

Brazil News



No. 36
May 1994

Editorial

The Most Important Talent

A talent is an inherited ability. Though never created nor acquired, a talent sometimes must be uncovered, and almost always developed, in order to be useful.

The old horse and buggy doctor was the epitome of simplicity. One hat was big enough to cover virtually all the specialties of the medical world of that day. Now that has all changed. Medical science has mushroomed into countless specialties and sub-specialties. The family physician's role, frequently, is not to heal, but to decide to which specialist his patient should go for healing.

Not only has medical science ceased to be a one-hat affair, but so has most everything else you can name, including the church. If simplicity, in this sense, is a virtue, then someplace we missed a turn. There is nothing simple about the overall operation of the church. More and more hats are needed to cover the diversity of talents that today are represented in the different offices and committees.

We have the option of talking about the good old days when things were simpler and wish we could turn the clock back. Or we can face reality and recognize that for all of our programs to function properly, we can't operate from under one hat.

A talent is an inherited ability. It's true that many abilities can be acquired, but seldom with the same acuity of an inherited ability that has been properly developed.

Watch a half dozen masons working on a large construction gang. You may have difficulty knowing which of them are born masons and which merely picked up the trade. You may not see any difference in their work.

But there is a way of finding out which are born masons. Draw up crude plans for an addition to your house. Then call the masons over one by one and show them the plans. Ask them if they are interested in the job, what they would charge, and if they would have any suggestions to make.

If work is scarce, they will very likely all be interested in the job. Their prices

may be fairly consistent. But watch their reaction as you show them your crude plans, as they look the job over. The mason who wasn't born with the talent will see walls to be built. The born mason will see walls that have been built. He will suggest changes, solve many of his problems, before he picks up his trowel. The first mason solves his problems as he gets to them – usually at an additional expenditure of time and money.

We are not suggesting that all offices and committees in the church should be filled with men and women who have a talent for that particular position. Beyond being an impossibility, it isn't necessary.

On the other hand, it's possible we're not paying enough attention to this factor. It's entirely too easy to believe that, other than for ordained positions, one hat is still big enough to cover most talents. In other words, when we nominate someone for a position, or when we cast our vote, we put spirituality at the top of the list, – which is totally correct – assuming that when the brother or sister is spiritual, God will fill in the gaps. Once again this is true, but it isn't quite that simple. If it were, all spiritual brethren would make good song leaders. All spiritual sisters would make good school teachers. And all spiritual couples would make good missionaries. Nope, that isn't quite the way it is.

The work of the church is complex. Besides all the normal congregational positions, we now have a wide spectrum of programs that are being operated by boards and committees. Included are missions, schools, rest homes, child care homes, literature and tract work, disaster relief work, proofreading . . . To suggest that any spiritual brother is equally prepared to serve in any of these functions would indicate a certain shortsightedness.

Most boards, even though working in a specific area, have a need for a diversity of talents. Possibly nowhere is this more evident than on a school board, where an extremely wide range of situations and problems must be dealt with. The utopian school should have the following talents represented: that of a judge (to give the final word in difficult decisions), of an educator (to give wise counsel on academic problems), of a bank manager (to handle finances), of a handyman (to fix broken water pipes and change light bulbs), of a diplomat (to deal with delicate situations involving teachers and parents), and of a rhinoceros (with thick enough hide to plow in after the diplomat and the judge have hit the canvas).

Now we come to what this article is all about. How do we get the right talents for the right job and for the right board at the right time?

As the people from Caterpillar say, "There are no simple solutions, only intelligent choices." How very true in the issue we are discussing. Let's notice a few guidelines that might help us to make proper choices when determining who is suitable for a position.

1. The person must be spiritual. Never nominate or vote for someone who is having problems, with the idea that responsibility genders spirituality.
2. Never nominate or vote for someone simply because you feel sorry for him. If elected, you may soon have even more reason to feel sorry.

3. Don't let a personality difference or past grievance keep you from nominating or voting for a capable brother. President Truman is to have said that it's amazing how much good one can do if he doesn't care who gets the credit. All too often we vote, or don't vote, for someone because of the credit factor. This shows a lack of concern for the welfare of the kingdom, as well as a lack of charity.

