, there are those cases in which the surgeon is expected to recreate the patient,

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to alter his features to where he is unrecognizable, even to close friends. Security agencies at times request such surgeries for defectors and witnesses in organized crime cases whose lives are in jeopardy. Criminals also resort to this subterfuge to assure their anonymity and stay out of the clutches of the law.

We admire these dedicated surgeons who give burn victims a chance to have at least a semblance to a normal life, who reconstruct facial features that have been blown away in an explosion. Truly theirs is a noble work as they help those who entered life with a less than perfect body to have a chance at normalcy, and those who met with misfortune during the course of life, to be restored, at least to a degree.

For nearly six thousand years (and still today in many parts of the world) there were no body shops. It's hard to imagine what people must have looked like, say five hundred or a thousand years ago. Let's notice:

There were no dentists. So as teeth decayed, or were accidentally damaged or knocked out, there was no restoration work, no fillings, no bridges, no dentures. Needless to say, there were no braces for protruding or misaligned teeth. Colgate smiles, especially after middle age, must have been rare indeed.

Broken bones. Without x-rays, pins and plates, casts and modern techniques for reducing fractures, there must have been a lot of people with crooked limbs, or worse, with dangling limbs.

Cuts. Have you ever thought what we would look like today if all of our more serious cuts had merely been bandaged up, and not sutured? Even with all the safety devices and procedures that help us avoid accidents, we would still be a scarred-up people. What about those people back then, when life was much more precarious, when there were no antibiotics and infection often set in, creating dreadful scars? Think of what the male population must have looked like after war when combat was still hand-to-hand.

Diseases. Smallpox, for example. It must have been a terrible thing for a smallpox epidemic to hit a village or town. Several months later cemeteries were humped with new graves and faces dented with new craters. In the space of several weeks, erstwhile handsome young men and attractive young girls were divested of their beauty. For the rest of their lives.

Maybe those were the good old days, but it's pretty hard to drum up any amount of enthusiasm for going back to the kind of situation we have just described. Nor are we suggesting we shouldn't wear braces to correct misaligned teeth or resort to corrective surgery for physical problems. That's not what this article is about.

Life wasn't easy for those folks back then, but we have reason to believe that they possessed at least one virtue that today is high on the endangered species list. At least in developed nations. Those people, whether through self-discipline or the iron hand of unblinking circumstances, accepted themselves pretty much as they were. They accepted the blows—the hard blows—of life with a serenity, a resignation, that permitted them to continue life in an imperfect state.

The grace to have a happy, fulfilling life in spite of an imperfection or handicap is truly inspiring.

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My shop teacher, Mr. Richard Galle (whom some of you readers knew) liked to tell the story of a college chum who was married to an absolutely homely girl. One day a number of the young men were together and the husband of this girl made the comment, “I’m married to the most beautiful girl in the world.” Mr. Galle says there were no guffaws, but that the young men wholeheartedly agreed with him. Why? Because of her personality. So outstanding was her personality that it outshone her homeliness to where she was actually considered beautiful.

I saw Pete Loewen with teeth in his mouth only one time (the rest of the time they were in his wife’s purse). A cheerful, ebullient man, he didn’t purse his lips or hold his hand in front of his mouth when gleefully laughing about something. It didn’t bother him to not have teeth, nor did it bother anyone else. Although he lived here only several years before being killed in an automobile accident nearly 28 years ago, people still remember and talk about him.

When I had my store, one of my customers had a speech defect which gave his voice an abrasive, nasalized tone. Since it was hard to understand him, he would talk loudly. People would turn to look, first because of his different voice, and then keep on looking because he was such an interesting person.

Another customer was deaf and dumb. Usually when coming to the store, he would be carrying his little terrier. Graphically, and with a series of guttural noises, he would explain what his dog’s problem was. I soon learned there was really nothing wrong with the dog, so one c.c. of a vitamin complex in the muscle would make them both happy. This fellow fixed stoves for a living. I doubt if his impairment was any hinderance to his job efficiency, nor did it keep him from having a host of friends.

