

# Brazil News

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Editorial

## **Through a Glass Darkly**

When Jesus said “Go ye into all the world,” the total population of the earth was in the lower millions. According to religious historians, the Great Commission was literally fulfilled in most, if not all, of the known world.

Today, if every member—man, woman, and youth—of the Church of God would become a missionary, each individual field would be composed of more than 300 thousand souls, in order that the entire world be ministered to.

This places us in the dilemma of the twelve apostles who were suddenly confronted with the problem of feeding five thousand men, plus women and children. Just the men would have come to over four hundred meals per apostle. Had some loaves and fishes not turned up and been placed in Jesus’ hands, many seekers would have left hungry.

It seems that one lesson Jesus wanted to teach His apostles was that He would prepare the food and they should be the waiters. This lesson continues valid.

After persecutions ceased in the 16th century, there was a definite decline in the spirituality of God’s people. By the time John Holdeman came on the scene, the situation of the church was anything but pleasant. His work was not to build bridges to distant lands, but to gather scattered bricks that could be used on the now almost bare foundation. Obviously, little was said about the Great Commission during this period—and rightfully so.

As Holdeman’s work was blessed and God’s church again became a functioning body, the Great Commission, that for several centuries had been in virtual hibernation, began to show signs of life. Scattered sparks of conviction began to converge, sending up feeble columns of smoke. And where there is smoke, there is fire. Concerned brethren began fanning the embers and a wobbly kneed mission program was born.

But a mission program it was.

The first decades spent in Mexico and New Mexico possibly taught us more about

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how not to do mission work than how to be successful missionaries. This is no disrespect to the first missionaries or Mission Board. The first rocket sent up by NASA didn't land on the moon. Many painful lessons were to be learned before a lunar landing could become a reality.

Even though the world population at the concept of our mission program was less than half of what it is today, the enormity of the task still weighed heavily on responsible ones. It was evident that if the world was to be evangelized on a one-to-one basis, that is, by missionaries, we weren't even in the ballpark.

It was here that the Lord appeared with the loaves and the fishes. Alf Yost and Reuben Buller were some of the first ones to recognize the potential of tiny little loaves and fishes – of little pieces of paper with several thousand words written on them. They became waiters, serving far greater numbers than an ordinary missionary could possibly serve.

Traditionally the missionary has been seen as the means of fulfilling the Great Commission, with tracts and gospel literature filling a supportive role.

Once again sparks of conviction are flying upward. This time they embody the thought that maybe—just maybe—tracts, the little loaves and fishes, are the means by which the Great Commission will be fulfilled, with missionaries in a supportive role.

For the sake of the remainder of this article, let's assume that this is really the case.

This takes us back to Pentecost. In a reverse situation, instead of going out to all nations, a good many nations came to them. The apostles were totally unprepared to speak to “Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians” in their native tongues. Due to the unprecedented—and totally unexpected—opportunity to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to a multitude of souls, the Holy Spirit gave the gift of tongues. This was an emergency solution for an emergency situation. In other words, since there was no way, nor time, to prepare for this event, God again multiplied the loaves and the fishes.

Today God expects us to prepare for the challenge He has placed before us.

A recent Time article tells of the preparations the Mormons have made to carry out the Great Commission. Approximately 60 of the world's languages are spoken in the State of Utah by their faithful.

In the State of Kansas it is doubtful that a half dozen are spoken.

To spread the gospel in an unknown tongue, having to rely on the translation done by non-members, is like two people who don't speak the same language getting married and having to communicate through an interpreter.

Some of our Brazilian airports have thick, possibly shaded, plate glass windows between customs and the lounge where relatives and friends await their loved ones.

A very common scene is for someone inside to make eye contact with someone who is waiting outside. Possibly it's husband and wife, parents and children, friend and friend. As they wait for their luggage to be released, they wave, they smile, they possibly even come to the window to see each other better. They become excited.

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But they can't communicate. They can't embrace. They can't hand over the gift they brought along. For they see each other through a glass darkly.

If we subscribe to the idea that tract distribution is a worthy work, that it is an integral part of the Great Commission, we are going to have to get a move on. Or be relegated to working through a glass darkly.

Really, what are we getting at?

Mission work, whether on a one-to-one basis or by the written page, is the art of communication.

Missionaries going to a foreign field feel a real sense of achievement when they learn several dozen basic phrases: Good morning. How are you? What's your name? How's your courage, brother?

Then comes the realization that they are communicating through a glass darkly. That soon gets old—for folks on both sides of the glass. Communication is more than smiles and the waving of hands. It's the exchange of ideas. It's clearly transmitting a message. It's showing a way. This can't be done successfully for any length of time through a glass darkly.

