

# Brazil News

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No. 52  
September 1995

Editorial

## **The Fifteen Factor**

All Bible students are acquainted with the story of King Hezekiah's illness and how the Lord promised him 15 more years. This miracle was both confirmed and compounded by the shadow of the sundial going backward 10 degrees.

Have you, reader, ever stopped to think how you would react if you knew you had exactly 15 years to live? The rest of this article is pure imagination. To get anything out of it, you will have to use yours too.

Meet Hez Ekiah.

Fifteen seconds. Hez is the happy-go-lucky type. Whenever he drives up in his battered up old four-wheel drive pickup, people exclaim, "Well, if it isn't ol' Hez!" He has friends everywhere.

But Hez has a rather serious defect. He doesn't take anything seriously. His parents are Christians, but he never managed to take their religion seriously. He got married, but didn't take his marriage seriously and his wife left him. He didn't take his two sons seriously, who were now teenagers and lived with their mother. He plain doesn't take life seriously. It isn't that he doesn't work hard. His boss often says, "I don't know what I'd do without Hez."

Hez has a dangerous job. He works with a crew that cuts logging roads out of the mountainside. His job is to go ahead and blast out the rocks the heavy equipment can't handle. He doesn't take that seriously either. He is notorious for the short fuses he uses. He hates to wait around for the charge to go off.

One day Hez sets a heavy charge, lights a short fuse and runs for cover behind a nearby boulder. He smiles with satisfaction when just as he steps into his protected area the ground shakes and debris go whizzing past. As soon as the dust has settled a bit, he is out to inspect his handiwork. It will take a little touching up. One small charge and the area will be ready for the bulldozers.

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Humming to himself, Hez drills a quick hole, stuffs a stick of dynamite in, and lights the fuse. A short one, as usual. He will take shelter behind the same boulder.

In 20 seconds that last rock will be out of the way. Hez turns to head for the boulder and has taken but three steps when his foot slips into a crack between two rocks that were jarred apart in the first blast. Violently he jerks upward to free himself. His struggle is just enough to cause the two rocks to shift and return to their original position, pinching his foot like a mammoth vise.

Five seconds has passed since the fuse was lit. Hez knows the only thing he has left in this life are 15 seconds of time.

In a matter of several seconds, Hez sees his entire life flash before his eyes. He remembers the exact words he used to inform his parents, while yet in his early teens, that he was not ever going to be seen in a church again. “Religion is for cowards and old fogies,” are the words he used. He plainly saw the hurt on their faces. He keeps good the promise to never again set foot in a church.

He sees his wife waiting up for him until the early hours of the morning when he would finally drag himself through the door in a drunken stupor. He hears her pleas just as clearly as if she were standing right there beside him.

He sees his two sons, struggling in life because he has never taken anything seriously.

All this and much more he sees in approximately five seconds.

Ten seconds remaining. Good reader, look at your watch, observe the second hand as it ticks off the last 10 seconds of time for Hez Ekiah. He is praying. He had five seconds to reflect on his past and now has 10 seconds to pray. And pray he does! Do you believe that 15 seconds is enough time for a sinner to be saved?

Fifteen minutes. We now change the ending to our story. Hez is up in the mountain doing some scouting to see where a new road should go. He knows there is a forest fire in the area, but as is his habit, he doesn't take it seriously enough. Because of an unexpected wind change, he finds he is trapped. Judging by the speed the flames are traveling, he knows he has 20 minutes at the most before he is engulfed.

His first reaction is to try and save himself. Leaving his pickup on the road, he blindly begins running downhill, hoping to try and beat the flames to the river, where there is safety. For five minutes he runs, he stumbles, he falls, he gets up again. Then he sees the flames have already reached the river. He is surrounded. And he has fifteen minutes to prepare for his end.

Hez sees his whole life in great detail. The smell of smoke, the wild animals scurrying past him, some going one way and others another, help him see how desperate his situation is. Oblivious to everything, he kneels and confesses his past. He leaves nothing out. He promises the Lord that if by some miracle he should be delivered, he would go back and make restitution – especially with his wife and children. He means it from the bottom of his heart. Good reader, do you believe 15 minutes is enough time for a sincere soul to be saved?

Fifteen days. The ending again is changed. Hez has been losing his appetite over the

last week or 10 days. He doesn't take it seriously. However his boss noticing something is wrong, almost manhandles him to the doctor. Suspecting the case is serious, the doctor has Hez hospitalized while tests are taken.

