

One of Ray's Paraguay journals

CHAPTER SIX



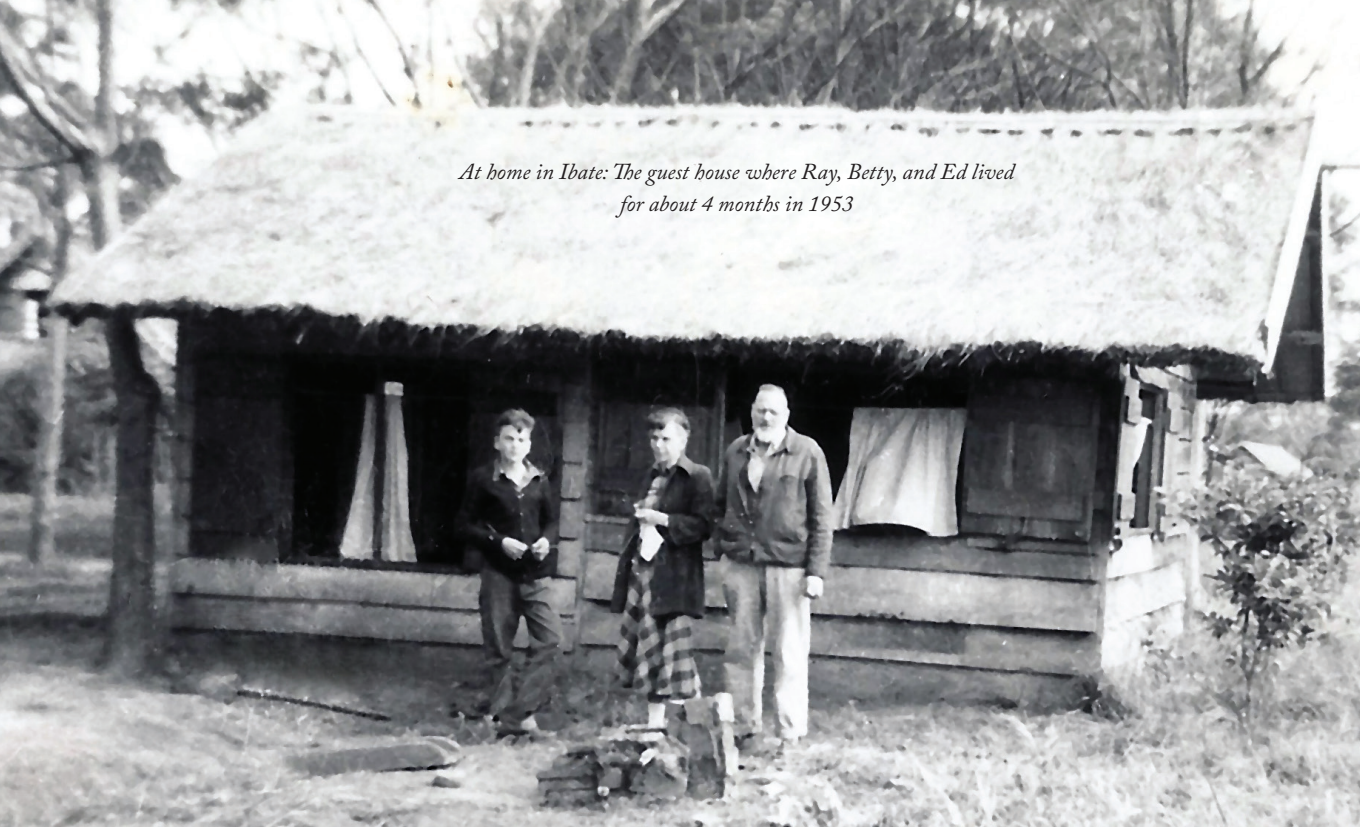
Primavera



After a few days at the Bruderhof House, Ray, Betty and Irene Bernard boarded a small airplane and arrived less than an hour later in Primavera. The rest of us had already departed by boat for an overnight trip to Rosario, where we were met by a horse-drawn wagon for the final 30 miles inland to the Bruderhof. Travel was slow, with mud two feet deep in places, and we spent one more night under the stars before arriving at the community.