Brazil has a population of approximately 150 million souls. At present we have five missionary couples. That leaves 3 million souls per couple. Obviously if we are going to go into all the world here in Brazil, it's not going to be done on a one-to-one basis.

The tract work was begun here in Brazil in January of 75 by Mark and Glenda Loewen. The present workers, Stephen and Dete Kramer, are receiving approximately 1500 letters a month. Approximately 95% of them are from distributors asking for more tracts. The remainder, which comes to 75 letters, ask for spiritual help or orientation.

Assuredly this is more than one man can handle, even with a computer. A novel solution has developed for this problem. Beginning with the former tract workers, Calvin and Donna Hibner, those writing were given a free subscription to the Mensageiro, the Brazilian Messenger, a 16 page publication sent out on a bi-weekly basis. This policy has been maintained and at present 500 Mensageiros are being printed. One hundred go to the three congregations. Most of the remainder are sent all over Brazil, as well as to the Portuguese speaking countries of Mozambique and Angola.

Due to the absolute impossibility of paying a personal visit to all of those who find our tracts and seem sincere, twice a month we are sending them a plate of food that we feel has the minimum requirements for spiritual survival, as well as instructions on how to be saved.

The thought presented earlier that the missionary may eventually be used in a supportive capacity in the tract work has become a reality here in Brazil.

In the town of Patos, in the northeastern State of Paraíba, tracts were received by different ones. They wrote to the tract center and soon were receiving the Mensageiro. So much interest was shown that today Sam & Erma Coblentz and son are stationed there.

In this little paper we have discussed some of the cultural, social and economical

problems we have in this country. They exist. But on the other hand, and this is what makes it worth while to put up with some discomforts, we are in a beautiful setting to do exactly the kind of mission work I have described. Living here, we have direct exposure to the culture, to the language and to the people. Really this is wonderful. Or to put it more succinctly, the dark glass has been removed.

This is a solution in Brazil, but not in the many other countries that are crying for help. In the majority of them there is no one in the church who speaks their language, who can assure us that tracts are properly translated, who knows the customs and culture of the people, thus being able to select literature especially suited to their situation.

The tract office in Moundridge is doing miracles, sending out loaves and fishes in many different languages. Even so, how much of this work is being done through a glass darkly? Without a liaison between the sender and the receiver?

The apostles didn't sit around waiting for the Lord to give them the gift of tongues. They were busy at work when it suddenly happened.

If we are to acquire the tongues we so desperately need, we will have to get busy. Time is running out. Should we consider selecting couples with the gift of (learning) tongues and sending them to foreign countries – maybe two couples to a country – for the express purpose of becoming fluent in the language of that people, to learn their customs? ▲

More on this next month

## Politics

### **Collorgate**

At the best, Brazilian politics are turbulent. To be president is no easy task in a society that either idolizes or vilifies (usually in that order) its chief executives.

Brazil's first president, Deodoro da Fonseca, who held office from 1889-91, was forced to resign from the high office.

Washington Luís Pereira de Sousa, president from 1926-30, resigned after popular opinion became intolerable.

Getúlio Vargas served his first term from 1930-45 as a virtual dictator. He was forced out of office by the military. During a second term, 1951-54, he again was pressured to resign by the military. He solved the problem by taking his own life.

Jânio Quadros, president from January 31 to August 25 of 1961, suddenly and mysteriously resigned.

João Goulart, 1961-64, a leftist orientated president, was forced out of office by the military. Twenty years of military dictatorship followed.

Tancredo Neves, the first civilian elected president in 1985 after the military dictatorship, never took office. Operated for an intestinal disorder on the eve of his

inauguration, he died 38 days later. Contrary to the opinion of sensationalists, he was not assassinated by military doctors. José Sarney, the vice president, assumed the presidency.

There is no doubt but what Collor can soon be added to this list of presidential casualties. Speculation has narrowed down to how he will leave office, that is, if he will be impeached, if he will resign, or as someone has suggested, he commit suicide.

Anyone interested in an expert analysis of Collor's dilemma should read the September 7 issue of Time magazine.

I mentioned a number of months ago that the President's wife, Rosane, pulled some shenanigans involving a lot of money, but that in a gesture of good will, congress and the people were graciously overlooking this, so as not to upset Collor's programs. This good will has evaporated into thin air. The courts have ordered her to repay the taxpayer's money spent in an extravagant birthday party for a friend, and it looks like there is a lot more to come.

The big question mark now is the vice president, Itamar Franco, who will assume when Collor steps down. In his favor he has a very clean record. Against him is his ultra conservatism, a reluctance to sell off state owned industry and give free market policies a real chance.