It would be interesting to sit down with a dozen of you readers and spend an evening listening to you tell about people who you know who are perfectly normal, in spite of being imperfect and abnormal. They speak with a lisp, they stutter, they are overweight or underweight, too short, too tall, they have no outward beauty, yet you love being with them. In fact, you don’t even realize they are imperfect.

This world is full of plastic surgeons. No, no, not the kind that wears a surgical gown, wields a scalpel and redoes noses, chins and other body parts. We’re talking about the stacks of self-help books available on every kind of emotional or personal problem imaginable, the health products advertised to retard or reverse the ravages of age, the fitness academies and all the exercising gadgets available to acquire or maintain a more perfect body, the radical sports that are practiced to gain a new dimension to life, the drugs—both illegal and prescribed—that are being taken in an attempt to make an improvement on unpleasant reality.

We readily agree that there are situations in which some of what has just been mentioned can be useful. It is when children, young people, middle-aged and the aged resort to unnecessary or extreme practices, in an attempt to make of themselves what they aren’t, that the Klaxon should sound.

It is God’s plan that childhood be a time of innocence, in a broad sense. Historically children have been shielded, even by many non-religious adults, from the coarser side of life.

This has changed. A deliberate effort is being made to acquaint them with the “facts” of life, that which their grandparents didn’t know or discuss until they got married. Reader’s Digest and other magazines print “cute” little things these children utter in their “innocency.” We chuckle, when we should weep. Yes, we should weep, for these young children have had their mental and emotional structure altered by parents, educators and entertainers who want them to develop faster, learn faster, achieve faster, mature faster. Viciously flouting the basic laws of nature, these Dr. Jekylls take innocent children and scar and maim them for life by forcing them to know what they shouldn’t know and be what they shouldn’t be.

Teenagers are the hardest hit. Society and the media have set a standard of perfection that few can attain. The truth of the matter is that not everyone has been born with perfect features, with a charming personality, with the ability to be a straight A student in school. Yet these young people are made to feel that these are all indispensable ingredients found in the recipe to happiness.

There are those who have both the emotional and financial resources to make changes, some radical, in their appearance and personality. They manage to convince others, and possibly themselves, that they are happy.

The majority, however, are doomed to live with their imperfections. These all too often resort to reverse therapy. They deliberately create imperfections to prove that “imperfect is cool.”

Why would someone choose to speak with a lisp because of a pierced tongue?

Why would a young person, especially a young lady, mar her body with tattoos?

Why wear faded, torn blue jeans in public places?

Why...?

It seems that on each corner the “plastic surgeons” of this world have hung out their shingle. Each one specializes in a particular type of surgery that promises to correct the annoying defects that plague both young and old. Sadly, those who pay—yes, they pay dearly—for the services of these surgeons, cannot be called patients, but victims. Thus when you walk down the street and see these individuals, remember that they are victims of the plastic surgeons of this world. This is the price they are paying for what they believe will bring happiness.

The perfection of this world doesn’t bring happiness. Nor does exaggerated imperfection.

The people we’re talking about aren’t underprivileged, undereducated or underachievers. Often they come from middle class homes, have a good education and hold down a good job. But they aren’t happy.

As lookers-on, we have no difficulty in seeing through their façade and declaring them chronically unhappy.

Those same people whom we have just described are just as observant as we are. When they see Mennonites walking down the street with their distinctive garb and mannerisms, they also reach their conclusions. It would be most interesting to hear their comments, to read an article written about us. What would we hear? What would we read?

We are going to do some guessing from here on, so feel free to disagree. We may be all wrong. And then we may not be totally off...

There is a good chance that the people we have just described understand us just as well as we understand them. As they observe us walking down the street, or on the job, they decide if we are happy or not...

The “plastic surgeons” we have described are no respecter of persons. Everyone is welcome in their office, and on their operating table, including Mennonites.

And now for the question: Do you suppose these “doctors” get much business from the Mennonites? The answer is really quite simple. Are Mennonites a happy people *the way they are*? If they are, those doctors aren’t getting any Mennonite business. On the other hand, if they aren’t, they will seek the services of these professionals.

