

Brazil News



No. 51
August 1995

Editorial

Spiritual Boot Camp

Boot camp is to the soldier what conversion is to the Christian. For a young man to come through this process and emerge as a true soldier, he must permit his own will to be crushed and adhere to a new order.

By no means is this new soldier a zombie. Now, as never before, he must think fast and make intelligent decisions. His will was crushed, but not his mind nor his muscles.

Boys walk into boot camp. Soldiers march out.

Boot camp is only the beginning. A soldier just out of this basic training still has a lot to learn. But nothing he will learn thereafter, even though he becomes a five-star general, will be as important as what he just learned – that orders are meant to be obeyed.

Or as Art Buchwald puts it, “The purpose is to break you down and then rebuild you into the person the Marine Corps wants – one who will never question an order”

The soldier just out of boot camp knows there is still much to learn and that his survival and future success depend on how well he can assimilate days, weeks and months of training which are yet to come.

At least this is the way it ought to be. Professional soldiers are alarmed by the lack of preparedness they are seeing in their ranks. They feel there is a softening up of discipline.

That, of course, is out of our realm. Of concern to us is the feeling that conversion experiences, like modern boot camp training, are not as thorough as they used to be.

When listening to a convert’s experience, we have a little mental check list we go over. Was there a burden for sin, a feeling of being lost? Can they tell of a time when they feel the Lord forgave their sins? Are they determined to be faithful?

All this is good. But if conversion experiences are weak, then something must be missing. Maybe another question should be asked.

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In boot camp recruits learn their usefulness is determined not nearly so much by their talents or strength, as by their willingness to obey orders. To a large extent their future success, any promotions, will depend on how well they learn to obey.

Is it possible that we aren't putting enough stress on the importance of obeying orders in the Army of the Lord? Do our converts understand that orders are meant to be obeyed?

In boot camp tough drill sergeants sadistically show recruits who is in charge. The Holy Spirit teaches the same lesson in gentleness. Our tendency is to mistake gentleness for weakness. And so when an order is given in a still, small voice, we ask ourselves if the order is really of the Lord. Could it be the evil one tempting us? We then wait for a confirmation of the order (something no sane recruit would ever do to his drill sergeant).

It seems that putting out a fleece is becoming all too routine. We admit there are rare occasions when that is proper. Let us notice, however, that Noah didn't put out a fleece when told to build an ark. Abraham didn't put out a fleece when told to leave his homeland.

It is all too easy to put out a fleece for most anything the Lord asks of us. "Go talk to your brother. Encourage him." "Lord, today it doesn't really suit," we reply, "but tomorrow when I drive past his place, if his car is in the garage, I'll stop and see him."

But when our neighbor tells us the local farm supply store is selling tractor tires for half price, we don't waste a minute. We get there just past closing time and the front door is locked. We try the back door. We know what we want and are determined to get it. We don't need a sign or a fleece. We don't take a locked door as a closed door.

Maybe we should ask our converts: If the Lord asks something of you, when do you plan to obey? We should explain to them that God seldom raises His voice. Often He only asks us once to do something. (Why ask again if the opportunity is past?) So if we begin asking for a confirmation when the Lord gives an order, we will deceive ourselves into believing the first order was a false one since it wasn't repeated.

It's true we're weak and at times we sincerely don't understand. Then it is entirely correct to request a confirmation. That's not what we're talking about. At times something so unusual is asked of us that we feel the need of a confirmation. This is when Gideon put out a fleece. But when the order is clear and simple (Go encourage your brother), we should, like the military man, snap to attention and say, "Here am I, Lord." That is where the blessing lies. Converts need to understand this.

An order is meant to be obeyed. An order disobeyed is, above all, an affront to the one who gave it. It is an act of defiance. The recruit knows that the penalty for disobedience, even delayed obedience, can vary from pushups to time in the brig.

And spiritually, what is the penalty for not obeying orders? Read the following experience by I. N. Mastre (Writings and Experiences of Our Fathers, pp. 196-197) and decide for yourself what the consequences would have been if bro. Mastre would have been disobedient, if he would have done what we so often do:

