

Brazil News



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Editorial

Off-limits

Much of life is off-limits, a fact respected by most of humanity.

No one has the right to enter a stranger's house uninvited. To merely sit down in someone else's car in a parking lot can turn into an unpleasant experience.

Once businesses and public offices are closed, they become off-limits. Even when open, one cannot roam about at will. No matter how much money a customer may have deposited in a bank, the vault continues to be off-limits. Many organizations are off-limits to those who aren't members or haven't paid a stipulated membership fee. Military installations are off-limits to the civilian. Members meetings in church are off-limits to outsiders.

The off-limits principle also applies to intellectual property, to industrial secrets, to military strategy, and tragically, to criminals who have not had their rights read to them.

Strangely, the respect that man shows for the earthly he often doesn't show for God and His mysteries. Almost hysterically he seeks to invade areas which Nature has decreed to be off-limits.

Nowhere is this seen more than in man's attempt to "discover" the origin of the universe and of life itself. While some study the atom, invisible to even the most powerful microscopes, others probe the infinite space with powerful telescopes, confidently speaking of quasars, black holes and light years. Yet others examine fossils and excitedly inform us how many million years ago that particular species lived on the earth.

So confidently, so convincingly do they speak, that we begin looking for ways to slip God into their equations. We look at the quasi miracles wrought by modern science, especially in the fields of medicine, transportation and communication. We don't question if the knowledge required to do a heart transplant or send a man to the moon is real or fake. It is almost with a twinge of conscience that we question the findings

of naturalists and physicists (who study evolution and the origin of the universe, respectively), while we accept as legitimate the work of other scientists. Are they really anti-God or are we anti-scientist?

Should we refuse to read what these scientists have to say? Should we write everything off as false? Should we try to sort out the grain from the chaff? Should we try and consolidate the first two chapters of Genesis with scientific findings? Invoke the one-day-equals-a-thousand-years formula to give time more elasticity?

Science is the discovery, interpretation and application of facts. A man decides to go fishing in the creek that runs through the back of his place. When digging for worms, his spade brings up a strange looking rock (discovery). He takes the rock to his geologist friend and finds it indicates the presence of diamonds (interpretation). He buys the necessary machinery to begin mining operations (application) and becomes rich.

When God filled the earth with natural resources and man's head with brains, it was a deliberate act. He knew that as the earth became more populated, resources and brains would have to go into partnership. And this partnership would be called science.

The Creator blesses science so long as the facts discovered are legitimate, their interpretation is sound, and their application for useful purposes, that is, to aid in the propagation of mankind. Without science would there be five billion people living on the face of the earth today?

Science is three-dimensional. It deals with the past, the present and the future. And that is what this article is all about.

God has not blessed retro-science. He could have easily filled the entire book of Genesis with minute details of the creation of the world. But He didn't. He could have filled the whole Bible. But He didn't. He said everything that needed to be said in two chapters. And He said it was good.

Scientists who try to finish writing the book of Genesis will unearth some interesting facts, but God has hidden the key to interpretation and to application. Proof of this is that right now scientists are puzzled. Recent findings by the gyrostationary Hubbell telescope indicate that the oldest stars in the universe are three billion years older than the universe itself. Embarrassing, to say the very least.

Proof that God does not bless retro-science is in the fact that physicists and evolutionists tend to be atheists.

And should we somehow manage to consolidate retro-science with Genesis (impossible), what would we have proved? Would it make it easier to believe in God? Would our faith be increased? Would the unsaved find it easier to accept the atoning blood?

We as God's people should never feel embarrassed to openly confess our belief in Genesis one and two. We shouldn't feel obligated to walk around with a bag full of "Christian scientific findings" to dispute modern theories. Is there any stronger argument than Genesis one and two? Need we be ashamed of its simplicity?

Have you ever stopped to think what it would be like to stand before the Lord on the day of judgment and have Him suddenly thrust His finger at you and demand,

TELL ME ABOUT CREATION!

To Job He said, “Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.”

There followed a lengthy interrogation (read Job chapters 38-42), beginning with, “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.”

He asks, “Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, ‘Here we are?’ ”

“Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?” And finally, “Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?”

On that final day we shall answer according to what we believed here on earth. Can you imagine standing before the eternal Judge and trying to convince Him that He wasn't the Creator of heaven and earth? Or reminding Him how He did it and how many billion years it took?