4. Never nominate close relatives. If they are as capable as you believe, others will see their talents too. One should even be very cautious about voting for a close relative. One of the worst plagues that can hit a congregation is nepotism, when families place their own members in office. It reeks of politics.

5. Look for little telltale signs in people that would indicate at what they would be proficient. This is very important. Be interested enough to always have your mental notebook open all year long. You know that once a year there are elections for Sunday School positions. You know there are general elections at the end of the year. You know there are school board elections toward the end of the school term. When you see a little telltale sign in someone, make a mental note and file it away until the next election.

6. Keep your ears wide open for the little Voice that suddenly says, "Nominate so and so," or "Vote for that one." Call it a hunch, if you will. Whatever it is, it's very important.

7. Especially after nominating someone who was elected to office, keep an eye on him. See how he is doing. (This is particularly true when you have nominated on a hunch.) If the person is serving on a committee, pay attention to what other members say. (That brother sure has been a blessing in our work.) Encourage. Make suggestions. Help him develop his talent.

8. Check your own record. Do you consistently nominate people who aren't elected? Do those whom you vote for seldom make it into office? If the answer is yes, a big red light is flashing somewhere. Try and figure out what the problem is. If necessary, ask for help.

9. If you are elected, do your very best. Don't try and fabricate a talent you don't have. Don't feel that you should be able to do exactly what other committee members do. If your gift seems to be different or insignificant, maybe that is exactly what is needed where you are serving.

10. Never stay home "because it's just business meeting," or "because it's only Sunday School election," or from school meetings "because I don't have any children in school." Your attitude toward this kind of a meeting tells a lot about your character.

The most important talent. The most important talent is to be able to recognize the talent in others. No matter how great a talent someone has, it is of little value if not put to use. And for it to be put to use, someone must say, "I nominate . . ." Someone else must say, "I support it." Others must raise their hand at the proper time.

The most important talent is one that cannot be neglected, for all others depend on it. ▲

Behavior

Ayrton Senna

One Sunday evening several weeks ago we decided to go to church in town. Before we even got in, someone informed me, “Ayrton Senna was killed!”

Sunday evening services are Bible study and Paulo David is the teacher. The subject was hell.

Toward the end of his class, Paulo said, “I heard that Ayrton Senna died. I don’t suppose he had any inkling how close he was to death . . .”

“Yes he did,” interrupted the one who gave me the news before going into church. He went on to tell what Ayrton had said before he got into his car before the fatal wreck, indicating he had a premonition of something.

Who is this Ayrton Senna whose death was announced in the Goiânia paper with headlines every bit as big as would have been used if the president of Brazil himself had died?

Ayrton Senna was a Formula 1 auto racer who lost his life on the track in Imola, Italy. The three time grand champion was hoping to make it four. There is no doubt but what he was a fabulous driver.

When his body arrived in the São Paulo airport aboard a Varig flight, over a million people were waiting along the 31 km. route to the state legislative building, where he would lie in state. President Itamar posthumously decorated him with the Grand Cross award and decreed that he should be buried with all the honors of a chief of state.

Why such an outpouring of emotion? Especially when taken into consideration that Senna was not an outgoing or exceptionally likable person?

Senna symbolized what Brazilians would like for Brazil to be. He was successful. Internationally, he was able to compete with the very best and be a champion. He was rich and famous. Who wouldn’t like to be part of a country that was all this?

Even religious fervors were stirred by Senna’s death, with both Catholics and Protestants competing to transport him to the glory world on their particular airline. VEJA magazine called him muito católico – very Catholic, but admitted he was strongly influenced by his sister, who belongs to some nondescript Protestant sect. Terribly humiliating and frustrating to Catholics, must have been the fact that some Protestant pastor had the final words over his coffin. Over his grave there is an inscription with his name, date of birth and of death. Below is the verse, “Nothing can separate me from the love of God,” something extremely unusual had he actually been a practicing Catholic.

Strangely enough, his religiosity was not a posthumous invention. In Japan, Senna once astounded his listeners by telling them that he had seen Jesus during a race.