* * *

I will relate an experience I had soon after my conversion. While coming home from a trip I felt so uneasy that I knew not what to do. It seemed to me as if something kept saying, "Go west, go west." At first I did not pay attention to this voice, but it kept on saying, "Go west." At last my wife noticed my uneasiness, so she wanted to know my trouble. I could hardly tell her, for it seemed all I could hear was, "Go west." At last I asked her if we should pray, for it seemed as if I would be lost. We knelt down and prayed, but again I only seemed to hear, "Go west." I consulted with my wife, and she told me to obey. I got ready and went about eight miles until I came to a city, where I spoke to some of my acquaintances. Then I wanted to return home, thinking that this was all the Lord wanted me to do. I soon was in trouble again. He said, "Go west." I continued going west until evening. I realized I was twenty-one miles from home. Satan troubled me, telling me what a silly man I was, that I was so far from home just through my own imagination. At this time my mind was turned to a friend nearby, where I went to stay for the night. This friend was very glad to see me, and we talked much about the Scriptures during the evening. In the morning he wanted me to go with him to visit a woman, sick with consumption, who was expected to live but a short time. Others had talked to her about conversion, but it had been of no avail. I went there and bid her the time of the day and asked her how she was getting along. I asked her whether she was at peace with God and told her that the condemnation rests upon everyone who is not born again, for all must repent. She did not like to hear this, but I tried to place the judgments of God before her. Then I went to a neighbor who was interested in hearing God's Word. Soon the neighbors appointed meetings for me in the evenings, which were well attended. During this time I had forgotten about the sick woman, until one morning the thought that maybe she was dead struck me. I went at once to place the judgments of God before her and returned to the neighbors. They had again appointed a meeting for me in the evening, in which God blessed us all.

The next morning I felt it a duty to visit the sick woman. When I arrived, to my surprise she arose in bed and said, "You held the judgment of God before me, and that was right." She manifested a free and joyful look, and then said, "I saw Jesus last night leaning over my bed, and as I wanted to take Him, He disappeared. But, oh, I am saved. I would have been lost had God not sent you to hold judgment before me so that I could repent."

Now my heart was opened to praise God's name for His kindness, for I could plainly see that it was God who had sent me west and that He did not let me have rest until I was willing to go. There was a soul to save and win for Christ, over which the angels in Heaven rejoiced. I then felt such power as I had never felt before. I stayed for two more days holding meetings in the neighborhood... ▲

Yes, we would do well to teach our converts that orders are meant to be obeyed. And the best way to teach this lesson is by example. And who knows, that may be where the problem is. Maybe we, who should be teaching, could use a refresher course.

Brazilians Write

By Paulo David

How God Called Me to Himself

It has been almost 19 years since I heeded the Lord's call to salvation, and five years since my first contact with His church. During this time I have had many experiences.

In this article I want to relate how the Lord called me to Himself.

I was born in a Catholic home, at least that is what my folks said we were – Catholics. The only evidence of religion that could be found in our home was an image of Christ on the wall and an illustrated Bible, the kind that comes with some encyclopedias.

I have no recollection of ever seeing my folks so much as paging through that Bible or ever saying a prayer, not even at mealtime. We didn't go to church, but if anyone asked what our religion was, then we were Apostolic Roman Catholics. So, as can be guessed, there was no religious instruction in our home. Even so, I am thankful to my folks for all that they did for me.

But God knows no limitations and has many ways to get our attention. In my case it was exactly through that illustrated Bible that He began to awaken within me a certain interest in religion. I remember how I liked to page through that Bible and how the illustrations impressed me. Parallel with this religious interest, as I came up to the teenage years, I also became aware of a strong attraction for sin, even though during that time I had a very vague concept of sin. What I did know was that my thoughts, feelings, words and deeds were not right. But I was powerless to change. Some of these sins, like lying, disobedience, unclean thoughts and words, got the upper hand in my life. I was very much ashamed of some of these things, especially my habit of swearing. I would even swear at my mother.

One day someone told my mother that what I needed was to begin attending catechism classes. "This boy needs religion," people began to tell her. So I began studying catechism in the catholic church. I even went so far as to confess my sins to the priest, even though it just about did me in. I had to do penance by reciting the Lord's Prayer a number of times and saying I don't know how many Hail Marys. During mass I went to communion for the first time.

Once the newness of all that began to wear off, that empty feeling came back. This empty feeling was compounded by the emptiness I had just experienced. As I remember, I went back to church only a couple of times, and that was it.

Time went on and I continued in my own ways, but nothing I did brought me any satisfaction. I remember the many times I would leave parties and places of entertainment feeling worse than when I walked in. I couldn't seem to take home with me the thrill I felt at these places.

In the middle of all this confusion my parents enrolled me in a spiritist school. For five years I listened to lectures on cause and effect, reincarnation and charity [good works]. During these five years that I was in direct contact with spiritism, I never found satisfactory answers to my questions about God, nor to the void I felt in my heart – for they simply didn't have the

answers. The god of spiritism is distant and inaccessible. He is undefined and impotent. He doesn't save, he doesn't pardon, he shows no mercy. The truth of the matter is that there is no place for a loving God, nor for a Savior, in a religion that centers around cause and effect.

