

# Brazil News

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**This entire issue of Brazil News is dedicated to the recent kidnapping which took place on the Mennonite Colony in Rio Verde, Goiás, involving the Caleb Holdeman family.**

## Special Report

### **Slow-Motion Lightning**

When lightning strikes, it's too late to run or to hide. There isn't even a split second to take evasive action. When the bolt falls from the sky, it's already too late.

When kidnapers strike, it's like lightning—in slow motion. One moment you are going about your daily routine of life in the land of the living. The next moment all routine, all plans, all dreams, all possessions, are pulverized. The glint of cold eyes, of cold steel, the harshness of cold voices, like a sudden, jagged bolt of lightning, make death seem more real than life.

In the next frantic moments, the bolt, now poised over the victims, does an erratic dance as orders are shouted. Death is just one eighth of an inch away, the distance the twitching trigger finger must travel to bring life to a jarring end.

For the Mennonite Colony in Brazil, September 24 brought a nice shower, apparently bringing the dry season to an end, ushering in the 97/98 agricultural year. Farmers didn't have to be told it was time to get corn seed into the ground. Everywhere tractors could be seen, going back and forth in the fields.

An informal meeting had been announced for that evening in the Monte Alegre social hall to welcome back Daniel & Ana Kramer and daughter Fyanna, the missionaries from Acaraú, in the northeastern state of Ceará. Some farmers probably parked their tractors early in order to be at the meeting on time.

The Caleb Holdeman family was one of the first ones to leave after the refreshments had been served. Approximately 10 minutes later they were at home.

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They came in through the front door and as Joanne walked past the carport door, she noticed it was slightly ajar. That was strange. Also, there was mud on the floor.

“It looks like someone was in the house while we were gone,” Joanne observed to the rest of the family.

The entire family went in and immediately it became apparent that someone had been in their house during their absence. There was dirt on the floor, on the rug.

Somewhat spooked by now, the family began a quick investigation of the house. When they got into the utility, Gloria, 14, their oldest daughter, saw a partially eaten package of wafers on the cupboard top. This new bit of evidence did nothing to allay their fears. Worse was when Joanne saw a club lying on the counter.

If it was a thief, he must have been interested in more than just eating wafers. Caleb decided to check his desk. After all, that is where some small cash and a few items of more value were kept. It was the logical place for a thief to exercise his trade.

While Caleb was going through his desk drawers, Gloria decided to go to her room, just down the hall. She turned on the light and there, right by her bed, was a duffel bag. And lying on the floor, partially hidden by the bed, was the form of a man.

The previous Sunday evening we had a Christian Endeavor meeting in church. The topic was “The fields are white to harvest.” Caleb was scheduled to read a story to the children. Everyone, including the adults, listened with interest as he read about how an Indian who hated the Palefaces was caught in a bear trap set by a white settler. With a crushed leg, he had no option but to permit himself to be rescued by his enemy and be taken to the white man’s cabin, where he and his small daughter spent a number of weeks while his leg mended.

At times the Indian was unable to contain his hatred. And the settler could not contain his love, which finally won the Indian over.

Caleb didn’t realize how much of that love he would soon need.

Gloria immediately turned off the light and came running to the living room where the rest of the family was. “There’s a man in my room!”

Caleb’s first thought was that it might just be a young man who on several occasions, when desperate for money to buy drink, has made a bit of a nuisance of himself. With this in mind, he started down the hall to check things out.

But he didn’t get very far. Not one, but six masked men, came charging out of the back bedrooms brandishing guns, knives and strange looking weapons.

Seeing what was happening, Joanne and the three children rushed out of the front door. But that was as far as they got. While some of the men ordered Caleb to kneel and raise his hands, others brought the rest of the family back in.

Marshall, five years, the youngest child began to cry. Joanne relates, “It appeared they were going to gag him, but I took him in my arms and managed to quiet him down.” Winfield, 12, was speechless.

Still not realizing that these men were kidnappers, Caleb offered to let them take the pickup, or whatever they wanted, but asked that they not harm the family.

By now the extreme gravity of the situation was sinking in. While Caleb was trying

to reason with the kidnapers, Joanne and the children knelt and began to pray. Caleb too, seeing he was getting no place with his pleas, also began to pray out loud.

Joanne says, “It crossed my mind that this might be how the martyrs felt. I didn’t know if we would be shot. So I prayed that God would give Caleb wisdom to know how to deal with these men. I also asked God to give us grace to be prepared for anything and not hate these men if the worst should take place. It was while we were kneeling and praying that the men tied our hands behind our backs. They let Marshall stay by me and I was able to comfort him.”

Caleb continues, “The men were so nervous that it felt like they might shoot at any time. By now all they could think of was to get going. They had already filled an ice chest with food out of our freezer. They marched us out of the house and told us to get into our car.”

That is where trouble began. It was more than evident that Caleb & Joanne and their three children, plus the six kidnapers, would not fit into the VW station wagon. So it was decided they would go in the double cab Ford pickup instead.

Professional kidnapers plan their course of action with the same thoroughness of a brain surgeon planning an operation. They try to prepare for every contingency. They rehearse their plans until they are confident of what they are doing. We’re talking about professional kidnapers.

But the men who kidnaped the Holdeman family weren’t professionals. They would hardly qualify as amateurs, as we shall see.

Several months ago we wrote about a new mode of transportation that is springing up all over Brazil. It is the moto-táxi, which is taxi service on a motorcycle. These six men hired motorcycle taxis to bring them to the Colony earlier in the day. Apparently they had no definite plan of action in mind. In broad daylight, they simply went ambling down the road. Marilyn Hibner saw them walking on the road in front of her house, close to the dam.

