

Brazil News



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Editorial

Governability

When God created man, He gave him dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing. Next He asked him to take care of the garden. Finally He gave him a wife with the understanding that he would take care of her.

That wasn't all. As children were born, man, together with his wife, were to help them develop into useful men and women.

Man was given leadership over men. As the population increased and towns and cities came into existence, he was to establish local government. Nations arose and man was made politically responsible.

Through this all, some men became lords and others vassals. To some were given one talent and to others many. Some ruled over little and others over much. This is the order of creation.

In all this, man is expected to have dominion over – govern – that for which he is responsible, be it much or little.

A cowboy mounts his horse. The horse bucks. The cowboy sails through the air. He remounts and again sails. And again. He is unable to control his horse.

A teenager drives down the road at a breakneck speed. Unable to make a curve, the car skids sideways and then begins to roll. He is unable to control his car.

A teacher announces that class will come to order, but no one pays any attention. She speaks louder, with equal results. Finally she shouts and threatens, but nothing happens. She is unable to control her class.

A field commander orders his troops to advance into heavy artillery fire. Instead of advancing, they scatter. He is unable to control his troops.

The ability to control a machine is called skill. The ability to control people is called leadership. Machines are easier to control than people.

James defines skill. It is the ability to steer a large ship with a very small helm. It follows that leadership is the ability of one individual to govern many. When this is impossible, we say that the situation is out of control.

In a democracy, one man is expected to stand at the helm of a large ship with millions, indeed hundreds of millions, of passengers. This man, usually a president or prime minister, gets the credit or blame for the general state of the nation.

For years democracy has functioned. In spite of defects, no better system has been found. In a drawn-out duel with communism, democracy triumphed – when the former dropped dead of a heart attack. Attempting to celebrate, the victor blindly stumbles over its fallen adversary.

Communism was not slain. It collapsed, it imploded. It committed suicide, if you like.

Where does that leave democracy?

Will democracy likewise implode? Or a bit more rudely, will it too commit suicide? Will the fact that democracy is based on Godly principles (as opposed to atheistic communism) guarantee it unlimited life?

If time continues another 50 years, will democracy, as we know it today, still exist? Positively not. It is doubtful it will last another 20 years. In fact, at this point it is very doubtful that it could survive a severe global crisis.

Why?

Because democracy is never stronger than the people who support it. To blame declining world conditions on democracy and suggest an alternate system, as communists did, is like saying that if a drunken driver had a better car, he would no longer be a menace on the road.

For democracy to function properly, there are certain preconditions.

Godly principals. We have mentioned that democracy is based on Godly principals. This presupposes that a large majority of the people are Godly and that they will elect Godly leaders who will endorse Godly principles. When this ceases to be the case, the backbone of democracy has been broken.

Tempered leaders. So far as leadership is concerned, the II World War is a great divider. Men who were at least in their teens during the War, who know what it means to do without, and what it means to make sacrifices for their nation, are of an entirely different breed than those who were born during or after the War, who possibly dodged the draft, and have very little, if any, sense of patriotism. These are untempered men, unfit for leadership. This doesn't preclude the possibility of the emergence of a strong post-war leader, but the chances are slim. Should such a man exist, the chances of being elected to office are even slimmer.

Patriotism. Patriotism today is found mainly in the cemetery. John Kennedy's rhetoric of not asking what your nation can do for you, but rather what you can do for your nation, now has an especially hollow ring to it. People no longer respect their government.

A serious people. For a nation to function, people must have common sense. They must be willing to put in an honest day's work. They must place a high value on their

family and on family life. They must have a sense of right and wrong. They must derive satisfaction from doing that which is honest and legitimate.

A place called home. A home is a house filled with love. No nation, no matter how Godly the principles on which it was founded, can survive without strong homes. There is no home strong enough to survive a TV set in the living room. To believe that love, purity, good principles and a strong family bond can be maintained while a little rectangular box spews out immorality, hate, and a totally warped view of life, is the height of folly. Many millions today are homeless (and we're not talking about people who sleep under bridges and stand in line for a bowl of soup).

Sound economics. On both a personal and a national level, the greatest secret to sound economics is restraint. The desire, or willingness, to systematically spend money before it is earned has only one possible long range outcome. The poorhouse. The majority of today's nations are economically broke.

Does man still have the ability to control the affairs of nation? Yes, there are still men with the necessary qualifications. Will they do it? Very likely not. The reason is simple. Democracy cannot function without free elections. When the populace becomes corrupt to where over fifty percent of the voters no longer fit into the preconditions listed above, then the best men will no longer be elected to office. Officials will be elected that campaign to the itching of the ears and then spend four years scratching their own.

