

# Brazil News

---



No. 55  
December 1995

## Editorial

### **The Yoke**

A yoke is to an animal what a hitch is to a tractor. It's a means of transferring energy produced to the equipment being used.

Imagine buying a new tractor and having it delivered to your farm, only to discover it has no hitch, nor any provision for attaching a hitch. For all practical purposes the tractor would be worthless. Unquestionably you would ask for your money back.

Likewise oxen without a yoke would never pull a plow.

Man was created an erect being, a position totally unsuitable for yoke bearing. Endowed with a superior intelligence, he was given dominion over the rest of creation, which also makes him a poor yoke bearer, for he was created to rule, and not to be ruled.

Sin, of course, upset this original plan. Having chosen to "be as gods," man set out to exercise this power, first of all by having dominion over his fellowman. The results were predictable. Cain slew Abel. Nations emerged, each striving for supremacy, for dominion over the other.

Before being exposed to sin, man's greatest delight was meeting with his Master in the cool of the evening. This was total freedom, for everything that God had asked him to do he enjoyed doing. And anything he asked of God, God was pleased to do. Never was man's will at variance with the Master's will, a truly blessed state.

Unlike the serpent that was condemned to crawl in the dust after the Garden calamity, man retained his erect posture. But according to the hardness of his proud heart, a yoke would be placed on his shoulders. Like blind Samson, he would have to lean forward and submit himself to a harsh dominion at the mill of oppression.

A yoke is a means of transferring energy. It is also a means of subjection. All too often in Old Testament history God's people were forced to bow under a heavy yoke of servitude, transferring their energy to heathen taskmasters. Then as they would cry out,

the Master would hear and bring about deliverance. The yoke would be broken from off their shoulders. Only a long-suffering God could put up with this interminable cycle of bondage and deliverance.

God knew that for the Children of Israel to prosper as a nation, they would need a form of leadership. This leadership would have to be both powerful and low-key. This would be found in the judges, who for all practical purposes were invisible kings.

It's true that some of the judges were quite visible, but they made it clear to the people that the power they exercised was not their own. In this sense they were truly invisible kings. It was a system tailored to the needs of a rebellious people. Basically the judges were religious leaders who interfered in civil matters only where necessary. Had Israel accepted this type of leadership, their yoke would certainly have been lighter.

"But we want a king," the people said. When Samuel complained, the Lord told him, "They aren't rejecting you as judge, but me as King."

Saul, the first king, was a prelude of what was to come. David, a man after God's own heart, showed what a king with a perfect heart could do. But alas, there was a dire shortage of such kings. Solomon, his own son, was not a David. His grandson, Rehoboam, made no attempt to conceal his concept of leadership: "My father [Solomon] made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

By choosing a king, Israel also chose a yoke – a yoke that repeatedly brought them into servitude, for as the king, so the people. Finally they ceased to exist as an autonomous nation, having to bow to other powers. Living in subservience to the detested Roman Empire was an especially bitter pill. These proud men couldn't even conduct their own affairs of state.

The heavy yoke worn during the centuries by God's people wrought a subtle transformation in their concept of the Messiah. His great work, they believed, would be to crush the odious Roman yoke. He would be a political and not a spiritual deliverer.

As Jesus began his ministry, some saw his miracles as an additional benefit, a bonus, to his principal mission of political liberation. The scribes and Pharisees regarded His miracles as a ploy to gain popular support so that He, not they, would be the new head of government.

Even today, nearly two thousand years later, the Messiah is still misunderstood. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." But contrary to the Jews who were under a heavy yoke and knew it, today people see themselves as free and the thought of a yoke to them means servitude.

It appears contradictory. Jesus says, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." But he also says, "Take my yoke upon you." Freedom with a yoke?

Before the fall, Adam and Eve were truly free, without a yoke. They served the Lord effortlessly. We believe that after the fall they were restored by faith in the promise of

a Messiah. But their service to God was no longer effortless. Without the Holy Spirit, they were denied direct access to the throne of grace. God had to be approached via sacrifices, rituals and intercessors. Yet through faith and obedience it was possible to be saved.

When Jesus was made man, He, the second Adam, also served God effortlessly. In all the temptations He faced, never did He feel a desire to yield. Never did He desire the way of the world.

