

Brazil News



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Editorial

At the End of the Day

As the day comes to an end, we often feel like a run-down battery, our courage resembles a fuel gauge hanging on empty. After a long, tiring day, we are looking forward to a warm house, to a warm meal, to a warm family, and then to a warm bed. We expect to get up in the morning with our battery charged up and with our fuel supply replenished, ready for a new day. We call this home.

We enjoy getting up in the morning, having a good breakfast, and going to work. We enjoy our work, our daily activities. But breakfast is seldom so delicious, nor is our work so enjoyable that we don't look forward to coming home to roost at sundown. To roost...?

One of the casualties of modern living is that few people have had the privilege of watching the ritual of a chicken going to roost. Rare indeed today is the farmyard that has chickens running loose. Some of you who were born in the first half of this century may feel a pleasant sensation down deep as we give a few details of a day in the life of a chicken.

The Bible bids the sluggard look to the ant as an example of industriousness. A mother hen would be a close runner-up in this category. A chicken, especially a hen with a brood of little chicks, has a busy, busy day. To feed herself and 10 or 15 youngsters means being on the move most of the day, scratching and clucking, one eye on the chicks and the other on the sky, looking out for hawks.

Hens obviously don't call each other on the phone to chat about their days activities. If they did, we might be amazed at how parallel their conversation would be to that of a couple of mothers with little children discussing the day on the phone. In both cases there would be run-down batteries and empty fuel tanks.

The Master touchingly calls our attention to how a hen gathers her chicks beneath her wings. When the chicks are small, the hen evidently will not fly up into a tree

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with her brood. But as the shadows lengthen she ceases to scurry about searching for another seed, for another worm, for another insect, for her young. The rapid cluck, cluck, cluck, which says, “Here’s something to eat,” changes to a gentle, yet urgent call to come home—under her wings.

The mother hen slowly makes her way to the spot she has chosen to spend the night. Almost inaudibly she clucks and one by one her chicks come slipping under her wings. Finally, after the last one is safe under her wing, the clucking stops. The chicks, not quite sure if it is bedtime yet, stick their downy heads out from under her wing, as if to ask, “Do we need to go to bed so early?” Soon they too have settled down for the night.

The days go by and the chicks get bigger and bigger. They feather out to where they no longer need to sleep under the mother hen’s wing. In fact, they wouldn’t fit even if they wanted to. The hen once again roosts in the branches of a tree, and so do her children.

Nature itself teaches us that we should come home at the end of the day to recharge our batteries and fuel up for the morrow.

It takes more than a meal, a house and a bed to recharge and refuel. People living in mansions surrounded by luxury and servants may get up each morning just as depleted as the evening before. Their spirit hasn’t come into roost. They feel like the chick who has lost its mother and spent the night out in the rain.

A middle-aged divorced doctor whose children have left home tells of what she faces each afternoon when she comes home from a busy day. Walking into the house she announces, “Hi, here I am!” Her words bounce off empty walls. Yes, it’s a nice house with a nice bed, but when she gets up the next morning her batteries haven’t been recharged and the fuel tank continues on empty.

At times we temporarily find ourselves in a situation in which our “roosting” routine has been broken. Because of unusual circumstances we find ourselves alone in the house. We sit down to a meal and find we aren’t hungry. We go to bed and aren’t sleepy. We get up in the morning and feel like we need a tow truck to pull us through the day.

(We recognize that there are those who live by themselves because this has been God’s plan, a plan which they have gracefully accepted. While there may always be a certain loneliness, they can have happy, productive lives and often make immeasurable contributions to their family, to the church, to the community and to the nation. We tip our hats to these courageous souls.)

One of the greatest treasures of Mennonite life is a stable, pleasant home situation. If there is such a thing as a disadvantage to this, it might be the fact that we have difficulty understanding that not everyone is as fortunate as we, indeed, that even in our midst there are those for whom the end of the day isn’t always pleasant. While we are recharging our batteries and replenishing our fuel supply for the coming day, they are tense, unsure of what will happen next.