I plead Genesis one and two. ▲

Missions

The Wedding

Most people are able to recall very few details of the weddings they have been to in the last five years. And of the weddings they do recall, most fit into the same pigeon-hole. Not so with the wedding that recently took place in the little mission church in Pirenópolis, Goiás.

Pirenópolis is a quaint little town tucked away in the hills some 50 miles from Brasília. Because of the beautiful scenery and its historical importance (one of the oldest towns in the state of Goiás), Pirenópolis is a tourist attraction.

Our first contact with this area was through Paulo David, who then was the pastor of a prospering evangelical church. He felt convicted to resign his pastoral duties and move to Rio Verde. Because of the interest shown in Pirenópolis, a mission was established with Myron & Martha Kramer as the first missionaries.

The little church has prospered, not so much in numbers as in stability. The wedding on June 10, between Maria José Godinho (better known as Zezé – rhymes with lay-lay, accent on the last syllable) and Sebastião Maria de Sá (known as Bá – rhymes with the musical note fa), was the first wedding on this field.

Faith and I were unable to attend, but the first thing one of our local preachers told me when he returned was, “Charlie, you really missed out on it. That wedding was something else.”

Sylvia came home and said, “That was the best wedding I have ever been to.”

Paulo David said, “Charles, você não podia ter perdido aquele casamento.” – “You shouldn’t have missed out on that wedding.”

Most everyone who talked to me about the wedding had a similar story.

Bá and Zezé were both converted in the Comunidade church, where Paulo David was pastor. That is where they began going together. However, upon coming in contact with the Church of God, they broke up. Zezé, being quite young at the time, ended everything with a period. Outwardly Bá did the same thing, but inwardly he placed a comma where Zezé placed a period. One of Bá’s virtues is patience.

Brazilians love weddings. Great pains are made to make sure that all of the relatives are invited. When Janete got married (see BN no. 48), we soon discovered that even distant relatives (not the kind I have in the US), whom she hadn’t seen for years and practically didn’t even know, had to be invited. Her aunts made sure she didn’t leave anyone out.

Here on the Colony when both the bride and the groom are Brazilians, it makes for a big wedding, because beside the usual crowd, there are the additional relatives who attend. Even so, they are a minority.

I guess we had never imagined what would happen if two Brazilians got married in a mission church where the relatives – obviously almost exclusively non-members – would be the majority. Even though a number of carloads of people from the Colony went to Pirenópolis, they were still by far outnumbered by the locals.

In Bá and Zeze’s wedding not only were there a lot of relatives, but according to Paulo David, practically the entire Comunidade church was there, plus a lot of Pentecostals.

The little church has seating space for approximately 70 people. Staven Schmidt, the present missionary calculated there were at least 300 people at the wedding. Nearly half managed to get inside, which made for, very literally, a full house.

Glenn Hibner set up his sound system so that those outside could hear what was going on. Someone said you could actually hear better outside than inside.

This is where a little miracle occurred – a beautiful miracle that we have witnessed repeatedly in this country when quite a few non-Mennonites are present at our activities. We will call it the miracle of reverence.

Most Brazilians meetings, both secular and religious, are quite disorganized. At least by our standards. People are constantly moving about and the concept of absolute silence, like in our meetings, just doesn’t exist.

Yet, even with the Mennonites outnumbered by about six to one, the atmosphere, both inside and out, was of reverence. People paid close attention to the singing and preaching of the word. Paulo feels a very powerful witness was left, especially to the Comunidade people.

The reception was a somewhat different story. It had a definite Brazilian piquancy to it. But – and this is a tribute to how cultures can blend – when people told me what a great wedding it was, I am sure they were including the reception.

Bá works in a restaurant. What does he do? Everything. He buys supplies, he keeps the kitchen going, he waits on tables, he washes dishes when necessary. Beside this, he is totally honest and reliable. His boss, a lady, values his work and virtues so highly that she has practically adopted him. She made it plain that the wedding reception she was giving for him was the same as she had done for her own children. Her gift to Bá and Zezé was a microwave oven.

The reception was held in her restaurant. Rice and stroganoff were served with soft drinks. (I suspect that in her children's receptions the drinks weren't overly soft.)

Something they had never witnessed in a wedding before was the opening of gifts. The lady became so enthusiastic with this novel practice that she declared herself master of ceremonies and loudly announced for everyone to hear, what the gift was, from whom, together with some appropriate or – at least once – inappropriate remark.

