

# Brazil News

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Editorial

## **Ad Astra Per Aspera**

For the benefit of non-Kansans, that little Latin phrase, which appears on the Kansas State seal, means “To the Stars Through Difficulty.”

There are many kinds of difficulties or hardships, but we want to think about handicaps, about misfortunes which we suffer, sometimes through no fault of our own.

One of the deplorable developments of modern living is the inability to accept what life has to offer, or shall we say, what life just plops in our lap at times. This closes the mind to many avenues of service and opportunities that exist. Worse, when assigned a task, an almost frantic effort is made to come up with some sort of “problem” that would exempt us from carrying out our responsibility.

We said this is deplorable. Truly it is. Some of the greatest accomplishments registered in both secular and religious history have been wrought by men and women who had definite handicaps or suffered crushing misfortunes, but instead of throwing in the towel, they accepted their adversities as a challenge to press ahead. Let’s notice:

William H. Prescott—The author of *History of the Conquest of Mexico* and *History of the Conquest of Peru*, lost his sight in one eye while studying at Harvard University in the early 1800’s. Shortly after graduation his other eye began to fail. He sought medical help in Europe, but upon learning that his case was helpless, decided to dedicate his life to literary research, a strange career for a blind man, to say the least.

With the help of assistants, his seeing-eye-men, he was able to accumulate vast amounts of information by researching the appropriate national archives. Vital statistics he committed to memory.

In the preface to *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, he states: “For one thing, before I

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conclude, I may reasonably ask the reader's indulgence. Owing to the state of my eyes, I have been obliged to use a writing-case made for the blind, which does not permit the writer to see his own manuscript. Nor have I ever corrected, or even read, my original draft..." Yet what a book!

Abraham Lincoln—Autodidact, he not only became a successful lawyer, but also one of the greatest presidents the US has known (if not the greatest). Contrary to what one might believe, he was not hindered in office by his lack of formal study. The Gettysburg Address is ample proof of this. His letter to a Mrs. Binby, a model of some of the purest English ever used, is displayed in the Oxford University:

Executive Mansion  
Washington, Nov. 21, 1864

To Mrs. Binby, Boston, Mass.  
Dear Madam,

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully  
A. Lincoln

An amputee—While waiting near the physiotherapy entrance of the Sara Kubitchek Hospital in Brasília, an attractive teenage girl arrived by car, transferred to a wheelchair, and made her way to the front door. Dressed in shorts, she made no attempt to hide the stump of her one leg, amputated just above the knee.

What impressed me was the effect her arrival had on the attendants and others near the entrance. Radiating cheerfulness, she smiled, greeted those present, shook hands with some of them, exchanged a few words, and then wheeled herself into the hospital. So genuine was her personality, so infectious her bonhomie, that it was impossible to feel sorry for her, which doubtlessly is exactly what she wanted. That girl will go further in life on one foot than a lot of others manage on two.

The Apostle Paul—Paul had some sort of handicap. Bible scholars conjecture as to what it might have been. Some suggest he was semi-blind. Whatever it was, once he was convinced that this particular difficulty would follow him through life, he accepted it gracefully. 2 Corinthians 11:25-27 are indisputable proof that his handicap didn't keep him from having a productive life.

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Make your own list—Yes, make your own list of people whom you know that live with a handicap, and who, like the girl whom we described, ask no sympathy from anyone. (Obviously, not all fit into this category.) Yet they live productive, rewarding lives. They accept difficulty as part of their normal routine.

For the worst handicap of all, we coin a word: routinitis—routine sickness. Carriers of this sickness usually are quite healthy otherwise. Their financial situation tends to be stable. Their overall operation is quite orderly. And it's exactly this that brings on routinitis. People don't want anything to happen that might disrupt this happy routine, so they seclude themselves within their little private castle and pull up the drawbridge.

When asked to take part in some project, they open the door just a crack and say: "I have other plans," or "I'm just too busy today," or "I'm sort of under the weather." Other times they launch into a harangue about why they are against that particular project.

But in the end what it boils down to is a bad case of routinitis. They don't want to get involved in anything that might possibly upset their routine.

The blind can make important contributions to society, paraplegics can be highly productive, people with all kinds of sicknesses put in a normal days work. But people with routinitis have very little to contribute.

It takes an effort for an amputee or paraplegic to become reasonably mobile. The blind and the hearing impaired must make a real effort to have a relatively normal social life. This is true of most any handicap or disability. But folks, routinitis is probably the hardest of any to overcome.