The 1992 presidential elections in the US are more than a change of party. They are a change of policy, a change of direction. A president has been elected who believes that more spending will solve the government's financial woes. Who says prayer in school is a good thing, but doesn't plan on tackling the issue. Who doesn't feel abortion is a pretty thing, but understands that the Constitution grants women this right. Whose past would make even recent presidents blush, not to mention Lincoln and Washington.

Political commentators are heralding the end of conservatism, the beginning of a new day (or is it a night?).

When a cowboy loses control of his horse, he hits the sod. When a young fellow loses control of his car, he hits the ditch. When leaders lose control of events, what do they hit? They hit people – hundreds, thousands, millions of souls.

We as God's people should remain in touch with events. We should be preparing. While men and women loudly shout "peace and safety," events are subtly unfolding that are going to take a lot of people by surprise.

As has been mentioned before in this little paper, the next world-wide crisis could easily be set off by an economic disaster. An international crash of the stock market – a very real possibility – could have ramifications far beyond what we can imagine.

Back in the Great Depression, the world – and especially the US, the hardest hit – survived, vivid proof that democracy and capitalism work. But the folks from back those days fit into the preconditions already mentioned.

If ever there was a time to think seriously about the Biblical injunction of owing no man anything, it is today. The man who has both his spiritual and financial house in order will weather the storm – even if democracy doesn't. ▲

Politics

VASP

Ever since we moved here, there have been four principal Brazilian airlines: Varig, Cruzeiro, Transbrasil, and Vasp.

Varig, the largest, has taken tiny Cruzeiro under its wing and are flying together. Both are privately owned. Varig enjoys a high rating in both domestic and international flights. A lot of our people fly Varig.

Transbrasil, also privately owned, has had its ups and downs (I'm not talking about take-offs and landings), and yet it seems to be weathering the storms quite well. It is also an excellent airline to fly with a good safety record.

What do airlines have to do with politics?

Enter Vasp.

A lot. Vasp, until the beginning of the Collor administration, was owned by the state of São Paulo (VASP – Viação Área de São Paulo). It too seemed to be doing quite well, but as it turned out, by a different set of standards than the other airlines. To keep flying, it racked up enormous deficits. The state of São Paulo picked up the tab.

When, in the beginning of his presidency, Collor announced he was going to privatize Vasp, people everywhere applauded our courageous young president. Now people would like to see him stuck in jail for it.

Vasp was privatized, "sold" to a "gentleman" by the name of Pedro Canhedo. In the euphoria of the proof that privatization works, most failed to see several interesting factors.

1. Pedro Canhedo bought Vasp lock, stock and barrel virtually without money. How did he do it? Through government assent, he assumed Vasp's enormous debt load of 276 million dollars.

2. Almost immediately after taking over Vasp, Canhedo began talking about buying out other Latin American airlines. He acquired a number of new planes, upping his fleet to 58 jets – which flew at 55% capacity.

3. He began a price war that everyone liked except for his competitors and creditors. When I flew to the US in April, my ticket from Goiânia to Wichita and back cost 850 dollars on Vasp.

4. Things began getting really warm when Luís Octávio da Motta Veiga, the president of the state owned petroleum company, Petrobrás, resigned, publicly announcing that Pedro Canhedo was trying to force him (with Collor's knowledge) to make Vasp a 40 million dollar loan. In return, he would buy jet fuel from Petrobrás for 10 years or so.

I'm sure some knew the kinky details of this transaction from the beginning, but like was done with Collor's wife when she pulled some shenanigans, those who knew looked the other way. Not because they approved, but because they wanted to give Collor every chance in the world to straighten out the country.

If you remember in the articles on Collorgate, a fellow by the name of P.C. Farias was mentioned different times. It was this connection that cost Collor his presidency. It also turns out that P.C. Farias and Pedro Canhedo had a “lot in common.” For one thing, when Vasp got into hot water (even with all the favors received), P.C. Farias “loaned” Pedro Canhedo 7.5 million dollars without so much as an IOU. No document, because they trusted each other, or so the story goes.

Today Vasp is broke with a total debt load of 1.2 billion dollars. Twenty three of its jets are grounded by judicial order because of default of payment. Pedro Canhedo has been indicted by the Federal Police for white collar crimes. All this being in the open, people are deliberately choosing other carriers to avoid flying Vasp. This very fact will probably end up being his coup de grace.