Those people on the street don’t have a lot of difficulty in telling if we are happy. If *you* are happy. Someone who is truly happy, who has accepted life the way it is, acts different than someone who pays the plastic surgeon an occasional visit. No, there won’t be any piercings or tattoos. There will be just little indicators here and there. In our congregations, those who seek the services of plastic surgeons stick out. They look just a little bit different and act just a little bit different.

The people on the street can sense this difference. We can’t help but believe that they are impressed when they see a Christian, young or old, who is happy in spite of visible imperfections. It is this kind of Christians who make up the backbone of the church and her many programs.

We don’t know if Jesus was handsome. We do know that “He [was] despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” He may have looked something like Abraham Lincoln. Surely His back must have been scarred from the scourging which He took, and we know for sure that He has scars in His hands, His feet and His side.

Yet He is perfect. ▲

Life in Brazil

Weddings

If you were asked to write a one-page essay on weddings, what would you write? (Try it!) Imagine you are trying to describe a wedding to someone totally unfamiliar with our culture, would a page be enough?

Folks, I can guarantee you that it takes more than one page to describe a wedding on the settlement in Mato Grosso. Especially when the groom is from the US.

Just a bit of history.

Denton & Emma Burns and children Elizabeth, Mary, Mim and Timothy, together with several other families, arrived in Brazil on November 16, 1968. They moved to what is now the Colony on June 1, 1969, after a preliminary stay in Anápolis.

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Reno & Marilyn Hibner and children, Glenn, Glenda, Arlo and Calvin, arrived on the Colony on October 15, 1970. Glenn was 20 at the time.

The Dan & Clara Coblentz family and children, Jonathan, Samuel, Thomas, William and Rebecca, were part of the second wave of immigrants (the Ohio folks) that arrived on November, 6, of 69. Their son Samuel was 10 years old.

Ura & Rosella Yoder and children, Erma, Dwayne, Marlene, James and Martha moved to the Colony on December 4, 1971 (Paul Ray came a year later, after finishing his service). Erma was 21 at the time.

Now a quick lesson in Biblical math. One plus one make one. On June 6, 1971, Glenn Hibner and Elizabeth Burns became one, which was the first wedding on the Colony (that's material for another story). On February 6, 1977, Samuel Coblentz and Erma Yoder became one.

Glenn & Elizabeth had five children. Brenda was born on March 27, 1978, and in August of 96 they moved to Mato Grosso.

When Dan & Clara decided to move back to the US, Sam wasn't married, but wanted to be, and knew to whom, The last thing he wanted to do was leave Erma in Brazil, so he up and marries her and they both moved to the US. On April 11, 1978, Frank was born.

In July, 1992 Sam & Erma and Frank returned to Brazil to be missionaries in the town of Patos. Since Frank's Grandpa Coblentz owned land in Mato Grosso too, Frank ended up spending some time there... When Sam & Erma finished their mission term, they, together with Frank returned to the US, but...

I'm sure I don't know the whole story. All I know is that one bright Sunday morning they were announced. He there and she here, which gets us to our $1+1=1$ story.

It's quite elementary that if Frank was to get married in Brazil, he would have to come to Brazil. The Brazilian Consulate didn't seem to see through that bit of logic and denied his request for a visa. Now talking about some shook-up people. Both there and here. The travel agency he was working through applied for a visa in another consulate that was more pro-marriage and they granted him his visa, with very little time to spare.

But that wasn't the end of the problems. Brenda has dual citizenship, but in Brazil she is considered Brazilian. Frank is an American, so that makes for an international marriage. There are certain legal requirements that must be met in this type of situation. Once again it looked like things might go sour, but the fellow they were dealing with in the courthouse wasn't about to be guilty of putting asunder that which God wanted to join together, so he bent over backwards to make things work. And in the end they did.

Then there was the little problem (which the folks from Mato Grosso declared up and down wasn't a problem) of how a settlement of seven families would put up some 75 visitors who wanted to be present at the wedding.