Ayrton Senna is unabashedly referred to as an idol. While he represents what the people wish for their country to be, it is exactly this attitude that keeps it from happening. It’s wishing instead of doing. It’s vainly hoping that some of their idol’s good luck will rub off on them. It doesn’t work. Ayrton Senna himself didn’t get to the top of the ladder by emotionalism. He didn’t get there by wishing. He got there by doing. Like one of my school teachers used to say, “The best way to get a job done is to do it.” ▲

Brasília

Boxcar Politics

Quite a few years ago I read the story of some Nazi prisoners who were hauled off to a concentration camp. After suffering indescribably, they were loaded into closed boxcars and told that they would now return to their homeland.

Crammed into the boxcar, worse than so many cattle, which at least would have had some decent ventilation, the incarcerated men, women and children kept their spirits up with thought that they were going home.

As they traveled, someone found that a knot in one of the sideboards could be removed, giving a limited view of the outside world. Excitement increased as old landmarks were seen and whispered from one to another.

Finally their hometown was reached and their boxcar shunted to a siding. For all practical purposes they were home. Yet they were prisoners.

The shouting among the guards on the outside indicated heated negotiations were taking place. Unfortunately I don't remember all that happened, but as I remember it, the engine was coupled to the boxcar and they began their return journey to where they had come from.

(Would any of you good readers have a copy of this story? I think it's called The Knothole. I would appreciate a photocopy, if possible.)

That is politics, I suspect not only in Brazil, but in many countries of the world. The problem isn't a lack of intelligence or the inability to come up with a solution. It isn't lack of means to make the solution work. The problem is constant bickering, sacrificing the welfare of the nation for personal gain.

It's frustrating to watch this scene unfold, not because it's hurting us so much (really we are having quite a good life), but because of what it does to the masses. As the men, women and children locked up in the stifling heat and filth of the boxcar, so the poor class must suffer.

The president has decreed that on July 1, the Real, our new currency, shall substitute the Cruzeiro Real, our present currency. The plan is very good. But that is no sign it will work. Unless Congress cooperates, the bickering on the outside of the boxcar will doom those inside to a continued purgatory of inflation.

Now do you understand why people idolize Ayrton Senna? ▲

Polícia Federal

For a little over a month, the Polícia Federal have been on strike. Not only are they the Brazilian FBI, but they also issue passports and are present in international airports and borders, checking and stamping passports.

Obviously their being on strike created a lot of problems, especially for folks wanting to get a passport. Even so there was a feeling that they weren't so far out in what they

were asking for. What made the situation serious was that they threatened to use arms if any effort was made to replace them until a settlement could be reached. President Itamar simply called on the army to invade their headquarters in Brasília.

This was done without any violence, and several days later, after recalling the troops, the Polícia Federal agreed to let 30% of their personnel go back to work, while negotiations continued. It appears that before too long the rest will be back on the job. ▲

This Month on the Colony

The Dry Season

In most of Brazil the four seasons are not nearly as well defined as in N America. In fact, if asked what season we're in, most Brazilians scratch their head and admit they don't know. Everyone talks in terms of rainy or dry season.

Being south of the Equator, our seasons are just opposite of those in the northern hemisphere. Your spring is our fall, your summer is our winter. Right now we are going into winter, although to us it is the dry season.

In our part of the country, the rains normally begin in September. While these rains are obviously looked forward to after a long dry season, they are also dreaded. Almost invariably some of the first rains are violent, with high winds and a lot of lightning. It isn't unusual for someone to lose part of a shed or house roof during these storms. (See Remembering Out Loud.)

The rains in September are usually sporadic. In October they begin to settle down. Fields are prepared for planting. Farmers watch the weather like hawks and the moment they feel we are actually in the rainy season, they begin planting corn.

After corn planting there is sometimes a bit of a lull and then as November rolls around preparations are made for planting soybeans; fertilizer is broadcast and herbicides are applied. By the first part of December most of the planting is done.

December and January usually bring us a lot of rain. February is the month for corn harvest. This is often a hit and miss affair between showers.

In April, soybean harvest is in full swing. Once again it takes dodging showers.

May is a borderline month. It's possible the rains continue most of the way through May, or like this year, they can suddenly stop, apparently putting us into the dry season. (Notice I said apparently.)

June, July and August are the really dry months. Sometimes we don't get a single rain. Other times we may get up to three or four rains during this period.

