

# International travel gives Lancaster IFYE a broader perspective

BY SALLY BAIR

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QUARRYVILLE — When Jody Henkel returned from her six-month visit to Greece as part of the International 4-H Youth Exchange program, she brought with her a broader perspective of the world around her enriched by experiencing another way of life.

Jody lived with five families in Greece and spent a lot of time at the American Farm School, located near Thessalonike in northern Greece. A former 4-H'er from Lancaster County, Jody is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Henkel, Quarryville.

Farming was definitely different from that done in Lancaster County. In Greece the families live in villages, with their land in parcels in the surrounding countryside. Because the average farmer owns only 10 acres, and because of the terrain, most of the farm work is done by hand labor.

At first, Jody admits that she was surprised by the methods being taught at the Farm School, but as soon as she began her home stays she realized that they were teaching what was necessary for that part of Greece.

Tobacco was a crop which was familiar to her, but she found Greek tobacco was very different from Lancaster County's. She said, "They export most of their tobacco to the United States. It is mostly cigarette tobacco, and it was only hung in barns at one place."

Jody helped harvest some tobacco, and said that it was brought into the farms in baskets, then sewn together on a threading machine to make a long string. These strings of tobacco were then hung in plastic shade houses. She added, "It doesn't take long to dry."

Cotton, olives and grapes are other crops which require a lot of hand labor. Jody found that olive trees were literally several generations old, but limbs would be cut off to generate new shoots and to keep the trees short so harvesters could climb into them. She also found that olives from the trees were not edible, but require processing to become the familiar fruit we eat in this country. Green olives with pimentos were never eaten in Greece.

The most common farm equipment was tractors, plows and disc harrows, and Jody experienced planting cabbage from a machine. Harvesting of grain, sugar beets and corn is done mechanically.

There is fresh fruit in abundance in Greece and it plays a large part in the diet. Formerly Greeks were not allowed to import any fruits that could be grown there, so Jody said most fruit was eaten only during its growing season. With Greece's entry into the European Economic Community, that restriction may change. Because the government sets the price for fruits, homemakers look for quality, not price, when shopping. Jody said most fruits and vegetables were sold at open markets.

The climate was similar to Colorado where she went to school, with hot but dry summers and cool, rainy winters. The country is divided by mountains, and Jody stayed primarily on the Aegean Sea side of the country. Travel across the mountains is difficult and infrequent.

The American Farm School, where she began and concluded her six-month visit, was founded by missionaries under the Ottoman Empire. It now serves about 250 Greek students, about 25 of whom are girls. It is a two- or three-year vocational school, preparing students for the most part to return to their farms. Students range in age from 15 to 18.

Funding for the school is part American, part Greek and part private. The director is American and the staff is Greek. There are some students from European countries who visit and work there, and Jody worked along with these students, helping run the 400-acre farm. She said a major emphasis now is teaching machinery repair, so that villagers do not have to rely on repairmen who visit infrequently.

Jody found Greece to be very modern. Homes had large refrigerators, indoor bathrooms, stoves and other conveniences. She added, "Some homes had solar panels for hot water heaters."

Although women's roles are changing in Greece, women remain mostly in the homes. Jody



Jody, right, works along with one of her host mothers preparing peaches for canning. The peeling and the processing of the peaches was done out of doors.

said, "You don't see women working, although a few are actresses and on news programs on television." Being a woman traveling on her own did not cause Jody any problems because she was usually with her Greek families. "I always got respect because I was with a Greek family."

She said her light brown hair set her apart from other Greeks, because most of them have dark hair. Her blue eyes were not unusual, and she commented that babies often have blond hair before it turns dark.

Language also set her apart, because she did not know Greek before she left the United States. Throughout the course of her stay she said she picked up enough to be able to ask fundamental questions and to get around. She said young children were most helpful to her in learning the language because "Their vocabulary was at a simpler level."

English is not necessarily spoken in every family, and she found that German was frequently the second language. She pointed out, "They are very European oriented."

Greece is, indeed, part of Europe, but has had a long history of occupation by other countries. Jody lived in northern Greece, which was Turkish until 1913, when the Turks returned to their homeland, and the Greeks who had been living in Turkey were returned to Greece. This occupation accounts to some extent for the small land holdings.

During World War II, Greece successfully fought invasion by Italy, but subsequently was occupied by Germany. Some real hardships were felt during that period of time.

It is this history of intervention that accounts for some of the reserve Jody felt among her Greek host families. She said, "It is part of their hospitality creed that strangers who came into their villages must be welcomed. In fact, they insisted on paying for everything." Sometimes they even wanted to pay for stamps for the letters she was writing home.

Another part of their creed or gracious hospitality was that visitors should not work, and that caused her some concern because part of being an IFYE is to work along with the host families. She overcame their objection by showing that she sincerely wanted to work. She states definitely, "I was welcomed."

Most of the families were ex-



Jody points out the location of the American Farm School in northern Greece where she began and concluded her stay as an IFYE to that country.

tended, with numerous relatives living together or in close proximity. Entire villages seemed to be related, and she found just one of her five families locked the doors of their home. She learned, too, that everyone is solicitous of children, and she pointed out, "Child crimes are not as big in Greece as they are here."

Her hosts were very eager to have her eat a lot, and she said, "We ate all day long." Coffee is drunk "all the time," Jody remarked, adding that it was served in a demitasse cup and was very thick Greek coffee. She explained that the coffee was always

ground fresh and very finely. A tiny pot was filled with water, then the finely ground coffee and sugar was added and it was heated over a campfire type heater until it boiled. The result was a very thick liquid which was served from the demitasse cup, where a residue always remained after drinking. Coffee played an important role in socializing, but not for breakfast.

Breakfast was a light meal of bread and warm milk, Jody recalled. There was a cooked meal served in early afternoon, and another large meal served at 10 or 11 p.m.

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One of Jody's host aunts works with pita dough in the kitchen. Most of the Greek families were extended ones, with many relatives living in close proximity.

## Homestead Notes