Lastly there was the little problem of getting to the wedding. One way it's 1,100 km of highway and 230 of dirt. The other way is shorter, 600 of pavement and 320 of dirt, and considerably worse.

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As it turned out, 6 or 7 vehicles ended up making the trip and a chartered bus (an Expresso Nacional bus that some of you BN Tour visitors are acquainted with). Even there we ran into a problem. Their buses run only on highway, so once it got to Sorriso, when the dirt begins, a local, less luxurious bus, took the passengers the rest of the way.

Now we will listen to what John & Dorothy Burns from Tennessee, and Faith Becker, from Rio Verde, have to say about the wedding. John & Faith are uncle and aunt to the bride. John & Dorothy flew into Cuiabá, the capital of the state of Mato Grosso. Faith went on the bus.

Faith: Sept. 30. The bus left the Monte Alegre church at 4:20 a.m. The passengers were: Bert & Ada Coblentz; João & Charlene Souto and children Keila and Norman; Daniel & Betty Martin and children Arthur and Yvonne; Tim & Deanna Burns and children Kemberly, Lorinda and Marsha; Harold & Irene Holdeman and children Steve and Starla; Wanda Schultz; Luciene Rosa; Raquel Garcia; Adriana Soares; Roseanne Yoder; Dustin Schultz; Duane Miller; Wendy, Harley and Issac Penner; Micha Dirkson; Jessica, Barbie and Carolyn Dirks; and myself. We stopped at the bus station in Rio Verde and picked up Eliamar Silva, making a total of 35 passengers and two bus drivers.

By 6 o'clock we were at Jataí and it was beginning to get light. At 8:45 we stopped for breakfast. Soon we crossed the Araguaia River, which is the Goiás/Mato Grosso line.

In the town of Santa Rita do Araguaia the public phone booths are fiberglass shelters resembling the local wildlife, which includes macaws, cranes, and many other native birds.

We saw enormous farms. One of them, called El Dorado São Paulo, has palm trees planted along the road for about 10 km. All at once we would begin to head down into a deep valley on a long series of curves. After Rondonópolis the traffic became very intense. In a 60 km stretch I counted 216 trucks and busses. We had lunch in São Pedro da Sepa. It was a *rodízio* (where they serve all the grilled meat the customer can hold), which came to US\$3,65 per person. Restaurants never charge bus drivers.

We got to Cuiabá at 3:10 p.m. The place was HOT—43°C, 109°F. The bus was serviced and fueled up and we left at 4:30. The air conditioner on the bus simply couldn't put out enough cold air to keep us comfortable.

At 10:10 that evening we got to Sorriso, where we spent the night in cabins that had been reserved...

John: Sept. 27. We, together with our married children, Jonathan & Lisa Toews, and his folks, Earl & Patricia Toews, arrived in Cuiabá at about 11:45, after a two-hour flight from São Paulo. Stan & Mary Schultz and Sergei—Mary is my sister—were waiting for us. We headed right out to the Amazonian Inn. Soon Glenn & Elizabeth drove up. We were tired out, so had showers and went to bed.

Sept. 28. The wake up call came at 6:00 a.m. We had heard that Cuiabá is very hot, but it was pleasantly cool at this time of the morning. We had a good continental breakfast and then packed out for the Boa Esperança colony.

It's a loooooong way to Sorriso. The roads are not very wide and there were very many

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big transports and some of the roads are not very good. It got quite warm, but was very bearable. There is a lot of land that has never been developed, and then there are many, many miles of vast fields, like Western Kansas. Daniel Kramer says that this area of Brazil, including the Rio Verde area, is the size of Mexico and much of it has not been developed. Some of the farms were up to 15 kms long and who knows how wide?

One area along the way was hilly and there were a number of lime quarries.

We stopped at a bus stop for lunch where they weigh your plate and charge you so much per kilo.

Near Sorriso there is a place where some brethren are moving dirt. Glenn & Elizabeth's son Kevin is working there. Glenn phoned ahead and had one of his buddies bring him to town so that he could go with us. It was election time, so there was a lot of activity in town.