It's one of the hardest, because contrary to other handicaps, which almost always bring some degree of discomfort, routinitis brings comfort. Instead of looking for a cure, most carriers of this disease dread a cure. So that is how they spend their days.

Ad Astra Per Aspera. For our martyr brethren, this was literally true. Their road to the stars was a maze of difficulties.

We say those times have past. But have they? Have we today come up with a magical solution to reach the stars without difficulties?

There is a tremendous lot of work that needs to be done in the church today. Whether we do it or don't will have a direct influence on the eternal destiny of men and women, not only in our own community or nation, but in nations throughout the world. How many people can we have laid up in the sick bay with routinitis and still be free? Or do we maybe have the beginning of an epidemic on our hands?

Routinitis does have a cure. Unlike many other sicknesses or handicaps, it is possible to be totally cured. But there is no such thing as an easy cure. It takes a real effort—more than a real effort. It takes the grace and power of God to move out of the castle of selfishness, burn the draw bridge, and begin living where the action is.

That is the road to the stars through difficulty. ▲

## Perdigão

### **What's It All About?**

It is said that the history of Rio Verde will be divided into “before Perdigão” and “after Perdigão.” Because of this, future issues of BN will carry frequent articles under the heading of Perdigão.

A perdigão is a male partridge. It is also the name of the company that shortly will be making a profound mark on the history of Rio Verde by setting up a large integrated poultry/hog operation.

Perdigão invited four people from the Rio Verde area to visit their installations in Videira, Santa Catarina, a state in southern Brazil. Representing the mayor's office was the secretary of industry and commerce, Milton Vieira Ramos; the regional coop, Comigo, was represented by its president, Antônio Chavaglia; the Dutch Colony was represented by Wilhelmus H. J. Compier; and I represented the American Colony.

We left the airport in Rio Verde in the company's twin-engine plane at 3:30 p.m. on October 16. With only one brief stop in Presidente Prudente for refueling, we arrived in Videira at 6:45 that evening.

Videira, which means grapevine, is located in a very mountainous region. The short runway for the local airport was shaved off of the tops of two adjacent mountains. I told the people from Perdigão that this was the only airport I knew in which the plane didn't come down to land, but that after landing, one had to come down to get to the town far below. The fellow replied, “You should have been here years ago when Perdigão began flying their products to São Paulo in DC3's. They loaded the planes down so heavily that when they got to the end of the runway, instead of going up, they would actually drop for a ways until picking up enough airspeed to lumber off to their destination.”

We wound our way down the mountain and were taken to the hotel right next to the Perdigão complex. The next morning we were up at six o'clock, had breakfast and were on our way by seven.

At this point a bit of an explanation is in order. Perdigão came into existence in the thirties as a family project. Videira had been colonized by Italian immigrants who eked out their living on tiny clearings cut out of the mountainside. Even today, over sixty years later, a one acre field would be quite large. At one place they were plowing with oxen. I saw only several tractors during the time we were there. A large cattle herd would be possibly 15 head. The area is still very Italian, as last names clearly indicate.

Because of the extremely uneven terrain, many of the houses, especially in town, have one end on ground level and the other propped up on stilts. And contrary to our area where virtually all houses are masonry, quite a few there are wooden structures, made of pine lumber which is native to the region.

Best of all were the chimneys in some of the houses proving they still cook on wood

ranges. Unfortunately I wasn't able to get into any of their homes, and much less eat a local home cooked meal.

The chicken and hog barns obviously couldn't be built on stilts. To complicate matters, these barns must always be built on an east-west axis so that the sun rays will not strike the building laterally. Since the building site must usually be cut out of the mountainside, many of the barns, especially the older ones, are small, holding only some 7,500 birds. The newer ones are double that size.

This means that all trucks servicing these barns must be very small. There simply isn't any place for a larger truck to turn around. This is especially troublesome when loading out fryers. Even the smallest barns require two or three small trucks.

That first morning we visited several chicken operations and then went to the hatchery where approximately 350 thousand chicks are hatched daily.

There is nothing timid or obsolete about Perdigão's installations. To get into the hatchery, we all had to shower, dress in their uniforms and boots. We began our tour where the egg selection takes place and then followed on through to the incubators.

The vital functions (temperature, humidity, egg rotation, etc.) of each individual unit are recorded and posted on computer screens.

