

Brazil News



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Editorial

Values

Everyone has an unwritten set of values. For the millionaire it may be a model of the year Cadillac. For the beggar it may be a privileged spot under a bridge that he calls home.

Some values held are of an individual nature. Others can be attributed to ethnic, religious, or family groups. Whether these values held be simple or complex, one thing is always true: they have a strong influence on the life of the holder.

We have talked a lot about culture in this paper. When you get right down to it, culture can be defined as the set of values held precious by a people.

What are some of the values we as Mennonites hold high?

·A tight family life. In other words, we don't appreciate a constant flux of people coming and going at any time of the day or night. (Try having devotions with people coming and going at will.)

·A neat home. I'm talking about the house and its furnishings. While everything may not be new or the very best, we still like to have a complete set of well arranged furniture, as well as the necessary appliances.

·A fairly good car. We're a mobile people and without a car key our entire way of life comes to a screeching halt. Rural life depends on a car. In fact, urban life does too.

·A prepared table. We place a high value on setting around a table at meal time, passing the food around, with each one helping himself. It is expected that children remain seated until everyone has finished eating. We stress table manners.

This list could go on and on.

This set of values is strange to most of the peoples in the world. Some of the values mentioned are typical of the American people. Others are typical of the "Holdeman" people.

These values, as well as many others not listed, are very important to us. To be deprived of even one of them makes us feel we are somewhat underprivileged.

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At this point it would be fascinating to have people from a half a dozen foreign countries give us a rundown on their set of values. Since this isn't possible, let's take a quick look at some middle class Brazilians values:

·A loose family life. This would probably apply to most peoples of the world. A tropical climate makes this especially noticeable, where amiable year round temperatures permit doors to remain open most of the time. Especially in the poorer segments of society, doors are always open and neighbors and acquaintances come and go at will. In this case a man's house is not his castle. Rather, it takes on the appearance of a bus station.

·A house is a place to get out of the rain. In other words, the important thing isn't whether the walls are spotless (The floors, yes. They shine.). Furniture isn't meant to decorate a home. If a divan is comfortable, it doesn't matter so much what it looks like. To the N American culture some homes here appear to be disorganized.

·A car is an investment. Obviously everyone would like to own a good car. However, it is very expensive to purchase a car, even an old junker. Fuel and maintenance costs are high. Before buying a car, a Brazilian considers how many lots he could buy with that money. Or how much he could increase his stock in the business he runs. When he buys a car, he tries to get a model that will have good resale value. And the day that a long awaited opportunity turns up to buy a choice lot, for example, he doesn't think twice to sell his car and be on foot again. This may happen a week after he bought the vehicle.

·Food is important to a Brazilian. As their buying power increases, so does their grocery bill. The supermarket is one of the last places to cut costs in times of a crisis. When it looks like our economy is going to pieces, the supermarkets remain jammed. However, meal time isn't a time to get the family together. The food is left on the stove and can easily be reheated. Each member of the family eats when convenient. He may sit at the table. Or he may sit on the divan, holding his plate in one hand.

What would be a general rule to explain some of these differences of values? Generally speaking an American puts a lot of importance on things and how things are organized. A Brazilian sees things as a means to an end. We have a saying here, "Quem não caça com cachorro caça com gato." He who doesn't have a dog to go hunting with, hunts with a cat.

If you can understand the dog/cat principal, you will understand one of the basic differences between an American and a Brazilian.

Americans love to fish. So do Brazilians. For most Americans to go fishing, they go to a sporting goods store, or wherever, and buy a "good" rod and reel, a "good" tackle box, some "good" hooks, lures, bobbers, etc. etc. Without all these "good" articles, he can't go fishing.

You ought to see a Brazilian go fishing. It looks like a joke - until you see the fish they catch. Their "rod and reel" is usually a slender bamboo pole about the height of a man. The bottom end may be a half an inch thick. The top usually tapers down

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to approximately 1/8 of an inch, at the very most. It comes with a small nylon loop that the fisherman can tie his line to. This is usually a short piece of low test line approximately the same length as the pole. At the end he ties a ridiculously small hook. Maybe six inches above the hook there is a small piece of lead clenched on with a pliers (or with the teeth). No bobber. The “tackle box” may be a little bottle with some hooks, sinkers and piece of line in it that can be carried in the back pocket. That’s how he goes fishing. To him the important thing isn’t the equipment he uses, but rather the fish he catches.