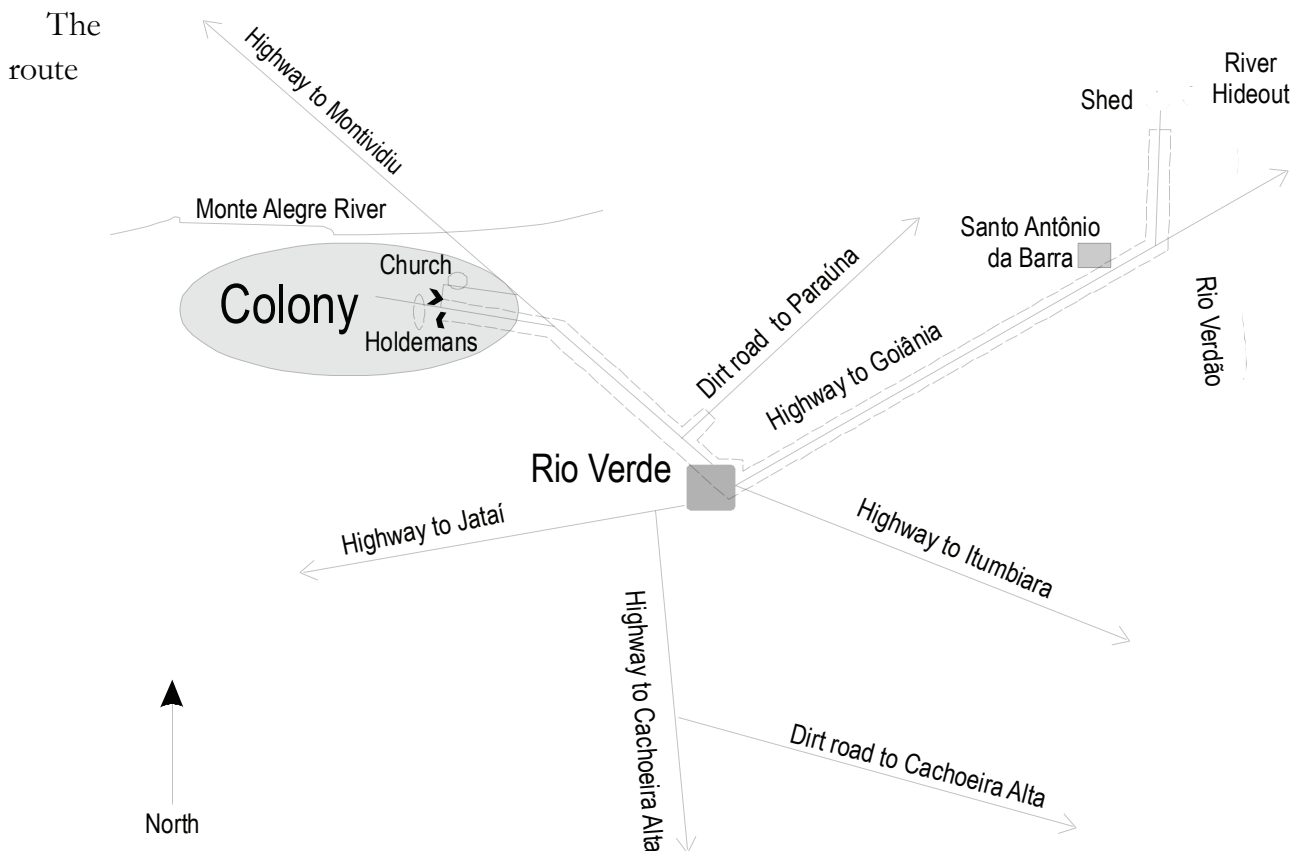
So now these men had their second crisis. They had found their way onto the Colony, but now did not know how to get off and return to the main highway. Caleb would have to show them the way. Probably in order to not arouse suspicion, they decided to have him drive. His hands were untied and he slid into the driver’s seat. Two of the kidnapers rode up front with him. Joanne and the children were in the back seat with another kidnapper and the other three rode on the back of the pickup.

It was here that Caleb had to make a very important decision. The first option was to drive past church where everything was lit up and there were still a lot of people. But what would the reaction of the jittery kidnapers be? Would they panic and begin firing their weapons?

The other option was to take a shortcut to the highway. This would mean that no one would know of what was happening to them.

It was this latter course that Caleb chose. In retrospect, we can’t help but believe he did the right thing.

Caleb tells us, “They told me to step on it, but I drove my normal speed.” Different



The route followed by the Holdemans after being kidnapped. Joanne and the children were separated from Caleb at the shed.

thoughts raced through his mind. Should he roll the pickup? No, he decided that wasn't the thing to do. After all, God was leading and protecting. He would simply obey their every command.

Truly it was God who was leading. Later, speaking with the police about the case, they strongly emphasized that prompt obedience is the key to getting along with this type of criminal. Repeatedly Caleb asked them not to harm his family.

As they neared the highway, the men ordered Caleb to stop. Joanne and the children were blindfolded with strips of shirts and rags, hastily hacked into strips with their knives. Upon reaching the highway, he was again ordered to stop. One of the kidnapers prepared to take the wheel and Caleb was also blindfolded. But his hands weren't to be tied again for the duration of the episode.

Joanne tells us that as they were driving along, "I talked to the children about Jesus and God. I didn't come right out and tell them that we might be separated, but within myself I hoped that if they would be taken to someplace where there would be no Christians, they would always remember that Mother had always taught them that Jesus would help them in all their problems."

Now with a different driver, the pickup headed toward Rio Verde. Caleb: "The fellow was a very poor driver. When the pickup slowed down and they turned onto a dirt road, even though I was blindfolded, I could tell we were on the road that goes to Paraúna. We drove for a little ways, then they pulled over and shut the pickup off. They

all got out and talked together for quite a while. We just sat there. We couldn't hear what they were saying, but the suspense was terrible."

Doubtlessly it was. Sometimes it is painful when well intentioned men discuss our situation, but how much more so when criminals, diabolical men with evil intentions, are trying to figure out what to do with us.

