

Brazil News



No. 69
February 1997

Editorial

The Case of the Missing Stones

[We have used our imagination to write this article. You must use yours to read it.]

I live in a walled city (some people prefer to call it a congregation). My house, like most of the others, is built up against or near the towering wall that surrounds the city.

We live in the city, but work outside (in what we call the world). That is where we have our fields and do most of our trading.

The reason for the high walls surrounding our city, as you will have guessed, is not to force people to stay inside, but rather to give us protection against our worldly enemies.

Because of these enemies, everyone in our city—men, women, young men, young girls—receives military training. You might say that everyone, except for small children, is a soldier.

In these cities being a soldier isn't an option. It's an absolute necessity for survival. To paraphrase a saying found in our Soldier's Manual, "If soldiers and officers are many times hard put to survive, what will be the fate of the draft dodger and the pacifist?"

We have weekly meetings in which officers relay to us instructions received from the Supreme Commander. Once a year we call in officers from other cities for a general inspection tour which includes the troops, our weaponry and installations. They also try and recruit new soldiers.

The wall around our city, when intact, is very secure. It's high with battlements on top. Just a word on the battlements. Since the wall is fairly wide, when the city is under attack, soldiers can fight right off the top. As can be imagined, without some sort of parapets, the soldiers on the wall would be in an extremely dangerous position. Not only would they be an open target to the enemy, but would also be in danger of simply falling off either side of the wall. The parapets are low, protective stone railings on both the inside and outside edges of the wall. It is between these railings that the soldiers assume their battle positions.

Brazil News

Don't get the idea that all the battles are fought from on top of the walls. They aren't. In fact, most casualties occur either while the soldiers are outside the city for one reason or another (or for no reason) and when the enemy slips into the city undetected. This is difficult since he has to either come through the gate, which is usually heavily guarded, or over the walls.

Our city is located on uneven terrain. Since the surrounding wall accompanies the contour of the land, it has an undulated appearance.

Because we are surrounded by belligerent peoples, we are in a constant state of war. So in our ranks, to have the reputation of being a good soldier is a coveted quality. Conversely, a soldier who becomes friendly with the enemy or doesn't actively participate in the defense of the city is viewed with concern.

Now just a word on our warfare. We are taught from young on up to hate our enemies. In combat we have but one order: Utterly kill and destroy. We are to give no quarter, show no mercy, make no prisoners, never retreat.

Since warfare is very much a part of our life, it's also part of our conversation. When the esprit de corps is good in our ranks, we openly discuss strategy, our strong and weak points, victories and defeats. We give pointers to each other.

Especially in the yearly visits made by neighboring officials, all local soldiers and officials are expected to review their record for the past year to determine their readiness for combat. When someone's record is murky, or if it has been an especially difficult year, help is given. Suggestions are made. Depending on the nature of the problem, corrective measures can be taken.

In these yearly reviews, there are especially two situations that cause consternation in the ranks. One is when the soldier routinely reports more defeats than victories. The other—actually worse—is when vague references are made to both victories and defeats, but without being able (or unwilling) to tell actual experiences of either.

It's important to understand that we don't have a conventional enemy. He knows it's useless to make a concentrated attack on the city, that is, to gather all his forces against all of our forces. He knows that to conquer us as a body, he must first weaken us individually. His espionage services are unequalled. He keeps a detailed file on each soldier in which all of his strengths and weaknesses are listed. According to each file, warriors are hand-picked to harass our soldiers on a one-to-one basis. Many of them work undercover. Sometimes two, three or more men are assigned to one of our soldiers.

Let's remember that most of these soldiers that are assigned to destroy us aren't ugly, horned creatures. Very seldom are they towering giants. Most of the time they are very attractive men and women who speak kindly. They offer us things that we would like so much to have.

Orders are to KILL! To utterly kill and destroy. When we are obedient and kill on sight, the moment the sword touches the enemy, all his or her beauty evaporates and there, lying on the ground, we see a terrible horned creature. This gives us courage to give all our enemies the same treatment.

But unfortunately, we don't always kill on sight. At times we are so enchanted by what we see and hear that we forget about our orders to kill.