Knowing that these situations exist, the least we can do is remember them in our prayers and meditations—and look for the open door to extend a helping hand. May we remember...

Our brothers and sisters who are married to an unbeliever. This is especially true on mission fields where often only one spouse comes to the faith. In some cases there is a relatively peaceful coexistence. In others, however, the unbeliever goes out of his or her way to snarl up the life of the believer. There are those, especially sisters, who suffer in one day what many of us don't suffer in a year. At times they must work out during the day, doing menial tasks, to support the family. When they come home at night, dead tired, they must tend to the family, make supper, wash clothes, and do all the training. Late at night, or early in the morning, when the husband comes home in a drunken stupor, she must get up and prepare him a meal (from a bare cupboard) and listen to his verbal abuse.

Our brothers and sisters who have been abandoned by their spouse. These are especially painful situations when during the day they glimpse their estranged spouse in the company of a new partner. Often they must play the role of both mom and dad in the home. If we feel that being only mom or dad can weigh heavily, what about these souls who carry a double burden? We see them on the street and they smile. They don't go around with a long face. They speak cheerfully to us. Conveniently we assume they have adjusted to the circumstances. To a point maybe they have. Even though they walk erect, one leg they walk on is a wooden leg. When God takes a husband or wife home, there is a healing process. But when it is the work of the devil, there is a wooden leg. Let us never get the idea that because they smile and seem to be doing well that they don't need our prayers

Our brothers and sisters who suffer from an incapacitating illness or the consequences of an accident. Physical suffering is never pleasant. When a person with normal health becomes ill, there is always the hope of taking medication and getting better. But we have those in our midst who know they will suffer until the day of their death. Folks, it takes courage to be cheerful even though you have no hopes that things will get better. It takes courage to face life being dependant upon others. Don't only pray for these souls. Make them part of your life. The story is told of a little boy and his dad who were often seen walking up the steps of a cancer clinic where the son was undergoing treatment. Both had a nice crop of hair. One day, however, the little boy began losing his hair. The next time they were seen walking up the steps, both father and son were totally bald. Dad had shaved his head for the sake of his son who was ill. Are you willing to shave your head for your brother or sister?

Our brothers and sisters who learned to know the church after living in sin for many years. Those of us who were born and raised Mennonites have difficulty understanding people who learned to know the church later in life. We have difficulty identifying with their struggles. Some of the things they say sound so foolish to us, so immature. We tolerantly smile at them when they come up with one of their "off" ideas. Or maybe we try and set them straight. Maybe some of their ideas are impractical. But not all of them. When they try and point out certain misalignments in our midst, we pat them on the back and say, "You'll grow up yet, Johnny, and then you'll understand." We don't realize how frustrated some of them are, the hours they lay awake at night trying to sort

things out. They awoken the next morning exhausted, overcome by the doubts which daily pelt them like hailstones.

This list could go on. I invite you readers to contribute your thoughts on this issue. As you come home to roost at the end of the day and you walk into a warm house, are given a warm greeting by your spouse and children, partake of a warm meal, spend a warm evening together, and then go to a warm bed, remember those who don't. ▲

Zigzagging Around (From Brazil to USA)

I Lose My Wallet

As we thought about coming to the US, we knew a number of doors would have to open. One by one they opened and we came to the conclusion that the trip would be feasible. That meant getting our personal affairs arranged for a two month absence, as well as getting everything in order on our job at the Publicadora Menonita where we work.

Our plans were to leave on Saturday afternoon, June 15, visit the Goiânia mission on Sunday and catch our plane on Monday. As we got into the final countdown of days, things got tighter and tighter. It meant going to town more often than our weekly trip on Tuesday to do business. The Friday before we were to leave I made a last trip to town to tie up loose ends. After stopping at the accountant, I headed to the post office. That is where I realized my wallet was missing.

