Brazil News

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Editorial

What Only a Letter Can Do

The telephone is a wonderful invention and we can't imagine what life would be like without it. We lift up the receiver, punch in a few numbers, and seconds later have our friend or loved one on the phone, maybe down the street, maybe in the next town, in the next state, or even half way around the globe. Why sit down and laboriously write a letter with this kind of communication just seconds away? Do we even need the letter anymore?

Indeed we do! Read on and find out what only a letter can do.

The letter, the kind of letter we're thinking about, is more than a narration of facts. It's more than chat or the latest news. It's the communication of the soul.

Has someone ever begun weighing on your mind? As you went about your work, that person just tagged along. As you went to pray, there he was, so you included him in your petitions. Maybe it's someone whom you know very well. Or maybe hardly at all. In fact, it may be someone of whom you have merely heard. But for some reason, as this person comes and goes in your thoughts and prayers, a bridge is built.

Have you ever experienced something like this? Have you ever felt bewildered by a bridge that suddenly appeared in your life? Way down in your soul you feel a desire to walk over this bridge, but don't know how. You are aware that if you call the person, you won't be able to express what you really feel. Because of distance, a personal visit may be impossible. Or like with a phone call, you might not know how to transmit your feelings.

Why not write a letter?

I'm not a letter writer, you object. But you can be.

This kind of a letter, the kind that is written by your soul, doesn't need to be long. It may just be several sentences long, just one short paragraph. In fact, it may be: "Dear… I have been thinking about you lately and want you to know how much I appreciate you. I pray for you every day. Love…" If that is the message that is resting on your soul, then these few words are a complete letter. They are the bridge from soul to soul.

A soul letter doesn't depend on an elegant writing style, on flawless grammar or spelling. It doesn't depend on beautiful penmanship. Often a short, laboriously scrawled letter impresses the reader more than an errorless message. The sweat drops attest to the fervency of the writer.

For some, letter writing comes easy. If that is your case, what should you write? We have said that the message you have to transmit is a bridge. But bridges have an approach. So include an approach in your letter. Tell the person to whom you are writing what it was that caused you to think about him or her. If you remembered some interesting times you had together, maybe when younger, mention some of them. Tell what led your thoughts up to what is weighing on your soul. Be open. Don't be so vague that the reader has to spend a lot of time trying to figure out what you are trying to say. If you're afraid to say it, then don't.

Why are there times that a letter will do what a phone call, or even a personal visit, are unable to do? You, the writer, have the advantage of being able to carefully sort out your thoughts, and through meditation, express exactly what you are feeling. The reader, on the other hand, can take the letter received and read and reread it. A day later, or a week or month later, he can again reread what you have written. The words you have written will truly be a bridge, joining your souls.

Does it pay to write a letter?

In the last issue of BN, there was a report on a mission trip to Acaraú. It was mentioned that a young sister, who for a long time had been in the valley of decision, had decided to give her heart to the Lord after receiving a letter from someone in N America who knew her—doubtlessly a former missionary.

That letter was what it took to tip the balance. It was a bridge between two souls that in turn brought down a stairway from heaven.

There are letters of encouragement, letters of comfort, letters of concern, letters of simple friendship. There are letters of gratitude for favors received.

As a general rule, when you write a letter you should not ask for an answer. Don't make the reader feel like he or she is under any obligation. If there is to be an answer, let it be spontaneous.

But folks, no one can walk over a bridge that isn't built and no one can get any good out of a letter that isn't written. When someone begins to weigh on your soul, pray. Meditate. If the weight remains, consider writing a letter. It may do what nothing else can do. It may make an eternity of difference. ▲

Brazilian Stories

By Anna Kramer

Run Over By a Ship

Acaraú, Ceará is a fishing town on the northern coast of Brazil, about 230 km. west of Fortaleza. However, it is about seven kilometers from the ocean and the Acaraú River on the west side of town, where the fishing boats have access to the ocean on

high tide. Many of the locals were born and raised here. Their horizon is limited to the vast, endless deep sea. Most of them are fishermen by trade.

Many of the fishing boats used by these people are approximately 36 feet long and 10 or 12 feet wide, with a cabin about 6' x 10', with three bunks on each side. They use a MWM 4 cylinder diesel motor to power these boats. It was on a boat of this description that the men in this story suffered shipwreck.