To not annihilate our enemy on the first encounter is far more serious than we think. For several reasons. (1) Even though we face our enemy on a one-to-one basis, we are still part of an army. Our individual defeat weakens the entire body and puts other soldiers in jeopardy. (2) It's a fact that soldiers are strengthened by victories and weakened by defeats. This is also true of the enemy. Anytime we fail to destroy the enemy on the first encounter, he becomes doubly dangerous—and alas, doubly attractive. (3) Most important of all, the same as our victories bring honor to our Supreme Commander, our defeats bring dishonor.

Now for the missing stones.

Over a period of time we became aware of an enemy infiltration in our city. Since the gate is very carefully guarded, we knew the enemy had to be getting in some other way. That left only one option—over the wall.

But how?

It was then that someone noticed something that we should have caught long before. We remember that the wall accompanies the hilly terrain. That means that even though the wall appears to be higher at places, it is actually the same distance from top to bottom anywhere you measure. Or that's what we thought.

On closer investigation we found that at places the top of the wall was actually much closer to the ground than at others. As we walked around the outside we found different places where with a short rope and grapple it would be possible to pull oneself up and over the wall. Careful examination also showed that stones near the top had been removed and the battlements carefully replaced so as to not arouse suspicion.

But why had the stones been removed? For what had they been used?

No alarm was raised. Rather it was decided to do a little detective work and find out what was going on. The first step was to identify those living near the lowered sections of the wall. They appeared to be run-of-the-mill soldiers. A few of them were casually approached about the missing stones, but they became ill at ease, illusive. So it was decided to continue with investigations before doing any more questioning.

The first solid clue we came up with was something strange indeed. In the back yard of each of these soldiers, right up against the wall, we found little stone huts elaborately camouflaged with shrubs.

The next step was to stake out undercover agents to watch these soldiers with stone huts in their backyards. As their reports began coming in, an amazing pattern soon was established. It was reported that these soldiers would look out the backdoor of the house, anxiously scrutinize the area to make sure they weren't being observed, and then, with a plate of food in hand, stealthily head out to the little stone hut in the backyard. The plate would be shoved through a narrow slit in the wall. At this point the reports would vary slightly. Some of the soldiers would almost immediately return to their house. Others would remain there for minutes—and even hours. Some would make these mysterious trips only once a week, others several times a day.

What could it all mean?

One of the agents reported, “I got the funny feeling these men and women were going to some sort of shrine, that like in pagan lands they were taking food to their personal deity. As I watched them in their other activities, I got the subtle feeling that to them the most important thing in life were these little huts—and whatever was in them.

Next a profile was done on these soldiers and once again a pattern emerged. Especially during the annual review, when asked for a personal report, they would become somewhat murky in their speech, making vague references to both victories and defeats. Any efforts to get in a little closer, to draw out a few specifics, would be met with a tangible uneasiness.

The missing stones were now accounted for, but what was in the little huts?

The investigations continued until sufficient evidence had been gathered. Then a general meeting was called and one of the officers made a speech, that went something like this:

“Fellow soldiers, our beloved city is endangered. We have been invaded by the enemy!”

A gasp went up. Invaded? How? Where were the enemy soldiers?

“Yes, we have been invaded and today there are a number of enemy soldiers, even generals, right within the walls of our city. Our security is seriously threatened.”

Surprise was stamped on the face of many of those present. Some, however, looked straight ahead, trying to show no emotion.

“As you know, in our warfare with the enemy, there is but one order: ‘Utterly kill and destroy!’ Unfortunately, this order has been disobeyed by some.

“We have been taught to hate our enemies. Do you know why? Because our enemies hate us. That’s right, they hate us with a murderous hatred. There isn’t one single enemy soldier, male or female, that would hesitate to slash our throat. And yet . . .”

Now the officer’s voice dropped so low that everyone had to strain their ears to hear.

“ . . . and yet these very enemies whom you are to hate, you have taken captive. You have brought them into our city. You have fed them to keep them alive.”

A pause. Now the voice rises.

“By your insubordination you have jeopardized the very existence of this city. How?”

Those who before looked straight ahead, now are carefully studying their laps. The officer’s voice rises even more.

“You have stolen! You have removed stones from the wall of our beloved city and have built huts in which to hide the enemy soldiers which you loved too much to kill. You have given the enemy food out of our stores that should have been kept in case we should ever fall under siege. Time you should have spent with your families and in the benefit of the city, you have dedicated to the accursed enemy. To the enemy who at this moment is in your backyards waiting for your visit, for your food.”