The same principle applies to a house. The important thing is to be able to sleep in it, to be able to eat good meals and to raise the family. Basically, that is all the American wants out of his home, but he can’t imagine doing it under such rudimentary circumstances.

When the American invites company over, the house must be spotless. Nothing wrong with that. The table must be set just so. The meal as near perfect as possible. So far so good.

What happens if someone shows up unexpectedly when the house looks like Hurricane Hattie just hit it? When the sink is full of dirty dishes? If the ones who showed up unexpectedly aren’t sharp enough to say, “Well, we just stopped by to say hello,” then you must be sharp enough to say, “Well, it sure was nice of you to stop by for a few minutes.”

To the Brazilian the important thing is that company has shown up. The house is no problem. Everyone pitches in and in a little while the house is half way presentable.

I learned an important lesson from my Mom five years ago, when we returned to the US for the first time in 18 years. In my morning report to her on how we planned to spend our day, I mentioned that we wanted to drive around looking up relatives. I didn’t realize I was treading in dangerous territory. She asked, “Where will you have dinner?” Innocently I said, “Oh, I suppose wherever we happen to be at mealtime.”

In very clear English, that even I could understand perfectly, she told me that that is NOT custom in the USA. I realized that McDonalds was the perfect option for ignoramuses like me who fail to see the handwriting on the wall.

So much for the practical aspect of this subject. Now a bit of philosophizing. When meeting someone of another culture, try and find out where their values are. If you can manage this one, a bridge of understanding will exist between you. Instead of seeing a streaked wall as a sign of lack of cleanliness, take note of the reception they give you. Remember that to have certain values, we must give up others. The one who wants an absolutely spotless house with beautiful furniture will probably go easy on hospitality.

Missionaries, more than anyone else, find they must give up certain cherished values to be able to reach the people to whom they are to minister. This is a sacrifice. But amazingly, when they manage to do this, the day comes (or should come) when they find they made a good trade. It has enriched their life. ▲

Economy

Tomorrow is Here

A man sitting behind a huge stack of bills calls his wife and says, “Honey, for a long time you and I have been spending like there was no tomorrow. Well, tomorrow is here.”

In Brazil tomorrow is just about here. That’s good. When a nation, or an individual for that matter, can’t make an intelligent decision today, then tomorrow must force a decision. Decisions made tomorrow are never easy.

In the 30’s, during the time Getúlio Vargas was president, a rough equivalent to the American Social Security system was set into motion. To understand better how this worked, we will transcribe here the opinion of the economist and one time Minister of Economy, Mário Henrique Simonsen:

“Compulsory Social Security was instituted in Brazil during the first presidency [he was president twice] of Getúlio Vargas. This was done under the auspices of a capitalist regime, yet based on the illusion that it would be funded from three sources: One third of the funds would be supplied by the government, one third by employers, and one third by the worker. The part the government was to come up with was based on the fictitious assumption, deeply ingrained in Brazilian culture – at least until the time of the new Constitution drawn up in 1988 – that the government has power to create money out of nothing. Since this isn’t possible, the only thing left for the government was to tax both capital and labor. In other words, the funds ended up coming strictly from the working class (even from those not covered by Social Security, a tremendous injustice) and from the employer, who had to decide between charging more for his product to cover the additional expenses, or pay his employees less money. He simply figures out what his part is and then indirectly takes it out of the employees paycheck by holding his earnings down.

“The big problem is that all compulsory social\welfare programs overflow with money during the first years of operation. This is because there are a lot of people paying in and very few eligible for retirement. During this period the government faces the temptation of blowing the extra money that is stacking up. In our situation here, the Brazilian government never really paid in it’s part. The reserves that existed in the beginning were used to finance housing projects at ridiculously low interest rates. In the 60s, the Social Security system here was already operating on a hand to mouth basis. Retirees were no longer being paid by reserves, simply because they no longer existed. At this point it was the younger generation that began to pay the retirement of the sick and elderly.