I suspect that journalists are going to have interesting times with this situation before everything is said and done. ▲

Collorgate

The 18th of December has been set as the date for Collor’s impeachment trial in the Senate. No serious political observer gives him the slightest chance of being acquitted.

Turning on P.C. Farias certainly didn’t help Collor. His erstwhile buddy has promised to tell his version of the story.

Not only will Collor be judged in the Senate, but also in the Supreme Court, where stripped of presidential prerogatives, he will be judged for crimes comuns. The first trial will deprive him of his presidency, the second, possibly, of his liberty. ▲

Itamar Franco

What kind of a president is Itamar Franco? He is living up to expectations. Since most people had few, if any, he isn’t too bad.

Really, it’s too early to judge Itamar’s performance. Until the Senate trial is over, he will deliberately keep a low profile. One negative factor which has already caused him different problems is an extremely short fuse. Unless he can control his temperamental nature, he is doomed to be a presidential midget.

He has raised some disturbing questions, such as, “Why do petroleum products go up at least once a month and salaries only every four months?” He appears to have no answer to his own very logical question.

Itamar’s ministry inspires little confidence. Rather than choose ministers who would reflect his thinking, he has chosen men who represent a wide range of ideas. The idea is to keep everyone happy, but what in reality occurs is civil war within the ministry, and the displeasure of practically everyone else. ▲

Bill Clinton

Brazilians in high places are not happy with your future president. His protectionist views bode no good for future commercial relations between the US and Brazil. Republican administrations with their free trade policies certainly are more favorable, especially to third world countries.

Ironically, while lambasting the Democrats for their protectionism, Brazil's own protectionist policies are far more severe than what Clinton will probably ever propose. One hundred percent import taxes are not uncommon here.

The other area that could cause problems is Brazil's foreign debt. Bush has been most favorable. ▲

Colonization

A Trip to Mato Grosso

Mato Grosso (which means "Heavy Woods") is the state that borders Goiás to the northwest.

For a number of years interest has been shown in getting a new settlement started. Different trips have been made, but nothing has ever looked really feasible. Now another trip has been made. I asked Mary Schultz to write down her husband's observations:

João Souto, Dan Kramer, and I left for Mato Grosso the morning of November 19. We got to the town of São Lucas de Rio Verde at 6:00 p.m. The first thing we did was look up Daniel Prante's farm, which is just across the river from this little town. About eight years ago we were here and camped right near this spot along the river.

Daniel showed us some of his farm that evening, and then we left for Sorriso (Smile). Daniel's brother-in-law helped us find a hotel, which ended up being some little cabins nestled in among the trees. It cost us under seven dollars a piece.

Sorriso is a well organized town of 30,000 habitants, mainly gaúchos (people from the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, many of them of German descent). Its electricity comes from 17 generators. It has at least four implement dealers.

The next morning Daniel and a fellow by the name of Zeca took us out to see land. But first we stopped at his office to pick up a long rope. That was the first inkling we had of what kind of roads we would be on. We headed out east on the same road we had taken about eight years ago. The first farm he showed us belonged to Daniel Prante. We weren't too impressed, as the soil was rather sandy.

From there we headed toward the town of Boa Esperança (Good Hope). We drove through some very flat, beautiful farm ground. Beans were beautiful.

Once we got to Boa Esperança, we drove out to a farm that had been repossessed by

the Banco do Brasil. The roads on that farm are almost impassable. We decided to look at the building site, which is right along the river Teles Pires. Everything was deserted. We saw ten stripped down combines and some other old machinery that was no good. There was a metal shed.

We headed back to Boa Esperança for lunch. Some of the holes we had to go through sent water sloshing over the hood. The owner of the restaurant where we had lunch was a hunter with a red beard. He showed us the picture of a panther that had killed one of his dogs. During lunch they told us of some of the fish that have been caught in the Teles Pires river. One weighed 200 pounds and the other 250 pounds.

After lunch we went to see a 6,250 acre farm that belongs to a fellow by the name of Paulo. Two thousand acres are cleared. Part of this land was in pasture and part just abandoned to weeds. It had a nice wooden house on it.

The next place we looked at, called Gleba Gaúcha, was about 25 miles from town. It was a rather dilapidated place.

Zeca wanted to take us to a friend's place about 15 miles in the other direction, but we weren't interested. We headed back to Boa Esperança. All of a sudden he told me to stop. He backed up a bit and we saw a sign with Fazenda Estrela (Star Farm) on it.

We waited for the other pickup to catch up with us. Then we headed into this farm. We got to a place where we saw that people had been getting stuck. Zeca told me, "Don't stop now or you'll get stuck," so I gave it all it had, making it a little over half way, when we got stuck. With the others pushing and going back and forth, we finally got through.

