

Brazil News



No. 53
October 1995

Editorial

What Hath God Wrought?

With this prophetic message, Samuel F. B. Morse officially opened the first commercial telegraph line between Washington and Baltimore in 1844.

When the US government failed to show sufficient interest in this new invention to buy the patent, Morse formed his own company. And like some mammoth spiders, he, and others who purchased patent rights, began spinning steel webs that rapidly crisscrossed the eastern states, followed settlers on their march west, and finally linked the Atlantic seaboard with the Pacific. In 1866 the first permanent transatlantic cable was laid. Human woodpeckers, hunched over small transceivers, laboriously tapped out short messages in Morse code, linking the new world with the old. Indeed, it was through this pecking process that the veil separating continents, countries and communities was rent in twain, laying the foundation for what we today know as the global community.

On March 10, 1876, the first complete intelligible sentence was transmitted by telephone in Alexander Graham Bell's laboratory, when he called his assistant, "Mr. Watson, come here, I want you."

In 1826, Joseph Nicéphore Niepce took the world's first photograph from the window of his house at Chalon-sur-Saône, France. Though blurred, with a general lack of definition, it is nonetheless a recognizable photograph.

In 1877, John Kruesi, a mechanic, inspired by Thomas A. Edison's notes on how he believed a "talking machine" could be made, wrapped tinfoil around a cylinder which could be cranked by hand. By speaking into a small mouthpiece attached to a diaphragm, a needle following tiny circular grooves vibrated, etching minute "hills and dales" as it moved. Playback was obtained by running the needle over the recorded area and amplifying the vibrations. The very first recording was made by Edison himself, reciting "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

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During the final decade of the last century, an Italian youth named Guglielmo Marconi, began putting to practical use electromagnetic discoveries made by other scientists. He managed to send and receive signals over a distance of two miles. When his own government showed no interest in his invention, he went to England and in 1896 obtained the first patent ever granted for wireless telegraphy. In 1898, once again in Italy, he established radio communication across the English Channel. Three years later he bridged the Atlantic Ocean, transmitting and receiving between Cornwall, England and St. John's, Newfoundland. In 1907 the first regular transatlantic wireless communication was established.

The conception and birth of television are somewhat difficult to pinpoint, as they involve no one single name and extend over a period of time. It was during the thirties that the BBC in London and NBC in the US began broadcasting on a regular schedule, thus ushering in a new era.

Most of this occurred in approximately one century. Today we tend to sniff at the lowly telegraph. We fail to realize that through this apparatus, for the first time in history a message could be sent faster than a man or a horse or a ship could travel. It's true there was still a physical connection, a wire or a cable, but the message could now travel at nearly the speed of light, crossing the Atlantic Ocean in the fraction of a second.

The telephone sealed the doom of the lowly telegraph. No longer was man dependent on a few intercessors with knowledge of the Morse code to relay his messages. He could boldly, in his own home, any hour of the day or night, talk to his neighbor on the next block or section, his relative in the next state, or friend in another country. That is, if there was a wire or cable to transmit the voice.

With the invention of the radio, no longer were communications dependent on steel webs spun by human spiders. Ships at sea, aircraft flying above the clouds, could now maintain contact with shore or other craft. Wireless communications became a reality.

In a few short years the stage was set for man to do his version of the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes. With the ability to capture and store both sound and images, and then to retrieve and transmit them, it became possible for thousands, then hundreds of thousands, and now – with satellites – billions of human beings to simultaneously see and hear a given event, the Olympics, for example.

If peoples of the past could be given a demonstration of what is happening today, they would doubtlessly feel they were in the presence of gods.

But wait. It has been a hundred and fifty years since Morse tapped out his first message. The changes in the next 15 years will be greater than those of the last century and a half. If time continues.

The old saying, "Sure as death and taxes," should be revised to "Sure as death and computers," because after all, there are a lot of tax dodgers, but there are no computer dodgers. Not owning one doesn't remove anyone from its sphere of influence – an influence that will increase exponentially if time continues.

The history of mankind is replete with mergers: smaller kingdoms merging to

withstand a more powerful one, businesses merging to become more competitive, political factions or parties merging to obtain more votes. But never in the history of humanity has there been a merger with more far reaching results than that of communications with the computer.

To understand this merger, meet an imaginary character whom we shall call Web.

Web is a public speaker. He is often called to neighboring towns to make speeches. Since he must go everywhere on horseback, depending on the distance he must travel, some weeks he can only manage several speeches.