The problem with this kind of a system is that it creates a distorted picture of what is really possible. During the 70s, when we were on cloud nine, a retirement plan was worked out for rural workers. This was done without providing any additional contributions to cover costs. In the 80s, when things began to go backward

economically, the first red lights began to blink. To compound this problem, with a greater life expectancy, retirees live longer, thus placing an even heavier burden on the working class that picks up the tab. Other countries have faced the same problem, but they were able to get the message. They realized that to retire someone on the basis of how many years he has worked [versus a set retirement age, 65, for example] makes no sense when the life expectancy is increasing. They also realized that when this happens they shouldn't promise something they are unable to fulfill..."

Almost everyday the papers have something to say about this problem. It is an explosive issue. With inflation running at approximately 25% a month, money loses its value mighty fast. Over a period of years the retirement benefits have been losing to inflation. According to present legislation, retirement checks should be increased by 147%. The president has refused to pay. The Supreme Court has determined that he doesn't have to pay. Not because the money isn't due, but simply because it doesn't exist. This really isn't his fault.

Simonsen touched on, but didn't explain, a Brazilian law which says that anyone who has contributed to Social Security for 30 years is eligible for retirement. Take the example of a boy who gets a job at 17. His boss registers him as an employee and he begins to pay. When he is 47, he can retire. To say that this is the height of folly is using mild language. What modern country has anything so dumb? Maybe that is one of the reasons they are modern.

Social Security has turned into Social Insecurity. Poor folks who paid in the minimum during their working years today are having to live on well under fifty US dollars a month. Social Insecurity.

What's the solution? Let's return to Simonsen:

"It is necessary that the government make sure that Social Security become independent of the national budget. It must pay out what it takes in. Otherwise there is no solution in sight. To increase retirement benefits, one of two things can happen: Save money by reducing needless bureaucracy and by eliminating corruption. Or increase the amount that is contributed to the Social Security program."

Social Security is a tomorrow that is here today. The poor class that gets almost nothing is used to suffering. It is the lower middle class that is having fits. They are the ones who are hardest hit.

The government can put up with a lot of pressure – for a while. But it can't take indefinitely the kind of pressure it is getting from people who are suffering because others have been stuffing their pockets.

Keep tuned in. Something is going to come out of this yet.

Our present minister of economy is cautiously suggesting that the second half of this year will show a slight upturn in business. This obviously is good news. What is really needed, though, is an upturn for the poor class. They are the ones who are taking the brunt of the crisis. The new minimum wage of around 90 dollars a month should help - unless it gets eaten up by inflation before payday at the end of the month. ▲

Interview

Laura da Costa

I feel a little bit guilty about calling this an interview. Anyone who knows Laura and her spontaneous personality will understand why. After a couple of questions, she launched into the story of her life. All I could do was try and keep up as the words flowed out. After more than 30 years of typing, I'm not real shabby on speed, but even so she gave me a real workout.

What Laura has to tell us shows once again that the Lord can save to the uttermost. I must confess that I have censured her story. What remains is sufficient to give a picture of what her life was like. What you read here is the tip of the iceberg.

As you read her story, think of how many more Lauras are needing help.

BNews: Where were you born?

Laura: In Itajá, Goiás.

BNews: Where is that?

Laura: It's way out on the Mato Grosso border.

BNews: Could you tell me one of your first memories?

Laura: My parents had separated. Once in a while I would go to spend some time with my dad. Once my mother sent my brother Nilson to take me home. I didn't want to go. I screamed and carried on. He had to drag me to the bus. The reason I didn't want to go home was because my stepdad didn't like me. When anyone asked if I was his daughter. He would be real plain: "No! She's a daughter of the woman I live with."

BNews: What can you tell me about your real dad?

Laura: He and my mother separated when I was only a year and nine months old. When I was three my mother began living with my stepdad. At that time my mother was working in a hotel. Everyone liked me and tried to help take care of me. One time some people stayed in the hotel and when they left they kidnapped me. When my mother found out what had happened, she took out after us. About 20 kilometers down the road she found us and got me back.

BNews: What happened to the kidnappers?

Laura: Nothing. My mother understood how much they wanted to have a child of their own. Back in those days I was a pretty little thing.

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BNews: And from here how did things go?

Laura: My stepdad decided he didn't like me. This was a complicated situation and my mother would let me go with whoever wanted to take me. It could be someone that lived close by or someone from a distance. But I always ran away and came back home.