True to Holdeman tradition, the bride and groom were given the privilege of making an embarrassed little speech at the end of the doings. Bá isn't very tall and the crowd was large, so instead of climbing a sycamore tree, he hopped up on a chair and said his little piece. But the crowd wanted more than that. They began to chant: Bei-ja! Bei-ja! Bei-ja! (Heavily accenting the first syllable) – that is, Kiss her! Kiss her! Kiss her! Both Bá and Zezé have the gift of giggle, but somehow he managed to convey the message that that was neither the time nor place for a beijo.

In spite of the Brazilian cheer brought to the reception, a definitely Holdeman spirit could be felt: No hard drinks. No photographers. No dancing.

Some of you good readers in N America are acquainted with Bá & Zezé. I hope more of you can learn to know them – and their beautiful little congregation. You will be inspired. ▲

Remembering Out Loud

I Build a Kite

A number of years ago several of my children decided to build a kite. I took one look at the flimsy thing they were constructing and began a condescending lecture on what a real kite should look like.

So, with their fiasco as a backdrop to my speech, I went back quite a few summers and told them how we used to fly kites in Kansas at the old Liberty School, between Galva and Canton.

“Yep, we'd get our kites up in the air and the wind was so steady there in Kansas that on last recess we'd tie them to a post on John S. Unruh's pasture fence and do you

know, the next morning when we'd get to school they would still be up in the air!" (A few of you readers will remember this.)

I suspect I was more impressed by my lecture than my children were.

I made the kite according to Kansas specifications. There was nothing flimsy about it. Built of lumber sawed down to $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch to a side, with the longer stick some 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, and the shorter one shorter, maybe 2 feet long, it was truly a heavier than air craft, especially after being covered with heavy paper and equipped with a tail made of strips of cloth tied together.

Now came what was to be the moment of glory, when the Kansas kite was to lean into the wind and majestically soar. Then I could smile at my children and say, "See, this is how we made kites back in Kansas."

But fate would have it otherwise.

The human constitution has its limitations. It can take only so much running in front of a kite that acts like a spoiled brat that periodically hits the floor to drive a point home.

The frailty of the mind is also put to test when trying to fly a Kansas kite in Goiás, Brazil, South America. Well-mannered children don't say everything they think. If they did, they might ask, "Dad, did you build kamikaze kites back in Kansas too?" or "Dad, that fence post you tied your kite to overnight in Kansas . . . ah . . . was it able to run . . . ?" Or maybe even, "Dad, did you ever have a high fever back in Kansas?"

That kite never flew and I became a retired kite maker. That was some 15 years ago.

A few days ago my son Otávio asked me to help him finish a kite he had started. He had gone out to the bamboo grove with the machete and cut down a bamboo. He cut out a piece a foot and a half long and split it into slivers, which he then shaved down until approximately $\frac{1}{16}$ of an inch thick.

My part was to help him tie the horizontal piece (14 inches) to the vertical piece (18 inches) with number 9 mercerized cotton sewing machine thread. Then we had to run a piece around the outside edge. Next came gluing a very light paper to the frame. Now he informed me we would only put paper over the lower part of the frame, that is, from the horizontal stick on down. At this point I was tempted to come out of retirement and give him a few instructions. However, I limited myself to asking him if he thought it might fly. Yes, he said, it would. That is how Janete makes kites and they do fly. Dutifully I helped him cover only the bottom part of his kite with paper.

The tail, which he proudly attached, was more number 9 thread with slender little pieces of thin plastic tied on at regular intervals. The kite string was also number 9 thread. The entire kite, including the tail, weighed $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.

A day or two later when Janete came over, she and Otávio decided to fly kites. Pretty soon he called, "Hey dad, come to the window and look at my kite." I looked all over and couldn't see any kite anywhere, and yet in his hand I saw a string that stretched out skyward. So I went outside and looked up . . . way up. And there it was, that flimsy kite, wearing only trousers and no shirt, up there unbelievably high.

But even that wasn't good enough for my son. He brought it back to earth and they

tied the thread to a kite Janete had built. That one went up until it was just a spec in the sky. They put a half kilometer or more of thread on these little kites.

During kite season it's worth taking a little time off to watch some of these small professionals at work. One of their favorite stunts is to rapidly jerk the line, which causes the kite to go into a free fall, spiraling down to earth like a wounded bird. One gets the impression the string has torn and the kite is lost. But suddenly, like the Fenix, it begins to rise again. Adroitly, at the last instant, the little commander has quit jerking the line and begun reeling it in, which gives the kite the needed lift to resurrect.

