

SOWER



American
Farm School

Thessaloniki
Greece

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GREEK SUMMER



Storm, 12 Dec. 1983

Almost like a game of Twenty Questions, the weather on Friday, December 12, 1983 played with the Thessaloniki area in general and the American Farm School in specific: what is neither animal, vegetable or mineral, comes from the North, has the capability of devastating rooftops, windows, plastic greenhouses, even full-grown trees, and then leaves in its wake dreary weather and much clean-up? Answer: the strongest Vardaar wind to hit Thessaloniki in easily 15 years, perhaps longer.

The storm lasted the afternoon and the evening, with final Farm School damages including over 60 damaged trees, three large panes of glass at the Student Dormitories shattered out of their frames, the plastic greenhouse and the olive-netting shade structure at the Nursery and the Student Projects' plastic house thrashed and rendered basically non-existent by the gale. Though no houses were thus destroyed, or, indeed, seriously damaged, most all rooftops on campus lost scattered shingles, the whole roof of the Dairy's milk-parlor waiting corral was lifted off, and the cow maternity barn roof was caved in by a wind-toppled tree.

Three weeks later, the campus still showed signs of the calamity, although with the combined clean-up efforts of the Farm Department and various students, the AFS hopes to be back in tip-top condition for the start of the New Year.

Nancy Worcester Departs Farm School

The end of March marked a frenetic flurry of farewell festivities to honor Nancy Worcester as she prepared to leave her position as Director of Public Relations and Fund Raising to return to the USA after 11 years with the Farm School.

Just as in Kipling's India the troops called for "Din, Din, Din," to service all needs, so today in Athens, Thessaloniki, and in the villages the cry is "Nancy, Nancy, Nancy" (or NAHN SEE as the Greeks pronounce her name). "Nancy, will you edit the Sower?", "Nancy, will you organize a reception for the new Ambassador?", "Nancy, will you coordinate the Dance Under the Stars for 600 people?", "Nancy, will you manage the Board of Trustees visit and plan their schedules?"

Nancy's association with the School goes back to 1971. She was born and raised in Michigan, and later attended the University of Colorado where she took her degree in Sociology. After graduation she did research in child psychology in New Orleans, and worked for Levi Strauss in San Francisco. She spent a year travelling in India and Asia and then wound up in Greece, which captivated her. She stayed for a year teaching English and began working part time at the Farm School where she soon became Executive Secretary to the Director.

After two years in Greece, she returned to the U.S. where she became Co-director of the Office of the Trustees in N.Y.C. When the School decided to expand its fund raising activities in Greece, she returned in 1979 as Director of Public Relations and the only woman member of the 11 man Executive Committee. Since Nancy's return annual giving in Greece has increased from 6.5 million drachmas to more than 11 million drachmas.

Her multiple tasks as Public Relations Director have ranged from being official photographer to writing brochures, newsletters, and letters of appeal. Besides coordinating the visits of myriads of Farm School guests, she has constantly sought out new sources of support and called on donors.

Nancy's cheerful smile and easy going manner have assured her a warm welcome wherever she has gone. Her friendly disposition inspired one friend to remark, "She's as comfortable as an old shoe. We're really going to miss her." Good luck to you, Nancy, in your new pursuits.

ERRATA

The following contributors were not listed or were incorrectly cited in our 1983 Annual Fund Donor Recognition List. We thank them for their generous support and apologize for the oversight.

Dr. and Mrs. Edmund L. Keeley
Mr. and Mrs. S. Basil Paras
Mrs. Gordon S. Rentschler
Mrs. Louis Sloss

COVER:

Top: Jeff Lansdale, GS '83 Director, and Dimitri "Jimmy" Pandazis, Senior Staff, at the work site in Nea Gonia.

Bottom: Travis, GS '83's beloved mascot.

Greek Summer 1983: Thoughts of a Parent

by Wayne G. Douglas

As we drove to JFK for the Greek Summer departure, there was a lot of fear in the car, more than just Dido's chronic apprehension about flying. Her mood moved along a continuum from excited and nervous ("I don't remember packing the traveller's checks.") to nervous and scared ("Why am I going to a country where I can't even read the alphabet?") to near despair ("Six weeks — the whole summer's shot!"). There were parental qualms as well. On the way home, my husband and I agreed that we couldn't expect the miracle predicted by experienced parents. We'd be content if it were just an OK summer for Dido; after all, six weeks is a pretty long time.

As it turned out, the traveller's checks were never seen again, but we were wrong to worry about anything else. The miracle happened; we welcomed home a child simultaneously starry-eyed and filled with a new assurance about herself and the world. Greek Summer was the outstanding experience of her life, such a stunning success as to make me ponder the how's and why's of it.

The kids seemed to experience their summer on three different levels. First, the group: the wary strangers of June returned in August melded into a single caring, giving whole, pavers and leaders alike. Second, Greece, where they encountered a classical past and a rural present equally unfamiliar to teenagers from the U.S. and where they participated in the lives and culture of a magnificent people. Finally, the Farm School, which caught them up in an enterprise transcending individuals and nations, where they were greeted with a legacy of good will and the responsibility of handing it on.