This is the story that Raimundo Peres, age 46, father of eight children and a resident of Acaraú, told to Daniel and me:

August 6, 1996 was a normal day for us fishermen as we left the harbor for another 18 to 20 day trip. I have been a fisherman since about 16 years of age and have worked out of different harbors, including Fortaleza.

I knew the water was dangerous, but being a good swimmer, I wasn't afraid. Fishing and the challenges that go with it made up my life. When we returned from a fishing trip, I was soon in a bar drinking. For several days I would stagger around on the streets, totally drunk. This caused my wife and family a lot of grief and they were ashamed to be seen with me when in this condition.

Soon I would return to the ocean, so my family saw very little of me. I must say that I have a wonderful family and they did everything they could to help me. So about three months ago I decided this kind of life couldn't go on. I quit drinking. Life has been much better since then and my family is happy. I really believe it was God who helped me overcome this bad habit.

On August 20, after having been on the ocean for 15 days, we had a nice catch. We would fish for two more days before returning to shore. By now we had about 450 lobsters (150 kilos) and around 30 kilos of fish. May, June, July and August are the four months of lobster fishing, and although we were fishing for lobster, we also had a nice catch of fish, including a fish I was going to take home to my friend Daniel Kramer.

In the late afternoon we cleaned the day's catch, put them in the ice box and prepared for the night. We had already all been in bed sleeping, when about 10:00 p.m., the captain awoke and said he dreamt a ship ran over us. I was also awake, so he told me he was going on deck to check a line he left baited in the water. As he opened the door and stepped outside, to our horror and surprise, there sure enough was a big ship coming upon us. There was no time to start the motor or get out of the way.

When we drop anchor for the night, the boat remains west of the anchor, facing to the east, which puts it into a favorable position to ride the waves. The ship came from the southwest. Had it hit us broadside, our boat would have been shattered and we would have sunk immediately. What saved us was that it was a glancing blow.

By this time I was up and on deck. I hurriedly cut the anchor rope so we wouldn't be drug along by the ship. The impact of the hit threw the captain against the ship and then back onto the deck. He was badly bruised. Our boat was also badly damaged and began to sink. The other four crew members crawled out of the cabin onto the now submerged deck.

Our boat had two fuel tanks, and since our fishing trip was about over, they were practically empty, so they served as floats to keep our boat from sinking. But even so the deck was under water.

The large ship continued on its way, never knowing it had hit a fishing boat. It looked like an enormous apartment building slowly going by with its many rows of windows and lights. It seemed like a long time before it was finally past.

There was nothing we could do except hang on to our swamped boat until morning. In the meantime wave after wave rolled over us. When morning came, we hoped and prayed and watched for someone to come by and rescue us, but no one showed up. We saw a few boats in the far distance, but they didn't see us. Also, during that long day two more big ships went by, but thank God they didn't come toward us.

One of the fuel tanks sprang a leak and began filling with water. About noon the stern began to sink. Soon the boat was standing on end in the water, with only the bow above the surface. Was our whole boat going to sink and were we going to go down with it?

We all six hung on to the bow, on to a rope and on to each other. We tried to keep our courage up by saying that God would surely send someone to rescue us.

But that day passed with no rescue, with no water to drink and no food. Once the youngest member of the crew, a lad of 16, said he was hungry and thirsty, but we all encouraged him to pray and ask God to rescue us, rather than to think about food and water. We chewed on black plastic to keep our jaws from locking up.

By ten o'clock that evening we were becoming desperate, but what could we do? I thought about my wife and children and prayed for courage to hang on. Suddenly I saw the light of another fishing boat off in the distance. I told the rest of the men that I was going to try and swim to that boat. At first they didn't want me to go. They thought we ought to stay together. I told them this was our only hope. I also told them that they could stay and wait, but when they saw I was determined to go, they all decided to go too.

They were all hanging on to plastic water jugs and one had a small empty propane bottle. I started swimming in the direction of the light. I called back to my buddies and they answered. But after about the fourth time I called them, they didn't answer anymore. A fear gripped my heart. Had the sharks gotten them? would they get me too? I prayed again and asked God for courage and strength.

Soon I saw some dolphins swimming around. This made me feel better because I knew that dolphins and sharks aren't usually seen together.

As I would ride the crest of a wave, I'd look for the light, then swim as fast as I could in that direction, rest a bit and repeat this procedure each time I rose up high enough to see the light.

By four o'clock, when the morning star appeared, and I still hadn't reached the boat, I knew I had to get there before daylight, or I wouldn't be able to see the light anymore. So again I prayed for strength and swam on.