And of course, like everything else, kite flying has its shady side. A small section of string is run through glue and then through glass which has been pounded to a powder. This makes for some magnificent aerial battles. Others attach razor blades to their kites and attempt to shred the opponent's kite.

Then there are the truly ultra-lights made out of a piece of properly folded paper. These may rise only a hundred feet or so, but for the little tots, they are a lot of fun too.

Because of unstable and constantly changing winds, flying a kite in Brazil is truly an art. So is kite building.

Now what I would like to find out is if a Goiás kite will fly in Kansas, USA, North America.

Moral of the story: It's good to learn as a child, but it's also good to learn from a child. ▲

Banking – Then and Now

I have begun doing my banking in the Banco Itaú. On the check stub I noticed it gave a number for a service called Itaufax. I coupled my phone to my laptop computer, which has a fax card and dialed the number. A recording came on asking me to punch in the number of the local agency and my account number, then my personal code, and finally the type of service I wanted. Several minutes later I had an itemized bank statement right there in my living room. This can be done at midnight, or any other time one chooses.

Banking used to be different. There was no such thing as a bank statement, at least not as we think of one now. To reconcile the checkstub balance with the bank balance, it was necessary to take in the old checkstubs, ask for their transaction record sheet, and then laboriously sort things out.

Especially for businessmen (and deacons), because of the volume of checks deposited, this system was torture. Let's use the Banco do Brasil as an example. To deposit 15 checks, also from the Banco do Brasil, the teller would have to find all 15 transaction record sheets – among many thousands – and see if there was enough money in each account to cover the check, plus pencil in the amount of the check paid, so that the next teller would know that that amount had already been paid out. So it could easily take 25 minutes or more to deposit 15 checks. Today the same amount of checks can be deposited in a matter of a minute or so.

That wasn't the only headache we had in banks. We have talked about long lines and briefcases of money, so we won't go over that again.

Loans. When we first came to Brazil we got the impression it was impossible to work up credit in a bank by being a good customer. One's credit rating depended almost exclusively on the financial statement presented to the bank. Since it was a long drawn out procedure for a foreigner to get a title to the land purchased, our financial statements were quite slim. And so was the credit we got.

But then suddenly things went to the other ditch. Instead of asking for an impressive financial statement, all they asked for was a co-signer. By now they knew we pay our debts and so they wanted our business. The co-signing was just a formality. Since I had my store during that time, the bank automatically put my name down as co-signer a lot of the time. They knew perfectly well my few holdings wouldn't even begin to pay what I had signed for.

As people got titles to their land, the co-signing became largely unnecessary. I must say this to the credit of the Colony. Not once did anyone let me down.

Obviously I wasn't the only one who co-signed. Other Americans did too, as well as a Brazilian by the name of Joaquim Cruvinel, who was a rice buyer when we first came to Brazil.

The co-signing policy we had for a while certainly wasn't an ideal situation, and yet it helped us through a difficult time. Today people are very careful about co-signing. That's the way it should be. ▲

Brasília

The Strike that Struck Back

Few things make or break a president quicker than a strike that threatens the vital organs of a nation. Ronald Reagan was forced to stand eyeball to eyeball with the air controllers and Margaret Thatcher with the coal miners. Neither blinked.

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso had his chance when refinery workers went on strike, ostensibly for higher wages. He didn't blink either.

But there's more to the story than that.

Possibly there has been no one single factor that has hurt Brazil's economy more than its state owned industry. As a result of the military takeover in 64, activities considered vital to national security were nationalized. This included communications, the oil industry, steel mills, hydroelectric plants, among many others.

The results were disastrous. Instead of safeguarding national security, key positions were violently disputed by politicians to safeguard their own financial security. With access to public coffers, enormous deficits were quietly covered. Labor unions loved this setup.

The president, working with congress, has taken enormous strides toward privatizing state owned industry, or at least breaking the monopoly they held. Union leaders are furious, as are employees who are riding the gravy train.

The largest and most powerful of all state owned industries is Petrobrás, through whose hands – pipes, that is – all petroleum must flow. Even though different oil companies are licensed to distribute petroleum products, they must buy from Petrobrás.

