

Brazil News



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Editorial

When Culture Becomes a Crutch

No culture is all good or all bad. We have tried in past articles to present both the positive and negative aspects of Brazilian culture. Today we are going to analyze several of the negative ones and the danger they present to God's people.

A disrespect for laws and for those who make and enforce them. Here in Brazil this can be seen everywhere in practically everyone. A lot can be said to justify this attitude. To begin with, officials themselves many times don't respect laws. So why should anyone else? Some laws make very little sense. Others are outright contradictions, obviously made for political reasons, to benefit a few. Then there are the laws that become outdated – but are not repealed. Laws that the authorities themselves don't expect to be kept.

Many arguments could be given to try and prove that it isn't practical, or even possible, to be law-abiding in Brazil. This conclusion is very dangerous.

It's true that in a country of conflicting laws, of outdated laws that have never been repealed, common sense must be used. Much of this legal hodgepodge is actually a deliberate act by unscrupulous lawmakers to create loopholes for interest groups. The Christian who loves God's law and wants to keep man's law to the best of his conscience, will find there is a way through this confusion. Would the thought that it is impossible to be law-abiding in Brazil indicate a desire to take advantage of some of the crooked laws? Have these laws become a crutch?

Non-resistance. More and more I am seeing that one of the most difficult doctrines for Brazilians to really understand is that of true non-resistance. Once again, we can try and justify this attitude. Let's begin with our police. They by no means measure up to N American police. As a result many crimes go unsolved. At times emergency calls can't be answered because all of their vehicles are out of fuel, or broken down. Many officers have an eighth grade education, or less. They make

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between a hundred and two hundred dollars a month. So they occasionally take – in fact, request – bribes.

It is easy to develop a scornful attitude toward the Brazilian police system, say it's no good, it's totally corrupt, etc. When a theft is reported, some questions will be asked and the information recorded. If, however, there is interest in having the police find the stolen goods, then chapter two begins. The officer may say something like this, "We have a pretty good idea who did the stealing and where the goods may be. But, all of our vehicles are broken down. Could you loan us a vehicle?" Or, "We think we can get your goods back, but we'll have to travel several hundred kilometers and we have no money for fuel or for our officers to buy food. We'll need X cruzeiros to check into this." What should the Mennonite do? Has this become a crutch?

Inefficient public services. This includes the police system we just described, but also gets into public utilities and a lot of other areas. Brazilians become furious at some of the slow and inefficient services they must endure. They swear. They yell. They call names. But in the end they accept it.

Let's take an example. CELG, the state owned utilities company that furnishes the state of Goiás with electrical power, leaves a lot to be desired. It isn't unusual to be without electricity for 12-24 hour periods here on the Colony. If a fuse blows or the line goes down towards evening, there is a good chance it won't be fixed until ten or eleven o'clock the following day.

It is so easy to call in and give the man at the desk in the utilities office a real going over for their poor service. Tell him how it should be done. Culturally it is accepted to let him have it.

What we don't take into consideration is that the man behind the desk is not responsible for the fact that there are only several vehicles available for rural use and many times they are both out, or maybe filling in in town. We forget that the repairmen are making maybe three hundred dollars a month, at the most, and that for that kind of wages they have no desire to go out at night with vehicles that aren't equipped for night work, thus risking their lives.

We forget that we're not the only ones who need and want attention. Once, after a bad wind and electrical storm, when the Colony was without electricity, I went into the dispatcher's office in Rio Verde. The man sitting behind the desk had two phones ringing almost constantly, plus a two-way radio blaring away. Finally he simply took the phones off the hook. I found out that eighty percent of the rural properties were without electricity. I found out that the men had gotten to bed around five o'clock that morning, after working all night. After several hours sleep they were back on the job.

Yet, how easy it is to call the man behind the desk and give him a piece of our mind. How easy it is to forget that he too has a soul. How easy it is to lose our witness in a 30 second phone call. Is inefficient service supplying us with a crutch, an excuse to occasionally lay our religion aside?

Is there such a thing as usury? Because of high inflation, money left in a checking account for thirty days can lose at least a fourth of its buying power. Banks compete

fiercely, each one trying to offer the best investment plan. Most of these plans carry an interest rate of possibly one percent per month, plus monetary correction. Most plans don't keep up with the dollar. In other words, even after getting 25 or 30% per month, the money still isn't keeping its actual value – let alone yielding any returns above inflation.

The church in Brazil (with consultation) has opened the door for members to use any of these plans. The truth of the matter is that it's extremely difficult to operate a farm or a business without some kind of monetary correction.

The problem is the mentality this is creating. Because of the many variables in these plans, it's possible – especially if one is considered to be a “good customer” – to get into better plans. Suddenly a battle is on to get into the best plans. Instead of using the plans as a means to reduce losses, as the church intended it to be, they become the means of wringing the last cent out of our money.