Daniel Prante looked it over and drove down in the grass. He made it through.

We drove until we came to a fence and followed it until we came to a road. After we had driven on it for a while, we stopped and got on the back of the pickup to look around. From there we saw the buildings, so drove to the entrance. When we got almost to the driveway, someone was flashing the tractor lights at us. Apparently they knew of our being in the vicinity and wanted to get our attention. They showed us the farm.

The shed was approximately 115 x 165 feet. There was an 80 ton scale and two houses made of lumber. It is a 15,500 acre farm, bordered on one side by the Sucuri River and on the other by the River 38. Fourteen hundred acres have been planted into rice and then into tame grass. Two thousand and two hundred acres have been cleared and the trees pushed into windrows. Six thousand and five hundred acres have had the trees drug down, but not shoved together. The rest of the land is in woods. The price of the land comes out to 70 dollars an acre.

We were impressed by this farm. João said, "This farm fits the bill." From there we headed back to town. Since it didn't have hot water, we had a cold water shower. We had supper in the restaurant. While eating, various farmers came in and visited with us, telling of their hopes for the future. Hopefully a highway will go through this town to Rondonópolis within the next six to 10 years. Since the electricity comes from generators, lights are turned off at 10:30 each night. They have a telephone office and a small co-op.

Close to Fazenda Estrela, a Japanese has a 3,750 acre farm for sale. Another farm with 50,000 acres is up for sale.

After leaving the telephone office, we went to see the Resegue farm. It had quite nice flat ground as we drove toward the building site. We talked with the foreman and asked if we could see the place. We saw the airstrip, a dryer and a huge shed. There were some 20 wooden tenant houses, all rotting away. He wanted to show us another part of the place, but didn't have the key to get through the gates, so he took a hacksaw, hammer and punch. We drove out toward the river. After leaving the flat land, we drove through a rolling, sandy, lightly wooded area. After around 10 miles, we came to a gate. He cut the chains with the hacksaw and we drove down to the river. In a little stream that feeds into the river we could see fish swimming around in the clear water.

We took the man back and then drove to the Estrela farm again and looked around. We took some soil samples and then headed for Daniel Prante's other farm. It's for sale, but will be divided into strips so that whoever buys has to take some rolling land with the flat. The foreman is a fellow by the name of Schultz.

We picked up one of Daniel's ham radios that needed repair. We talked with a couple from the southern state of Paraná. We asked them what their biggest difficulty was. They said, "Roads and electricity." They have a beautiful cattle ranch.

A stretch of the road from Daniel's farm to Sorriso had been worked on by the county. Zeca got stuck in the middle of the road. I knew I would get stuck too if I stopped, so I drove along side, made it another 20 yards and got stuck too. With two men pushing, I got into the ditch, where I had more traction and was able to get out. We couldn't get Zeca's vehicle out of the mud by pushing, so we got the long rope and managed to get him into the ditch too, and he was able to get out. Who says the middle of the road is always best? The roads weren't so grand, but the land was beautiful. Daniel told me that in this area there are a lot of small farmers with 750 – 1,000 acre plots. They even have a church there.

Once we got past this muddy stretch, the roads improved. They had been graveled and were kept up by the county. We arrived in Sorriso after dark, after having driven nearly 400 miles on back roads.

The next morning Daniel and Zeca brought the manager of the Banco do Brasil to see us. He told us of a German made distillery that had been set up in the area to convert corn and sorghum into alcohol to be burned in vehicles. Apparently they were about to go broke. The manager, a young, friendly fellow, told us that there were 425 thousand acres of soybeans planted in the area this year (as opposed to 300 thousand acres in the municipality of Rio Verde, where we live). ▲

What do we want?

The following article, written by Dan Kramer, gives a summary of what we as a Colony are facing as we think in terms of a new settlement.

We as the younger generation of Mennonites who immigrated to Brazil, have to a certain extent reached a stalemate. Land to be bought for a reasonable price (at least by Brazilian standards) is practically nonexistent in the Rio Verde area. To be able to start a new colony or congregation calls for a fairly large tract of land, possibly in the neighborhood of 12–24 thousand acres.

This need has caused many expeditions to be made in search of land. We hear of cheap land in such and such a place that can be had. A group is gotten together, pickups loaded, and away we go. We go and we come – tired, dirty, and worn. A report is given in which the following questions are asked and answered:

1. Is the land flat or hilly?
2. What kind of vegetation does it have?
3. What are the roads like?
4. Is there electricity?
5. How close is it to town? What kind of a town is it?
6. What is the rainfall like?