Then one day Web discovers that by standing on a hill near his home, his voice carries to all the surrounding towns. He is ecstatic. Now, by just walking up the hill near his house, he can make several speeches a day to a far larger audience.

In fact, he could speak all day long, except for the simple fact that finally he does run out of things to say.

Then one day a man knocks at his door. He states his business. He would like to sell Web three pills. The first would give him the ability to read as fast as he can turn the pages of a book, and the second would give him a photographic memory. And the third pill? He will no longer need to sleep. Web buys the pills and takes them

He now spends 12 hours a day “reading.” In a short time he is an expert on any and every subject you can possibly think of. And what does he do the other 12 hours of the day? He makes speeches, naturally.

People love it. By going to a higher hill, his voice carries over much of the world.

But now a problem arises. Even though a greater part of the population can hear him when he makes a speech, not everyone is interested in what he is talking about. People would like to consult him personally. For this he has no solution.

Until one day when the same stranger returns with a fourth pill. This one gives him the ability to communicate with tens of thousands of people simultaneously on a one to one basis. He buys the pill.

By now everyone knows Web. From where he sits on a mountain (oh yes, he moved from the hill to a mountain) he can share his knowledge with anyone who is interested. Soon he has tens of millions of clients.

So much for Web. Suffice it to say that today there are Webs doing everything we have described, and even more.

What will these Webs – computer networks, if you prefer – be like 15 years from now?

The computer, as we know it today, like the telegraph, will have a short life. The keyboard will become a museum piece and be replaced by voice commands. The TV and telephone will become computer terminals. A wrist watch will be both a telephone and terminal. A child doing his homework may well look at his watch and ask, “Web, what’s the highest building in the world today?” And in only a slightly synthetic, Web will immediately answer, “Bill, the highest building in the world today is . . . but in another two months an even higher building will be completed.”

It isn’t our intention to try to predict what all will happen in the next decades if time

continues. Suffice it to say that if a book were written today describing life 20 or 30 years from now, we would certainly label it as science fiction.

What is behind all this?

We believe that modern telecommunications came about with God's blessings ("What hath God wrought?"). But the evil one also saw his chance to bring to fruition the promise made in the garden, "Ye shall be as gods." The television set, which has captured not only the world, but most of Christendom also, will look like kindergarten stuff when this world is laced with an invisible web, instead of steel webs, like in Morse's time.

Every aspect of life will be controlled by this web. And then, when the camp of the saints is surrounded, the clouds will suddenly open and men everywhere will look upward and gasp, "What hath God wrought?" ▲

Life in Brazil

Now for the Good News

According to official statistics, 30 million Brazilians don't earn enough to buy even their basic needs each month.

And yet for those of us who live here and see what's going on, something doesn't add up. In the poorer sections of town where everyone supposedly makes only a minimum wage, a little over a hundred dollars a month, the houses obviously are small and devoid of many frills. Yet most of the houses will have a gas stove, a refrigerator and a TV, plus a blender and possibly a washing machine. That isn't possible with only a hundred dollars a month.

The September 6 issue of VEJA Magazine throws some interesting light on this subject.

The first problem is the IBGE, the federal organ responsible for official statistics. Their questionnaires are tailored for wage earners who are working in registered establishments and get a monthly paycheck. The second problem, possibly the biggest, is a Brazilian's apprehension of questionnaires and his incredible ability to say things exactly the way they aren't.

Now listen to what VEJA found out in a recent research on what they call the underground economy.

In few countries of the world is there a more vigorous underground economy than in Brazil. This has a negative side in that the underground, which is technically illegal, doesn't pay taxes. But on the positive side, it is upping the living standard of millions of Brazilians who would find the red tape too laborious to cut if they tried to set up their businesses according to the letter of the law.

The term "underground economy" is somewhat misleading. There is nothing underground or hidden about it. You see it everywhere. I mentioned several months

ago how people sell their contraband wares acquired in Paraguay. Also, many products produced in the fundo do quintal – backyard – are peddled this way. This they do openly in booths which they set up each morning on the sidewalks and in the plazas, often right in the middle of town. Unless they really make a nuisance of themselves, officials usually wink at their activities, especially if what they are selling was produced internally.

Economists who have studied this underground economy in depth believe that it involves between 250 – 300 billion dollars annually, above (or shall we say below, since it's underground) the official GNP of 530 billion dollars. One of Brazil's leading economists, Mário Henrique Simonsen, says "In a situation like this numbers are quite controversial, but it's evident that Brazil isn't as bad off as the official statistics would indicate."