I explain here that some of the wallets used in Brazil are the size of two conventional wallets. These are usually carried in the hand and not stuffed in a pocket. My wallet is one of these larger ones and when I get into the car, I lay it on top of the ash tray, in front of the gear shift lever. So when I got to the post office and saw that it was missing, I immediately knew it had to be at the accountant's office. I was getting ready to punch his number into my cell phone, when it rang. It was my wife, who told me he had called and asked her to tell me my wallet was in his office.

Since I don't have the habit of forgetting my wallet this was somewhat disturbing, even though it only meant going back a few blocks and picking it up. I realized that to lose my wallet, I first had to lose my head.

When I got back to work, I parked on the back porch of the literature center and went in. A little while later I needed my wallet for something and looked on my desk where I always kept it. It wasn't there.

A little red light began to flicker. Had I lost my wallet again? I thought that maybe I had forgotten it in the car, so with rapid steps I returned to the back porch. Imagine my shock when I got there and the windshield wiper on the driver's side was pointing toward the sky. Who had been messing? One glance at the ash tray told me the wallet wasn't there. The raised windshield wiper told me it had been stolen.

I beat it back inside and asked my son if he perchance had raised the windshield

wiper. He hadn't. We both went out and when he looked into the car, he said, "That ash tray door wasn't open before!" We checked down on the floor to see if the wallet could have possibly fallen down. It hadn't.

We went back in and I asked Faith if she had seen my wallet any place. She hadn't.

This was all quite mysterious. Even though we have quite a little traffic on the road in front of the literature center, we have never had any problem with things disappearing. So I gave my office and store another going over in hopes that maybe the wallet hadn't been stolen and that I had absent-mindedly dropped it off at some odd place. Nothing.

We were quite a sober little bunch in that literature center. There was absolutely no way we would be able to catch our Monday flight out, and there was a good chance we wouldn't go at all. With both my checkbook and the Publicadora's checkbook stolen, no telling what would happen. There were my credit cards, my I.D. card, my driver's license and other important documents that I would be needing.

It was distressing, to say the least, to know that at that moment someone had my checkbooks, credit cards and other important documents. The gloom was thick enough to where one needed fog lights to navigate in that literature center.

In spite of the fact that I had very carefully checked my office out, my wife decided to check for herself. She walked in and said, "Right here's your wallet!" There it was, in plain sight, on top of my diskette cabinet. I have never danced around hugging a wallet, but if you ever see me do it, you can safely say, "Aha, I know just what happened!"

Anyway, the explanation for why I didn't see the wallet in my office, as I have already said, is that I had lost my head. But we don't have a clue as to the raised windshield wiper and the open ash tray door. All I know is that while my thoughts were racing at supersonic speeds during the minutes my wallet was "lost," I had some sensations that some time I want to run through my keyboard. ▲

Goiânia

We didn't even begin packing our suitcases until late Saturday evening, which meant we would miss the morning service in Goiânia, but at least we would be there for the evening service. Just a few words on the Goiânia mission and why we wanted to be there for that particular Sunday.

Goiânia, a city of a million inhabitants, is the capital of the state of Goiás. There has been a missionary couple in Goiânia for a number of years and yet the membership is fairly low. This, however, isn't discouraging. The Goiânia mission is actually an incubator where members are hatched out, only to move to a new congregation later on, usually Pirenópolis or Rio Verde.

The Sunday morning we hoped to be in Goiânia the membership stood at six, but six converts were to tell their experience, which they did.

Pedro, in his latter sixties, is the husband of sister Clarinda, who has been a member for 13 years. Pedro never opposed his wife and at different times made a valiant

attempt to quit smoking, but never quite managed. Finally, after all these years, he came through with a good experience.

José Lima and his wife, are an elderly couple. I wish all of you could know this white-headed old gentleman. Alert, curious and talkative, he and his wife are going to be a real asset to the Goiânia mission.