Maybe that is why I didn't fall into the clutches of spiritism, for even though I myself didn't know what I was looking for, my soul was crying out for a loving God, for peace and salvation, something the spiritists couldn't offer.

In 1976, when I was finishing my studies in that school, I was invited to a youth gathering in a group called Alvo da Mocidade. By now I was all confused and discouraged with religion. I had decided to have my own religion, a sort of God and I affair. I would be like those who say, "Religion is a personal thing," or "The important thing is to believe."

If I had known that the group that invited me was made up of believers (Protestants), I probably would have never gone to one of their meetings. But since no one told me anything, I went.

The meetings of this group were different from the traditional youth meetings. They were informal and everyone was at ease. They sang, played games and listened to talks, but nothing suggested anything was of a religious nature. No effort was made to get anyone to accept anything they said.

I didn't know it at the time, but this group came into existence in the United States during the sixties, where it was called Young Life. A non-denominational undertaking, it was a mission project directed toward rebellious teenagers, to those who had an aversion for churches. I guess I fit into all that quite well. The evangelistic work of this group wasn't carried on in open meetings, but rather in youth camps held twice a year.

It was through these open meetings that the youth were drawn to their camps. I wanted badly to go to one of these camps, because it sounded like they would be a lot of fun. I had no idea what really went on in these gatherings.

In January of 77, when I was 15, God opened the door so that I could go to one of these youth camps.

We went to a fazenda located next to a lake in the state of Minas Gerais. The spot was beautiful.

I soon noticed that I was getting into something totally different from the gatherings I had gone to until now. Even though it was a relaxed atmosphere, things were taken seriously and both in the morning and at night we got together to sing and listen to some pointed lectures on the plan of salvation. For the first time in my life I was coming in contact with the gospel of Christ.

Slowly I began to understand why I felt such a void in my heart. I understood why nothing seemed to satisfy the longing I felt. I realized now that all the interest I had shown in religion in the past, and even my sincerity, never delivered me from my sins and I was still a sinner, estranged from God and walking in my own ways. That emptiness I felt was the lack of God in my life. It wasn't at all a question of having or not having a religion. It was a question of having or not having God in my heart. And I knew I didn't.

Until then to me Jesus was nothing more than an image on the wall. Now He was introduced to me as the Son of God, the Savior who came to the world to die on the cross so that sinners could be forgiven and restored into fellowship with God.

God was calling me. I could feel His call. He was calling me to leave my own ways and surrender to Christ so that He could be my Savior. But together with the knowledge that God was calling me, there began within me a real struggle. I began to fear that if I surrendered my will, I would lose my liberty. My big I was showing itself for what it really was: selfish and independent. I didn't want to bow down before the Lord. I didn't want to have anything to do with the cross. I didn't want to die to self.

Fears, doubts, unbelief and unwillingness were the weapons that this I used to remain on the throne. My soul cried to God for forgiveness and salvation, but that would require a full surrender. In the middle of this turmoil, I came up with the idea of putting my salvation on hold. But God didn't let me by with that. He called my attention to the possibility that that might be my last chance. How could I know that I wouldn't lose my life on the way home?

As I thought about this the fear of a Godless death took hold of me. I began to feel like there was a great possibility that I really would die before reaching home. No longer could I put off my salvation. I needed to answer God's call. There and then I began to call upon God as never before. I came to Him just as I was, a weak, fearful, poor and wretched sinner. I begged Him to help me surrender. I wanted to make a complete surrender, but without His help this was impossible. I asked Him to save me, to pardon my sins and from then on do with my life as He saw fit. It was a simple prayer, but all that it took for Him to answer me. He took away all of my doubts, fears and unbelief, filling my heart with faith and confidence in His salvation. In the place of turmoil there was peace, and where before there was a void, God's presence could now be felt. My sins were forgiven and I was a child of God.

I returned home full of joy, and, needless to say, didn't die as I had feared.

The Lord still had many things to teach me, but that is another story which I hope to tell shortly. ▲

The Colony – As Seen by Others

No Rest for the Mennonites

[By Nely Caixeta, editor of Exame, a magazine dedicated to banking, finances and industry.]

On the last Thursday of May, 80, agricultural families from Rio Verde, in southeast Goiás, one of the principal soybean producing regions in Brazil, gathered in two little country churches to celebrate Thanksgiving Day. Six months ahead of schedule, or behind, depending on how you look at it, the members of this community, men with

long beards and women with dresses that cover the knees, long sleeves, and with the hair put up under a black covering, living on the lush plains of the Central West, do a rerun of this traditional fall holiday held in the United States after their harvest. The service, conducted in both English and Portuguese, was attended by people with difficult to pronounce last names like Stoltzfus, Hibner, Holdeman and Loewen. When the service was over, these farmers went back home. Their houses, made of red open brick and surrounded by enormous lawns, are comfortable, but not luxurious, except for the fireplace found in each living room. It was here that another prayer was offered before sitting down to a special meal. Thanksgiving Day is not complete without stuffed turkey and pumpkin pie sprinkled with cinnamon.