Several days before hatching the eggs are transferred to special trays and placed in eclosion chambers. When the doors of these units were opened for us to look in, the forlorn cheeping of the chicks could be heard and they managed to peck their way out of their tiny prisons.

We saw where the now fluffy little chicks were taken out of the trays and tossed onto a conveyor belt, and much like baggage in an airport, transported to the baggage claim area, which in this case is where they are sexed.

Thirteen girls sit around two enormous funnels, possibly five feet across, one superimposed over the other. The chicks are picked off the conveyor belt in such a way that one of their wings is outstretched. A quick glance at the miniscule wing feathers tells them the sex of the chick.

This is where the two funnels come into the picture. Depending on their sex, the chicks are tossed into either the top or bottom funnel. Those thrown into the top one get quite a ride before they hit the opposite side with a thud.

(I forgot to ask whether it's the males or females that get the vicious top ride, but I suspect it's the males. I can't imagine those gals passing up an opportunity like that.)

Sliding down the side and out of the funnels, the chicks hit another conveyor belt where another set of girls grab them and run them over a vaccinating machine. Every time they do a hundred the machine beeps and the tray is taken to a short tunnel where the chicks are nebulized with another kind of vaccine. From here they are taken to the loading area where trucks will soon take them to the local poultry raisers.

Since the farmers don't have telephones, a novel system has been developed to let them know when their chicks will arrive. At a certain time of the day the local radio station announces which farmers will receive chicks, how many and at what time. The program is so popular that it even has sponsors.

After visiting the hatchery and several poultry barns, the next logical stop was the packinghouse.

The Perdigão poultry packinghouse in Videira is the largest in the world. At present they are slaughtering 347 thousand birds a day, but by December they want to hit 365 thousand (easy to remember, since there are 365 days in a year). After taking time out for breaks, lunch and cleaning up, the actual butchering time is reduced to approximately 18 hours a day. Figure it out. Every second over five live birds are unloaded from one truck and another five are loaded all processed and packaged on another truck.

Contrary to what one might believe, after touring the Perdigão packinghouse in Videira, you feel like buying their product. Everyone, even visitors, wear white uniforms and hoods and boots. On the way in each one must scrub his boots with a brush, wash his hands with soap and then rinse them in a disinfectant. Going from one area to another, one must walk through shallow pools of disinfectant.

There are 2,769 people employed in the packinghouse. They are highly organized. I didn't see a single person standing around (which was also true of the hatchery).

Approximately 70 percent of their production is exported to Japan, Germany, the Middle East, and other countries.

We visited a number of hog farms, which ranged from very simple operations to one that was totally computerized. In this last one the feed is liquefied and sent to each individual pen through pipes. Each day the computer slightly increases the amount they get and makes the necessary changes in the formula.

In the packinghouse where the hogs are slaughtered and processed, once again we were able to see the entire process, including how the different products are made.

What I found most impressive on this trip, and I think maybe the others too, was the fact that within several years Rio Verde will have something similar in operation. In volume it will be somewhat smaller, but technologically it will be more advanced since all the equipment installed will be the most modern available.

Why was Rio Verde chosen for this project? For one thing, one percent of all the grain produced in Brazil comes from Rio Verde. They expect to buy all the corn and milo produced locally. The flat terrain was a big plus in their choice. And once again they mentioned that the American Colony had a very definite influence on their decision.

At this point it's a little early to give out a lot of cost figures. However, if their plans are carried through, the poultry barns will house approximately 25 thousand birds and should cost, with all the equipment installed, in the neighborhood of 55-70 thousand dollars each.

What if someone from the States wanted to move to Brazil and set up barns? My impression is that they would try and work out a special concession for getting visas. It's obvious they are very anxious to work with foreigners.

We left Videira for Rio Verde on Friday noon after having spent a day and a half there.

The question that folks on the Colony ask is: Is it a reliable company? Those of you readers who watch the business world know that many companies begin as family projects. Ford Motor Company is an example. For a while this is an advantage, but it's a genetic fact that just because dad was a good administrator, doesn't say the sons will be. By the time the grandchildren step in, there may be quite a power struggle. Almost always there is a decline in efficiency and profits.

This was the case with Perdigão. Several years ago the family woke up to what was happening and sold out lock, stock and barrel. The shares were bought by pension funds and individuals and a holding company created. Today Perdigão is showing a tidy profit. At present they rank as second in their area in Brazil, with Sadia in first place. They hope, within the next ten years, to win this distinction. The outcome of their unit in Rio Verde will probably be a determining factor in this commercial struggle.