During this time I was around 10 years old. My mother gave me to a mean woman. I was hungry a lot of the time. I got skinnier and skinnier. After that she gave me to a woman in Castelândia. When I was 12 years old, she gave me to a woman in Jataí. I sent her letter after letter asking her to come get me, but my stepdad got ahold of them and hid the letters.

Then the day came that I began to drink. During this time I was studying at night. After classes we would go to a filling station where they sold beer and we would drink. By this time I was a specialist at running away. So I decided to run away again. I found out there was nothing like lying to get what I wanted. This was one lesson I learned very well.

A friend and I decided to run away. She knew a fellow that worked in a place where they made metal window frames. We told him one whopper and got him convinced to take us to Rio Verde. When we got here, we told him the truth, but even so he tried to help us. He knew how my stepdad treated me.

I remember that when we got to Rio Verde, we met a man, a stranger. We told him a big whopper too. He felt so sorry for us that he took us to the best restaurant in town and then paid for us to stay in a hotel.

From here we decided to go on to Goiânia. We went to a hotel. We told lies like you wouldn't believe. We would go to a restaurant and tell such a sob story that people would buy us a meal. We would stay in a hotel as long as possible and then leave without paying. We would leave our clothes, so then we would have to go to the stores and steal more clothes so that we would have something to wear. We did this time and again. By this time we knew exactly how to do things. I was 13.

Then one day we decided to move on to the city of Ituiutaba, in the state of Minas Gerais. From there we moved on to São Simão and then to Paranaiguara. I tried to keep moving back in the direction of where my mom lived. I was uneasy. When we got to Cachoeira Alta, the police recognized me. They said they had orders to arrest me. When we promised to go back home, they let us go.

On the way home, we stopped at Caçu. There we ran into a bunch of wild youngsters our age. In that bunch was an older woman who was anything but an example. Even so she gave us good advice. She told us we should go back home.

We decided to go to Itarumã to see my mom. When we got there my stepdad was just getting home from working in the field. He saw me and began to beat up on me. He drew his revolver and threatened to shoot any of my friends who might want to help me. He kicked me around and stomped on my back, breaking my ribs. It was his intention to kill me.

Then my mother showed up. She fainted when she saw what was happening. Finally someone got my stepdad to quit beating up on me. They took me to the hospital. My mother's family was very upset with what happened. They decided to turn my stepdad in to the police. But we got things patched up enough that this didn't happen. I stayed at my grandmother's place until I was stronger.

Then I took to the road again. I went on and on and on. I was on the move like this for a long time. I went to São Paulo, to Santos, you name it.

When I was 17, I moved in with a fellow. I drank a lot and used drugs, although never to the point of becoming addicted. I would go out in the evening and spend the night on the street. He told me that every time I did this I would have to spend the whole night on the street. Once when he locked me out I came home and broke the windows, cutting myself all up.

I became pregnant and when I was seven months along, I got real sick. The doctors couldn't really figure out what the problem was. Then my stepdad came and got me. By now I was extremely weak. I would cry out in pain. And worse, I didn't have money to buy cigarettes. One thing I couldn't live without was money. I didn't want to sell off the things I had accumulated. Then I remembered my revolver. I always had a gun. I asked my stepdad to sell it for me.

The man who bought it felt sorry for me and tried to help me out. With the money I got I was soon drinking again. One month later I had a little boy, Jean. I went back to Rio Verde and began living with the same man again. I became pregnant for the second time. When I was six months along, I became very sick and had to have surgery. I left Jean with my mom in São Simão.

I had a little girl. It was then I decided to stop drinking. I didn't want to have my daughter grow up and know that her mom was a drunkard. If it had been another boy I would have kept on drinking. At this point I still enjoyed spending the night on the streets. There wasn't a thing that I was scared of.

One morning when my little girl was four months old, she got sick. That evening she died. That shook me up so bad that I decided to go back to drinking.

Then one day my stepdad came to where I was living and said that my brother Nilson wanted to talk to me. When I got to where my brother was, a fellow started shooting at him. All of a sudden he turned on me. The first shot grazed my head. I began to run. The second shot got me in the back. I went down on the spot, but something told me I wouldn't die. I was afraid, though, that I might be paralyzed.

I want to mention something interesting at this point. During this time of drinking and everything that I did wrong, every night before I would go to bed, I would kneel down and ask the Lord to not take my life in my unsaved condition.