During the rainy season our relative humidity hangs in at ninety percent or more. When rainy, cloudy weather sets in, the hygrometer can easily spend several weeks at 98-100%. This is miserable. Houses get moldy. Allergies flare up. Roads give out. Streets and highways become pocked with potholes. In the poorer sections of town streets sometimes become deep ravines. Rivers overflow.

The rainy season is a beautiful time in Brazil. Everything becomes an exuberant green.

So what about the dry season? Is it an ugly time of the year, when things turn brown, the atmosphere becomes hazy?

By no means. The dry season has a beauty all of its own – sort of like the N American fall. Humidity drops to 40 - 50%. Temperatures drop, once in a while hitting freezing. By once in a while, I mean once or twice every three or four years. It used to happen a lot more often before so much of the land was cleared.

Because of almost no rain, the dry season is the preferred time for building projects. It's also the time to hop a plane and tour N America.

If you folks in the northern hemisphere want to feel sorry for us because of our high inflation, go right ahead. If you think our politics are a mess, no one will argue with you. If you say that we're more backward than you, what of it? But folks, never, never criticize our climate here in central Brazil. It's tops. And period. ▲

A Brazilian Story

Saved Because of an Accident

[Today Meuzilma (better known as Mel), Paulo David's wife, tells us her experience of conversion. I might mention that here in Brazil the term Evangelical is used to designate Christian groups that reject Catholicism and the more radical forms of Protestantism.]

It all began in April of 1980, the month in which I turned 17. But there I was lying on a hospital bed because of an automobile accident I had been in. It was only through God's grace that I wasn't dead. I was hurt badly, with deep cuts on my face and neck. I lost my left eye.

For the first time I began to think seriously about life. I realized how empty I was. I wondered how my life would be from there on out. I thought people would reject me because of the way the accident messed up my looks. I began thinking about ways to compensate for the handicap with which I would have to live from now on out. My idea was to become an important person. During this time I was a high school sophomore. I decided to take refuge in education and excel in some profession.

Up to this point I had kept my distance from God. The little bit of religious teaching I had received so far had all been Catholic. People who came to visit me in the hospital would say things like, "You need to accept what God does as being right. He is the one who permitted this accident to happen." Others would ask, "Why do you suppose that God would let something like this happen to you?" I came to the conclusion that it was because He didn't like me, that He wasn't love. I didn't see this as any great problem, because I didn't like Him either!

But while all this was taking place, a lady came into my room and asked for permission have a prayer. I said she could. That was the first time I had ever heard a prayer (oração). Until now the only thing I had ever heard was rezas [Catholic prayers, which Evangelical groups don't consider to be true prayers.] I still remember some of the words this lady used in her prayer – especially the phrase, “Lord, don't permit this youth to become rebellious...” I began to cry. That prayer was exactly what I needed to hear.

My family interrupted the lady and asked her to quit praying. They thought that she was upsetting me and that was why I was crying. I didn't say anything, but the reason I was crying was that the prayer was exactly what I needed to hear. The lady left and never again did I see her. I have no idea who she was. For a long time after that, when I would go to rezar, I would include some of her words in my prayer.

When I got out of the hospital, my life was a big void. I was tremendously unhappy. I developed an inferiority complex. I couldn't accept myself the way I was and refused to accept others the way they were. It really got to me the way they always wanted to know what had happened to me. I didn't accept God either, because after all, He was to blame for all this.

My life began to circle around my studies. I thought that the day I was a successful professional person, my problems and my inferiority complex would all disappear. But once again God intervened in my life. He simply didn't let me pass the college entrance exams, which left me more frustrated than ever. It increased my emptiness and the rebellion toward God.

In the beginning of 1983, someone invited me to an Evangelical church service. I thought, “Crentes?” [Unlike Evangelicals, the word crentes – literally “believers” – include even the most radical Protestant sects, thus giving it a very pejorative slant. We don't consider ourselves to be crentes.] Go to the crente's church? It must be a horrible experience. It's probably made up of old people, of ladies with long hair. No, I decided, that wasn't for me. But the person who invited me insisted so much that I finally agreed to go because I didn't know what to say anymore. To my great surprise, I found it all real interesting. I was impressed by the way they worshipped God, by the way they prayed. Everything was so different from what I was used to.