When daylight came at about 5:15, I was in sight of the boat. When the cook came

to the deck to begin the day and prepare breakfast for the men, he saw me in the water. Immediately they threw a rope and helped me aboard. As I hit the deck, I fainted, but they soon revived me. After giving me milk to drink, they asked me if there were more men out there. I said, yes, there were five more men in the same direction I had come from, floating on jugs. Then they helped me to bed and I fell asleep.

They went in search of the others and found them. When I awoke, we were all six on the boat. They then radioed back to the company that we work for and told of our wreck. They said we were all alive, although some of us were in bad condition, and that we would be getting in before the next morning.

We then started for land and arrived home at one o'clock in the morning on August 23. My wife and daughters were overjoyed to see me. My eyes were so red and sore I could barely see and my throat so sore I could only swallow milk for several days. My chest muscles ached from swimming so long, but I thanked God I was home.

The captain was taken to the hospital, where he remained for several days before being released. We all suffered much from the bruises and salt water, but have all recovered.

The company sent three boats in search of our wrecked one and found it. They towed it to the harbor. The only thing that was salvageable was the motor. Three days after I was home, a friend brought me my watch. It had been found in the boat. It is still working.

I feel it is a miracle and only by God's help that I am alive. My wife and daughters do not want me to return to the ocean, and I admit I have a little fear, but I've been a fisherman all my life and don't know what else to do. ▲

By Mário de Moraes

Honest Abílio

It's amazing how that honesty is many times our best defense. That is the case in this story of Abílio César de Almeida, that took place many yesterdays ago in the lovely city of Salvador (state of Bahia).

Before I get started on my story, I want to tell you a little about Abílio. A baiano (someone born in the state of Bahia), he is honest right down to the marrow of his bones. One hair from his beard is worth more than any document that you can have notarized. It's hard to find someone like him around anymore. The only reason I don't say that he's the only one left, is that I have found that there are exceptions to all rules.

Abílio told this story to Almir, his dad-in-law, who is also an A-1 reporter. All this happened one day while Abílio was walking to his daughter's house in an area of town known as Queda Brusca.

"Watch it there! You almost stepped on a diamond ring," a young man said to Abílio. Looking down on the sidewalk, he saw the ring too. The stone glittered in the sun.

After Abílio picked up the ring, the young man came up closer and examined it with the older man. With the large stone, it was an impressive looking piece of jewelry.

"That sure does look like a diamond to me," was the young man's comment. "And the ring itself seems to be pure gold."

"It does, doesn't it," was Abílio's only answer. At that time he was working for the post office.

"I'm sure that's a genuine diamond," the young man insisted. "I've seen diamonds before."

"You might be right," was all Abílio would answer.

"And if it is, it's worth a fortune!" exclaimed the young man.

"I'm sure I don't know," was Abílio's rejoinder.

If Abílio would have been the suspicious type, he would have noticed the strange glint in the young man's eyes when he made his suggestion.

"I'll tell you what. It's plain to see that you're an honest man. Since we sort of found this ring together, I would say that it belongs to both of us. So, since you're the older of us, go and sell the ring and we'll split the money 50/50. Does that sound fair enough?"

Before Abílio could answer, he continued.

"But there's just one problem. I'm flat broke. You look like you're not hurting financially. Since I could use a little money right now, how about paying me some before you sell the ring? We can set a place to meet later on and then you can give me the rest of the money. How about meeting at two o'clock this afternoon?"

This is where Abílio's honesty showed up.

"Nothing doing. You're the one who saw the ring first, so it's yours."

"No, you picked it up, so it belongs to you," argued the young man.

When Abílio tried to hand it to the young man, he backed away. "OK then, it's ours."

But Abílio would hear nothing of it. "It's yours! Here take it!"

Seeing there was no point in arguing with Abílio, the young man, obviously upset, turned his back on the older man and began walking down the street in rapid strides.

When Abílio got to his daughter's house and told his son-in-law what had happened, he was in for a surprise. Almir told him that that whole thing was a trap. If it wouldn't have been for his honesty, he would have ended up with a worthless ring—and considerable less money in his pocketbook.