So it was after I had been shot and was lying on the ground, I promised the Lord that if He would help me to walk again, I would walk worthy of His honor and glory the rest of my life.

They took me to the hospital. The doctor said there was nothing that they could do for me, that I would be an invalid the rest of my life. He said they could take me home

again and buy a wheel chair. But I knew that somehow I would walk again. My mother took me to another doctor. He said that I would have to go to Goiânia. But I didn't have money to pay an ambulance to take me there. So I sold my jewels and paid the ambulance.

The specialists there told me that it was a hollow point bullet that had damaged my spine. During the first week they built me up for the surgery.

It was in this hospital [Santa Genoveva, on the way to the airport in Goiânia] that something very impressive took place. I was sitting in a wheelchair in the wide hospital hall. I saw a man go by with a Bible. I asked a girl to tell him that I wanted to talk to him. I went back to my room and there we talked together. I asked him if he was a believer. Then I told him that the next day I planned on having surgery and I would appreciate it if he would read me something from the Bible and have a prayer. This is what he did.

Another patient saw what took place. She began to make fun of me. She said I would find out that prayer was a worthless thing.

The next day I had surgery. I went into the operating room at 10 in the morning and got out at 3 in the afternoon. I had a very rough recovery because of the anesthesia. That night was really a rough one.

That same woman kept making fun of me. She said that if I had prayed to the virgin Mary, everything would have been OK.

The next day she had head surgery. When she got out everything was fine. She was talking and feeling good. Again she made fun of me saying how dumb I was, acting like a chicken with a broken neck. Then she asked the girl that was taking care of me to give her a bite of chicken soup. But before she could give her the soup, she went into a coma and within two hours she was dead. The doctors had no explanation for her death. To me it was proof that God was still taking care of me.

I stayed in that hospital for around two months undergoing treatment. My doctor said I was going to get better. When I was released, I stayed in a friend's home in Goiânia for another month.

When I got back to Rio Verde, my stepdad didn't want me in his house. So I rented two rooms where my son Jean and I could live. It wasn't easy. Sometimes I would fall and lay on the floor all day because there was no one around to help me up. Slowly I regained my strength. During this time I made my living selling pictures that I painted.

Then I began going to the Assembly of God church. I went there for two years.

Then one day while I was going to church, I saw several sisters of the Church of God in Christ. I told my mom that if someday I left the Assembly of God church, I wanted to be part of this group. All this business of talking in tongues bothered me. It scared me.

Something began to happen in my life. I would get drunk and carry on, doing all kinds of things I shouldn't, but the next day I would feel bad and repent of what I had

done. That happened time after time. I went to the Assembly of God church and told them I didn't want to be a member any more.

Then I began to go to the Mennonite church. To this day I can't remember how I found their little church.

When Mark and Glenda Loewen became the local missionaries, they rented a house right in front of my mom's house. I learned to know them better and my interest in the Church kept increasing.

Then Jean had to have surgery. I was having financial problems. So I decided to get out of Rio Verde. I moved to Araraquara, a city in the state of São Paulo. I got a job in a bar in a shady section of town. I worked during the day and drank at night. After about a year of this, one day I made a decision. I told God that I wanted to go back home and be a Mennonite. I asked God to open the doors. That is what happened. My boss immediately agreed to buy my color TV. Within two days I had everything taken care of. But before I left I went to a store and bought material so that I would be able to make myself some modest dresses.

When I got back to Rio Verde, I began going to the Mennonite church again. For a while I made my living selling clothes I had bought in São Paulo for this purpose.

In December of 86, I had an experience of conversion. On the 17th of May, 1987, I was baptized.

BNews: You have now been a member of the Church for a number of years. How do you feel about this life?

Laura: The transformation in my life was like the one when Jesus turned water into wine. There's a verse in the Bible, isn't there, that talks about vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor? Before I was a vessel of dishonor and shame to God. Everything that I did brought dishonor to His creation. I believe that now I am a vessel of honor. Even with all of my weaknesses, I try to always take the name of God with me wherever I go.

I would like to make it clear that I'm not telling these things so that people will feel sorry for me. Rather, I want everyone to know that God is able to transform people. I want others to see that God is able to pardon the awfulest sins. I can see this because I feel God has forgiven me and I am saved by His grace. If someday I lose my salvation, it won't be because of my past sins.