Brazil owes much to Collor. However, at this point, if he wants to keep on serving his nation, he can do it best by resigning.

One extremely positive development in this whole situation is clear proof that democracy is now here to stay. This whole episode is taking an orderly course and everything indicates that the changing of the guard will not result in any political upheavals. There is talk that the present Economy Minister will be retained by Franco. If this happens, inflation should slowly begin to drop again. Economists calculate that without Collorgate, inflation would have dropped to 15% by now. Political uncertainty is keeping it in the neighborhood of 20%. ▲

## Local Elections

I don't believe I have ever given the impression that politicians are saintly people. Some have more principle than others. Some are more competent. But generally speaking, they all have the same birth mother.

Brazilian politicians certainly are no exception to this rule.

In November, Brazilians will elect *prefeitos* (mayors) and *vereadores* (county commissioners) in all county seats throughout the country.

Since our *municípios* (municipalities or counties) many times are huge, almost like small states, a mayor carries a lot of political clout. It isn't unusual for a federal congressman to resign in order to become a candidate for mayor.

These races for mayor and county commissioner are hotly disputed. Each candidate spends fabulous sums of money. Especially for mayor, this can easily run into millions

of dollars. Unfortunately, directly or indirectly, this is taxpayer's money. It's true that individuals give heavily, but always expecting – and usually getting – something in return.

In Rio Verde we have only two serious contenders for prefeito this year. It isn't unusual to see four, five and up to six candidates contending for the same office.

Especially the campaign for mayor and vereador are corrupt since a lot of the votes come from poor folks who can, as they say here, be bought off with a par de botinas (pair of work shoes).

How does a local campaign operate here? To get an idea, we're going to see how Roberto and Elídia, the composite characters from several previous stories, come to a conclusion who should get their vote.

### Scene One

Pedro Moreira (Roberto's boss, sitting on the corral fence): Well, Roberto, I suppose by now you have decided for whom you are going to vote, right?

Roberto (looking sort of uneasy): Seu Roberto (the seu is a term of respect, something like don in Spanish), I think that I'm going to just make one great big X on my ballot so that they will have to annul it.

Pedro (with a look of kind consternation): Roberto! But why would you do something like that? Don't you like any of the candidates?

Roberto: To tell you the truth, seu Pedro, I think they're all from the same laia (pack of thieves). What have they done for me that I should vote for them?

Pedro (kindly): Yes, yes, Roberto, I know what you're thinking. Our present mayor is the biggest thief in the world – after Collor, of course. But listen, I don't believe you are acquainted with Samuel Fonseca. He is one good (at this point he tugs on his ear lobe, which shows he is the best) man. He will do miracles for you – for everyone.

Roberto (attempting to show indifference): Huh! Will he do miracles for people who don't vote for him?

Pedro (slightly red-faced and visibly uncomfortable. A mighty shrewd question for a hired man): Well, uh, ya, you might look at it like this, he needs your vote to be elected and I'm sure he will remember you."

Roberto (feeling quite smug inside): That's funny, seu Pedro, to this day no one has ever remembered me after he was elected. And what if he looses?

Pedro (triumphantly): That's the whole reason to vote for Samuel Fonseca. He is one good (another tug at the ear) candidate. He never forgets anyone. He is muito caridoso (full of good works). If you only knew how many people he has helped....

Roberto (interrupting, playing his trump card): Seu Pedro, you are convincing me. I am willing to vote for a man like that....

Pedro (interrupting smiling from ear to ear): You're an intelligent man, Roberto. You....

Roberto (interrupting): And like I was saying, since Samuel is a caridoso man and likes to help others, I feel confident he would help me with a problem I am having.

Pedro (his ear to ear smile slowly shrinking to normal size): Who knows, he just might.

Roberto (skillfully playing his cards): Just a minute! You mean there are some preconditions to Samuel's caridade, is that it?

Pedro (a few beads of sweat breaking out on his forehead): Well, you know that Samuel is from a poor family...

Roberto (gleefully finishing the sentence): And so he is going to have to steal like everyone else.

Pedro: No, no! You missed the point. He won't steal one single centavo from anyone.

Roberto: That settles it! I won't vote for him! If he's poor and won't steal, how will he help the 30 thousand people who will have to vote for him so he can be elected? Huh?

Pedro (totally defeated): OK, OK. What do you want?

Roberto: Well, I think you noticed how Elídia limps. She broke her leg when she was a child and her folks didn't take her to the doctor. It healed all crooked. It's going to take a surgery to get it fixed. The doctor wants five hundred dollars to do it.

Pedro (knowing inwardly that Roberto has driven a mighty hard bargain for two votes – his and Elídia's): Well, uh, I'll see what I can do for you.

