

# Brazil News



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Editorializing

## **My Scratch pad**

[On my desk, beside my keyboard, I always have a 4x6 inch scratch pad. Information or thoughts I wish to save for future reference are “scratched” on the pad, the page removed and stacked. As I sat down to work on this issue of BN, I went through my “pile” (a disorganized file) and found over 50 little 4x6 pieces of paper and clippings staring at me. I stared back and this is the result. (Some were chucked, some “replied.”)]

## **Importance**

**It's nice to be important,  
but it is more important to be nice.**

## **Guilty & Innocent**

**When we defend those who are guilty,  
we betray those who are innocent.**

## **The Short Letter**

**Sorry about the long letter; I didn't have time to write a short one.**

*[This little saying is attributed to Mark Twain, George Bernard Shaw, Voltaire, Blaise Pascal, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Winston Churchill, Pliny the Younger, Cato, Cicero, Bill Clinton, Benjamin Franklin, and many, many others.]*

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This applies not only to written communication, but especially to speeches and lectures.

Have you ever spent time in an airport watching planes come in for a landing? They come in on the same glide path, they all touch down at approximately the same position on the airstrip. They decelerate and soon are taxiing to the terminal.

A lot of writers, and especially public speakers, would make lousy pilots. When they should be lining up for a landing, they decide on an additional go-around. And another. And another.

“Pilots” find fulfillment in these additional go-arounds. But not the “passengers.”

### **Flying Lessons**

**The only way to learn to fly is by flying.**

—**John Steinbach, author of *The Grapes of Wrath*, etc.**

(To learn to fly is one thing; to learn to land, another.)

### **The Road Map**

**Adversity can be a road map to God.**

—**Unknown**

### **Mouth to Ear**

**From your mouth to God’s ear.**

Spoken to one making a positive resolution.

### **The Bell**

**You can’t unring a bell.**

(Please read on.)

### **Joking**

**So is the man that deceives his neighbor (acquaintance, friend) And then says,  
Was I not joking?**

—**Proverbs 26:19 (Amplified Bible)**

It is positively amazing how we learn to install a fire escape in our speech. We say

something that later creates turbulence. We have the following options when called on the carpet:

- 1) “Oh! I was just joking when I said that.”
- 2) “Whoever told you that misunderstood what I said.”
- 3) “I never said that!”
- 4) “I asked it as a question, that was all; never meant...”

In the book *The Threefold Cord*, the author tells us that approximately 90 percent of what we say is understood by our tone of voice and body language. This means that at least 90 percent of the elaborate excuses we self-assuredly spew out are probably not believed.

Not all the wounded have the resilience to keep their balance when told “It was just a joke.” Like a plant exposed to a scorching sun, they decide it isn’t worth it. The perpetrator looks on and shakes his head, wondering how some people can be so sensitive.

“Loose lips sink ships.”

“But no one can tame the human tongue; it is a restless evil [undisciplined, unstable], full of deadly poison” (James 3:8 —Amplified Bible).

## Infodemic

A new word that is trying to edge its way into the dictionary. It really needs no explanation. It is a pandemic of information. In one typical month many of us are subjected to more new information than our forefathers five hundred years ago were in their lifetime.

## Three “Isms”

There are those who believe that communism and socialism are nearly the same thing. They aren’t. Yes, they are both noxious, but they have a basic difference.

**Communism.** Never has a free country welcomed communism as a form of government. Its implantation is never peaceful and necessitates the violent purging of opposers. In the case of Russia it was the literal slaughter of the intelligentsia. Millions lost their lives or became slaves in the gulags of Siberia. Military officers who were seen as “dangerous” (with the ability to think intelligently) faced the firing squad. Approximately half – the most qualified – were eliminated.

Private ownership of property is suspended. Everything belongs to the government and is controlled by corrupt party hacks. Thus citizens are told where they will live, how they will make their living and how much they will earn. Thus in Cuba a doctor is on the same wage scale as a mason.

Communist nations today have become more palatable by integrating homeopathic doses of capitalism.

**Socialism.** The implantation of socialism is not revolutionary. It does not deprive citizens of ownership, as in communism. The infiltration of socialism depends on three basic factors:

- 1) Entitlement. The belief that the government owes its citizens a living.
- 2) Moral lassitude. The replacement of moral values with the desire for pleasure and leisure.
- 3) Disregard for constitutional values, the belief that liberty means the freedom to do as one pleases.