BNews: What would you say to someone who is in the valley of decision? To someone who doesn't know if it is worthwhile to accept Jesus as his personal Savior?

Laura: I feel that missing out on the pleasures that this world has to offer is nothing when compared with eternal life. There is nothing like being able to lie down at night and being able to sleep. ▲

Tragedy

Lindalva Lima Ferrell

“You can’t find better neighbors anywhere.” That is the expression constantly heard to describe our neighbors Douglas and Lindalva Ferrell.

Douglas, an American, and Lindalva, his wife, a Brazilian from the state of São Paulo, have been our neighbors for a number of years. When Alvin Schneider sold out and moved back to the States, Doug bought his place.

On January 26, the Colony was shocked by the news that shortly before midnight, Lindalva’s life was tragically snuffed out.

Both Doug and Lindalva have occasionally come to our church services. Several nights prior to her death, Doug, Lindalva, and Richard, Doug’s dad, were in services. Min. Wayne Amoth preached a powerful sermon on repentance. After the service she asked to speak to the ministers. With Doug interpreting, she asked questions concerning the way of salvation.

Several days before this both of our revival ministers, Wayne Amoth and Linford Holdeman, were to the Ferrell home for a meal.

What went wrong?

Only God can answer this question. We can but surmise. One fact that cannot be ignored is that after the funeral her family admitted for the first time that Lindalva’s dad had suffered from mental illness. Another fact is that Lindalva was a very dedicated partner in Doug’s farming operation. In retrospect it can be seen that her efficiency and outward confidence possibly masked an inward stress until something just snapped.

The church immediately stepped in and did what was possible to lighten the load for Doug and his dad, Richard. Relatives were notified in São Paulo state, funeral arrangements were made, a vehicle was sent to Goiânia to pick up relatives in the airport and finally the funeral was held in the Monte Alegre church, with the burial in the local cemetery.

The first reaction of Lindalva’s family was quite negative. Demands were made that the burial be in São Paulo. However Doug’s wishes were finally respected that it be here. There was a lot of consternation as to what might happen when the family arrived.

I happened to be outside when Errol Redger drove up with part of the family that he got from the airport in Goiânia. As they got out of the vehicle, they began wailing and carrying on, but as they got nearer the house, they seemed to become aware of the soothing melody of song drifting out through the open door and window. It seemed that an almost visible transformation took place. Instead of misunderstandings, a very warm spirit was felt.

Due to the nature of the death, it was decided to not hire a car to announce her death in town. Even so the funeral was very, very large. Once again the presence of the Holy Spirit was keenly felt. Min. Mark Loewen brought the introduction and Wayne

Amoth had the sermon. The silence was absolute as everyone listened to what was being said. The orderly viewing of the body was another testimony to what happens when the Spirit is present.

Since Lindalva's relatives were Catholic, someone had asked the priest to go to the house for the requiem mass. I happened to know this particular priest, as he had been my customer when I had my store. I introduced him to Mark Loewen, telling him he was our pastor. The priest became all apologetic explaining that he didn't want to interfere in what we were doing, but that they had asked him to have the requiem mass. He said he would fit his in whenever it suited us best. Mark told him he could go ahead immediately, which he did. I got the impression that he was relieved when the last Hail Mary was said.

Pray for Doug, for his three small children, for his dad, and for the family on both sides. There seems to be a general conviction on the Colony here that this incident may result in the salvation of souls.

Following is the short obituary read in both English and Portuguese:

Lindalva Lima Ferrell was born in the state of São Paulo on March 3, 1957. She passed away on January 26, 1992 at her residence on the Philadelphia Fazenda at Rio Verde – Goiás.

She was raised in Palmital, where she got her grade school and high school education. While going to college in Ourinhos, Lindalva worked as a telephone operator. It was during this period that Douglas learned to know her, when she helped him make his phone calls to the US.

Douglas and Lindalva were married on December 12, 1981. She was a loyal, dedicated wife, taking an active part in Doug's activities. During the periods he would spend in the US, she would simply take over and keep things going.

Doug and Lindalva were blessed with three children, Karen, now 9; Richard, 7; and Douglas Jr., 8 months. ▲

Religion

Monte Alegre Revival

Different articles published in this little paper have touched on problems the American Colony has faced in the past.