In the study made it was discovered that only 2.8 million families make a minimum wage or less. The families classified as low income actually make an average of 748 dollars a month.

In the city of São Paulo there are 250 thousand vendedores ambulantes – people who sell their wares on the streets. This includes everything from popcorn and popsicles to clothes and perfumes. (We have a retired brother who sells popsicles on the streets of Rio Verde.)

There are those who have their own little business. Lindinalvo dos Santos walks the streets in a rich section of São Paulo pulling a little hand cart. He gathers 400 kilos of scrap paper a day, clearing a hundred dollars a week.

The underground economy has increased by 30% since the real, the new currency, came into circulation a little over a year ago. I have said it before, and will say it again. Finally, finally the poor people are getting a break.

Naturally, a lot of people hold down a regular job and make extra money by moonlighting. As their underground activity becomes more prosperous, their tendency is to quit their job and dedicate themselves exclusively to their own little business.

Brazil still has a long ways to go, but it's getting there faster than we expected. Let's be happy with those who are coming up in life. ▲

And More Good News

I BN no. 44 we reported on the outrageous price of having a telephone installed here in Brazil. The state owned Telebrás system, which until recently had a constitutional monopoly on telecommunications, was able to charge up to 2,500 dollars for the right to have a telephone. This gave the telephone a speculative value and turned it into a commodity to be bought and sold for a profit.

For those who were in this business, the curtain is rapidly falling. Barbosa, the technician who does the maintenance work on our Xerox copier told me the other day he is buying a phone for 500 dollars. That is still outrageous, but it certainly is better

than 2,500 dollars. It is expected that once foreign companies get their product on the market, it will be possible to acquire a phone the same as it is done in N America, simply ask for one and have it installed. As a Brazilian would say, “Que Deus te ouça!” – “May God hear you!” ▲

A Brazilian Story

by Mário de Moraes

For Lack of a Bank

They say that in the town of Itajubá, in the state of Minas Gerais, there is a rancher noted for his hard work and intelligence, even though he is illiterate.

One day his youngest son informed him that he was leaving home to try his luck on his own.

Knowing his son lacked experience to go on his own, the rancher gave him some strange advice, “Vá com Deus, meu filho, mas tome muito cuidado com os homens carecas.” – “Go with God, my son, but be very careful with bald-headed men.”

Don't ask me why this aged rancher had it in for bald-headed men. It must have something to do with his upbringing, but that's beside the point.

In order that his son would at least have a chance of making good, the rancher gave him 200 contos de réis, which was the currency back in those days and represented a lot of money.

Even though he didn't understand his dad's advice, the young man went ahead with his plans and traveled to the southern part of the state, where he decided to try and invest his money. Not knowing anyone, he stopped in a drugstore to get some advice from the pharmacist:

“Could you recommend a bank where I could open an account and deposit my money? I need a safe place to keep it until I can make an investment.”

“We don't have banks in this town,” the druggist informed him, but added, “I'll tell you who can help you out. It's the colonel who lives down on the next block in a large whitewashed house.”

As the young man headed out that direction, the druggist sent a boy running through the back alley to let the all-powerful colonel know about the visit he was about to get.

The following day the young man rode out into the countryside, where he bought a nice bunch of cattle. He told the owner, “We'll settle up at the colonel's house. I left my money with him.”

The local rancher looked at the young man wide-eyed. “You left your money with the colonel?” he asked incredulously. “Then you'll never see it again. It happens all the

time. Since he is the most important man in town, people trust him and leave their cash with him for safekeeping. When they go to pick it up, he denies that they ever left any money with him. Since he's also the delegado de polícia – sheriff – if you make him any trouble, you'll end up in jail.”

Everything happened exactly like the rancher predicted.

Some days later a dejected young man returned home and told his dad the whole story.

His first question, “Son, was the man bald?”

“Yes, he was.”

“Didn't I warn you? But that's OK. We're going to get your money back.”

Father and son were soon on their way to the town where the colonel lived.

“Now you stay back here,” dad told son, “until I've talked to the colonel for a few moments. Then you walk up and act all upset. Don't let him know we know each other”

When the young man walked up with rapid strides, the colonel was saying, “Seu Antunes, you can leave your 2,000 contos de réis with me. You can be sure they'll be safe in my care.”

At that exact instant the colonel noticed the young man for the first time. Realizing that if the disgruntled young man opened his mouth he would mess this big deal up, he put on a big smile and said, “This young man who just walked up can vouch for me, seu Antunes. He left 200 contos de réis with me the other day and now is returning to pick them up.” Looking at the young man, he added, “Now aren't you? Here, I'll pay you right now.”