JUNE 6, 1953: Primavera at last! Yesterday at 11 a.m. Betty, Irene and I took off in a small plane and found it quite interesting. I could see the altimeter go from 500 feet to 1,000, 2,000, and then level off at 3,000 feet, flying at eighty miles per hour. Cows were tiny dots and the land seemed covered with moss, not trees. For landing, we had to circle several times to scare cattle away. Stopped for greetings at Loma Hoby. The community sang a greeting song and stepped up to shake hands. We felt uncomfortably like potentates but if we had stepped down there would have been too much delay. Nancy and Mimi have been assigned to Loma

*At home in Ibate: The guest house where Ray, Betty, and Ed lived
for about 4 months in 1953*



and will work in the kitchen and the laundry, and Betty, Ed, and I have a very nice gnome-like cottage in Ibate, about two miles from Loma. Nancy and Mimi came with us to our cottage, and Betty went to bed with a bad cold while the rest of us went to the dining room for a very simple supper: bread, lard,²² mate, and doughnuts.

I slept well in a double sack-bed.²³ This morning I spent some time at the “power house.” It is quite a good set-up: a 1932 Chevy motor running a 25 HP 230 volt DC generator on wood gas.²⁴ The gas producer is homemade from steel drums. The people here are very nice. Our too general impression, one can only say it is all different than expected.

Why dirt floors?? Answer: the sawmill can’t keep up with the need for sawn lumber. Already I have become a confirmed string and paper saver.

²² Used in place of margarine or butter (which was considered a luxury), lard was a common spread at Primavera; unlike its solid lard common in the US, this pig fat was a runny liquid.

²³ Beds were typically made from wet strips of rawhide woven across the top of a wooden rectangular base; as the rawhide dried, it tightened to form a taut grid to support a stuffed mattress.

²⁴ Wood gas was used as a more available alternative to gasoline, which was expensive in Paraguay. Wood gas is produced by burning wood in an oxygen-deprived environment to create gas that can be used as fuel. In Loma, the power plant was operated by a wood burning steam engine.

After tea I looked around with Roger [Allain]²⁵ and browsed through the large library. We had a long talk in his office about my job (in building) and Ed’s education: he needs to learn German first.

JUNE 7, SUNDAY: At breakfast Roger brought birthday presents: two sausages, five eggs, three cigars, wine, a candlestick and candle, instant coffee; a pamphlet, *Siebter Rundbrief* [Seventh Circular]; a book, *The Individual and World Need* by Eberhard Arnold, a text book, *Elementary German*, a card and hard candy.

This Sunday morning meeting celebrated the harvest, with a sermon by Roger. We should celebrate not so much man’s achievements as we should gifts of God. The harvest display included maize, grasses, mandioca,²⁶ eggs, charcoal, lemons, oranges, sausage, peas, bread, milk. A tour of the farms followed: a vegetable plot, bananas, a new yerba plot; pastures of planted Jesuit and colony grass; cows, etc. After siesta Ed and I started a bit of softball. All were quite enthusiastic. Roger started Ed on German before supper. Betty had her first tasty meal, a hard boiled egg, bread, onions and tea. She is feeling much better, but still has some temperature, probably the flu of some sort.

JUNE 8: Betty works in the laundry and I work in the building department, with Ed helping me while school is on vacation. He and I put in our first day’s work at a new two-family house near the library. We cut and put in three window frames made of the 2x4 and 2x5 hardwood lapacho.²⁷ Primavera is like *The Mysterious Island*²⁸—bearded (and often tattered) colonists working with primitive tools.

JUNE 9: Betty was up and out for first time since last Friday; we were invited by Gwynn and Buddug Evans to attend an informal meeting.

²⁵ Roger Allain, a leader in the Bruderhof community.

²⁶ Mandioca, also known as manioc and cassava, is a starchy root and a major food staple in South America.

²⁷ The flowering, deciduous pink lapacho is the national tree of Paraguay.

²⁸ The 1874 novel by Jules Verne.