The farmers described here are members of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, a type of Christian fundamentalists, who exchanged their little farms in the United States, toward the end of the sixties, for a piece of cerrado [plains] in central Brazil. There, 30 kilometers from Rio Verde, on corn and soybean fields that total more than 10.000 acres, the American immigrants developed one of the most prosperous agricultural communities in the country. Their farms, averaging 300 to 750 acres, are considered quite timid in a region where soybean fields lose themselves on the horizon. However in terms of yields, they can't complain. Good equipment, mixed with the sweat of the entire family, makes it possible to harvest 300 bushels of soybeans per acre, well above the national average of less than 200 bushels per acre.

When they arrived in Rio Verde, almost 30 years ago, from different states, like Kansas, Idaho, Pennsylvania and Ohio, they were looking for land that would permit them to maintain the life style which they have tried to follow since the 16th century, when the Dutch priest Menno Simons brought about a reformation, which still bears his name. Since then his followers have held to two principles which are the foundation of the Mennonite philosophy – hard work and the spirit of independence, the exact thing that three centuries back caused them to leave Europe and try their luck in the United States.

But what was it that induced this group, almost 30 years ago, to settle in the middle of nowhere in the heart of South America? Actually, the settlement here came about by happenstance. Toward the end of the sixties, six men left the United States looking for land that would be both fertile and cheap. After looking in the states of Bahia, Mato Grosso, and even in Paraguay, they stopped at a car agency in Rio Verde. While the mechanics were doing a checkup on a VW Kombi purchased before the trip, the Americans heard about a fazendeiro [farmer] who had some land for sale. They ended up buying a tract of seven thousand acres and settling there. "It was almost a donation," is how Charles Becker, one of the pioneers and today responsible for the publication work of the Mennonite church in Brazil, puts it. "Even so people in town were overheard saying that the fazendeiro really took the gringos for a ride." There is no doubt, it was a bargain. During that time when there were almost no roads, electricity or telephone service in southern Goiás, an acre of ground could be purchased for eight U.S. dollars. Today, with the cerrados converted into enormous plantations, land in the area can be worth up to a hundred times more.

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The first eight families repeated the saga of their pioneer forefathers who moved to the United States. In the beginning they lived in tents. Then came masonite shelters. To put a bit of variety into their menu, they ate armadillos, deer, capybaras and even rattlesnakes. Today, while the majority of the Brazilian farmers are up in arms with the government, trying to renegotiate their debts with the bank so they can plant again, most of the Mennonites managed to keep their finances in order. How did they do it? With a good dose of caution and lots of sweat. Doing their own work and limiting their investments to money made in the previous harvests, the Mennonites, with a few exceptions, have managed to stay clear of bank financing and the infamous TR [the table used to calculate monetary correction on loans] – the most recent headache of Brazilian farmers.

Take the example of Daniel Holdeman, 40, born in Georgia, but who at 19 moved to Brazil. During the last 15 years he hasn't borrowed a single cent from the bank to plant his corn and soybeans, which he does with the help of his wife and four children. "I don't like loans," Daniel says in his halting Portuguese. "And much less to mortgage my crop." Storing his grain and holding on as long as possible, he is able to get a better price for his product. Then, with cash in hand, he is able to buy fertilizer and seed well before planting time at bargain prices.

Three crops a year – Daniel's story brings out the robust spirit so common in pioneers. When he came to Rio Verde, he helped his dad, Duane, one of the first farmers to plant soybeans in southeast Goiás. In the beginning the crops weren't anything to brag about. But when the farmers learned how to correct the acidity of the soil with lime, yields began to come up. Some time later, using an old John Deere tractor which his dad gave him, and a brand new Massey Ferguson, Daniel began to plant on his own. To begin with he planted only a hundred acres of rice. The next year, now married, he increased his operation by planting on some ground that his wife Linda, the daughter of a neighboring colonist, inherited. During this period, with no operating capital, he was forced to get financing in the Banco do Brasil to be able to buy fertilizer. Four years later, now on his feet financially, he was able to declare himself independent of all official loans.