At Sorriso we left the pavement and had three hours of dirt road. We stopped at Boa Esperança where Glenn got a few groceries and their mail. It had rained some so the road was not terribly dusty nor extremely rough. We got to Glenn's place in the dark. His phone isn't working, so that is a bit unhandy just when they need it so badly for making preparations.

We attended Glenn & Elizabeth's wedding in 1971, which was the first wedding in the church in Brazil, and now we are here to attend Frank & Brenda's wedding, which is the first in the congregation in Mato Grosso. Glenn had the family set up his little portable 8x8 foot office on the yard, and that is where they put us up for night. Stans slept in their van and Glenns slept in a tent. Patricia, Mrs. Earl Toews, thought it was nicer to fly through the air than on the ground. It cooled off nicely and was a very pleasant evening.

Sept 29. We made good use of the air mattresses we brought along, but Glenn & Elizabeth's mattresses let them down during the night. There is no power here, so the generator came on about 7:00 o'clock, like a wake up call. Today everybody was busy cleaning up the place. Glenn has a big drive-thru shed, so it got cleaned up and the floor graded and packed. The men all had quite a time getting the road grader going. It is a pull type, but has an engine, and they couldn't get it started. Finally they got it started by using an electric motor and belt to turn the drive shaft.

Stephen Kramer, Dan and Sam Coblentz came and got some lumber and made benches. They were not planed, so they covered them with plastic. After they got the grader going, they did some grading around the yard.

The wedding is going to be in the shed, so they moved a lot of equipment aside. Glenn built a bathroom some time ago, but only got it finished now. The water in the shower is piped through the generator's cooling tank, so it is nice and hot when the generator is running. Glenn spent quite a little time getting another generator set up. There were too many things on for the just one unit.

Sept. 30 We had rain in the night, so I was glad I had caulked some of the cracks yesterday. Glenns got soaked and their mattress deflated again. Elizabeth got the giggles, and I think the generator came on a bit earlier on that account. We are quite a

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crowd every meal, but it looks like things are in good control. Glenns have a veranda all the way around their house, which got roped off today so that it could be scrubbed. Some of the men scraped together the mud in front of the shed and hauled it off in Kevin's old hotrod (an old VW Kombi with only the chassis, engine and seats left). The mud was from the freshly graded soil. Glenn packed the shed floor with the big truck. We put up plywood to hide the shop tools, etc., and created a sort of rostrum. The plywood was then covered with white plastic. In the afternoon I made some simple tables for the food for the reception. Kevin put up Glenn's big tent in the yard. The Kramers set up the PA system.

Oct. 1. The big day! The lights came on at 6:00 and there was a lot of activity. The cat box had disappeared from the porch yesterday, and behold her time to be delivered drew nigh, so the rug on top of the freezer was the best she could find. The cat and her young were relocated to a safe place in the shed.

We put white plastic down on the shed floor, with bricks around the edges to hold it down. It really looked neat. It was cloudy and cool, but soon the sun came out. We had devotions on the porch around the veranda. We loaded a few benches and took the big truck to church. Most of the ladies missed the service, as they were preparing dinner for the many visitors.

Faith: Oct. 1. We got up early, had a good breakfast, and by 6:30 were on our way again. Our bus, which had been chartered, was one of the busses that normally makes the run to Boa Esperança. We got to the colony at 10:20 a.m. This, of course, was Sunday and they only had Sunday School, which began at 9:30.

The colony was all prepared for us. For lunch, they put all the visitor's names in a hat and each family drew a number of names. The bus then delivered everyone to the proper doorstep.

We had lunch, got ready for the wedding, and then the bus was there to pick us up again and take us to the wedding. He then drove out to a nearby woods to wait until the wedding was over, but someone went and invited him, so he came back. He seemed to really enjoy it all.

John: The youth—about 40—had the pre-sing. The youth did their practicing for the pre-sing in front of the congregation. This confused the bride's mother and she had to walk out to find out what time the wedding was supposed to start. But then at 1:30 the practice became real and the wedding was begun. Both Portuguese and English songs were sung.