When Jesus said that we could be free indeed, He didn't mean that we would serve God effortlessly like Adam and Eve did before the fall. Our sinful flesh, which doesn't become converted, makes sure that Christian life will never be effortless. The freedom Jesus offers is power to be victorious and to love victory. Then why the yoke?

A yoke, we have said, is a means of transferring power. We have also said that to be a Christian today isn't effortless. It takes a real effort to be an overcoming child of God. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, we become His servants, but the yoke He offers us isn't a punishment for past sins. It isn't a mark to remind us and others that we are Christians.

Jesus knows our frame. He realizes that we are no match for the evil one. Indeed, we can't control our own flesh. He knew we would need more power than is within us if we were to be victorious. So when Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you," He wasn't trying to increase our load, but rather to lighten it.

The yoke of Christ should never be compared with the yoke of the Romans or the Babylonians or the Egyptians. These yokes brought bondage. The yoke of Christ is a power transfer. Instead of having to battle alone, we now have access to His power in our life. And what power is this? The power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, to shun the yoke is to refuse His power.

You agree that a tractor without a hitch would be worthless. What do you think about a Christian without a yoke? ▲

## Christmas

by Mim Dirks

### **Can You Explain Christmas?**

You are asked to teach a class of children from all over the world. For convenience sake, they all speak the same language.

"Oh good!" you think, "I get to teach the Christmas lesson. Children always enjoy that story. And it's so easy to teach. I know it like the palm of my hand."

"Good morning, children. Today we are going to study the Christmas story. Who likes Christmas? Please raise your hands."

Only Sue, Pancho, Joãozinho, Heidi, Hans, and a couple others raise their hands.

Mohammed looks at Quinto and whispers, loud enough for everyone to hear, “What’s that?!”

Sim San wears a puzzled frown. Abishai looks a little worried. Olga looks completely blank.

The palms of your hands feel a bit clammy. This isn’t going to be quite as easy as you thought. It might be better to direct the questions to those students who know something about Christmas.

“Joãozinho, tell us how you celebrate Christmas in Rio de Janeiro.”

With a big smile, Joãozinho begins. “I like Christmas because I get nice presents. We have a big festa (party). Papai Noel (Santa Claus) rides up and down the streets in the back of a pickup, throwing out candy for the children. There are fireworks, music and dancing . . .”

Pancho breaks in. “Do you know what I like best? I like the piñata! But first we go to church and worship the holy mother Mary and her child.”

Heidi and Hans can hardly wait their turn. Heidi tells of gingerbread boys, snow and bells. Hans tells of St. Nicholas on his big white horse and his helper, Black Peter.

Since you asked how they celebrate Christmas in their country, you can hardly tell them to be quiet. With each new story your heart sinks a little lower. But there is hope. Sue. She’s from the Bible Belt. She’ll set the record straight.

“I like Christmas because my folks listen to my hints about what I’d like for Christmas. That’s exactly what they get me, even if it’s expensive. We put up a huge tree and hang it full of fancy decorations. We fix a snack for Santa Claus and hang up our stockings. I about wear out my records of ‘Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer’ and ‘Jingle Bells’. We go to church to see the crèche. It has Josph and Mary and baby Jesus in a manger. It’s pretty, but I’m not sure what it all has to do with Christmas.”

Quickly your mind goes back quite a few years to when you used to listen to your dad and mom read Bible stories. You heard them from little on up and just took for granted that all children knew them.

But this class shows that’s not the case. Suddenly you have a beautiful thought. You now have the privilege of telling the real Christmas story to these children. That will be enjoyable.

“OK children, I see some of you are acquainted with Christmas. But I want to tell you a Christmas story that is different from what you know. Pay attention. You will love it.”

With a smile and a note of victory in your voice, you begin:

“It was time for Jesus to be born . . .” Mohammed and Abishai begin to frantically wave their hands.

“Yes?” you ask.

“Jesus!” says Mohammed, “I know who he was. He was a great prophet, but not as great as our prophet!”

“No! No!” almost yells Abishai. “That name is accursed! My dad said never to listen to anyone who used that name.” With his face contorted, he announces, “I’m getting out of here!”

Once again your hands are becoming clammy.

Now shy Olga raises her hand.

“Yes?”

“Who is Jesus?”

“He is the Son of God,” you answer fervently.