The next afternoon the doctor walks into the room where Hez is pacing the floor, raring to leave. "Sit down, Mr. Ekiah," the doctor says gravely. Hez immediately senses the news isn't good. "I'm going to be totally frank with you. You have a rare type of cancer and have 20 days to live at the most. About all we can do is make you as comfortable as possible. I'm sorry . . ."

Hez is really shook up. The doctor tells him he should feel free to get a second opinion, which is what he does. During the next five days he sees some of the best specialists in the area. The last one repeats what the first one said, and this is when the truth finally sinks in, "Mr. Ekiah, you have approximately 15 days to live. I'm sorry..."

The doctor tells him there is really no point in staying in the hospital. So long as he feels well enough, he can stay at home.

Hez goes home and gets on the phone. He calls his aged folks. He calls his wife. He asks to talk to his children. They come to see him. He frankly and honestly admits his failures. There is a real homecoming.

But by no means is everything cut and dried. Suddenly Hez feels an almost uncontrollable desire to make up for lost time with his family. Hez begins to pray as he has never prayed before in his life. He prays for a miracle, that the Lord will heal him so that he can assume his rightful place in the home. He asks others to pray for him. Even though he is becoming weaker, he is firmly convinced the Lord will heal him. That's all he can talk about. On day 12 he must return to the hospital. It isn't until day 13 that he admits – bitterly – that it looks like God won't heal him after all. Efforts to point out that he must now prepare to die, not to live, are somewhat frustrated by the strong sedation he is under. Good reader, do you believe 15 days were enough for Hez to find what he needed?

Fifteen years. Now for the final ending to our story. One night Hez has a dream. What appears to be an angel comes into his room and hangs a thick calendar on the wall. Then deliberately he begins tearing off pages, one month at a time and dropping them on the floor. Speechless Hez watches as one year drops, then another, and another. When the last page is dropped, the angel disappears.

Seeing he is alone, Hez slips out of bed to look at the pile of months on the floor. The last one, he notices, is exactly 15 years later than the present date. And where the month should be, there are the words, BE PREPARED!

Hez wakes up in a cold sweat. No one needs to tell him the meaning of the dream.

For about a week Hez is really shook up. His boss and coworkers notice he's different. He isn't his usual happy-go-lucky self. He even confides in one of his more religious buddies and gets some good advice. He considers calling his wife and seeing if they can make up, but it's hard on his pride to admit he was wrong. He tells the Lord that if they should get together again, she should make the first move. That will be his sign. There is no sign.

He does look up his aged folks and most pleasantly surprises them by announcing he will be going to church with them the coming Sunday. This seems to take a certain load off his chest. And from then on, on special occasions – Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving – he goes to church, even after his folks are gone.

Like the calendar pages falling to the floor, the years go by. Hez seldom thinks of his dream anymore. Until one day when he rips the month off his calendar and with a start realizes it is exactly 15 years since his dream.

Hez has never really left off his happy-go-lucky approach to life. Now as he sees that fatal month staring him in the face, he suddenly chuckles, “That dream really shook me up back there . . . .” Weren’t 15 years enough time for Hez Ekiah to prepare to meet his maker? Or was it too much?

That’s a valid question. Not only for Hez Ekiah, but for Christians everywhere. Let’s look at the fifteen factor just a bit.

Fifteen seconds. If God calls a sinner with only 15 seconds of life left, it’s because He’s ready and able to forgive. However it’s 15 seconds we should never bank on. And yet how many times don’t we? We live carelessly during the day, say things we shouldn’t, do things that aren’t becoming, think things that aren’t pure. We let everything accumulate, and then when we have our evening prayers, we include a quick 15 second clause, something like this, “Lord, if today I have done anything amiss, if I haven’t been faithful, if I . . . then please forgive me.” No effort to try and remember what we may have done amiss. No repentance. Just a 15 second formality to remind God to be sure and remember to forgive us again.

Fifteen minutes. A lot can be done and said in 15 minutes. We think it’s surely plenty of time for God to reveal Himself to a sinner. It is. But it’s also plenty of time for the enemy to show his strength. And that’s where the problem is. To believe one can live as he pleases, and that 15 minutes or so will be enough to straighten out a lifetime of sin, is foolhardy, to say the least. For anyone who has known the truth to think that God will give an eternity of bliss in exchange for 15 final minutes of soul searching is a terrible risk.