Already God began dropping little notes of comfort. Joanne tells how that the men seemed to be concerned about their comfort. At one point they adjusted the ropes on Gloria's hands. She says, "It crossed my mind that if they were wanting to bump us off, why would they be worried about hurting us?"

Caleb continues the story: "Finally they got back in the pickup, turned around, and headed back toward the highway. They threw blankets over our heads and told us to keep down. When we got near Rio Verde, they scooted around the edge of town on dirt roads until finally we got to a highway again. I didn't know which highway it was, but thought it might be the one that goes to Itumbiara."

This, in fact, was the message passed along on the quick alert, that they had been taken out on the highway to Itumbiara.

"We drove for a long time on that highway—or at least it seemed that way. It turned out to be only 45 kilometers (see map) and then we turned off on a dirt road again. We drove about another 20 kilometers and then they stopped. All of them got out and they had another conference.

"While this was going on, we had a family clearing and confessed to each other. We had no idea what was going to happen. Of course, we were praying all the time.

"When the men returned, they ordered Joanne and the children out of the pickup. I started to get out too, but they said I had to stay."

As Joanne and the children were led away, they kept talking to each other in low voices to make sure they were staying together.

Joanne continues: "The children had filed out of the pickup without making one peep. They were as quiet as little mice. I realized that I might never see Caleb again."

We must remember that at this point no one on the Colony was aware yet of what was going on. We believe though that not only the family's prayers were being answered, but also those that the Lord saw would soon be sent to His throne.

The children's behavior is proof of this. The delegado de polícia (roughly equivalent to a sheriff in the US) told us later that amateur kidnappers are so edgy that if a child screams, they can, just as easily as not, shoot them in the back.

Caleb continues: "Only one of the men stayed to guard me. The others were gone for quite a while. Finally two more came back and said we were going to Rio Verde. They tried to turn the pickup around, but got stuck. Being poor drivers, they were unable to get out, so they took my blindfold off and had me get the pickup out. Then they blindfolded me again."

It must have been a severe psychological blow to these men (even though they themselves possibly didn't recognize it) to be dependent on their prisoner, first to find the way to the highway and now to get the pickup going again.

When they got to Rio Verde, the men told Caleb he could remove his blindfold. Then they pulled over and gave him his instructions. He was to come up with a hundred thousand reais (US\$90,000). He asked about the possibility of lowering that sum, but they wouldn't hear anything of it. That evening—it was now past midnight—between 6:00 and 6:30, he was told, he should head out of Rio Verde on the road to Cachoeira Alta, a neighboring town, by himself, with the ransom money. There would be someone on the road to stop him. That was the extent of the instructions—except, of course, that the police were not to be notified.

Then they let him go in his pickup. He immediately headed back to the Colony, to his folks, Duane & Frances Holdeman. It was 2:30 that morning when he drove into their yard.

Their reaction was similar to what most of us felt when we first heard the news: unbelief. At first they talked to him through an open window. Caleb says, “I told them we had been kidnapped, but it took a while to register. They didn't even ask me to come in. Dad asked, ‘Well, do you want to raise the money?’ I said, ‘Yes, I want to get my family back.’ Then they remembered to invite me in.”

I don't know if there is a technical name for this particular method of kidnapping. I guess I would call it the simplified method. It is meant to be over with within 24 hours, there is no telephone communication, and the ransom is kept low enough to where they believe it will be possible to get the money together on short notice.

The family and staff members were immediately notified and the news put on the quick alert in both the Monte Alegre and Rio Verdinho congregations, asking that everyone pray earnestly.

And then what? Needless to say, this was a first for everyone. Since Caleb had promised to not notify the police, this was of course out of the question. And there was also the doctrine of non-resistance.

But something had to be done. Once again the effect of prayers was felt by those most closely involved. Step by step, a logical course of action unfolded.

The first one notified was a local physician, Dr. Benjamim Spadoni, whose wife, Nelci, is the mayor of Rio Verde. He said he would notify the delegado de polícia, who is also a member of the Presbyterian church where he is a member, but request that the police not become involved in the case.

It isn't too often that citizens of three nationalities are kidnapped in a single operation (except in large politically orientated operations, involving embassies etc.), but that was the case here. Caleb is an American, Joanne a Canadian and the children are Brazilians. Consequently it seemed proper to notify both the American and Canadian embassies.

The security agent from the American embassy soon called back and outlined the two courses of action that could be taken, which basically was to involve or not to involve the police. He explained that either course had its advantages and dangers. The determining factor as to what should be done was our non-resistance doctrine.

Caleb continues: “It was a real comfort to know that I didn't have to make these

decisions by myself. The whole church was more than ready to help. There were quite a few people gathered at my folks' place and it was amazing how fast the night went by. Pretty soon it was morning."

A prayer meeting was announced for 9:00 that morning at the Monte Alegre church. I doubt if anyone will ever forget that meeting. It had the hush of a funeral, the solemnity of a communion service, and yet, as the meeting progressed, the hope of an Easter service.

Min. Elias Stoltzfus opened the meeting by saying that this was something entirely new for us. He spoke to us about the promises of God. At no place does He promise that something like this would never befall us, but He does promise His presence.

Min. Mark Loewen told us not to think in terms of Joanne and the children being in the hands of kidnappers, but rather in the hands of God. For Him this wasn't a difficult situation.

Caleb tells about the prayer meeting: "They sang the song, O I Love To Talk With Jesus and it was a real balm to my soul. During the meeting Min. Staven Schmidt showed me the verse that his Bible opened to for morning worship. It was Psalm 34."

*I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*

*This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.*

*The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*

*O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

*O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.*

*The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.*

*The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*

*The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.*

*Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*

*He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.*

*Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.*

*The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.*

Caleb explains, "What especially impressed me was the part of the poor man that cried to the Lord and He helped him out of all his troubles."