The young man pocketed the money and left as rapidly as he showed up.

The dad said he was going back to the hotel to pick up the money and would soon be back. Instead, as can easily be imagined, the two were soon galloping out of town.

On their way back, the old man told his son, “Yep, it's like I always say, you have to be careful of bald-headed men.”

As they trotted along, the old man began chuckling to himself. ▲

Another Brazilian Story

The Fatal Flaw

We met in the mall today. I said, “Sandro*, I'm sorry about your boy. I just found out about it recently.”

He said, “Yes, today it's exactly 60 days that it happened. It's really rough.”

We have known Sandro and his wife Sofia and their son Ubiratan for approximately 20 years.

When Sandro, now possibly in his late fifties walks down the street, people respectfully greet him, “Hello Colonel.” People used to say, “Hello Capitão,” then

“Hello Major,” and then finally he was promoted to Colonel in the Polícia Militar of the State of Goiás, the organ responsible for maintaining law and order. He is now retired.

Sofia is an energetic, talkative woman. Deeply involved in community projects, she is a household word among both the rich and the poor.

Sandro began life as a poor boy. Through hard work and shrewd dealing he rose rapidly. Today, I am told, he has five farms and thousands of head of cattle. That puts him well into the millionaire bracket.

Ubiratan is adopted (as is his only sister – mentally deficient). Sandro was driving through a small town one day when someone offered him a new-born baby. He accepted. When he got home he handed it over to his wife, who had to go to the neighbors and borrow some milk to be able to feed it.

Sandro is a retired dentist, so he is also greeted as Doutor. By nature Sandro isn't a gentle person, and who should know it better than his patients.

Sofia is an interesting person. She talks about the times they were in the Estados Unidos, in França, in Itália, and you name it. She loves traveling.

Sandro likes to dabble in politics. His name occasionally comes up as a potential candidate for mayor. Recently he spent time in Goiânia working for the governor of the state of Goiás. He loves politics.

When Ubiratan, still a teen-ager used to come into my store, it could have been his dad. He spoke in a gruff voice like his dad, he acted like his dad, he dealt just like his dad. Both father and son would only buy after they felt assured they were getting rock bottom price.

Sandro & Sofia live in a mansion. An interior decorator spent months getting everything just so-so.

Sandro & Sofia should be some of the happiest people in town. But they aren't. They lost their only son, the heir, in whose hands they knew their empire would continue to grow. In the supermarket, Sandro put his hand on my shoulder and said, “Oh, it's really hard!”

Sandro has the reputation of being miserly. He used to follow his wife around in the supermarket watching her cart, replacing on the shelves items he considered unnecessary. And even though he knows perfectly well that if the check-out girls in the supermarket come up short on cash in their till at the end of the day, it is discounted from their wages, he will write out a check for a slightly lesser figure than his bill, toss it at the girl, and leave with his groceries.

Ubiratan was owing the equivalent of approximately 8 thousand bushels of soybeans. He declared up and down he couldn't pay this debt. He and his creditor met in a restaurant in a neighboring town, where they discussed the debt.

Being a military man, Sandro was used to throwing his weight around. Even though short in stature, on a moments notice he would turn into a hurricane, shouting, threatening, demanding. To see this back side of his character, all one had to do was try and collect a bill. People respectfully called him Colonel and Doutor, but not admiringly.

Sandro would doubtlessly have felt a surge of pride if he could have been present

when his son negotiated with his creditors. He gave them an ultimatum. Either they take some used machinery as payment of the debt, or just forget about it.

Sofia is a very religious person. In fact, a lot of her life revolves around mass, saints and everything else that goes along with that particular religion. Probably to keep peace with his wife, Sandro also shows a certain religiousness.

Ubiratan's creditor realized he wasn't joking. So, to not lose everything, he took him up on his deal and left the restaurant. In anything but a good mood.

The interior decorator agreed to work for Sandro & Sofia for one hundred dollars a month. Whenever they needed her services, she was at their disposal. After six months she asked for her wages and they refused to pay. Shouting, as usual, he told her he would pay one month's wages and that would be it! It was. So the girl went to law and the judge decided in her favor. Sandro felt sorry for himself.