Keep tuned in. Perdigão is here to stay. ▲

## A Brazilian Story

By Samuel Coblenz

(Missionary in Patos mission)

### **Blind and Yet He Could See**

This is the story of a blind man who lived in the town of Equador, in the state of Rio Grande do Norte.

Born in Parelhos, close to the town of Equador, life was tough. His family was poor and he wasn't very big before he was on his own. He went to live with a schoolteacher. Under her tutoring, by the time he was nine years old, he was able to read. From there on he read anything he could get his hands on. What he wanted most was to read the Bíblia Sagrada [Holy Bible].

So it was that one day while helping the janitor lady clean the Catholic church, he asked permission to read the Bible in the church. The lady was horrified by his request. Throwing up her hands, she exclaimed, "Ave Maria! Whatever has gotten into you? Where did you get such an idea? That book is sacred. Furthermore, it is dangerous. Only the priest can read this book. Don't you ever let such a foolish thought cross your mind again. Do you understand?"

He understood and the years went by. Finally he fell in love with a girl and they decided to get married. Her dad agreed to the marriage, with just one condition. He would have to confess to the priest before they could get married. It happened that he wasn't a religious man and the last thing he planned to do was confess to a priest.

But he had to face facts. He wasn't about to have his marriage called off and the day was getting closer and closer. So the night before the wedding he made a show of going to town to confess to the priest. Since there were two priests, the one performing

the marriage ceremony could always be lead to believe that it was the other one he confessed to. And so it was that when he was supposed to be confessing to the priest, he was actually at a friend's house.

The marriage took place and as the years went by, 21 children were born into this home. All but five died in infancy or childhood.

In 1958, at the age of 25, he was involved in a blasting accident and lost his eyesight. Not only was his vision shattered, but his plans and hopes for the future too. How would he provide for his growing family? Beside their own children, they had also adopted a girl who was needing a home.

When it seemed everything had closed in, a friend took pity on him and gave him an accordion. Soon he was able to coax music out of this instrument. He began to make his living by playing at bars and parties.

One night while playing, he became aware that a fight was going on. He could hear the antagonists grow louder and louder. Next came shots and the blind man's partner fell dead at his side, hit by a stray bullet. He himself was hit by a deep fear. Never again did he want to return to such a place. Shortly afterwards he began receiving a small government disability check. It wasn't much, but with an effort they could make it go around.

One day, with his money in his pocket, he and his wife went to the market to buy a week's supply of groceries. They had exactly 65 thousand reis (an inflated currency used years ago) to spend.

As they walked together, they overheard someone saying something about the Bible and what a good book it is. They stopped to hear what the man was saying. Edging up to the man with the Bible, he asked, "Sir, are you talking about the real Bíblia Sagrada?"

"Sim senhor!" was the emphatic answer. "It's both the Old and the New Testaments in one volume."

"And what does it cost?"

"Twenty-one thousand reis is the price, senhor."

Even though he knew full well what this would do to their grocery shopping, the man pulled the money out of his pocket, handed it to his wife, and had her count out 21 thousand reis. They were now the happy owners of a brand new Bible. So far as their groceries, somehow they would make out.

This was the second major change in the life of this man. He and his wife would sit together for hours on end while she would read the Bible to him.

The first ones to come along and offer a free interpretation of the Bible were the Jehovah's Witnesses. But what his wife read to him out of the Bible didn't add up with what they said. He wrote them off.

Next came the people from the Assembly of God church. What they said agreed more with what the Bible said, so he and his wife decided to try their way.

In 1989 tragedy struck again. His faithful wife and Bible reader suddenly passed away. Now who would read the Bible to him? None of his children who were still at home were literate, so they could be of no help.



After a while he remarried. The woman appeared to be a Christian. But very soon it became evident she was not cut out to live with someone who couldn't see. Several weeks after the wedding, they separated. He moved back to Equador and she moved to Parelhos.

It was here that he came in contact with the Church of God. The connection came through a man by the name of José de Lola. This José showed interest in the church and requested that the missionary from Patos, Paraíba pay him a visit. During the period of a year, visits were made to José, but the more he learned about the church and her doctrines, the more he became convinced that wasn't for him. The way was too narrow.