The number of stone backyard huts in the city can now be determined by merely counting bowed heads.

“You have betrayed your Supreme Commander. You have betrayed your fellow soldiers. You have betrayed your families. You have betrayed yourselves. . . .”

There is a movement in the crowd. First one, then another, and another, of those whose heads moments before were bowed, rapidly rise and stride out of the meeting. Those who remain look about bewildered. The presiding officer smiles. The silence is palpable.

Soon, in the distance, there is the sound of falling stones. Then a muffled scream. More stones falling. More screams.

The screams, a terrible unearthly wailing, seem to be coming closer. It is evident that bodies are being dragged over the cobblestone streets. The noise is deafening. The presiding officer gives an order: "Attention! Everyone outside!"

A strange, strange sight indeed. The very soldiers who minutes before were staring at the floor, praying it would open up and swallow them, are now marching in with firm stride. In their hand they hold a short chain fastened around the neck of an enemy soldier. Each time the enemy struggles to arise, a violent tug on the chain sends him sprawling on the rough cobblestones. Thus each one drags his "personal enemy" to the front door of the meeting hall. To quiet the awful din, the soldiers place a foot on the enemies neck, making them gasp for air.

One of the soldiers, looking at the officer in charge, salutes and asks: "Sir, may I say a word?"

"Permission granted."

"Officers and fellow soldiers, you all see this enemy who lies here beneath my feet. I have served him in my backyard for the last three years. The hut in which I kept him was low, so I had to kneel down to give him his food and to speak to him. I thought that by keeping him penned up he wouldn't be able to harm anyone, but I would be able to glean some valuable information from him. But it didn't work that way. The only reason I didn't turn him loose in my backyard was that I was afraid of what others would say if they found out. I loved this wretch dearly. I loved him more than our Supreme Commander.

"But now I hate this good-for-nothing, this miserable dog." Drawing his sword, with a violent blow he sends the enemy's head rolling down the cobblestone street.

Then another asks permission to speak. And another. Finally there is not a single enemy alive in front of the meeting hall.

Those present begin to cheer when the first soldier lifts his hand and requests, "Wait. It's too early for cheers." Then he and all the others who had had huts in their backyards rise up silently and leave.

Soon there is again the noise of stones being moved. Some of those who remained in front of the meeting hall have a mystified look on their faces, but the officers are gently smiling. They say, "Let's go home. Tomorrow morning we will meet again."

The following morning as they again make their way to the meeting place, something seems different. Finally someone exclaims, "I have it! It's the wall! See how high it is?"

"You know," another one says, "come to think about it, that's how it used to be."

The meeting is a long one. There is much cheering. Before dismissing, one of the officers asks: "Could someone tell us what you have learned through all this?"

A soldier who spent the night rebuilding the wall in front of his house, arises.

“I have learned,” he begins, “that when I love the Supreme Commander with a perfect love, then I have a perfect hatred for the enemy. Then I am assured of victory. But—and I know it’s true—in the same proportion that my love for my Commander decreases, it increases for the enemy. When this happens there is only one solution: kill the enemy, tear down the hut and rebuild the wall. That is why I got no sleep last night.” The soldier sits down.

Then he arises again. “But tonight I shall sleep.”

[Acknowledgments: To one of our revival ministers who preached a sermon on Joshua 10:22-24.]

Zigzagging Around

Credit Cards

Credit cards are as American as apple pie and 4th of July. Anyone with reasonably good credit can accumulate a stack of them over a period of time. They are probably the most accurate gauge ever invented to measure one’s self-discipline.

Credit cards in Brazil are still in their infancy as compared with N America. Many business establishments don’t accept them. And the majority of the people don’t carry them. Besides, they are expensive to acquire and prohibitive to use—unless zeroed out on the due date so as to not leave an outstanding balance. Let’s notice:


The initial fee runs from \$60 for a common card, to up to \$200 for an International or Gold card, a fee which thereafter must be paid annually for renewal. There is some solid logic behind this fee.

Credit card companies prefer to have a monogamous relationship with their customers. Exactly because of the high cost, most users deal with but one company. Even additional cards for spouse or other persons cost 50% of the normal fee.