## Scene two

(A plush living room where Pedro and a dozen other men are sitting in a circle in serious conversation)

Fernando (leader): Well fellows, what did you come up with? How many votes from your hired men can you guarantee me?

First speaker: Fernando, those were the good old days when a pair of botinas would buy a vote. I have 12 hired men, plus their wives, which makes for 24 votes. But by the time I added up what they were asking for, it came to 200 dollars per hired man.

Fernando: That's terrible! That's outrageous!

Second speaker: What do you mean? I have 16 votes on my fazenda. I talked until I was red in the face, but I couldn't get them down to one cent below 250 dollars per hired man.

Fernando (a livid red, on the verge of a cerebral hemorrhage): Listen....

Pedro (interrupting): Calm down! Calm down! We're in a new era. I have five hired men. Four of them will settle for 250 a piece, but one of them insists on 500 dollars so his wife can have surgery. I am positive that if I say no, all the hired men in the area will find out and back out. They think a lot of Roberto and Elídia.

Fernando (doing a few quick calculations): That comes to 300 per hired man.

Third speaker: Look, Fernando, either you come up with this kind of money or our candidate will loose. Understand?

Fernando: We're talking big money. Look, the only thing I can do is talk with Samuel Pereira and see what he says.

### Scene three

(The patio of a mansion. Seven men are seated in a circle.)

Samuel: I just had another survey done and we're tied right now with the next closest candidate. Fellows, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE ONE SINGLE VOTE! And we have to come up with at least another five thousand to tie this election up.

Pedro: Samuel, votes aren't cheap any more. On my place, for example, I am having to pay an average of 150 dollars per vote.

Samuel: That's OK! Understand. I'll pay double that per vote if I have to to get another five thousand votes. I've talked to the governor (who is from his party) and he says we must win this election or else! Go at it men. I need more votes! Tell my secretary how much each of you need and he will deposit the money in your accounts.

### Scene four

(The governor's mansion. The governor and two dozen candidates are present)

Governor (shuffling through some computer printouts): Gentlemen, by the last surveys done, I see you are doing some good work. Fortunately, money isn't a problem. I have been siphoning off tax money that comes into our central office ever since I became governor two years ago. So long as the federal government doesn't do an audit on me, we're OK. Keep at it men, we're going to win!"

### Scene five

(A comício – political rally three days before the election)

Samuel Pereira (speaking to a crowd of 10 thousand people): ...and if elected, ladies and gentlemen, I promise to be a mayor like you have never had before. No more corruption! (applause) No more stealing! (applause) No more bribes! (applause) What do I plan on doing with tax money? I will build a hospital for the poor folks! (applause) I will pave the streets in the poorer sections of town! (applause) I will...

### Scene six

(The mayor's office, a month after the new mayor has assumed his new position)

Municipal treasurer: Samuel, how do I do this? I need 150 thousand dollars to pay our workers and I don't have a dime? I am needing another 200 thousand for general operating expenses. Now what?

Mayor: Ya I know, ya I know. We're more than broke. Tell them we'll be several days late. Keep telling them that. Some will quit, but so what? We'll have to limp along like this for a while. This campaign was a real drag...

That, my good readers, is local politics in Brazil. It's a national disgrace. But amazingly it is a system that works –at least to a fashion.

When we stop to count our many blessings, let's not forget to thank the Lord for the doctrine of separation of church and state, that we are spared the anguish of deciding which candidate is less corrupt. ▲



## Emma Burns' Diary

### First Rains

#### Sat – Sept 15, 69

Denton and Charlie went to Brasília to see about Charlie's freight. Carlos (age 4) and I went to the river to scrub Denton's coveralls on a rock. Miriam came with Yolanda (16 mo.) so the children played in the water. The girls came and sifted some more dirt to make Cinva-Ram blocks. We covered the sacks of cement as it was cloudy and thundering, the first signs of the rainy season.

While we were eating supper, in walks Doris. Jona tried crossing the "bridge" on the Pirapitinga Creek without anyone to guide him across and slipped off. So they had to walk five miles. [Just a note on the "bridge." It was merely two narrow beams crossing the creek. Any slight miscalculation could prove embarrassing.]

Charlies sleep in the tent now that Jonas moved to their new house.

#### Tue – Sept 16

Since the men were gone and Jonas aren't here for meals anymore, we slept until 7:00. The girls went to sift dirt and set some fishing poles. We saw five snowy white egrets. Are they beautiful!

The girls, Timothy and I fished all afternoon. Timothy and Miriam each caught a small one. We heard a little monkey (marmoset) in our little woods. We all had to go see it.

We planted 30 orange and tangerine trees when we moved here. Today we were all excited, we found two little oranges on one of the trees in our new orchard.

