

# Brazil News

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Featura Story

## **Graças a Deus**

After one last look into the open abdomen, the surgeon straighted up and said, “Graças a Deus” (Thanks to God).

On the other side of the table, the assisting surgeon repeated, “Graças a Deus. Parece que está tudo bem” (It appears everything is OK). The patient’s chances for recovery were good.

That morning before leaving home, Nelson Machado de Barros told his wife, “I’m going to work today because I’m a hired man and must do what I am told not because I feel like going.” Perhaps this was a premonition of impending disaster.

Several hours later Daniel Kramer was at his daughter Susan’s father-in-law’s place in Rio Verde, waiting for his four boys and Nelson to arrive to help on a remodeling job. Mud was mixed and on the board. After getting on the scaffold, he got back down.

Something was wrong. His boys should have been there already. Had something gone wrong?

Looking toward the street, Daniel saw a taxi stop in front of the house where he was working. That was strange. Even stranger was the look on his daughter Susan’s face as she got out of the taxi and came to him. Yes, something was the matter.

Lacking appropriate words, she simply blurted out, “Dad, I have some bad news. The boys went off the Rio Verdinho bridge. They say two of them are in critical condition.”

That morning the four Kramer brothers: Dan, John, David, and Jeff, together with Nelson, their faithful hired man of many years, loaded their old Ford dumptruck with sand, several bags of cement, a log approximately 30 cm in diameter by 4 m in length, a chainsaw, and other odds and ends. With Dan at the wheel, Dave and Nelson in the cab, and John and Jeff on top of the truck, sitting on the edge of the high dumped, facing forward, with their feet resting on the cab, they set out for town.

## Brazil News

The Rio Verdinho river is the first river that is crossed about 20 km out of Rio Verde, when coming to the Colony. From both sides there is a long, fairly steep grade. It isn't unusual for heavily loaded trucks to approach the bridge at an excessive rate of speed. Should an emergency arise, there is no possible way to stop.

By the strange chemistry that creates accidents, as the Kramer truck approached the bridge, on the way to town, a large Scania semi loaded with 20 tonnes of lime was approaching from the opposite direction. This in itself would have been no problem, had it not been for a slow moving cycle crossing the bridge at that very instant, also headed toward the Colony.

Obviously, had the driver of the Scania known what the situation would be on the bridge, he would have held his truck in check as he dropped into the valley.

From the other approach, Dan saw what was in the making, but hoped to be past the cycle before the truck was upon it. He didn't realize the speed the truck was traveling. When within a hundred meters of the bridge, the Scania suddenly swerved into the oncoming lane to miss the cycle.

Dan immediately swung the truck over, getting his right wheels off of the pavement, right up next to the steep dropoff of the approach to the bridge.

For a brief second it appeared all would end in a head-on collision. But then, as the truck cleared the cycle, he swung back into his lane. The cabs of the two trucks passed within centimeters of each other.

The cabs passed, but not the long bed of the lime truck. When the bed of the lime truck sideswiped the Kramer truck, the impact was violent, tilting it enough to where it was traveling on only the right wheels. This placed it on a collision course with the left railing of the bridge.

As the truck crossed into the opposite lane, it settled on its right side and gouged its way to the railing. Shortly before hitting the bridge, John and Jeff were thrown off together with the sand, cement, and everything that was in the bed. Sliding along in the sand and cement, they struck the railing, or rather the walkway, some meters ahead of where the truck hit.

Most Brazilian bridges are constructed with what appears to be a small walkway along each side, on the inside of the railings. These little walkways are approximately 30 cm high and 60 cm wide.

As the Kramer truck, sliding on its side, hit this little elevated walkway, the grill and right fender became entangled in the railing and detached themselves from the rest of the truck. Projected by the momentum of the truck, the motor went over the edge and fell into the river. The cab, together with its three occupants, took to the air, turned upside down, and landed in approximately 60 cm of water in the middle of the river.

The chasis and the bed did another flip and slowed down by the elevated walkway, fell over the edge of the bridge landing at the water's edge.

Ivo Licatta describes it as an explosão. From where he, his son Ivo Jr. and several hired men were, for instants all that could be seen was a huge white cloud of dust smoke as he puts it, as lime spilled out of the semi onto the asphalt.

Ivo has a sand extraction barge about 50 meters upstream from where the accident took place. At that time he and his men were doing maintenance on a front end loader, approximately 200 meters from the bridge.

