

Brazil News



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Editorial

Cultural Shock

As all missionaries know, as well as anyone who has ever made a major move, a new culture can make or break a man. While the move to Brazil certainly cannot be compared with our forefathers coming from Russia to N America, it nonetheless goes far beyond what a new missionary normally experiences on a foreign field.

Most of the families involved in the migration to Brazil had to have sale before making the move. Some came down first to look things over. Others didn't.

In either case, what happened was similar. After much prayer and concern, it was decided to have sale. This in itself was a rather traumatic experience. To place in an auctioneer's hands practically everything that has been accumulated over a period of years and see it reduced to a stack of bills isn't easy. With every So-o-o-o-ld! that the auctioneer triumphantly shouts out, another snip is taken at the umbilical cord that has for years attached the man to his belongings. And who is so insensitive as to be able to sit in on his own auction and never have any misgivings, never think, "What in the world am I doing?"

It is exactly this factor of selling out that makes migration a much more stressful situation than going to the mission field. Normally the missionary places his holdings in good hands, says adiós to his congregation and loved ones, and heads to the field. No matter what he faces, there is always the little fire escape at the back of his mind: "If things get too hot, I can go back." Or at worst, "In another two (three) years my term will be up." He has something to go back to. Home is still there.

For the migrant, it was the sale. A marathon of visits to say good-bye to people all over. A nighttime flight with Varig or PanAm. Someone waiting in the airport in Brasília or Goiânia. Makeshift quarters on the colony. Looking for a vehicle to buy. Looking for land to buy. Looking for a building site. Waiting for money that got hung

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up in some international currency house to come through. Knowing only how to say bom dia and obrigado, and not even feeling like saying that part of the time.

For the migrant it was having someone another American (supposedly sane) tell him that a hundred cruzeiro bill was worth more than a ten thousand cruzeiro bill. That he didn't know which way was north. (All newcomers have to know where north is and the only two directions most people are familiar with in Brazil are up and down. During the first hectic period some Americans got to the place that they lost even their sense of up, being able to only see down.) That amanhã (tomorrow) can mean next week, next month. That when asking the age of a horse and the seller said dezoito (18), the cipher given was probably referring to years, not months, as led to believe. That when returning a defective item purchased, saying, "It doesn't work," the store keeper would smile warmly, point to a huge box of similar objects, and say, "None of them work," and it be assumed that this logical explanation correct the situation. And all of this had to come through an interpreter.

Just a sideline: I mentioned in another article that the spiritists here believe that good works which would include suffering for a noble cause when in sufficient number, guarantee entrance through the pearly gates. If that theory was sound, no one would be more sure of his salvation than those who had to interpret for newcomers ("Tell them that back in the US it sure isn't this way!" "Tell them they said it would be ready TODAY!").

All this of course varied from person to person, family to family, but sort of a pattern developed:

Phase 1. A sort of blind euphoria. "We've made it to Brazil!" "We're actually here!" "It seems like a dream!" During this initial phase all the traumatic experiences of the auction sale, good-bys, etc. were shoved into the background. Brazil is a beautiful tropical country, which certainly did give many new-comers a boost. Children absolutely loved all the commotion, living in a tent, going fishing, being able to explore. Going on wild pig hunts, going swimming in crystal clear rivers, riding horse, was all a lot of fun. Young people thought it was tops. To go to the bank and find that the dollars sent over, now converted into cruzeiros, had turned one into a millionaire felt good. An especially euphoric period was after the shipping box sent from N America via the port at Santos finally got to the fazenda. As cherished items were taken out one by one, cloud nine turned into cloud ten.

Phase 2. Cloud ten didn't last long. Back to cloud nine. Cloud eight. Cloud seven. And suddenly, as happens with a paratrooper whose chute won't open, the earth came rushing up mighty fast. Clouds six to one were but a blur and then a mighty crash! All at once it was no longer fun to live in makeshift quarters. After buying a fazenda, a vehicle, materials for a new house (actually a shed with living quarters in most cases. More on that in another issue), farming equipment, it was discovered that it doesn't take long to spend a million cruzeiros. Worse yet, dollars left in reserve in N America would have to be tapped. It was during this period that interpreters came up with most of their supposed celestial points.

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Phase 3. “Why am I here?” Some real solemn reflection, some earnest prayer, some rigid self-discipline, did miracles. Miracles. It was here that each one had to realize that we tread on the earth and look at the clouds and not vice-versa. Once this hurdle was made, it’s amazing how nice these folks were to interpret for.