#### Wed – Sept 17

Timothy and I stomped clothes. It was a windy day and a clothesline broke, so we had to rinse some clothes over. At 2:30 p.m. it started to lighten and thunder, so we got the clothes in. It sprinkled, but didn't rain.

The girls let the sledge hammer head fall into the river yesterday, so today they tied a rope around Miriam and she went down to get it.

Waneta Dyck brought us some delicious peanut cookies. We took some to the falls for the girls who were sifting dirt. Carlos went with me. There was a pair of parrots with a nest in a palm tree. They sure were noisy. I got some sand in a sack to take for a sand pile for Carlos and Yolanda. I mended and transplanted some tomatoes. To mend and sew we just turn the wheel on the portable singer by hand. It's slow, but we get it done.

#### Fri – Sept 19

Jona went to fix the "bridge." They saw a white-tailed deer. They went to Manoels for oranges, but since they couldn't understand each other, came back without any.

It lightened and thundered and really rained, our first rain on the fazenda. Every seam on the masonite roof leaked. We had to move things and cover everything up to keep from getting wet. The tent nearly blew over. We had to get a rope and tie the tent to a tree and to the house to hold it up. Our 16x20 foot house is full since there is no other building to store things in. We had to bring the mash, etc. into the house and with the dirt floor all wet, it looked more like a barn than a house. Had some blankets hung up to dry and some mattresses got wet. John Penners came to spend the evening.

### **Sat – Sept 20**

It rained in the night and this morning. I put on a sweater and used a plastic fertilizer bag for a scarf and went out to stomp [wash] clothes. Later in the day I went to town with Jona and Doris. It sprinkled off and on all the way home from town. At the “bridge” it was so slick that we couldn’t make it up on the other side. So Jona backed up and took a run at it. Doris and I pushed with all our might and we made it up the hill and got home. Their son Ralph had shot a 7.5 lb. wild duck and was dressing it.

Denton and Charlie got back from Brasília. They got Charlie’s freight, but got stuck at the “bridge” and had to walk home. They got here around 10:00 p.m.

### **Sun – Sept 21**

We went to church. John Penner preached. Charlies and we were to John Penners for dinner. It was so delicious! The bread and cake Alma baked in the oven on top of her wood stove. Their little house is so homey. We went to pull their pickup out of the mud. The sun was shining and we saw the sun go down behind the trees at Johns. It was the first we’ve seen a sunset for over a month. Since all the rain, the smoke from all the grass fires cleared the atmosphere and once again we can see the horizon.

### **Tue – Sept 23**

Mary mixed bread and we baked it in a tin oven on top of the wood stove. We put tin and bricks on the side and top to keep in the heat. The bread turned out perfect. The first I baked in Brazil. ▲

## **Chapter 1**

### **Two Little Girls**

Why chapter 1?

I have hesitated to tell this story because it’s incomplete. And yet there was a persistent feeling that maybe now would be a good time to tell chapter 1. Your prayers may make a difference on chapter 2. Or 3...

Before Brad and Joleen Koehn came to Brazil to adopt a child, they had heard about two little girls who were staying with Laura Costa and were needing a home.

When they got to Brazil and the mother of the child they had originally planned to adopt began wavering in her decision to sign off her rights, a feeler was sent out to the mother of the two little girls. Would she be interested in having someone adopt her children?

The answer came the next day. She would like to talk.

Just a word on the mother. Her profession, while one of the oldest, certainly is not of the noblest. By the time she was 20, she had four children – none living with her for any amount of time.

Brads and Faith & I went to see the mother. After several minutes of talk she came to the point. She wanted a house in exchange for the two little girls. Brad told her no way. She agreed to think about it.

Several days later she agreed to let Brads have her two little girls.

It was a happy family: Daddy, Mommy, Lana (Brad's 11 year old girl), Daiane (age 7), Danila (age 5) and infant Bruce (whom they still had at this point).

Within a matter of several weeks, the mother of the two children began calling demanding money. I told Brads what she wanted and they decided it would be best to take them back to the mother.

This is what we did. She hardly knew how to react when we took the children back. Brads left the door open that if she someday decided to let them have the girls with no strings attached, they would still be interested.

In a matter of a week or so, she began calling. She wanted to talk with Brads. We went in to see her. It was explained in very clear Portuguese that not one centavo would be paid for the two little girls.

Because of her profession and circumstances I prefer not to go into here, we felt it would be best if they didn't spend the year-end holidays with her. Knowing what kind of a woman she was and the possibility of her backing out, Brads decided not to take the children, to avoid the pain of detaching themselves again, should it come to that. So we took them in on a temporary basis. After some time with no new demands, Brads took them in again until they left for the US. At this point we took the two little girls in.