Who is the blind man we keep talking about? His name is Ignácio Daniel. For about 15 months, we payed Ignácio regular visits. Now I had the privilege of reading his precious Bible to him. We read all about David. We read about the Recabites—a story which even I wasn't acquainted with. We read the book *E Não Amaram As Suas Vidas* [Worth Dying For]. This impressed him deeply and he frequently commented about the faith of the Waldensians.

One day he said to me, "Samuel, I want to be a Mennonite." Later he placed more emphasis on this decision. "Samuel, even if you and all the Americans would leave Brazil, I would still be a Mennonite. By the grace of God, I want to always be a Mennonite." He talked about a change that took place in his life. When asked if he felt he was saved, he didn't hesitate. "Yes, not because of anything I have done, but because of what Jesus has done for me."

His health wasn't the best, but no one thought he had any serious problem. But one day things got bad enough so that he was admitted to the hospital. Even though he was able to get out for short periods, his health rapidly declined.

One day Raquel (his youngest daughter with whom he lived, together with her husband and young daughter) noticed that the people from a church called Deus é Amor (God is Love) were in town and on some kind of a healing campaign. So without his knowing anything about it, she invited them to her house.

The lady walked up to his bedside and asked, "Brother, so you're sick. What seems to be the problem?"

He told her that he felt a knot in his stomach, which was probably his most serious problem, but he also had high blood sugar, high cholesterol, stains on his lungs, among other things.

"Brother, we are here to pray for you so that you may be healed. Do you agree to this?"

"Well, I feel my end is near, but I wouldn't turn down prayer." So the lady put her hand on the problem spot and prayed. When she finished, he could no longer feel the knot. "Samuel," he told me, "the knot was completely gone." Once he told them he felt he was healed, the shouting began. It turned into a big party.

Immediately he began to wonder what kind of a faith it was that was to have healed him. He asked the Lord, "How is it, Lord, that I have prayed to you all this time and have never gotten such dramatic results?"

Three days later the knot came back—bigger and more painful than before.

When I got there, he was in the hospital again and that is where I heard this story. He was open with me. He said, “Samuel, I believe that came from the devil and I feel that I strayed from the path by letting this happen, but I have asked God to forgive me and have promised to never again let something like this happen in my life.”

As the month of March, 1996, progressed, Ignácio was unable to keep any food down. When we visited him on April 1, he said we would no longer see each other. A week later I returned for another visit. He would sip water from a spoon and didn't seem to be totally alert anymore.

Then on April 11, Ignácio raised his hand and motioned to Raquel, who was sitting near him on a chair. He said, “God bless you, my daughter. Take care of Rebeca, my granddaughter. It's time for me to go. Adéus.” And he slipped away.

So it was that this man, who at nine years of age desired to read the Bible, never had the privilege with his natural eyes, but in his spirit he was able to see the Sagradas Escrituras. ▲

## Updating the Past

By Joe Baize  
(Continued)

## Our Life's Story

My brother Norman and I had bicycles. Sometimes we rode around town with a friend named Roscoe Dooly. One day he ran into the back of a car, flew off his bike and landed on the trunk of the car.

On the way home from work, I would follow a street car, hang on to it and let it pull me along. This was against the law, but this way I didn't need to pedal all the way home. Oftentimes by taking the street car I got to work early. Then I would spend my time reading the Bible, which was good for me.

For religious services we attended the General Conference church. I went sometimes after I became a teenager. I was baptized into that church when I was 16. The minister, John Plennert, never asked any of us boys if we were converted. He gave us some lessons and then announced baptism services for a certain Sunday. He just baptized a bunch of ornery boys. Mother and Dad attended this church too.

Mother was never satisfied with this church and endeavored to teach us children the Holdeman way. Dad was bitter toward the Holdemans and often condemned them. He was bitter because he felt the Holdemans looked down on him because he moved in with Mom and then married her.

We got our first cars around 1917. When we moved into town, Dad traded the farm for a Model T Ford sedan, plus a jewelry store in town and some expensive silverware

(a twelve-piece set that stayed in the family all these years). This was considered a good trade and is how Dad got the store. He had learned to be a jeweler when yet single and living in South Dakota with his aunt. This was the end of Dad's farming.

About this time Norman bought a new Chevy touring car for nine hundred dollars. Now we had better transportation. Dad kept the jewelry store for 18 years. Then he turned it over to my brother Edd. After this Dad had a stroke and was disabled. This Baize and son Jewelry Store stayed in our Baize family for approximately 70 years.

