

New York office: 45 East 65th Street, New York 21, N.Y.

News-Letter

March 1956

AN OPEN LETTER FROM CHARLES AND ANN HOUSE:
After their long years of service, we are happy to welcome into our midst, and to continued activity, Dr. and Mrs. Charles L. House. Better than anyone else they can tell us of their confidence in Mr. and Mrs. Bruce M. Lansdale to whom they gave over the direction of the American Farm School when they retired last spring.

SALUTE TO BRUCE AND TAD LANSDALE: To present our principals in the drama today we have to review briefly the factors that have led us to give over the direction of the Farm School, not only with confidence in the practical management, but with abiding affection as Bruce and Tad set their steps towards the great future.

Bruce's career at the Farm School began at less than a year of age. His father had been appointed general secretary of the Y.M.C.A. in Greece and the family settled down very near to the School. A frequent visitor, he learned the virtues of American Farm School milk, rode on the backs of the cows or in a donkey cart and always with the lads from the School as his companions. Thus, he soon became completely bi-lingual.

As High School age approached, Bruce's father was transferred to Rochester, New York whither the family moved but our friendship had become well established, and so whenever we went home a visit to the Lansdale family became traditional. Four years at Rochester University followed the preparatory school and he completed his course in Mechanical Engineering in the Naval Unit.

Early in 1946, Greece was preparing for her first election after the War, and because of his knowledge of the Greek language, Bruce was assigned by the Navy to serve with the Allied Mission for Observing Greek elections. He returned to America in April when the Mission had completed



Three generations of Lansdales

its mission, but was asked to come to Greece again during the summer with a group to observe the Plebiscite for the return of King George II to the throne.

He was stationed in the Peloponnesus about as far from the Farm School as he could be in Greece; it was not easy to get to the scene of his childhood memories, especially since the railroad was not yet running to the north of Greece and his duties did not afford him the necessary time. But when in Athens to submit reports he had a few hours at his disposal, and with characteristic resourcefulness, he went to the British Air Command and told them that he wanted very much to go to the Farm School and asked if they could fly him up there for a couple of hours. How R.A.F. regulations included such a mission must, I think, be ascribed to the persuasiveness of Bruce Lansdale, rather than the foresight of the British R.A.F. Perhaps Prov-

idence had a hand in it, too. In any event so it was that on August 17, 1946, quite unannounced Bruce and a young British pilot appeared at the Farm School about lunch time. It may be that this brief visit of two or three hours was the turn in the road he took towards the Directorship of the Farm School.

During the German occupation, the School equipment was scattered and lost and when the German army evacuated, James Hall the classroom building was blown up by a demolition squad, so the reopening of the school entailed an endless number of needs at a time when supplies of all sorts were lacking and prices prohibitive. In the School shops the staff provided many of the essentials but materials and skill for making mattresses did not exist and the cost in Greece of the three hundred mattresses needed would have been about \$10,000. These difficulties must have impressed Bruce during his brief visit for when he returned to Rochester for the gay Christmas holidays, the idea struck him that he and other young men would be spending a considerable amount on flowers for their partners at the Christmas dances. He talked with some of his friends. This resulted in the girls making up tiny corsages, tied with ribbon of the Greek colors; the boys bought them for the price of orchids; parents and others who heard of the project over the radio and through the local press became interested. The result: \$800 for the 300 new mattresses needed for the Farm School.

After completing his service in the Navy Bruce decided that before getting a job in America, he would volunteer his services to the Farm School and he came out to Salonica in March 1947. He threw himself into the life of the School and its mission and felt the call, but also the need for further preparation to respond to it. He returned to America to get the necessary training he felt he needed. He studied at the University of Rochester and the College of Agriculture at Cornell University, where he received his Master's degree in rural sociology. It was at this time, too, that he married Elizabeth Krihak whom he had known in former days at the University of Rochester.

In September 1949, he returned to Greece

with his bride, as Assistant Director of the School. Thus Bruce Lansdale has been in training for the Directorship of the School for more than eight years. He comes to the work equipped with an excellent knowledge of the Greek language. He knows the Greek people; he understands their problems and their country; he loves the Greek people and Greece. His wife shares his enthusiasm and has become fluent in the language. They have a family of three children, two of whom were born in Greece. All these qualifications are rare but to us who have passed over the reins to them, they seem secondary to the fact that two young people are prepared to dedicate their lives to the ideals and spiritual progress of the School and to maintain and lead forward all its worthwhile traditions of Christian community life, with perseverance and enthusiasm, in the face of heavy burdens and difficulties.