What will happen when/if inflation comes down into tolerable levels? Will we have become so accustomed to making our money yield in the bank that we'll want to keep on walking with a crutch? Will we be able to turn loose of the tiger's tail?

Tropical sensuality. Sensuality is a visual or audible effort to stimulate the lustful nature of men and women. Brazil is internationally famous for this deplorable characteristic, very much a part of its culture. Carnival (which I wrote about some time ago) is visible proof of this.

Possibly the tropical climate has a certain influence on the way both men and women dress. But beyond a doubt, the evil one has a much greater influence. Men normally have their top two or three shirt buttons open. Women (not all, of course) seem to have few restraints when it comes to dress.

There is no point in giving this situation hush-hush treatment. It's very real. It's right before our eyes. And unless we really have our guard up, it will have a definite influence on our purity.

The crutch? We have to go to town. We can't go around with our eyes shut. That's true. But we can plan our trips to town to keep them at a minimum. Then, when we have to go, we can have a special prayer for grace. God can sanctify our eyes and our ears – if He has our whole heart.

Obviously, N America also has a serious problem with imorality. The difference is that it doesn't show up on the street as much as here.

By now some of my readers may have concluded that Brazil is a place unfit for Christians. Then you missed the point. It is a treacherous place for half-hearted Christians. But then so is N America. The difference is that some of your basic dangers are of a different nature than ours. But down deep, they are brought about by the same enemy and take people to the same place.

This means that whether we live in North or South America, we must be on our toes. We must recognize the cultural dangers that exist where we live, and speak out. If we don't, they will become a crutch, then a wheelchair, a stretcher, and finally a tombstone. ▲

Politics

President Itamar

Brazilians are cautiously admitting that President Itamar isn't as bad as they thought he might be. His much criticized impulsiveness, his habit of shooting from the hip, is proving to be an asset. People are realizing that it's sort of nice to have a president who doesn't wear a mask, who smiles when he's happy and scowls when he is upset – and not vice-versa. In other words, they feel like he's not putting on a front.

That doesn't mean everyone agrees with what he is doing. Especially one area that is being frowned upon are the new restrictions he has placed on the privatization process of state owned industry and business. President Itamar says he is in favor of privatization, but that he has put the breaks on because of the corruption in this area during the Collor administration. A prime example would be VASP Airlines. He certainly does have a point.

In a bold move, President Itamar has shown that he, and not party big-wigs, is running the show. To begin with, he asked Luiza Erundina, the ex-mayor of São Paulo, to be part of his ministry. This has drawn fire for two reasons: First, because she is from the Partido Trabalhista (PT), the leftist worker's party. Second, because she plans on being a candidate for governor of São Paulo in the next election and her time in the ministry will certainly strengthen her, possibly upsetting the apple cart for the traditional candidates.

Luiza Erundina. Remember that name. I suspect you'll be hearing it again in the future. She is from the Northeast, of very humble origin. Politically, she is definitely a rising star.

President Itamar is making the same mistake Carter made in his early presidency, when he got the bright idea of carrying his own suitcases to prove he was a common fellow like anyone else. He forgot that people don't want a common fellow for president. They want someone they can look up to – not at.

Enter President Itamar. He can't forget the days when he could go where he wanted, when he wanted, without anyone trailing him. Security men make him furious. Whenever he sees someone whom he suspects of being a security agent, he sends him a packing. One night he and a few of his aides left Rio de Janeiro for Juiz de Fora, his hometown, escorted by only one backup car. They arrived at two in the morning. Neither car had so much as a two-way radio.

A VEJA photo shows him walking down the street with his daughter in Juiz de Fora. No security agents. Just like the good old days.

In a recent poll, seven out of every ten Brazilians said they approved of the way President Itamar is running the government. This isn't bad, since it isn't based on any great promises he has made, but rather on the fact that they believe he knows what he is doing. May he continue to be worthy of the people's confidence, for then he will have their support.

Brazilians love a good political joke. Or a bad one, for that matter. Now when President Clinton does something they don't consider intelligent, they say, "Esse filme eu já vi antes." English: "I saw this movie before," referring, of course, to our former administration. ▲

A Brazilian Story

The Onça's Revenge

Just a little Portuguese lesson before we tell our story. The first "o" is long, as in "bone". The letter "ç" is always pronounced like English "s".

Onça means panther. We have both the black and the spotted panthers here in Brazil. In fact, when we moved down here 24 years ago, there were still a lot of onças around here. As you will read in this story, they too killed livestock on the fazendas. Onça hunts were big events.

Now the story.

His name was Euzébio and he lived out in the boondocks in the Amazon Basin.

