

**“The Lord knew what he was doing;”
Three-year term turns into three decades of missionary service**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg
LAM News Service

Ceres, Brazil (LAMNS)—
“You must have the wrong fellow,” was Alan Mullins’ response when a missionary recruiter called him over 30 years ago. “I was teaching school in North Miami and working at Sears to pay off my college loan when the recruiter said that he had heard about what he called my ‘tremendous interest in missions’. He said he would be in Miami and would take me out to dinner. Well, I never miss a free meal, so I went. I guess you could say that was my mistake,” Alan jokes.



Now, 30 years later, Alan and his wife Ézia are working with Christian Camping International-Brazil (CCI-Brazil), training camp leadership along with writing and developing curriculum and training material in Portuguese for use throughout the country.

“We provide staff training manuals, write books on games, outdoor activities, musical games and camp history and prepare material to tell how the camping movement came about,” explains Ézia, a Brazilian from the state of Minas Gerais. “We have four books we have published being used in training courses and two other books distributed by a publishing company. Some of these materials are being used by missionaries in Portugal, Mozambique and Angola.”

The couple is heavily involved in training camp counselors and leaders who direct two sessions of camping each year during Brazil’s January and July school breaks. “We have to start from scratch every year and that is very challenging,” Ézia explains. “We try to pass on to them the idea of Christian camping and its full potential. The idea is to reach the whole person, working not only in leading the person to Christ, which is our main goal, but working with the teenager or child in his or her life as a whole—emotionally, socially, mentally and intellectually, encouraging and developing the whole person.”

Alan and Ézia travel over a large portion of Brazil to hold workshops and training sessions. “Most of the camps in Brazil today are under the Brazilian church,” explains Alan. “There are still some denominational missionaries working with specific camps, but that’s becoming less and less true in Brazil. CCI-Brazil is involved with all denominations, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, some Pentecostal groups, anyone willing to be involved in evangelical camping.”

One of the camps is the Presbyterian facility at Ceres serving campers from all over central Brazil. When Alan first arrived in the country the property was a boarding school for missionary children. “The Lord knew what He was doing bringing me to Brazil. I came here for three years to teach missionary’s children, fully expecting to return to the United States. But, God had

prepared me through a ministry of camping in the States to be the one to start teaching camping to the Brazilian church.”

The couple train leaders at four different camps, sometimes twice a year at each site. “There are about 300-400 campers per camping season for a total of from 600 to 800 per year,” Alan says. “Out of those, we experience nearly 150 first-time decisions for Christ.”

“Camping is one of the best tools to reach people for the church,” says Ézia. “Many unbelievers would not go to church but they will go to camp because it is a neutral environment. A camp has a tremendous opportunity to minister to a person who would never darken the doors of a church, and it has twenty-four hours a day to do it rather than just two hours a week.”

Ézia knows how some campers feel when they are away from home and need attention. “Being the last of 20 children, you can imagine that I didn’t get much attention from my parents. I remember a missionary who read me the Bible and treated me as if I was a person. When I was seven she took me under her wings and paid my way to school. I always wanted to be a missionary like her.”

The Mullins are also involved in community service near their home in Campinas. “We started a church in our home in the 70’s,” Ézia says. “We started a church for children who would come for juice and cookies and to hear Bible stories. Now the local director and his wife work with a



congregation of 150 members that started in our garage. It is rewarding when the Lord allows us to see this.”

God has also given the couple a ministry of helping young people who could not live at home or had been abused and needed a place to stay. “We have taken in around 15 of these,” Alan says.

“One stayed for ten years and became a part of our family. Many are involved in the church in some way. Some are pastors and camp directors.”

Currently the Mullins are helping to pay for the construction of a church building in Campinas by selling used clothing. (Donations of clothing may be sent to the Mullins at Avenida Brasil, 1256, Jardim Guanabara, Campinas, SP 13073-000, Brazil. Packages should be sent surface mail and clearly marked “Abandon if not delivered, No Commercial Value.”)

Meanwhile, Alan and Ézia are looking for other missionaries to join them in their camp training ministry. “We can use short-termers who would like to work at a camp for a month in the summer or in January,” Alan says. “They do not need to speak the language, but would help in the kitchen, with cleaning and be a part of a staff.”

They are also looking for permanent personnel to work nation-wide in the area of training. “We need people who have experience in camping and would be willing to come to Brazil for five to 10 years to help develop courses and teach leadership,” Alan says. (For information and application forms, contact the Latin America Mission).

Related websites:

Christian Camping International: www.gospelcom.net/cci

Christian Camping International-Brazil: www.cci.org.br

Latin America Mission: www.lam.org

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SIDEBAR STORY

One never knows how far the influence of their ministry will reach. LAM missionary Ézia Mullins recalls one 13-year-old camper who sensed a call to missionary service around a campfire in Brazil.

“Twenty years later I met Agripino and he was one of the leaders of Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF),” she recalls. “He was training leaders in Angola using some material in Portuguese. He shared with us that he was in an airplane in Angola ready to return to Brazil when officials of that country came and stopped the plane. A high-ranking member of the Angolan government came to him and said, ‘we heard you have been training some of these people how to be leaders. I want you to come back and teach our government people these courses.’ It so happened that I was the one who had put together those courses in the Portuguese language,” Ézia recalls.

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