Back to the strike. Knowing that congress was about to vote a constitutional amendment that would put an end to Petrobrás' monopoly, refinery workers went on strike. It was the strike that struck back

Probably 95% or more of Brazilian households cook with butane that comes in 30 lb. bottles. The poorer classes have only one bottle. When it runs out, they must rush to the nearest distributor and exchange it for a full one.

It was the bottled gas consumers that took the brunt of the strike. Since the middle and upper classes usually have several extra bottles on hand, they weren't too hard hit. Gasoline, alcohol and diesel were available throughout the strike. So basically it was the poor who suffered.

Not only did they lose popular support, but they proved that having the entire petroleum industry concentrated under one roof was not in the interest of national security. Actually, very dangerous.

While the strike was in progress, congress voted to end the monopoly Petrobrás had held for years. A number of the strikers were fired. Certainly the results obtained were not what the unions had wished for.

How did the poor folks make out? They would stand in line for hours waiting for a truck to come in with a new load of gas. Even though the strike ended several weeks ago, bottled gas is still scarce. It should soon be back to normal. ▲

This Month on the Colony

Colony Mail Service

The concept of rural mail service, as known in N America, doesn't exist in Brazil. After a quarter century of doing without, I get the feeling that the Colony has almost lost hope that each household will ever have a mailbox at the end of the lane.

For a week, during the month of June, those living in the Monte Alegre area were able to imagine that things were changing. The people responsible for distributing O Popular, the Goiânia daily, in the town of Rio Verde, sent a young man out on a cycle every morning to deliver the paper to our doorstep, with the offer to start a mail route, if we were willing to pay the price.

I believe everyone agreed it was a good thing, but as can be expected, some were more enthusiastic than others. The problem was that it wouldn't be free rural delivery,

like in N America. Because of the recession we're in, the thought of paying US\$20 a month for daily mail service doesn't spark much interest.

There is also an idea floating around about having our own little post office here, possibly in the literature center. In theory this is possible, but in actual practice it would be complicated. The mail is delivered to Rio Verde in a special truck. However, from there it is distributed to smaller towns by bus. This bus goes by the Colony on its way to Montividiu, but someone would have to be at the road every day to pick up our mail bag. And knowing how irregular the schedule can be on these buses, it would surely be a test of patience to wait at the highway every day.

At this point it appears that mail service on the Colony is premature. But I have no doubt but what it will happen – maybe sooner than we think. Until then, we will do what we have been doing for the last 25 years.

While we're on the subject, I would like to put in a good word for our postal service here in Brazil. Our Correios is very efficient, in spite of being state owned. It used to not be that way, but in the last few years it has become a model of efficiency. ▲

Recession

The extremely high interest rates set by the government to hold inflation down have sparked a recession. Even though the government is again lowering interest, it will take a while for these new measures to take effect. In the meantime, there will have to be a lot of belt tightening.

It's been a long, long time since things have been this tight on the Colony after harvest. I'm almost embarrassed to write this, because I can just see some of you N American readers rolling your eyes heavenward as you see visions of pilgrims from Brazil traversing your continent. So before you conclude that the editor of BN has a high fever when he says the Colony is hard hit by the recession, give him a chance to explain.

Brazil has never, in all its history, come up with an economic balance. Teeter-totter fashion, when one sector of society is crying the blues, another is on a spending binge. As the Real becomes more firmly implanted, this distortion is diminishing. In fact, at this point most of Brazil is wailing, which includes farmers, small businesses, financial institutions and industry. The one bright – or shall we say, brighter – spot in this crisis, as it is referred to here, is the situation of the poor people. The minimum wage recently went up over 40%, while the basic articles they purchase have gone up insignificantly. To know that this underclass is finally being given a break is certainly refreshing.

On the Colony most will be able to ride out the storm by battening down the hatches. A few may have to make some substantial adjustments. Ah yes, and those who today are flying high, will return from the north and be in the same shape as everyone else. Then we shall all be equal. ▲

What's Happening on the Colony?

Almost nothing. Remember we're in the dead of winter. There has been some lime spread, but even that is hinging on the price of soybeans going up.

We used to have our revival meetings during this time of the year, but it didn't work very well. First of all, it's out of season to get ministers from N America. Also, there is a lot of dust on the roads this time of the year. And then there is the travelling aspect, when quite a number are gone for a month or two.

For those who do their own shop work, this is an excellent time to get machinery in order for the busy season. ▲

Brazilians Write

My Conversion Experience

By Zelinda Lacerda Sperb

I want to tell a bit of my past, hoping it can be of help to others who are looking for the way.