Their first impression was that the Scania had gone down into the river. They didn't stand around waiting for the dust to settle to see what had happened. Ivo Jr. and his men immediately took out running for the accident site. In a matter of two to three minutes they were there. Ivo Sr. arrived several minutes later, not having the speed of the younger ones. His version of what happened is as follows:

“What do you do when you see two fellows with serious injuries on top of the bridge [where vehicles come through at high speed] and more down below in the river? What do you do first?” That is how Ivo Jr. summed up his reaction upon reaching the bridge.

There wasn't a second to be wasted. His intuitive decision fortunately was to head down into the river.

“As I came down the embankment”, he reports, “[Dan] wasn't in the cab. He was calling for help in a weak voice. We helped him to the bank first. Then we went back to the cab. Both [Dave and Nelson] had their heads under water. Since [Nelson] was only semi-conscious, his body was limp and we had no trouble getting him out and on the bank. Once he was out, [Dave's] head came up out of the water and we were able to get him out too and up on the bank.”

At approximately the time of the explosão, Sebastião, a neighbor whom we have known for over 20 years, was just starting down the long Rio Verdinho grade, headed for Rio Verde, in his Chevrolet pickup. Sebastião has seen a lot in his life and is one of those fellows who keeps his head together in an emergency. His pickup was immediately turned into an impromptu ambulance.

The heavy log that had pinned John's legs down was removed and he was placed in the back of the pickup. Nelson, in severe pain, was placed in the back of the pickup where he could lie down, together with Jeff and John.

Dan and Dave rode up front with Sebastião.

Ivo Licatta estimates that the time from the explosão until everyone was in the pickup ready to go, was approximately 12 minutes.

As many times happens in situations of this nature, some details are somewhat vague. It is believed that Dan was thrown out of the cab somewhere in its trajectory to the river, which incidentally, is approximately six meters below the bridge. When Dan became aware of where he was, he was sitting in the river a short distance from the cab. He made his way to the cab and found Nelson hanging out of the window with his head under water. He managed to get him back into the cab far enough to raise his head above water. Then with his body he blocked the rapid current from running into the cab at full force. This action lowered the water level enough in the cab so that both Nelson and Dave could breathe. When Dan was helped to the bank, the full force of the water once again entered the cab, explaining why Ivo Jr. says Nelson and Dave both had their heads under water.

Dr. Vicente Guerra was in his office in the hospital when Sebastião's pickup arrived

with the victims. Someone opened the door and said, “Quick! We have a bunch of people to take care of.” It was when he got to the emergency room that he realized the victims being brought in were actually his patients. During many years he has been the Kramer’s family doctor.

At first glance, it appeared that Nelson was in worst shape. A rigid, distended abdomen gave reason to believe there were serious internal injuries. Soon he was in surgery and doctors were able to say, *Graças a Deus*. It wasn’t as bad as it appeared to be. He also suffered a broken wrist, a dislocated hip and cuts on one ear and chin.

After the orthopedist got through examining Dan, things didn’t look very good either. He had a shattered vertebrae. Arrangements were made to take him to the Hospital de Neurologia in Goiânia.

Dr. Vicente (doctors are normally known by their first name in Brazil) personally took over Jeff’s case. His most serious problems were his eyes especially the left one that were loaded with cement that had spilled out of the bags and an injury on the side of his head that suggested a fractured skull. Of less importance, although possibly more painful, were the many large abrasions on the face, arms and back. Due to the possibility of skull damage, Jeff was transferred to Goiânia by ambulance late that night.

John had a deep cut on his skull, cement in his eyes (much less than Jeff) and an abundance of abrasions.

Dave had a broken wrist and some abrasions.

The accident happened on Monday, the 1st of July. Today, Saturday the 6th, Daniel Kramer is a happy man. Jeff is home, back from Goiânia. Fortunately, no neurological problems developed from the head wound. Doctors are uncertain of how the recuperation of his left eye will be.

John is home, sore and bruised, but in good spirits.

Dave is home with a cast on his arm. He is out running the combine, harvesting milo, and riding horse.

Dan had surgery in Goiânia and everything went well. Doctors did a bone graft and fused his damaged vertebrae to two healthy ones. He has total movement of all his limbs.

Nelson’s recovery is somewhat slow, but he too is getting along as well as can be expected.

Of less importance and yet of importance is the financial aspect of this wreck. The owner not the driver of the semi that hit the Kramer truck is a Dutchman who moved to Brazil in 69, coincidentally the same year the Kramers moved to Brazil. He has agreed to pay all medical expenses as well as Nelson’s down time. This will probably run between ten and fifteen thousand dollars. The truck will be the Kramer’s loss.

