

# AMERICAN FARM SCHOOL • THESSALONICA, GREECE

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## News-Letter

We here in the eastern United States knew, without the recent confirmation of newspaper stories, that it has been the longest and coldest winter in fifteen years. But in northern Greece, the unprecedented cold has shattered a fifty year record, according to word from Bruce Lansdale, Director of the American Farm School. We quote in part from his letter:

"The hardest hit by the cold wave were the mountain villages of northern Greece where transportation and communications were brought to a standstill.

"For one week it was impossible to move out of Salonica in any direction, which made it impossible to provide food and feed to the villages except by airplane drops. A majority of the villagers, which includes many parents of our students, were forced to feed their animals what food they had set aside for feeding themselves, so that they will be on pretty much of a starvation diet until they collect their harvest this summer. For awhile, fuel could not be purchased at all, or only at exorbitant rates.

"This is bound to leave many parents in such a position that it will be impossible for them to pay the third installment on fees due after Easter."

**ALL THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA AFFECTED:**  
According to an Associated Press dispatch, the severe cold in the Mediterranean area has caused serious damage to olive crops and we are warned there will be a shortage of olive oil this year. The world's supply will be reduced to an almost unprecedented low and prices have gone up. The UN FAO reports that prospects for a substantial increase next year are poor. No doubt this will affect many people in Greece as olives and olive oil are a major export and olives an important part of their diet.

**GIFTS TO THE FARM SCHOOL.** Through a good friend, Heifer Project, Inc., the Farm School has received gifts of a team of draft horses to be shipped from Germany

and a young Guernsey bull calf to be sent from the U. S. These practical gifts will be most welcome.



Meg, our ball collector and her master

**WORKING LIKE A DOG:** For some time now we've had a volunteer worker named "Meg". Meg is a handsome cocker spaniel - a female Robin Hood who seems to practice taking from the well-to-do and giving to the needy. Meg is an ardent tennis enthusiast, particularly interested in those high lobs out of bounds. On her walks with her master, Mr. John Samuels of New York City, Meg finds the lost balls and trots home with them. In the past four years this tiny cocker has located 1106 lost balls (including some baseballs). Mr. Samuels sends these balls to youth organizations all over the world and our Farm School in Greece has received 160 of them from 1953 to 1955.

A letter from the School, acknowledging Meg's contributions said - "It must seem rather strange to you that we can make use of old balls but there is very little in the way of games in Greek villages and Mr. Litsas has very cleverly made a number of games using bits of wood, old tin cans, balls and pieces of string which make very exciting games and the boys enjoy playing them by the hour. So, thanks to Meg."

**THE HIGH COST OF LIVING:** Most of us take for granted that the cost of living abroad is much lower than in the United States. A recent letter from Bruce Lansdale dispels any such erroneous idea. Here is what he says, in a letter written March 16, 1956:

"There are only a few limited items which are in any way cheaper in Greece than they are in the United States. These include servants in the house, a few vegetables and possibly meat. On the other hand, staples, such as coffee, sugar, tea and the like, are more expensive here than they are in the United States. Tad and I estimate that in our own home it costs us every bit as much to live in Greece as it did in the States, even tho we have our house rent free.

"This means that all of our staff are existing on a standard of living far below anyone in the United States.

"To help our staff obtain the most nutrition at the lowest possible cost, we have worked out a menu for the average family which includes meat for two meals a week, and providing that all the butter, milk and eggs are given only to the children, with the balance of the diet made up primarily of potatoes, vegetables in season, lentils, chick peas and dried beans."

Actually salaries in Greece are about 20% to 25% of salaries in the east-central part of the United States for a comparable job. Needless to say, it is difficult to exist on that amount, particularly now that inflation has increased the cost of everything in Greece.

Add to this the fact that teachers at the American Farm School live on the grounds so as to be always available. One can truthfully say that they are a dedicated group, on duty a good part of the day, from early morning until midnight.

In a survey made by Dr. Raymond Miller and Dr. Irwin Sanders at the School last year, they stated, as follows:

"The salary scale in terms of purchasing power is low in terms of what it was before World War II and in terms of the current expectations of the staff. It is not low in terms of what people in comparable positions in Greece receive, but many other Greeks accept double employment in order to meet minimum financial needs, an opportunity not open to most of the Farm School staff with their full schedules."

The Greek government this year ordered an increase of 15% in all salaries, to, in part, offset the significant increase in the cost of living. However, since American Farm School staff salaries now seem to be below average due to inflation, we hope to give a total, across the board increase of 35%.

Naturally, this adds considerably to our budget for operating expenses.



Lansdales Inspect Dairy Herd In Barn

Bruce and Tad Lansdale with the three small Lansdales inspect a part of the dairy herd. All the cattle are scientifically bred and cared for. The results are dra-

matically proved by the fact that the average yearly milk production of a Farm School cow averages 8000 pounds a year, whereas most Greek farmers get only 800 pounds a year from their cows.

#### A NEW FRIEND - MONTGOMERY BLAIR HIGH SCHOOL IN SILVER SPRINGS, MARYLAND:

The students of Montgomery Blair have pledged to support a Farm School boy through his four year course at college by underwriting a scholarship for \$425 a year. Mr. Lansdale will select a needy and deserving applicant to enter the School this coming fall.