When I learned to drive, Mom sometimes asked me to take her to Lonetree on Sunday afternoons to see her cousin Bishop Tobias Unruh. She wanted to return to the church. This gave me the opportunity to learn more and settled my conviction about my spiritual life.

My mother often talked to us children about getting converted. I remember I must have been about 11 or 12 years old. It was during the time we lived out in the country, and during the summer months sometimes the weather turned dry. We had to herd the cows along the roadsides where the grass had not been grazed off by other cows.

One day while I was out alone herding the cows, I heard my name called real plain. I looked around but didn't see anyone. That made me uneasy. From that time on I felt I was unsaved. Then I prayed that the lord should forgive me, which I believe He did. Soon after that, when I went to bed and looked up into the sky at night, nothing seemed to bother me. I had no fear anymore. During the summer months when the weather was hot, my two younger brothers and I would sleep on the hay wagon out in the yard. That was where we could watch the moon and the stars. I can remember what a blessed summer that was for me.

In the fall when we started back to school we were not living around our church people. My classmates were wordly boys and girls and I lost out, but I never forgot the experience I had that summer.

When I was 14 we moved into town and I got a job in a factory in Hutchinson. I worked there until I was 21 years old. It was during these years in town that I was under heavy conviction. It was also during these years that our uncles and aunts and cousins would stop in and visit us in Hutchinson. During these visits I became more acquainted with our church people. There was a Sunday School being held in Hutchinson, and once a month our ministers from Hesston and Halstead were asked to come there and preach. Since our mother had belonged to our church in her younger years, there was something that stayed with her during these years. So the Sunday that our ministers would go there to preach, my mother would ask me to take her there.

Listening to the preaching and Mother talking to us about getting converted, I felt this was what I wanted. In myself I wanted to leave home and go to Halstead, get converted and join the church. I had been under heavy convictions for so long. By now my father and mother were separated and I was the only one working to support my mother and my two younger brothers and a sister. My brothers and sister were still in school.

I knew it wouldn't be right to leave school and make my mother and brothers and

sister take care of themselves. My older brother and sisters all stayed home and helped support the family until they were of age. So I told the Lord that if he would protect and keep me until I was of legal age (21 years), then I would leave the family and get converted and join the church.

Finally the time came when I was of age and could leave home. I well remember the first night after I left home. I stayed at my uncle's place in Halstead. They gave me a room to sleep in by myself. I went to bed after we all had prayer and dropped off to sleep right away. I never woke up till the next morning when they called me for breakfast. A night's rest like that I hadn't had since I was a young boy.

I stayed at my uncle's place in Halstead for a few days, then I heard of a job at Hesston. I went to work for John Boeckner. He would give me room and board and pay me five hundred dollars at the end of a year.

During this time is when I tried to find my way back to God. It was a difficult time for me, being away from my home and family for the first time. I got homesick and the devil took advantage of this and said, "You are not going to find peace anyway. You may just as well go back home." But I knew how I felt those seven years in town and I was not going back into that again. The Lord had answered my prayer and helped me this far and I intended to be true to the promise I had made to him. During this time at Hesston I went through some trying times in my search for peace.

One night I went out to pray. It was cloudy and all overcast. While in prayer, I told God that if there was anything yet that was in my way, He should reveal it to me. If not, I would like to know that too. Then as I opened my eyes, I saw a big white star in front of me. I felt that was the answer to my prayer. I was baptized into the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite on September 30, 1928.

I first met Elsie while working near Montezuma for her uncle, C. T. Koehn. Her dad, A. T. Koehn, asked me to chore for them while he was away preaching the gospel. Elsie was 13 at this time and I was 23. During the years after this I kept in touch with the A. T. Koehn family, hoping to keep in touch with Elsie. I corresponded with the family. Sometimes Elsie would answer, sometimes her dad or one of her brothers. If I had the opportunity, I'd pay them a visit.

After I finished my year at Hesston for John Boeckner, he gave me the five hundred dollars. With two hundred and fifty I bought my first car, a Model T, probably a 1924 model. That car served me well and I drove it many miles, even to California to get married and then back to Missouri.

I left Hesston and went back to Halstead and got a job working for Andrew Brown. We had many religious discussions. (They were Lutherans.) Andrew usually talked against my faith, but his wife often took my side. Andrew had a sister who came to visit and she wasn't used to a man with a beard, let alone a man with a big red beard. Andrew told his sister she could ask Joe any question she wanted to about the Bible and Joe could answer it and say where it was

found. She replied, “I believe it. If he looked at an eight-day wall clock, it would stop.”