I had always heard that to be a crente, it was necessary to die to the world. Since I was upset with the world, since it didn't solve any of my problems, I decided to become a crente and see what would happen. Even though I still couldn't see how God is love, He began to really work in my life.

I now considered myself to be a crente, but because I still couldn't feel God's love, my life was still miserable. I still had the same inferiority complex. Until now I had had no experience with God. It really got to me when I saw sayings like, “Jesus Loves You,” or “Jesus Cares for You.”

One day while listening to a sermon on the love of God, I thought to myself that if the preacher had gone through what I went through, he wouldn't talk like that. I felt that God loved only a select few, and that unfortunately I wasn't one of them.

Time went by and things got worse and worse. I asked myself: Why can't I be like other people? They pray and talk about how happy they are. Why can't it be like that with me?

One day in church someone asked me, "Do you have an inferiority complex? Have you ever really accepted the accident you were in?" There it was! It was something that I had carefully hid away in my life. How did this person detect this in me? I thought I was really good at hiding my problems. I went around smiling and tried to look happy. Since I wasn't being myself, I was quite a shallow person.

I didn't answer her questions. I began crying hysterically. (Later on she told me how scared she was when she saw my reaction.) She suggested, "Why don't you just talk with God and tell Him everything you are feeling inside?"

I asked, "But how could I do such a thing? God would punish me if I told Him what I feel."

But she insisted, "Go and pray. Talk with God. Tell Him everything you are feeling, both the good and the bad."

I went home crying and straight to my room. Even now, many years later, what happened there is fresh in my mind. It's as though it happened yesterday. I remember how I knelt and began to talk to God, something I had never been able to do before.

I prayed, "Lord, I don't feel that you are my Father, nor that you love me. Why did you let such terrible things happen to me? Why? Why? Why do I have this inferiority complex? I would like to accept everything that happened to me, to be able to look people in the eye without always feeling this awful complex. I would like to love you like the Bible teaches, with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my understanding and with all my strength, so that I could feel the peace that you are able to give. Lord, help me to make a full surrender to you. I need you. I need your forgiveness for all the evil I have done against you. Forgive me for my sins (and here I mentioned some that I remembered)."

While I was praying, asking for His help, I still remember how I clenched my hands to where they hurt. I was crying all the while. I talked to Him about the things I had hidden away in the bottom of my heart.

Then something happened that's difficult to describe. At that moment I began to feel God's presence. Every time that I got to some especially difficult time in my life, His presence became even stronger. By now I was lying on the floor. I was unable to move. I stayed that way for several minutes trying to understand that presence. I had never gone through anything like this before. The Spirit of God was upon me with wings of healing. It was wonderful! A feeling of peace began to fill my heart and then I began to feel the love of God. It wasn't a love that I manufactured. It was God himself who put it in my heart. I began to smile and said to Him, "Lord, I love you! I love you! Forgive me for not having loved you for such a long time."

Those are unforgettable moments in my life.

When I got up, I felt like a new person. I was happy and could understand things, one of which was that without the accident, I probably would have never learned to

know God. I thanked Him for this. It was through this accident that God got my attention. Now I had what was most important to me. Instead of an inferiority complex, I now had peace. Right there and then I made a covenant with God, promising to be faithful to Him the rest of my life.

I could hardly wait for the next day to come around, when I would be able to go to church and tell everyone what God had done for me. I couldn't wait to be able to talk with them, to look them in the eye. I felt so light. I felt like someone who had been totally blind and then got his vision back.

It was here that my Christian life began. I wanted to learn more about God, how to please Him and serve Him better. At that point I didn't even dream that in three years I would be married to a pastor of that church and living in the little town of Pirenópolis [where we now have a mission].

It was after we were married that God began a work in our life that would end up bringing us to His Church. This was a difficult time for me because I didn't realize that it was God's hand leading us.

As time went by, my husband began to disagree with some of the teachings and practices of the church where he was the pastor. It was during this time that he had his first contact with the Church of God in Christ. He became interested in the teaching and practices of this church. Before I knew it, he had strong convictions that this was the true Church of God.