Our sincere thanks to the students at Montgomery Blair for their interest and assistance. We hope that this may become a project for other schools in the United States to follow. It is one significant and worthwhile way for our students to express their friendship for the people of Greece and to enlarge the American student's sphere of interest. Too, it can stimulate the students' interest and knowledge of the country which has given us such a rich cultural heritage and democratic traditions - a country which has suffered so much from invaders and Civil War over the years.

FROM OUR MAIL BAG: Recently we received a wonderful letter from Clarence C. Abbott, a Cincinnati industrialist who is an official on the Cincinnati Committee. He and Mrs. Abbott recently returned from a visit to Greece and to the School. He said many complimentary things about the work of the School but commented particularly upon: (1) the calibre of the boys themselves; their courtesy, politeness and great enthusiasm for and interest in their duties at the School and (2) the capability and devotion of all those in charge, from Bruce Lansdale, the Director, through the many instructors who are "carrying on the work." He says "all are paid but a pittance and are happily devoting their lives to this valuable work, which in my estimation is among the most worthy being

conducted by Americans abroad anywhere in the world." Our friend concludes his letter by saying: "It is my impression that here in frequently invaded, harassed and oppressed Greece, with its lack of adequate facilities in the rural areas, the American Farm School is the best example of true Christianity at work that I have ever had the privilege to observe."



Farm School boys making cheese and yogurt

WHAT'S IN A GLASS OF MILK? Students at the School learn not only how to produce clean milk from good cows but various uses to which it can be put. Here, boys are packaging cottage cheese, goats' cheese, butter and yogurt. In the background are bottles with cream, butter milk and full cream Jersey milk from Farm School cows. These products are sold in Salonica for money which helps pay for the boys' educations. The milk bottles are a gift from Sigma Chi fraternity in New Jersey.

CORNELL STUDENTS GOING TO GREECE: 32 students from Cornell University are going to the American Farm School in Salonica this summer on a work project. Their purpose is to build a much-needed residence and conference center which will serve as a recreation hall for the staff as well as a meeting place for farmers and leaders from the Balkans and Near East. The boys must raise \$15,000 to cover building materials and expenses. To date they've received one generous contribution which will cover food and lodging for all of them for two months. They will pay their own transportation expenses. The remaining \$12,000 to be raised includes expenses

for administration and seminar leaders as well as the cost of the building materials. We very much hope that this project may become a permanent "Cornell in Greece" project similar to the famous "Yale in China" and other college undertakings in the Near and Far East.

#### SOME BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON OUR STAFF:

We've talked of our fine and loyal staff at Salonica in this issue. Perhaps a few biographical details might be in order. Our News Letter of May 1955 announced the appointment of Bruce Lansdale as Director and sketched his background briefly. Second in command to him is Theodore Litsas, Associate Director. He has been a member of the American Farm School staff since 1930.

Theo Litsas has brought to his job a varied background which has been of great value to the School. After completing his education at the International College and the English Commercial School in Smyrna, he supervised a refugee camp at Salonica, operated by the Red Cross in 1922 and 1923. Then he became a field worker for the Near East Relief, handling the care and relocation of children after the Turkish atrocities. From 1924 to 1929 he served with the Village Cooperative Organization, sponsored by the Society of Friends to assist newly settled refugees.

Throughout his career, since 1923, he has been active in organizing and developing the Boy Scout movement and since 1945 has been Commissioner for the Boy Scouts in Northern Greece. Between 1927 and 1936 he visited many European countries to attend youth movement conferences and International Boy Scout jamborees.

Mr. Litsas teaches some courses and is in charge of all administrative and recreational programs at the School. In 1951-52 he visited the United States for the first time under the State Department program for the exchange of persons. Now he is back in Salonica, putting in a long day and a long week on behalf of the Farm School.

Another long time member of our staff in Salonica is Demeter Hadjis who is now the new Director of Instruction of the American Farm School. Demeter joined the staff in 1931 after graduating from the American Farm School and attending Cornell University. He came back to America a second time in 1951 to take a general study refresher course in agricultural education at Cornell.

#### RECENT POLITICAL SITUATION IN GREECE:

From Bruce Lansdale: "There has been much concern expressed in the American press about the gains for communism in Greece. In the villages, representing about 65% of the population there was no such indication. Neither is there any anti-American feeling other than a disagreement with our State Department's point of view on Cyprus.

"The farmers of Greece are 100% behind us. They have seen communism at work and know what it means. But they are looking to the West for help and guidance on how to improve their living conditions so there will be no danger of communism. This now becomes our responsibility. We must give them that vision and training for which they ask. We have the confidence of those who know Greece and the School. We must now look to the future with faith in God and a willingness to work with whatever means we have to carry on the responsibility which has been entrusted to us."

A WORD TO OUR GOOD FRIENDS: We should like to express our gratitude for your support in the past. Now, when there is such need in Greece, we hope we may count on your generosity to help support our boys. We are in need of about fifty scholarships at \$425 each and must raise additional funds to meet the increase in teachers' salaries. As you can see, our yearly budget will be greatly increased this year. Therefore, every dollar helps.

Our sincere thanks in advance for anything you or your friends can do to help. If you wish this News Letter to go to any friends, please send us their names and addresses.