If you think that’s outrageous, then listen to what it costs to have an unpaid balance. Even though our inflation is down to somewhat over a half percent per month, credit card companies are charging a stinging 11% per month for anything that goes over the due date. That is beside the approximately 2% service charge merchants pay for their services.

How can they get by with such outrageous interest? Simple. With the hyperinflation we had for years, 11% per month was cheap interest. And so even now 11% doesn’t sound all that bad to some people.

So far as the cards themselves, Master Card and Visa dominate the scene. American Express and Diner’s Club lag along in the rear.

A credit card in Brazil kept up to date so as to not pay interest can be very useful—especially for trips to N America. But to have a half dozen and use them like in N America, nunca, nunca, nunca... 

Lanchonetes

Lanchonetes—luncheonettes—are very popular in Brazil. Many of them are little hole-in-the-wall affairs with a half dozen tables, often out on the sidewalk, because they don't fit inside.

These luncheonettes are almost invariably run by the owner himself, which gives them a special atmosphere which draws people like a magnet.

Together with the normal snacks served in these luncheonettes, each one usually has a specialty, which many times is nothing more and nothing less than a special way of preparing a common dish. Whatever this specialty happens to be, it draws people who happen to appreciate that particular food.

In Rio Verde there are now two luncheonettes operated by our members. The first one, The Country Kitchen, which has been in operation for several years, belongs to Cláudio & Susan Silva. It is strategically located in the center of town, near a large hospital. Their specialty, right from the first has been grilled hamburgers, something that didn't exist in Rio Verde.

It was an idea that brought results. Brazilians have fallen in love with grilled hamburgers. Besides the hamburgers they also sell other American baked goods.

The second luncheonette to be opened several days ago was by Rogério & Regina Moraes. (We reported on their experiences and baptisms in the last issue of BN.) They are located on Avenue Presidente Vargas, which is the main avenue going through town. Their specialty is the empadão goiano.

An empadão is a small meat pie. The empadão goiano, as Rogério & Regina call theirs, is a favorite home recipe of their family. Everything indicates that their little luncheonette, called Tradição, will soon be a favorite among the Rio Verde people. Their sales on the opening days far exceeded what they had expected to sell. In fact, Rogério had to ask his folks to come out from Goiânia and help him build up his stock of empadões so he could continue operating.

On the positive side, these luncheonettes run by our people leave a very positive witness with the people. They can immediately tell that something is different in these little businesses. Furthermore, a very decent living can be made in these luncheonettes.

On the negative side, the bulk of the customers come in at night. Closing time is between 10 and 11 o'clock. This of course takes some readjusting on time to be spent with the family. But it seems to be working.

Some of you will remember that a year ago in our Annual Meeting, education was the evening topic. It was pointed out how that with ingenuity and a willingness to work, the Holdeman people have managed to find a niche in the work market that affords them a good living, in spite of having only a grade school education.

We are hoping this same entrepreneurship will become a trait of the Brazilian Holdemans. The two luncheonettes seem to be pointing in that direction. We are watching with interest to see what will come up next.



Brazilian Milk Production

Believe it or not, Brazil imports milk. It's a shame. For a country the size of the continental United States, and that was colonized at approximately the same time, to not be self-sufficient in dairy products, truly is a shame.

Hoping to find a solution to this problem, a delegation of men from the state of Goiás visited dairies in a number of countries, which included the US, Uruguay, Chile, Argentina and New Zealand.

The delegation was most impressed with the dairy farms in New Zealand, even though their production is low—an average of 18 liters per day—when compared with N American or European dairies. What they liked was that most of the herds in New Zealand are on grass, which of course keeps costs down. Because of the abundance of pasture in Brazil, this looked attractive.

It was humiliating, however, to find that the country of New Zealand, population 3.5 million, is the approximate size of the tiny Brazilian state of Piauí, and yet in 97 it hopes to produce 10 billion liters of milk—approximately half of what the behemoth Brazil hopes to produce in the same period.

It will take some doing. The average production per cow per year in Brazil at present is 4 liters (one gallon). They hope to eventually triple that figure.

If New Zealand is to be used as a model for milk production, some major changes will have to be made in Brazil. To begin with, dairy farmers in New Zealand dedicate themselves exclusively to this activity. Average daily production is 2,500 liters. For most Brazilian farmers, milking is a sideline. Average daily production is 80 liters.

