



Will Grote and Espinoza ranch hand Marcel. Preparing to leave for the International Rual Del Paraguay in Asuncion, Paraguay.

How I Spent My Summer Vacation

by Will Grote

Back in April of 1990, Mark Wyble, Junior Activities Director for the American Angus Association, contacted my mother, Pat Grote. He was looking for a young adult, girl or boy, that could speak a little Spanish and would want to work with the summer job program.

I've worked summers away from home for two years. So, Mom said, "Will can do both, where is the job?"

"Paraguay," said Mark.

Mom let him know right away that was too far for her little boy to go! But she told Mark that she would find him someone else to meet the qualification.

When I heard about the job, I told my parents, "I want to go." Mom informed me that it was a long way from home and that I wasn't even 15 1/2 years old. But, I didn't let up!

After a long conversation with Mark and lots of cross checking, I turned in an application, resume and several recommendations.

To my surprise the Espinozas of Paraguay were interested in me. They have a son, George, who was also 15 years old. It would be my job to teach George how to fit and show their

registered Angus and Brangus cattle. At the end of my six-week stay I would take the cattle to the International Rual Del Paraguay in Asuncion, Paraguay.

Diane Espinoza called late one night and spoke with my mother. She described my job, what clothes to bring



and flight connections. My mother felt more at ease when she found out that Mrs. Espinoza was from Houston, Texas, and declared herself to be a typical mother. She went on to explain that her husband, Antonio Espinoza, had recently been chosen to be the new

ambassador to Great Britain.

I was to stay on one of their ranches until it was time to go to the big show. Of course, there was to be plenty of excitement and entertainment.

After all the plans were made and tickets bought, I was to meet George at Miami International Airport. That was an experience in itself. My mother flew with me to Miami to see me off and to meet George. Instead of her seeing me off, I saw her off. Her connecting flight to Tampa left before my flight. How many guys get to put their mom on a plane and then leave the country? She shed two tears and kissed me a lot. At this point I was still brave.

Not knowing what George looked like, but that he was tall and blond, I had him paged. We met and jumped right into a conversation.

Our plane was an hour late and very crowded. We finally took off at 12 a.m. As I buckled my seat belt I thought to myself, "It's too late to back out now." The flight was 7 1/2 hours non-stop to Asuncion, Paraguay.

The ranch was very large and carried 1,300 head of commercial cattle. The



Three of the ranch hands working cattle in the palm tree pens.



Commercial cattle in the palm tree corral. Notice the straight logs used on the chute.

cattle pens had several holding pens made of palm trees. These logs were long and straight. They would put the bull calves down the chute made of palm trees. A rope would be placed around their neck and then they would open the gate. The calf would come out of the chute, hit the end of the rope, and when his back feet were in the air a cowboy on horseback would rope the hind feet and stretch him out. It was much the same as our team roping. These bulls weighed anywhere from 700 to 900 pounds at the time of castration. These cattle were later sold in Brazil.

We attended a bull sale where the cattle sold for hundreds of thousands of

Guaranies (Paraguay money) and attended the Hanover Boys Choir concert.

There was a spring near the ranch where my maid washed my blue jeans. Now I'll have original stone washed jeans for school. The water was moved by a water-powered pump to a holding tank that later transferred the water to the houses. They used a system to catch rain water that we used for drinking. We took a bath in creek water that we warmed over a fire.

The only source of heat in the new ranch house was the fireplace. This was not too bad. It only made it down to freezing one night.

Most of the ranch houses have thatched roofs. Thatch was gathered in the field and brought into the neighborhood by oxen-powered wagons. It was cut and laid out in the sun to dry.

Twice a week the ranch hands would crack their own corn and mix their own feed. They butchered their own beef and boned it out. All the meat was marinated in lemon juice. They even had their own lemon orchard.

The leather was saved to use later. They shaved the hair off and made leather straps. All the halters, bridles, chaps and ropes were handmade.

The ranch hands wore pleated, loose-fitting trousers that were fitted at the calf of the leg. They wore these during the summer so that the mosquitoes could not bite and to keep cool.

While showing cattle at the International Show, I met the men working for the Granada Corporation. While there I also met Patrick Simons from Cow Creek Brangus. Patrick had been fitting cattle in Paraguay for 15 years. It was good to visit with someone from the United States.

I had lunch with the American Ambassador Timothy Towell. I also was fortunate to be able to shake hands with Paraguay's President Rodriguez.

As I was strolling through the show exhibits one day, I noticed a man at the Nutrena booth with the name tag of Robert Grote. I introduced myself and said I was from Mason, Texas. He told me that he was from Bryan, Texas. I couldn't believe it. I had lived in Bryan, Texas, too.

He and his wife were very nice. After a lot of visiting, we came to the conclusion that we were of no relation. But, it was fun to visit with him. Mrs. Grote came to the airport to see me off and to make sure I was fine.

You know, I've always heard that the world is getting smaller. After I settled down for my 7 1/2-hour plane ride back, the girl behind me noticed that I had GROTE ANGUS RANCH, MASON, TEXAS, on my cap.

She said, "Mason, Texas!"

Come to find out her grandmother is from Mason, and she spends every summer in Mason.

Overall, my trip was just great and very interesting. I met various new and unusual people. I saw different places... some very beautiful. But the best sight was when I saw the United States coastline; the second best was a chicken fried steak and a big glass of good clear, hill country water.

AJ