

Now I have forgotten to tell you the nature of the road bed itself. It is fairly well graded up and the foundation is partly gravel, volcanic ash or sandy clay--but down the middle is a strip paved with cobble stones. These stones were laid by the native Indians by hand, then dirt thrown over the stones to partly fill in the crevices. It is amazing how smooth the stones--but to me it is very rough and when I first started I kept wondering when we would strike a smoother road--but after about 20 miles I got used to the "jiggle" and settled down quite relaxed. We reached Ambato about noon and went to a pension (a hotel and restaurant) run by some refugees--a very interesting and "foreign-looking" place. It has quite a pretty flower garden, tennis court, 2 guest houses, and down a bluff behind the place a swift-running river. *It is called Villa Hilda.*

The rest and food were most refreshing--and what a Sunday dinner. They served everything from hors d'oeuvres to ice cream. There was soup, steak, roast chicken, asparagus, potatoes, salad, etc., etc. Everything very tasty and served by French maids. In fact, I believe the man who owns the place must be French--though a German seemed to be managing the dining room.

While I am on the subject I must tell you that there are many many refugees here. It seems that before or at the beginning of the war there were many Jews, "Checks", French and other European nationals hustled out of their countries and Ecuador was apparently one of the easiest countries for them to be admitted into--so they came in droves and practically all of them went into business here; as a consequence, many of the stores, hotels, boarding houses and other lines of business are run by these people. You see many German-Jews.

From Ambato we drove over a mountain road cut along the side of the mountain and overlooking another dream valley--if possible more gorgeous than any we had seen. Some parts of the road, the drop-offs at the side of the road, were perpendicular for many feet below, a little breath-taking at times, but with a careful driver not frightening. We reached Banos (meaning baths) about 4 P.M. This place is surrounded by mountains, contains many pensions, some mineral baths, a few stores, + one huge cathedral--very beautiful without and most ornate within, with many famous paintings.

We drove on down the valley for several miles, along one of the most turbulent rivers I ever saw. There were many waterfalls, cataracts, and great gorges cut through solid rock in the most fantastic ways. At one place a bridge was constructed across a gorge that dropped 200 feet to the river below. Along this river the vegetation had become tropical--very similar to Panama jungle. There were huge ferns, long tendrils of vines down the bank, wild orchids and other tropical flowers. At places the road was cut out under huge mountains of rock and at many places there were walls of rock extending straight up for many many feet. The construction of the road was no small engineering feat.

We returned to a pension at Banos (The Edita) in time for another large meal before "turning in" time.

The next morning we drove back to Ambato in time for their market. I never hope to see anything as colorful as that. Not even the market at Chichicastinango in Guatemala quite came up to it.

*(Ambato was also destroyed by the 1949 earthquake + the cathedral with priests + 60 children at their - 4 - first communion were killed)*

*Banos was almost completely destroyed by earthquake in 1949*