Daniel, who takes his family to the United States every three years to visit relatives, has managed in the last two decades to come up with a nice setup. Besides his 375 acre farm, he has a comfortable three bedroom house, two machine sheds, a 6,000 bushel grain bin, a diesel pickup and a van, plus two tractors. The three combines are owned in partnership with his dad and brothers. "I never had a crop failure since I came," Daniel states. He has no doubt that if he would have planted soybeans in the United States instead of here, he wouldn't have advanced as fast as he did here. This can be attributed to the climate.

Here in the Central West region, the distribution of sunlight and rain during the growing season translates into good crops. In the United States the farmer often is exposed to long draughts or excessive rains. But here, with irrigation, it's possible to raise three crops a year. Over there no crops can be raised during the winter. Also here

no one has a heating bill to pay during cold months. An advantage that the farmers in the United States have is that they can come up with accurate figures of what they will spend and what the projected income will be. “Now with our new currency, the Real, things are easier,” Daniel explains. “Before inflation worked in our favor, but I prefer to not have inflation.”

Careful management, different clothes, blue eyes and blond hair aren’t the only characteristics that set these farmers aside from the neighbors in Rio Verde. Beside the goianos [natives of the state of Goiás], there are many other outsiders from the states of Paraná, Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul and São Paulo, who helped transform southeast Goiás into an enormous agricultural belt. On the local highways, over which 70% of the grain is shipped out, one sees billboards advertising herbicides and fertilizers. The Mennonites live a self-denied life. Their religious fervor precludes smoking, drinking, watching television, listening to the radio, musical instruments, photographs (except for documents), or any kind of political involvement. They don’t vote nor do they go to the army.

Courtship is not permitted. Marriage arrangements are handled by the pastor after consulting the parents of both the groom and the bride. They get their education in two schools that follow the American calendar and curriculum, studying only until the eighth grade. What happens in Brasília, only 400 kilometers from the Colony, they find out only a number of days later. Once a week Charles Becker picks up his copy of O Popular [the Goiânia daily] and his copies of Veja, Time and National Geographic. The Americans in Rio Verde, however, don’t shy away from technological advancements, as is the case with the more radical Mennonites, or for example, with the Amish in Pennsylvania – who remembers the film *The Witness*, starring Harrison Ford? – who until today prefer the buggy over the automobile.

Baseball and Churrasco – Many of the colonists have computers on their fazendas. Others prepare their soil, plant and harvest on equipment with an air-conditioned cab. Half of the families have telephones on their farms, which incidentally is the new system of rural cellular phones. Part of the comfort they enjoy while in the field is the result of their Spartan life style. Their religious and moral principles don’t permit unnecessary spending, be it for entertainment or expensive clothing. In each home there is a sewing machine on which the women make dresses, jackets and shirts, used by the entire family. The incentive to work begins at an early age, which transforms itself into additional income. While they still are small, seven or eight years old, children learn how to drive tractor. Daniel, for example, has never hired a single person to help plant or harvest his crops. “I don’t like to tell others what to do,” he says. He prefers to have his wife Linda help him, or his two sons, Delton and Wesley, teenagers who adore the Mexican food from the Taco Bell.

Contrary to the majority of Brazilian farmers who live in town and hire a foreman to run their operation, the Mennonites are always on the job, ready to handle any emergency. They see, for example, when insects begin to attack their crops. “That’s where the difference is,” explains Elias Stoltzfus, 37, one of the community pastors,

who plants 450 acres of soybeans and corn. “The best fertilizer available is the owner’s shadow every day.”

Without radio or television, many have difficulty expressing themselves in Portuguese. Some, especially the generation that has practically been raised here in Brazil, have perfected their Portuguese through correspondence courses. “We take advantage of the best of the two cultures,” says Myron Kramer, one of Daniel Kramer’s 10 children, who left Norfolk, Virginia and came to Goiás 26 years ago. This can be seen when they play baseball on a diamond behind one of the schools. At home, however, rice and beans are daily fare. American style pickles are eaten together with pequi, a fruit that can be found in the cerrado. Some have even gone so far as to make hamburger out of ostrich meat. When the corn is at the right stage, families get together to make pamonha [similar to Mexican tamales, except that pamonha is made of green corn], both sweet and salty. Some have substituted the traditional turkey on Thanksgiving Day for the Brasileiríssimo churrasco [very Brazilian barbecue]. “Here we eat meat,” Martha, Myron’s wife, says. “Over there in the U.S. they have to make do with just a whiff of the meat.”