When people hear the story of what happened, almost without exception they sum up their feelings by saying, *Graças a Deus*. Most of all, the Kramer family says, *Graças a Deus*. ▲

## New Bible

In most conservative religious circles, the King James version of the Bible is still considered to be the most authentic. In fact, other than for study or research purposes, other versions are possibly never even considered an official Church Bible. This is proper.

Visitors to Brazil (and doubtlessly to Mexico and other foreign fields) frequently ask if we use the King James version of the Bible in Portuguese (Spanish, etc.).

The standard answer goes something like this: No we don't. King James is actually the name given to a translation of the Bible done in England approximately 500 years ago. At that time, James, the king of England, enjoined religious and linguistic experts to translate the Bible into the English language. The result was not only a beautiful text, but also a sincere (and successful) effort to transmit the meaning and nuances of the original tongues. Since King James ordered only one translation to be made, there can obviously be only one King James version. So well did the men chosen by King James do their work, that the present text is basically unchanged from the original.

The question: Do you use the King Version in Portuguese? is actually an effort to find out what kind of version of the Bible we use.

Approximately 25 years ago when the first brethren returned to N. America after investigating Brazil, several Portuguese Bibles were brought back. They were a translation by João Ferreira de Almeida.

It happens that this translation was pretty much a one man affair, done strictly on personal conviction. As a result, it has been subject to numerous revisions. The one the brethren brought back to the States was the *Revisão Atualizada*. Because of this, it was the *Atualizada* that was adopted as our official Bible when we moved to Brazil.

Following is a brief biography of João Ferreira de Almeida, as recorded in a Bible of his translation:

“Almeida was born in Portugal in 1628. For unknown reasons, 12 years later, in 1640, he took up residence in Batavia, on the island of Java. In 1642, he moved to Malaca, on the Malayan Peninsula. It was here that Almeida read a Spanish tract entitled *La Diferencia de la Cristiandad* and was converted from Catholicism to the Evangelical Faith.

“In 1644, when merely 16 years of age, Almeida began to translate the Holy Scriptures. A year later he finished this translation. But his work wasn't published because he lost the manuscript. In 1648 Almeida began a new translation of the Bible, but died before it was finished.

“In 1648 Almeida was called to the ministry in the Reformed Dutch Church. It was his responsibility to visit the imprisoned and the sick. He was ordained to the ministry the 16th of October of 1656. From this time until 1660, he shepherded different Portuguese churches in the southern part of India.

“After finishing the translation of the New Testament in 1676, Almeida sent the manuscript to Batavia for publishing. Due to the inaction of the proofreaders, nothing

came out of this. Therefore he decided to send the work to Amsterdam, Holand. In the year 1681 the first Portuguese New Testament was printed.

“Almeida translated the Old Testament up to Ezequiel 41:21, when he died. In 1784 Rev. Jacobus op den Akker, from Batávia, continued the work and finished the Old Testament. Five years later, in 1753, the entire Bible was published in Portuguese in two volumes. That was how João Ferreira de Almeida’s work was finished.”

The Versão Atualizada was used for several years, when it was suggested that the Versão Corrigida would be a more accurate translation. This idea was accepted by the church and the Corrigida was accepted as the official version. This left us with a more accurate translation, but with a text that in many places was difficult to understand especially by the less educated.

Approximately six months ago a new version came out, called the versão contemporânea. It seemed that right from the beginning there was a general feeling that this was what we had been looking for.

A group of brethren was chosen to make a preliminary study not only of this version, but also the Corrigida, the Atualizada and the Revisada. This included a list sent to us by bro. Greg Dyck of more than 200 scriptures that modern day translations tend to water down or practically eliminate. In this study the Corrigida came out slightly ahead of the Contemporânea. Both the Atualizada and the Revisada proved to be contaminated by the modern translation bug. Next a practical study was made of the Corrigida and the Contemporânea, in which different doctrines were chosen and many of the related scriptures looked up in both versions. In this practical application the Contemporânea came out considerably better.

A meeting for all those interested was held in which these findings were reported. A recommendation was made that the Contemporânea and the Corrigida be placed on an equal basis for an undetermined period of time for all official Church use.

This recommendation was presented to a joint congregational meeting and given virtually unanimous support.

For those who ask if we use the King James Version in Portuguese we answer: We think we are about as close as we can get with what is now available. ▲

## Rancho de Buriti

Rancho (HAN-show): A simple house, usually made out of material provided by nature.

De (gee): Of

Buriti (boo-ree-CHEE): The beautiful palm trees that line many of our streams.

Rural life has changed drastically in the last twenty some years here in Brasil. Unfortunately.