**Fascism.** It has been said that the most effective form of government is a well-structured dictatorship. In very short-term crises, when confronted with seemingly incorrigible situations, this may actually be true, but NEVER as a permanent form of government.

For the observer of history, fascism is indelibly linked to Benito Mussolini, the Italian dictator during WWII. Not known for a stratospheric IQ, indeed hardly for an atmospheric intelligence, he was tolerated by Hitler, the German Chancellor, because of the strategic military importance of the Italian mainland.

(Mussolini's self-image was not only stratospheric, but his acute feeling of self-importance as well. Once when a foreign diplomat was ushered into his office for a meeting during the war, he kept his visitor waiting for a protracted time, as he set behind his desk carefully studying a book in his hands. Politely awaiting "il Duce" – his nickname – finish his reading, the diplomat couldn't help but notice that he was holding the book upside down.)

**Today.** We have no fear of our country turning communist. With the ascension of the left, socialism is beginning to loom as a threat. It is important to remember that populism can be the precursor of a mild form of fascism, also known as totalitarianism.

So what is the difference between socialism and communism?

Socialists take the reins.

Communists take the horse and cart.

## Priests

We have always had excellent relations with the clergy of the local Catholic church. Back when I had my veterinary supply and feed store in town both the priests and the nuns were my constant customers – even though my competitor was of their faith. We spent hours visiting. I remember...

The American priest who said many parishioners appeared in church for three occasions:

- 1) When *hatched*,
- 2) When *matched*,
- 3) When *dispatched*,

Honesty is a virtue in any religion.

Years ago we were invited to a Catholic wedding. During the reception beer flowed freely, except for children. Their parents were adamant about total abstinence in their offspring. The priest, however, the one who presided over the ceremonial part of the marriage, now had a new function. Many of the children sat at their own tables. The priest would sidle up to them with his tray of glasses of beer, look around to make sure their parents weren't looking. A bottle placed under the table made sure the children would have memorable recollections.

Now, the one I like the best. When, in the early history of the Colony, an accident took the lives of two of our lead men, the local priests and nuns were at the funeral. Later, when meeting one of the priests, he would become almost ecstatic when talking about the funeral. "It was so wonderful. I could just feel the presence of God there." He was speaking from the heart.

## **Affluence**

**Affluence does not breed generosity.**

## **On Pies and Weddings**

For some crazy reason during the early years of the settlement, a decision was made it wasn't proper to serve pies at weddings. A number of years went by and Walt and Roberta Redger were elected to the food committee. Knowing how Walt was a hands-on farmer, never asking his hired men to do what he was unwilling to do, I asked him, "Does being on the food committee seem like kind of a mundane job?"

Walt's answer tells us a lot about the man, "Naw. It needs to be done so I like it okay."

During the early years of farming, lime had to be spread at night because of daytime winds. Walt told me: "You know, I used to hate spreading lime at night, but it was something that had to be done, so I decided to like it. Now I really enjoy spreading lime at night!" (I suspect some of his hired men may have been sleeping while he spread lime.)

Now, back to pies and weddings. Walt saw absolutely no logic in the pie-ban. So, he got up in church during the time for announcements and said (no commas or periods):

"Some feel we should begin serving pies at weddings if no one has anything against this we'll start serving pies again well since no one has any objections we will begin serving pies."

He took his seat. What would have taken a normal mortal at least 15 minutes to resolve, Walt managed in a bit more than 15 seconds.

We are still serving pies.

## Ornithology

I am considering becoming an ornithologist (look it up). My speciality will be a study of the *Passeridae*. Most of us call them sparrows.

I could use up numerous pages telling what I don't like about passeridae, but since I believe most of you think like I do, I'll save key strokes and paper.

Why do I want to dedicate myself to the common house sparrow?

Here in Brazil the country is infested with sparrow nests – that is, the cities and highways.

A few words on the Portuguese language. In Portuguese a sparrow is called a *pardal*. And so is a radar – the kind of apparatus that records exactly how fast a vehicle was travelling when caught by the sparrow's eye.

Anyway, the other day after closing a deal at our local Honda agency, the salesgirl sent me a whatsapp message, that said, "I was checking on the car you are trading in and it has five speeding fines attached." She added, "All five are from the same "sparrow."

It is hard to make excuses. Here in Brazil, it is required by law that a sign be posted advising motorists of a radar in the close proximity. With the passing of time one develops an immunity to these signs – and to speedometer reading on the car dash. Then the little sparrow chirps (quietly) "Gottcha!"