Euzébio was the owner of a rubber plantation. Whenever he had a little time to spare, his favorite pastime was going hunting. He would kill anything he came across. It didn't matter to him if it was big or small. He felt the same satisfaction in killing a rabbit that he did in killing an onça. As can be imagined, whenever he went anyplace, he was well armed.

On weekends Euzébio would forget about his rubber plantation and together with a buddy or two, head out into the dense jungle to see what he could kill. He killed for the joy of killing, not because he needed or wanted the meat. He didn't care what became of the animal he killed. Time after time, he would leave a paca or a fat deer lying where he killed it along some stream, without the slightest thought of making use of the meat. It was for this reason that a lot of hunters didn't like to go out with Euzébio. To them he wasn't a hunter, but rather a killer.

On this particular day they ran across the tracks of an onça and were hot on its trail. Its tracks indicated it was a monstrous animal. Euzébio asked his buddies to let him have the first shot.

They hadn't traveled very far when suddenly they came face to face with the monster on the banks of a river where it had killed a small deer. The onça pintada (spotted panther) was enormous. Never had Euzébio seen one that size before.

Euzébio steadied his rifle on a tree trunk, aimed, and squeezed the trigger. The wounded animal jumped high and let out a shriek that froze the hunter's blood. It came down on its feet, turned, and faced the hunters, who were but a few yards from the animal. They were close enough to see the terrible hatred in its eyes.

What happened next was worse than any nightmare. It took several steps right in Euzébio's direction. He didn't move. Both he and his buddies were paralyzed by fear.

Even though they were all armed, it didn't occur to any of them that they should try and kill the wounded animal.

Euzébio began backing up, but tripped and fell over the trunk of a fallen tree. Everyone thought that was his end, when, mysteriously, the onça turned and disappeared into the heavy jungle, dragging one hind leg that had been mangled by the shot.

When they got over their scare, the three men who were with Euzébio decided to turn around and go home. Euzébio wouldn't hear about it. He wanted to track the onça and kill it. Even though the onça inexplicably saved his life, the hunter felt no gratitude.

When the others threatened to leave him in the jungle by himself, he grudgingly decided to go with them.

With the passing of time, the men forgot about their narrow escape with the onça.

Euzébio sold his rubber plantation and moved to a city quite some distance from there. He didn't leave behind his morbid desire to kill wild animals. But there was one problem. Where he now lived the game was small. He had to satisfy himself killing small alligators. He didn't so much as try to salvage the hides. He killed for the sheer pleasure of killing.

One day the talk of the town was an onça pintada that had showed up in that area. No one knew from where it had come. All they knew was that it had to be eliminated, as it was killing their livestock. Euzébio volunteered to take part in the expedition that would hunt the onça pintada down. It would be he and two others.

After hunting for quite some time, they ran across the onça's tracks. The dirt was soft and by the indentation left by the tracks, it was evident it was an enormous animal.

There was no doubt about it. The onça was huge. Euzébio saw it first. He took careful aim and squeezed the trigger. He, who bragged about his good marksmanship, missed! Before the other hunters could do anything, the onça gave a tremendous leap and slashed Euzébio's juggler.

With several shots, the other two hunters were able to kill the onça. When they got to Euzébio, he was dead. Beside him was the dead onça. It was then they noticed the large scar on its one hind leg. ▲

Colonization

A Trip to Sorriso

Anna, Mrs. Daniel Kramer, tells about their last trip to Sorriso, Mato Grosso.

For the benefit of new readers, the word "fazenda" (hacienda in Spanish) means farm or ranch.

On January 13, Stanley Schultz, João Souto, our sons Dan and Jeff, Daniel and I left

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for Sorriso, Mato Grosso. We went in Stanley's station wagon, which had plenty of space and was very comfortable.

We left at 6:30 a.m. and drove 14 hours to arrive at our destination. At noon we had dinner at a large truck stop on the by-pass at Rondônia. We paid around three US dollars each for a rodízio, which consisted of a salad bar and grilled meat that was served at each table on long spits. The meat kept coming faster than we could eat it. Later I counted 14 different kinds of meat: chicken, sausage, mutton, beef heart, beef hump, pork loin, cured pork, beef roll, brisket, ribs, and four other cuts of beef.

As we continued on through Mato Grosso in the p.m., I was impressed with the vast open areas and the beautiful large soybean fields. The road was good, except for about a 20 km. stretch that was full of holes. As Stanley swerved back and forth to miss the holes, I rocked back and forth on the back seat. He did a good job of missing the holes.

We arrived in Sorriso about 8:30 that evening and went straight to Hotel Recanto do Bosque. This is a hotel of cabins set in a wooded lot at the edge of town. It is very comfortable.

Sorriso is a new city that has developed as a result of the progress in the area in the last 10 years. It has wide streets, new houses, three large supermarkets, equipment dealers, a big hospital and everything a city needs to function properly. Also, it has a lot of trees and plants.

