

SOWER



American
Farm School

Thessaloniki
Greece

Fall 1981

Number 105



School Opens

On September 21 cars, small pick-ups and taxis passed through the gates of the American Farm School carrying parents, luggage and most importantly the incoming students for the 1981-82 school year.

Fifty girls moved into the new Costa Zannas Dormitory Wing, and 150 boys settled into the older, more familiar dormitory.

That afternoon Director Bruce Lansdale and his wife Tad greeted the parents of the first year students at their home where he described the philosophy and the goals of the American Farm School to the parents.

The following morning Father David blessed the School in a ceremony which the entire student body and staff attended. Soon after, with pencils sharpened, books opened and hoes and shovels made ready for gardening, school began.



Left to right: Makris George, Liz Holdeman, Viris Demetrios, Milonas Nicos.

Art: Life Drawing

The corner room of Princeton Hall overlooking the athletic field is in a state of transformation. The unused room is now becoming the Art Center on the Farm School campus. The looms from the Girls' School have been resurrected and drawing tables set up. Liz Holdeman, a graduate of Colorado State University at Fort Collins with a B.A. in Art Education came to the Farm School this Fall to work in the dormitories with the students and to develop an Art program. She conducts classes on Saturday mornings which feature drawing, painting and weaving. In cooperation with Liz, Christine Lansdale, a graduate of U.C. Santa Cruz in ceramics, teaches pottery. Liz astutely comments, "The word for art in Greek is *zographiki*. When translated literally it means "life drawing." Liz will be available in the Art Center every day of the week to encourage and guide the students in their new endeavor.



Ceramics is being offered as part of the weekend extracurricular program and is being taught by Christine Lansdale.

Honey Anyone

During the Fall, the resident bees at the Farm School produce honey from the pine trees. It is a dark, rich, delicious variety. As another endeavor in continuing education, the Farm School features a Friday afternoon course in bee keeping. Vladimiros Dermatopoulos teaches the course with his assistant Panos Misirlis, a 1980 graduate of the Farm School who studied bee keeping at the University of California at Davis last year. To ensure that the bees continue to produce tasty honey and that the hives are maintained properly Panos works closely with the students on the practical methods of bee keeping. The Farm School bees receive gentle and conscientious care.



Panos Misirlis heads the beekeeping club.

Cover Photo:
Opening of School. Tad Lansdale greets Fotis Hionides and his daughter (to his right) Rebecca. Fotis is one of the School's nightwatchmen who comes from a nearby village.

Life with Charlie

By Ann House

Charles House was the School's second director and a member of the Class of '09 at Princeton University. This is an excerpt from an article published in the October 5, 1981 Princeton Alumni Weekly.

When I married Charlie House in 1923, I knew I was taking on an extended family that would include the American Farm School, founded by his father . . .

I had been teaching at the Ethical Culture School in New York since graduation from Mount Holyoke in 1912. They had wanted a "greenhorn" who would have no preconceived ideas. Five of us worked in the "open-air department," which meant we taught on the roof of the five-story building at 63rd Street and Central Park West. There were high brick walls surrounding the roof, and part of the area was covered. The theory was that fresh air would benefit those children who were prone to tuberculosis, which was prevalent then. In fact, we ended up with a lot of obstreperous students, whom other teachers decided would do better outside their classrooms. In spite of the covering, there were days when it rained in and mornings when the desks had to be cleared of snow. I loved it . . .

The following year I had a sabbatical and decided to take a master's degree at Columbia Teachers College. Florence House taught there and I took every course she gave. We soon became friends. I had one evening class and on those nights I would have dinner with her at the Faculty Club. She told me about her brother Charles, who lived in Greece but was visiting the States. She said she had invited him to join us for dinner . . . but it was several weeks before he did . . . We did seem to get on well together, and I learned about the Farm School . . .

Charlie wasn't going to be in the States for long. A Bible Lands Mission in England was going to donate livestock to the school, and he had to accompany the shipment. Before he left, he took me to Princeton; he also asked me to marry him. I was attracted to Charlie but told him I didn't think we knew each other well enough. I was happy in my work and the thought of being uprooted scared me.