Everything went well. The mother left town. Quite often she called to see how the girls were doing. Everything seemed to be going OK.

Shortly before I left for the States in April, the mother called and said that she wanted the two little girls back because the biological father, who supposedly lives in northeastern Brazil wanted them back. That sounded mighty fishy. I asked if she herself wanted them back and she said no. I told her it was simple then. She should just forget about it. No, she said, she couldn't because he was threatening her.

To understand what happened here, we must go back to when we got the children for the second time. We took the mother to the Conselho Tutelar a newly established organ with the responsibility of seeing after abandoned children. She signed a document there giving us temporary guardianship of the two little girls until such a time that they could be adopted by someone.

Unfortunately, this document was drawn up wrong and ended up having no legal value.

I told our lawyer what the mother said, that she was being threatened by the father and wanted the children back. He petitioned the judge to give us temporary guardianship.

Then, while I was in the States, these two little girls were given a most undeserving blow. The lawyer from the Conselho Tutelar who had been taking care of this case all along, suddenly turned colors and took the mother's side – for reasons which I won't explain here.

He petitioned the judge to have the children returned to the mother. Faith told me over the phone that the mother's lawyer had called and said we should return the children. I told her to just let things ride until I got home.

I hadn't been home too long when one day the Popular, the Goiânia daily newspaper that circulates over the whole state, came out with a front page article saying she had asked us to take care of her children while she went to Uberlândia, a city approximately 250 miles from here, for a short time. When she came back we refused to let her have her children back. I understand she went on local TV and had her story aired.

Then one day while I was working in the Publication Room, a car drove in. I glanced up and saw it had some kind of a sticker on the door. I didn't pay much attention, since it is common for salesmen to come here.

When I looked out again, I saw the mother and the man she was living with. They were walking toward the house and trailing them was a reporter and a photographer with a TV camera. About all I had time to do was pray, "Lord, help me to know what to say."

It didn't take long to tell where the reporter was headed, what kind of a story he had been told.

He wanted to know if the two little girls were here with us. I told him they were and I believe it surprised him. He wanted to know where they were. I invited them in. That morning the girls had slept in and were still eating their breakfast. The mother rushed over and made a big scene in front of the cameras. Then she and her man went into a harangue about what awful people we were.

Then the reporter turned on me. What document did I have authorizing us to have the children? We had none, but it was in the judge's hands. Were we trying to adopt the girls? No. How many adopted children did we have? Four. Where were they? Three were here in Brazil and one moved to the States after getting married.

At this point he began to probe every possible way to get information out of me. Finally I sounded like a broken record, answering, "Talk to the judge about that."

I'm sure the Lord heard my little prayer. The interview wasn't going at all the way it was supposed to. The man would move out in front of the camera and begin waving his arms and yelling. I knew things were definitely changing when the man behind the camera began winking at me.

The reporter did his absolute best to get me to tell my version of the story, which

I refused to do. Finally he asked if the woman was telling the truth. I answered, “Her version of the truth is different than mine.”

Finally I told the reporter it was enough. I would answer no more questions. That ended the formal part of the interview.

On their way out I called the reporter into the Publication Room to talk with him off the record. The man followed right in, but the reporter asked him to get out. I asked him, “Do you realize that those two didn’t tell you a single thing that was the truth?” Yes, he answered, he did, “And that is why I would like to have your version.” He did his best to get my story off the record. Even that I refused. Then real quiet like he asked me about the lawyer from the Conselho Tutelar who had turned colors. I refused to comment, other than to say that it was lamentable what had happened.

What was the story the reporter had been told? As nearly as I can piece it together, they told him we were selling children to couples in the US. The way we were doing it was by adopting them here and then taking them to the US and selling them.

I don’t think we were very far into the interview before both the reporter and cameraman realized they were on a wild goose chase. So just before they left I told them they should go to town and talk with our family doctor who has known us for over 23 years and is also a coronel in the military.

The reporters returned to Rio Verde. They went to the courthouse and asked people if they knew me. Apparently no one would say anything bad about us. They went to see the judge, and according to the reporter, who called me later, she told them what I would not tell them, that the mother, not I, is strongly suspected of criminal activity. I won’t comment at this point what that is.

They looked up our doctor, whose nom de guerre, incidentally is, Coronel Guerra. A number of days later Faith and I went to see him. He immediately wanted to tell us what had happened. I’ll reduce to several paragraphs what he told in possibly half an hour. It went something like this:

“I met the reporters and the couple outside of the hospital. They wanted to interview me, but I told them I couldn’t be interviewed without authorization from my superiors, but I invited them into my office for an off the record chat. For some reason the man didn’t want to come in, so I turned all military and ordered, ‘MAN, YOU GET IN THERE RIGHT NOW!’ and he came right along.

