FRIENDSHIP THROUGH UNDERSTANDING

by BARBARA FOSTER

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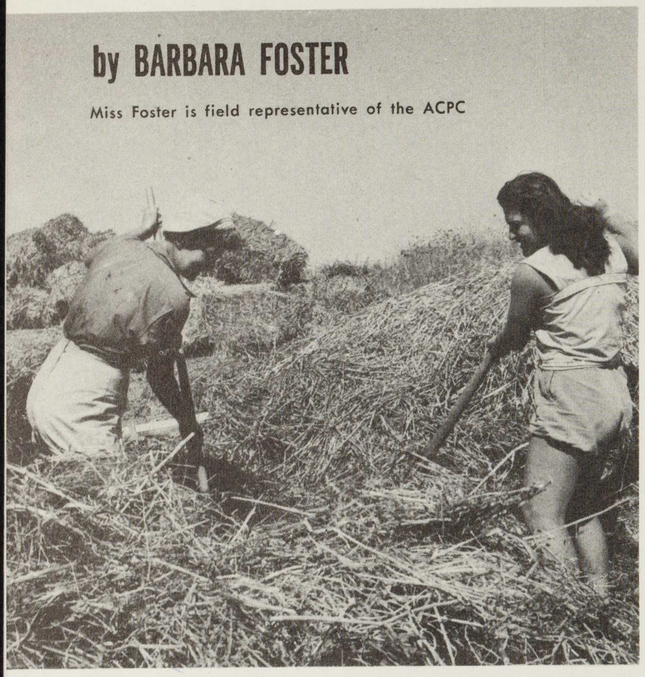

Peggy Dail of Illinois and 21 year old Talma Libraider pitch fodder on the Libraider farm in Kfar Warburg, where Peggy spent three weeks.

THROUGH the open door a milling crowd of young people seemed to fill the room. Was this some United Nations Youth Conference? In one corner, a boy dressed in Scotch kilts talked to a girl wearing a Norwegian sweater while in another corner a boy with a Tunisian cap compared pictures with a boy attired in the shorts, blouse, and tan of an Israeli sabra. No, this was no UN meeting; but the re-evaluation session of the International Farm Youth Exchange. After spending four months in various countries, these American young people had acquired many of the outer characteristics of the natives of those countries.

The International Farm Youth Exchange is a project for selected farm youths from the United States to live and work with farm families in other countries, and for foreign youths to come to the United States to live and work on farms here.

The project is dedicated to the belief that *understanding is the foundation of world peace.* By giving farm youth an opportunity to learn another way of life by living it, the project helps rural young people understand the problems and attitudes of rural people in other parts of the world.

When the delegates return they "share" their experiences with youth groups, rural organizations, civic clubs, and others in their own area. The program in the United States is conducted by the National 4H Club Foundation and the Cooperative Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Land grant Colleges; also co-operating are the Department of State, the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, and many other groups. Twenty-three countries participated with the United States in the 1952 exchange.

Twenty-five of these young people this year spent four months in various countries of the Middle East including Turkey, Greece, Lebanon-Syria, Israel, and Tunisia.

Typical of these groups were the five who visited Israel. Coming from such diversified states as Washington, Kentucky, New York, West Virginia, and Illinois, these three girls and two boys, all with experience of living and working on farms, had been active in their local 4H Clubs. In Israel, they spent several weeks on each type of co-operative farm—Kibbutz, Moshav, Moshav Shitufi, Moshava. As the Kibbutzim, they found out what it is like to live where property is owned and used in common. At the Moshav, they saw each family with its own possessions, barn and house, working for the joint community enterprise. A Moshav Shitufi differs from these by having collective ownership, like the Kibbutz, but each family works to maintain itself, which is not true of the former. The Moshava reminded the visitors of rural villages at home, with private ownership and private property.

All these differing methods of rural organization were studied with interest by the participants, who were well aware of Israel's urgent problems of land reclamation and absorption of immigrants. They worked along with the members of the settlements, lived with families, and shared not only their food but their problems as well.

In commenting on their experiences, Jean Smith of Manlius, New York, one of the group who visited Israel, wrote in a letter home "I feel very much at home at Moledeth. I think they liked us because, when we left, the family with which Arthur of the State of Washington had stayed said they felt as though part of their own family were leaving. All our 'families' came to say goodbye even though we left during the day. I guess we all said goodbye with lumps in our throats."

Jewell Deine Ellis of Kentucky reads a letter from home to the Karmiel family with whom she stayed in Israel.

GRASS IN JORDAN

GRASS—one hundred acres of it—is sprouting in the desert near Amman, Jordan. The grass is the result of a United States Point Four technical assistance project, designed to show the Arabs how some of their barren desert land may be made productive. The method, called water-spreading, is based on the principle of storing in the ground rain which would ordinarily run off its surface. For centuries, these deserts have been barren and unproductive; the Point Four project shows how sporadic rains of the region can support vegetation if utilized.

It is estimated that between four and five hundred thousand acres of land in Jordan alone are suitable for water-spreading. The development of these lands would greatly affect the economy of the nation. Not only would it provide work during construction, but more people could be supported through the increased productivity of the lands. The income from the lands would also strengthen the entire economy of the nation. Other Arab states have shown great interest in the project; Egypt has already asked the American expert in charge, Norman H. French, of Casper, Wyoming, to come to that country.

According to Tracy R. Welling, Point Four director in Jordan, water-spreading may provide "an era of development of the Arab world." Most of the deserts, he said, are free from rocks and would be fertile if they had water. "Water-spreading systems," he commented, "are especially practical because they are inexpensive—about thirteen dollars an acre—and because they can be constructed by the Arabs themselves. That is Point Four's aim—to help people help themselves."

The construction of a water-spreading system involves two steps: (1) the building of a ditch to divert rainfall from its customary drain-off gully, and (2) the construction of a series of earth dikes to hold the water long enough so that it may sink into the ground. A cloudburst thereby is directed into the ground instead of being permitted to run off the surface. The flow hits the first dike and is held there until enough water collects to run out the ends to the next one, and then again to the next, on down the slope.

The demonstration system, constructed by Point Four experts last August, collected over four feet of water in this way from one cloudburst. Within a week the water was all absorbed, and a test showed the earth to be saturated to a depth of five feet. Tests of other land where the rain had fallen showed that earth to be dry again.

Grass began to grow in December. The Jordan government called out the Arab Legion to guard the area and protect it from grazing. As the grass grew taller, amazed visitors predicted it would soon run out of moisture and die. However, the grass, now eight inches tall, continues to grow.