# the Last Inch

Macedonia and the Struggle for Community

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Trevor Wiser

This book is designed to be trimmed
to 7 ¼ x 9 ¾ inches.

*to my grandparents,*
*Art and Mary Wiser*

# Contents

# Introduction

This is a book for and about seekers. It was written because the story of Macedonia – a remarkable community that existed for 20 years in the Hills of Habersham County, Georgia – does not belong in the dusty filing boxes of an archive or hidden in the pages of seldom-opened memoirs. For me it is a living story, told to me often by my grandparents, whose radical way of life was profoundly influenced by their experiences in Macedonia, which in turn affected me. This book was written so that others might also be affected by Macedonia's history.

History only deserves to be researched and retold if from the study of the past one can glean some lesson or insight for the present. For anyone dissatisfied with the status quo of American life, there are plenty such lessons in Macedonia's story. While their peers (GIs fresh from the ravages of WWII) were seeking personal fulfillment in a happy family life in suburbia, the Macedonians were struggling to realize their dream of brotherhood, beginning with themselves and rejecting the competitive, selfish values of so many of their generation. Their dedication and tenacity alone should be challenge enough for anyone wanting to swim upstream. But there is more to the story than sheer will power. What sets Macedonia apart from the many cooperative ventures of its day was their ultimate realization that their own dedication simply wasn't enough. The fulfillment of the community's purpose did not come until Macedonia reached the end of its rope, as a community and as lone individuals. Not until then were the members each able to dedicate themselves completely to the common cause – to give their last inch.

This remarkable story came to a dramatic conclusion in September 1957, when the Macedonians realized in a painful breakdown that what they had defended as the highest truth was in fact a falsehood. Rather than crippling them and destroying their life together, this searing realization led them on to a fuller expression of their deepest longings. In their final letter to their friends and supporters, the Macedonians expressed the essence of what they had learned in their years in community, and their challenge is one that every reader should take to heart:

> We ask each of you, as we are asking ourselves, that we put our lives completely at the service of the spirit of love and the search for truth. Truly followed, these can ultimately only lead men together. We hope you will try to understand our experience, rather than explain it away.

In a word, the story of Macedonia is the story of a miracle. God worked in the lives of its members, far beyond what they were striving for. They were gripped by something, and let themselves be redirected by it, sensing greatness beyond anything they'd known before.

# Foundations 1937-1945

The Macedonia story begins in April 1917, during the First World War I, when twenty-one-year-old Morris Randolph Mitchell enlisted in the army midway through his college career. Fighting on the battlefields of France, Lieutenant Mitchell believed passionately in the "priceless cause" of the War, and when wounded, begged his commanders to send him back to the front. Watching many of his men wounded and dying gradually began to take its toll, however. Once Mitchell himself nearly died from gas poisoning and wounds. The veteran who returned to Delaware College in June 1919 was not the young patriot who had left. "The only thing I know," he announced later, "Is that I will NEVER have anything to do with war." Mitchell's pacifism deeply impacted the course of his life.

After graduating from Delaware, Mitchell moved to the small town of Ellerbe in North Carolina, where he took a job as principal of the local school. Mitchell became concerned with the welfare of his students, and quickly discovered that their academic difficulties were rooted in social ones. He was distressed by the "hookworm…TB, parental abuse, bad associates, overwork in the fields, ignorance in the home, low intelligence [and] malnutrition" that he found rampant among his pupils. The school was not meeting the needs of the students, simply because it was not addressing the root causes. Mitchell's solution was to involve the students in the social rehabilitation of their community. The students started a garden and cooperative market to help combat malnutrition and worked to improve their school. Seeking better education through social improvement was to be another hallmark of Mitchell's life, and his five years at Ellerbe were instrumental in establishing this principle.