“I told them I have known you since 1970...” Actually since 69. He went heavy on his recommendation. While he was talking another doctor came along. He said, “Dr. Lenildo, what can you tell me about Becker?” He really laid it on heavy too.

Then he named off our adopted children, giving a little rundown on each one.

Finally, in front of the reporter, he turned to the couple and read them their pedigree in some mighty clear Portuguese. By this time the reporter was mad....

To say the very least, facing TV cameras under this type of circumstances isn’t a thrilling experience. I assumed it was the local TV station, or at the very worst, the state-wide network.

I called Dr. Tereza, the social worker, and a very good friend of ours. She knew

all about everything. I told her we would hand the children over immediately if she thought best. She talked to the judge and sent word back, “Do NOT do any such a thing.”

Later that evening I was in contact with Dr. Tereza again, and she dropped the bomb shell. All this was to be aired on the national network at 6:45 p.m. the following day.

The only solution I knew was to talk to my best Friend about all this. He told me to look in His Word. But where?

For our family devotions we usually choose a book of the Bible and read it chapter by chapter (or a number of verses when the chapter is long). He told me to look at the scripture I would read the following morning. I opened the Bible to Psalm 119 and my eyes fell on verse 83. I began to read:

For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.

How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law.

All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.

They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.

Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

I ceased to fear. The following morning when I read those verses to the family, there was a special grace during prayer and I knew things would be alright. I think the family felt the same thing.

That evening, about the time 6:45 news should be over, I expected the phone to begin ringing with people from town telling me what was aired. Nothing. Finally the Japanese girl who used to work in my store – and knew about what was going on – called and said nothing had come over the air.

I called Dr. Tereza. “No,” she said, “nothing came over the news,” and then somewhat mysteriously added, “and I don’t believe anything will.” At this point I won’t print her reason.

As Coronel Guerra said, the reporter at this point was mad. And it was here I realized what kind of a miracle the Lord really performed. The reporter now turned on the couple and told them that he himself (I believe he is stationed in Goiânia) wasn’t supposed to have come out, but rather the most famous reporter in Brazil who is a household word. For some reason he wasn’t able to come. He said, “And what would have happened if he would have come out all the way from São Paulo to hear your lies?”

In Psalm 141:8-10 the Lord renewed His promise:

*But mine eyes are unto thee,*

*O God the Lord: in thee is my trust;*

*save not my soul destitute.*

*Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me,*

*and the gins of the workers of iniquity.*

*Let the wicked fall into their own nets,*

*whilst that I withal escape.*

Sometime before this thing with the reporters came up, I went to our lawyer and asked him to tell the judge that anytime she wanted the two little girls back, to just let us know. We would immediately bring them in. Not only did the lawyer do that, but he also drew up a document, which he gave to the judge, stating very clearly that we were placing the children at her disposal. In other words, we were no longer asking to keep them.

After one particularly trying time with the mother, who came out to see the children, we went in to the Conselho Tutelar and told Dr. Tereza that we were going to return the children to the judge. She beat it to the judge and the answer came back, “For the love of God, do NOT let them return the children.”

This brings us to the legal aspect of the case. Brazilian law, as American law, to quite an extent, gives the birth mother the benefit of the doubt. So far as winning this case by calling in witnesses – and yes, going on TV and giving the other version of the truth – it would be simple. And very satisfying to the flesh, I must add. Unless the judge has very solid proof against the mother, by law she must return the two little girls to her. She knows what the mother is. She knows she doesn’t actually want the children. She knows what she wants. And she knows of things she has done that could cost her her freedom. But like our lawyer says, “In court the truth in itself has no value. It is the truth that can be proven by documents or witnesses that has value.” Because of our religious beliefs, we aren’t producing this proof.

But everything indicates that another “Lawyer” is working on this case. This is fortunate. The wrath of this couple appears to know no bounds, as could well be seen as they stood before the TV cameras, attempting to lie to the entire nation. Job says, “Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment.”

The trial date was set. We were asked to bring the two little girls in, that the judge wanted to talk to them, as logically, she would also want to talk to the birth mother, and maybe to us.

We were leery about how the two little children would respond to the judge. The experience with the TV crew was extremely traumatic for them. Their tendency was to clam up and even act retarded.

I talked to Dr. Tereza about this. She and another member of the Conselho Tutelar came out. The girls already thought the world of Dr. Tereza, but Sérgio proved to be another God-send. They opened up to both of them and told the whole story, how they had been kicked around, locked up in the house with bread and water, etc.