I don't believe that it has been any secret that some of these problems have been of a spiritual nature. Year after year revival ministers would gently take us to task with a little speech that would end up something like this:

“For you people to move to Brazil, it was necessary to have a lot of determination, a strong will. However, now that you are an established congregation, you need to lay aside your strong convictions and blend together.”

We all knew this was our problem. We knew this was the solution. And we always hoped our brother would take this advice seriously.

Our meetings last year were a real breakthrough. A difference could definitely be felt during this last year. But something was still lacking.

As meetings began this year, right from the beginning it became apparent the waters were stirring. Spirits began to flow together. Unclean spirits found it difficult to hide. On their own they began crying out. As the body became purified, it began taking an active part in judging the spirits.

Our communion service was very warm. I think that all those who were present believe this marks the beginning of a new era – hopefully not only for the Monte Alegre congregation, but for the Church as a whole in Brazil.

May God grant this grace. ▲

History

Races

As we have already mentioned, the Portuguese who settled Brazil were a far cry from the Puritans who settled N America. The Portuguese, as all good Catholics, worshiped saints. This, however, did not make saints of them. Just the opposite seemed to be true.

It is estimated that when the Portuguese began settling Brazil, there were an approximate 4 million Indians living throughout the land. According to rough statistics, approximately 3.6 million slaves were brought over from Africa.

Today the indigenous population is calculated at more or less two hundred thousand. The majority of the Brazilian states have few “black” negroes.

What happened to these two races? As we mentioned in a previous article, the Indians were especially hard hit by the white man’s diseases. But by no means is that the whole story.

Loose morals soon made a racial melting pot. The result has been:

Caboclo – White + Indian

Mulato – White + Negro

Cafuso – Negro + Indian

Of these three categories, the middle one, the mulato, is by far the most dominant. In fact, excluding the southern states where there has been a lot of German and Italian influence, the majority of the Brazilians, in varying degrees, would come under this classification.

Ironically, it has been this exact undesirable behavior of the Portuguese that solved an enormous problem for Brazil. Because of this mixture, there is very little racism. Those who do suffer a bit of discrimination consider it to be just. In other words, there is no one to tell them that they are equal to others, so they accept it as a fact that they aren’t. With reasonably good treatment, they are more than happy to “keep their place”.

However, as the darker skinned mulatos become educated, there are no barriers or restrictions to rising on the social level. Rosane Collor, Brazil's first lady, has a very close friend who would definitely be considered a mulata. This is considered entirely normal and never have I read one word in the papers that would put the slightest shadow on this friendship.

The Portuguese are to be censured for their carnality, but Brazil must be praised, as a nation, for maintaining a much closer brotherhood than is felt in many other countries. ▲

Behavior

Futebol

Futebol means soccer.

To say that Brazilians take futebol seriously is the understatement of the year. To get an idea of how serious futebol is to them, think of the most fanatical football, baseball or volleyball fan you know. Now imagine that there are another 50 million fans just like him – only considerably worse.

There you have it.

Under normal circumstances a Brazilian is quite a sane person. But let a jogo de futebol (soccer game) start and all that changes.

To begin with, all Brazilian spectators know more about futebol than the referees do. As they watch a game, the things they say about the referee range from unpleasant to unrepeatable. I can't help but ask: With so many millions of absolute authorities on futebol, why don't they randomly pick someone out of the stands to referee the games, instead of hiring a nitwit?

During World Cup games, Brazil shuts down – down, not up. People draw up their chairs in a semicircle in front of the TV set. It's sort of a lull before the storm.

Then the action begins. Both on the campo de futebol (soccer field) and in the living room. When the referee shows his utter stupidity by calling a foul on a Brazilian player (stupidity, because Brazilian players do NOT play dirty. Argentines do.), a Hitler rally looks like a Sunday afternoon picnic.

The game continues. The ball is worked toward the opposite goal. It appears Brazil is going to make a goal. The ball is kicked. It arches toward the opposite goal...

In an unconscious effort to follow the ball on its victory flight, spectators detach themselves from their chair by rocking forward on flexed knees. A roar can be heard over the entire town (imagine a place the size of São Paulo) that would possibly be a good imitation of Mt Saint Helens erupting. But suddenly it stops.

What happened?