Outside the restaurant Ubiratan's creditor realized he had been taken for a ride. He walked back in and began to protest. Ubiratan cut him short, "Either accept what I've offered or I'll shoot you." The creditor was prepared for this answer. He drew his own revolver, killed Ubiratan and wounded his dad-in-law, who happened to be with him. Snatching his son-in-law's revolver, he killed the creditor.

When Sofia heard what had happened, her saints apparently abandoned her. Others had to restrain her so she wouldn't jump out of the window of her high-rise apartment.

If there was one thing that was more important to Sandro & Sofia than money and luxury and possessions and religion, it was their son, who was heir to all this.

The debt which Ubiratan owed could easily have been paid. But it was on this kind of deals that an empire was built. Had the deal in the restaurant not gone sour, father would probably have felt all warm inside when son would have told him how he paid his debt with some old machinery. It would have been one more victory.

But then it was a victory too when the girl working for a hundred dollars a month in the supermarket had to pay part of his grocery bill, even though it was but a few cents. Or when he hoped to pay one month's wages to the interior decorator who worked six months.

Sandro was an excellent instructor, turning son into an image of dad. And that is what destroyed him. Although he believes it was the bullet from the creditor's revolver that killed his son. ▲

Thinking Out Loud

Are Bible Stories Going Out of Style?

We hate to admit it, but Bible stories are going out of style. With a deluge of interesting, well illustrated children's books on the market, and in our homes, Bible stories have become drab. Even in our children's Sunday School quarterlies, one sometimes gets the impression that the Bible story is merely an introduction to a more interesting illustrative story.

We can blame the Little Golden Books. We can say the Bible stories are so full of unfamiliar names. We can say that small children aren't able relate to things that happened so many centuries back. We can say all kinds of things.

Believe it or not, Bible stories are interesting and children love them. When children find them uninteresting, something has gone wrong someplace. It shouldn't be that way. But there is a solution, and that is what this article is all about.

There are two kinds of Bible stories: those that stand alone and those that hold hands. Stand-alone stories are Noah and the ark, David and Goliath, Daniel in the lion's den, Jonah and the whale, the birth of Jesus . . . They are packed with action, which is what children thrive on.

Many of the stories in the Bible must hold hands in order to keep a child's attention. In other words, each story is a chapter of a larger story. The Bible is a story, starting in Genesis and ending in Revelation – a beautiful story.

For children to see the beauty of Bible stories, parents and teachers have a very important part to play. Let's notice what they can do. What they must do.

Atmosphere. I have told before how my grandma Unruh would take us children on trips from Central to Western Kansas. On her rocking chair. Anyone who has traveled this stretch of road knows it's one of the most monotonous in the state. And yet when we were sitting on her knee, that road came alive. As we rocked from one half-horse town to another, she would describe what was happening. "It's beginning to snow!" We would snuggle down a bit deeper under the old red Indian blanket. "It's snowing harder! We can't see the road!" Then we would hit the ditch. Somehow we would manage to "rock" out of our predicament and be on our way. Then finally would come the long awaited moment when we would drive up on uncle Brinton's yard near Scott City.

When parents and teachers read or tell Bible stories, the child must feel a special atmosphere. This doesn't require a lot of imagination or some special talent, but rather a simple love for the story being read or told. A child can sense what you are feeling.

And thinking back to the time you were still at home, why were meals such a special time? The food was good, you say. Sure it was good, even when it was only heated up leftovers. What gave the greatest flavor to the food was the environment around that old kitchen table. Even today certain foods or smells remind you of home and you feel good all over. And lonesome.

The Bible is a story. When we would travel from Central to Western Kansas on a rocker, all the little towns along the way were interesting because each one took us closer to our goal. Children must understand that each story is a "town" along the way. They must learn to know and love the beautiful celestial city in Revelations, which is the end of the journey.

Bible stories must hold hands. They must be linked together into one long enjoyable story. There is no better time to do this than when the day's work is done, baths have been taken, and the children settle around their parents – yes, whenever

possible, both dad and mom should be in on this – and someone gets out the Bible story book. It's important that it be read from start to finish, rather than jumping around.

And then comes the best part, when the entire Bible story book has been read, at least once, and children begin requesting, “Tonight won't you read the story about...?”

Repetition. Our church libraries have different Bible story books for sale and I certainly don't want to place one above the other. However, having just finished translating Hurlbut's Story of the Bible into Portuguese, I must admit that it's a book I can highly recommend.

