

□BOAS FESTAS, AMIGOS!□

Miss Alison Hardy entered the Department of External Affairs after the Second World War. She has served abroad in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and in New York and Washington in the United States. In Ottawa she was with the Press, Information and Finance Divisions. She retired at the end of December 1975.

I too, have had my swim on Christmas Day, have watched the leaves of the royal palm arch overhead and have felt the heat beat in upon me.

When I flew in to Rio de Janeiro, it was two weeks before Christmas. A time to be together — with friends — preferably in one's own home. The Brazilian cost of living made an apartment unthinkable and I went hunting a room with a Canadian friend from the Embassy who spoke Portuguese. At least, I thought she did!

The second place we visited was an apartment right on Avenida Atlantica, the street that follows Copacabana beach for so many blocks. The room had heavy dark furniture, a small verandah door instead of a window and the roar of the surf to entice me. I moved from the hotel the afternoon of December 24, 1945.

Adagio

Christmas Eve I attended my first midnight Mass in Brazil in the famous old church of Nossa Senhora da Gloria.

Canadians, from the Embassy or on scholarship, joined together in the early hours while it was yet dark for a reveillon and thought of home — Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto.

Through the courtesy of a Canadian, I was included in a Christmas lunch at the home of the U.K. Chargé d'Affaires, and asked to come and have a swim first. Somehow, in the water one could forget the heat and remember the

on the high Corcovado peak the statue of Christ that one can look at from almost every point in Rio de Janeiro. "Deus é brasileiro", the Brazilians confide. Somehow in Rio I felt it was true.



friends from External Affairs who had written about their Christmas swims. I felt like a Roman.

The main course for Christmas lunch included large mounds of rice, surrounded by shrimps in a special sauce. On top of the rice were little slivers of turkey. A reminder?

Andante cantabile

Many well-bred young Brazilian ladies attended the convent school of Notre Dame de la Sion. Through a cousin, we were all invited to the midnight Mass there on Christmas Eve. I shall never forget the golden glow from the altar in the chapel, where so many candles were lit, nor the girlish voices singing.

Outside the window, I could see

Scherzo

Christmas in Rio in 1947 at 311 Avenida Atlantica was to be a Canadian affair, at last. I had puddings and Christmas cakes brought in from Canada. I knew that if you set a match to Canadian rye, it would flame into Yuletide brightness. A friend from the American Embassy arranged for me to get a turkey from the Argentine. I had my guests in mind, friends who were away from home, whether home was Canada, the United States or Sweden.

My maid and I consulted about the turkey, cookbook in hand. Neither of us had ever roasted one before. Roasting pans were little-known in Brazil, seemingly, and what my maid went out to look for was costly — for a one-time venture. So we bravely decided the day before Christmas to roast the bird in a cookie pan with an inch-high side.