Deacon Harold Holdeman had the opening and Min. Arlo Hibner had the message and married the couple. There was a short program and then we watched the couple walk all the way to the house. We congratulated them on the front porch and dinner was on the back porch, everything outside. Needless to say, the porch soon didn't look like it had been scrubbed yesterday.

Faith: They served pizza joes, chips, dill pickles, cake and ice cream. I think they counted 157 people present.

There was an early service that evening—a song service. Afterwards they served

chips and watermelon, after which everyone went to his designated place to spend the night. There were seven tents on Glenn's yard.

John: The young girls bedded down in the shed and in the back of the truck—17 of them. I think there were seven tents on the yard. The bus driver slept in the bus and the truck driver and his wife in their truck. Arlos slept in their camper. It took a while for 50 people to go through the showers.

Faith: I'm not sure, but I think we were about 60 people here at Glens for breakfast. We boarded the bus and got going by 8:30, stopping along the way to pick up some who were at other houses. We got to see where everyone lives and went around to the place where the anaconda almost gobbled up Kevin (See BN 73). I was amazed at how much land has been cleared in the area. It is sort of like our state of Goiás was 20 years ago.

We got to Boa Esperança and all had dinner together in a restaurant. It came to three US dollars a person. Johns and Jonathans joined us here for the trip to the Colony. We left there at 12:45 and got to Sorriso at 3:05 p.m. After a rest stop at a bus stop, we went to where the men are leveling land. After the project is completed, it will be the largest oil extraction plant in the world. We rode the rigs for a while, then boarded the bus and went on to Sorriso for the night.

We were up at 3:15 this morning, had breakfast and were on the bus by 4:15. We got to the Monte Alegre church at 11:30 p.m.

So ends the story of the wedding in Mato Grosso. Just a bit different, possibly, than the traditional N American wedding. Oh yes, the couple will be living in Tennessee.

Just an interesting little note before we talk about the next wedding. Sometime before leaving the US, John sent Emma Burns, his mother a letter. When they got here, I went to the post office and there were the letters he had sent. So I gave them to John and asked him to deliver his letters personally, which he did. ▲

Another Wedding

We here in Brazil have our traditional weddings, just like you folks in N America also have. Admittedly, our tradition is sort of different from yours, but it nevertheless follows the procedures set forth in the *Manual of the Politically Correct Mennonite Wedding* that people carry around in the hip pocket of their brain. So it's refreshing when someone comes along who gives a bit of originality to a wedding.

Flávio Silva de Oliveira is a member in the little Patos, Paraíba mission church, way out in northeastern Brazil.

Flávia Maria Rodrigues dos Passos is a daughter to Sebastião & Aparecida Passos, all members of the Monte Alegre Congregation.

Just a word on the names: Flávio and Flávia. Those of you who are familiar with the Spanish language know that as a general rule (with lots of exceptions), words that end in "o" are masculine and those that end in "a" are feminine. Even more interesting is the case of a one-time governor of the state of Goiás, now a federal senator. He and his

wife have identical first names: Íris. That would really validate the one plus one equals one thing.

We have said before that Brazilians are an extremely hospitable people. When they have company over, especially for a birthday party, or any kind of party for that matter, they make sure their is enough, *and plenty left over.*

Sebastião & Aparecida wanted both plenty of food and high quality food. And they managed both.

They served *galinhada*, which is rice fixed with chicken. This in itself, with the usual trimmings, would have made an A-1 meal, but he went the second mile and butchered two fatted steers. Except for the unsuitable cuts, this meat was all grilled and served at the reception.

Tim Burns was responsible for butchering the steers, cutting up and seasoning the meat, and then finally for the grilling, with a number of helpers, behind the social hall.

The grills were homemade affairs; most of them 50 gallon drums cut in half set on metal legs, with a framework over the top to hold the spits of meat. There must have been six or eight of these affairs.