As I began translating I noticed that the author seemed to shy away from pronouns, constantly repeating the same names. My first tendency was to “correct” this literary deviation – until I realized it was the author's way of helping children learn difficult Bible names. And it works. In our evening devotions when Faith would read the stories, I was amazed at how, maybe a week or a month, or even a year later, suddenly a difficult Bible name would pop into my head. Repetition. Don't grow weary of repeating. That's how we learn.

The Bible is full of interesting facts. Once again I can't resist a good word for Hurlbut's. Mel, Paulo David's wife, is helping proofread the book I just finished. He told me that while she is proofreading, she will repeatedly call, “Paulo! I never knew this.” Then she will tell him of something interesting she just read. Hurlbut's is especially rich in little tidbits the author has included – the distance and direction between places, the kind of terrain, the customs of the peoples of those times, etc. Children enjoy these facts. They're interesting and make the Bible come alive.

Everyone should participate. There is no one set way to teach Bible stories. It's important that the story be read, but after that there should be a discussion. Some factual questions are good, like “What was David's dad's name?” “How far is it from Jerusalem to Jerico?” More important, however, are the “Why do you suppose...?” questions. “Why do you suppose David didn't kill King Saul when he had the chance? Do you think it would have been wrong?”

Once children learn there will be time for discussion, they will begin saving up questions. If you ever want to paint a beautiful picture, depict a family sitting in the living room discussing the Bible. When most living rooms in the world are being dominated by a TV set, the Lord must smile when he sees a family together enjoying His word.

Bible hour should not be rushed. This is actually part of the atmosphere we described in the beginning. The atmosphere should be relaxed. There should be no let's-get-this-over-with feeling. That is one reason why the evening is usually the most suitable time for Bible stories.

Now a few words on our children's Sunday School classes. I feel we have slipped. Increasingly teachers are relying on “other” stories and different kinds of aids to conduct their classes. It's true that for pre-school children this may be necessary. But

once children begin going to school, they can easily understand most stories and will enjoy a good discussion. As the message is the center of our services, the Bible story should be the center of Sunday School classes.

Greater care should be taken in choosing the teachers for children's classes. I'm not at all sure that the democratic vote is the best way of selecting these teachers. It would be nice if some other method could be used for the smaller children, to make sure they will have teachers who are prepared for the task.

Superintendents should sit in on the different classes, and especially children's classes. If they see the teacher is having difficulty, they could ask if she would mind having an experienced teacher coming in for a few Sundays and helping out. Sometimes just a few pointers might do the job.

How do you know when a Sunday School class is a success? When there isn't enough time to finish the lesson.

How do you know when Bible time at home is a success? When children beg, "Read just one more story. Please." ▲

Language & Culture

What's This All About?

Language and culture are closely interwoven. And it makes sense. If you can discover a lot about someone's character by what he says, why shouldn't it be possible to understand a people better by paying attention to their language? Especially to their idiomatic expressions?

In this new column, which we will occasionally publish, an effort will be made to give BN readers a glimpse of the Portuguese language. We have said before, and for the record will repeat, that Portuguese is a beautiful, expressive and functional language. Let's notice some expressions:

Quebrar um galho – literally, "to break a branch." Unfortunately I don't know the history of this frequently used expression. One Brazilian will walk up to another and say, "Pedro, you're going to have to break my branch today." Pedro will immediately ask, "What's the problem, Paulo?" (or facetiously inform him, "Only fat monkeys break branches"). Paulo, a traveling salesman, will explain his predicament. "My car is in the shop and I have to make a quick trip to Santa Helena (a neighboring town) to close a deal with a customer who just called me. If I don't go, I'll lose the deal." Pedro breaks his branch by loaning him his car.

To ask someone to break a branch goes beyond asking for a favor. It embodies the thought that "I've done all I can and still haven't come up with a solution. I've come to you because you're my friend. If you can help me out I will be most grateful."

It's amazing how being asked to break a branch makes one feel like doing just that.

Um dia sim um dia não – literally, one day yes one day no. It means every other day. They also say, dias alternados – alternate days.

De seis em seis horas – literally, six in six hours. When the doctor tells you to take a pill eight in eight hours, you know it's every eight hours. To do something once a week (as in Spanish) is de oito em oito dias – every eight days. I believe the Bible uses this system too of counting the day you're in. So if today is Monday, you must count, M, T, W, T, F, S, S, M, which makes eight days. Thus a week from today is, "in eight days" and two weeks from today is, "in 15 days." It's really kind of nice. When you Americans have to finish a job in one week you have only seven days time. We here have eight. Maybe that explains why Americans are supposedly such hard workers. They have one day less to get their work done.