In the past the answers have varied and they will continue to do so. We expect the land to be flat enough to not have to terrace. It can't have heavy enough woods to where it will be a problem to be cleared. The roads must permit at least 40 mph traffic. It can't be over 50 minutes from a nice clean town. Unless all these requisites are met, the deal simply fizzles out and that is the end of that venture.

There is only one place that I have read about that really sounds ideal, and that is the well watered plains of Sodom and Gomorrah, where Lot pitched his tents.

There is no reason why some government, much less Brazil, should maintain good graveled roads, much less pavement, for deer, tapir, ostriches and ant eaters. They create their own roads.

Towns depend on commerce and commerce depends on people, who either have something to sell or need to buy something.

Let's hear the conclusion of the matter. If we are going to relocate, we're going to have to reassess our "must" list.

Patience and hard work will clear heavy woods, build roads and establish towns. But land we can't build. We must buy what already exists. This is a challenge. Are we willing to launch out in faith, being willing to endure hardships the way our fathers did when they left their countries of origin, be it Europe or North America? ▲

Of Interest

In conversations with both Stanley and Dan, some other interesting details surfaced.

- Very little corn is being planted as of yet.
- About 20 miles to the north is where the heavy woods begin.
- The rainfall is supposed to be about the same as in the Rio Verde area (70–100 inches a year).

- The elevation is 1,300–1,600 feet (as opposed to 2,600 in the Rio Verde area).
- With a good application of zinc, good rice can be raised on first year ground.
- The land needs around two tons of lime to the acre.
- From the Estrela farm to Sorriso is around 90 miles.
- The high tension electrical transmission lines that run through the middle of the Colony will eventually furnish electricity for that area.
- It will cost around 25–30 dollars an acre to have the heavier woods cleared.
- Exploratory wells are being drilled in search of natural gas. No one knows for sure what the results are.
- Grain can be sold locally. The added freight brings it down approximately 20% from what it can be sold for in the Rio Verde area.
- Perdigão, a major packing plant in Brazil, is setting up a hog farm, that when completed, should have 3,500 brood sows. The idea is to put in a soybean processing plant to produce their own protein locally and export the finished product.
- The area looked at is approximately 700 miles from Rio Verde.
- The capitol of the state of Mato Grosso is Cuiabá.
- There are around 10 families on the Colony who are showing interest in this area. Obviously, this number could easily grow or increase. Stay tuned in. This may get interesting. ▲

Remembering Out Loud

Getting to Church

I lament that 20 years ago no one occasionally listed all the different kinds of vehicles and modes of transportation that were represented in our church parking lot when we had services.

Try and imagine what the parking lot would look like that had all of the following:

Jeeps – Back in the 60's and 70's, Jeeps were king here. A shining jeep was a status symbol. They would go anywhere. Because of the way they were built, you could, if necessary, haul 10 to 12 people. Obviously, some would have to hang on outside. We had mechanic shops specialized in recuperação de jeeps. When a jeep began wearing out, which didn't take too long with the terrible roads we had, they would be taken to one of these shops and literally stripped down. The frame would be welded up, rust spots and dents patched up, bearings replaced, the transmission and motor overhauled. After everything was restored, everything would get a good coat of paint and then reassembled. When they got through, it was hard to tell a restored jeep from a new one. Those old jeeps were a lot of fun.

Kombi – That's the VW bus. For a while a kombi was to a Brazilian Mennonite what a John Deere tractor is to a US Mennonite. In very few places have so few horsepower been better utilized than in a kombi. I remember meeting Pete Loewen on the road

one day with a flat tire on his kombi. The jack wouldn't raise the load. Proudly he told me he had two tons of seed rice in it. I believe that was well over twice what they are supposed to haul. So far as the amount of people you can jam into a kombi, really there is no limit – as long as you don't go overboard, of course. Twelve adults and 10 children certainly wouldn't be anything to brag about.

Trucks – This needs no explanation. If you can't afford both a car and a truck, and happen to own a truck instead of a car, you go to church in the truck. Naturally.

Sedan cars – They haul just as many people as a kombi or truck, only you have to make more trips. Most of our cars were either GM or VW products, ancient models by N American standards.

Bikes – I commented in an earlier issue about the days when we had four children and would go to church on two bikes (one on the carrier, one on the seat, one on the bar, times two bikes makes six).

Horses – Back in those days it wasn't at all unusual for people, especially visitors, to come to church on a horse. They were especially handy for people on the other side of the Monte Alegre, as they could ford the river just below the falls at Daniel Kramer's place.