Efforts Rewarded – Daniel Kramer, 59, has work hardened hands and a deep suntan from the hot central Brazil sun. When he came to Goiás to begin working on the thousand acre plot he had in the Colony in Rio Verde, he brought along his life’s savings of 15 thousand U.S. dollars. Today each of his children is worth eight times that. They plant 1,750 acres of rice, soybeans and corn, most of it on rented ground. They went broke twice on the sandy soil of their farm, which today is in pasture. In order to pay the debt off they had in the Banco do Brasil, Daniel and his sons worked out for three years on the neighboring farm of a Paulista [a native of the state of São Paulo]. After that they began farming their own land and went broke again. Finally they decided that the soil was too weak for crops.

It was on the rented land that they became prosperous. Last year the Kramers purchased a 4,500 acre farm in Primavera do Leste, Mato Grosso. The work they are facing doesn’t scare them. “I consider myself to have graduated from the Institute of Hard Knocks,” is how Daniel Jr., 36, one of the pioneer’s sons, puts it. “We’re used to being everything, agronomists, economists, mechanics and carpenters.” This is true, for the Kramers, like other members of the community, build their own houses, make their own furniture and overhaul their own motors. Together with four other families they harnessed the river behind their place and installed a turbine that produces 50 horsepower of electricity. Right now they are in a bind because of the discrepancy between the TR and the government support price on crops. If we don’t manage to renegotiate the 70 thousand dollars we are still owing, we’ll have to sell part of our farm. “It’s probably our own fault we’re in this bind because of having gone too far into debt,” the elder Kramer says with a sigh. “But we needed to update our equipment to be able to produce more.”

The Kramers work together as a family, something that causes the other members

of the Colony to raise their eyebrows just a bit. The problem is that the Mennonites are horrified by anything that would even remotely resemble collectivism. The manager of the Banco do Brasil in Rio Verde did his best to get this idea across, telling them they would be ahead if they bought their fertilizer and seed in big lots, but found out he was barking up the wrong tree. Elias Stoltzfus has a simple explanation for this. “It isn’t part of our philosophy to try and always make the very best deal,” he explains. Neither is it part of the Mennonite philosophy to make all the money they can and act like only the sky is the limit. They want to make enough money to have a comfortable standard of living. “If you gain the whole world, in the end you lose your soul,” is what David Kramer believes.

This isn’t exactly what Douglas Ferrell, 40, seems to think. Owner of the Fazenda Philadelphia, a 6,250 acre tract of land right along side of the Mennonite Colony. From the state of Maryland, Douglas moved to Brazil 21 years ago. He is not religiously inclined and is constantly expanding the borders of his property. His dad bought the first 1,200 acres for him in one of his annual visits to Brazil. The rest he acquired by planting soybeans, corn, sorghum and cotton in Goiás. When he moved to his present location, after trying his luck in the states of Paraná and São Paulo, he lived for some time in a tent beside a stream. Today he is building a 5,500 square foot two-story, five-bedroom house. It is there that Douglas, a widower, plans on living with his three children, and with Celina, a local girl, whom he plans on marrying shortly.

The story that Douglas and the Mennonite families tell is similar to that of many other pioneers who settled in unknown lands, many times in a hostile environment, to begin a new life. When they got to this part of Goiás, there were no highways, electricity, and much less telephones. They have been rewarded for their efforts. “In the United States everything is developed and the competition a lot stiffer,” Douglas says with a smile. “Here we grow together with the region.” ▲

Remembering Out Loud

The Airport in Brasília

When we moved to Brazil over 25 years ago, the airport in Brasília was still under construction. The runway had been completed, but the terminal itself was a long, narrow wooden structure that resembled an army barrack. It had no VIP lounge.

When the passenger terminal was finally completed, it was a beautiful affair. For those who like to spend time in an airport watching the flurry of activity as planes land and take off, taxi to and from the terminal, load and unload passengers, the Brasília airport was probably one of the best in the world. The observation deck must have been 500 feet long, giving a total view of everything, especially the planes that would taxi up to about 50 feet from where the spectators were.

Back those days we had a lot more international flights directly into Brasília. Pan

Am and Varig were the two principal carriers. Different of you readers will remember what it was like to land in Brasília on a rainy day. Either there would be busses waiting at the foot of the ramp to haul passengers to the terminal, or there would be someone there handing umbrellas to all the passengers. It was an impressive sight to see a long line of black umbrellas, looking so much like a trail of ants, meandering its way into the terminal.

We were to the airport several weeks ago. It is undergoing a massive remodeling and enlarging. I believe it will be one of the most beautiful airports in the world when it is finished. What makes this possible is our tropical climate.

Instead of getting a set of doors that separates the outside from the inside, as is obviously necessary in a cold climate, the transition here is gradual. The entire front of the terminal is sort of a porch covered by a high roof. Under this porch, which is some 50 feet wide, there are pools with fountains, and walkways in between.