Trem – train. Although there are few trains in Brazil, people, especially in the states of Goiás and Minas Gerais, constantly talk about trains. Someone will go see the doctor and tell him, "Entrou um trenzinho em meu olho" – "I got a little train in my eye." Trem is used like "something" in English. Mother will pull her little boy up short and demand, "What do you have in your hand?" Elusively he will reply, "A train." It is also used like "stuff." So it isn't unusual to hear mother telling child, "Go throw that train away." People from southern Brazil get a big kick out of hearing goianos (natives of the state of Goiás) talking about trains.

Estar no mato sem cachorro – to be in the woods without a dog. This denotes a difficult or desperate situation. Many of our woods used to have onças – panthers, and to be lost in the woods at nightfall without a gun or dog could be a terrifying experience. So when someone tells a story and says, "I was in the woods without a dog," things were really desperate.

Pimenta nos olhos dos outros não arde – hot peppers in someone else's eyes don't burn. This expression is used especially when someone shows himself insensitive to someone else's needs or suffering. It is the inability to "feel" what one's neighbor is feeling.

Quem não chora não mama – literally, he who doesn't cry doesn't nurse. This expression was probably inspired by a small child who expresses hunger by crying, thus alerting his mother that it's time to be fed. To really understand this expression, we must explain the colloquial usage of the verb chorar – to cry. It can mean to bargain for better price, to dicker or haggle.

This expression is deeply ingrained in the Brazilian culture. Greedy merchants often put exorbitant prices on their wares, expecting the buyer will haggle. And so that is exactly what happens. Prices can drop to less than half. Especially in more underdeveloped areas, haggling is a way of life. When being complimented on a particularly good deal, the buyer will simply say, Quem não chora não mama.

This mentality is rapidly changing. Many stores now have a set price and charge right down to the last cent. We hope that soon people won't have to cry in order to get a good deal. ▲

This & That

On September 1 the Cameron Goertzen family returned to their mission station in Goiânia after spending several months on furlough in the US. They came back with extra luggage, a tiny little fellow they call Kendall, born July 27. Kay Ann Dirks, their children's school teacher, also returned with them.

Since Cams are back in Goiânia, Daniel & Anna Kramer and daughter Fyanna have returned to the Colony.

Glenn & Elizabeth Hibner helped Roger & Sherilyn Hibner and Antônio Carlos & Mercê move to the colony in Mato Grosso. Luis Duarte came out the week of the 24th to move Jorge & Dalva Silva and children to the colony there. They're coming up with a mighty fine little group over there in Mato Grosso.

On September 3, when both congregations were together, Dean & Esther Lou Mininger gave a report in the Rio Verdinho church on their trip to Bangladesh. Beside being very informative, it makes Brazil look like a mighty modern place.

Ministers Elias Stoltzfus and Arlo Hibner returned from the Northeast, where they held some meetings in Acaraú and Patos. In Patos they had communion, which included the missionaries from Acaraú. They also had baptism for a young man named Vilmar.

We've got some mighty fine neighbors around here. And now we have another one, a cute little chap that Milton & Cindy Loewen have named Kyle Winston, born September 6.

Our grocery bills have gone down. Our gas bills have gone down. Our car is getting a much needed rest. But alas, the same can't be said of our phone bill.

September 7 is our Independence Day, our 4th of July. It's supposed to be a holiday, but it ended up being cleanup day at the Monte Alegre School. Also, the masons from the Colony, and a few others, went to town to help Paulo David add a livingroom to his house. I believe some of them returned the next day to finish getting the walls up.

The Brazilian Publication Board made a trip to São Paulo to visit some publishing houses and learn how books are published and placed on the market.

On the evening of the 10th Elias Stoltzfus gave a report in the Monte Alegre Congregation on the mission effort in the Northeast. These reports help forge a strong link between the home church and the missionaries and the brethren on the field. I feel this is very important.

I mentioned last month that Goiânia was projected for only a fraction of the present population. I read in the O Popular the other day that planners believed it would someday have 50 thousand inhabitants – and not the million plus of today.

The Stanley Schultz family spent the weekend of the 10th in Goiânia, visiting the church there.

Jair & Connie Costa spent the weekend there too and then picked up Corinne Koehn in the airport. She will be teaching in the Rio Verdinho School.

Every year 350 thousand Brazilians visit Disney World in Florida. They're good for the US economy.