So, now I will be watching for sparrows (for a couple of weeks, at least). Thus my nascent interest in ornithology.

(I still haven't figured out which sparrow has me singled out as the easiest victim in Rio Verde.)

## Fighting

**For most of the history of the US, people fought for what was right.  
Now they fight for what is wrong.**

## The Cost of Education

**The entire accumulated unpaid student debt in the US is equivalent  
to Brazil's national debt.**

(That should make Americans the smartest people in the world.)

## DNA

**People can be identified by their DNA.  
So can congregations.**

## Fires

The Colony has an extremely efficient fire brigade. When the relative humidity of the air dips below 30% (today we hit 5%) and winds exceed 30 kpm (today we had a high of 24 kpm), we have the perfect formula for wild fires. Last year was really bad. Almost daily we saw smoke rising somewhere in the distance, occasionally near, often out in the distance. All fires are reported on whatsapp and it is decided if our equipment should be dispatched.

Not infrequently the fires are ignited by electrical lines that short out. Last year a number were set by arsonists. Depending on the location and severity of the fire, spray planes are called in to assist.

Several weeks ago sparks from an electrical line set off a blaze near Carlos Becker's chicken barns. He is located in the middle of the Colony, near the water source, so in just a short time the fire was brought under control with no significant damage.

Since Colony members work together with other neighbors and involves a large area, this results in a very positive mutual reliance. We owe a lot to these men who drop everything to put out fires.

## Making a point

**Sometimes the best way to make a point is  
choosing not to make a point.**

## Need a job?

If you are a builder, no need to look beyond Rio Verde. In more than a half century we have lived here, never have I seen so much building. One high-rise going up appears to have some 30 stories. Anyplace one drives in town there is construction. Masons are hard to find.

## Taps

### Mim Dirks

Mim was my sister-in-law.

Some people can be summarized in one key word. Others are more complex and can't. Mim was one of these. But, let's begin with...

**Vibrant.** Daughter of Denton & Emma Burns, as she grew up the unexpected was the expected. They learned to innovate, often on very short notice. While living in Mexico, company had been invited for supper. Possibly the invitation was a bit fluid, or

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outdated. At any rate, on that particular evening everyone was sitting around the table, grace had been said, and plates were being filled, when someone drove up. One of the children went to the door, looked out, and in a state of shock announced, “It’s that family, that we invited for supper!”

Those with health issues would have possibly suffered a coronary or a stroke. Not the Burnses! In one of the greatest exhibits of spontaneous cooperation on record, the entire family jumped to their feet, rushed all the dirty plates to the kitchen, gave them a lick and a promise wash job, dried, and returned to their places – now with extras, of course. All this while one of the children (maybe Mim, who knows, it was right down her alley) entertained the guests outside while inside the Local Disaster Committee did what such committees are expected to do. And then...

(Oh! Hello! Hello! Come on in! So nice to see you! I hope you’re all hungry!)

That was Mim at her best. She knew how to take things in stride.

The Denton Burns and the Dick Toews families were the first to move to Brazil with permanent visas. That was back in 1968.

We won’t go into detail about the first days spent in a hotel in the center of Brasília, then the months in a rented house in the nearby city of Anápolis while Denton and Dick, together with interested brethren from the US who were present, as Brazil was reconnoitered in an effort to find the most suitable place to establish a settlement. For the children this time spent in Anápolis was an adventure all its own, where they learned to know Brazilian children, culture and language.

The day came that land was purchased and the move was made to the “fazenda” in Rio Verde, state of Goiás. And is where the real adventure began.

Camp was set up near the large falls on the Monte Alegre River, close to where Daniel Kramer has lived since 1969. Back then the last 10 miles or so there was only a faint fisherman’s trail to the falls. It is superfluous to say there were no houses, no electricity, no telephones. About the only thing there was plenty of was water and open sky – and gnats.

Tents were pitched. Cooking was over open fires in small rock enclosures, Baking was done in Dutch ovens. Dishes and clothes were washed in the river. Toilets were as numerous as the large bushes set back in the woods.

Mim was in her element. When we arrived in August of 69, the Burns family had progressed from the tent and was living in a tiny masonite “house” maybe 15 x 20 feet. (We moved into the tent.) Lined with bunk beds the “house” was basically sleeping quarters. One Sunday afternoon the preacher and his wife, John & Alma Penner, came for a visit. It began pouring rain and for the visitors to stay somewhat dry, they had to sit under an umbrella. In the house.