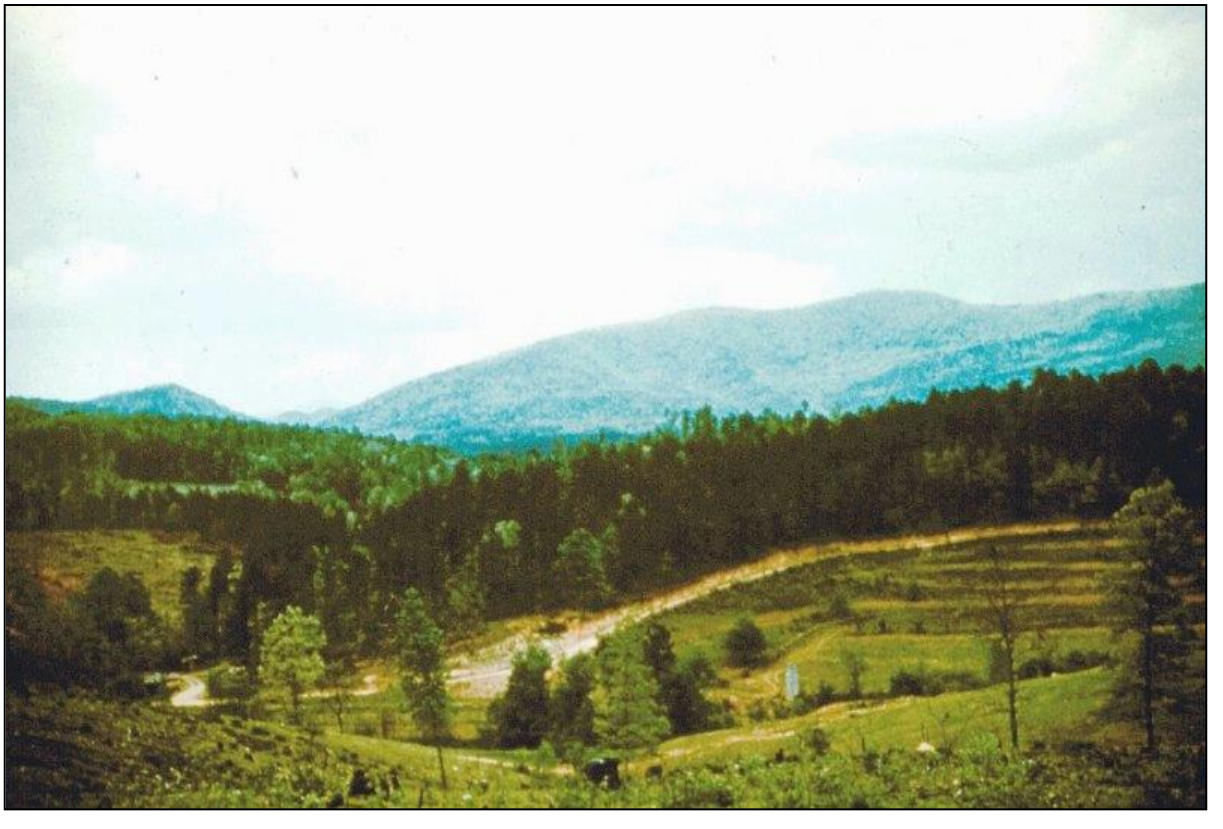
Realizing his vocation in education, Mitchell attended George Peabody College for Teachers, and received his Ph.D. in education in 1926. He studied under John Dewey at Columbia University, and, still preoccupied with his experiences in WWI, traveled to the International Study Center in Geneva to research the causes of war. Just as much as pacifism and education, the idea of cooperative solutions to the problems of the world, both social and educational, began to intrigue him. He believed that a concentration of money and power in the hands of a few gave rise to oppression and poverty for the vast majority in the lower classes. It is not surprising, then, that when the Great Depression devastated America and called into question the country's capitalist basis, Mitchell gravitated toward the social programs of the New Deal that offered local ownership and control, such as the TVA and the Resettlement Administration. When the director of the Resettlement Administration, Will Alexander, appointed Mitchell as an educational consultant, he welcomed the opportunity to put his ideals into practice.

In 1934 Mitchell accepted a position as professor in Columbia University's progressive New College, where he started a community planning group dedicated to studying cooperatives of all forms. During his tenure, Claude Purcell, superintendent of schools in Habersham County, Georgia, approached New College with a request that they take over an abandoned A&M college in his county. This new concern brought Mitchell to Georgia, where he found an ideal proving ground for his ideas of social rehabilitation. The south, he felt, was exploited by the north, and years of unsustainable farming practices had destroyed the land's potential. As he wrote at the time:

> Historically this area, situated at the foot of the Blue Ridge, was a refuge for non-slave-holding families from lower Georgia. They had

> cleared the forests and cultivated the soil field by field. In the beginning each field had been blanketed with about a foot of rich, warm, dark topsoil…. With seventy inches of rain annually and a long growing season, the families lived in comfort. As one field washed away, sloping under the beating rains, another was cleared. In a hundred years the accumulation of thousands of years had been destroyed. The area became almost untenable.

There could be no more perfect place to demonstrate Mitchell's theories about the intrinsic connections between education, community, and social conditions. Inspired by the opportunities this challenge presented, Mitchell purchased 1000 acres of forest and bottomland near the Macedonia Baptist Church in Clarkesville. Finally he could put his ideals to the test, and the Macedonia story began in earnest.