Phase 4. Adaption. An effort is now made to learn the language, at least the basics. Amanhã is accepted as a fact. Brazil becomes home, at least to a tolerable extent. Some cultural differences are actually seen as superior to those of N America. A concentrated effort is made to get things to work. US dollars have been spent and now survival depends on the unpredictable cruzeiro. In short, a workable routine of life is established.

Phase 5. Integration. There is a mighty big step between adaption and integration. Adaption means the necessary adjustments have been made to be able to put up with things and have a relatively normal life. Someone who has adapted usually has made enough money so that it is now feasible to sell out and return to N America. By selling out lock, stock and barrel, he could come up with enough green backs to get right back into the mainstream in N America. Every time something goes wrong economically, politically or even spiritually the tendency is to make up a mental sale bill. This person, even though apparently well settled in Brazil, is actually living in Equador, that is straddling the equator with one foot in N America and the other in S America.

Integration is being able to go to N America for a visit, enjoy it, then return and say, “Am I ever glad to be back home!” And mean it from the bottom of the heart. Adaption, on the other hand, is coming back and for the next three months feel like you’re in purgatory, wondering what ever ailed you to come here in the first place.

Once a stable nucleus had been established here and people dribbled in a family or two at a time, it wasn’t so bad. By being able to talk to people who believed in Brazil and were proving it was possible to make a living here, this whole process became less painful.

Caos. That’s what we had here in the beginning before anyone had adapted, before anyone really spoke the language, and before we knew if we could actually make a living here by farming.

We came from different congregations. We had different ideas. Once the phase 1 euphoria wore off, we big grown up people did things that little children get spanked for.

Listen to this one. The subject of Sunday came up. Was Sunday the only day that could be dedicated to worship in the new dispensation? Or would Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday work just as well? It wasn’t that anyone wanted to change to another day. It wasn’t that anyone had any doubts about Sunday. But it was a hypothesis that became the talk of the town. We talked about it in Sunday School. We talked about it in groups. And we talked about it at home. Absolutely ridiculous.

Another one. When we first moved to Brazil, practically the entire region was prairie. Cattle were moved from one location to another almost exclusively in cattle drives. The fazenda we bought had a major trail running through it. Obviously, a

herd of a thousand or so head of cattle can be rather hard on a rice or corn field. One brother whose fields were especially hard hit felt something should be organized to keep crops from being damaged, maybe reroute the cattle. That also became a subject to be discussed in Bible Study it fit into any topic in groups, at home, etc. Those whose fields weren't being damaged felt it would be a good light to let the cattle come through on their old stomping grounds. There we were, back and forth, back and forth.

These are a few minor examples.

It may sound a bit funny now, but I can guarantee you it wasn't back in those days.

What was the problem? Obviously there were some bad genes showing up. But it wasn't just that. Everyone was on edge. Everyone was going through the cultural adjustment at the same time. That's a disaster. No human being should have to ever go through such an experience twice in his life. Not even once.

As the Colony became better established, these outrageous happenings slowly died out. A few had to suffer a rather violent death, but finally they were buried.

Can anything be learned from this? Obviously. Should it happen again that a major move is made to a new and culturally different area, steps should be taken to prepare the colonists before ever leaving home. The Mission Board already has such a policy for new mission workers. As they arrive on the field, they know what they are liable to run into. It is impossible to prepare anyone for everything, but planning and preparation certainly does help. So any future colonization project similar to this one should be very well organized before anyone leaves home.

And today?

To say that all the cultural problems have been solved would certainly be misleading. To say that everyone feels at home here would be untrue.

Will some return to N America? Very possible. And why not? You folks in N America move all over, don't you?

There is just one little item. It's always nice to see someone move who can still say something good about the place he came from. ▲

More on cultural problems next month.

Our Schools

Valéria Gold & Ruth Kramer

[Just a few comments on the two teachers who are reporting on our schools here in Brazil. Valéria Gold is teaching in the Rio Verdinho School this year. She has spent a number of years teaching in the Monte Alegre School. This summer she spent almost three months in the States giving her English a good workout, which incidentally is top of the line. Valéria has taught Portuguese to both Brazilian and American children, as well as English to Brazilians.