“God?” asks the little girl from a remote Russian village. “Who is God? Every day in school we had to shout, ‘There is no God.’” Almost to herself, she adds, “If He doesn’t exist, I wonder why we had to say that.”

For this class the Christmas story won’t start with Gabriel and Mary. You’re going to have to go back and explain who God is. How else will Olga understand who Jesus is?

And Quinto the little Aztec boy. He has a vague notion of who the Great Spirit is, but nothing more.

Kim San, the little Korean boy needs to know too. His god is a hideous looking idol he worships.

Once you have explained who God is, then you can tell them about Jesus. Each one has a different need. Rich Sue – poor little girl – only knows Him as a babe in the manger. Pancho can only see Jesus in Mary’s shadow. Mohammed was taught that Jesus is not the Son of God. Joãozinho sees Jesus as an excuse for a big party. And poor Abishai, the little Jewish boy, doesn’t even want to hear the name. He too needs your help.

As you now prepare to launch into the Christmas story proper, you suddenly ask yourself, “Do I understand what this is all about? Have I too missed the true meaning of Christmas?”

Next time you see a group of children playing together, be they rich or poor, imagine what it would be like to tell them the Christmas story. The story of salvation.

Are you prepared? ▲

## Brazilian Brethren Write

by Tilde Caldana Batista

### **My Experience**

[Tilde is the wife of Luis Fernandes Batista and a sister to Valentina Caldana Bonifácio, whose experience was published in BN number 40.]

Some months back I tried to write my experience, but since I have had very little schooling, I got bogged down. Even so, the Spirit kept coming back, asking me to do my part.

But time went by and I lost courage. I began to feel I was a failure because of not knowing how to sing. I didn’t know how to give a testimony and didn’t feel at peace any more. This concerned me and I spent much time in prayer for a number of days, but nothing helped.

By now I was quite troubled. One night when I went to bed, I prayed God that He would show me what my problem was. I told Him I wanted to have peace and have the assurance of my salvation.

That night I had a dream. It was the third time I had this same dream. The other two times were before I was converted. Then I saw only darkness, but now I saw a light.

I dreamed that I was in a mountainous area walking on a narrow path that ran along the top of a cliff. Once I got out of these mountains, I came to a river. The water was shallow, so I waded across. I walked a little ways and then had to cross back over the same river. This time there was a bridge, because the water was deep. In my two first dreams, when I got toward the end of the bridge everything was darkness. Then I would awaken. But this time when I got to that point, I saw a light. Because of this light I was able to see that it was a beautiful river I was crossing. Then as I looked over to the other side of the river, I saw the most beautiful scene, something we never see on this earth. As I walked into this beautiful place, I was overwhelmed by a deep sensation of peace. I can't even explain what I felt.

I am a poor singer, but as I walked in this place I began singing the song Love Lifted Me [In Portuguese, of course], which I didn't even know very well. But now I had a beautiful voice. It seemed someone else was singing with me.

When I awoke from this dream, a line from the song kept coming back to me: A mensagem transmitir, aos que perdidos são. [Tell the story to those who are unsaved.] Just that quick I knew what the Lord was asking of me. He wanted me to write my experience, because in so doing I would be telling the story of what Christ has done for me. [Obviously she was thinking of having it published in O Mensageiro, which has been done.] I promised the Lord that I would be obedient. I came to the Lord in prayer and thanked Him for the way he chose to get my attention. I can see how important it is to be obedient when the Spirit asks something of me. God never asks something of us that we can't do. After this obedience, my peace returned.

My experience:

I was raised in a Catholic home. I knew nothing of the Bible. Even so, my parents did a good job of training us. We weren't allowed to wear worldly clothes like other youth did. So when I got converted, it wasn't hard to wear modest dresses. I'm thankful to my parents for what they did for me. Otherwise it would have been a lot harder for me.

Time went by. Three months before my eighteenth birthday, I got married. Thanks to God, our marriage has been a happy one. A year and four months later we had our first child. For six months everything went well. But then I got sick and my problems began. I would get dizzy and sometimes faint. I was in the hospital for a while and the doctors said they would have to do a brain scan. They found out I had epilepsy. During the two weeks I was in the hospital, my mother and my sister kept house for my husband and little boy.