During my teenage years I was very rebellious. I couldn't accept the fact that my dad died when I was young, and even less that my mother was left with eight small children to take care of. It didn't take long and we children were all separated, one here and another there. And that's how we grew up, separated from each other and without a home of our own.

As I was growing up, I just assumed that only the Catholic church had the true doctrine. Many times I knelt before man-made images thinking that through them God would hear me. It wasn't until much later that I realized how wrong the doctrine of this was. However, I didn't concern myself with trying to find the true doctrine.

Time went by. When I turned 18, I got married and we moved to the state of Rio Grande do Sul. I thought that now I would finally be happy, but it didn't take long until I found out that my husband was an alcoholic. This caused me to become bitter and it was here that a new period of suffering began.

When I was really down, I would ask myself: Why does God permit all this suffering? But it was in the middle of all this that I began to hear God's call. The problem was that I had no idea how to come to Him.

I went to every church I could find, but I didn't find peace in any of them.

One day I got a letter from one of my sisters saying she found the true people of God. I had my doubts because I had never heard of any such thing as the Church of God in Christ. Shortly after that I found out that another sister was joining that church too. I didn't know what to think about all that.

Then during a visit that I made to the state of Goiás, I had the privilege of learning

to know this church. I was really impressed and was sure that finally I had found the true doctrine of Christ.

But after finding that this way existed, I became depressed. It just looked too narrow and I was convinced that I would never manage to become part of God's people.

So I took my refuge in a world of fantasy. I would watch TV all day and sometimes almost all night.

One day some church brethren who were traveling in southern Brazil paid me a visit. They left me a Bible and some Mensageiros. I became even more depressed after this. But as I read the Mensageiro, I received a lot of good counsel. I began to read the Bible, even though I didn't understand what I was reading. I also began to pray, asking that God would open the door so that we could live closer to the people of God. In just a short time God answered my prayers. We moved to the town of Inhumas [near Goiânia].

I went through a real struggle. I knew I would have to renounce the things of this world, but I wasn't willing.

I felt that I needed help. So I sent a letter to the Mensageiro, asking that the missionaries pay me a visit. These visits were a big help. It became clearer than ever that I had to make a complete surrender. My sins began to bear down on me.

I prayed to God and asked Him to help me remove everything from my home that wasn't according to His will. The first thing was the television set that had enslaved me for so long. Once I had done this, a great faith welled up within me and I prayed, asking Him to forgive my sins. Right away I felt that peace that my soul longed for.

And then on top of this faith, God granted me a great victory. After 17 years of suffering, my husband decided to get help to overcome his drinking habit. He was totally cured. All these years of suffering helped me find my way into God's kingdom.

Now I can say I am happy. It's been a year since I was baptized and we now live in Rio Verde, where we belong to a wonderful congregation.

As I look ahead I see a narrow way. I see snares and pitfalls, but if I stumble, Jesus will be at my side and won't let me fall. ▲

[This experience was published in the October 2, 93 issue of the Mensageiro, which means it's more like three years she's been in the church. Her faithful witness has had a very positive influence on her husband, who usually comes to church. I believe it's only a matter of time until he too will be part of God's people. They have just moved to Goiânia, where he has a job as a mechanic. They will be attending the mission church in Goiânia.]

For the benefit of those who know some of the Brazilian members, Jerônimo & Maria, from the Rio Verde congregation, have also moved to Goiânia and will be part of that church. (See article written by Maria in BN no. 42.) Both Zelinda and Jerônimo and Maria will have a positive influence on the little flock in Goiânia.]

Book Review

Up From the Rubble

By Peter & Elfrieda Dyck (Herald Press, 384 pp.), it tells of their efforts, working through the MCC, to help Mennonite refugees at the time of WW II.

The work of the authors and the MCC was both noble and timely. Many thousands were repatriated through their efforts and much suffering alleviated.

A deeper message, however, can be gotten from *Up From the Rubble*, one that the authors themselves never touch upon. Yet it's there.

Our decisions, even small ones, many times have far reaching consequences. So far reaching, in fact, that in our lifetime we don't always understand fully what we have set in motion.

This was the case back in Russia many years ago when our forefathers agonized over two options: Go or stay? To go meant to face the unknown. It meant spending possibly a month or two in cramped quarters crossing the ocean in a vessel that offered only minimal security. It meant facing epidemics for which there were no vaccines. It meant beginning life anew in a strange land with a strange language and a harsh climate. It meant certain death for some of their numbers. They were fully aware of this.