It was marvelous what this meeting did. In many kidnapping cases, psychologists and other specialists are called in to counsel the family. This meeting did more than all the psychologists in the world could do. We left there confident that the Lord was in on this and that His will would be done. The notes of comfort He dropped were many. We recognized that maybe the outcome would be painful, but we felt prepared for this. Yet, I believe that everyone there felt a quiet confidence that the final chapter would be a pleasant one. As we shall see, this conviction was severely tried before the day was over.

News travels fast. In a matter of hours word had spread to many of the congregations in N America. And as frequently happens in this kind of a situation when everything is in a turmoil and word is passed around on the "Did you hear...?" phone, it becomes distorted. But even so, it came through clear enough to where people felt it was time to pray. It has been estimated that ninety percent of the brethren knew

at least something about what was going on in S America—and were praying. Folks, that's a lot of prayers. If our prayers are an incense, then there must have been a cloud over the throne of mercy. Different congregations also called prayer meetings. All these prayers meant a lot, not only to Caleb & Joanne, but to all of us.

There are two basic elements to a kidnapping. The first, of course, are the hostages. The second is the ransom that is demanded. In this case there were four hostages and a ransom of R\$100,000 (US\$90,000) to be paid. That's a lot of money, but interestingly, except especially for the deacons and a few others involved in getting the money together, the hostage aspect almost overshadowed the problem of the ransom.

And yet the ransom had to be paid. I don't know the details of what went on. All I know is that the deacons had a busy afternoon (our banks don't open until 11:00). Even with the fine cooperation of the brethren, it was a real job to get that much cash around. One brother even gave up buying a pickup so that he could do his part.

For Caleb this day was a Via Dolorosa. He knew that at 6:00 that evening, all alone, he would have to take the R\$100,000, meet the bandits, and pay the ransom for his loved ones. He knew, and we knew, this was going to be a very dangerous mission. This fact was later confirmed by the delegado de polícia and other specialists. There were so many things that could go wrong, including not making contact with the kidnapers. They obviously would be extremely tense, expecting that the police might be staked out in the vicinity. And there is the simple danger of driving around in the dark with R\$100,000 in cash. What if someone should get his hands on this money before he got to the drop-off place? Etcetera, etcetera.

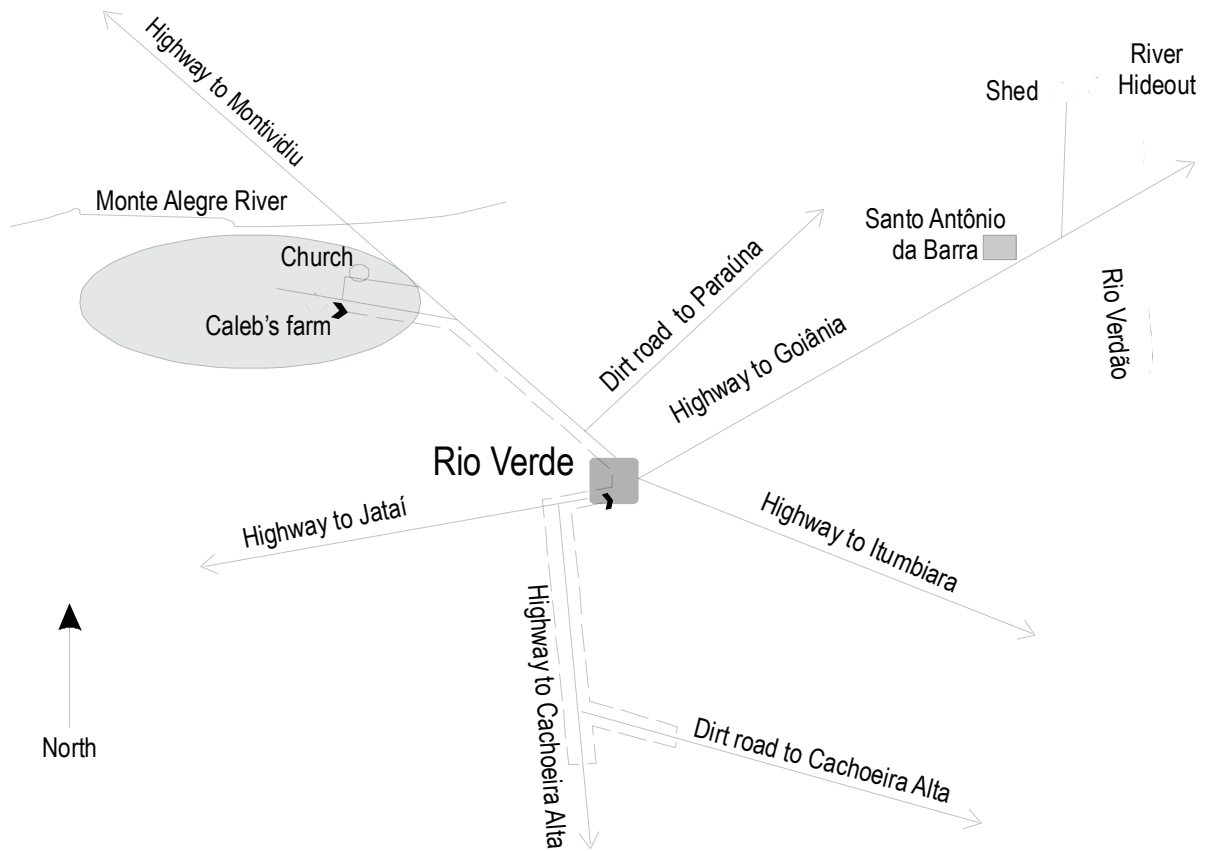
Caleb puts it like this: "I would hear of one congregation after another that were going to have a prayer meeting or put it on the quick alert, thinking especially of the time when I would be taking the money back. The hardest thing during that day was the suspense of not knowing what was happening to my family. As it came closer to the time that I would have to meet the kidnapers, I could sense what a dangerous mission I was going on. But I wanted to rescue my family. That was highest in my mind, to rescue my family."