Fifteen days. Our revival meetings usually take up approximately 15 days. It’s entirely too easy to be lukewarm for most of the year and then spend the first five days of revivals talking about how good the preaching is, the next five days feeling sort of uneasy, and the last five days rushing around trying to bring things up to date so our way is open to go to communion. If we consider lukewarmness to be a serious threat to salvation, then the lukewarm Christian must agree that his chances of being saved are very limited.

Fifteen years. A pilot knows that to land his craft he needs a runway. For a sinner to be saved, he also needs a runway, which is the call of the Holy Spirit. The enemy has been entirely too successful at making people believe that life is one long runway and that “anyplace, anywhere, anytime” they can swoop down for a landing.

Fifteen years represent a lifetime. The person who plans on getting right within the next 15 years probably won’t. Ever. Salvation isn’t a matter of 15 seconds, minutes, days or years. It’s a matter of now, of today. If today you see a runway beneath you, come in for a landing. It’s the only sure way. ▲

## Missions

### Goiânia

Just a bit of information on Goiânia before we talk about the mission there.

The original capitol of the state of Goiás was a town called Goiás, today known as Goiás Velho – Old Goiás. Feeling the need of a more strategically located capitol, the site which is now Goiânia was chosen. That was 50 some years ago.

Anyone driving in Goiânia today finds it hard to believe that it's a planned city. When construction was begun, a lot of the work was still done with ox teams. Planners simply were unable to conceive what the place would be like 50 years later.

Today Goiânia is a modern city of over one million inhabitants. In spite of having been planned for horse and buggy, the traffic is surprisingly agile and organized.

The true beauty of Goiânia, however, is not in its architecture or shopping malls, but in the little mission church almost in the middle of town.

Strangely, the beginning of the Goiânia mission can be traced to the other side of the Monte Alegre River from where Daniel Kramer lives. Nearly 25 years ago this land belonged to Enos & Clara Miller and they had a newly wed couple working for them, Jerônimo & Maria Barros (See Maria's story in BN no. 42).

After several years they moved on to a new job. After many storms and trials, Maria got converted and was baptized. Then Jerônimo decided to move to Goiânia, where he got work driving a city bus.

To say the least, this was a difficult period in their life. Jerônimo's wages hardly provided for the bare necessities of life. Their life became nomadic as they moved from one barracão to another.

A barracão is a couple of rooms people frequently build on the back end of their lot and rent out to come up with a little added income. Depending on the size of the lot, some backyards may have three or four barracões. Alongside the main house up front, there is a narrow corridor by which the barracões are accessed.

Especially when three or four families live in the same backyard, things are quite tight, including nerves. Children squabble, their parents squabble, and with three or four radios or TVs blaring away at once, the noise becomes almost unbearable.

And yet it was in this kind of an environment that through Maria's faithful witness a man by the name of Tony Soares got converted, then his wife, and now his two children. A faithful family, Tony is the foreman on Walt Redger's farm. They are members at the Rio Verdinho Congregation.

In the meantime back in Rio Verde Maria's grandparents both got converted (both have passed on and are buried in the Monte Alegre cemetery), as well as her aunt. Then her mother got converted in Goiânia.

It was decided that a missionary couple should be stationed in Goiânia. Dan & Marlene Kramer spent a term there, after which the work was shut down. Jerônimo & Maria moved back to Rio Verde, where Jerônimo got converted.

Next to get converted in Goiânia were Maria's cousin Selionir and her husband Nilton (See their articles in BN numbers 13 and 46). Once again a missionary couple was placed in Goiânia, Cameron & Deb Goertzen.

At this point a new influence was felt in Goiânia, this time from Pirenópolis. When Paulo David left the Comunidade church to come to the Church of God, different ones from his church watched him closely to see what he was getting into. One of these was Luiz Fernandes, a dentist in Goiânia.

Both Luiz and his wife Aparecida had had an experience of conversion while in the Comunidade church. But as often happens here in Brazil, where the man makes the first move in coming to the Church (which, really, is the way it should be), Luiz became a member and some 10 months later Aparecida was also baptized.

Together with Luiz came Divino Cândido, a public accountant, also from the Comunidade church. His wife is still hesitant about making the change.

Baptized together with Luiz and Divino was Isabel Barbosa (She was a neighbor to Nilton & Selionir). Her husband shows no interest in the church.

When Luiz's wife, Aparecida, was baptized, Maria's sister Marcenir was also baptized.