After that my health just wasn't like it had been. Even so I wanted to do my own

## Brazil News

housekeeping, and God gave me strength for this. Quite often I would even go out to the field and do manual labor. Three years later I had a little girl and seven months later my husband bought a house, where we still live. In 1989 I had another little boy. My mother came to help us, but she had to leave because my brother had an accident.

I didn't know how badly he was hurt, but some days later I found out that he had been swimming in a dam. When diving he hit his head on a rock and fractured his spinal column. He was paralyzed and would have to spend the rest of his days in a wheelchair. I was almost beside myself when I found this out. But what could I do? It seemed like I just couldn't accept this. What I wanted the most was to help my mother after all that she had done for me.

So far as my own health problem, I kept going downhill. The only reason I was able to take care of my children was because God gave me the strength. But that was about all that I managed to do, except to wash clothes and cook. The house was always upside down.

This worried me. I didn't know what to do. At this time we had television. My mother told me about a missionary program that was apparently helping a lot of people. I watched this program for a number of days, but it didn't do any good. In fact, I got worse. I would go to mass, but this didn't give me any relief either. So I quit going. I quit going to church altogether, but I knew that I would have to decide what I was going to do.

The temptations got worse. I could see that Satan was bringing this on. He brought me right up to the gate of hell. One day, a few minutes after ten, my two children and I were having lunch. [It used to be custom to have an early lunch.] I had filled their plates and was feeding the youngest one. Then something very strange happened. I suddenly had a horrible thought. I could feel something circulating in my head. It was Satan! He said, "Put some poison in your food. Put an end to your life. You're sick all the time. You aren't able to do your own work and you make work for your husband." He hammered away with these thoughts.

It hurts me just to remember this incident. I got up and picked up both of my children, who by now had finished eating. I tried to go outside, but wasn't able. Satan had me in his power. I managed to walk several steps, but that was all. I held my children tight and began to call upon the name of the Lord: "Help me! This isn't what I want."

Then I began to weep as I thought about my husband and my other child who was in school at that time. What would my death do to my family? And to me? I felt like I was already in hell, condemned for not knowing His Word. Although there was one verse that I had learned: "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

I knew that those who practiced these sins would be condemned. This made me feel even worse. I said the prayers I had learned in the Catholic church, but they didn't do any good. I had never really said a prayer on my own, but now I began: "Help me, oh God! Oh God, help me! I am so weak. Only you, Lord, are able to help me."

I was still weeping, but now I was able to walk. I went outside. Everything was so strange. No one was on the street and everything was quiet. But I was certain that God was there. I knew it because He had delivered me from Satan's clutches.

From there on I tried to serve the Lord. But how? From that day on I tried to pray, but there were days I didn't seem to have strength even for this. I would kneel beside my bed and weep, asking Him to give me strength to find the right way.

There were still many struggles. God was helping me, but I knew that I had a long ways to go to find the right way. I tried, but just didn't manage.

Two years went by. My sister Valentina had gotten converted and was a member of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite. So one day she and a missionary couple [Dean & Vivian Penner] in Mirassol, São Paulo, came and paid me a visit. They were handing out tracts in my part of town, and I got some too. Some days later they came to my house again.

In the beginning my husband and I didn't like it. But we finally got used to the idea. They would always bring us tracts and O Mensageiro. Sometimes I would criticize what I read. "Oh, but they're Americans."

I remember one particular visit when Dean asked me if I was at peace with God. I told him I was. Why did I say something like that? Because I still hadn't felt the weight of my sins.

He invited my husband and me to attend their services. By this time another of my sisters had gotten converted and was a member. They had their meetings in her house and in my parent's house.

For some time my husband and I just read the tracts they left us. But then we began going to their services. It was there that I began to understand that God sent His Son Jesus to save us from our sins.

The first thing I did was throw out the images we had in our house. I saw how wrong it was to worship the image of a saint. I read in the Bible where it says: "Their idols [are] silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat" (Psalm 115:4-7).

As time went by, I began to understand what was wrong and what was right in my life. But I wondered what my neighbors would think if I became a Christian. How would they treat me afterwards? I was afraid they would all forsake me. Everything would be different. If my children grew up and didn't accept this way, then we would be a divided home. I didn't want this. I wanted all of us to serve the Lord together.

The only thing that kept me from getting converted now was the thought of my children. Our oldest son was 11 years old. He didn't like it when my husband and I discussed this way.