[Just a word on this. This trap, known as the conto do vigário, has innumerous variation, but the basic element is always the same. Someone just finds out that the lottery ticket he purchased is a winner. All he needs to do is go to the bank with it and get his money. But he just found out that his youngest child has been involved in an accident in another town. He must leave immediately and won't have time to go to the bank to cash the ticket. If the person will pay him only a fourth or half of what the ticket is worth, he can just have it. By now he may be wiping tears. It's all a sham. Whatever he gets out of the deal is clear profit, since the ticket is worthless. It's amazing how often it works. The police are really rough on people they catch pulling this stunt.] ▲

Updating the Past

By Joe Baize

Our Life's Story

Introduction by the children

Our dad was born July 12, 1905, near Moundridge, Kansas, to John & Nettie Baize. He was a hard-working man who earned his living by the sweat of his brow. A usual workday for him was rising early, getting two or three boys up to help milk cows and doing all the chores that go with a dairy.

After breakfast he would go to work for someone else, putting in a nine-hour day, usually taking a packed lunch.

In the evening it would be chore time again. Then it would be supper time, when the family would gather around the table to all eat together. Quite often after dark he would go outside to make sure gates and barn doors were closed and the livestock OK, whistling a cheery tune all the while.

By nine or nine thirty, he was ready for the old chair in the living room, where again the family gathered together. He would take the Bible, read a scripture to the family, taking time to explain the meaning to the children. Then, as we all knelt in prayer, Dad would thank the Lord for the days blessings and ask His protection and care for the night. This gave us all a feeling of security, and each one could go to bed and rest. This was a typical day in the fifties.

Dad will now tell his story:

My mother and father were born and raised in southern Russia, close to the cities of Ostrog and Karlswalde. Mother married at the approximate age of 18 to a man named Pete Unruh. This marriage was not exactly what Mom wanted, but a minister of their church talked her into it. She had two children, both born in Russia. The first one died in infancy and then a second child was born named Susie.

After this the Mennonite people of this country lost their religious freedom and were being drafted for the war. My mother's parents, together with the older boys at home, decided to leave Russia for conscientious reasons, mainly objection to war. My mother and Pete Unruh got money together for the trip by selling everything they had, and also with help received from America. The trip cost between four and six hundred dollars.

They had to sneak out of Russia. This was done with the help of local Jews. They left at night with their bundles on their backs and carrying the children. They left the lights burning so the Russians would not suspect they were leaving. The Jews made a living by leading these people out. Whatever was left in the homes belonged to them. They were led through a swampy forest on foot. No one could make any noise. By morning they were in Germany.

They missed a passenger ship, so went by freighter, which meant a voyage of two or three weeks instead of one week, which was the normal time for a crossing.

They landed in either Boston or Philadelphia. This group went to Lonetree, Kansas on a freight train. They got to the depot at midnight and the station attendant sent someone on horseback to "Creek" Tobias Unruh (He lived by a creek). He was expecting a group of about 20 people. Tobias Unruh got two wagons pulled by horses and went to get this group. When they got to his house, his wife had the table set with food: apples, potatoes and more. Mom said it was the feast of a lifetime. They probably slept on the floor that night. When Mom opened her eyes in the morning and realized she was now in a land of freedom, she told the people there that she'd rather be a slave all her life in America than to live in Russia under fear and oppression.

After arriving in Kansas, they lived with relatives until they could find a vacant house. Three more children were born to Mom and Pete Unruh: Carrie, Tobe and Abe. Mom was unhappy with Pete Unruh, he being a drinker of wine. He often left his family without food or money while he spent his time with his drinking buddies. The deacons from the Lonetree Congregation would give Mom some assistance at times. It was during this time that Mom got converted and was baptized into the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite.

A neighbor from Russia, John Boese, came to America. Once when Pete was out on a drinking spree, he moved in with Mom. She was, of course, separated from the church, after which she and John were married. Andrew was born and in the years following, nine more children were born: Eva, Helen, Norman, Amelia, Lillie, Joe, Ed, Henry and Virginia. My mother now had 14 living children.

We were never home all together. As soon as one got to be 13 or 14 years old, he hired out to work for others, often living away from home.

My parents moved quite often and I was born near Moundridge. When I was probably two years old, my family moved to Syracuse, where my Dad worked for a businessman who sold poultry and eggs. He earned approximately two or three dollars a week. Dad and Mom borrowed around nine hundred dollars to build a two-story house on the open prairie. It had three rooms on the bottom and two on top. The stairway was on the outside. This was in the spring and summer. The house was built of 1x12 pine lumber. As a boy I remember looking through the cracks to the outside. In winter Dad put lath over the open cracks to try and shut out the cold and snow. It was open range, no road, no fences, just wagon trails. We had one wagon, an open wagon pulled by two work horses named Tom and Prince.