The time came to leave the Colony and head to town. He met the deacons at João Souto's place, where the Colony road hits the highway, and they gave him the money. It took bank officials all afternoon to count out the money and register the serial numbers. This job was compounded by the fact that only ten percent of the money came in R\$100 denomination bills. About half came in fifties and the rest in tens.

Caleb's brother Stanley followed him until the turnoff point on the highway where he would take the road to Cachoeira Alta where the kidnapers were supposed to be waiting for him. From here on he had to travel alone. Needless to say, it was difficult for Stanley to turn back while his brother drove into the jaws of death.

No particular spot had been designated by the kidnapers where they would be waiting, but the understanding was that they would be waiting on that road somewhere near town. Caleb slowly drove down the road. No kidnapers. He drove some more. And still no kidnapers.





The route followed by Caleb in his first frustrated attempt to find the kidnappers. Returning to town, he called the Colony

Had he heard right? Was this really the road they had specified? Seeing a man on a tractor, he asked if there was another road. Yes, there was a dirt road. Caleb decided to try that road. But it was very, very bad. He crept along at approximately 30 kilometers an hour for 10 kilometers. Caleb says it looked like the perfect place for kidnappers to be hiding. But they weren't there. So Caleb again returned to Rio Verde.

Desperate, he found a phone and called home. Word was flashed around that things weren't going well. Caleb decided that he would make another try at it on the highway to Cachoeira Alta.

Caleb tells us what happened: "I had driven some 15 kilometers when I saw three boys walking along side the highway, headed for town. I didn't know if it was them, so I stopped. They ran into the ditch on my side of the road. I wondered if it might be someone else wanting to get the money I had with me. Then what would I do?"

When Joanne and the children were separated from Caleb, they had no idea what awaited them. With their eyes blindfolded and hands tied behind their backs, the three kidnappers lead them down a narrow path, using their flashlights.

Joanne tells the story: "We couldn't see, so they would say, 'Careful, here's a rock' or 'Watch your step.' They let Marshall walk behind me and hang onto my hands. When I would stumble, they would say, 'Take it easy, take it easy.' They were very careful with us as we blindly walked along that path.

“Finally we stopped. It was a rickety old shed made out of sand bricks and with a tile roof. Almost the whole front was open.

“There was a pile of cotton seed in the middle of the shed. The seeds had quite a bit of cotton on them which made them soft. They smoothed out a place, put down a blanket and told us we could lie down.

“Really, it was quite comfortable. They untied our hands and since it was dark, also removed our blindfolds. I asked where my husband was. They said they had sent him back to get money. I didn’t know if that was the truth. If I would have known it was the truth, it would have been a great relief to me. I thought they might be asking a million real ransom. Gloria guessed it. She said it would be a hundred thousand.

“Since we didn’t have anything to cover up with, we were chilly. To keep warm we hugged each other. That is how we dozed that night.

“One thing that worried me though, was that one of the men very sarcastically remarked, looking at Winfield, ‘This rich man’s son won’t sleep in a fancy bed tonight.’ But it was the last time they made any kind of disrespectful remark. I felt God was answering prayers. As more people found out about what was happening and added their prayers to the many who were already praying, the men treated us better and better.

“Every now and then one of the children would say they were scared, or ask if we would see daddy again. We would immediately pray out loud. I told them that Jesus loved us and would help us.

“During the night the men would flash their flashlights on us every little bit to see what we were doing. I didn’t even think about trying to escape. We had no idea where we were. All I knew was that we had gone through town on our way out.

“In the morning, as soon as it got light, they came with their guns, tied our hands and blindfolded us. One of the men made a funny noise, like a match being struck. I wondered if they were going to burn us up.

“They led us through some swampy ground, through fences, by a dam, to a spot by a large river where they kept us all day. We found out it was almost two kilometers from the shed to the river where we stayed.

“Marshall’s blindfold kept coming down and each time he would try and put it back in place. He seemed to know that that is what was expected of him. I told him not to bother. Winfield had already taken his shoes off at home and so was only wearing heavy sport socks.

“One place where we crossed a little stream I asked if they wouldn’t help Marshall. They did and from there on each time we got to a more difficult place, they would carry him, without even having to ask.

“As we were walking, I began feeling very weak and stumbled. Seeing this, the men placed a blanket on the ground so that we could sit down. They untied our hands. We rested for a bit and then kept on going.

“When we got to the river, I reached out and tried to take my blindfold off, but they told me not yet. But then, about a half an hour later they told us we could take our

blindfolds off. They said it wouldn't be good for us to have them on all day. But they did tell us to face toward the river and they tried to stay behind us.

"Actually, we were in a heavily wooded area right next to the river. After some time I asked the men if we could do some exercises. They said we could, so we did some exercises. We would pray together and then doze a little. In the middle of the morning they brought us rolls that they had taken from our freezer and put in the ice chest. They got us water from the river to drink.

"I have a low sugar problem. When this would begin acting up, I would get weak and shaky and my mind would be somewhat numb. I wondered if maybe God didn't sometimes numb the martyr's minds too.

"As near as I can tell, when I began feeling better is when the prayer meeting was being held at the Monte Alegre church. That was about the time they decided to give us food and water.

"We had limited freedom along the river. I didn't ask if we could go down to the water, because I didn't want to ask any favors of them. But time seemed to just crawl by, so every little bit I would ask Gloria what time it was.

"During the afternoon it began to thunder and then a rainstorm came up. Marshall was scared. Lightning was the least of my worries. If we would all be killed, that would have been OK.

"We sang some songs together, like: Jesus Loves Me, Jesus Loves the Little Children. This cheered them up. Once Winfield started to get white. He was cold. I half covered him with a blanket. Two of the men immediately came and asked if he was sick. They brought another blanket. I told them he would be OK.

"Since it was starting to rain, the men made a little shelter out of tree branches and a piece of plastic. We huddled in there during the rain. For a while even they got in with us.

"In the morning they all carried their guns, half cocked, ready to use. But as the day wore on they began putting them in their belts, and finally only one of them had a gun.