This left me fearful, simply because I couldn't imagine that there could be such a thing as a true Church of God. I knew there were serious problems in the church where he was the pastor, but I excused them by saying that a church is made up of human beings, and therefore any church would have its problems. My husband did his best to show me, with the Bible, that there was such a thing as a true, visible church on earth. I simply closed my mind to this truth. I discussed this with others and came to the conclusion that my husband was being deceived.

Within a short time our home became a battleground. My husband decided to give up being a pastor and move to Rio Verde. [This decision, of course, brought into focus the aspect of losing a good salary, obviously creating a financial crisis in their lives.]

Things got harder and harder for me. But I knew that as a Christian wife, I would have to go with him to Rio Verde. My only hope was that God would help him come to his senses and realize how deceived he was, so that he could see there was no such a thing as a church being totally faithful to Christ's teachings.

We moved to Rio Verde and began going to the Church of God in Christ. As time went by and I saw how my husband's convictions were becoming stronger, I clammed up more and more.

Was it possible that he was right and I was wrong? Who really was deceived? Within a year after moving to Rio Verde, my husband belonged to this church. By now the peace and happiness I had felt when I got converted had all left me.

During all this turmoil, I read a book on the Christian home and on the

woman's place within God's plan. As I read it seemed to me I could see myself as God saw me. I could see how rebellious I was being toward God and toward His will. I could see how I wasn't willing to deny myself and give up my own ideas. I understood how that behind my fear of getting out of God's will, there was actually a very strong will of my own, an unwillingness to place everything in the Lord's hands.

I came to God in deep repentance and once again surrendered myself to Him. Then the Lord showed me the real reasons why I had rejected the Church of God in Christ. It was that I was vain, insubmissive and didn't understand the true nature of the narrow way and the cross that the Christian must carry.

I began to study the doctrines of the Church with an open heart. On September 13 of 1992 I was baptized into the true Church of God, where today, with my husband and children, we are walking in the way of the Lord.

My prayer is that we can continue faithful to Him all the days that we live in this world, until finally we are called to our heavenly home that God has promised to those who deny themselves, take up their cross and follow the Lamb wherever He may lead. ▲

Remembering Out Loud

When Mother Nature Raises the Roof

We talk about people raising the roof. It seems some folks have a gift for this. But none can do quite as perfect a job as Mother Nature.

Enter Daniel & Alma Martin (now residents of the Moundridge Manor).

To understand this little incident, a few explanations are in order on our roofing materials here in Brazil.

When we first moved here almost all roofs were made of clay tile. On the disadvantage side, clay tile are heavy, especially after a prolonged rainy period of daily rains, when they can become quite water-logged. Being heavy, they require some really strong rafters.

But on the positive side, clay tile are very cool. On a hip roof, they are impervious to all but the very worst storms. The same is true of gable end roofs in which the outside tile have been secured by cementing ridgecap over them. They make a beautiful roof. And last, but by no means least, no matter how out of square or how uneven a roof is, they work.

Through the years, clay tile began to give way to asbestos roofing, which of course is much lighter, but has the disadvantage of being hot, unaesthetic (ugly, in plain English), and very susceptible to high winds. About all it takes is for one corner to begin peeling, and before you can say "potato" half the roof is peeled.

Some galvanized roofing is being used, which is an improvement over asbestos,

although very noisy in a rain. Finally there is aluminum roofing with a baked finish in different colors, like we have on our new literature center. It has most of the advantages of clay tile, and yet is extremely light.

Back to Daniel Martins. The roof on their house was made of corrugated tin or aluminum, I'm not sure which.

Then one night as Daniel & Alma slept, it started to rain in. So Alma hopped up to close the window, but the window was closed. She tried the lights, but they refused to shine. In another bedroom, their son Howard and his wife from Mississippi, were having similar problems. Even with the windows shut, the rain kept coming in.

I don't know the exact details. (you folks at the Manor can ask the Martins for a first hand report. If you live in Mississippi, talk to Howard and his wife.) I suspect they unearthed a flashlight someplace. Anyway, as they looked upward they found there was no longer a roof.

That's right. The entire roof, including the hip roof over the porch, as well as a six foot piece of brick chimney, silently and majestically rose up into the air and began floating downwind. After about 20 feet the chimney had had enough and returned to the earth. About 50 feet farther the main roof came in for a landing, but the porch roof, with somewhat better aerodynamics, managed to continue flight for a short distance before making a forced landing.