Ruth is Daniel Kramer's daughter. She is teaching the lower grades in the Monte

Alegre School (According to my third grade son, she's a mighty good teacher). She has taught Portuguese to Americans and both Portuguese and English to Brazilians.

First we listen to Valéria:

In order to describe a Brazilian school, I resort to the words of a poet:

No chão de terra batida
Está a escolhinha rural.
Na frente a cerca de flores,
E no fundo o milharal.

[On a floor of hard packed sod
There stands a little country school.
In the front a fence of flowers,
And in the back a patch of corn.]

That aptly describes the few country schools that exist in Brazil. More often than not, the floor is packed sod, the students poor, little or no school books, and poorly prepared teachers.

But, I can sincerely say that what I have just said doesn't fit the Rio Verdinho country school. This school is operated under a sound economical setup. We have very good textbooks. In fact, we have certain luxuries that they don't have in the Brazilian public schools country or city.

In the Escola Rio Verdinho [as known in Portuguese] we have three teachers and 18 students. In my classroom I have the pré-primários and the second to eighth grades. Actually, I have few students, but they cover a lot of grades.

Our [bi-lingual] school operates on the theory that each student Brazilian or American should graduate with a good command of all the subjects in his mother tongue and with a reasonably good understanding of subjects in his second language. So far as speaking, each student should be able to fluently express himself in the second language.

The American student, for example, begins in the third grade to spend one hour a day in the Portuguese classroom, studying vocabulary and Portuguese grammar. This student will actually have only five years to get through his Portuguese course. To do this justice and learn Portuguese well in five years, the student must have a lot of determination.

You have probably done a little figuring and are wondering how a student can come up with a knowledge of geography, science, math, etc. with only one hour of Portuguese a day. The same would be true of Brazilian students who spend one hour a day studying English. We are trying to teach the student to communicate fluently so that later on he can continue learning on his own.

English is tremendously well accepted by Brazilian students. These children know

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the advantage they have if they learn English well. Unfortunately, the same can't be said about the American students in relation to learning Portuguese. It takes quite an effort from the teacher to try and get them to understand that it is important to know Portuguese if they plan on living in Brazil.

Because of necessity, in the past the two church schools have hired teachers who weren't qualified for the job. Such teachers usually manage to teach only a year or two and quit, without really making teaching a career. To constantly change teachers has weakened our Portuguese education. Another problem is that the Portuguese text and workbooks aren't set up for the way our system works.

I believe, however, that in spite of these obstacles our schools have progressed in the last years. This is especially true in regards to the support the parents and the community in general gives the school. Valéria Gold

A cheery, mixed chorus of "Good morning" and "Bom dia" greets the teachers every morning, when at 8:45 am the schoolhouse doors are opened and the students are permitted to enter.

If it's a sunny, warm morning, a glance outside will reveal the neat row of bicycles in the bike rack, while bright-faced students many barefoot are enjoying their usual round of small talk before the bell rings and studies begin.

Be the morning cold or rainy, the line of vehicles bringing the children is an imposing sight, but also heartening, as eager faces appear. So begins another day in the American-Brazilian schools of the Church of God in Christ, in Brazil.

The first school term for our parochial school here in Brazil began on May 4, 1970 and wasn't a full term. There were 21 students. The first terms were not all nine month terms, neither were students required to attend until a certain grade. It was more a matter of having school when it suited and studying until needed at home.

An interesting annotation found in one of my Mom's old diaries reads: "Called off school today as the men and boys went on a wild pig hunt."

During these initial school terms, many students didn't acquire more than a fifth grade education.

We completed our 21st school term on June 27 of this year. On September 10 we began our 22nd term, which should terminate approximately on May 27, 92. We've come a long way since those first days.

How do students speaking two different languages get along in school? Simply by learning each others language! This learning begins right in the first grade out on the playground. Teachers and first and second graders of both English and Portuguese classes are outside playing Johnny Can't Cross. The game begins with Mark and Júlio both chanting, "Johnny can't cross... unless he has..." then Mark yells "Red!" and Júlio yells "Vermelho!" This bi-lingual playground environment is an asset to learning and continues right on through to graduation.

In the past we have tried mixing the languages in the same classroom, but found it unsatisfactory. At the present time we have adopted a different system, namely:

each student studies all subjects in his native tongue and takes the other language as a separate subject. This begins in the third grade.