Horse and cart – Really these were the good old days. To see someone ride up real gallant like, head for a shade tree, unload six or eight passengers, unharness the horse, tie it out to eat grass, is really more majestic than for a big 747 to pull up to the terminal, spew out three or four hundred people and take on a truckload of kerosene.

On foot – To walk to church is good for body and soul. (Why don't I do it? Ask me no questions and I will tell you no whys.)

More on Church

We had church services in the shed Dick Toews made when living here. Beside being too small, it was never built to be a church.

It was decided to build a new church for the Monte Alegre congregation. John Penner offered to donate the land. The logical place to build on his land was up on the hill along the road that ran along the edge of his place.

One day a bunch of us went up the hill and out in the woods began looking for a building site in that vicinity. A place was found and it was decided to stake out the direction the building would set.

When out in the woods, a road, or anything else that is relatively straight, becomes a reference point. It's amazing how it distorts one's sense of direction. The first thing you know, the road, or whatever, becomes north and south or east and west.

I think that is what happened on the Monte Alegre church. The consensus was that it should be staked out perpendicular to the road. That is when old Jake Loewen (Pete, Jake and Ike's dad) couldn't take it any longer. His speech went something like this:

“This church is not being staked out according to north and south. It's on an angle. And that's not scriptural! The Bible says that people will flow in from the east and the west and from the north and the south. How will they do that when the church is setting crooked?”

The majority vote was for an unscriptural church.

Let's go back to when we still had church in Dick Toews' shed. One day when we were out on a wild pig hunt, we ran across a mother monkey with the cutest (I can't believe I called it cute) little monkey hanging onto it. The mother had something the matter with her. She was almost dead. So I took the baby monkey home and gave it to Mim Burns (Ya, Mim, you're a Dirks now. I know). She raised the little creature and apparently instilled in it a religious fervor.

Anyway, one Sunday Mona (now an adult) apparently decided it had been left home just once too often. So it struck out for church – on foot. It wasn't very far. Seeing the door wide open, it came right on in and with uncanny instinct, headed directly for the preacher's wife.

Alas, the minister's wife's sense of humor didn't include having monkeys climb up her skirt during worship service.

I said that walking to church is good for body and soul. That doesn't include monkeys. Ask Marilyn.

Then another day a little kitten decided to attend worship service. Showing less of a pentecostal spirit, it sweetly walked up the middle aisle, gently waving its little tail. Showing the same uncanny instinct, it walked right up to the rostrum (at least where there should have been a rostrum) and snuggled up to the preacher where he sat on his chair. Who could resist something like that?

Not John Penner. He reached down, picked up the little visitor, placed it on his lap, and gently stroked its fur.

Yep, those were really the good old days. Days to be remembered.

I hope the colonization project in Mato Grosso works out. Maybe a new generation will still have a chance at the good old days. ▲

Emma Burns' Diary

Building a Permanent House

Sun – Oct 19, 1969

A slow rain during most of the night. Sure am glad Denton tarred the seams on the room so it doesn't rain in so bad. To church, Jona preached.

Mon – Oct 20

Started raining and blowing during the night. The roof really leaked. We covered Timothy with a plastic curtain. Water ran under the wall into the house. Denton and I laid blocks on the new house.

Tue – Oct 21

Denton sawed door and window jams. Charlie and Faith hauled gravel with the

horse and cart to put on the road to the falls. I went with them on the first trip to see how high the river was. Pedro Pão came and wanted us to take João Carlos and Luzia to the doctor in town. Pedro said the water was a foot deep over the log that we walk on to cross the river. On the way home from town, we stopped to pick some wild fruit that we use to make jam. The fruit looks like orange strawberries. Timothy caught a 13 inch fish.

Wed – Oct 22

We splurged for breakfast. Had bread, butter, scrambled eggs, cracked wheat and milk. Charlie and Faith hauled sand and over 800 blocks. I worked in the garden. Geraldo, our neighbor from across the river came to visit us and see how we were doing. Denton and Elizabeth laid 150 blocks. Denton got one door jam in. It got so chilly that Mary made a fire in our barrel stove. John and Alma came in the evening. They brought a chocolate cake for Miriam's 12th birthday.

Thursday – Oct 23

Was so beautiful when the sun came up. Everything looked so clean and bright. Faith and Mary got two loads of firewood. John Penner and Dick Toews came for Denton to saw some boards for them. Denton laid blocks. Elizabeth mixes the mortar, Miriam fills the cracks. Manoel and Luís came. They really laughed about how our horse balks.