Leonardo & Cláudia Neves have moved to Rio Verde. Cláudia's dad, Roberto Gold, is a professional baker. He and his family are now operating three bakeries in town. Leonardo is working in one of them. They're putting a lot of hard work into the project and seem to be doing quite well. We have a saying in Portuguese that O Senhor ajuda quem cedo madruga – The Lord helps those who get up early. They should be getting a double dose of divine help, because they have to get up in the wee hours of the morning to have their bread already baked shortly after daybreak.

Leonardo Neves and Sebastião Neves each bought 30 acres from Daniel Kramer. The land is sandy, but it is right in the Colony, near the church and school, near a good road and near electricity. Sounds like a good deal to me. And we look forward to having both of them as neighbors.

On September 12 school began in both the Rio Verdinho and Monte Alegre schools. The teachers at the Rio Verdinho School are: Maxine Loewen and Corinne Koehn, with Katrina Alves giving Portuguese classes. At the Monte Alegre School the English teachers are: Dave Kramer, grades 5 – 8; Karla Holdeman, grade 4; Veleda Loewen, grades 1– 3. The Portuguese teachers: Laura Costa, upper grades; Luciene Rosa, lower grades; and Valéria Gold, language classes to both Americans and Brazilians. The Monte Alegre School is bursting at the seams, so the social hall has been pressed into service as a classroom. Now the ladies don't know how in the world to have their sewing.

Juanita Lima went to the US for her sister Ruth Ann Loewen's wedding on September 17. The wedding was phoned into the Monte Alegre church.

Clara, Mrs. Dan Coblenz, Cristiane and Raquel Garcia, and Flávia Passos travelled to the Patos mission by bus – a 44 hour ordeal. They will be spending several weeks there. The missionaries there, Sam & Erma Coblenz, are Dan & Clara's children.

Stan & Kathy Holdeman made a quick visit to the missions in the Northeast. They went by plane.

The chicken pox are making their rounds in the younger generation.

Staven & Adeline Schmidt from the Pirenópolis mission were out for a few days. They brought 80 kgs of strawberries raised by our brother Antônio and sold them here.

On September 19 Errol & Karen Redger had a little girl, Londa Janae. And so, the Colony continues to grow . . .

We tried but it didn't work. Castelândia, a small town some 80 km. out on the highway that goes to São Paulo, had a bad wind storm that totally or partially destroyed 50 houses. A number of men from the Colony went to investigate to see if some cleanup work could be done. They wanted to talk to the mayor, but he was in Goiânia supposedly trying to get the governor of the state, or someone, to give them some kind of disaster aid. So they talked to his wife. She didn't seem overly enthusiastic about our proposition to help. The supposition is that they wanted things to look as bad as possible in case someone came out from Goiânia to investigate the disaster. The name of this is politics.

The Monte Alegre youth went to town one evening to sing at the rest home and for Karen Redger, who was in the hospital. They had supper at the Panelão Restaurant. ▲

Facts & Figures

Population

Demographically Brazil is a young country. Ten years ago the average age of a Brazilian was 18. Today, at 23, it is still very young.

This is one of the things that always impresses me when going to the US. Much of your work force is middle aged or over. In our supermarkets most of the checkout girls are in their teens or twenties. In our hospitals it's amazing how many of our doctors are in their thirties.

In the sixties the average Brazilian family had 6.2 children. Today this figure stands at 2.8, close to 2.1 which is considered zero growth. It is estimated that in the year 2005 the average family will have 2.4 children. Officials are totally at ease with these statistics. After all, Brazil has lots and lots of room for expansion.

Notice what Stephen Kanitz has to say about this in Exame Magazine:

“India, China and Brazil are the new economic frontiers because they're still young. China and Brazil are beginning to age, but they're still a long, long ways from suffering discomforts brought about by this phenomenon, which can especially be seen in the more affluent European countries. As of yet the younger countries have everything to gain by this aging process. This brings about an additional positive side effect, which occurred in Singapore and will repeat itself in Brazil. As people get older, they begin thinking about laying something aside for old age. At 18 no one has any money to lay aside for the sunset years. In fact, at this age people don't even think about it. But as they get older, they save more, thus increasing our monetary reserves, which in turn gives us capital to finance our country's economic growth.”

How has Brazil brought about such a drastic drop in its birthrate in such a short time? There is no single answer to this question. One solution encountered, however, is ingenious, not to say deplorable. One fourth of all births in Brazil are caesareans, which limits these women to two or three children. Needless to say, some doctors are more given to this practice than others. We on the Colony would do well to choose doctors who do caesarians as a last resort, and not as a subtle method of birth control. ▲