When I was six years old, one summer day Mom was baking bread and the wall by the stove pipe got too hot and started on fire. There was no running water and even though Mom sent the children to the neighbors for help, they lived too far away and the house and everything in it burned to the ground.

Just east of the house was rolling land. The neighbors helped us make a dugout to live in. Mom had us younger children stay inside because it was just too hot to be outside in the summer. Later a house became available in Syracuse and we moved into

town. My Dad was a teacher in a German school. He had probably 12 – 15 students in different grades.

At the farm, before the house burned, Dad had about five cows that he milked, so we had our own milk and cream. Mother let the milk set until the cream came to the top and then once a week went to town to sell the cream. They got a few dollars and would buy flour in 48 pound bags, a little sugar and maybe coffee, also some potatoes if we ran out of the ones we raised ourselves. Kerosene was also a very important item, as there was no electricity anywhere. When the milk that was left was clabbered, it was used for supper, together with fried potatoes. We had many meals like this and they were a treat. If we had no clabbered milk, we had only milk and bread with syrup.

My Dad took a job at Pretty Prairie, about 30 miles south of Hutchinson, working for a Dutch farmer named Graber. Dad found a house with some land, so we moved to Pretty Prairie. This move took only one day. We took our lumber wagon loaded with our things.

We lived at Pretty Prairie for one year. Dad sowed wheat on this land and got two crops. It was here that I started school. It was a country school with 15-20 students. We had a nice young teacher, about 19-20 years old. We were supposed to talk English, but I didn't know it so well. My teacher gave me sticks to count and I counted to myself in Dutch. When she came by, I had to recount them to tell her in English how many I had. When it was time to move closer to Hutchinson, Mom told me to tell the teacher goodbye and give her a kiss, but I was too bashful. I just gathered my books and ran home.

We children were shy and sometimes afraid of people. When I was probably five years old, the older children and my parents went someplace. We saw a man using a hand seeder to sow wheat. We couldn't figure out what he was doing, so we figured he must be crazy. We all went inside and hid under the bed.

When I was 8 or 9 years old, my folks bought a farm 12 miles north of Hutchinson. We moved to an old shack, a narrow house, but soon after were able to build on. On this farm we raised broom corn. After it was mature, the heads had to be cut off and laid on the wagon bed. At home they were placed on shelves to dry and put through a sheller to get the corn off. After this the broom head was put into bales and sent to Hutchinson to be made into brooms.

I got my education while living on this place. When the weather permitted, we had a two mile walk to the country schoolhouse each morning and evening. If the weather was bad, Dad came and picked us up with the horses and wagon. My best teachers name was Florence Craig. She taught for at least two years and was real good-natured, about 19 years old. We had to learn a lot of poems and I learned them walking to and from school. I usually had them memorized by the next day. I liked school. For our lunches at school, we took rendered lard between slices of homemade bread, or syrup and bread, or a fried potato sandwich. On this place we had an apple orchard, so sometimes we could take an apple.

In school we boys often chewed paper wads to throw at others. One day while I was

young, I was chewing a paper wad and the teacher saw me. He came by and flicked my ear. I was so embarrassed that I cried. In our school we had seats wide enough for two, so when Henry entered first grade, I was maybe in the 3rd or 4th grade and we sat together. I was able to teach Henry and when it was his turn to recite from the reader, he would know his lesson perfectly. Two bigger boys, Leslie and Dewey German, thought this was a good deal and asked the teacher if they could sit with me too.

Once Norman was late for school, so he rode Prince, an old horse of ours. One of the school boys got on Prince and jabbed him in the stomach with his feet. He said the horse sounded hollow inside, so Norman invited him to crawl inside and find out. It was in this school that I finished my education.

Our parents worked hard to make a living. On this place we had a dozen cows, some chickens, ducks, geese and pigs. When we killed a chicken, goose or duck to eat, Mom saved the down from under the feathers for our pillows and covers, which were all homemade. The mattresses were made of a heavy cloth called duck cloth and either filled with corn husks or hay.

We lived on this place for six years. When we were young, we made our own toys, especially the snow sleds. We had a lean-to that we would climb on. We had a one-by-twelve propped up on the roof. We would slide down the one-by-twelve to build up speed. By doing it that way, we could slide a long way.