Charles and Ann House

THE LANSDALES GO CALLING: Late in December Bruce and Tad started out to visit some of their boys on vacation in their homes. "Travelling through country ravaged by years of war and occupation and more recently by earthquake and flood, we met the backbone of the nation, the villager. Each boy, each home has its own story and its qualities of heroism.

We left the main paved road at Karditsa and travelled along on bumpy gravel. All about were rolling hills covered with a patchwork quilt in shades of green and brown showing the unbelievably small strips of land being cultivated. It was a clear sunny day and the warmth of the December sun felt good on our arms and shoulders. Through the open car windows we heard the melodious sheep bells resounding on the hillsides and it seemed as though spring was in the air. (We were lucky we went when we did for two days later the roads were blocked with a heavy snowfall.) After half an hour we turned off on a narrow dirt lane used mostly by carts and deeply rutted. We had serious doubts that the car could make it but we inched and bounced our way and five miles later we reached Daphnosphilia, "Cave of the Laurel", our first stop, its 120 mud and stone houses perched along a mountainside.

As soon as we stopped, the car was surrounded and greetings of welcome called out to us "Kalos orissete". Sotirios Kyriakou, a senior at the School greeted us with his parents, two sisters and three brothers. Their home consisted of three rooms: living room, bedroom and kitchen. At supper time as we partook of a magnificent meal of egg and lemon soup, a chicken killed in our honour, goat's milk cheese made by Mrs. Kyriakou and her own freshly baked bread, we listened to their individual war history, typical of so many others.

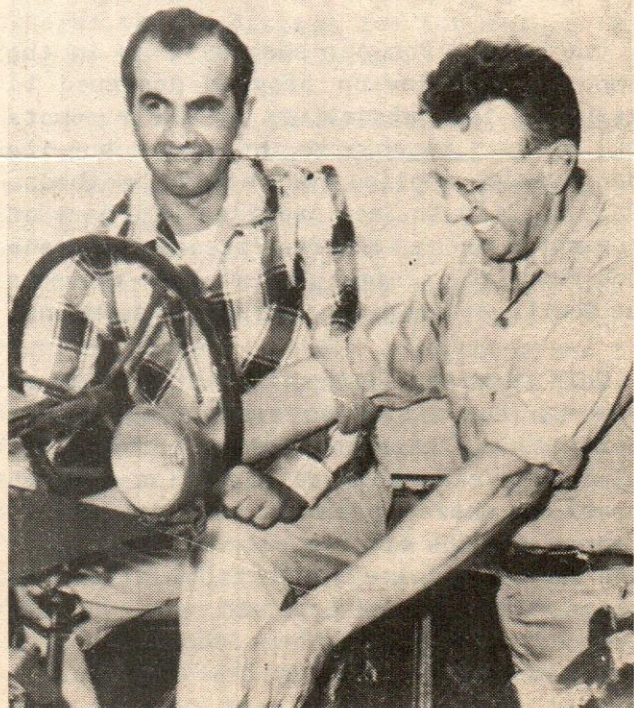
One December evening in 1942, they had looked out and seen a neighboring village below set aflame by the Germans. The families had left all their belongings gathered the children and ran up into the mountains, where they hid in stone caves and watched helplessly as their beloved Daphnosphilia went up in smoke. The next day they came down, salvaged what they could and erected shelters to stay alive, for how could they leave their fields, their permanent roots.

But in 1946, when the surrounding mountains were full of communist bands, it was no longer safe to stay and the family again left all their accumulations and went to Karditsa where they rented one room and lived for three years. Those were hard years, for what can a farmer with no land do? But long years of devastation have taught the Greeks resiliency and with an indomitable spirit they have returned to their fallow lands and begun anew.