"We sang some and once I told the men that we weren't only praying for ourselves, but for them too.

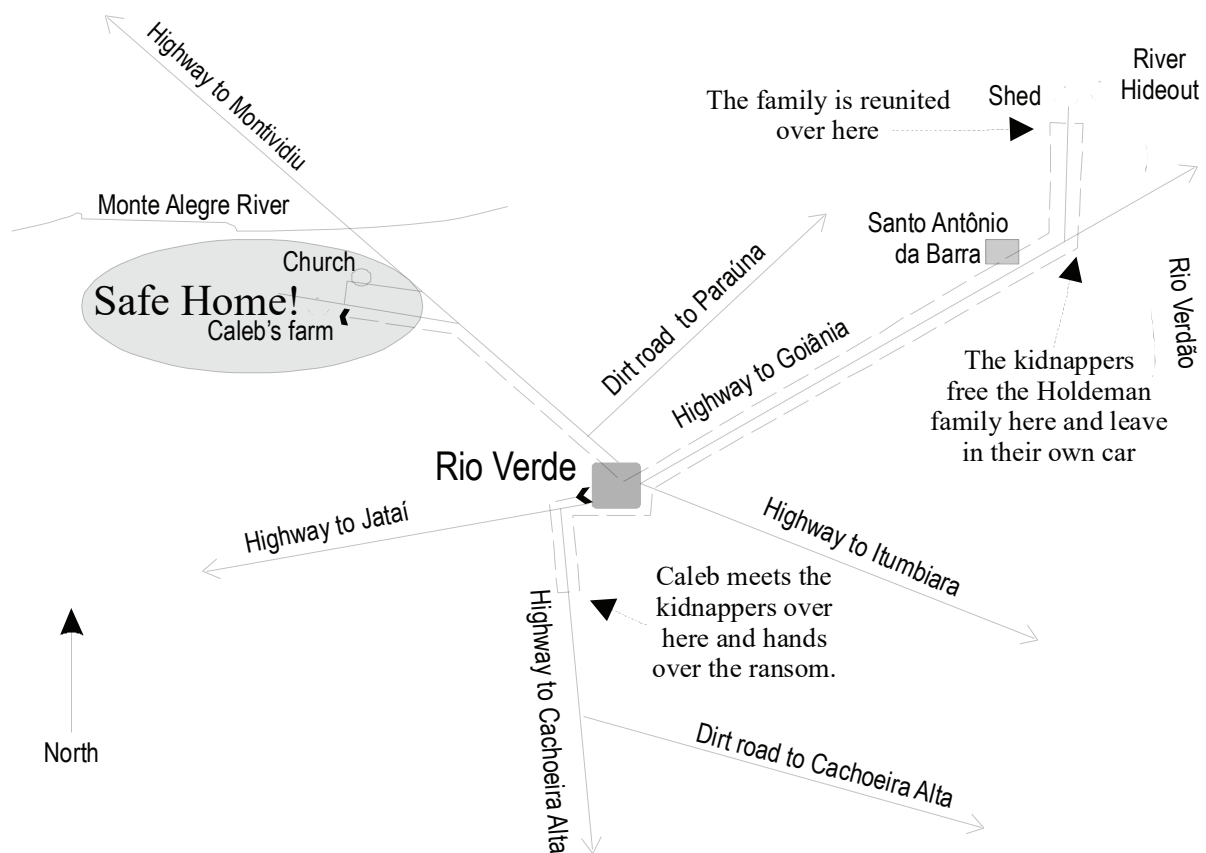
"Then toward evening they walked us back to the shed, but this time we didn't have our hands tied nor were we blindfolded. It was drizzling so we got pretty wet.

"Back in the shed, we sat down on some fertilizer sacks and waited and waited. The children asked if daddy was coming. That is when Winfield started crying. I told them that I didn't know. We prayed that God would protect us. When it got dark I figured he wouldn't come that day anymore. We were so tired that we all really slept.

"Suddenly I was wide awake. It was pitch dark inside. Outside the moon was shining just a bit. Then I heard it again, a low whistle outside. I could tell it was some sort of signal."

In the next several seconds Caleb had to make an important decision. The life of his family could easily depend on what he did. Should he wait and see if these were the men or shouldn't he?

He resumes the story: "I almost took off, but I was desperate, so I waited. About that quick they were at the pickup window. I saw it was them and they didn't even have



## **The ransom is paid and the family freed. They return home.**

their guns. They got in and counted the money and said I should head back to town. Just before we got there, they had me take a dirt road until we got to the main highway. Then they had me stop and I was blindfolded. One of the men took the wheel. On the other side of town there was a car parked beside the highway. They yelled at the occupants of that car. By what they said among themselves, I knew it was following us. We drove some 40 kilometers and turned off on a dirt road, where they stopped. One fellow got out with the money and went to the other car. The others stayed with me and said they were taking me to my family.

“We drove on a little farther and stopped again. They all got out and said that I should wait while they got my family.”

The whistle that Joan heard was a signal. She tells it: “The kidnappers in the shed, who by now were sound asleep, awoke. Those outside identified themselves. I had the impression they were scared of getting shot themselves if they just barged in. The men talked among themselves a little bit and then told us it was time to get up. The children were all groggy. We started walking out on the same path on which we had come in.”

Caleb: “After a while I heard them coming. Then I saw them in the light of the flashlight. What a relief when I saw them climbing over the fence.”

Joanne too was elated: “Sure enough! There was Caleb with the pickup. This was such a relief, but we were still in the hands of the kidnappers. Even so, the first thing we did when we were together in the pickup was thank the Lord for his protection thus far.

All five kidnappers got into the pickup with Caleb & Joanne and the children. As

they drove the men kept telling Caleb not to notify the police. One of them said, “I don’t believe he would do something like that.”

The car was waiting at the highway. Without another word, the men got out of the pickup, got into the car and took off.