One day I was thinking about all this. I asked God to simply take my children into His hands. A few days later I had a beautiful experience. God spoke to me in a very direct way.



## Brazil News

On January 7, 1992, Fernando, our 11 year old son, fell off a horse and hit his head on the asphalt. He got tangled up in a rope and the horse drug him for a ways. He was hurt so badly that it looked like he wouldn't make it. My husband and I were beside ourselves. I promised God that if He would return our son to us in good health, I would be willing to serve Him. I didn't know it at the time, but my husband made the same promise.

When our son got out of intensive care, we felt the Lord was answering our prayers. I spent another nine days with him in the hospital and then we came home. But now my heart was heavy. The Lord had answered my prayer and now I had to do my part. I had to make a total surrender. I asked God to forgive me, but I wasn't sure if he actually forgave me. My husband and I kept on going to services. Sometimes the missionaries would come and visit us. He would read the Bible and we would sing together. Things seemed to be better.

Then one day when I prayed, God showed me that I needed to ask a certain person to pardon me for something that happened in the past. I tried a number of times, but didn't manage. But one day God gave me strength to go and confess to that person. She forgave me wholeheartedly and encouraged me to walk in this way. I felt a great peace in my heart.

One day I was reviewing my life. I felt a great joy as I remembered the many blessings I had received. Then I took my Bible and read in Matthew 11:28-30, where it says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

After reading these verses, I thanked God for everything He had done for me. I also read the 116th Psalm. I would like to copy the 116th and the 119th Psalms, but I know there wouldn't be room to publish them.

On the day of my conversion I read these two Psalms and wept a lot. I asked God to forgive me and I am sure He did. I felt such a great peace in my heart and a firm desire to walk in His way.

On December 14, 1993, my husband and I were baptized. Now we belong to the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite. Today I am very happy, even though I occasionally don't feel the best. But that isn't in first place. God and my salvation are in first place in my life. I have placed everything in His hands.

I pray for my mother and my brother, as well as for the rest of my family. I hope that some day they too can walk on this way. I know that my strength is limited so far as helping someone, but I can remember them in prayer and place them in God's hands. I also pray for my children so that they too may have a desire to walk in this way.

We have our trials, but we are happy. Every day we thank the Lord for having saved us from our sins. I hope that we can be a light to our children. I ask all the brethren to pray for us so that we can be faithful to the end. When we get to heaven, we'll see that it was worth it all. ▲

## Religion

### **A Clash of Religions**

According to history and by all statistics, Brazil is a Catholic nation. Today, however, this religious monopoly is being challenged by the charismatics.

The Pentecostals have been present since the beginning of this century. The Assembly of God church can be found everywhere. Smaller, less organized Pentecostal groups, are appearing like dandelions in an unmowed lawn.

This has been a real headache to the Catholic church. They realize the winds are no longer blowing in their favor. More and more of their members are adhering to Pentecostalism. To add to the woes of the Catholic church, they must now contend with the Universal church.

Founded in 1977, the Universal church is the fastest growing Pentecostal group in Brazil. The “pope” of this church, Bishop Edir Macedo, has not only proven himself a dynamic leader, but also a talented businessman.

Notice the growth of this church:

Since 1990 the membership has jumped from 900 thousand to over three and a half million.

The Universal church has 225 churches in 34 countries, including the US.

The tithes received from these 3.5 million members have made the Universal church extremely wealthy. It purchased a television station for 45 million dollars and owns a bank, plus many other properties.

Today the Universal church has six members who are federal congressmen.

What has made this phenomenal growth possible? Organization and dedication. Their churches are open from early to late. Their pastors are enthusiastic. With typical Pentecostal zeal, they stride back and forth on the rostrum as they preach their gospel.

But the big secret is in their particular religious specialty – expelling evil spirits. This they do boldly and with great fervor. Like a cat playing with a mouse it has caught, they manipulate the spirits before expelling them. Bishop Macedo will cause those who are possessed to get down on their hands and knees, in front of TV cameras, and bark like a dog, just to prove he has power over evil spirits. This kind of a thing draws enormous crowds. In other words, religion becomes an interesting spectacle.

Is all this just put on? No. But neither can one believe that it is done through the power of God. Their calling card is: “Come to the Universal church where miracles are daily happenings.”