On a wild pig hunt we ran across a motherless baby monkey. We took it home to Mim, who with her usual enthusiasm adopted it. For anyone who can put up with the antics of a baby monkey and remain sane, Mona was an entertaining little creature. Like Mary’s little lamb, it followed Mim wherever she went. So, when on Sunday morning Mim locked Mona up in her cage, the little monk was outraged.

Mim and her family walked the quarter mile to church. Behold! Somehow while



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the service was in progress the little Houdini managed to escape her confinement. Telepathically, she immediately understood where Mim would be and made a beeline for church. In keeping with the decorum of house of worship, the little creature, not so little anymore, headed straight for the preacher's wife and onto her lap. Alas! The preacher's wife (not Alma Penner), had zero tolerance for all creatures great and small, no tender mercies for those with a tail, who landed on her lap, and then crawled up to her shoulder. We will not describe what followed. Suffice it to say, it was Mim who rescued her monk from the uncharitable reception given by the preacher's wife;

(Just a little sidenote unrelated to Mim. One Sunday morning, during services, as Preacher John Penner sat in his chair on the rostrum, a half-grown cat sedately came walking up the aisle, with tail erect, to the front of the church. Anyway, it walked right up to the pastor and brushed against his leg, like cats do. Unlike what happened to the monk, the preacher reached down, picked up the cat and settled it down on his lap, where he patted it as the congregation looked on.)

The next years were a period of constant changes. The first church services were held under the cattle racks that had been removed from Dick Toews' truck and covered with a tarp. Then under a clay tile roof with walls that slowly rose from Sunday to Sunday as a few more cinva-ram blocks were produced near the falls and laid up.

Now for a word on cinva-ram blocks. Dirt was dug up and run through a fine screen (all by hand), the proper amount of water was added, plus 10 percent cement. This was all thoroughly mixed up and measured into the tiny hopper of the cinva-ram machine. Pressure was applied with a long handle and then the block removed and set out in long rows. Everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, was involved in this project. The same blocks were made for the first permanent house. Denton, together with his children, built the house, which to them was a five-star mansion when completed.

To build up a settlement from scratch takes a lot of work. It isn't a task for the faint of heart. And especially for the Burns family it was anything but easy. Because of his knowledge of Spanish, which is a first-cousin-once-removed to Portuguese, he spent most of his time helping other families as they arrived. This meant helping them set up their tents and showing them how to do without. It took a lot of patience.

Word was sent to Rio Verde from Goiânia that some Americans had been involved in an accident. Since the information was transmitted to a ham radio station in town the information was sketchy. Then someone came out from town and confirmed that two men from the Colony had been killed in the accident. I was at home at the time, but Mim was with the group that got the news. She immediately looked me up, and without preamble, announced, "Daddy and Pete were both killed."

Mim was 13 when this event shook her like a tsunami. Her non-conventional nature dovetailed with her dad's quest for novelty. He was at his best when shouldering the problems of others and searching for a solution (which he usually found).

It would be an understatement to say this was a life-changer for Mim. She developed an almost frenetic desire for change. She was at her best when venturing into the

unknown. After marrying Leo Dirks, their lives became a zigzag of moves from one location to another, both in Brazil and the US.

Without going into the merits or demerits of these frequent moves, we want to point out the overriding positive side of this footloose life. Mim was a born missionary, a people-lover. Making friends came as natural to her as breathing. Since most of her life was spent in Brazil, both she and Leo placed a premium on communication, which, needless to say, was in Portuguese. To speak English in the presence of Brazilians who spoke only Portuguese, was a linguistic felony. Thus, communication at all times with Leo and the children was in Portuguese. I believe that her love for language stands out as one of her greatest achievements.

Mim was a Dorcas. I think that most of her waking hours were dedicated to making something to give away to others – rugs, pot lifters, quilts for almost all her nephews and nieces, as well as others. At our Christmas gatherings she always had a small gift for them – usually hand-made. Few of her relatives or close friends don't have a remembrance received from her at some time.

It would take pages and pages to trace the migrations of Leo and Mim. So we won't.

In a nutshell, Mim's life can hardly be described as conventional. She was allergic to modernism. Thus her preference for remote areas untouched by progress. Happiness could be found in doing without. This did not keep her from leaving a fine family. Or being appreciated.

I miss her.

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