Tim does a lot of grilling at get-togethers, picnics, etc. I always figured he really knew his business, but at that wedding I began to wonder. They were planning on some 700 people, and so by my calculations they should have begun grilling meat before the service started. But Tim said no, it was too early. So they had the pre-sing, and nothing. The introduction, nothing. The sermon was in full swing when Tim finally gave the word to douse the charcoal with alcohol (the kind of alcohol that some people burn in their cars). Another two three or more minutes went by while the charcoal absorbed the alcohol, and then, at last, matches were tossed into the grills.

By now there was a good sized pile of spits loaded with meat. In just a short time they were sizzling over the coals. By the time the service was over there was a good supply of grilled meat ready to be served. Not once did they run out of meat. And as happened when the multitude was fed, when they finished, there was a bunch left over.

Flávio & Flávia have returned to the Northeast, where Flávio teaches school. They had a mighty nice wedding that, I feel confident, easily fits into the standards the church tries to maintain on weddings.

A Story

Author unknown

The Invincible leader

“Tell me a story about when you were a great soldier. Tell me about one of the battles you won,” said a little boy to his grandfather.

The old man had been a colonel in the Austrian army for many years and could

recount fierce tales of conquest by his troops. But today he shook his head as he took the boy upon his knee.

“I will tell you, instead,” he said, “of the greatest battle I ever lost, which was won by braver men than mine.”

The little boy was astonished, for he thought that his grandfather’s soldiers were the bravest in the world. So he listened eagerly.

“I was commanded,” the old colonel began, “to march against a little town in the Tyrol and lay siege to it. We had been meeting stubborn resistance in that part of the country, but we felt sure that we should win because all of the advantages were on our side. My confidence, however, was arrested by a remark from a prisoner we had taken. ‘You will never take that town,’ he said, ‘for they have an Invincible Leader.’

“‘What does the fellow mean?’ I inquired of one of my staff. ‘And who is the leader of whom he speaks?’

“Nobody seemed able to answer my question, and so in case there should be some truth in the report, I doubled preparations.

“As we descended through the pass in the Alps, I saw with surprise that the cattle were still grazing in the valley and that women and children—yes, and even men—were working in the fields.

“‘Either they are not expecting us, or this is a trap to catch us,’ I thought to myself. As we drew nearer the town we passed people on the road. They smiled and greeted us with a friendly word, and then went on their way. So friendly was their attitude toward us, and so different from the usual reception given us, that my soldiers forgot they were under discipline and returned the greeting.

“Finally we reached the town and clattered up the cobble-paved streets—colors flying, horns sounding a challenge, arms in readiness. The forge of the blacksmith shop was glowing, and the smith left it to stand in the door with a number of others to watch us pass. Suddenly he waved to one of my soldiers and I heard him exclaim, ‘I knew that fellow when we were boys together at Innsbruch!’

“Women came to the windows or doorways with little babies in their arms. Some of them looked startled and held the babies closer, then went quietly on their way with their household tasks without panic or confusion. As for the boys—little fellows like you, my son,” the old man cuddled the boy in his arms; “they made us feel as though we were taking part in a glorious parade for their special amusement. They swarmed after us, whooping with delight and asking innumerable questions about the weapons we carried. Apparently they had never seen guns and swords before.

“It was impossible to keep strict discipline, and I began to feel rather foolish. My soldiers answered the questions of the children, and I saw one old warrior throw a kiss to a little golden-haired tot on a doorstep. ‘Just the size of my Lisa,’ he muttered.

“Still no sign of ambush. We rode straight to the open square on which faced the town hall. Here, if anywhere, resistance was to be expected. This is what we found. The door of the beautiful building was wide open. Pigeons flew up from the grass around

the fountain as we approached. No cannon or barricade was in sight, and my regiment, as it poured into the square, looked out of place.

“Just as I had reached the hall and my guard was drawn up at attention, an old white-haired man, who by his insignia I surmised to be the mayor, stepped forth, followed by ten men in simple peasants’ costume. They were all dignified and unabashed by the armed force before them—the most terrible soldiers of the great army of Austria.”

“And what did this old man say, in the face of your guns and your cannon?” Asked the little boy breathlessly.

“He walked down the steps, straight to my horse’s side, and with hand extended, cried, ‘Welcome, brother!’ One of my aides made a gesture as if to strike him down with his sword, but I saw by the face of the old mayor that this was no trick on his part.