One evening in winter while brother Tobe was caring for his horses, Henry, Edd and I made a bunch of snowballs. When he came out to go to the house, we three boys peppered him with snowballs. This made him mad. He went inside and told Mama that if she wasn't going to take care of us, he would. We stayed outside and by the time we got into the house, Mom had calmed him down and nothing happened to us.

We had a steer we made into a pet and we rode him. By this time, Dad's horse, Prince, was older and we could ride him also.

From this place near Hutchinson we moved into town. It was a big two-story house—really two houses with a breezeway in between. We lived in half of the house for about a year. Then Dad and Mom bought a house on 8th Street. By this time three of the children were married and brother Tobe had died in the service. He was in training for World War I. He died of a bad case of flu. The last time he was home on furlough he told some of the family as he was leaving that the next time he came home it would be in a coffin.

When I was 14, I started looking for a job. I finally got hired at the Hutchinson Bag Factory by telling them I was 16. James Lee Dyck, the manager, questioned my age. I was about 5' 4" and weighed a hundred pounds. He said I wasn't very big for 16. I told him I was as tall as my Dad. He said my job was not very desirable. It would be sweeping floors. The building covered half a city block and it kept me busy keeping the floors clean. It was a new business and I enjoyed my work. I worked from 7:00 a.m. till noon and then had an hour off for lunch. In the afternoon I worked from one till six.

For lunch Henry and I (he worked there too) walked to a hamburger stand. We paid five cents for a hamburger and five cents for a bottle of pop. I got paid 20 cents an hour

and worked six days a week. Every two weeks my check was 24 dollars. I gave it all home except for two dollars.

I worked for two years sweeping floors. Then I was promoted to the shipping department, earning $2.25 a day. In shipping it was my job to run a one hundred ton press that pressed bags together, after which a stenciling machine would print the address on. The bag factory had an electric truck (the only one in Hutchinson) and I took these 500 pound bales to the depot to go on the freight train. I needed to learn the railroad schedules so that I could make the deliveries at the right time on the right train. Some of the bags went as far east as New York and others as far west as California. We even shipped to Puerto Rico.

When I was 16, the office manager, Julias Inman, came around to update the employee records. He asked how old I was. I told him I was 16. He said, "Joe, that's how old you were two years ago!" I told him, "That shows you how bad I wanted a job." He was a good boss. ▲

(Continued next month)

Remembering Out Loud

Grass Mattresses

What Joe had to say about corn husk and hay mattresses reminded me of when we moved to Brazil. Most of the mattresses used in this part of the country were made of dry grass back those days.

The first thing these mattresses had going for them was price. I don't remember what the price was, but it can't have been much because the cloth used to make them cost very little and the grass was free. There wasn't all that much labor involved.

A unique characteristic of these mattresses was the aroma of nature they carried with them, at least during the first month or so. The smell of fresh grass could easily give the impression one was camping out on the prairie.

A grass mattress had more of a personal touch to it than an innerspring or foam mattress. It didn't take much to mold it to ones personal anatomical peculiarities, something an orthopedist might have a tendency to frown on.

Someone on the Colony recently told me they finally bought a new mattress after using the old one 40 years—not a grass mattress, of course. It would be a rare grass mattress, under normal use, that would last one tenth that long. I think a lot of them did good to last more than a year or two. But then they were cheap.

Another rather distressing little feature of these straw mattresses was their propensity to become headquarters for certain kinds of parasites, such as ticks. As one can imagine, they would rate as five-star hotels for ticks and mites. Once we bought a new grass mattress already pre-infested with "pepper" ticks—we call them that because they are so small that they look like specks of pepper.

Faith also remembers making a corn husk mattress.

I don't think grass mattresses are even made any more. I suppose it's a good thing, although one can't help but get a bit lonesome for them once in a while. ▲

To Make a Copy

We take copiers for granted. When we need a copy of a song, of a document, of an article, we head for the nearest copier. The younger generation just assumes that copiers are the most natural thing in the world.

Well they aren't. I can remember when they didn't exist. It would be interesting to know how many of you readers (especially those of you who taught school a few yesterdays ago) remember the hectograph. For those of you who don't even know such a thing ever existed, the hectograph was a shallow tray, maybe a fourth of an inch deep, slightly bigger than a sheet of letter size paper (8½" x 11"). This tray was filled with some kind of a glycerin gelatin.