Michelle, Isaac and Diogo. They are Divino & Corina Ismael's three children. Divino is a brother, a public accountant, who has been a real help to the Goiânia mission. His wife has at different times been under conviction, but until now has not made a total decision. She had great hopes that her children would continue their studies and was quite disappointed when they decided to not go on to college. If someday you are walking the streets of Goiânia and see these young people, you will say, "Say, there goes my brother—or sister." I have no doubt but what they will leave a good witness.

These six souls told their experience in the morning and were baptized in the evening. Unfortunately, we didn't make it to the baptism either. As we were nearing Goiânia the brake booster went bad. We limped along to the hotel and stayed put. The following morning we had the brakes repaired. ▲

Our Trip

In our entire trip from Goiânia to Wichita, we didn't hit any turbulence. Not once did the "Fasten Seatbelt" sign flash on. We left the Goiânia air port at 5:10 p.m. on a Varig 737 and landed in the Guarulhos airport in São Paulo at 6:35 p.m.

At midnight we boarded a Varig 747 and landed in Miami at 7:50 p.m. (6:50 p.m. Miami time) the following morning. We left Miami at 9:55 a.m. on an ancient American Airlines 727 and landed in Dallas-Fort Worth at 12:18 p.m. (11:18 p.m. Dallas ForthWorth time). We left Dallas-Forth Worth at 1:52 p.m. on an American Airlines Fokker 100 and arrived in Wichita at 2:42 p.m. I might mention that everyone should have the opportunity of riding a Fokker.

We spent several days in Galva with my Dad and then headed to S Dakota to spend a week with our children (we plan on going back before we leave). We have been gone from the US for almost 30 years, so every now and then I find I must realign my thinking. Read on. ▲

To Be a Barber

Never in all my days, not even once for two seconds, did I ever want to be a barber. Mess around in other people's hair, nosiree. Now I'm having second thoughts. Here's what happened.

When we left Brazil I didn't quite need a haircut yet. Beside that, I didn't have time to get one, so I decided to go to a barber in the US, something I haven't done

for 30 years. I asked my Dad where I could find a barber. He said in McPherson, on Main Street, across from the flour mill. I asked him what the man charged and he said around six bucks. That sounded outrageous, but not as outrageous as I would look with long hair, so my son Otávio and I went to Mac to have our hair cut.

When we got to the barber across from the flour mill we found a big sign on the door saying he would be closed for a few days. So we went to a hardware store next door and asked if there were more barbers in town. Just that quick the lady told me of two more on Main Street. The first one was chuck full, we looked for the second one, but never found it. We decided to go back to the first one, which was now emptier.

We walked in and found a seat. Sitting across the room was an old schoolmate of mine, so we soon were deep in conversation, discussing the US, Brazil, and you name it.

There were two barbers, a man barber and a woman barber. Pretty quick the woman barber told Otávio it was his turn. Then the man barber told Kenneth it was his turn. In just a jiffy Otávio was off the chair and the woman barber told me it was my turn. So I sat down on the chair.

Some people think I'm sort of different. My wife sometimes thinks so. Even I think so sometimes. One reason is that I would rather sit in a dentist's chair than a barber's chair. But really, that's all sort of beside the point. I sat down on the chair and the woman barber wrapped some stuff that looked like toilet tissue around my neck, and then something else, and then put the big sheet over me. Then she started to cut my hair. She had overheard Kenneth and me talking, so she knew I lived in Brazil, so she said her dad used to travel to Brazil on business and then she was done cutting my hair and unwrapped me so I could get off the chair.

I said, "How much will that be for both of us?"

The man barber said, "That will be 22 dollars."

That's right, 22 dollars—US dollars—22 US dollars.

I didn't faint, probably because I don't have that habit. When you get a haircut you don't say, "Hey, I don't believe I want this haircut after all," so I groped around for my checkbook and wrote out a check. I messed up the first one, so I had to tear it up and start over. TWENTY-TWO and no/100. I handed the woman barber the check. I think she said thank-you. I don't know if I managed to say anything appropriate for such an occasion. I made it to the door and exited.