Recently Nilton & Selionir have moved to Pirenópolis and are members in that congregation. Jerônimo & Maria have moved back to Goiânia, as well as José & Lucy Cardoso (José was the printer at Gráfica Girassol. He and his wife were members at the Rio Verdinho Congregation. Her experience is in BN no. 11).

This brings us up to the present. A month ago we spent the weekend in Goiânia with Luiz & Aparecida Fernandes. Sunday morning they have services in a large rented room. After attending the service, once again I realized that religion is stronger than culture. The spirit, the solemnity, the order of the service, in spite of being near the center of a city of a million inhabitants, matched that of any congregation in N America.

The church is a rented room, long and narrow, and because of this there is no middle aisle (nor isle). The benches are long enough to leave a narrow aisle along each wall. The men sit toward the front and the women toward the back.

Interestingly, five of the families come to church in their own cars. Admittedly they aren't exactly late model cars, but because they were acquired by great sacrifice, they're just as happy with them as a lot of people are with a late model car.

It's good there are cars. Goiânia is sprawled out over a large area and most of the members live many miles from church – in opposite directions. In spite of services starting at 9:00 o'clock in the morning, everyone was there on time, except for possibly two sisters, both of whose spouses aren't members.

The one, Isabel Barbosa (see her article in BN no. 49), lives right on the edge of Goiânia, in fact, on a dead-end street that runs up against a pasture. At least 12 miles from church, she has to catch her first bus at 7:30 in the morning. If everything clicks where she needs to catch her second bus, she gets to church a bit before starting time. But if the second bus has already left and she has to wait for the next one, then she gets

to church late. Those who find it easy to stay home from church because it's a little too hot, or a little too cold, or because they're tired, or have "sort of a headache," should go to church with Isabel some morning – and cover their heads in shame.

Evening services, which are Bible study, are held in the member's homes. The Sunday evening we were there it happened to be at Isabel's house. Like the Sunday School discussion in the morning, this lesson carried itself on its own momentum. There were no distressing silences, no need for "filler" comments. In fact, the discussion based on the 5th chapter of Acts, lasted for approximately one hour and 20 minutes.

Before leaving Goiânia I told Luiz Fernandes that no one needed to feel sorry for them. He immediately agreed. For you people coming to Brazil for a visit, I suggest you plan your flights in such a way that you can spend one Sunday in Goiânia. It will be one of the highlights of your trip.

The Brazilian brethren are actively involved in the services. To an extent, the missionary is there in a supportive role. And that is the way it should be as the work grows. The present missionary couple, Cameron & Deb Goertzen have been in the States on furlough and should return the first of September. Daniel & Anna Kramer and daughter Fyanna have been filling in for them during their absence. I noticed that when Daniel got word that Cam would be back on September 1, he acted just a bit disappointed. That too is good. ▲

## **And Their Children. . .?**

In our last visit to the US, I asked different ones involved with the mission program in Mexico how the church was progressing. I heard some real encouraging comments.

Then I asked another brother who frequently goes there for revival meetings. His answer seemed to contradict everything I had heard. He went on to explain the reason for his pessimism: "The members are losing almost all of their children to the world."

Recently one of our ministers returned from a short series of meetings in one of our missions. I asked him how things were there. He told me the members are doing well spiritually, then added, "But they're losing their children to the world."

I suspect this phenomenon is entirely too commonplace on our missions. What is the problem?

If a dairy farmer had good milk cows, but constantly lost almost his entire calf crop, he would become alarmed. He knows that for his operation to be a success, he must raise his own replacements.

This is true of the church. It's true of missions.

In this article we will make no attempt to give a solution for this problem. Rather, we want you readers to think seriously – and pray – about it. To broaden your thinking, include the following factors in your meditations:

Schools. Our private schools have become a sacred tenet. So much so that if a group

colonizing a new area in N America would announce that they planned on sending their children to public schools for a year or two, and then build their church school, a real concern would be felt. Yet almost all the children of members on missions go to public schools.

Most of our members on mission fields live in towns or cities. When we say towns, we're not talking about towns like Moundridge or Inman. To put it mildly, the environment isn't good. We say that if God has given these folks grace to get converted in town, He will give them grace to live there. And of course, to raise their families there.

In N America the members are only a telephone call from each other, or by car (which everyone has), maybe 15 or 20 minutes at the most. We take this for granted. On the mission field this is seldom the case. Few have telephones. Even less have cars. Often they live in different sections of town or in different villages. This means their children seldom play with other members' children. This may be significant.