Nope, Brazil isn't a dairyman's paradise. ▲

Our Postal Service

We have reported before that the postal service in Brazil is quite good. It hasn't always been that way. We used to have to stand in line for half an hour or more to buy a stamp from a postal employee who made no effort to hide his disdain for the customers impatiently waiting in line.

All this has changed and today the Correios (Post Office) is repeatedly cited for its efficiency.

January 25 is Postman's Day here in Brazil. The Popular, our Goiânia daily, published an addressed envelope that was processed by our postal service. The caption said, "Anyone who can find an address like this deserves our respect."

This is how the envelope was addressed (Hortolândia is the city and S P stands for São Paulo):

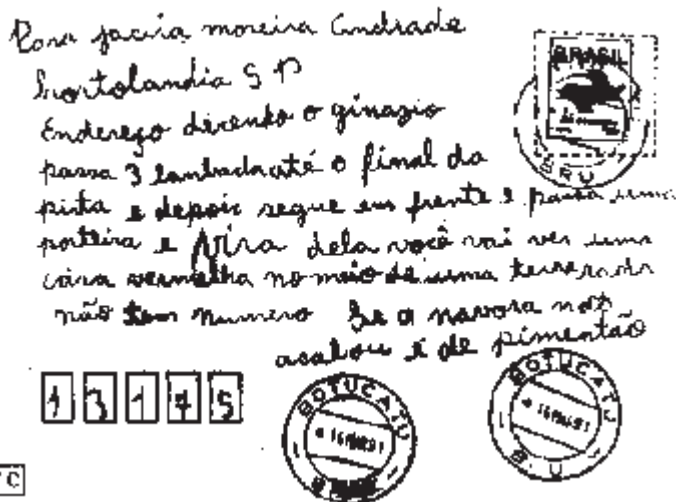
To Jacira Moreira Andrade

Hortolandia S P

Address - go down the street by the gymnasium

go over three speed bumps and when the asphalt ends keep on going until you get to a gate and turn... from here you will see a red house in the middle of a plowed field it has no number... If the field hasn't been plowed, there will be bell peppers.

I tip my hat to that postman. He certainly earns every cent that he makes.. ▲



The Church in Brazil

Annual Meeting

January 1 is the date the church in Brazil has chosen for its General Annual Business Meeting. Until last year, it was an evening meeting made up mainly of the members from the Rio Verdinho and Monte Alegre congregations. A few would come out from the Rio Verde congregation. Now we have both an afternoon and evening session, with supper served by the food committees. Invitations are sent out to all congregations and mission posts. The response is good and approximately 80% of the members were present.

In the afternoon session, we had our financial and activity reports from:

1. Mission Board
2. Tract Board
3. Publication Board
4. Proofreading Committee
5. Colonization Board
6. Literature Center Trustee Committee

Next came the election of officers for these boards. The following items came up for discussion:

Date of future annual meetings. January 1 chosen.

Approval of new church statutes. We are in the process of totally redoing our church registration. The new set of statutes was approved.

Possibility of organizing for Christian Disaster Relief work. It was decided to begin in a small way, thinking especially about local disasters. Each congregation will elect a member. Especially the members from the three central congregations will then work together.

Compiling of a Portuguese hymnal for church use. There was very good support to begin work on our own church hymnal. A five-man committee was elected for this work.

A quota for general church related expenses. This is in addition to the Conference quota, which we also pay into. The quota we set up is mainly for Annual Meeting

related expenses and for maintenance of the Literature Center. It comes to approximately a dollar per member per month. It sounds almost symbolic, but for those who aren't accustomed to paying a monthly quota, or have a reduced earning power, this will be an excellent introduction to what a quota is all about.

Supper was served between 5:00 and 6:00.

The evening session, open to everyone, was dedicated to the topic of the true church. There were talks on:

The one true church (the lineage)

The kingdom and the church (the purpose of the church)

Keeping the church pure (church discipline)

Separation from the world (modesty, simplicity, economy).

There is no doubt but what the annual meeting is having a uniting effect on the brotherhood. It is helping those who don't live in the central area to feel they are part of the body, that they too have a contribution to make.

I think most of us (except for the food committees) are looking forward to next year's annual meeting. ▲

Monte Alegre Revivals

Immediately after the Annual Meeting, Monte Alegre Congregation's revivals began with Dennis Unruh and Sam Shirk as the evangelists.