At no point, all the way up to the airline desks and passenger areas are there any doors. Everything is wide open.

I don't know when this project is to be completed. Right now it's kind of a mess with a lot of temporary walls and with no observation deck. Even after the observation deck is reopened – much smaller than before – it won't be the same. The unloading is done through tunnels. But, what will be a loss to spectators will be gain for passengers. No more umbrellas, no more busses.

Right now I think only Transbrasil has direct flights into Brasília from Orlando and Miami. It's a fine airline and it certainly does beat going through São Paulo and having to spend most of the day there waiting for a flight out to Goiânia.

The first chance you get, visit the Brasília airport. ▲

Paraguay

A Country with a Hazy Future

The different segments of Paraguayan society have never been knit together into a working unit. This makes for a weak country with an unbalanced economy. Curiously, it's the outsiders who do best in this little South American country. BN has reported on the progress Mennonites have made where native Paraguayans wouldn't stand a chance.

VEJA magazine reports on another interesting, yet distressing, aspect of the Paraguayan economic system. In the border town of Ciudad del Este, near Iguacu Falls, merchants in six thousand stores in a 20 block area sold over 13 billion dollars worth of goods last year, approximately what all of the businesses in the city of São Paulo sold during the same period. Most of the money flows through the hands of multimillionaire businessmen: Koreans, Arabs, Chinese, Lebanese and Brazilians.

The interesting thing about this whole story is that almost all of the merchandise sold ends up in Brazil – illegally, as contraband. And worse, a lot of what is sold is of

inferior quality. Have you ever wondered what stores do with defective goods that are returned while under warranty? Some of them are given a lick and a promise repair job and shipped to Paraguay, where they are sold as new.

I doubt if there are very many Brazilian cities where these goods aren't sold openly. In Rio Verde they are sold in little booths set up along the sidewalk in front of the large Catholic church in the middle of town.

The hottest items in this illegal commerce are: clothes, movie cameras, computers, perfumes, whiskey, cigarettes and lots of trinkets.

This business, most of it illegal, represents one third of the Paraguayan economy. It brings 12 million "visitors" into their country annually.

Many of these visitors are repeats. In Brazil there are 60 thousand sacoleiros – literally, "bag carriers" – who make their living traveling to Paraguay by bus, filling their bags with possibly five to 10 times more than the legal limit of US\$200, and returning to Brazil. Every Saturday 500 busses and 5,000 cars make this run.

Some of them don't even have to cross into Paraguay. Formigas – ants – the name given to locals who take orders from the sacoleiros, cross the border on foot and bring back what they can carry, for a commission of course. Twenty dollars for a normal trip, forty dollars if firearms are included.

By no means is being a sacoleiro an easy life. At the check points bribes must be paid, varying from 200 – 2,000 dollars per bus. However, sometimes bribes don't work and their purchases are confiscated. The greatest risk is being held up. On one occasion 10 busses were held up simultaneously by bandits and relieved of their goods in one massive job.

Can a country with this kind of economy progress? Hardly. Keep tuned in. One of these days Brazil will begin clamping down on this contraband, and then Paraguay will be in a real fix. ▲

This & That

Were the Communists about to take over the country at the time of the military coup nearly 30 years ago? That question will be debated for many years here in Brazil. An interesting little item has turned up lately that might throw just a bit of light on the subject. A Russian who spent over half a century spying for his country, has begun telling his story. The seven years spent in Brazil were quite frustrating. He reports that most of the money sent from Moscow to Latin American Communists "was spent on women, real estate and parties." Ironically, it's this exact characteristic that kept communism from taking off in Brazil that still keeps capitalism from shining as it should.

On July 6 Daniel Martin Sr. died in the Moundridge Manor. Daniel & Alma spent a number of years here in Brazil, until his health began to fail. They made a very positive contribution to the Colony. An interesting speaker, he was an interpreters

nightmare as he quoted from his vast repertoire of songs and poetry. We will miss him.

On July 6 Daniel & Betty Martin and Phil & Alfrieda Martin and boys left for the US to attend their dad's funeral.

Again we refer to the Revolution of 64. Because of the amount of Communist priests coming in and agitating the poorer classes, Brazil began giving only three month tourist visas, so as to make it easier to get them back out of the country. In this the innocent suffered with the guilty. Because Americans wanting to visit Brazil could only get a three month visa, the US retaliated by giving Brazilians the same treatment. Now, after all these years, Brazil has begun giving tourist visas that will be valid for multiple entries during a five year period. The US has reciprocated by giving Brazilians visas valid for 10 years. It should be understood that a 10 year visa doesn't mean a foreigner can stay in the States for 10 years. The maximum time continues to be three months, without an extension. However, for additional visits during the 10 years, there is no need for a new visa. The same is true for N Americans coming this way, except that the visa must be renewed every five years. Not bad, not bad.