A recent incident set the stage for open battle between the Catholics and Universalists. Bishop Sérgio Von Helder of the Universal church, took a statue of Our Lady of Aparecida, the patron saint of Brazil, to his church and in front of the TV cameras, kicked and hit the image (According to his accusers, 12 kicks and 10 hits).

This childish act was enough to bring to the surface the deep animosity that exists between these two groups. It has turned into a mud slinging contest that will have no winner.

It's distressing to see the importance some Catholics still attach to their images. They speak up against their clergy, even against the Pope, but it appears they still hold their images in high esteem.

You can expect to hear more on this clash of religions. The leaders of the Universal church are a bold bunch who don't run from a fight. And since much of the ire of the Catholic church for membership losses is directed toward them, a fight there will be.

Now read the following story, taken from the *Martyrs Mirror*, pp. 176-178, that also involves an image. But notice the difference. ▲

## **Eulalia Upsets an Image**

At this time there was a Christian maiden, called Eulalia, not more than twelve or thirteen years old, who was filled with such a desire and ardor of the spirit, to die for the name of Christ, that her parents had to take her out of the city of Merida, to some distant country seat, and closely confine her there. But this place could not extinguish the fire of her spirit, or long confine her body; for, having escaped on a certain night, she went very early the following day before the tribunal, and with a loud voice said to the judge and the whole magistracy: "Are you not ashamed to cast your own souls and those of others at once into eternal perdition by denying the only true God, the Father of us all, and the Creator of all things? O ye wretched men! Do you seek the Christians, that you may put them to death? Behold, here am I, an adversary of your satanical sacrifices. I confess with heart and mouth God alone; but Isis, Apollo, and Venus are vain idols."

The judge before whose tribunal Eulalia spoke thus boldly, was filled with rage, and called the executioner, commanding him to take her away speedily, strip her, and inflict various punishments on her; so that she, said he, may feel the gods of our fathers, through the punishment, and may learn that it will be hard for her, to despise the command of our prince (that is, of Maximian).

But before he allowed matters to proceed so far, he addressed her with these soft words: "How gladly would I spare thee! O that thou mightest renounce before thy death thy perverse views of the Christian religion? Reflect once, what great joy awaits thee, which thou mayest expect in the honorable state of matrimony. Behold, all thy friends weep for thee, and thy sorrow-stricken, well-born kindred sigh over thee, that thou art to die in the tender bloom of thy young life. See, the servants stand ready to torture thee to death with all sorts of torments; for thou shalt either be beheaded with the sword, or torn by the wild beasts, or singed with torches, which will cause thee to howl and wail, because thou wilt not be able to endure the pain; or, lastly be burned with fire. Thou canst escape all these tortures with little trouble, if thou wilt only take a few grains of salt and incense on the tips of thy fingers, and sacrifice it. Daughter, consent to this, and thou shalt thereby escape all these severe punishments."

This faithful martyr did not think it worth the trouble to reply either to the

entreating or the threatening words of the judge, but, to state it briefly, pushed far away from her and upset the images, the altar, censor, sacrificial book, etc.

Instantly two executioners came forward, who tore her tender limbs, and with cutting hooks or claws cut open her sides to the very ribs.

Eulalia, counting and recounting the gashes on her body, said: “Behold, Lord Jesus Christ! Thy name is being written on my body; what great delight it affords me to read these letters, because they are signs of Thy victory! Behold, my purple blood confesses Thy holy name.”

Then she spoke with an undaunted and happy countenance, evincing not the least sign of distress, though the blood flowed like a fountain from her body. After she had been pierced through to her ribs with pincers, they applied burning lamps and torches to the wounds in her sides, and to her abdomen, finally the hair of her head was ignited by flames, and taking it in her mouth, she was suffocated by it. This was the end of his heroine, young in years, but old in Christ, who loved the doctrine of her Savior more than her own life. ▲

## Remembering Out Loud

### **Sunday School**

This year I am teaching the Brazilian brethren’s class. You can’t ask for a better class. I am amazed at the depth of the thoughts that are often presented.

But it hasn’t always been like that. When that class was begun 25 years ago, we didn’t have Sunday School lessons. We knew almost no Portuguese and we had no Brazilian members.