For example, this year in the Monte Alegre School we have teachers for grades 1-4 in English, for grades 1-4 in Portuguese, grades 5-8 in English, grades 5-8 in Portuguese, in addition to our grammar teacher, who teaches English to Brazilians and Portuguese to Americans. This year we have five teachers and one aide. There are 50 students. We press toward our goal of having eighth grade graduates who fluently read and write both languages.

For our American students we use books imported from the US. At this time we're using A Beka math, phonics and language; The Economy Reading series; McGraw Hill Basic Goals in spelling; Sadlier Oxford spelling; Bowmar/Noble handwriting; Silver Burdett & Ginn geography and social studies.

To find adequate material for teaching Portuguese has been somewhat of a problem. If you read the article in the last issue of Brazil News, you will understand why. In case you haven't read it, here's a simple explanation: Brazilian textbooks are not set up for a student to learn from them. Instead, a teacher needs enough education to practically be able to teach without a textbook, making up her own curriculum as she goes. Needless to say, such teachers are hard to come by, with no slam intended to our present teachers. They're doing a great job. This makes it difficult to come up with books, curriculums, lesson schedules, etc. This is especially true in the case of a beginning teacher. We are using what we have available and always striving to improve.

It has been said, "There's nothing so American as baseball." Let's add, "And nothing so Brazilian as futebol (soccer)!" We have both on our school playgrounds, plus volleyball courts, swings, merry-go-rounds, slides, plenty of room to run and lots of games and fun! It is also interesting to note that cultural differences and language barriers are unknown in an animated game.

Some people still think of our life here in Brazil as being out in the sticks. I would invite anyone who thinks so to visit my 6.5m x 7.5m classroom with its smooth painted walls, cupboard, chalkboard, big windows, pretty curtains, ceiling fan, lights, cute desks, and most important, 15 dear little scrubbed faces. I hardly think you'll call it in the sticks.

Of course, I'm prejudiced, but why shouldn't I be? Ruth Kramer ▲

Readers ask....

How many Brazilian members are there?

Alfred E. Koehn

It's a fact that there are some real negative aspects to Brazil, something we aren't trying to hide in this little bulletin. Take them all and place them on one side of the scale. Now take the Brazilian members I'm going to make just a few comments about

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and place them on the other side of the scale. To me and this is a personal opinion, not necessarily shared by all we have a treasure here that far outweighs the negative aspects.

I hope to someday interview some of these members and write up a little history of their lives. I believe it will make for some interesting reading.

The statistics given here are based on where the members are living at the present time.

Monte Alegre Congregation	33
Rio Verdinho Congregation	11
Rio Verde Congregation	29
Cruz mission	1
Mirrassol mission	2
Acaraú mission	2
Pirenópolis mission	3
Fortaleza mission	1
Goiânia	1
Natal	1
USA	2
TOTAL	86

Eighty four precious members.

Through the years we have rejoiced as each of these souls was added to the fold. Not only have they been accepted as brethren, but in many cases, close natural friendships have developed between Brazilian and American members. But not always.

From the beginning we have done our fishing in shallow waters. Deep water fish aren't usually found in shallow water. As a result most of our Brazilian members come from the poorer sector, both economically and socially.

"Hold everything, brother!" I hear you say. "Didn't Jesus say that the poor will inherit the earth? That of such are the kingdom of God, etc.?"

All that is true. We can be eternally thankful that it is true. But, let's face facts. Luke was a what? Matthew was a what? Paul wasn't exactly illiterate. Zacchaeus was no church mouse. Do you get it?

The bulk of Jesus' followers were of the poor class, but the bulk of the New Testament wasn't written by these folks.

To develop a church composed of members principally from one economic and social level creates problems. It takes more than bricks to build a house.

Several years ago a young minister from another church became interested in the Church of God. His former members were a well rounded out bunch, ranging from the poor class to the middle class, with even a few professional people.

As this brother yes, Paulo David is now a brother became more acquainted with the church, he also began to make some observations. One of them was: why did we fish

only in shallow water? In other words, why were almost all of our members from one social level? After all, are they the only ones who deserve salvation?

This line of thinking rang a bell. Sometimes problems would arise among our Brazilian members. Due to cultural differences, it was extremely difficult for us to analyze what was really happening. At those times to have had some brethren from a different social level would have been tremendously helpful.

I hope in a future issue of Brazil News to give a run-down on Paulo David, but for now be it sufficient to say that he is a dynamic type person who feels at home with everyone. He doesn't hesitate to get into a spiritual conversation with whoever he meets rich or poor, educated or uneducated. He can get by with telling people things for which others would practically get stoned.