I'm not much on mathematics, but when someone asks, "If a dozen eggs cost 12 cents, how much does each egg cost?" I can figure that one out without a calculator. So by applying the same logic I figured, "That woman barber must have taken about 11 minutes to cut my hair, and she charged 11 bucks, so that means she made a dollar a minute on me. And a dollar a minute on my son." (Can you imagine what it would have been like to have walked into that place with a half dozen boys and shell out 77 US dollars?)

A dollar a minute for snipping around on my head. Now do you see why being a barber is beginning to look attractive? But that's only half the story. My old school chum had lost most of the shingles on his head and had only the siding left. Now if

I could charge a fellow like that 11 bucks for a snip, snip here and a snip, snip there, whew!...

They were mighty fine barbers, the man barber and the woman barber. That isn't the problem. The problem is that back in Brazil my barber and his two brothers, also barbers, charge three bucks a cut. So when Otávio and I go in, I shell out six bucks for both of us. For starters the barbers offer to wash the client's hair. I decline, Otávio sometimes accepts. They do all their cutting with a scissors, from start to finish. (They do have a clippers hanging there for customers who insist on a clippers.) They moisten the customer's hair down, put some kind of cream on it, and then use a hair dryer to dry the hair and get it just so.

But, when in America do as the Americans, and if that means shelling out 11 bucks for 11 minutes on a barber chair, then I guess that's the price I'll have to pay to be civilized. If you hear I've moved back to the US and am cutting people's hair, don't ask why. Just say, "That guy's in big money."

(Oh yes, I am encouraging dads with multiple boys to come to Brazil to get their hair cut.) ▲

Remembering Out Loud

by Sylvia Baize

Going to School

We lived about two miles from school. A lot of times we rode bike to school. This was not my favorite part of the day. We lived down in the valley, so we had a long hill to climb, starting right from our front yard. Once we got to the top it was level for about a mile. Then there was another little climb (big for a little biker like me), just before we got to the school house, just a little ways from Clifford Warkentin's place.

I usually rode the little red bike. If I was lucky I would catch a ride with Lucas on his bike. He could make things mighty scary, but even so it was better than to make my little legs do all the work. But best of all was when my dad would be going to the store in time to drop us off at school. Then for frosting on my cake, if my mom went with him to the store, we would often stay at Cliffords until they came home. I loved this, especially when Norma Jean, their daughter, would let me play with her big doll and its many clothes. I always held Norma Jean in awe. She was a big eighth grader and I was a little first grader. And it always seemed like a dream come true when she said I could play with her treasured doll.

My sister Sandy was an aide at school for a while and then she would ride with us. That always made the trip more exciting and less tiring.

One day as Sandy, Lucas and I left school, we were riding along having a good time

and somehow Lucas and I got a ways ahead of Sandy. She was still coming down the little hill near the school, singing at the top of her lungs and pulling her usual little trick of not holding onto the handlebars, her arms crossed.

Lucas and I hurried to stay ahead as long as we could. Every second her voice got closer. Then suddenly all was quiet—way too quiet. We slammed on our brakes and looked back and there was Sandy lying on the road. We hurried back to her and she was laughing so hard her whole body shook. She had taken an awful tumble, but seeing she had only a few scratches and was laughing, we decided we could laugh too. We made sure we told the whole story to my dad, so that he could have a good laugh—which he did.

If we happened to get up later some morning, everything was in a rush. I remember one of those mornings when we had to rush to school on our bikes. I popped some gum in my mouth and away we went like we were going to a fire. The faster I pedaled, the faster I chewed. The effort of doing both was almost too much for me. The sun was already hot and I began to feel nauseated. Even so we plugged on: pedal, chew, pedal, chew, pedal, chew...

As I remember, we got to school on time, but I was plain exhausted and feeling sick. I made it through devotions okay, but the trouble started during our reading class.