But we had visitors. I’ll never forget a class we had on the subject of church and state. That Sunday we had some distinguished guests in church – Dr. Donald Gordon and his wife Helena, who founded the Evangelical Hospital in Rio Verde some 50 years ago. By the time we moved to Brazil, they had gone into retirement in São Paulo. Even so they made frequent visits to Rio Verde, and the Colony.

Why the Gordons didn’t go to an English Sunday School class, since they both were Americans, is more than I know. But there we were, trying to explain why the church doesn’t get involved in politics. Sensing our difficulty to express ourselves, they came to our rescue and explained very clearly why churches should become involved in politics.

They went on to cite examples of how their denomination managed to elect some federal congressmen and what a blessing it was. They told of all the good they were doing. We just sat there like a bunch of dumb ducks. But I suspect no permanent damage was done, as we have no congressmen in our ranks and no one is wanting to be the mayor of Rio Verde.

This was mild compared to other problems we had over the years when folks with

a chip against the church, or against certain brethren, would spell out their grievances. These were not pleasant classes. It was especially embarrassing when we had visitors who would listen in total bewilderment. About the only thing anyone learned in some of those classes was how non-resistance works, which, when you stop and think, is an important lesson.

Then there was the case of the couple in which only the wife was a member. Every time she would ask a question, her husband would quickly answer. (The class was mixed, men and women, back those days.) So she wised up. “I have a question,” she would say, “that I want some baptized member of the church to answer.” It worked.

## This Month on the Colony

### **Gray Igloos**

If you were to lay up an igloo shaped structure out of bricks, how would you go about making a perfect dome? What kind of tools would you use – other than a trowel, of course? Sound complicated?

Don't feel bad if you just flunked this little test? Until about two weeks ago, I would have flunked it too.

Pedro Maia, from the Rio Verde Congregation, is setting up some charcoal kilns (ovens – I'm not sure what you call them) on his little piece of ground that originally belonged to John Penner, about a quarter mile from the Monte Alegre River. When he is done, there will be a total of 10 kilns, each approximately 10 feet in diameter.

OK, what kind of tools does it take to make a brick igloo? A trowel, a short stake about two feet long with a nail pounded part way into one end, and a five foot stick with a little tin flap at one end. That's all. I want Paulo David to draw a kiln in construction for the next issue of BN.

What kind of material does it take? Brick, of course, and saibro. Saibro is gray clay mixed with fine sand that can often be found near our streams. The mortar is saibro mixed with water. No cement, no lime, just water and saibro.

On one side of these brick igloos there is an opening approximately two feet wide and four feet high. Little half brick holes must also be left at different levels all the way around. This is for ventilation.

The kiln is done. Now it must be packed full of wood. Any kind of wood – roots, stumps, short logs and branches – packed right up to the top.

When another piece of wood won't fit in, a little diesel fuel is thrown in and the fire lit. The door is quickly closed by filling it in with bricks laid up with saibro mortar.

Since heat goes up, the fire burns more intensely on top and smoke comes out of the top holes. Once the smoke coming out of these holes turns blue, the wood on top has turned into charcoal. The top holes are plastered over with a piece of brick and saibro. When the smoke coming out of the next set of holes turns blue, they too are plastered

over. This process is repeated until finally the bottom holes are shut. If the wood is dry, this may take 24 hours from start to finish. If it's green, it can take considerably longer.

Now the kilns must be left until the fire has gone out completely. If the "door" is opened while there are still some live coals, they will blaze up, ruining the charcoal.

Needless to say, it is all backbreaking, extremely hot work, especially the part of removing the charcoal when the brick walls of the kiln are still hot.

This charcoal bears no resemblance to the briquettes you use in N America. It's shape, when coming out of the kiln, is just about like when it went in, except that now it is black and brittle.

After it has been broken into smaller pieces, it is bagged, loaded on trucks and hauled to steel mills down south. The reject stuff is sold locally to fellows like me.