We had a small gas burner along, some food and dishes, so our supper that evening was chicken noodle soup, which we ate in our cabins.

Thursday morning we went to see Zeca. He led the way in his pickup to the Pantanal fazenda. He and his brother-in-law, Daniel Prante want to sell this piece of land. We drove about 120 km on dirt or gravel road to get there. When we got to the one boundary line, which was a fence, Zeca said, "Now we'll leave your car here and we'll all go in my pickup." So the men all jumped on the pickup and I stayed with the car.

When they returned 45 minutes later, it was almost noon. The first question was, "Is dinner ready?" I said it wasn't. I didn't know they were going to stay that long. Well, they wanted to see another area, so I said I'd quickly cook dinner while they were gone.

When they returned, I had a kettle of chicken vegetable soup made. They had passed an old abandoned house somewhere and Daniel found a watermelon growing, so they brought it along back for our dinner.

After dinner we drove around some more with Zeca and arrived at Boa Esperança around 5:00 p.m. Here we told Zeca good-bye. We made arrangements with the lady at the restaurant for supper, made reservations at the hotel, then went driving again. We went to see the badlands along the Teles Pires river and the beautiful waterfalls.

Boa Esperança is also a new frontier town. It has around 300 inhabitants, one restaurant, one hotel, one health center, one service station, two saw mills and a few stores. Their electricity is produced by a generator run by a large diesel motor. At 11:00 p.m. the motor is shut off.

The hotel was a simple wooden building with cement floor, cold water showers, but clean and comfortable.

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When the men were looking at the Fazenda Pantanal, they found that on the back side of the place there was a creek and some marsh land. It is so flat that the water doesn't drain properly, so they wanted to see how large that area was. So Friday morning we drove out there again, then followed the fence for a kilometer on the southeast corner until we got to the ground. There we set up our stove and cooked dinner under a tree. I was impressed while out there in the wild that although the sun was quite warm, there was a cool comfortable breeze very much like here in Rio Verde.

After dinner, Stanley, João, Dan and Jeff took off walking to follow the west border along the marsh. Daniel and I took the car back to the road, drove 6 km. to the northeast corner, then parked under a tree. Daniel wanted to walk in along that edge and meet the others along the north-west edge. I was rather dubious about it all and asked, "What if you get lost?" he looked about a bit, then said, "Well that's easy. The sun is to my west. So if I follow my shadow, I'll get back to the road."

So during the two and a half hours that he was gone, I read, slept and waited. When he got back, he said he hadn't met the rest of the group. He also admitted that he did get a bit "confused." It was by sheer determination to follow his shadow that he got back, because otherwise it seemed completely wrong.

A half hour later Dan appeared on a truck and the rest were about a kilometer up the road. Needless to say, they were all hot and bushed after walking 6 km. on a hot afternoon.

We then drove north of Boa Esperança to see both the Estrela and Taparina Fazendas. Both of them have only a caretaker on them. At Fazenda Estrela I asked the lady how close their nearest neighbors were. She pointed east and said it was 15 km. to the nearest ones. Then she pointed west and said the same thing. If you're wanting elbow room, this is the place!

We returned to Sorriso for the night.

Saturday morning we again went to talk to Zeca to see how we could make contact with the owners of the places we looked at. We had the name and phone number of a man who lives in Cuiabá that has a fazenda we were interested in. So he called and made arrangements to meet him on Monday morning. We were also told that to get more information on Fazenda Conselvan, we had to contact the Banco do Brasil in Cuiabá.

After talking with Zeca, we decided to drive west of Sorriso just to see the country. We stopped at a supermarket to get a few things for dinner, then headed west. When we got to the river, a man took us across on a flat boat – no bridge yet. On the other side we parked under a tree and cooked our dinner. We then drove on past miles and miles of beautiful flat soybean fields. Some of the land was still in woods. Ten years ago this entire area was in woods, until people from the southern states of Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul started moving in and clearing land. Today the land that has been cleared is very productive. Each farm has a large shed, but the houses are quite small and primitive yet.

We stopped at one house to visit and ask questions. It was very interesting. They

use less lime and fertilizer than we do here at Rio Verde, yet they have good yields. But in this area the land is not for sale, since the owners themselves are farming it.

We returned to our cabins in Sorriso for the night.

Sunday morning we took it easy, then had an hour of Sunday School together in one of the cabins. About 11:00 o'clock we told the hotel people good-bye and started toward Cuiabá. We arrived there at 5:30 p.m.

Monday morning Dan again called Sérgio, the owner of one of the fazendas, and he came to the hotel and then took us to his office. He's a lawyer, a very diplomatic man. Right away he began to tell us of the progress of Mato Grosso. He said that today Mato Grosso is second in soybean production in Brazil and is trying to reach first place.