Fri – Oct 24

Denton and Charlie cut metal plates to nail on the seams of the rafters. I drilled holes in the metal plates. I worked in the garden. So nice to have vegetables out of our own garden. Miriam and Timothy helped me get the garden about all hoed. Sure looks nice.

Sat – Oct 25

Denton, Elizabeth and I laid blocks. We laid 300 today. Miriam filled the cracks. Around 4:30 it really rained for a little while. Had a half inch. The pig broke its harness and got loose. So Charlie, Tim and I got saplings and made a pen. It was so chilly we made fire in the barrel stove. Mary found a little frog in our bed.

Sun – Oct 26

Everyone to church. John Penner preached on patience.

Mon – Oct 27

Some of the men went to town to talk to someone about fixing our road. Towards evening Charlie hitched up the old horse and gave us rides. She didn't even balk.

Tue – Oct 28

Mary is mixing mud this week. Denton got blocks laid up even with the door and

window jams at the two north corners of the house. I got a great big leafed plant out in the woods and planted it east of the house. The leaves are huge and notched. [That plant is there to this day, only a lot bigger and prettier. cb] Charlie and Faith hitched up the horse and hauled some cement.

Wed – Oct 29

Laying blocks is the order of the day. A helicopter flew over.

Thu – Oct 30

A toucan flew over. It's bill looked about as big as its body. It was a pretty bird. I went to the river to wash Denton's coveralls. Faith brought the little ones down to let them play in the water. I saw a monkey running. We got a letter from Enos Miller. They, Daniel Kramers and Dan Coblentz's plan to be here November 6. Homer and Hazel Unruh, John and Joan and two children, plan to come along on a visit.

Fri – Oct 31

Woke up at 2:00 a.m. It was really blowing. Felt like the house would blow over. Denton held on the wall to keep it from blowing in. The roof really leaked. We had to set pans out to catch the water. It was dripping on Timothy, so we covered him with a plastic curtain. Denton and I had to crowd to one edge of the bed to keep dry. ▲

Adoptions

Melissa Kay Wesenberg

Laura da Costa came up with the idea the other day that if Melissa was placed between her biological mother and Dindy Wesenberg, no one would ever guess Dindy wasn't the birth mother. How true.

Melissa's adoption has been a long tedious haul. But finally it is through. The judge has given a favorable sentence and right now Dindy is waiting out a 15 day appeal period that follows a sentence in Brazil. Obviously no one is going to appeal, so it is a mere formality.

What could have (and should have) been done in six weeks, drug out four months. Why?

Let's give the legitimate reasons first. The promotores (county attorneys) were on strike for several weeks which intensified the normal jam in court. Municipal elections came along and took the judge's time during almost three weeks. That makes five weeks. Add that to the six weeks it should have taken and you have almost three months. What about the rest of the time?

Rather than go into details, let's just say that some authorities see themselves as a servant. Others as a master. It makes a world of difference – and can easily make a month or two of difference in a case like this.

This is unfortunate. The Conselho Tutelar da Criança is most upset by what has happened. They have approached the promotor and requested that adoption cases be given priority in court. Their argument is that when someone goes out of his way to adopt a child, even so far as coming from the US, the good will of these parents should be given prompt attention – not punishment.

The promotor (who never was the problem) has promised to do all he can to speed things up.

Where does this leave international adoptions? Are they still advisable?

International adoptions in Brazil are totally legal. That, however, doesn't say that authorities are necessarily in favor. When you must work with someone who drags his feet, as happened in the Wesenberg's case, it creates a tremendous hardship and expenses skyrocket. Each individual must analyze how much he is willing to sacrifice to give a homeless child a home.

Our lawyer has agreed to something that is definitely an option to be considered by prospective parents. He suggests that once a child has been located and the match made with adoptive parents, procedures be started in court and gotten to the place that the judge requests that the parents come and spend the 15 days to a month with the child required by law. As soon as this period is over, both parents head back home and wait for the final sentence to be given. When this happens, one of them comes back and gets the child. This would involve one extra ticket, but would be a lot cheaper than being off work for three or four months and having to spend extra money here.

The other solution, which could happen any day, would be a change of authority. Let's remember that most authorities don't take the attitude of our present one.

Is it worth all this to give a child a Christian home? You decide. ▲

This & That

November 2 was Memorial Day here in Brazil. Cemeteries are usually loaded with people putting flowers on tombs of loved ones. In keeping with Catholic traditions, they burn a candle or two. The Colony has no activities, other than to possibly help the Rio Verde congregation youth hand out tracts in the municipal cemetery.