Charlie and I did have things in common, one being pacifism. He was a pugnacious individual, but he thought no good could come of war. I'm sure it had to do with his growing up in Macedonia,

which was called "the storm center of Europe." Father House had seen over 30 wars and revolutions in his day, as the Bulgarians, Turks, Greeks, and Serbs fought for the land. Those early memories must have influenced him to become a conscientious objector before the U.S. got into World War I. It caused a rift with his older brother and with many of his friends. By the time conscription began he had decided to register and do anything short of bearing arms. Fortunately, he flunked the physical, and he seemed to see in that a "call" to go back to Greece and be groomed to take over his father's school . . .

He certainly didn't like to write, and he was a terrible speller. Yet when he left the States after we met, he wrote to me every night. I still love to read those letters. He didn't spare himself or me in them, giving me an accurate picture of the situation in Thessaloniki. It was desperate. Over a million refugees had fled from Turkey into Greece. He described how they followed him around begging for work and how impotent he felt.

Before the year was out, I decided to go to Greece. Charlie thought we could all get better acquainted if we were not at the school, so I sailed to the island of Corfu to meet him, his parents, and his sister Ruth who lived with them. In spite of the fact that war broke out between Italy and Greece and the harbor was bombarded, we had a wonderful two weeks. Then I suddenly got dreadfully ill with what was later diagnosed as a ruptured appendix and peritonitis. I did not have surgery; I just got better. But it was four months before I was able to leave Corfu. Mother and Father House left to open the school. Because of the war we were unable to find a nurse, so Ruth and Charlie cared for me. That's when I really did get to know and love Charlie . . .

We ran the school for 32 years with one major interruption during World War II. The Germans occupied Greece in April 1941, and though we were restricted we managed much as usual. But when Hitler declared war on America on December 11, we were arrested within the hour. We were imprisoned in Thessaloniki and the Germans occupied the school. In March we were allowed to return to the school, but we were kept under house arrest. Then in November of 1942, we were deported to Germany. We spent one week jammed into a third-class



Ann and Charlie House

compartment on a crowded train. I broke out in shingles. Charlie was sent to a place in upper Bavaria, and I went to a convent in Wurtenburg. The nuns there ran a home for the insane and feeble-minded. I remember a nun showing me to the dormitory the first day and cautioning me to remember that my door was to the left. "The one on the right is where all the 'loonies' are," she said. We later learned that a lot of these inmates had been liquidated in order to make room for us.

When at last an exchange of prisoners was arranged, we sailed from Lisbon to the States . . .

Though there were no students during our absence from the school, the Greek staff kept it going. The Germans needed produce, so they allowed the farm to be worked. They let the staff keep "cracked" eggs, we later learned, and there was a surprising number that fell into that category.

We returned to Greece in September of 1945, and by the end of October we had our first students. That year also saw the arrival of our first female students, something Mother House had always wanted. We stayed on for the next 10 years and Charlie oversaw the rebuilding. We made several trips back to the States, one in 1959 when Charlie received the Woodrow Wilson Award — one of the proudest moments in his life.

Charlie died in 1961. Since our retirement we had been living in Orient, Long Island, but we had just returned from a wonderful year at the Farm School. When Father House showed his wife the 53 acres of parched land he had purchased in 1902, she asked, "Whoever will you get to live in this place?" And he replied, "You, my dear." Today there are several hundred students working 400 acres of productive farm land under the leadership of the school's third director, Bruce Lansdale.

I have been back to visit and still correspond with many of our former students and teachers. I'm happily settled at Meadow Lakes in Hightstown, New Jersey (again with a little help from '09), glad to be near the university, close to old friends, and handy for reunions.