The Kyriakou have more than average land, 30 acres for Thessaly is a relatively wealthy area, but theirs is broken into 10 separate plots and they must travel many miles to plant their wheat and care for their vineyards. They took us to their fields and proudly showed us the grapevines that Sotirios had planted, of American stock, originally imported to Greece by Father House, to replace the local variety which was easily destroyed by phylloxera. They took us into their barn and showed us how, although their village was without electricity, Sotirios has approximated current by rigging a switch near the door connected by two batteries, a

long wire and a flashlight bulb at the far end so that their lantern would no longer be a fire hazard. We were delighted to learn that the chickens from the Farm School were laying so well. We admired the outhouse that Sotirios and his brother had cleverly designed on a platform on the mountainside behind their house. We saw how the rest of the village was sloshing around in mud while all around the Kyriakou house there was a firm foundation of heavy rock which Sotirios and his brother had carried down from the mountain. We listened to their dreams of putting in irrigation systems, of purchasing farm machinery and of increasing their harvests by using better seeds and more fertilizer and we felt very proud to be a part of this vision.

Everywhere we went we found similar situations and it made us very humble to have those who had so little, give us so much. We were thankful that we had this opportunity for it drove home the true meaning of Christian love and hospitality. "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." Galatians:5:22. These are the qualities that we found in the so-called "backward" Greek villagers. And it is this spirit that we hope will inspire all of us throughout the coming year."



Nick Hadjimarkos and his host

NICK HADJIMARKOS, A FARM SCHOOL BOY—"AD LIB" AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES: Through the International Farm Youth Exchange program, Nick enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Neu of Hamersville, Ohio for several months. Mrs. Neu writes: "It was very difficult to give him up. It does not seem that a family could become so attached to anyone in so short a time, but Nick has a way about him and he came at a time when we had a great need of him. He is a great help to us."

HOW NICK FELT ABOUT US: "I am glad and happy that I could come to your country. I am very enthusiastic about the American people because they all work together in meetings, work and church. They believe in liberty like in my country. I will never forget this time when I live in your country. We believe that understanding is the basis on which we can build world peace and security."

MR. HENRY HOPE REED RETURNS FOR A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES: Mr. Reed brings us the welcome tidings that Bruce Lansdale is throwing himself into the work of the Farm School and getting recognition by both American and Greek communities in Greece. His most striking comment, however, is the role the Farm School assumes as a pilot project in the whole Middle East.

One reason for our success lies in the important follow-up program designed to keep the boys who return to their remote villages in touch with the School and its progressive applied agricultural methods. This ability to keep promises in a part of the world where too often pledges are made and then, for reasons good or bad, there is no fruition, has given us a unique standing.

This service requires the entire time of one man for distances are great; transportation is hazardous often and arduous always. These last difficulties present problems where, even in imagination, we cannot see the efforts entailed. Besides the matter of keeping this relationship alive between the boy and what he has learned through the Farm School there is a wonderful opportunity for our contact man to observe and suggest new entrants for the Farm School. From as far away as

Lebanon we have had a request from an agricultural school to send a teacher to learn our methods of teaching and integrating the work afterwards in the villages.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY GOES INTERNATIONAL: A group of 30 students from this University are going to Salonica this summer to engage in building a large staff house for the unmarried teachers and they will erect this Hall which will certainly represent much more than just stone and mortar. We wish them all the best of associations and the beginning of enduring friendships across the seas.

ONE GREEK TO HIS OWN COUNTRYMEN: ALEXANDER IOLAS, one of the most important of young gallery owners in New York, is showing for the first time in this country, the work of a brilliantly talented Greek sculptor, Polygnotos Vagis. The premiere will be a benefit for the American Farm School and donations will be received for the duration of the exhibition, during the month of March. This splendid generosity on the part of Mr. Iolas, who had not heard of the Farm School until recently proves again the spontaneous appeal that our School makes whenever its work becomes known. Prominent members of both the Greek and American communities are graciously giving their names as sponsors to help assure a successful affair. For those interested a March number of Life will feature an article about Polygnotos Vagis.

TO OUR FRIENDS - OLD AND NEW: This sturdy spirit of reciprocity, the result of long years of collaboration between the School and its faithful friends has achieved a well merited success. But without the abiding faith of one man, John Henry House, whose courage and love of his fellow man in desperate need of sympathy and understanding, this well spring of continuing Christian endeavor would never have been. Its small beginning, wrapped in the mysterious folds of Destiny is still emerging into a great and untold future.

YOUR PART, no small one, has been in the fidelity and support through thick and thin and we thank you once more for the firm bonds of lasting friendship.