People often noticed me because of my red beard. One day while in town, a man passed me on the sidewalk. He kept looking back at me and walked right into a pole.

I would go back to Hutchinson when I could and my sister Ev was disgusted with my beard and my religion. She told my mother that I need not come to her house as long I chose to live like that. Mom told her that if that was the way she felt, then she wasn't welcome at her house either. Eva felt she had been wrong and she apologized and said I could come over anytime.

I wanted to begin farming for myself. My cousin Adam Schmidt from Rich Hill, Missouri, had some land that I was able to rent. The first year when the corn crop was ready, the river flooded and I lost my crop and my furniture in the house. Some five or six hundred acres flooded in that area. My neighbor and I drove my cattle, pigs and chickens to a bridge across the river and to the levee, which was about eight to ten feet wide and a quarter mile long. While the water receded, we camped out on this bridge and cared for our animals. Our neighbor, Alf Bear, had a boat and would bring us ducks and fish to eat. It took about a week till the water was gone.

The Salvation Army stopped in our area and gave us mattresses and some furniture and approximately three hundred dollars to buy groceries and feed for our livestock. I bought some pigs and fed the ruined corn to them. I stayed over for the winter and in the spring I moved to higher ground, north of Rich Hill. I rented ground and a house from an elderly lady named Salina Measure. It was a nice four-room house. I rented this for one year for two hundred dollars cash. This was a rhubarb farm and I sold enough rhubarb to pay the rent.

I batched these two years and went to church at our congregation in Rich Hill. I farmed one more year there, but the corn and oats burned up for lack of rain. I got work in Western Kansas and Nebraska during the harvest. ▲

(to be continued)

## Zigzagging Around

### **WalMart**

We reported some time back that WalMart made it's debut in Brazil by opening a Supercenter in São Paulo. Several others followed. Now Exame Magazine tells how things have gone:

“What would Sam Walton, the legendary founder of WalMart say if he could see how his business is operating in Brazil? Just a little over a year ago WalMart came to Brazil, formed a partnership with Lojas Americanas [a chain of department stores], and set out to teach the competition a few things. With 120 million dollars to get the ball a rolling, in a short time they had five stores operating in São Paulo—three Sam's Clubs

and two Supercenters. During the month of December, the Supercenter in Osasco, S.P. sold a million dollars a day, a record. It seemed that the Brazilian market would be easy prey. But it didn't exactly work out that way.

“By the end of June the operation had lost 31.6 million dollars. Held up against Wal-Mart's total annual sales of a hundred billion dollars, that's a drop in the bucket. But in Bentonville, Arkansas, this loss is a sign that something isn't working right. Many of the executives who helped get the chain on its feet have quit. No new store has been opened in 1996 and in the last six months sales have fallen 30 percent. And it isn't that the Brazilian consumer has turned up his nose at the Supercenters. That's not the problem. Rather the top brass is failing to assimilate the reality of the Brazilian market. This is where Sam Walton, a champion of humility, would have asked questions instead of giving his opinion.”

What is the problem? It's exactly what we wondered about when WalMart announced it's intentions to set up shop in Brazil. Would the N American modus operandi function over here? A former WalMart executive puts it this way: “The word ‘flexibility’ doesn't exist in their vocabulary. Their attitude is that whatever works over there should work here. Just do as the manual says.” A São Paulo market consultant puts it like this: “They haven't managed to understand the peculiarities of the Brazilian consumer and that's why they're blundering.”

But that's not the only reason they're having problems. They have an infrastructure that will serve 80 stores, which creates an overhead that must be absorbed by only five stores. Seen from this perspective, the solution is to open more stores, which is exactly what WalMart plans on doing. They are hoping to open eight new Supercenters during the next two years. And who knows, if things start to pick up, they may even consider Goiânia. ▲

## McDonald's

Now this is a different story. And it's an interesting story. Some 17 years ago when McDonald's decided to give the Brazilian market a try, they needed someone to manage their business. The man for this was Gregory James Ryan, an American who was one of the pioneers of the fast-food industry here in Brazil.

But there was a problem. Ryan owned an old Ford car and was able to scrap up only 20 thousand dollars, not nearly enough to get the project going. But McDonald's decided to take a risk and put down one hundred thousand dollars so that Ryan could get to work in São Paulo.

