

Mr. Jose Arsenio de Magalhaes, President of the Chamber of Councilmembers

Councilwoman Helenita Melo Lopes

Mr. Paulo Ribeiro Reis, representative of the mayor of Monlevade

Mr. Augusto Espechit, Manager of Arcelor Mittal Monlevade

Chamber of Council,

Friends of 45 years from Belo Horizonte,

All present,

On the 22nd of August 1946, 62 years ago, here arrived from Belo Horizonte a small 12-day old baby. His father, Henri Meyers, a rolling mills engineer at Belgo, and mother, Marianne, came from small neighboring towns, in Luxembourg, less than 10 km apart. As they arrived at their house by the wire-drawing plant, his nanny Alaide was already there. Today, after he lost his parents, she is his Brazilian mother. There the little boy was surrounded by lots of love and infinite care. In a few years his brothers Pedro, Jacques, and Carlos arrived, these already legitimate Monlevade citizens. The boy learned to pray in French from his mother and in Portuguese from Alaide. Catechism was taught by the kind Dona Eugenia, present here at 84 years of age. He remembers how she explained the mystery of the Holy Trinity with a three-leafed clove and confesses that to this day he does not understand it well. At six years he was raising hell at home one morning when his father grabbed him and took him to school. It was one of the saddest days in his life. They put him at the back of the class, on the left side, with the 'dummies.' At class break, he learned to escape from the bullies and was beat up quite a few times by the son of the school director that considered himself top dog. The kindness of Dona Josefina Bruzzi saved him from a deep depression. He received the first communion from the tremulous hands of Padre Drehmans. Later, in Middle School, in the wooden building, he had the luck to have a pleiad of dedicated teachers. Professor Salles taught him the rigor of mathematics, Padre Higino the dryness of Latin, Dona Guilhermina a beginning of English, and Professor Lucilo geography. He was inspired by Padre Henriques who inculcated in him the love for literature and the necessity of grammar. The literary society Padre Leonel Franca was his first experience in oratory and he remembers the terror he felt when he was given the job to deliver his first public address.

He learned to fish with Levy Mahe, Alberto Luscher, and Caixa D'Agua (Water Reservoir, his nickname) in the creeks and lakes of the region. And fishing is a school of patience. His beloved father took him hunting and after that they would stop in Piracicaba for an ice cream. Boca Rica (Gold Mouth, a nickname), present here tonight, the great hunter, completed his education. The beauty of nature entered into him and never left him.

Carlos the Gardener taught him about the different trees, *jatoba*, *pau mulato*, garlic vine; he would also tell him stories of the hinterland, of Puri Indians that he had met. On Sundays, he would go horseback riding with Mr. Teixeira, always with a long knife at his side. He would tell him wild stories of his cowboys days. He remembers how Mr. Teixeira how would get mad and show his knife when the kids in the street would yell: “Mr. Teixeira, fart on your hand and smell it.”

Juca e Rafael taught him how to build traps and cages for birds, how to catch yellow siskins with a viscous substance taken from tree sap, how to catch *curiol*, *papa arroz*, and *azulao* with a caged decoy and a trap. Geraldo de Assis showed him how to drink a dozen of large Brahma beer bottles in one day.

The boy confesses that he was always a little jealous of his brothers and friends, these legitimate citizens of Monlevade, not imported like him.

In first grade he escaped into the steel plant more than once, sneaking in with the large number of kids that took the lunch for their fathers. The strength and the danger of flowing steel, snaking red, raining in sparks, running on the ground already gray, among the clangs of impacts and the hum of the cranes marked him deeply. This steel, and the toughness of the men that produced it, working hard, climbing the steep hills carrying rice, beans, and sugar for their families, sometimes screaming in pain wounded at the Margarida Hospital, strengthened the boy, created an internal steel in him.

Everything that followed, this long journey of life, was a consequence of these first years. This journey took him to distant lands: USA, Europe, Soviet Union, Japan, China, Singapore, the Americas, Nepal. He learned from, collaborated with, and taught researchers everywhere. He enriched himself in this global quest. In the moments of fatigue, of disillusionment and despair, of confusion, he always felt, coming from a mysterious place, this force inside, the steel of Monlevade. This internal steel gave him strength for the journey, and he thanks the fraternity and spirit of work learned here.

The boy still has two dreams in appreciation for everything that Monlevade gave him and to honor his citizenship:

1. With his brothers, to construct a sports center for the poorest people of Monlevade and to honor the memory of his father, Henri Meyers.
2. To climb the Neblina Peak, the highest in Brazil, in the north of the Amazon, and to deposit there a little piece of this Monlevade soil so rich in iron.

And may we, as coming to the end of our journey, repeat the words of Paul: “I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I kept the faith.”

Thank you.