It is noteworthy that this was Dennis Unruh's eighth time to Brazil. He has been very closely involved with both the revival effort and the mission program over here.

Not only did the Monte Alegre Congregation come to a very warm communion, but the following morning there was an election, with Staven & Adeline Schmidt being called to the ministry and Jesse & Delores Loewen to the diaconry.

Staven is Earl & Johanna's son and Adeline is Duane & Frances Holdeman's daughter. Jesse is Edna Loewen's son and Delores is Enos Miller's daughter.

For a congregation of some 130 members to have eight staff members (four ministers and four deacons) may seem like quite a lot. It isn't. One of the ministers, Arlo Hibner, is on loan to the Rio Verde Congregation. Rio Verdinho has two ministers. When you take into account the two congregations that have no minister or deacon, the mission posts and the doors that are open, we are still very short-staffed. The mission that is being opened in Mozambique has involved our staff here, since the official language there is Portuguese. Dean Mininger is just returning from his second trip over there. Mark Loewen and Harold Holdeman have spent some time there. And while we're at it, let's add another factor. Increasingly the ministers from here are helping in revival efforts in N America. Right now Mark Loewen is in Fawnsdale, Alabama.

So it's understandable why our staff went about smiling like proud new parents when they found out they had more help.

Yes, it was a successful revival. ▲

Thinking Out Loud

My Black Cat

Shortly before we left for the US in May, our mother cat had a litter of kittens. All but two, a black one and a calico one, underwent the final solution. When we returned some six weeks later, both of the survivors had a determinedly anti-Homo sapiens attitude. All attempts at approximation were roundly rebuffed.

One day the calico kitten, now a teenager (by feline standards), simply disappeared. That left the black kitten. The offspring of a famous mouser, even at this young age it showed an aggressiveness that assured us that the *Mus musculus* population would continue at zero around our house so long as it was around. That seemed to be a fair trade-off for tolerating its unconcealed hostility.

Generously, when calling the dog for meals, we made sure there was enough for the black cat. Arrogantly, it would refuse to touch the food so long as we were near. But once we had retreated beyond the invisible buffer zone it had established for its safety, cautiously it would begin eating.

I assumed that this Gaza Strip would be a permanent fixture in our relations, but something began to change.

Instead of studiously ignoring me, I would catch that black cat gazing at me from a distance, almost benignly. If it was really wanting to sit down at the bargaining table with me, I certainly wanted to hold up my end of the negotiations. A bit of perestroika in our strained relations would be welcome.

I found that if I would rapidly stride to the car, for example, all the while pretending I didn't see the black cat, I could come within a reasonable distance of it. But the moment I stopped, or glanced at it, negotiations would become unproductive, in the jargon of negotiators.

My son, an animal lover, was my ally. One day he excitedly informed me that he had managed to "touch" the black cat. Some days after this coup de théâtre, I also managed a rapid touch. A sensation. (No wonder presidents emerge from Camp David with ear-to-ear smiles after a successful period of intense negotiations.)

At this point the black cat dropped all pretense of not liking us. When I would go for a walk it would be right on my heels. I managed a second touch, a third

Then came the day when, with a quick leg movement, I managed to secure my now somewhat converted black *felis catus* between by leg and the porch wall. Even though terrified, it let me pet it just a bit. Then one day I even managed to pick it up briefly. It was a victory of sorts—even if right then it displayed for me the same affection that a condemned prisoner shows for the scaffold.

An interesting relationship has developed. The cat likes us. So much so that its favorite parking space is right outside our front door. One gets the impression it's greatest joy in life is hearing our approaching footsteps. Once we manage to open the door and walk out, it's right under our feet. If we're not careful, we stumble over it.

But there's still something missing in our relationship. I can reach down and pick it up, but it won't relax in my arms. It makes sure it is constantly in position for rapid takeoff. Any effort to cradle it as one normally does a cat, is immediately rebuffed. Any unusual movement and one feels its sharp claws as it catapults to the floor.

What does that cat really want?

I'm not sure. I do know that it appreciates me. I suspect it tells other cats what I good guy I am. It apparently waits for me for hours outside the front door. It likes to follow me around. We could be great friends (I am a cat lover), but since it insists on calling the final shot in our relationship, on saying, "Look, I'll follow you, but don't pick me up," I'll probably never go to the bother of giving that black cat a name.