To those of us who had previously lived in Mexico, a palm house was frequently seen as a sign of abject poverty. Here in Brasil, we soon found, a casa de buriti many times represented a veritable cornucopia.

## Brazil 7 News

Let's back up a bit so you can get the setting of what we are talking about.

Back in those days much of the land in this area was divided into 10 to 50 thousand acre fazendas (farm, ranch hacienda in Spanish). In one of the paradoxes that only Latin America can produce, it was possible to have a 30 thousand acre farm and be considered poor.

The reason is simple. Much of the land along the Monte Alegre and Rio Verdinho rivers, where the colony is located, is what Brazilians call cerrado (land covered with small trees and light underbrush) or chapadão (land covered with native grass and few or no trees). This kind of land had almost no value. Twenty five years ago hundreds of thousands of acres could have been purchased for five US dollars an acre.

If today this is some of the most expensive land around, why was it virtually worthless 25 years ago? First of all, because agriculture was limited to what the Brazilians call roça de toco (literally, field of stumps). In just a moment I'll explain what that is. Secondly because it took between 10 to 20 acres of native grass to keep a cow alive on a year-round basis. Even so some of these fazendeiros pobres (poor landowners) would raise several thousand head of cattle.

On these huge tracts of land composed of cerrado or chapadão, there were little areas of what they call cultura. As used here, cultura means small areas usually from one to 30 acres of extremely fertile soil, covered with heavy timber. When these woods were cut down and burned they became a roça de toco. It was possible to plant rice, corn, beans, you name it, for four or five years without any fertilizer. Then, when the land began to lose some of its fertility, grass would be planted. One acre of this pasture would be worth more than 5 or more of the other.

Since most of these fazendeiros had no tractors or machinery, obviously this work was all done by hand. So he would hire someone for almost no wages, to get the woods cut down and into production.

But, if they got almost no wages, how did they survive?

Like kings. That is a story in itself for next month.

The good Lord saw fit to put most of these areas of cultura along a river. Twenty years ago when there was no mechanized farming in this area, our rivers were some of the most pure and beautiful in the world. It was totally safe to drink the crystal clear water and we did.

Enter:

Geraldo Honório, a fazendeiro with around 25 thousand acres of ground.

João Carlos, Geraldo's son who decided to develop a small part of his dad's place.

Pedro Pão (literally, Pedro Bread, so called because of his light complexion that reminded people of the whitish color of french bread), the man hired by João Carlos to develop an area of cultura along the Monte Alegre River, slightly downstream from the American Colony.

OK, now we're back to our rancho.

Once Pedro Pão moved out to what would be his work area, his first job was to make his rancho. I feel sorry for anyone who has never been in a newly constructed

rancho. Beyond their rustic beauty, there was an association of smells that no other house in the world can match.

The first smell is that of freshly cut lumber and palm leaves.

In case you get as carried away with ranchos as I do, and you decide to build one, I'll tell you how Pedro Pão probably built his. Feel free to make one just like it.

Step one: Select a relatively level spot for your building site. With a sharp hoe, remove all the native grass. The floor is now done.

Step two: Sharpen your ax, go out in the woods and cut four stout corner poles. Now cut four more, around a meter longer. You will use one at each end of the house and two down the middle. After running a beam over the top, the rafters will rest on them. Now here is one little problem. These woods are on very hilly land. Even if you had a tractor, you couldn't get in with it. So now you have to call in two or three neighbors to help you carry the poles out. They are green and heavy.

Step three: Step off the size you want your new house to be and dig the corner post holes. In case you're the kind that likes everything just so-so, get a 10 meter piece of 3/8" transparent hose, fill it with water and use it as a level to get the posts the same height. In case you don't know how this kind of level works, write me and I'll explain. Place the four corner posts in the holes. Now dig the four holes along the center and place the longer poles in them. Level them if you like.

Step four: In case you forgot how long your house is, step it off again. In the woods cut three 6" diameter trees. Cut off the excess so that they will be approximately a meter longer than the length of the house. After notching out the corner and middle posts for your house, place these on top the long way. Good, good. Now you're ready for the rafters.

Step five: The rafters. These you can't get in the same woods. The rivers in this area have streams running into them every kilometer or so, usually with dense jungle on each side. Since little sunlight penetrates these jungles, trees must grow fast and tall to get their share. One of these trees is called a pindaíba. It is of a soft lumber. About four good whacks of an ax will fell a two and a half inch in diameter tree. There is one small item you must observe. Unless you cut this wood in the decrease of the moon, termites soon eat it up. (No, you don't need to write asking for explanations. I have none.) Cut enough of these pindaíbas so that you can place one every 50 centimeters or so. If you're as strong as Pedro Pão, you can carry out two or three at a time. No need to call in the neighbors.