You finish this list. I would enjoy hearing your comments. And of course, the solution. ▲

## Life in Brazil

### **Niseis in Japan**

Most any place you go in Brazil, you will find Niseis, the name given to Japanese born outside of Japan. Industrious, intelligent and meticulous, they quietly go about their business.

Approximately 5 years ago, Marilsa, the Japanese girl who used to work in my store, told me one of her brothers planned on going to Japan to work. It didn't take too long and four of her brothers, her dad and a number of her cousins were in Japan working, making big money.

According to VEJA Magazine, during the last five years 180,000 Niseis from Brazil have gone to Japan to find work. The Brazilian government has looked on this favorably because of the amount of dollars it has brought into the country.

By no means is it a picnic to work in Japan. To begin with, the Dekasseguis, as they are called in Japan, are discriminated against. While they make good wages, up to five thousand dollars a month, they must put up with crowded living quarters and work long hours. And worse, if married, they are expected to leave their spouse behind.

Most spend their time in Japan as true pilgrims, only passing through. They live in their own society and look forward to the day when they will have enough money to return to Brazil and set up their own business, buy their own house, or whatever.

While living in Japan may bring financial progress, it also brings social woes – in Brazil. According to a recent study, in 15% of the cases when a married man gets work in Japan, the marriage breaks up. One can't help but believe that if the marriage had been solid to begin with, the man wouldn't have left his family.

Be that as it may. The Japanese have done very well here in Brazil. They are seen in the professions, at all levels of government, and, of course, are the mainstay in garden farming. Why don't we have any Japanese in the church? They would make tremendous Holdemans. ▲



## The Atlantic Jungle

Ecologists love to write about how Brazil is heedlessly destroying its rain forests, bringing to the brink of extinction its exuberant flora and fauna. Obviously there have been abuses, the same as there have been in N America, Europe and Asia. But let's face it, if ecologists had existed 200 years ago, there would be a lot of hungry people on the face of the earth today (and ecologists would be an endangered species).

But not all is lost. Last October when the space shuttle Endeavour was over the northeastern state of Bahia, it pointed its microwave radar at a jungle area along the coast and snapped two shots. Biologists went wild when they were able to combine that data with what they already had.

Just what is the Atlantic Jungle? It is actually a series of forests – 456 in all – along the entire coast of Brazil. Some are large, others quite small. Notice a few interesting details:

In a 2½ acre plot of jungle, 450 different plant species were found, a world record.

In the Atlantic Jungle, 15% of all known species of animals and plants can be found.

More than 400 species of birds have been found in the Atlantic Jungle, more than what is known to exist in the entire European continent.

An important factor in the Atlantic Jungle is the fertile topsoil, hundreds of feet deep at places. This is a total contrast to the Amazon basin where there is almost no topsoil. The fertility of the Amazon jungle comes from the decomposition of enormous amounts of organic matter. Once this land has been denuded, in several years it is worthless as farm ground.

Interestingly, some of these forests can be found right next to the city limits of some of Brazil's largest cities, like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. A visit to Iguazu falls should by all means include a tour of the nearby jungle.

At the close of the last century, Emperor Pedro II became alarmed when he saw how the land surrounding Rio de Janeiro had been cleared and planted to sugar cane. He decreed that the hills be replanted with species of trees originally growing there. His project was so successful that today the Tijuca forest is considered one of the most beautiful urban green areas in the world. s

Brasília

## Surviving Without Inflation

Contrary to what all common sense would dictate, Brazil was a country prepared to live with high inflation. Fortunes were made by playing the inflationary game. But now, under a new set of rules, some of the star players are going broke.

Hardest hit in this whole story are banks, and both businesses and individuals who were umbilically attached to financial institutions when the no inflation crisis hit.

Just to keep the record straight, we do still have 2–3% inflation per month, but after living with 30–60% inflation, this to us is about the same as zero.

Right now there is a lot of weeping and wailing heard throughout the land, causing

one to remember Egypt on the night of the death angel. In its death throes right now is the Banco Econômico, the oldest bank in Brazil, founded 161 years ago. With 297 agencies and 810,000 clients, for a titan of this weight to go under is a solemn alert to everyone that no one is immune to the non-inflationary virus.

And yet not everyone is crying the blues. Banks, businesses and individuals who had the foresight to understand how a non-inflationary economy would act, today may not be swimming in money, but neither are they gasping for breath, desperately clinging to straws, as some of those who didn't have this vision.