“We were free!” Caleb says. What beautiful words! As soon as they reached town, they called to the Colony and told them “that our mission was accomplished,” as Caleb puts it.

Some 40 minutes later, back on the Colony and reunited with loved ones, little Marshall succinctly gave the conclusion of the whole matter: “We got stole.”

Marshall is doubtlessly the only one who will have at least a few good memories of what took place. The little hut that the kidnapers built on the banks of the Rio Verdão quickly turned into an Indian hut. I asked Joanne if she remembered the story of The Ransom of Red Chief while Marshall was playing Indian. She said she did.

In the Ransom of Red Chief the police didn’t become involved. Nor did the press. Ostensibly the same was true in our situation. Word did not leak out in town. If the press knew anything, they kept mum. The police did know, almost from the beginning, but honored our request that they not become involved. That doesn’t mean, however, that behind the scenes, they weren’t doing anything. They were. By the time they were notified that the family had been released, they were raring to get to work. Our local delegado de polícia, Paulo Roberto Moreira, together with the Grupo Anti-Seqüestro (the Brazilian version of SWAT teams in N America) which had already come out from Goiânia, didn’t lose a minute. That same night they had a meeting with Caleb and Joanne, got the information they needed, and went to work.

Within approximately 24 hours, three of the eight men had been captured right in Rio Verde. Some 36 hours later three others were captured in the neighboring state of Mato Grosso as they returned to a hotel after a dance. A little over half of the ransom money was recovered and returned by the police.

The other two are still hiding out. Since they have been identified, there’s a good chance that sooner or later they will be captured.

Those on the colony who had contact with Paulo Roberto Moreira, the delegado de polícia, and the Grupo Anti-Seqüestro agents were impressed with their professionalism. Caleb says that when they returned to the shed the following day where Joanne and the children had been held captive, the police nonchalantly walked around looking things over, occasionally stopping to pick something up and examine it. They appeared to have all the time in the world, but when they left, they had picked up sufficient evidence to get on the kidnapper’s trail.

We mentioned earlier that they came to the Colony on moto-táxis. It was exactly the receipt they received and forgot in the shed that led them to the men who brought them to the Colony, who, of course, identified the criminals.

Paulo Roberto Moreira, the delegado de polícia is a soft-spoken, very courteous man, probably in his early thirties. When he answers his incessantly ringing phone, he treats all with the same courtesy. But no one should mistake his gentlemanly ways with softness. Once they had found what section of town the kidnapers were from, he

dressed up in old clothes, borrowed his sister-in-law's old beat-up Fiat car, and began roaming the streets. Soon the men were in jail.

I mentioned to the delegado that the men were obviously amateurs. He replied with a wry smile, "Much more so than we even suspected." He rummaged through a pile of guns and knives on the floor and showed us one of the weapons they carried. "It's from the Middle Ages," he said. The "weapon" was a piece of heavy tin cut into a rough star with jagged points. It could either be thrown or used in hand to hand combat. I traced it onto a piece of paper in the delegado's office. Reduced to about half size, you can see what it looks like.

Next comes a homemade knife, also reduced, which they forgot in the Holdeman's house.

One of the firearms was an ancient, homemade, double-barreled muzzle loading pistol. The lower part of one barrel was totally blown away, probably from an excessive charge. An ancient bolt-action shotgun, about to fall apart, was another of their weapons. The two who are still loose very likely have some weapons with them, which we of course haven't seen.

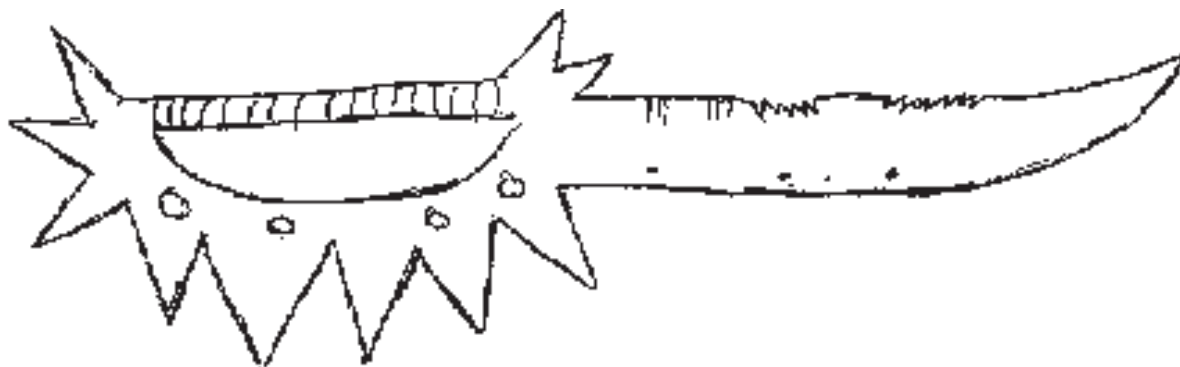
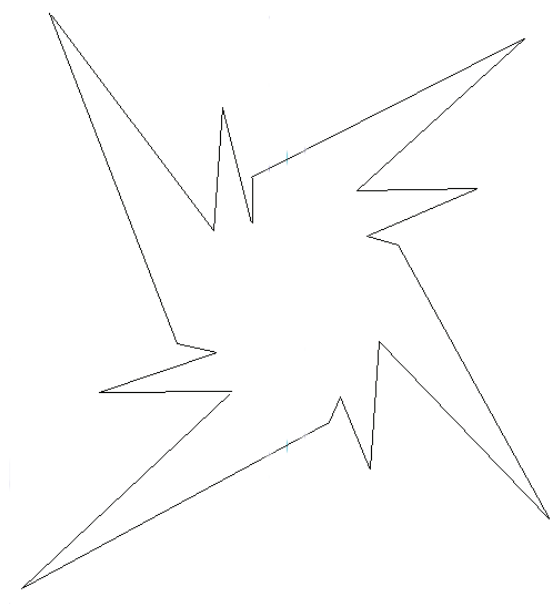
What has this episode done to the Colony?