We all had our *Stepping Stones* readers open on our desks, each taking his turn at reading. I could feel that my breakfast was wanting to return from whence it came and wanted desperately to step outside. So I did the unthinkable, I raised my hand during class. My teacher, who was standing right next to my desk, saw this and promptly pushed my hand down (she saw only my hand and not my ashen face).

Things were getting really desperate, so I tried again and once again my hand was shoved back down. I couldn't leave my desk without teacher's permission, so I did the only thing left to do. I deposited my breakfast all over my *Stepping Stones* book. This convinced my teacher that I wasn't raising my hand for no reason, so she told me to go outside and lie on the grass until I felt better. Before I left the room, I glanced back at my old antagonist, Tony Koehn, and saw that he was gagging. Just that sight made me feel considerably better.

When Rosemeire came to stay with us, I had just graduated from my little red bike to a nice big new one. I felt real big now, but she was bigger than I, so she got to ride the new bike and I was back on the little red one. Even though I didn't approve of this switch, it was a good lesson to help me understand the need of sharing.

One day on our way home from school, she was coasting with her feet up on the fork, just above the front tire. She was really flying along and somehow her feet slipped and one of them got in the spokes, putting a pretty good gouge in it. How she screamed when my mom cleaned it up. Me...I was more concerned about what happened to my bike than to what had happened to her foot. ▲

Thirty Years in Brazil

Introduction

During the next several months we will be giving special attention to the fact that it has now been 30 years since the first Mennonites migrated to Brazil. In 1968 the first families moved and established temporary headquarters. During the following months they, together with other interested parties from N America, traveled extensively in Brazil looking for a suitable tract of land to purchase.

In 1969 land was purchased in the Rio Verde area and temporary headquarters were set up on a permanent site. By the end of 69, there were nine families living on the Colony.

How the Move Came About

While some brethren obviously had a more active role than others in making this move a reality, it cannot be attributed exclusively to any one person. It appears God had been placing a conviction in the hearts of different brethren over a period of years. When the question, "Have you ever thought of moving to Brazil?" began floating around, something seemed to click in the heart of different individuals.

"Have you ever thought of moving to Brazil?" Those who answered this question in the affirmative began to share their convictions. Telephone calls were made between brethren, sometimes spanning many states. An impromptu group began to emerge.

The interest shown in South America soon proved to be deeper than mere telephone calls. On February 21, 1967, five brethren left by plane to visit Brazil and Paraguay: Dan J. Miller, Denton Burns, Elmer Dyck, Harold Dirks, and Min. Reno Hibner. They were gone approximately twenty days—sufficient to realize the great potential that existed in South America, and especially in Brazil.

At this point the General Mission Board and the Colonization Board became officially involved. Three brethren were chosen to make a second trip: Glenn Koehn (representing the Colonization Board), Reno Hibner, and Denton Burns. Enos Miller and Dave Giesbrecht went along as interested persons.

Not only was land looked at in many different areas, but contacts were made with government officials to find out what would be required to obtain a permanent visa. Did the Brazilian constitution give religious liberty? Would our nonresistant stand be respected? Could we have our own schools? It was felt by these brethren that there was an open door for a future move. The results of this trip was reported to the 1968 Annual Meeting. There was support for a move.

The Move

Abram left Ur not knowing where he was going. Those moving to South America knew it was Brazil, but that's about all. Brazil is a mighty big place, roughly equal in size to the continental United States. The areas looked at in the two exploratory trips were separated by many hundreds of miles.

It was decided that two families should move initially and establish a temporary base. From this base reconnaissance trips would be made until a permanent site could be chosen.

The Brazilian consul in Houston, Texas proved to be extremely favorable, and soon permanent visas were secured for the first two families.

On November 18, 1968, the Denton Burns and Dick Toews families arrived at the Aeroporto Internacional de Brasília with permanent visas. Homer and Hazel Unruh arrived at the same time to spend several months on tourist visas. Approximately two weeks were spent in Brasília taking care of business matters. Part of the group stayed in a hotel and the rest in the home of Mennonite missionaries. An enormous farmhouse was found about six kilometers out of Anápolis, a near-by city. On December 3 the families moved into this house. This would be their home during the coming months while looking for a place to settle.