Whenever you come to Brazil, take a look at Pedro's charcoal kilns. ▲

## Language

### **Got Any Tagled Locks?**

The other day Dennis Kramer stopped by especially to give me a can of pressurized lubricating oil, called GT 2000. He said something about the Becker habit of using cockroach spray to repair washers and bad complexions, but then he got to the point. He wanted me to see the English translation of the instructions. Here they are:

#### **GT 2000 NO RUST**

**The periodical use will give a complete protection against rust, lubricating all the metallic parts exposed on humidity of air and corrosion.**

#### **Applications:**

##### **On car:**

**Unfast all the jamed parts like screw and nuts. Take creaks of the pedals, doors and cowl away. Repel the water of the distributers and of all the electric system.**

##### **In house, in office and in industry:**

**Lubricate and protect all the eletric houses equipments, motors, rollong matting, motocicles, skates and guns. Desentagle locks, hinges, sewing machines, typing machines, bicycles, etc. Advisable on conservation of tools.**

##### **How to use:**

**Pulverize on a distance of 15 cm, directing the jet to the wished place. Adopt the lengther to an economic use in areas of difficult acess.**

**Cautions:**

**This product is inflammable and bottled under pressure. Keep on temperatures under 50°C. Do not drill the can and do not throw it on incinerator. Do not use it on electric equipments that are still working. Take care of the eyes during the application. If they are reached, wash with current water and ask for medical help if you don't feel well. Keep away from children.**

## **This & That**

Some time ago I mentioned that WalMart was moving into Brazil. This is going to be an interesting one to watch. They plan on investing a billion and a half in the next five years. Their initial strategy is to build huge malls right alongside existing or projected Carrefour malls in the state of São Paulo. Carrefour, a French chain, is doing a landslide business in Brazil, with stores in most major cities. When will Goiânia get its WalMart? Give them several years time.

Since the Monte Alegre School now has one classroom in the church social hall, sewing is being limited to afternoons. So on Nov. 15, a national holiday, the ladies took advantage of the day and had all day sewing.

Pedro & Vanderlúcia Maia moved to their little place near the Monte Alegre River (See Gray Igloos).

Daniel & Anna Kramer and dau. Fyanna, and Glenn Hibner and dau. Julie, spent a few days in Mato Grosso.

Priscilla Hibner and children went to meet Arlo at the airport in Goiânia when returning from the US. They spent the weekend with the little church in Pirenópolis.

John & Sheila Kramer and children are here from Mato Grosso. They will be spending some time here helping out in their family farming operation.

On November 20, there was a report at the Monte Alegre Congregation on the M&D meeting in Montezuma. The Rio Verdinho Congregation also attended. The Rio Verde Congregation had their report on the 24th. Staff members who were to the meeting: Richard Mininger, Dean Mininger, Elias Stoltzfus, Arlo Hibner, Duane (& Frances) Holdeman, Harold Holdeman

On the 21st, Daniel & Anna Kramer and Fyanna left for the mission in Acaraú to take Arlen & Carol Friesen's place, who are going on an extended furlough. On the 19th the Kramers had a farewell dinner at the Monte Alegre social hall.

On the 21st, Frank Coblenz returned to Patos after spending some time on the Colony. His grandmother, Rosella Yoder, went with him and plans on spending some time there.

Remember the little article about people on the Colony planting potatoes, hoping it might turn out to be a new option for making money? Well forget it. It's not a matter of who made the most, but who lost the least. There's a pretty good chance potatoes have gone the way of cotton.

## Brazil 16 News

John & Joan Unruh and Dean & Esther Lou Mininger, spent the weekend of the 25th in Pirenópolis.

The government has taken a definite step toward cutting down the enormous amount of goods, both legal and illegal, coming into Brazil via Paraguay. Each sacoleiro (tourist) crossing the border could bring US\$250 worth of merchandise back duty free. That amount has been cut back to \$150. Either people will have to cross more often, or decide it just isn't worth it and quit. The folks on the Paraguayan side of the border aren't especially pleased with this new regulation.

J.C. Penny is trying to buy out Mesbla, a national all-purpose store found in most of our malls.

VEJA published a little preview on Bill Gates' book, *The Road Ahead*. It would be interesting if it was science fiction. Unfortunately, it isn't. (Bill Gate is the "pope" of computer software.)

There's a lot of waist high corn around. Most of the soybeans are planted and up. For a little while it looked like we wouldn't be getting enough rain, and then suddenly farmers feared they would be getting too much. So far the crops look real good.

Alma Martin and Marlys Wicke are visiting their relatives in Brazil.

Staven & Adeline Schmidt, the missionaries in Pirenópolis, have a phone now. The number, including the international code for calling from the US: 011 55 62 331 1552.