No, I don't think the Martins slept much for the remainder of that night. Yes, everything did get wet. No, no one got hurt. Yes, it was an unforgettable night that they shall never forget. ▲

When the Roof Comes Down

To put up a clay tile roof on a large building is a real art. It's a subject in itself that I won't go into at this point, except for one small detail.

A fellow by the name of Jaime Menezes had a sawmill on the outskirts of town. It was quite a booming place and he decided to build an enormous building in which he could store his sawed lumber.

The rafters were built and the sheeting put on. Then the heavy tile were brought up on the roof – probably a number of people below tossing them to some “catchers” up above. They were then stacked up in piles at regularly spaced intervals on the sheeting so that the “layers” could begin their work.

Suddenly there was a terrible cracking sound and with a hideous roar the entire roof, including the tons of clay tile, went crashing down to the floor below. Several workmen were killed.

Now for the little detail. It's an unwritten law that on large roofs the tile be laid up equally from all sides. Because of their enormous weight, to work on only one side can easily create enough stress to bring the entire roof down, as happened at the saw mill. ▲

When the Roof Goes Up and Down

[I can't resist this little story that Mário de Moraes tells. While the first two roof stories are authentic, this one I have serious doubts about.]

A newspaper editor received the following letter from one of the workers, in which he asked for a few days off for health reasons. Here is what the letter said:

“Yesterday when I got home from work, I discovered that a bad storm had ripped several clay tile off of my house. I rigged up a two-by-four with a rope and pulley. Then I placed several boxes of tile up on the roof.

“When I finished I found out I had a bunch of tile left over, so I went back down to the ground and pulled the empty box back up and securely tied the rope. Then I crawled back on the roof, put all the unused tile into the box, which made it quite full, and crawled back down.

“Carefully I untied the rope that held the box of tile. Unfortunately, I had put so many tile into the box that now it was much heavier than I. Hanging onto the rope, I found myself being lifted at a terrible speed, headed for the roof. Halfway up I met the box of tile, that was coming down at an equally great speed. It smacked me on the shoulder, but I continued rising until my head hit the two-by-four I set up and my fingers got pinched in the pulley.

“And that isn't the end of my woes. When the box hit the earth, the bottom broke out and the tile scattered. Now it was I who was heavier than the box. I began my descent at an outrageous velocity. At the halfway mark I came into contact with the now shattered box, which inflicted some painful wounds on my legs.

“When I hit the ground, on top of the broken tile, I lost my presence of mind and let go of the rope. What was left of the box now came flying down and hit me on the head. My injuries were so serious by now that I had to be hospitalized.

“Because of all this I request that I be given a few days off until I recuperate my normal health.” ▲

This & That

There was no school on April 21, which is a holiday in honor of Tiradentes, a national hero. School is dismissed on all national holidays, except for Catholic religious holidays, such as Corpus Christi.

Beginning last quarter, our Portuguese Sunday School books were printed at Gráfica Girassol, Stanley Schultz' print shop. For June, July, August quarter, another big step has been taken. Dale Koehn sent me the English Youth & Adult quarterly on a diskette, which was processed so as to be compatible with our desktop publishing program, printed on vegetable paper and sent to Gráfica

Girassol, where positive plates were made and the books printed. The most noticeable difference from the books printed in N America and ours, is the spiral binding we use.

Bert & Ada Coblentz returned to the US. Their daughter Lovina came to help Jonathan for a short time.

There have been some mumps going around here lately.

Lester & Sharon Holdeman are spending a short time in the Fortaleza mission in the Northeast. That makes sense. But it sure doesn't make sense for Lester to get the measles.

On April 25 we had the English Annual Meeting report at the Monte Alegre congregation. The Portuguese report was in town several days later. As I have mentioned before, it works much better to have separate reports. They can be much more complete without an interpreter.

Paul Yoder, Glenn Hibner, Divino Cândido, Dan Kramer, and Luís Fernandes went to Mato Grosso to the Sorriso area. Both Divino and Luís bought a tract of land. I understand that nearly 20 thousand acres have been purchased by different ones. I'm doing my best to get one of the new colonists to write an article on what is going on and supply a map to be published in this paper. I wish the people who buy land in Mato Grosso would be as anxious to get the word spread as ladies who have new babies.