The goalkeeper, in a supreme effort, jumped and caught the ball. No goal. In stunned silence, one after another people limply fall back into their chairs.

The game continues. Once again the ball is flying toward the goal. Once again Mt.

Saint Helens erupts. The goalkeeper jumps, but too late. The ball neatly enters the goal.

Anyone who has not witnessed this will think that what I am saying is a lot of hyperbole. I invite you doubters to stay in a hotel in some Brazilian town during the next Copa do Mundo.

The roar steadily increases. But it's only a prelude to what is to come. Start counting seconds from the time the ball hit the net. When you get to approximately seven, you will hear what sounds like three canon shot in rapid succession. Then more. And more. Depending on the importance of the goal, these shots merge into one prolonged roar.

It isn't war. It's just that it takes around seven seconds for thousands of Brazilians who have spent thousands of cruzeiros to buy thousands of fire crackers about 18 inches long to make it outdoors and light them. Gripping the lower end – hopefully – they set fire to these artifices which send three mini-rockets skyward (if correctly held). It must have been a similar sight, and noise, that inspired Frances Scott Key to write the Star Spangled Banner.

All this is mild compared to what happens if Brazil wins the game. I know. My wife, children and mother-in-law happened to be in Salvador – Bahia, riding a taxi to our hotel when Brazil won an important Copa do Mundo game.

Traffic simply ground to a halt. Our taxi driver apologetically informed us that we would have to walk the rest of the way to the hotel. The streets became a sea of dancing people. There we were trying to force our way through. Music blaring from trucks with dozens of loudspeakers precluded any serious attempt at conversation.

Somehow we made it through – minus our watches and a few other items. But we did make it.

The crowd was totally wild. Never have I seen so many people apparently in a trance. Once the emotion of the game wore off, I don't doubt but they again became respectable citizens.

Why is it that futebol has such a tremendous sway on the people here? Might it be that for the duration of the game, no one is poor, no one is illiterate? People who are normally expected to remain silent can suddenly jump up and yell, "Kill the ump!" They can vent their feelings and know that during that hour and a half their opinion is worth just as much as any one else's. In other words, for a few fleeting moments, they believe that everyone is created equal. ▲

This & That

Mark & Glenda Loewen and family returned after spending approximately six months in the US. The congregation welcomes them back.

Ministers Wayne Amoth and Linford Holdeman spent most of January here, holding meetings at the Monte Alegre Congregation and helping with meetings in town.

We had a number of visitors from both Pirenópolis and Goiânia for our meetings.

Myron & Martha Kramer and family, from the mission in Pirenópolis, together with

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their school teacher, Denise Litwiller, were here for most of our meetings. Nelson de Barros once again had surgery, this time for a bowel obstruction. He is doing well.

Leonardo & Cláudia Neves had a boy, Edivan, on Jan 7. Sweet fellow.

Min. Richard Mininger returned after helping in revival meetings at the Lone Tree Congregation.

Min. Ron Wohlgemuth and his wife Mildred, together with Min. Kenneth Smith and his wife Ruth have come to help in the revival effort. First they concluded the meetings in town and now they are beginning at the Rio Verdinho Cong.

Bradley & Jolene Koehn and dau. Lana returned to the US. They plan on returning to Brazil as soon as everything is in order with the three children they plan to adopt. The children are staying with us.

Doreen Koehn returned after a visit to the US.

Glenn & Elizabeth Hibner and dau. Julie flew to Acaraú – Ceará to spend a week on the mission with their daughter, Sheila, who is teaching Arlo Hibner's children.

Deacon Victor Isaac and wife are here to visit their daughter Corrine, who is teaching at the Rio Verdinho school.

Verle & Ruby Schneider are here to visit their children, Lowell & Sharon Warkentin, and their granddaughter, Cheryl.

Everything is pointing to an excellent crop. Our rains have been well spaced. Corn harvest has begun. Some are putting up silage.

Richard Mininger brought us our new 386 computer that Dale Koehn purchased for us with Church Incorporation Grant money. Kenneth Smith brought the monitor. The old PC was loaned to Gospel Tract, where Stephen Kramer is computerizing the entire system. Linford Holdeman brought a 24 pin dot matrix printer that is being used in that work.

Bonnie, Mrs. Eldon Penner, and dau. Lynnette returned after spending Christmas with her folks in Idaho.