Farmers who had debts in the bank are in an especially critical situation. As we have mentioned before, in an effort to stimulate farming, for years the government systematically subsidized farm loans. In a tragic lack of vision, instead of using these good years to prepare for the lean years, farmers sold their economic soul to the banks.

Today they are making bricks in Egypt, having to gather their own straw. It's rough. It's unfair. Farmers who financed machinery will end up paying for their equipment at least twice. That's mighty high interest on a 3–5 year loan.

Good old Moses, the government, is adamant in its refusal to step in and perform another miracle. In this the innocent are suffering with the guilty, the Israelites are being hit by the plagues just as much as the Egyptians.

Why this tough stance by the government? They realize (even though they can't say so aloud) that many Brazilian farmers are not farmers indeed. They are there for the loaves and fishes they could get from the bank. Keeping these non-farmer farmers afloat cost the government billions of dollars annually. Obviously many, many farmers will go broke, or better, are broke. According to the cruel rules of capitalism, this elimination of the weak is necessary for a sound economy. There is no doubt, high interest is being the death angel to many farmers who didn't sprinkle their door posts with their own money.

What about the Colony farmers in this whole story? There are three categories: 1) Those who no longer depend on bank financing. These are in good shape. 2) Those who use the bank sparingly. They're in a tight, but will survive. Wiser (and will shortly belong to group 1). 3) Those who are under a heavy debt load. Survival will take a real effort.

The Colony for some time has been looking for ways to diversify. Fish ponds are a possibility. A few have gotten into beef cattle, which are giving very good results. There is talk of starting dairies. (One small scale dairy is doing well.) Different ones planted potatoes this year, but it's too early to come up with any conclusions. We had hoped that Sadia would move into our area (see BN no. 37) and we could set up chicken barns, but that hasn't worked out. Every now and then someone talks about getting a local industry going, but it's something that doesn't get past the dreaming stage.

One thing has become crystal clear, on both a national and Colony level. Survival without inflation will depend on a new mentality. Different visitors from the US have looked our operation over and questioned if maybe we weren't getting ahead on a false economy. The answer is yes, we did get ahead on a false economy. And it's exactly here that the new mentality comes into focus. We must now adapt to a real economy.

But it can be done. And will be done. ▲

## Brazilians Write

By Cláudia Gold

### **How I Found the Way**

[We use Cláudia's maiden name, because this article was written while she was still single. Today she is Cláudia Neves. Some of you readers know her sister Valéria, who recently spent several months in the States.]

I want to tell about the most important time in my life. Five years ago, which was in 1980, I was 15 years old. I was a servant of Satan, because I constantly did things that weren't pleasing to God.

I wasn't acquainted with the Word of God. I had never read a Bible, although I knew that God existed up in heaven. So every night I would say the Lord's Prayer by memory and some other [Catholic] prayers. Through this I did develop a certain fear for God. Some times at night I would forget to say my prayers before going to bed. Then if I would awaken during the night, the only way I could go back to sleep was if I said my prayers.

Sunday is when different ones would go to church and I felt I should go to. But I would come home just as empty as when I went, and disappointed with what I heard. Through this God was trying to show me something.

One day a friend of mine invited me to go along to a meeting at Christmas time that the Church of God was having in the main praça – plaza, in town. I had other plans so I didn't even consider going. For some reason these plans didn't work out. One of my friends showed up and insisted I go with her to the meeting, so that's what happened.

I enjoyed it a lot, but didn't feel any special call. Time went by and my sister Valéria became interested in the church. She got converted and was baptized.

I was jealous of her. She was so dedicated in her Christian life, trying so hard to be faithful in a home where only she was a Christian. I came to the conclusion that she had been predestined to salvation [and I hadn't been], so I kept on with my old life.

Then something began to happen inside of me. I began to feel so empty. Finally I began to go to church and listen to the preaching of the Word. Now something was changing within me.

I considered seriously giving my life to the Lord, but there was a strong resistance in my heart. I wasn't willing to leave the things of this world. Yet I knew God was calling me. It was a horrible feeling to be torn between two strong powers.

I was full of doubts and didn't know myself what I really wanted. Then I began to learn how to pray with all my heart. I pled with Him to increase my understanding.

I remember how I was given some tracts, which I carefully read. One of them, Two Masters, tells how that no one can serve two masters.

On September 26 of 1981, a Sunday, I went to church and heard a sermon on the lost

and the saved. That is when I was certain I was lost and felt such a heavy weight for all my past wrongs. I had a beautiful opportunity right there to repent as I listened to the message, but I didn't.