On the evening of November 2, the Colony had a carry-in supper at the dam to commemorate the fact that once again it is doing its job of creating a beautiful lake. After supper there was a program. Unfortunately I wasn't there to hear the speeches made on memories of how the dam came into existence. It has an interesting history. When I first knew the area, it was where Aristote crossed the Pirapitinga with his ox team.

Paula Schultz, who was staying with Dindy, returned to the States on November 6.

Sylvia and Sueyllen have been spending nights with her.

As happens four times a year, seven hundred and some Sunday School books have been made and distributed. Besides the three congregations, Stephen Kramer at Gospel

Tract sends books to all the mission posts and to individuals who are showing a special interest in the gospel.

The spiraling machine we got some time ago has done a lot of work. We just got done making 25 children's songbooks for the Rio Verdinho School. Also, we have come out with a "pre-edition" of Histórias do Mensageirinho para Crianças, Vol. I, which is a 360 page book with 217 children's stories taken out of the children's section of our Brazilian Messenger. We have almost enough material to make volume II. However, since these stories will come from the first Mensageiros that weren't set up on the computer, they will have to be recopied or scanned. I hope to check into a scanner and appropriate software during our stay in the US.

The Junior Sewing girls made a couple of throw pillows for Miss Isaac and cut out a quilt top for Celma Loewen.

The Burns tribe women got together and did some sewing for Faith and for her Mom. It's amazing what people will do to get rid of us for a month.

Several girls and some young married women took Dindy out for a jungle picnic (whatever that means) and then a swim at the dam.

The two little girls are back in town, after spending some time in Goiânia. I met their mother's lawyer in town yesterday, whom we have known for years. He explained that he was appointed by the court to take the case, and how he hated to see it turn out the way it did. I believe he was sincere. He himself believes that all the accusations are true that were brought against the mother and the fellow she lives with. The oldest of the two keeps sending word through Laura's Mom that we should go get them. It's a temptation.

Oswaldo, the little 11 year old boy who has been spending the last 10 months on the Colony, was taken back to town. He needs a nice family. Anyone need a nice little boy?

Reno & Marilyn Hibner celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on November 22. They had an open house in the afternoon and I think most of the Colony showed up. We as a Colony owe much to Reno and Marilyn. They moved here when the Colony was in its infancy, and are thus very closely interwoven into its history.

Some nitwit got the story started that the anaconda seen on the Colony last month was 22½ inches in diameter, mind you. This is where Brazil News shines, when it can correct these terrible distortions. For the record, the snake was 22½ inches in circumference. You can expect things like this in a country where the illiteracy rate is high.

I got some real static from the girls who went on the bicycle outing, reported on in the last issue of this little paper. They hit the ceiling because of the age thing. To restore peace, I am going to list their ages, according to their birth certificates. If you happen to know them and can't believe what you read, take a look at their birth certificates. Here goes: Jessica Dirks, 15; Karla Holdeman, 15; Katrina Schultz, 16; Paula Schultz, 19; Sherilyn Yoder, 17; Sylvia Becker, 16; Wendy Penner, 15.

Bill & Gracie Miller are working on the adoption of Joycelyn, a little three month old

baby. The Conselho Tutelar is doing all it can to make things go smoothly.

This rainy season started out early with constant, gentle rains. Suddenly the rains stopped and in some areas it rained hardly any during three weeks. Now it has begun raining again. Some of the corn is already tasseling. Most of the soybeans are planted and up.

Otávio, our nine year old son brought some homework to try and work ahead on account of our trip to the US. As his surrogate teacher, I was helping him with spelling. In an effort to help him find a synonym for “wed,” cleverly I suggested, “When someone has a wedding, he gets _____.” He thought a little bit and brightly answered, “clumsy.” This put me into a real bind. Really, he answered correctly, but I couldn’t let him know it. So I repeated the question and he made another stab. “Crazy,” he said. They do a lot of crazy things, but I didn’t say so. Diplomatically I persisted. “Try again.” Apparently seeing the impossibility of satisfying my demanding standards, he made one last effort. “Noisy.” Before things got any worse, I supplied him with the answer: “Married.” Simple. That is, if you know which one of the answers your teacher is fishing for.

By now you’ve probably guessed. We plan on spending Christmas in the States. We leave here Dec 5 and return Jan 3. Our home base will be at my Dad’s place in Galva. Feel free to call. 316 654 3427. I would appreciate if you readers would tell me what kind of questions you would like to have answered. What are you interested in? What are you tired of? Because of the type of work Faith and I do, a trip like this is very educational. We hope to learn a lot. And enjoy ourselves too.