Partly through Paulo's influence, we now have a number of people who are interested in the church who are definitely of a different social level.

In Pirenópolis, where Paulo is from, there is a fellow by the name of Abadio who quarries facing rock and sells it for construction purposes. In Goiânia a dentist and his wife are wanting to come to the church. In Rio Verde a doctor and his wife are very much interested.

This weekend the dentist and his wife from Goiânia I just mentioned brought out another couple to learn to know the Church of God. It's an interesting story.

A fellow by the name of Divino and his wife Corina had been members of the same denomination that Paulo had been part of. Even though not from the same congregation, he knew Paulo somewhat.

This denomination is apparently nose-diving into carnality. Divino, who was a counselor over eight families, was to be ordained a deacon right shortly. Being a conscientious man, he knew this couldn't be the Lord's will. He came into deep trouble, feeling he was on a dead-end street. Feeling the need for help, he sought out Luís, the dentist. Luís simply told him, "I know the solution to your problem. It's the Church of God."

As he listened to Luís' explanations on the Church and read *Whether it be of God*, which has been translated into Portuguese, he had no doubts. This was the solution to his problem.

He asked for an interview with his church superiors and told them he was no longer a member of that church. Luís and his wife and Divino and his family were out this week-end to learn to know the church. Everything he saw confirmed his conviction. This was what he was looking for. He had an experience of conversion some years ago. Talking with him, he summed up his feelings like this: "I'm like the eunuch. There is nothing I can't accept. I would like to be baptized." (He realizes, of course, that baptism isn't quite that quick or automatic.)

What does all this mean? It means that as we begin to expand our horizons, as we begin to cast our net into other waters, the Brazilian church will take a huge step forward.

Pray for the work here. Pray for the ones I have mentioned who are interested in the

church. It is obvious that their struggle is not yet over. Pray also that we don't get the idea that the soul of a deep water fish is worth more than the soul of a shallow water fish. ▲

Little three year old Ronald wanted to say hello to Reno. To accommodate his small stature, Reno bent over to shake hands. Knowing an opportunity when he sees one, Ron reached out with his free hand, patted Reno's shiny dome and said, "Your mommy really cut your hair short, didn't she?"

This & That

Some folks say that when it doesn't rain all during the dry season, the rains are more constant in the rainy season. Our first rains this rainy season would seem to bear out the fact that once in a while newcomers and fools are right. We have had some beautiful planting weather. Most of the corn is planted and preparations are being made to get soybeans into the ground.

Most rainy seasons are ushered in, and some six months later escorted out, by violent wind and electrical storms. Neither of these have been as violent this year as sometimes. At Daniel Kramers a windstorm ripped off several heavy asbestos roofing sheets from their machine shed. This wouldn't have been overly serious, except that they went skipping across the rest of the roof breaking around another 20 full length tiles as they went. Some brethren got together to help in the repair work.

Doug Ferrel, a fine American neighbor, lost his shed roof in a storm. Quite a few showed up to put on a new roof.

This was mild compared to what happened in the city of Itu (state of São Paulo), where a terrible wind storm, unlike anything ever registered before in Brazil, killed 15, wounded 350, and demolished 252 houses. A bus was picked up and tossed some 20 meters, as though it were a box of matches. The storm, which lasted approximately five minutes, with winds of approximately 300 kpm, leveled an area approximately five kilometers by 500 meters. While it is believed it may have been a tornado which theoretically don't exist in Brazil meteorologists are more inclined to believe it was a straight wind caused by the clash of hot and cold fronts high overhead. Should this be proven to be a fact, a name will have to be coined in Portuguese for such a wind, for we have no term for a 300 km an hour straight wind.

The pope made his visit to Brazil. He was in Goiânia, our state capitol. More on that next month when I will have more information on how things went. I might mention they were prepared for 700 thousand people in Goiânia and only 300 thousand, if that many, showed up. In Brasília they expected a million people and only about 200 thousand turned out for the event. The altar built in the national capitol cost around 422 thousand US dollars.

Dennis & Vera Loewen had a boy, Christopher Dale, on October 17. Cute little fellow.

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Leo Dirks spent several days in the hospital with pneumonia. A number of the brethren got together and helped with his field work.

The senior citizens had their monthly supper at Paul and Rachels.

Stan and Kathy Holdeman have moved into their new house.