Leonard & Moselly Koepl had a garage sale and then returned to the US. If they would have asked me for advise, I would have told them to just settle down here and forget Oregon. But like they say here in Brazil, if advise was worth anything, it wouldn't be free. People would sell it.

Maria, Jerônimo's wife, from the town congregation, has been hospitalized in Belo Horizonte for some time. She is undergoing tests to try and find out what her problem is. So far things don't look very favorable.

On May 4 the Monte Alegre School kindergarten students put on a little program for the parents and grandparents. There were 10 students. Keleda Loewen was the teacher.

The Monte Alegre district has had several meetings to discuss an addition to the present school, which is now loaded to the gills. The office was turned into a classroom. The books were moved out of the library and children moved in. Even the hall has become a classroom. Right now we have a do-re-mi problem. The school board sings do(ugh), do(ugh), do(ugh), and everyone else sings me? me? me?

It's about three years ago that the Kramers had their accident on the Rio Verdinho bridge. Some of you will probably remember that Dan came out of it with a broken back. He was taken to Goiânia for surgery, which included fusing three of the vertebrae and holding them in place with a large plate. Recently one side of the plate slipped out of place. The doctor felt he should have it replaced with a smaller, permanent plate. When Dan got out of surgery he was pleasantly surprised when the doctor told him his back had mended so well that he was able to remove the old

plate and it wasn't necessary to replace it with anything else. In another couple of weeks he should be jumping off trailers again like nothing ever happened.

The Mark Loewen family spent the May 8 weekend in Mato Grosso with the Leo Dirks family.

The Monte Alegre youth leaders, Carman & Celma Loewen, are beginning a series of classes out of the Let's Polish Up book. I don't know much about it, but I think the idea is to teach them proper manners, correct social behavior and whatever else young people should know. A noble cause.

On May 10 a number of mothers got together and served a hot lunch to the Monte Alegre school children and teachers.

Tim Burns has worked real hard here lately. Now he's taking a vacation – in the hospital, after having some kidney stones removed.

In the last several weeks we have had baptisms in all three congregations. That brings the number of our Brazilian members up to 112, including those on the mission fields, of course.

Carman & Celma were coming home from Goiânia the other night, after spending the weekend in the Pirenópolis mission, when they hit a lobo – wolf (see issue 31 on lobos). The front of their car was bashed in bad enough for Glenn Hibner to have to tow them home.

Faith just informed me that 96 of you Brazil News subscribers in N America have either lived in Brazil for a time or been here for a visit. Not too bad. It would be nice if the rest of you would come and pay us a visit.

At least most of you 96 should know where Broadway is here on the Colony. It's the road that runs past our place and down to where Tim Burns, Emma Burns and the Kramers live. The view on this road has really changed recently. Daniel Martin had the land on the left side of the road (going down), that used to belong to John Penner, cleared and plans on having someone farm it and then put to pasture.

In June the US is to host the World Cup soccer games. Brazil will be there with every intention of winning. Whether they win or not, the big winners will be Varig, Transbrasil, Vasp, American and a few other airlines.

It's not too hard to lose track of the value of money with the kind of inflation that we have. I gave the children fifty thousand cruzeiro bills to give in the Sunday School collection. I thought it was quite a little, but my wife gave me a real going over. She pointed out it was approximately three US cents. I have been told that sometimes when such worthless bills are put into the collection (obviously by children) that the deacons simply chuck them. VEJA magazine shows children out on a street throwing wads of bills into the air, watching the wind carry them off.

Ribeirão Preto, one of the larger cities in the state of São Paulo, had a violent storm the other day. There was a lot of hail, and according to the papers, even some tornadoes. Rather than being a true tornado, I suspect they were oversized whirlwinds. We sometimes see them here.

The latest word from Telegoiás is that our rural cellular phone system will be implanted

Brazil News

at the end of this year. If it wasn't for a 135 meter (443 ft.) freestanding tower that must be built in Rio Verde first, we would have them even sooner.

In an effort to make it possible for lower income families to own a car, the government cut production taxes way down on vehicles with one liter motors. It worked. Today over 30% of all vehicles produced have a one liter engine. And the government is making more on taxes than before.