

P, 48

AMERICAN FARM SCHOOL • THESSALONICA, GREECE

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News-Letter

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MRS. CHARLES L. HOUSE, WIFE OF THE DIRECTOR, WRITES OF ACTIVITIES AT THE SCHOOL, AND GIVES SOME VIGNETTES OF LIFE IN GREECE TODAY.

June 18 - Our new irrigation system has been working for about a week, and is arousing lots of interest among the farmers of the region.

June 25 - Concrete for the foundations of two new silos was poured this week. Charlie is pushing the work hard, for they must be completed in time for the silage.

July 2 - The Ministry of Agriculture has decided to extend the Tractor Training course for another six weeks, and the boys are doing a lot of tractor plowing.

July 11 - We got back from the island of Thasus late Saturday. The villagers live by fishing and raising olives, and it's surprising to see how little the people can get along on. The little Miss Despina, who had a "cafeneon" at the edge of the village, did not have enough knives, forks, spoons and dishes for our party of six. We provided the food and she did the cooking with one small pan and a few sticks of wood.

July 17 - I must tell you a nice story. Charlie and the carpenter in our neighboring village of Sedes are good pals, both enjoying nothing better than figuring out ways of making things out of odds and ends, but Charlie says that carpenter can beat him completely. Here's a sample of his ingenuity. He had made himself a band saw, but he had no belt. A belt would cost 400,000 Drs. He had no money, but he had a donkey worth only 100,000 Drs. He therefore killed his donkey, made belts from the skin, and with his machine and belt he has now made more than 400,000 Drs., so he says his donkey is still working. The belts are stubborn, too, as the donkey was in life, for when the skin is dry the saw works all right, but when the weather is damp, the belts stretch, and he has no end of trouble!

July 30 - Charlie has been getting a terracing demonstration on the hill back of the dam under way. It's something he's wanted done for a long time, for the water always washes badly on that hill, and there are so many hills like it in this area that he was anxious for the farmers to see how to terrace properly.

Sept. 17 - Another group of young men from widely scattered sections of Greece are here for training in the installation of canning equipment and its operation. They are from Rhodes, Crete, Corfu, Mytilini, Sparta and other towns in the Peloponesus, Thessaly and Thrace - quite a representative group. The regular school opens officially on September 26, and classes being on the 28th.

Oct. 5 - Bruce and Mike are hard at work. (Note: Bruce M. Lansdale of Rochester, New York, son of one of our Trustees, who did graduate work at Cornell last year, and Edmund L. Keeley ("Mike"), son of the U. S. Minister to Syria, who graduated from Princeton last June, received awards under the Fulbright Act to teach science and English at the School this year.)

Charlie and I are going to drive to Lamia for the weekend - two thirds of the way to Athens. The road has been closed to civilians for some two years because of guerrilla activity in the mountains, but now it's declared safe to go without a convoy. There is to be a special demonstration of irrigation and rice growing under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture and ECA - Walter Packard's project.

Oct. 14 - Bruce is working with the seniors at present, laying out the plumbing connections for the school laundry which needed an overhauling, giving them the problem of figuring the best layout and then doing the job. He has given them for their study assignment the drawing of plans for piping their own homes for water.

Our trip to Lamia was a great success. There were addresses in Greek and English about the work being done by the Mechanical Cultivation Services of the Ministry of Agriculture in conjunction with ECA; then we proceeded to the village of Anthili, five miles distant, and watched the draining of large areas of swamp and the harvesting of most lush fields of rice, growing on fields which six months ago were like the swampy areas across the road where nothing worth while can grow. It is hoped that in another year, many more acres of this swamp land can be reclaimed. The village entertained us with Greek peasant dances and rice dinner, and after more speeches by officials, the president of the village got up and said that the village had decided, in appreciation of Walter Packard's efforts in their behalf, to name after him the road from the village to the rice fields.

We made the trip back in one day, in spite of being slowed up by a later start than planned (because a mine sweeper is supposed to precede traffic), and dense fog over the Kastania Pass. The trip made me think of one taken on our return to Greece after the war. Bridges are again blown out as they were then; between Elisona and Servia village we had to make 9 detours across river beds, due to destroyed bridges; and in two miles of road I counted 19 places where mines had blown up the road, sometimes half of it gone, which meant we had to drive slowly. But it is good to know that road communications between Salonica and Athens are again open.

Oct. 22 - Never have I known greater enthusiasm for athletics. Mike is out with the boys every afternoon playing football, basket ball and volley ball.

Oct. 29 - The King and Queen came up to Salonica on Tuesday, the 26th, for the celebration of St. Demetrius' Day; St. Demetrius is the patron Saint of Salonica. Charlie and I attended a gathering at the University Farm at which the Queen was present to inspect a boys' camp (refugees and orphans). Nicola Orphanides, a Farm School graduate who is now employed by the Agricultural Bank, was there, and we were together as we watched the children parade past the guests, and he remarked, "I was a little refugee boy like these, when the Farm School took me, and I often wonder what would have happened to me if I had not been cared for at the School."

At the rice festival at Kynikia last Sunday we had talks with a number of our graduates, both regular and from the special courses. The boys were working for the Land Reclamation Department of the Ministry of Agriculture as tractor drivers and operators of various machines for ditching and grading the fields. One is assistant engineer in charge of reclaiming the swamp land belonging to one of the villages.

That evening Bernard Wyckoff, who had gone with us to the rice festival and had seen our boys, spoke at the evening service. He spoke of how Walter Packard had come over here with a vision of what could be done to make waste lands productive; that Father House and Charlie had come with a vision of ways of training boys to make their poor lands richer; there, at the rice festival at Kynikia, through our boys, the two were brought together and the circle completed.

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The work of the AMERICAN FARM SCHOOL is made possible by contributions from its friends. It is badly in need of funds. Will you not help us by contributing to it (if you have not already done so this year), and by sending us the names and addresses of others who might be interested?