When we left the church that evening, I was very quiet, deep in thought. I began to remember everything I had done wrong in my life. As we drove along, leaving the church behind, it became clear to me that that was what I was doing spiritually too. I was leaving the church, God's people, behind and losing the opportunity that God had given me to repent. I knew my life would go on just as it had been before.

It seemed that God was trying me and I simply wasn't able to bear the weight of all my sins. I said to Him, "I ask only one thing, and this I desire from the bottom of my heart, that I may dwell in your tabernacle all the days of my life."

At that moment the air became so pure. I felt so light. There was no longer a weight on my conscience. I knew that that night I would be able to sleep soundly, knowing that if Jesus should return I would be saved.

I was aware that I would have to face many problems, but now I knew that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit were on my side. ▲

## Remembering Out Loud

### **A Special Effort**

As I record the conversion experience of the different Brazilian members, it is amazing how many of them trace the first step to some event that required a special effort by someone.

Those of us who live here will remember the meetings we held in the town plaza, like the one Cláudia just described. We remember the meeting we held in an empty rice storage house on the main avenue. And especially do we remember the series of meetings we had in the sports gymnasium with Min. Dennis Unruh as the evangelist. A number of our members cite those meetings as the first step toward the church. Years ago we had meetings in a school auditorium, where, if I'm not mistaken, Maria Barros (see Missions) made her decision to get converted.

All of these activities took a lot of organizing, a lot of work. And yet it was worth it. Knowing this, why is it so hard to keep up the good work? Why haven't we done anything like this for the last number of years?

We talk of placing a missionary couple in Rio Verde. It might be a good idea. But let's face it, the most efficient missionaries so far have been the local congregations.

But it has taken a real effort. It has taken a lot of work. Is that why we've quit?

God's Word is powerful. Sometimes we try to take advantage of that fact and exempt ourselves from doing anything. After all, we say, if the soul is sincere, it won't be necessary to do a lot of prodding.

But look at it another way. God's Word is powerful. If it is powerful enough to convict sinners, it also is powerful enough to convict saints to get to work.

If you don't remember anything else out of this issue of BN, remember this: Most souls are saved by a special effort. ▲

## **This & That**

They're back. The folks from Brazil who were visiting in the US are all back home. Lynnette, Eldon & Bonnie Penner's daughter left for the US on July 31. She is teaching in the Cimarron School.

Sylvia B left for the US on the same day. After spending a few days in Kansas, she hopped over to Murray, Kentucky, where she is now teaching school. We hope she doesn't "chicken" out.

The Monte Alegre sewing tied a comforter for sis. Aparecida, Sebastião Passo's wife, who had surgery and spent some time in the hospital.

Jorge & Dalva Silva had a boy, Warlen Filipe, on August 5. I wish all you readers could see this couple, together with their little brood of children, come trooping into the church in town. Everything about them suggests they and their parents and grandparents were raised in the church. You would have a hard time believing that the Jorge you see is the same one whose story appeared in BN, numbers 22-24.

Two of the Monte Alegre staff members are on indefinite loan to the church in town: Min. Arlo Hibner and dea. John Unruh, and their families. Since Min. Mark Loewen and his family are spending some time in the States, that leaves only Min. Elias Stoltzfus, dea. Duane Holdeman and dea. Harold Holdeman at the Monte Alegre Congregation. It spreads things quite thin in a congregation of this size, but it's amazing how well it is working.

On August 6 the ministers from all three congregations were traveling, so deacons and Sunday School superintendents had to take over.

Pecans were shipped in from down south and sold here on the Colony for US\$4.80 a pound. They're slightly cracked, which affects the price, but not the taste.

The Arlo Hibner family paid the Leo Dirks family a visit at Planalto da Serra, Mato Grosso, and then went on to the Sorriso area, where they own a plot of ground. The families in Mato Grosso look forward to visits from the Colony, and especially from staff members, who can hold a service with them.

Elias Stoltzfus and Dean Mininger were to the Mirassol mission in São Paulo State for meetings.

Bradley, Myron & Martha Kramer's son, had his foot crushed when a trailer hitch fell on it. Doctors had to amputate his big toe.