When we began talking land, he said his price is \$81 an acre. He expects that within a short time it will be around one hundred dollars an acre. We visited with him for three hours, but he wouldn't come down on his price.

From there we went to the Banco do Brasil to see about Fazenda Conselvan, but that does not seem to be open at this time.

At 4:00 p.m. we left Cuiabá for home. We arrived after midnight. It was an enjoyable trip and we were glad to be back home.

The thing that impressed me most was the enormous amount of beautiful flat country and what progress is doing to the region. Anyplace that there is progress, the price of land is skyrocketing. But for those who are willing to face the frontier, there are still vast areas of undeveloped land. This, of course, is farther away from the cities and good roads.

It's evident that to get cheap land, it takes courage – and urgency. Frontiers are rapidly being swallowed up by progress.

I was also impressed by the fact that wherever we went – the filling station, store, hotel, etc., we met people who would say, "Oh, you need to go to such and such a place for land." Land is still available, but who is willing to meet the challenge? ▲

Emma Burns' Diary

More Progress

Thu – Nov 13, 1969

It seems that nearly everyone on the Colony has intestinal problems right now. John Unruh helped Charlie make the foundation for their house. Mary cleaned the yard. Elizabeth and the smaller children carried away the ant hill stove. All the children really like cafezinho [the strong Brazilian coffee served in miniature cups]. Samuel Coblentz [the same one who is in the mission in Northeast Brazil] was here yesterday and drank three and a half big cups of cafezinho. Today he brought us a wheelbarrow load of firewood he chopped at Dick Toews' place. When he left with the wood, Leroy asked, "Hey, where are you going with that wood?" Sam answered, "Oh, to pay

Dentons for the coffee I drank there.” He really helped here today, finishing carry out the old stove in the wheelbarrow.

Dan & Clara went to town with Harold Dirks today to buy lime to be used in mortar for laying bricks and plastering. They hauled it on the back of Harold’s pickup. It rained and the lime began to heat up, sending up clouds of steam. They had to unload it so the pickup wouldn’t catch fire. [Just a little explanation on this phenomenon. The lime is purchased in rock form the way it comes out of the kiln. To be used it must be slaked, that is, soaked with water, which releases an intense heat process which transforms the lime rocks into a usable powder. Improperly slaked lime that is used in plaster will cause eruptions in the wall. Maybe some of my Brazilian readers can come up with some interesting recollections on this subject that could be used in the next issue.]

Fri – Nov 14

It took me until devotions to get the fire going to be able to make breakfast. The wood is so wet. Elizabeth made pancakes. We make pancakes every morning, unless there is something that needs to be eaten before it spoils. Denton, John Unruh and Charlie slaked some lime this morning. The pile kept getting bigger and bigger. Denton said it is like the widow’s oil.

Daniels, Curtis and Dennis, came by on their way to where they chose their home site. They decided to build across the stream from us, close to the falls. Daniel started plastering our house today. Dick Toews borrowed our cart and horse to haul sand. But the horse got so balky and finally laid down, so they had to end up using the kombi. Miriam went swimming with the other girls.

Sat – Nov 15

Daniel got his boys started clearing trees and then he came to plaster. For break Mary took pieces of bread dough and deep fat fried them. After frosting them, they tasted about like doughnuts. Everyone thought it was a real treat. Since we don’t have an oven, we have to figure out new things to make. It seems like we always have to be washing. If we let the wash get too big, we get too tired stomping. [Just a reminder. Back those days the dirty wash was placed in large pans, filled with water, soap added, and then stomped until clean. Those washing machines burned a lot of calories.] Faith and I went to visit Clara Miller. Elizabeth and Mary went to see Alma Penner on horseback. When they got back they gave Daniel Kramer’s children rides on the horses.

Sun – Nov 16

Jona Dyck preached from Romans chapter 12. Charlie, Faith, Elizabeth and Mary went to see Pedro Pãos, our neighbors across the river. They stayed for supper. Daniel and Anna walked over to where they plan on building. We slept, trying to find places where the roof didn’t leak.

Mon – Nov 17

People still are not feeling the best. Daniel finished plastering our house.

Tuesday – Nov 18

It was raining when we woke up. Homer leveled dirt in the house, getting it ready to pour the floor. John Unruh and Charlie hauled sand with the kombi. Denton and Elizabeth laid block for the outhouse. Charlie shot a deer. Miriam took some meat to John Penners and the three new families on horseback. The men had a business meeting this evening. They decided to buy a cement mixer for Colony use.

Wed – Nov 19

Put the tile on the outhouse, so that is another job finished. Several of the men went to town to get the new cement mixer. Daniel and his boys cleared trees. João Souto [the same one mentioned in the article on colonization], who works for the man we bought our place from, brought Ralph Dyck's horse back. We don't have fences yet and have to tie our horses out on long ropes, so they occasionally get away and go back to their original owners. We saw a big ostrich across the stream with a whole bunch of little ones. Miriam, Timothy and the Coblentz boys went to pick a cherry-like fruit for their supper. I smoked some venison over a slow fire. Dan Coblentz bought a jeep, so now they have transportation.