For a cat to find a warm spot in a man's heart, it must trust him. Totally.

Why do we so often treat God like my black cat treats me? Think about that. ▲

Missions

How Do They Start?

A book could—and should—be written telling how our different mission posts got started. When one visits a mission, it looks like the most logical thing in the world that there should be a mission there.

But there wasn't always a mission. And there had to be something to convince people that there should be. Often this something is a person or group of persons who seemed to be interested in salvation. It's amazing, though, how often that first one, or ones, end up dropping out, but in their place others begin showing interest.

We mentioned that we had some visitors here on the Colony from the city of Curitiba, the capitol of the southern state of Paraná—Roberto & Lúcia Amorim and their children, Camila, 12; Thiago, 10; and Letícia, 5.

Roberto tells of a new birth experience. His wife, however, feels she has never been born again. Her clothes, when here, weren't exactly a lesson in modesty. Both of them have outgoing personalities. They were very responsive to hospitality. When they left the Colony, it was with mutual warm feelings.

When they returned home, I called them. They said the first thing their daughter Camila did was to go through her wardrobe and make a pile of all the clothes she would no longer wear. A few days later it was Lúcia's turn to do the same thing.

Approximately a week ago several members of our mission board, Min. Arlo Hibner and Dea. Duane Holdeman, and their wives, paid them a visit in Curitiba. They returned with a good impression of how things are developing there.

Will Curitiba be our next mission post in Brazil? Very possible. For years we have been looking for an opportunity to penetrate southern Brazil. Maybe the time has come.

I called Roberto several days ago and he made an interesting observation. Before he

left here the tract office supplied him with a list of all of our distributors in Curitiba. He looked them up and came to the conclusion that most of them are using the tracts for their own benefit, without any interest in the church.

More and more I respect the church in Mexico for having restricted tract distribution almost exclusively to brethren. What Roberto reports confirms a growing sentiment here that we should follow the Mexican example.

Next month we hope to report on a missionary conference that is to take place here on January 6 and 7, when all the missionaries in Brazil will be here on the Colony. The evening meetings will be open to the public. ▲

Brasília

What's Happening?

What's happening in Brasília, the national capitol? Are things getting better or worse?

They're getting better. All we have to do is think back to how things were five years ago to see how much Brazil has changed.

It is said that a country can expect to have a really good president once every 50 years. If that is true, then Brazil is living its days of glory now with President Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

Under the leadership of President Cardoso, Brazil is being restructured. Obviously it's a long road and most of it uphill going. Bringing inflation down from 60% per month to 9% per year may well be one of his easiest victories. Some of the reforms which he hopes to implant are meeting stiff resistance.

A major victory which he is winning in congress is the right to reelection. According to our constitution, presidents, governors and mayors cannot serve two consecutive terms. There was a strong logic behind this law. Once in office, they would have at their disposal such a powerful machine that they would perpetuate themselves, or whom they chose, in power.

The people today aren't nearly as gullible as five years ago. When corruption is exposed, even the most powerful politicians are forced into retirement. It is because of this change in mentality that reelection is being seen in a different light.

An excellent example of this is President Cardoso. One four-year term is simply not long enough for him to implement the reforms which he sees as necessary. Now, with a strong possibility that the constitutional amendment permitting reelection will pass, the president can get on to more urgent business.

On a municipal level, the new mayors have taken office. In Rio Verde the new mayor is Nelci Spadoni, the wife of a well-known doctor. Everything indicates she will do an excellent job. Her intention seems to be to make a name for herself while in office—and not a fortune. That, after all, is what politics is all about. ▲

Brazilians Write

by Adrianna Cavalcante

Why I Love Ceará

Acaraú, my hometown, is located in the state of Ceará, in the immense northeast region of Brazil.

Ceará is a state richly blessed with natural beauty, which explains why tourists from all over the world visit my state. They are people who are tired of seeing civilization invading their forests and rivers. They want to find a place where there is no pollution. That is why they find their way to Ceará.

I'm not trying to say that all is beauty in my state because there are some places that aren't especially attractive.

Acaraú is a tropical town located on the coast. It has many beautiful beaches. Some of them haven't been discovered by tourists yet. They are just like God created them. We are surrounded by beaches, rivers and lakes. This means that we have an abundance of delicious seafood right next door. It also means that crab, shrimp, lobster, oyster and a variety of fish are part of our daily fare.