The "original" was a spirits duplicator stencil which could be prepared either with a pen or stylus or a typewriter. This stencil would then be placed facedown on the tray filled with gelatin, and left for a certain amount of time—I think 15 minutes or so—after which it would be removed and the "copier" was ready to copy. The image of the original was now etched into the gelatin.

Copies were made by placing sheets of paper on the gelatin and immediately removing them. Since gelatin is moist, the copies would also be moist, with a tendency to curl up. The first half dozen copies would come out in a fairly dark blue image. But with each additional copy made, the image would become lighter. It was difficult to get more than 15 or 20 fairly good copies from one original.

Between "runs," there had to be at least a two or three hour interval while the unused ink from the stencil would sink to the bottom of the tray. Eventually the gelatin would become so saturated with unused ink that it would become necessary to replace or reprocess the gelatin.

I have a hard time coming up with many fond memories of the old hectograph.

The spirits duplicator was a big step ahead. The same kind of stencil was used, but it was placed on a cylinder, where it would come in contact with a wick saturated with alcohol as it was turned by hand. Again, with each copy made, the quality would drop.

Then there was also the problem of the wick becoming overly saturated with alcohol and smudging a stencil on the first or second copy. The only solution was to count to ten, walk around the house several times, and then make a new stencil.

I have absolutely no desire to return to the spirits duplicator era.

Now that has all changed. The teachers send their students to the literature center with a request for four copies each of 10 different originals. A few minutes later they are headed back to school with copies that often are better than the originals. Yep, when it comes to copying, the good ol' days are right now. ▲

Zigzagging Around

A New Congregation

The Boa Esperança Congregation is the fifth congregation to come into existence in Brazil.

Boa Esperança means Good Hope, really a nice name for a congregation. In the recent revival meetings in Mato Grosso, this was the name chosen by the group.

For those of you who aren't familiar with Spanish or Portuguese, just a little lesson on pronunciation. The O in Boa is long and carries the accent. The C with the cedilla, the little tail, is pronounced like an S. The accent is on the next to last syllable: ess-pay-ron-sa.

The Boa Esperança Congregation is made up of 13 members: Dan & Marlene Kramer and children Robert, Rebecca and Dwight; Jorge & Dalva Silva; Mercês Alves; Glenn & Elizabeth Hibner and children Brenda, Kevin and Julie.

Mercês' husband, Antônio Carlos, is converted and in doctrine class, as well as another young man from that area. Hopefully there will soon be 15 members in that congregation. ▲

Predated Checks

The predated check is just as Brazilian as parrots and Portuguese. Of every ten checks given today, seven are predated.

When my car turned three—three years old, that is—it had never had a motor tune-up done on it. It was evident it could use one, so I took it to VW and asked them what it would cost to bring things up to date. A little while later the mechanic informed me that in addition to the motor tune-up, the front wheel bearings should be changed, plus a few other things.

When they showed me the price, I told them there was no way I could handle it in one whack. Their shop was about empty so they were wanting my work quite badly. The upstart was several predated checks and a repaired car.

The big advantage of the predated check is that it requires no paper work. The disadvantage is that if the buyer is dishonest, it gives him plenty of time to skip the country.

Many checks are predated by simply writing under the signature: Bom para o dia 25—good for the 25th, or whatever date that happens to be agreed upon. Other fasten on a little piece of paper with a staple or clip with the same message.

For someone to cash a predated check before the day stipulated, is a grave offense, unless it can be proved it was an honest mistake.

So, folks, if some sunshiny day your local barber tells you, "You know, there was a Holdeman in here to get his hair cut and he wanted me to wait a week before cashing his check," don't get excited. Somebody from the American Colony in Brazil was traveling through your community. ▲

And if There Should Be An Emergency...

I am putting this little item in BN for two reasons: It may be of interest to you readers in N America. But most of all, to get us to thinking here in Brazil.

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to have no emergency services—no fire department, no ambulance, no nothing? Well we here on the Colony don't have to imagine. It's reality.

Even Rio Verde, which now boasts more or less a dozen 12–15 story buildings, has only an antique tank truck without so much as a ladder, to fight fires. I have my doubts if it would come to the Colony if called, and if it did, it would probably be an hour or more before it got here.

All that isn't quite as bad as it sounds. Since almost all buildings are masonry or steel, there are far less fires than in countries where there is a lot of wood construction. In the more than 25 years this Colony has existed, there has never been a serious fire. I think we have fallen into the fallacy of believing there won't ever be a fire. But what if there is?