This all went on paper as two separate reports and were given to the judge as proof. Dr. Tereza said, “Don’t you worry about how the two little girls will get along with the judge. She has a way with children.”

Unfortunately I have run out of space to finish Chapter 1. More next month.

Just one little thought, both of the little girls take their turn praying at mealtime. The oldest one invariably begins, “Dear Jesus, take care of Daddy and Mommy and Lana and Bruce.”

I believe He will take care of the two little girls too. Even so, remember them. ▲

## Remembering Out Loud

### **Twenty Years Later**

Faith and I were in the grocery store the other day. I saw another lady buying groceries. It seemed I had seen her someplace, but I couldn't remember where. Suddenly she smiled, came up to me and held out her hand. "Do you remember me?" she asked. I told her there was a little bell ringing, but I couldn't for the life of me remember who she was.

She introduced herself and said, "I was your student when you gave English classes in town over twenty years ago. You used to call me Nancy. Do you remember me?"

I remembered calling one of my students Nancy, but still couldn't get the gears to mesh.

She continued, "I live here in Rio Verde. I studied to be a dentist and have been working here for ten years, but have never had the nerve to talk to you all this time, because one day I crawled over the wall into your back yard and stole some mangos off of your mango tree. You saw me do it and it has haunted me all these years. But now, thanks to God, I am a Christian and I can admit what I did."

Suddenly I remembered her, her sister, who also studied with me, her brother and her dad.

### **My Soldier Student**

Nancy makes me remember another student I had. He was a policeman and his name was Jeswaldo Galvão. His work schedule didn't permit him to be in all the classes, but when he did come I would simply lay aside my prepared lesson.

Jeswaldo would come to the door and in soldierly fashion, stop, bow slightly, and say, "Good morning, Mr. Becker. May I say..." and he would repeat a new phrase he had thought up in English.

He would now come in and sit down with the rest of the class and listen to my comments on his new phrase. Without fail my explanation would bring another question to his mind and that is how we would pass the next hour. Everyone: Jeswaldo, Mr. Becker, and the rest of the students enjoyed these impromptu classes.

### **This & That**

When Sheldon Radel was born on August 11, Sid and Irene Schmidt decided to be the parents. They think he's sweet.

Conversion, Consecration & Christlike Service, by Marjorie Hiebert, is now in print in Portuguese. One last session with the proofreaders and Paulo David, and Hear Their Cry, by Marjorie Unruh, will be ready to print, our 10th book in Portuguese.

Ken & Dindy Weisenberg came on August 9 to adopt Melissa Kay. Everything is going well so far. Paula Schultz came with them.



## Brazil 17 News

Laura Costa had back surgery on August 31. It takes more than that to keep her down. Junior Sewing at the Monte Alegre Cong. was held on the 11th. A comforter was tied for Moacyr's niece and nephews, who are going to be living in the little house on the old Harold Dirks place.

A new spillway is being put into the dam between Schmidts and Loewens. More details on that in another issue.

Carman & Celma Loewen ordered shelled pecans from the southern state of Santa Catarina. They were sold here for US\$2.77 a pound. Talk about good!

The entire American Colony is on this side of the Equator again. The last stragglers were: Clifford & Naomi Warkentin and family, Stan & Kathy Holdeman and family, Clinton and Marie Unruh and family, Reno & Marilyn Hibner, Will & Ann Miller, Daniel & Betty Martin & family.

On August 30, late in the afternoon, we watched Myron, son of John & Joan Unruh, and Sheila, daughter of Edna Loewen, get married.

Tony, Veril & Ileen's son, and Wynelle, daughter of Ike & Rosalee Loewen have decided to get married.

Likewise, Milton, Edna Loewen's son and Cindy, Daniel & Betty Martin's girl.

Corrine Isaac from Canada is planning on spending this school term here at the Monte Alegre School teaching the lower grades. She is living in the little house on Caleb Holdeman's yard.

We are easing into the rainy season. As I have mentioned before, the first rains usually are ushered in with violent electrical storms and a lot of wind. This year we have had some moderate winds, but the rains have been gentle.

With the rains, Mennonites have turned into farmers – or vice-versa. Field work is the order of the day.

The Leo Dirks and the Carlos Becker families went fishing at São Simão. I don't know if the fish bit as well as the mosquitoes.

The 5th was a local holiday, Rio Verde's 144th anniversary.

During the Exodus, so many people were gone from the Rio Verdinho Cong church that they canceled evening meetings and came to Monte Alegre. Now with increased Numbers, they are resuming their evening meetings.

Myron Kramer, the missionary in Pirenópolis, who now has the old PC first used in the work here, has begun translation of The Mirror of Truth in his spare moments. It's a monumental job.