People, place, project — each played a role, but the sum was more than the parts. Somehow, the Lansdales knit the strands together to bring alive so much that parents want their children to value. Dido shared every word of Bruce Lansdale's "Metamorphosis" talk, some fourteen typed pages. I listened in wonder; our own efforts to say similar things are met with jaded groans, and yet, here it was, coming back to me, dynamic, deeply felt, a part of her for always. This was metamorphosis indeed, even unto my dictionary's expansion of the definition as a change "esp. brought about by or as if by supernatural means!"

The magic is not in the words, good as they are. Bruce's talk was a summing up of the real metamorphosis that had been ongoing throughout the summer. No one made a speech about world hunger, for instance. Instead, it was experienced one hot and hungry evening when three different dinners appeared by lots. For a very few, there was a banquet. A larger group got a dull subsistence meal. Finally, the majority was served water, rice and a small piece of bread. The ensuing uproar led to revelations about world peace as well as world hunger.

The same creativity illuminated every activity of the summer. The challenge of hard physical work — in the village, at the Farm School, on Mt. Olympus — exacted a commitment. The commitment becomes, joyfully, a gift of self, and the giver finds that the more she gives, the more she has. It is the genius of the Lansdales and the Farm School, it seems to us, to offer this discovery to those who join them.

Farm Notes

This year's turkey project was a rousing success with 11,500 turkeys raised and sold for a profit of approximately \$65,000. For the first time this year the birds were packaged in newly designed plastic bags with a bright new gold, red and blue seal advertising the Farm School.



One of Greece's largest supermarket chains, Alpha Beta Vasilopoulos, owned by Mr. Gerry Vasilopoulos, honored the School by donating a week's worth of food for all 230 students including everything from roasting chickens right down to the salt and pepper. The kitchen staff, lead by head chef Theodoros Constantinides, prepared and served the delicious meals to grateful students.



If you visit the School and see the student olive grove, don't be alarmed to see the entire grove has been pruned way back to what appears to the uneducated eye to be bare stumps. This was done to actually rejuvenate the trees and increase their yield. Students took the opportunity to learn and practice the art of pruning as well as propagating olive branches.



Marketing is a skill taught during practical projects. Here Dimitrios Lampratsiotes, Apostolos Baniias and Ourania Konstantinidou prepare to sell cabbages grown in their student gardens.

Return to Polydendri

by Ned Rimer

As I travelled along the familiar road in Peter Custer's Land Rover, I was filled with the same excitement I had felt once before. Six years earlier I was nervously rehearsing the last verse of "Eis Ton Afro" with forty-three other Greek Summer participants, preparing for the opening presentation and first night in the village of Polydendri. I was alone this time and just as nervous. Although my Greek had improved since my last visit, I continued to remind myself that a smile was worth a thousand words.

I drove straight to my family's house. I had called the café in town two days earlier and left a message that I would be visiting. Would they remember me? I was greeted at the door by four unfamiliar faces. Was I at the wrong house? They seemed to know me. Within moments I was sitting at the table surrounded by four warm smiles and a heaping pile of watermelon slices. I felt right at home but where was my family? For a short while, my father returned from work. I helped him fill bags of grain for storage. Later my mother arrived from the hospital, where she had been under tests for a recent illness. It was great to be back and see them both. There were many hugs, "yassous," questions, and stories. I learned that my brother had joined the army and my sister had been married. We all sat down to



Two old friends.

a very generous lunch which lasted till mid afternoon.

My sister Avery, who was a Greek Summer participant the same summer, had lived with the family next door. After lunch I went to visit with them. They also shared many stories about the summer of 1977.

I later walked up to the village square, where I easily recalled raking top soil and planting grass seed. The square was beautiful; everything was as lush and green as I had imagined. Over at the café, a small group looked on as this stranger took pictures of their village center. I went over and introduced myself. The café owner came out, a face I had not forgotten. I explained that I had been there six years earlier with a group from the American Farm School. Smiles, hugs, and a round of beers followed. The few patrons sitting in the shade gathered under one central tree. Everyone wanted to know about the other Americans, the ones who stayed with them. Pou enai Michaeli? Pou enai Petro? Pou enai Annie?

A few more people arrived at the café. One new face I remembered well. Six years ago, with only ten yards to go on the cement road, a large scale water fight broke out. The primary recipient of water had been this young man. When I introduced myself, he suddenly recalled the very same incident and went on to tell the story to all who had gathered. Everyone began to laugh. He ordered me a beer and began to share other memories of that summer.

Sitting at the café, the cement road looked very much the same as it had the night of our final farewell. It was still decorated with chicken foot-prints and initials. A few new buildings had been built in the center of town. There was a new community center and a new café. Many of the young children had grown up and left the village. It was quieter but just as beautiful.

I finally had to bid farewell. The entire village had welcomed me back as though I had never left. The smiles, warmth, and hospitality were as grand as ever. As I drove off in Custer's Land Rover, I was struck with a feeling I had felt once before.

I will return someday.



The road that GS '77 built.

SOWER

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