Thu – Nov 20

Myron Kramer cut his hand with a machete, so he came to have Charlie fix it up for him. Some of the girls went out to pick berries. Timothy and I made a little house for the ducks. Faith took care of the wash and I made meals. John and Joan Unruh borrowed our two horses, Russo and Judy, to go horseback riding. ▲

Remembering Out Loud

Drying Grain

Our electrical current here isn't stable like yours in N America. Because of all the electronic equipment I have in my office, I have a voltameter on the wall right in front of me so I can monitor the voltage. Occasionally I have to shut down the equipment for short periods of time when the voltage either plummets or skyrockets.

Recently I noticed the voltage was constantly low. I couldn't imagine why, until suddenly it occurred to me that we are now in corn harvest and dryers all over the country are running. That means that for the next three months, at least, we have low voltage, until both corn and soybeans are harvested.

Twenty four years ago I don't know if we had more than one dryer around. Most of the grain, which was just a drop in the bucket compared to what is produced today, was dried in the sun.

On the fazendas grain was either dried on concrete slabs or on enormous sheets of unbleached muslin.

Rio Verde didn't have a lot of paved streets in the latter sixties and early seventies. At times it became difficult to drive in town as most of the streets were yellow with rice.

These grain dryers, like the stomp-a-matic washing machines, described in Mom's diary, also burned up a lot of calories. In fact, the whole harvest procedure was conducive to calorie consumption.

How was harvest back when we first came?

We'll talk about the days when Enos Miller lived across the river from Daniel Kramer and they farmed together. At that time I was teaching school and had the privilege of helping in the harvest during vacation.

Enos and Daniel had a little itsy-bitsy self-propelled combine, sometimes called the "pepper shaker." It must have had about an 8-foot header and was powered by a little VW engine. Since it had no grain bin, it took two men to run one of these machines: one man up front at the controls and another one alongside, on a platform, hanging empty sacks on a grain spout and sewing them up when they got full. The full sacks would then be toppled off the platform and onto the ground.

Now came the part of the second crew, usually three men, who would pick up the sacks. One would slowly drive alongside the sacks and the other two would toss them into the trailer. With two sure enough good tossers, the tractor would seldom have to stop.

Once the trailer was full, or all the sacks picked up, this crew would proceed to the "dryer." An average size drying slab would be approximately 30x50 feet. When things got tight, all available tarps would be spread out too, plus the cotton tarp, already mentioned.

As the tractor slowly drove over the slab, the sacks would be tossed out so as to give the right coverage over the entire drying area. After removing (never cutting) the string used to tie the sacks, they would be emptied on the slab.

The next step was to evenly spread the rice. This was done with the help of wooden affairs that looked like an oversized rake.

The actual drying procedure could be handled by one man. About every five to 10 minutes, he would push what resembled a large wooden hoe back and forth through the rice. This would, of course, create ridges and valleys across the entire drying area, having a stirring effect on the rice.

This was a pleasant job. To pick up a handful of rice, hold it for a few moments to try and determine its humidity, was a satisfying little ritual. Slowly, as the day progressed, the grain would become warmer and warmer – and lighter and lighter.

That's the bright side of the picture. It didn't always work like this.

Obviously these ecological dryers depended on the sun – and on the cooperation of the clouds. There were mornings when everyone would anxiously look at the clouds and try to decide if it was advisable to use the dryer. Finally it would be decided, "Let's

try it.” The slab would be covered with rice. And the clouds would begin to roll in. Then a few sprinkles. Now folks, talking about calorie consumption! Everyone, men, women and children, would be drafted into the service. The rice would be shoved into piles and covered with tarps, since there wasn’t time to sack it up. Once the sun came out, the rice would be spread again. Sometimes one batch of rice might be out on the slab two or three days. And sometimes it would end up heating when the weather was bad.

Once the rice was dry enough to be stored, twenty liter cans would be used to scoop it into the sacks, which were then sewed up. Two men would lift the sack, placing it either on the head or back of one of them. He would then carry it into the shed where the rice would be stored until sold.

Frequently this job was done in the evening when it was too damp to cut. About ten o’clock, the rice all sacked up and under cover, everyone would head into the house for another one of Clara’s delicious suppers.

Those truly were good days. There was a lot of hard work, a lot of team work, and a lot of happiness involved in bringing in the grain.

Now, back to the grain dryers used in town. We used to have crews specialized in drying rice for hire on Rio Verde’s streets. The drying technique was much the same as used on the fazendas, except that their slab was asphalt – actually better, because the black surface heated up more.