We have many different kinds of fruit, like cashew, oranges, bananas, coconuts, lemons, tangerines, among others.

Since much of the region is covered with a fine, white sand, the sun seems to be much brighter than at other places.

Our rainy season is from the middle of December to the end of June. Because of all the rain, rivers run out of their banks and lakes fill up. Temperatures fluctuate during this period, ranging from very hot to quite chilly.

In the dry season it gets quite hot, but because of the constant wind, it doesn't feel so hot. It's always cool at night.

Acaraú is a fishing town. Much of their catch is exported to different countries. Live lobsters are flown to Japan.

Obviously Acaraú has its share of problems. Corrupt public officials inhibit progress. Our school system is deficient and health services leave a lot to be desired. But on the other hand our crime rate is very low. You don't have to worry about getting mugged on our streets.

I feel it is a privilege to live in a town like Acaraú. I invite you all to visit my town and find out if what I have said is true. ▲

Off the Subject

Personal Cards

You're flying from City A to City B. You strike up a conversation with the passenger sitting in the seat next to you. You begin with banalities, but soon your seatmate begins telling you about a problem that he or she is facing. You listen carefully and are able to give a few pointers.

You keep on talking right during landing and as the plane taxis up to the terminal. Suddenly everyone is standing up and heading toward the door. You shake hands with your new friend and tell him or her that you hope everything will work out.

As you both edge down the aisle you think, “Now why didn’t I give him or her my address and phone number?” But it’s mighty hard to write anything down while edging out of the plane with both hands full. How nice it would be to have a personal card in your shirt pocket or purse at just that moment.

Anyone traveling should carry some kind of card for just this kind of situation. They’re inexpensive. For someone with a business, a business card will do. A minister should have a card identifying him as a clergyman. For anyone else, all the card needs to have on it is your name, address and phone number. Maybe you would like to put a Bible verse or some favorite saying on it.

Obviously discretion needs to be used. To simply have been someone’s seatmate isn’t reason enough to give out a card. To indiscriminately hand out cards could even lead to serious problems. But if you feel a valuable contact has been made, if you feel your new friend is a seeking soul, that is reason to give a card.

This of course doesn’t preclude giving out tracts. Often a card is a complement to a tract. It’s true that our tracts have an address, but often the person would feel more at ease contacting someone he or she now knows.

If you think this is a good idea, don’t wait until the next time you wish you had a card to do something about it. Do it now and when the opportunity comes, be glad you have a card. ▲

This & That

Different ones have visited the group in Boa Esperança. I suspect visitors are always welcome over there.

Sam & Erma Coblentz, the missionaries from Patos, are adopting a little boy by the name of Isaac who is now two years old. One day the Coblentz family decided to go to a Pentecostal meeting where they felt there might be some seeking souls. As is costum in this type of meeting, the glory rolled and the decibels zoomed. Some time later Sam & Erma’s son Frank returned from the Preparatory Classes he attended on the Colony. He gave a report in the mission church on some of the highlights. This involved telling a story heard in class in which someone yelled, “Fire!” With gusto Frank raised his arms and yelled, “FIRE!” This apparent Pentecostal fervor stirred something in little Isaac’s bosom and from where he was sitting in the audience, he hollered, “HALLELUJAH!” for all to hear. Yahoo Sam, no more Pentecostal meetings, you hear?

Three of Enos Miller’s brothers from the US are here paying him a visit.

An adult wild hog was spotted outside the literature center during our meetings. Fortunately (a) it didn’t get into the literature center, (b) the revival preachers weren’t in the literature center, and, (c) didn’t get locked in together with the wild hog.

Brazil News

Kramers killed an 18 foot long anaconda on the stream that divides their place from Emma Burns'. She suspects it was this snake that ate all her ducks and a bunch of chickens. If that's the case, then she won't have to furnish any more free MacChicken and MacDuck sandwiches for the old serpent.

We're supposed to go off of daylight saving time on February 22.

Streets, highways and country roads are really in bad shape. With the constant rains, it becomes practically impossible to patch things up. Since these potholes often can't be seen when the streets or roads are under water, it becomes quite dangerous to drive during a rain. The best policy is to find a high spot and park until the water goes down. Unless one enjoys spending time and money in the mechanic shop.