The Pirenópolis mission had meetings from July 5 – 9. Richard and Dean Mininger were the evangelists. We were there for one meeting. Everyone should visit this mission. I was amazed at the total silence and order during the service. It goes to show that religion is stronger than culture. They had three baptisms on the 8th and communion services on the 9th.

I mentioned last month that I was expecting a visit from a gentleman who lives in the Paraguayan Chaco. Unfortunately that visit didn't materialize. Uwe Schmidt, the realtor from southern Brazil, sent me some interesting information on the Santa Cruz area in Bolivia.

Brazilian farmers have been making news here lately. Unable to pay off in the bank, they decided to protest, demanding, for all practical purposes, that their debt be cancelled. To make their point, tractors, loaded on trucks, headed to Brasília from all over the country and converged in front of Congress. In the end it was agreed that one third of their debt would be extended interest free for one year. For those who have already paid off, they will receive an interest free loan for that amount for the coming year. It will be a real help to some of our people.

The little congregation in Goiânia is growing. Three families from the local congregations moved there. From the Rio Verde Congregation it was Jerônimo & Maria Barros (BN, no. 42 published an experience written by Maria on how she found her billfold) and Zelinda Sperb and her family (See Zelinda's experience in BN no. 50). From the Rio Verdinho congregation it was José & Lucy Cardoso (See Lucy's experience in BN no. 11) and their family. José was the printer in Stanley Schultz' print shop.

The Myron Unruh and Jake Loewen families returned from the US.

On July 13 the funeral service for Daniel Martin Sr. was called in to the Monte Alegre Congregation, with quite a few attending. It was very clear. Once again it was

Maurício who did the hookup for us. He is making us something permanent so that it won't be necessary to come out each time.

Our last dry season was really a rough one for cattle raisers. We had an early frost that dried up the pastures and a lot of people in the area hadn't put up any ensilage for such an eventuality. This year is just the opposite of last. The weather is very mild, pastures are still relatively green and the cattle are in good shape. People who put up a lot of feed with the thought of buying up skinny cattle for a little of nothing, fattening them out and making money, will probably be disappointed. BUT . . . the dry season isn't over yet. Things could still change.

Nelson Unruhs, Dave Kramers and Luciene Rosa were to Mato Grosso to visit the Sorriso area and the Leo Dirks family.

This world is a small place. We were in the American Consulate in Brasília and Faith struck up a conversation with some women. She found out one was from Sorriso, Mato Grosso. Faith told her she had a niece living there. We found out the lady works in the Banco do Brasil and knew both Dan and John Kramer. By the way Dan, how about putting on paper the story you tell about the German, or whatever, you met in the airport in São Paulo who talked Pennsylvania Dutch. BN readers would enjoy that story.

The Rio Verde Congregation had revival meetings, with Roy Koehn from Ohio and Richard Mininger from Rio Verdinho Congregation as the evangelists. I understand they had very good meetings and concluded with communion on the 26th.

The proofreaders are working on John Holdeman's book, *The Mirror of Truth*, which Myron Kramer is translating. The proofreaders are Luiz Fernandes from Goiânia, Paulo David from Rio Verde, Calvin Hibner and Paul Yoder from Monte Alegre, and Duane Miller from Rio Verdinho. Because of Holdeman's rambling writing style, the book is no picnic to translate nor to proofread. Myron has tried to take some of the kinks out of the text, which will certainly make it more readable.

On July 26 the Carman Loewen family left for the US. They want to attend the Blacksburg, Virginia reunion, to be held at Ulysses, Kansas.

I guess I wasn't cut out to be a Pentecostal. A couple of fellows came out from town, one of them apparently a preacher, to buy some Bibles from Gospel Tract. I walked into the room when Clinton was just finishing up his sale. The preacher fellow very loudly and cheerfully announced, "Why don't we pray? You people like to pray, don't you?" "Yes," we said, "we do." It was obvious we were in for a real McCoy prayer session, so Clinton broke in, "Charles vai orar." – "Charles will pray." I just got the first sentence said and the shouting started. So I stopped praying and let the noise subside. Then I said another sentence and had another lengthy pause. I'm not sure if my prayer was three sentences or four sentences long, but it sure was a blessing to be able to say Amen. Next time I'll say, "Clinton vai orar."

Veleda Loewen invited the young girls over and had a birthday dinner for Ozânnia, the girl who lives with Emma Burns. It's probably the first time such a thing has ever happened to Ozânnia in her life.