João Souto's mother, who lives in Uberaba, in the state of Minas Gerais, has been in a coma for a number of months. She is at home and is being cared for by one of her daughters. João (Charlene Loewen's husband) has an interesting story to tell about

this. When he was still at home, his family went through some very difficult times. When things were at the worst, his sister, the one who is now taking care of his mother, got sick. They had absolutely no money to take her to the doctor, so day by day she got weaker. It was evident she couldn't last much longer. Then a neighbor came over and said he was going to take the girl to the doctor. According to João this neighbor was actually quite poor himself. Even so he did what he could and with the proper treatment, his sister got better. He concludes his story by saying, "It appears that way back there God already saw how much we would need my sister to take care of my mother and sent that neighbor over to help us out."

Dan & Clara Coblentz spent a few days in Mirassol, São Paulo, with their son William and his wife Miriam and family.

At different times we have reported on the contraband that is coming into Brazil from Paraguay. More and more articles are being published in our papers about this.

Everything indicates that the good old days are over for the contrabandistas. Things won't come to a screeching halt, but it will become increasingly difficult to bring illegal goods into the country.

There is a herd of capybaras living in the pond in front of Earl Schmidt's house. They are being quite destructive to the lawn grass.

Dean & Esther Lou Mininger left for Bangladesh on August 16, where they want to spend several weeks visiting the mission. We're anxious for them to get back so we can hear their report. Kendra Schultz is taking care of their children.

The ladies on the Colony have been putting up tomatoes, carrots and strawberries. A neighbor of German descent has been doing some garden farming. Right now the market is apparently flooded with tomatoes and carrots, so he is selling his for a little of nothing to whoever will pick them up on his farm. Another neighbor is raising strawberries. I understand that Antônio, one of the brethren from the Pirenópolis mission has a strawberry patch that is really yielding well. I wouldn't be surprised that some of his crop will end up in our freezers, like they have in the past.

Luiz Duarte and his family were out from Mato Grosso for a lightning visit. Someone from here who visited his place says he has built himself a really nifty looking wooden house. He pumps water from a nearby stream with a water wheel.

Lowell & Sharon Warkentin moved into Luiz Duarte's house on Walt Redger's farm. Since Lowell is renting from Walt, this works out real well for him.

Some more progress. Until now we Americans have been getting our I.D. cards at the Federal Police in Goiânia. That is where we get Brazilian passports for children born here. Now the Federal Police have opened an office in Jataí where we can do all this. Jataí is 80 km. From Rio Verde and Goiânia is 220, so it's evident where a lot of people will be going from now on.

Arlen & Carol Friesen, the missionaries in Acaraú, state of Ceará, had a little boy on August 9, Shawn David.

Frank & Doreen Mininger and son were here for a short visit. They need to return at least once every two years to keep up their permanent visas.

João & Charlene Souto's nine year old son, Leslie, was helping cut up meat in the community meat house. He had the unfortunate experience of losing his left hand in the meat grinder. In one of those little paradoxes of life, Leslie is having to cheer up those who feel sorry for him. He's going to make out fine. Like he says, he still has 15 dedos (fingers and toes) left. That's quite a few.

Jeanette Schmidt is giving sewing lessons to some of the young Brazilian sisters. More power to her – and to them. This is a beautiful way to share.

Elias Stoltzfus and Arlo Hibner are visiting the missions in the northeast and I believe holding meetings. They will be gone for several weeks.

When the rage for alcohol motors in cars was at its peak, only about 5% of the vehicles rolling off the assembly lines had gasoline motors. Today the statistics are inverted. Only 5% are alcohol, and obviously all of the imports come with gasoline engines. Hardest hit by this change is São Paulo. Since alcohol pollutes the air much less than gasoline, São Paulo is becoming dangerously polluted. As a stopgap measure, they have created an ordinance keeping 20% of the cars in the garage on any given day. This is being done on a rotating basis, using the last number on the license plate to determine who goes and who stays.

Stanley & Mary Schultz and Sérgio and Katrina Alves are paying the Leo Dirks family a visit in Mato Grosso. They plan on visiting the Sorriso area too.

I believe the Holdeman people would make good state troopers. The way they can pull a fellow over just because of a few little numbers they don't agree with in BN is really something else. Even Mininger that was out from the US for a few days had to turn on his red light and siren. The reason for all this can be found in BN no. 51, page 7, at the end of the first paragraph in the second column, where it says, "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." Apparently no one caught on that this is the kind of production that can be had over an accumulated six year period. But for those who enjoy their jots and tittles, try this one, "Good equipment, mixed with the sweat of the entire family, makes it possible to harvest 50 bushels of soybeans per acre, well above the national average of less than 30 bushels per acre." Big deal.