I positively can't imagine how there has never been a serious accident out here on the Colony with the amount of traffic we have and the speed people drive. Remember that probably not over 10% of the traffic is Colony traffic. No, we have never had a serious accident, but what if there would be some day?

We're not prepared for anything, nor do we have any stretchers to haul the victims to the hospital—not to say anything about an ambulance.

What could we do? The least we could do is organize so that in the event of an emergency, there would be some prepared to go into action.

You folks on the Colony, what do you think? Should we do some organizing and preparing? ▲

This & That

Let's face it. We're not very good prophets. Who, yes who, would have predicted 10 years ago that an American cardiologist would be called to Russia to examine and give his opinion on their ailing president?

The Rio Verdinho teachers, Maxine Loewen, Milcah Schrock and Luciene Rosa, are living in Errol & Karen Redger's house, while they are in the States.

Wagner & Aletha Machado moved into their new house. Ben & Laura Koehn are living in Alma Martin's house. Alma is living in the US.

On August 27, the Monte Alegre sisters had a baby shower for Viviene Carvalho. Her husband, José, works for Jake Loewen. José & Viviene were baptized less than a month ago. On September 18 they had a girl, Isabela.

On September 11, Nelson & Ruth Unruh had a girl, Yolanda Dee.

On September 17, Doug & Celina Ferrell had a boy, George.

Walt & Alberta have sort of "moved" back to the US. I'm not sure what that means. I wonder if even they know. Anyway, they're there. Chris & Anita Stoltzfus have rented their place and are living in Craig & Monica's house, who have moved back to the US.

Dean & Esther Lou Mininger and children returned after spending approximately three months in Mozambique. On September 1 they gave a report at the Rio Verdinho church, and on September 8 in Rio Verde. They feel there is an open door for the work there. One interesting aspect of the report was their comparison of the Portuguese spoken there with what is spoken here in Brazil.

The Carlos Ambrósio family, from the Rio Verde congregation, are living in Leonard & Moselly Koepl's house. Leonards are now retired in the US.

On September 12, the Leo Dirks family left for an extended pilgrimage in N America. They plan on spending ten weeks there.

We mentioned some time ago that John Deere tractors are now being sold in Brazil. Those who bought locally were given a free trip to the US. So on September 20, João Souto, Paul Yoder, Stanley Schultz, Lynn Schultz, and Luiz Duarte left for the US. Several of them stayed a few days longer than the week most of them stayed. Those green machines in our fields should raise us a couple of points on the scale of civilization. Big deal.

I might mention that Luiz Duarte went on that trip as a salesman and not as an owner. He has been Walt Redger's "Aaron" (interpreter and right-hand man) off and on over the years. I think he's spending a few days with Walt & Alberta. I can hardly wait to hear Luiz tell his story. This is his first visit to the US.

On October 3, there will be elections for mayor and county commissioners all over Brazil. Here in Rio Verde the two leading candidates are both well-known here on the Colony.

On September 28, Dan & Clara Coblentz had sale. They are returning to the US, to Tennessee, I think. The sale began at 9:30 in the morning and ended at 6:00 in the evening. Dan & Clara and their family were some of the first families to move to Brazil. They spent a number of years here, when pioneering was pioneering. Two years ago they moved back to Brazil. Now they are returning to the US again. It's fortunate that moving isn't as complicated as it was nearly 30 years ago. It's a positive sign when people are able to move back and forth. We want people to feel welcome here, and at the same time not feel they are obligated to stay here if they would like to be elsewhere. We wish them the best.

The Glenn Hibner and John Kramer families were out from Mato Grosso for the sale. Glenn is our sales promoter.

Frank, son of Sam & Erma Coblentz, the missionaries in Patos, Paraíba, is living here for a while, working for Myron Kramer.

Several of Enos Miller's brothers from the US were here to pay him a visit.

Our daylight saving time will begin October 6 and end February 22. There will be three hours difference between our time here and CST in N America. When it's midnight here, it will be 9:00 o'clock in the evening in there.

We're just beginning to ease into the rainy season here. Some farmers have already finished planting corn. Normally soybeans are planted in November, but some are beginning to plant considerably early. This is because of the double cropping that is coming in stronger every year.

Bert & Ada Coblentz have sort of moved back to Brazil.