

Brazil News



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Why a Bulletin?

New flickers of light are constantly appearing on the globe as God's people become established in different countries, indeed, continents. It is totally normal and healthy that curiosity be shown as these new lights begin to flicker in the twilight of time.

Questions frequently asked about a new area are: What are the people like? How do they make a living? How is the climate? What about the government? What are some of the customs? Where do you do your shopping? Can you buy most anything?

It would be interesting to know what percent of the brethren in the US and Canada have some relative living in a foreign country, either serving time on some mission field or living in Brazil. Needless to say, when this is the case, there is normally an acute interest in the particular area where relatives are living.

The American Colony has existed in Brazil for over 22 years. During this time there have been many interesting happenings both happy and tragic. Almost without exception, when something newsworthy occurs, the first (and sometimes final) reports reaching North America are distorted, some slightly and others to ridiculous proportions.

Brazil News was conceived as a means of getting accurate information to you that won't do a summersault when it hits the equator.

However, together with the desire to help avoid distortions of facts, there is a deeper reason for wanting to see the Brazil News in circulation. Our Church needs wholesome literature that can be read on a family level.

It should be made very plain that this bulletin shall in no way be a gossip column or a forum for airing spiritual concerns. For the latter we have our official Church publications. Brazil News is not a religious publication nor, needless to say, is it irreligious. It is meant to be the vehicle by which interesting and wholesome articles concerning Brazil can reach your livingroom.

This first issue is a test balloon. Reader response will determine if it is also the last issue. If you enjoyed it, please fill in the enclosed questionnaire and return. cb ▲

Roads

We call them estradas in Portuguese. A paved road is a rodovia or asfalto.

In North America you take roads for granted. On a local level you have your township boards that see to it that roads are sanded or graveled and maintained. These same boards purchase graders, backhoes you name it and hire someone to run them. Should a culvert wash out, you simply call your township board and tell them what has happened. Possibly within a matter of hours, or a day or two at the most, steps will be taken to correct the problem.

In Brazil there is no such thing as a township. We have counties, many of them absolutely huge, covering thousands of square kilometers.

To have an idea of our local road situation, imagine first of all, that your township board resigned, but not before selling off all their equipment. This would leave road maintenance up to the farmers who use the roads. Secondly, imagine that no one ever laid out your roads. Back in the days when the US was colonized, the first settler to stake out a claim would have made a road to his homesite. Rather than clear out trees or fill in ravines, he would have simply taken the way of least resistance, even if it was a lot farther that way.

The next settler would follow the first road until a certain point and then veer off to his place. This same method would be used until the entire countryside would be interlinked with roads. Aerially it would appear as a web made by a spider in need of psychiatric care.

That is what the roads look like in the Município de Rio Verde.

But it is even worse than that. Remember that some of these roads were made 50 to a hundred years ago. Back when they were made, narrow wheeled ox carts were very much in use. Depending on the road conditions, they could easily cut in six to 12 inches. The first big rain would open up each rut into a small ravine. Eventually roads became ditches. At that point the road would be moved over several meters and everything begin anew. It isn't unusual to drive down country roads that are a meter lower than the surrounding countryside.

Until approximately 15 years ago, people made out fairly well with these roads. There were a lot of 4-wheel drive jeeps that could get through most anything. During this period most of the land was either in woods or pasture. Cattle reigned supreme.

Then came the agricultural boom. Huge tracts of woods were bulldozed down into windrows and burned. Pastures were broken up to be used as farmground. In a matter of approximately five years, the countryside in places became almost unrecognizable.

As any farmer knows, for land to produce, especially in an acid soil like we have here, huge amounts of lime and fertilizer must be trucked in before crops can be trucked out.

Our município has perhaps two or three graders in working order. They are expected to take care of thousands of kilometers of roads. So far as actual road building, they do almost nothing. Basically their job is to simply make a pass or two on

the roads and try and fill in the holes. No effort is made to build the roads up, so with each grading the roadbed sinks a bit more.

To make matters worse, these few graders are used as political instruments. For a mayor to be elected, obviously he needs votes. Since he knows who voted for him, guess who gets the graders first. Guess who doesn't get them at all.

During this past corn harvest, it rained almost every day. It was possible to cut corn, but the trucks simply couldn't get it to town. Since the corn had a high moisture content, some of it ended up spoiling.

We have been talking about municipal roads. Just a few words on as estradas da Colônia Americana. Both the Monte Alegre and Rio Verdinho Congregations have their own road committees. These committees levy a small tax on farm production that goes toward road building and maintenance. Between some ancient graders that have been adapted to be pulled by a tractor or two, a fleet of dump wagons, water wagons, and other assorted pieces of equipment, it is amazing what can be done.

Even though the mayor knows that he gets no votes from the Colony, he has been most helpful. A number of months ago he sent out a patrol, some trucks and a loader. Together with the Colônia equipment, the main roads were built up with gravel. In spite of all the rains, these roads held up beautifully. There was almost a constant stream of traffic. It has been estimated that during harvest there is more traffic on the road that goes by the Monte Alegre Church than there is on the Goiânia highway.

The stretch of road that used to take several hours to travel to get to town is now blacktopped and takes possibly 20 minutes. With the Colônia roads being in good shape, few live more than 30 minutes from town. For those in the Rio Verdinho area, the same is true, except that they take the Rio Verde Jataí highway and come into town from the other direction.

There is talk that a rodovia will come right through the middle of the Colônia. As the Brazilians say, "Só Deus sabe" (Only God knows). ▲

This and That

The going thing here lately has been auction sales. Different ones are packing up and heading back to the USA. Each one has his particular reason. No, no, it isn't a mass exodus. Yet, who knows, there may be more.

The weather is turning cool. It's time to get firewood around. One of these days it is liable to turn cold. Let me tell you that you have no idea what cold weather is until you've been through a cold snap here. When it gets down to around 40°F here, it's bad, and when we have a frost....

Corn and bean harvest are over. People are getting ready to harvest cotton right now.

A dry snap in December hurt some of the corn. Even so many had a good crop.

Soybeans in general were real good. It looks like cotton won't do too bad. I don't hear farmers squawking very much about prices, so I assume they must be fairly good.

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Our inflation is down to a very tolerable 6-10%. That's per month, folks. Not per year.

When is inflation bad? When it hits 1% per day. When our new president took over it was about 3% per day. Terrible, terrible.

For those of you who know our local town of Rio Verde, we have a new mall. At least that is what we call it. The mall part of the mall is a general failure as of yet. The supermarket part is a fabulous success. It has 20 checkout stands and sometimes they all have a long line.

It appears that long about June or July different families from the Colony will contribute to the financial well-being of the airlines plying the Rio/Miami route.