To stay, on the other hand, meant security, prosperity, homes, farms with fertile soil. And possibly most important was being able to remain in a hand crafted society, that is, a closed society with their own religion, their own language, their own customs, and to a certain extent, their own law.

The decision wasn't easy.

Unfortunately the many experiences of our forefathers who left the old country have never been compiled in a single volume. If such a book existed, it should be read together with *Up From the Rubble*. Such a comparison would clearly show that those who had the necessary vision to choose suffering over security and poverty over prosperity, in the end suffered less and prospered more than those who chose the way of least resistance.

Both Old and New Testament history confirm that most persecutions come about because of man's faith – or because of his lack of faith. The children of Israel suffered unspeakably because of their lack of faith. The martyr brethren, on the other hand, suffered because of holding fast to the faith. There is a world of difference between the two.

We recognize there were probably those who would have liked to leave Russia but were unable. Thus it would be improper to hastily conclude that those who left were spiritual and those who stayed were faithless. And yet it is an element that cannot be ignored. Only God knows to what extent this is true.

Chapter 4, entitled *The First Thirty-Three*, tells of an incident that took place in the village of Nieder-Chortitza, in the Ukraine. The year is 1943 and by now all property had been collectivized by the communists, including the Mennonite's farms. One

can imagine the joy these farmers felt when Hitler's armies swept through the area, returning property to the original owners.

It was exactly this joy that sealed the doom of the Mennonites, for when they received the Germans as liberators, they automatically rejected the rule of their own government. When the tide of the war changed and the Nazi army began retreating, the Mennonites faced a severe dilemma. They could remain and face the fate of traitors under Stalinist rule, or they could flee, casting their lot with an army that would soon no longer exist.

The German commander of that area ended up making the decision. He ordered the evacuation of all the inhabitants of that village, a total of 614 souls. By the time the last ones left, they were under artillery fire. Jakob Giesbrecht describes it thus: "We left knowing that we would not return. There were many tears as we glanced back once more... our homes... our schools... our church... the cemetery where our loved ones lay buried . . . the place where we had been happy."

The odyssey, begun in the late fall of the year, was one of terrible suffering. Jakob ends his story by saying they left the village of Nieder-Chortitza on October 3, 1943 and arrived in Maastricht, Holland, on July 31, 1945, twenty-two months after they left home. He states, "We started out with 614 persons and now we are only thirty-three. In that turbulent time of almost two years, we lost 581 of our friends, neighbors and loved ones."

Chapter 15, *New Beginings*, tells of the colonization in Paraguay. Throughout the book, and again in this chapter, one sees the ugly soul of communism. Democracy places value on individual gifts. Communism sees individual gifts, the ability to think, as a challenge. Therefore anyone who showed any individuality was eliminated. It is partly for this reason that a village in Paraguay was made up of 147 women and no men. In most of the villages women seem to have outnumbered men by a considerable margin.

The suffering of these first colonists in a strange, inhospitable land, are similar to what our forefathers suffered in America, maybe even more. In their favor was the fact they don't have cold winters like in N America.

I highly recommend that anyone interested in reading this book brush up on how our forefathers came to America, as well as on Old Testament history relevant to this kind of situation, that is, on the time the Israelitas found themselves in bondage and what led up to this. Read from this perspective, *Up From the Rubble* creates a deep thankfulness for our forefathers who chose affliction rather than affluence. ▲

[Note: I received a letter from Horst Gunther Kliever, from the Witmarsum Colony in southern Brazil. He plans on paying us a visit, together with Peter P. Klassen, who lives on the Filadélfia Colony in the Paraguayan Chaco. He has written extensively on the Mennonites in Paraguay, and now wants to write on the Mennonites who migrated from Russia to Brazil. Stay tuned in.]

This & That

The May 95 issue of Reader's Digest has an article that positively every teacher and schoolboard member of our school system should read. Entitled Teach Your Child to Wonder (Reprints available through RD), in a few short pages it does more to tell what teaching is all about than a whole stack of hundred dollar teaching manuals that assume that paper can substitute gray matter.

On June 10, Sebastião de Sá & Maria José Godinho got married in Pirenópolis. See Missions.