The New Library

For over nine months Margaret Samiotti and Ninetta Massarano worked on a project in the basement of the new Costas Zannas Dormitory Wing. Although they did not work with cement, animals or farm machinery, their labor was vital to the Farm School. They are librarians. They lugged over 3,000 volumes from the Academic Building, James Hall, across the campus to the new library, a spacious, sunlit basement room overlooking the Theo Litsas Athletic Fields. All the books are now card catalogued and neatly stacked on shelves.

When construction began on the new Zannas Wing of the dormitory, Associate Director Andoni Stambolidis felt the basement area was the ideal place for the School to house its new library. He contacted Margaret Samiotti, a Masters graduate in Library Science from the University of Northern Colorado, one of a handful of formally trained librarians in Greece to come and set up the library and to train an assistant, Ninetta Massarano. In mid-June, after the library was established, Margaret took a highly sought after position in the Greek Government and has been succeeded by Ninetta.

Ninetta explains, "The School envisions the library as a resource center for the students and staff as well as a visual center where the teachers can bring the students to show them, visually, the concepts

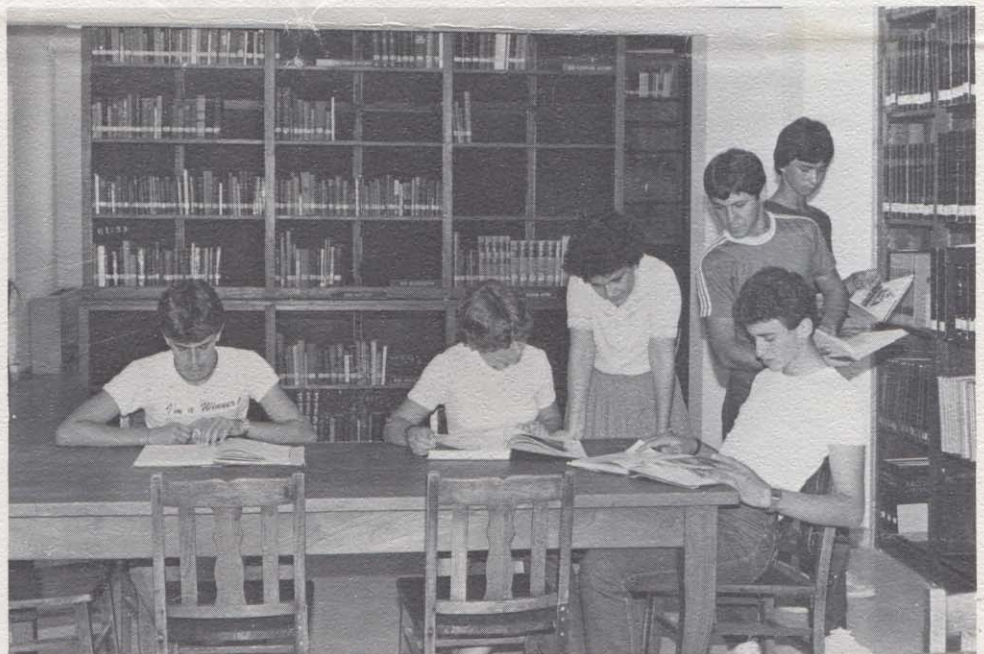
they are discussing in class." The resource center is now set up and the media center is in the process of development.

The library is composed of 3,000 volumes, many of which were gifts from American friends of the School years ago; most are written in English and are now outdated. Ninetta stresses, "To attract the students we need to improve the Greek library. We need current encyclopedias, dictionaries, agricultural texts, fiction, and regular subscriptions to magazines. We also

need reference books so that teachers can come to the library and order books they need by using our reference library."

Ninetta is very pleased that the library received its first donation this summer: "It will help us to meet some of the basic needs. With our limited budget it is very exciting to have additional funds to work with!"

With the opening of School, students have meandered in and out of the library sometimes finding what they need. The library's goal is to meet all their needs.



Left to right: Panayiotis Palaontas, Evdokia Paralikidou, Ninetta Massarano (Librarian), Charalambos Tombazides, Sotirios Panaylotides, Christos Moulasiotis.

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