It has increased our faith in God and in the power of prayer.

It has clearly shown that there is a close bond in the brotherhood. Caleb & Joanne's problem became everyone's problem, not only in Brazil, but throughout the church.

I sincerely believe it has been a witness to many people, as this kidnapping was aired nationwide.

One more thing, which maybe isn't so pleasant, but is a fact we just as well face. Just because we're Holdeman Mennonites does not mean we're exempt from kidnappings. Maybe, just maybe, this is one of the biggest lessons God wants to teach us. As time draws to a close and this world becomes increasingly violent, we can expect more of this. And let's remember, not all kidnappings may turn out like this one.



**Two of the homemade weapons used by the kidnappers**

We have said that a kidnapping is lightning in slow motion. Stop and think about that just a bit.

A family is driving down the interstate when a drunken driver suddenly veers into their lane. If that scene could suddenly be shifted into slow motion and we could put it on the quick alert, ask the brotherhood to pray that something would happen to cause the drunk to pull back into his own lane, wouldn't we be thankful?

A farmer hoists up a piece of heavy equipment so that he can work on it. While he is tightening a bolt underneath, the hoist chain breaks. What wouldn't we give if the machine would come down in slow-motion and we could get together and pray for his deliverance?

A child playing in a tree slips and falls headfirst. What wouldn't we give if the fall could be in slow motion so that we could pray for God's protection so that there wouldn't be a broken neck?

No, a kidnapping isn't a pleasant experience. But if one day you find yourself in the hands of evil men, remember that in a matter of hours thousands of saints will be praying for you. That is reason to give thanks.

Caleb has visited the kidnappers in jail. One came and apologized for what happened. Many prayers were offered for these men, not only that they wouldn't harm the family, but also for their salvation.

When Caleb went on his lonely nighttime mission to deliver the ransom, he took some tracts along, which the kidnappers accepted. The title of one of them was: How To Get Out of Prison.

Caleb & Joanne and Gloria and Winfield and Marshall are free. But their kidnappers aren't. Both in body and soul they are in prison. May we pray that their souls will be set free.

Through all this God dropped little notes of comfort to different ones who were praying mightily. This was the case here on the Colony. We received a phone call from Canada telling how the Lord dropped a note of comfort through a Bible verse. Doubtlessly many could tell such experiences. I would appreciate hearing from you readers.

When the phone rang here in the early hours of the morning and we heard what had happened, the verse came to me, "Sanctify yourselves . . ." I couldn't remember the rest. I looked it up in the morning. In Joshua 3:5 I read, "Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you."

And He did.

Is Brazil a safe place to live? Is it a safe place to visit?

If you are convinced that Brazil isn't a safe place, nothing I can say will convince you it is. You shouldn't risk your life living in, or visiting, this South American country. But on the other hand, if you can believe that it's the Lord's will that His church be present in Brazil, if you can see God's protecting hand and guidance in the recent happenings, then you needn't fear. Come see us.

I asked my youth Sunday School class if they thought we out to get out of Brazil. The first to answer was Bira Bernardes, the young man whom some of you learned to know during his visit to the US. He said no, we should not get out.

Bira, I agree with you.



# O Popular

Agricultores, militeiros e três filhas foram libertados após pagar resgate de R\$ 100 mil

## Família norte-americana é seqüestrada em Rio Verde

Quatro integrantes de família de agricultores foram seqüestrados em Rio Verde, Goiás, após pagar resgate de R\$ 100 mil. Os seqüestrados foram libertados após o pagamento do resgate. A família norte-americana foi seqüestrada em Rio Verde, Goiás, após pagar resgate de R\$ 100 mil.

### CAMPO



#### LEITURAS

##### Visita do papa será tranquila, diz o Bispo de Goiás

O Bispo de Goiás, Dom Antônio Carlos de Souza, afirmou que a visita do papa João Paulo II ao Brasil será tranquila e sem incidentes. Ele destacou que a Igreja Católica em Goiás está preparada para receber o papa com todo o respeito e acolhimento.

#### LEITURAS

##### Goiás prepara companhia para registrar TST

O governo do Estado de Goiás está preparando uma companhia para registrar o TST (Tribunal Superior do Trabalho). A iniciativa visa fortalecer o sistema judiciário trabalhista no estado e melhorar a eficiência dos processos judiciais.

#### LEITURAS

##### IBAMA denuncia matança de bichos

O IBAMA denunciou a matança ilegal de animais silvestres em Goiás. A denúncia foi baseada em denúncias recebidas por órgãos ambientais locais e estaduais.



#### LEITURAS

##### Cinefilos vão ao PPS e Itamar assistir PBDW

Um grupo de cinefilos vai ao PPS e Itamar assistir ao filme PBDW. O filme é considerado uma obra-prima do cinema brasileiro e atrai um público fiel de amantes da sétima arte.

##### Magnus Villia vai ao HIP para adquirir TCM

Magnus Villia vai ao HIP para adquirir TCM. O TCM (Tribunal Superior do Trabalho) é uma instituição importante para a resolução de conflitos trabalhistas em nível nacional.

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#### LEITURAS



##### Avião cai na Indonésia e 234 ocupantes morrem

Um avião comercial caiu na Indonésia, matando 234 ocupantes. O acidente ocorreu durante a decolagem e causou um grande impacto internacional.

##### Terramoto mata 10 na Itália e destrói basílica

Um terremoto matou 10 pessoas e destruiu uma basílica na Itália. O sismo ocorreu em uma região turística e causou danos materiais e humanos significativos.

#### LEITURAS

##### Atividade do comércio eletrônico cresce 100%

A atividade do comércio eletrônico cresceu 100% em comparação com o ano anterior. Isso reflete a crescente adoção de plataformas digitais por consumidores e empresas.

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Headlines in O POPULAR the Goiânia daily