On June 11, Ben Koehn & Laura Martin got married in the Rio Verdinho congregation. Ben is Ileen Koehn's son and Laura is Daniel & Betty Martin's daughter. They will be living temporarily in Lester Holdeman's house. This was the fifth wedding in just a bit over a month here in Brazil. It looks like the well has gone dry for now.

On June 13 Esther, Regina and Dave Miller left for the US.

Kendra, daughter of Stanley & Mary Schultz, is taking a vacation on the Acaraú mission with Arlen & Carol Friesen. She was their house help when they were studying Portuguese in Rio Verde at the beginning of their term.

On June 15 there was a carry-in supper at Stacy & Janette Schmidts in honor of Troy and Sonya Schmidt, who are returning to the US, and for Lester Holdemans, who are leaving for a year or so. Troys left on the 17th. They'll be back, just you wait and see.

Different ones here on the Colony are planting experimental plots of potatoes. Since we're in the dry season, people are planting where they can irrigate. Most farms have at least a few acres of lowland along the streams that can be gravity irrigated.

The Monte Alegre youth, together with their leaders, Dennis & Vera Loewen, had a cleanup day at Edna Loewen's place. Some of the boys hauled some eucalyptus logs to Emma Burns, for her to burn in her fireplace.

The evening of the cleanup was a farewell for Milferd and Marcia Loewen, who will be spending some time in the US with their parents.

Edinei & Janete bought a new automatic washer. While Edinei was out doing something else, Janete decided to try it out, but the thing refused to so much as make a noise. At her wits end, she finally asked her neighbor, Sherilyn Hibner, to give her a bit of technical assistance. The problem, Sherilyn found, was in the cord. It needed to be plugged into the receptacle. Once that was done, the washer made a low whirring noise and the new "technician" a loud noise. I'm wondering what a few swishes of cockroach spray would have done in a case like this

Myron Kramers took John & Sheila Kramer back to their home in Mato Grosso and spent a few days with them. Julie Hibner went along and is staying with Johns while her folks are in the US.

On June 18 Daniel & Linda Holdeman left for the US.

Waldecy, better known as Wally to his acquaintances in the US, is out for a visit. He's

been gone from Brazil too long. Even in the Rio Verde church, where everything is Portuguese, he started his testimony in English, and then switched over.

On June 19 Mark & Glenda Loewen and family left for the US. They plan on spending a year in the Iowa congregation, while they get specialized medical attention for their son Victor.

Glenn & Elizabeth Hibner and daughter Brenda went to the US with Marilyn, Mrs. Reno Hibner.

On June 19 the Rio Verdinho congregation had a farewell supper in their social hall for Luiz & Maria Duarte and family. They have moved to their land in Mato Grosso. They will be living in a tent temporarily.

On June 20 Lester & Sharon Holdeman left for the US, where they plan on living for a year or so.

On June 21 Clifford & Naomi Warkentin and boys left for the US and Canada.

Mervin & Norma Jean and children left on the same plane for the same place.

Craig & Mônica Redger and son Dallin returned to the US after spending a month here.

Ileen Koehn and Eugene and Francine left for the US. Her daughter Corinne, who was here for a short visit, went back with them.

Roger & Sherilyn Hibner are living in Mark & Glenda's house. Edinei & Janete are living in their shed, which has living quarters and was Marks' home for quite a few years.

The Tim Burns and Jair da Costa families are spending a little time in Mato Grosso with the Leo Dirks family. Leos' daughter Barbie, who stayed after the weddings, returned with them.

Changes are underway at Gráfica Girassol, which is Stanley Schultz' printshop. José Cardoso is no longer the printer. I don't know what plans are for the future. They print all of the tracts for Gospel Tract.

Wendy, daughter of Eldon & Bonnie Penner, is spending some time on the mission in Acaraú, helping the Friesen family.

July was the changing of the guard in the tract office here in the literature center. After four years on the job, Stephen Kramer is returning to the farm and Clinton Unruh is leaving the farm (although he, like Stephen, will continue to live in his own house). These four years have been a time of real change.

On the evening of July 2 there was a baptismal service in town. The two young girls baptized are the daughters of Graciano, a builder who has done a lot of work on the Colony in the past. The young man is a son to Francisca Oliveira, who died recently and was buried in the Monte Alegre cemetery.

On July 4 the Tract Board, the outgoing office superintendent (Stephen Kramer) and the new one (Clinton Unruh) and their families, had a hamburger fry at the literature center because of the changing of the guard. The literature workers were included too. It kind of makes a person wish they would change workers once a week.