Ryan didn't bury his money in a napkin. Total sales for the McDonald's chain in Brazil this year should hit 750 million dollars. And contrary to the parable of the talents where the unfaithful servant lost his job, here Ryan is losing his job—or at least his place in the partnership—because of his success.

With annual projected sales of two billion dollars by the year 2000, McDonald's

wants it all, even the 15% which now belongs to Ryan. So they “offered” to buy him out for thirty million. He said no-go. A hundred million or nothing. But after a meeting in headquarters in Boca Raton, Florida, a compromise was reached that should end up yielding some 70 million for Ryan. Acquaintances say he seems quite depressed. To have turned 20 thousand bucks into 70 million in 17 years (plus all he made during this period) doesn’t seem to be fodder for depression. But then we’re all different...

At any rate, McDonald’s plans on investing half a billion dollars in Brazil by the year 2000 and opening a new eating joint every five days. That will place Brazil, together with Japan, England, Australia and Hong Kong, in the group of the five fastest developing markets for McDonald’s. ▲

## The Weather

We have mentioned that the rainy season usually comes in with quite a bang. We can expect wind and rain storms. This year was no exception. Some roofs had to be patched up or partially replaced.

Then came a four inch rain that ended all speculation on whether terraces would or wouldn’t hold. They did or didn’t.

One of the big problems, however, is electricity. To begin with, our lines are not built very well. Parts of the line run through sandy soil that gets bone dry during the dry season. The grounds lose their capacity to absorb lightning bolts. Fuses blow and at times the electrical discharges follow right on into our homes, burning out appliances and motors.

This year was especially bad. For a number of days we were out of electricity about half of the time. Finally the electrical company decided to give our line a good maintenance. So for almost a week they would turn off our electricity in the morning, work on the line all day, and turn it back on around 6 o’clock in the evening. There was even the little joke: “Do you know what I’m going to do some time when we have electricity . . . ?”

A number of years back the electrical company did a thorough maintenance on our line and things went better for quite a while. Now with the ground quite soaked, together with the work done, things should go better.

Farmers seem to be planting a little earlier each year. Because of putting out a second crop, I suspect they will push this tendency to the limit. This year was no exception. With the first rains the beginning of September, quite a little corn was planted, and some soybeans.

Then it quit raining. It’s hard to know what looked more peaked, the crops or the farmers. But then the last minute the rains came—good rains—and you should see the crops. They look almost as good as the farmers. ▲

## Aunt Dorothy Boeckner

Aunt Dorothy Boeckner was one of those people who left footprints wherever she went.

If something needed to be done, she did it.

If something needed to be said, she said it.

If something needed to be cooked, she cooked it.

If someone needed to be invited over, she invited.

If someone needed advice, she advised (whether they asked for it or not).

If something interesting happened, she put it in the paper.

If someone needed help, she was the first to help.

If something needed to be organized, she was the organizer.

If someone needed a recipe, she had just the right one.

If someone needed a lift, her presence inspired.

Hesston won't be the same without Aunt Dorothy. Her enthusiasm and sincerity have made it a better place to live. She has enriched the lives of many. Including mine.

## This & That

Last month in the article about the new congregation in Mato Grosso, we mentioned that hopefully before too long several converts would be baptized and their membership would jump from 13 to 15. Well, they're 15 members now—and there were no baptisms. It's sort of like this. When we made up the list of the charter members, we omitted John & Sheila Kramer. Not intentionally. No way. They're part of the Burns family and so it's surprising we didn't list them twice. Anyway, hopefully there will soon be 17 members in that congregation.

On Oct. 3 the Monte Alegre Congregation had a farewell for Dan & Clara Coblentz in the social hall. On the 4th the youth got together at Myron & Martha Kramers and had a farewell for Dans, who were their youth leaders. It was also a welcome for the new ones, Staven & Adeline Schmidt. Dans left for the States on the 5th.

Bert and Ada Coblentz left by bus for the Northeast on Nov. 1. They want to visit the missions in Acaraú and Patos.

On Oct. 17, Miss Velda Loewen invited her students (6th-8th grades) to come home with her after school and help clean up the yard. When they finished they had a wiener roast. The parents were invited to spend the evening there and listen to the children sing.

Elias Stoltzfus is spending several weeks at the Homeworth Congregation helping in the revival effort.