Many of the streets were totally covered with rice, except approximately a car’s width along one side where vehicles could get through.

One of the most distressing sights was to see a crew get caught in a sudden rainstorm before they had time to shove the rice into piles and cover it with tarps. Blocks away from where they were drying rice, the gutters would be a bright yellow with rice. When this happened, it wasn’t unusual to see the poorer folks with large screens, dredging all the rice they could get for their own consumption. To say the least, this rice, unless very well cooked, must have brought on some real intestinal parasites for those who ate it.

Today the old street dryer is almost a thing of the past. So are most of the drying slabs on the fazendas. We human beings are a funny lot. When we dried grain by solar power, we longed for the day there would be enough dryers to not have to do it that way anymore. Now that there are, we long for the good old days, for the camaraderie of doing it on a slab.

Inflation

Being president in Brazil is never easy. It can be downright uncomfortable when inflation spins out of control. Those of you who have been reading this little paper for some time, will have noticed that inflation has been in the 20-25% range over a period of quite a few months. Now it’s up to 30% – that’s per month, OK? – and threatening to escalate.

President Itamar began promising to lower interest rates in an effort to get us out of our recession. His finance minister finally convinced him that rates must be raised and not lowered. Doubtlessly this will deepen the recession. Itamar has promised to absolutely steer away from freezes and other surprise tactics to combat inflation. One thing is sure, unless he can come up with something quick, inflation is going to wreak havoc.

I mentioned last month that there was a good possibility that three zeros would be knocked off of our currency the first of February. It didn't happen. For some reason he didn't even ask Congress for their approval.

The Banco Central has just come out with a new five hundred thousand cruzeiro bill. Whenever anyone asks Mário Henrique Simonsen, one of the most respected Brazilian economists, what should be done to keep inflation down, he pulls a bill out of his pocket and says, "Inflation doesn't come about because of prices. It's our money that has no value." The new one half million cruzeiro bill was worth 78 US dollars when it was approved in September. When it went into circulation several days ago, it was worth 32 US dollars, down 41% from its original value.

Of Interest

- Brazil produces an average of 650 thousand barrels of petroleum per day.
- Approximately 200 thousand barrels of alcohol are produced daily from sugar cane. The majority of Brazilian cars run on alcohol.
- Brazil has approximately 19 thousand miles of railroads.
- The area of Brazil composes 1.66% of the total area of the earth, 5.77% of total land mass, and 47% of the South American continent. It borders Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, and the Guineas. It has 4,630 miles of shoreline along the Atlantic Ocean. Ninety three percent of Brazil is located south of the Equator.
- Brazil probably produces more champion Formula-One drivers than any other country in the world. Rightfully so. Once a Brazilian gets into the driver's seat of a car, he begins practicing. By the looks of the traffic in Rio Verde, at least several hundred local champions are in the making.

Of Interest

O Mensageiro

The Brazilian equivalent of the Messenger of Truth is called O Mensageiro das Boas Novas da Salvação.

Approximately 80% of our readers are non-members who receive the Mensageiro

free through the mail. Once a year we send out a questionnaire to see if they want to be kept on the mailing list. The last questionnaire, sent out asked the following questions:

1. What is your age?
2. Are you married?
3. If married, how many children do you have?
4. What is your religion?
5. Are you satisfied with the church you are going to?
6. Are you at peace with God?
7. Do you personally know anyone from the Church of God in Christ?
8. If you don't, would you like to know someone?
9. How many people in your household read the Mensageiro?
10. What influence has the Mensageiro had in your life?

Following are a few of the returns (answers come in above sequence):

José Sérgio da Silva, 34 years old, married, 3 children, Christian, satisfied, at peace, no, yes, 4 people, By studying this paper, I had the opportunity to learn that which no one would teach me. Everyday I am learning more.

Regina Nascimento da Penha, 25 years old, single, x, Catholic, somewhat dissatisfied, at peace, no, x, everyone plus friends, After I began getting the Mensageiro, I feel that my life has changed because it talks a lot about God's Word. Pray for me.

Lázaro Nogueira, 76 years old, married, 5 children, x, satisfied, yes, x, 2, First of all, it has strengthened my faith in Christ. Also it has increased my convictions concerning the evil influence of the television set. (Lázaro sends frequent donations for the literature work. He is an active tract worker).

Israel de Souza Monteiro, 49 years old, married, 11 children, Assembly of God, satisfied, at peace, no, yes, at least 12, I have used different articles from the Mensageiro in our Bible Study. I have grown through what I have read.

Amara de Souza, 65 years old, married, 8 children, Assembly of God, satisfied, at peace, no, yes, 4, The Mensageiro has had a strong influence on me. When I'm downhearted, I pick up the Mensageiro and read for a while. The messages are inspiring, including the section for children. (Amara has been a faithful reader for years. She frequently writes us short letters).