On December 9 the Harold Dirks family arrived in Anápolis, however only with tourist visas. The following Sunday this group held a service in Homer Unruh's room. During this period different areas were investigated.

On February 9, 1969, the following brethren arrived in Brazil: Daniel Coblenz, Daniel Kramer, Daniel Martin Sr., Enos Miller, and Min. John N. Penner. On February 4 a VW Kombi mini-van was purchased. A trip was planned to different areas, which would take them through the Rio Verde area.

It was in Rio Verde that an apparently insignificant happening became a determining factor in where the Mennonite colony would be located. The Kombi odometer indicated it was time for a check-up. Since Rio Verde had a VW agency, a day was taken off for this. As always happens when a group of foreigners shows up, a lot of curiosity was shown in this group of Americans. In their halting Portuguese they explained what their mission was.

The message came through and one of the listeners, the owner of the establishment, had an idea. He knew a fellow who wanted to sell a large tract of land. So it was that Manoel Norberto Vilela came on the scene. He had land for sale. The land was looked over and a tentative deal was made. He was told, however, that before closing the deal, the group would like to go to Mato Grosso, a neighboring state, and look at other areas. A date was set when he would be given final word.

Upon returning from the trip, camp was made near Manoel's farmstead. That night the issue was discussed and it was decided that everyone would remain in a prayerful attitude during the night. The next morning a vote would be taken. It was unanimously decided in the morning to purchase the tract.

On February 16 an organizational meeting was held in Anápolis in which Dea. Dick Toews was chosen as the spiritual leader of the group.

The following three and one-half months spent in Anápolis were busy ones, working on getting money to Brazil to pay for the land, getting legal work done—and possibly above all, getting acclimated to the Brazilian way of life.

Camp Is Established

On June 1, the Burns and Toews families moved to the *fazenda* (farm). Camp was made between two streams that empty into the Monte Alegre River a short distance above the large waterfalls on what is now the Daniel Kramer fazenda.

The first Sunday, June 8, a service was held in the shade of a small woods on what is presently the Emma Burns home site. After that services were alternated between the Burns and Toews campsites. At the Toews' the services were held under some truck stock racks covered by a black plastic tarp.

It was during these initial worship services that the first Brazilian began to attend. It was significant that on July 20, Bro. Denton conducted the entire service in Portuguese to accommodate a Brazilian neighbor. In all fairness it must be admitted that the mixture of Spanish and Portuguese spoken at that point required considerable interpretation by the Holy Spirit for the listeners to get the drift of what was being said. And that is exactly what happened. Something stirred in the heart of these dear Brazilian neighbors. What they couldn't understand in their mind, they understood in their heart.

Other Families Arrive

On July 29, the Min. John N. Penner family arrived in Brasília. On Sunday, August 3, John had the message, the first by an ordained minister of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite in Brazil.

The service on the following Sunday was held in what came to be known on the colony as the “cracker box,” a small masonite house that was to be the Burns residence until a permanent house was built.

On August 11 the Charles Becker family arrived.

On August 24 the group began having services in the shade of a pole shed erected by Dick Toews. Even though it had no walls and the floor was packed gravel, it gave more space for the slowly-growing group.

At this point two Brazilians who frequently came to the services were Manoel Norberto Vilela and his tractor driver, João Souto. A very warm relationship was maintained with Manoel. A number of years later João Souto was converted and became a member of the Church. Today he is married to the former Charlene Loewen

On August 28 Min. Jona Dyck and family arrived on the fazenda. He worked together with Min. John Penner in the ministry.

The Dyck family built a temporary house out of particle board. This was a larger building, so on September 28 the group began to meet in their house.

On October 18 the Harold Dirks family arrived in their pickup camper, having spent approximately two months coming by land route.