Step six: Now finally, you will need your first nails. Space the rafters on the roof and up on top, fasten them in place with one nail. You don't necessarily need a nail on the bottom.

Step seven: Go back to the woods with your facão (machete) and cut a bunch of little pindaíbas that aren't over an inch in diameter. Drag them to the building site. They are the sheathing. They can be nailed on or can be lashed on with little strips of palm tree fronds.

Step eight: Now. Now comes the fun part. Now you must acquire your roofing



material. This material is on top of the palm trees that, as I already mentioned, grace our streams. Some of these palm trees are only three or four meters high. Some are 10 or more. There are two methods to get to the top. The first and simplest is to cut a long pindaíba and lean it against the top of the palm tree. Once in place, you make your way to the top. It is possible you will develop your own personal style of climbing. The other way I shall not attempt to describe in detail here. It involves a number of rawhide ropes which are fastened to the climber's legs and looped around the palm tree. By a maneuver that reminds you just a bit of a telephone repairman climbing a pole with spurs on his boots, so you must make your way to the top. Then, with your facão, you proceed to cut the leaves and let them fall to the ground. As in everything else, this incurs certain occupational hazards. Occasionally snakes or bees are found in the tops of palm trees. When this occurs, make haste to come down. Once when Pedro Pão was cutting some leaves to make me a palm hut, I saw him hit a nest of bees. His rawhide climbing contraption was designed for slow ascent and slow descent. When the bees began to swarm around his head, he discovered that his contraption also worked for rapid descent. The amount of Ave Marias (Hail Marys) he managed to intone in those brief seconds that he was returning to earth would certainly have made him a candidate for the Guinness Book of World Records.

Step eight: Drag the palm leaves to the construction site and braid them into the sheathing.

Step nine: Your house is just about done. All that is lacking are the walls and the foundation. For a foundation you go back to the woods and cut some trees down that are around 10" in diameter. Take them to the building site and cut them to size so that they fit between the posts you placed in the corners. With your ax cut just a little groove right down the middle. Now cut some more pindaíbas around two inches in diameter in your jungle. Cut them the right length so they will fit between the foundation and the log you placed over the top. Slightly sharpen the bottom so it will stay in place in the groove in the foundation. On the top you lash the pindaíbas together with more palm frond strips, or even with rawhide. Leave a space for a door and a window or two. The same procedure is used for inside walls.

Step ten: Obviously the vertical poles you have used for walls are full of gaping spaces. Go down to the river and get some clay, mix it with fresh cow dung, and plaster the walls inside and out. It makes one sturdy wall.

There, your house is done. All except for the stove and the furniture. More on that next month. ▲

## Readers ask...

What has happened to the frozen bank accounts? Will they be returned? Wayne W. Miller

Just a bit of background on this question. When President Collor took office a year

ago in March, inflation was up to 80% per month. Compound that and you come up with more or less 115,000% per year.

Obviously this was Collor's number one problem. He decided to try something that was tried in Germany in the 40s when their inflation hit wheelbarrow proportions (that is, it took a wheelbarrow of money to buy a wheelbarrow of groceries. Since inflation is an excess of money circulating, less money in circulation should mean lower inflation.

Secretly Collor got everything in gear for this. When he took office his first action was to decree a banker's holiday and confiscate all savings accounts, overnight applications and money in checking accounts over a certain amount.

Alas, what's good for the Germans isn't necessarily good for the Brazilians. It's true that it did cut inflation over night, but it's also true that lots of people didn't like it. Actually, it was good for the poor people. Now there was no inflation and obviously they didn't have a lot of money stashed away to be confiscated.

Latins don't have the rigid discipline that the Germans have. To make a plan like this work and workable it is, as the Germans proved requires a rigid discipline. This was lacking here. Soon all kinds of exceptions were made for people to get part or all of their money back. I don't know what percent is still confiscated. At the end of 18 months, the money still being held by the government will be returned with interest and monetary correction, which theoretically should keep up with inflation.

Was it all a big failure? By no means. It wasn't the success it could and should have been, but right now our inflation is down to a very manageable 6-8%. The freeze that was slapped on most everything that can be bought or sold here sometime ago, is slowly being lifted.

How many of the folks from the Colony got hurt by this freeze? I don't know. I know some did. Did it really do some in? No. It did put some in a bind for a time. However, between having some of their money confiscated and inflation coming way down or not having the money confiscated and continue with 80% inflation, confiscation was better.