“ ‘Where are your soldiers?’ I demanded.

“ ‘Soldiers? Why, don’t you know we have none!’ He replied in wonderment, as though I had said, ‘Where are your giants?’ Or ‘Where are your dwarfs?’

“ ‘But I have come to take the town.’

“ ‘Well, no one will stop you.’

“ ‘Are there none here to fight?’

“At this question, the old man’s face lit up with a rare smile that I will always remember. Often afterwards, when engaged in bloody warfare, I would suddenly see that man’s smile—and somehow, I came to hate my business. His words were simple:

“ ‘No, there is no one here to fight. We have chosen Christ for our Leader, and he taught men another way.’ ”

“What did you do then, grandfather?” Asked the little boy eagerly.

“Do you know, son,” the old soldier answered, “there seemed nothing left for us to do but to ride away, leaving the town unmolested. It was impossible to take it. If I had ordered my soldiers to fire on those smiling men, women and children, I knew they would not have obeyed me. Even military discipline has its limits. Could I command the grisly soldier to shoot down the child who reminded him of his Lisa? I reported to headquarters that the town had offered unassailable resistance, although this admission injured my military reputation. But I was right. We had literally been conquered by these simple folk who followed implicitly the leadership of Jesus Christ.” ▲

Information on Brazil

Agrarian Reform and the MST

Agrarian reform is the distribution of unproductive land to unproductive people. That’s about the long and the short of it. In N America there never was true agrarian reform because unproductive land was sold or granted to productive people, usually as a homestead. We know the story. These courageous men and women, together with their children, defied the heat and the cold, the droughts and floods, sickness and death, to build a nation.

Modern agrarian reform is basically a leftist political movement, based on the Robin Hood philosophy that the poor can be helped by expropriating the rich. In a country like Brazil it's true that there are land owners with immense, fraudulently acquired tracts of land. Yet it's a proven fact that when this land is divided into 70-100 acre tracts and given to the poor, in most cases the poor remain poor.

The MST—*Movimento Sem Terra*—*Movement of the Landless*, is a highly organized, radical leftist movement. The leaders choose tracts of land (not always unproductive) and stage an invasion. Overnight the land is dotted with shelters made of black plastic tarp. To expel them requires court orders and a large contingent of Military Police.

This movement is not to be confused with the government's agrarian reform program, which is entirely legal and does give the landless a chance. It's true that most of those receiving land soon are looking for someone to buy their rights. Three things happen: 1) Those selling their rights will probably buy themselves a house in town or invest in something that is down their line which will make them a better living than before (some will plain throw their money away); 2) The one buying the rights (usually from two or three settlers) will have the means to get to work and make his living on the land; and 3) The land will become productive. Looked at from this angle, the agrarian reform is working. ▲

This & That

As has probably happened in many countries of the world, Brazil is concluding it's end-of-the-decade (end-of-the-century and end-of-the-millennium) census. The fellow who covered the Colony here at Rio Verde was not only very efficient, but extremely courteous as well.

Jonathan & Lisa Toews and girls were here for the wedding with their parents John & Dorothy Burns. Earl & Patricia Toews were also here. This was Earl's first visit to Brazil since he left as a young boy nearly 30 years ago. Patricia has written a report, to be published next month, on the trip they made to the state of Paraná to visit the place where the Dick Toews family used to live.

On October 10 there was a get-to-gether at the Monte Alegre social hall in honor of the newlyweds from Mato Grosso.

At the Publicadora Menonita we are in the process of getting our books on the Brazilian market. As we showed our books to different ones, the response was unanimous: We needed to dress up the covers. We have always believed that the important thing is what is on the inside, not the outside. But reluctantly we had to admit that many readers won't look at the inside unless we impress them with the outside. On October 16 we received our first set of books with dressed up covers. They are: *The Christian Home*, *The Shining Sword* and *Worth Dying For* (reprints), *A Threefold Cord* and *No Proselytes in Zion*, first editions. We should soon have another set of books ready to be printed.