One of the greatest single increases in numbers occurred on November 6, 1969, when the Daniel Kramer family, together with two nephews, Curtis and Dennis Kramer, the Dan Coblentz family, and the Enos Miller family arrived with permanent visas. Together with them, with tourist visas, were the Homer Unruh and John Unruh families.

With these latest arrivals, our staff was increased to four, with Brothers John Penner and Jona Dyck in the ministry and Brothers Dick Toews and Enos Miller in the deaconry. Due to increased numbers, services were again held in the Dick Toews shed.

This changed on January 29, when the Jona Dyck and Dick Toews families moved to the state of Paraná, and a few months later, back to the United States.

On March 14, 1970, the first school term was organized with twenty-one pupils. Charles Becker was the teacher.

On August 9 the congregation got together to pick out the permanent church site for the Monte Alegre congregation. Construction began in August 1972. The first service was held in the partially completed building in February 1973.

On October 15, 1970, the Reno Hibner and Pete Loewen families arrived in Rio Verde. Bro. Reno was welcomed to assume his place in the ministry.

Tragedy Strikes

March 19, 1973, was a fateful day in the history of the colony. Three brethren, Denton Burns, Pete Loewen, and Crist Stoltzfus were on their way to Brasília to do some legal business. The Rio Verde-Goiânia highway was still under construction, and near Goiânia it was necessary to detour on a back road. A head-on collision took Denton's and Pete's lives. Crist was critically injured, but in time he made a full recovery.

To say the very least, this was a severe blow to the colony. Until now Denton Burns had been taking care of the endless red tape involved in the venture. Pete Loewen was always ready to help in whatever way possible. In fact, the accident took place while these brethren were helping Crist secure his permanent visa.

Aside from the very personal nature of the tragedy and its effect on the colony itself, it had a far-reaching impact on the Brazilians who came to know the Colony during its almost four years of existence.

Back in those days when someone died, it was custom to quickly print little leaflets lamenting the death and informing the reader of the time of the funeral. A car, usually with a loudspeaker on the top, would then slowly drive up and down the streets announcing the death and distributing the leaflets. It hadn't, of course, occurred to anyone from the colony to do this. The mayor of Rio Verde saw to it that it was done.

He and some of his city councilmen did all they could to help the colony prepare for its first funeral.

The funeral itself was a most unforgettable experience. People flowed in from all directions, the rich and the poor, the illiterate and the highly educated—people of the most diverse religious beliefs, including a Catholic priest and several nuns. The priest, especially, was deeply impressed; later he spoke of how God’s presence could be felt. People came on foot, on horseback, in cars, pickups, jeeps, and trucks, and a plane landed close to the church, bringing friends from Brasília.

To this day the Brazilians in town talk about Pete and Denton. Their contribution to the establishment of the colony was inestimable.

Considerations

Even now certain questions may be asked: Why did the move to Brazil come about?

Was it because Mennonites were running out of farm ground in N America? Can the move to Brazil be equated with the move to...say...Mississippi or Kentucky? Were the millions of acres of dirt cheap farm ground in Brazil responsible for this migration?

Was it because God wanted to established His church in Brazil through colonization? Put more succinctly, did God use a bunch of farmers to do what missionaries normally do in other countries? And once the church is established, does He expect that these “farmanaries” (farmer+missionary) will return “home” like regular missionaries do?

Was it because God wanted a group of His people to move to Brazil to live and witness, like they are doing in Mississippi or Kentucky? Put more succinctly, did God send His people to Brazil on a “permanent visa” or a “temporary visa”? Does He want the movement *to* Brazil to grow *in* Brazil? Does he want us to keep our eyes open in Brazil for new opportunities *for both farming and witnessing*?

We ask several final questions, now to our readers. Today, 30 years later, how do you see the movement? Do you see it differently than you did in the beginning? What would your reaction be if we N Americans would say “Mission Accomplished” and make plans to pull out, like missionaries do when the church has been established in a foreign land? ▲