Luiz Alberto Pereira, 30 years old, single, x, Christian Remnant Church, not very, I believe so, no, I'll let you know, myself and different friends, I get a lot of good out of the Mensageiro. It was through this paper that I learned about the history of the Church, that I became acquainted with the Mennonite faith, and that I learned to live

a simple life and to understand that it's necessary to be born again, as your church teaches.

Antônio Ferreira Lustosa Neto, 28 years old, single, x, Protestant, satisfied, at peace, The Mensageiro has become a part of my life. It has had a strong spiritual influence on me. Thanks to what I have learned, I am now able to help others.

Wilson Vieira Pinto, 54 years old, married, 6 children, Assembly of God, satisfied, at peace, no, yes, 2, Through the Mensageiro I have come to understand and interpret the Holy Bible better, something that is lacking in my church. I especially appreciated Mensageiro number 183 that had [Gladwin Koehn's editorial] on "Asking for the Old Paths," as well as other articles.

Just an observation: You have noticed that almost everyone replied that they were satisfied with their church and felt peace with God. This is culture. Letters I get from readers begin with how everything is just fine spiritually. About a third of the way through the truth begins to appear: "Brother, I have a problem. I feel that I am lost. I don't get along with my husband (wife), etc." To say right off that things aren't going well isn't custom. ▲

This & That

Harold & Emma Dirks and Greta returned to the US after spending some time here with their children.

Revival meetings have begun at the Rio Verdinho Congregation, with Roland Loewen and Robert Toews as the evangelists.

Dr. Gordon, the missionary doctor and founder of the Hospital Evangélico in Rio Verde, was out to Earl Schmidts this last Sunday. I believe he is 96 years old. I didn't find out about it until later, so I can't relate what he said. But I understand he had some really interesting things to say about the early days of Rio Verde. I understand that back when he first came to this area, his car, plus two others, were the only vehicles in town.

Arlen & Carol Friesen and two sons, Brian and Terry, have arrived on a missionary visa. They are living in a rented house in Rio Verde and studying Portuguese. Their teacher is Paulo David, who knows no English. I am watching this situation with intense curiosity and will probably be making more observations as time goes by. With his flamboyant personality and ability to sketch, Paulo is going to teach Portuguese in Portuguese (and not in English, as is normally done). This means that right from the beginning his students should be thinking Portuguese. Unobserved, Duane Holdeman watched a class where the words open and close were being taught. Paulo would repeatedly open and close a door, saying abre when it was opened, and fecha when it was closed. Abre, fecha. Abre, fecha. Abre, fecha. Even you are learning.

Brazil ¹⁷ News

One more comment on Paulo David. My brother-in-law Tim Burns built a new pasture fence. Near our house he put in a corner post approximately 12 inches in diameter. The post had an enormous bow in it. Paulo looked it over and said, “É, o Timóteo apertou demais o arame de cima.” (“Yep, Tim pulled that top wire too tight.”)

Nelson Unruh, David Kramer and David Miller returned from the US after attending the preparatory class.

Reno Hibner is spending a short time in the US.

Tim & Deanna Burns are in the US for their son Darrin’s wedding. The bride, Ramona Kaminsky is from Ohio. They plan on living in the Hesston area (until they return to Brazil, huh Darrin?).

Sidney Williams and daughter Vanessa spent several days here on the Colony. He is from Leland, MS and she teaches school in Mirassol – São Paulo mission, for Dean & DeeDee’s children.

Juanita Isaac is spending some time in the area with her sister, Corinne, who is teaching at the Monte Alegre School.

Some men who are working on the Colony saw a huge anaconda near the dam where the other one was seen. Feeling that the only good snake is a dead one, they killed it. Was it the one I wrote about several months ago? Who knows?

Corn harvest in is progress. It looks like another bumper crop.

Ensilage is being made for the coming dry season. All of our silos are the horizontal type.

Juanita, Mrs. Tony Lima had a baby. They named it Vivian. Brazil News told about little Vivian. Now Juanita is all excited. It turns out Vivian isn’t Vivian. Vivian is Merrilee. They changed Vivian’s name. I have no objections. Next time, lady, I want to see the birth certificate (no photocopies).

Colony roads are maintained by the Colony, with occasional help from the county. A lot of work has been done on the roads recently, getting them ready for the intense harvest traffic.

There are still wolves in the area. The other night we heard one howling right near our house. These lobos, as they are called, are actually from the fox family. They are very tall because of their enormously long legs, but are by no means vicious like the authentic N American wolf.

January 30, at midnight, we went off of daylight saving time. That means there are now three hours difference between us and CST in the US.

Rains are varying quite a little from one area to another. Even here on the Colony, some fazendas are getting a lot more than others. So far crops aren’t suffering.