When Mitchell bought the property in the mid-1930's, his primary concern was not cooperation, but rather land rehabilitation and social improvement. He hired Elvin Roberts as the project manager, and together they drew up plans to rehabilitate and develop the land. Central to Mitchell's proposal was a dam across Shoals Creek, which was to be 32 feet high and create a lake 300 feet long. The dam would be used to generate power for Mitchell's projected "balance of agriculture and industry," as well as allowing for recreational development. Other plans included soil reclamation, a cooperative store, and the development of a dairy herd.

In a letter to Roberts in the fall of 1938, Mitchell explained why he thought cooperation would be important to the project: "Cooperation is the Christian substitute for competition. Competition leads to war. Cooperation leads to peace. Competition leads to scarcity. Cooperation leads to plenty." Mitchell's experiences in the war, his involvement with the impoverished students of Ellerbe, and his tenure with the New Deal had taught him the brutal consequences of competition. On this point he was adamant: "We must teach the service motive as vigorously as we have been taught to idealize the profit motive." Later, he wrote, "We must recognize monopoly and unfair labor practices and racial discrimination and wasteful advertising costs and inflation and deflation and other related evils of capitalism to the extent they exist in our petty, daily dealings…. Morality must grow in meaning to fit the times of such intense interrelationships." For Mitchell and those who followed him at Macedonia, the search for a solution was absolute. For them there could be no distinction between their participation in capitalism and the injustices it spawned. This level of conviction and responsibility distinguished Macedonia from the New Deal programs and other cooperatives of its time.

The practical framework Mitchell used to put this into action was simple and innovative. Combining democracy and cooperation, Mitchell called for a share system where every member would make a minimum $100 purchase of stock in the community, and thenceforth have an equal voice in the decision-making process, regardless of the number of shares he or she owned. In May of 1939, eight people including Mitchell and Roberts organized themselves into the "Macedonia Cooperative Association." The arrangement established that all means of production would be owned cooperatively and workers would be paid in cash or community scrip. Mitchell apparently intended to exchange his ownership of the property for an equivalent value of shares, but this never took place.

For all of Mitchell's charisma, it was unclear at this point how many other participants felt any real commitment to the project. Eventually five families joined, but for them it was a matter of economic necessity rather than social principles. In the depths of the Depression, the promise of an alternative was attractive. Even when Macedonia could not pay its members cash wages, it offered land for gardening, a dairy with shared produce, and scrip which could presumably be exchanged for cash at some point in the future.

In the summer of 1939, Macedonia launched a new venture that was in keeping with Mitchell's philosophy of the interrelatedness of work and education. That year the American Friends Service Committee opened a number of camps across the nation "in areas of social and economic tension to assist working class people who are on a low economic plane." They would also educate the participants by exposing them to the conditions in these areas and helping them to acquire practical skills. Macedonia hosted one such camp that summer. Work on the dam had begun, and the community was glad for the assistance. The work camp ran for three successive seasons, and brought many

young people, mostly from the north, to Macedonia, with their enthusiasm and idealism. Many of these would retain an interest in Macedonia, and some – like Doug Moody, Art Wiser, Pat Scarlet, and Mary Raecher – returned to Macedonia even after the work camps had closed and formed the core of the new membership after the war.

Despite the influx of workers, however, and the production of lumber, honey, garden produce, cream, sorghum and potatoes, in its early years the cooperative was still unable to meet its operating costs. Mitchell retained his teaching position in Florence State Teacher's College, and his income subsidized the community's development. By 1942 Mitchell must have been wondering if his venture would ever be able to demonstrate the "economy of abundance" he had envisioned. He had invested nearly $20,000 in the purchase of the land, but now events began to turn against him.

In the fall of 1942, after four years of backbreaking labor, the construction of the dam was nearing completion when a flash flood washed most of it away. This was a major blow for Mitchell, as the dam represented the keystone of his plans for developing Macedonia. Simultaneously, friction between the mostly absentee Mitchell and the residents of the community over the dairy herd soon came to a head when Mitchell used his landlord's prerogative to veto the sale of some of the cattle. As a shareholder, Mitchell theoretically had the same degree of authority as anyone else, but the fact that he owned the land meant that in reality he wielded substantial power. The other members refused to work in the dairy any more, and only the emergency assistance of Doug Moody and his brother Norman saved the operation.

Besides the internal frictions, the war economy was now booming, and the lure of higher paying jobs was too great for most of the Macedonia members. They had never been truly committed to Mitchell's cooperative dream, and now they began to leave. By the spring

of 1943, all but the Robertses had left, and Mitchell's project was in shambles. For the next several years, the community would limp along until it suddenly received an infusion of new life from an unexpected source.

# 1941-1945

## Conviction

While Morris Mitchell was working to build a cooperative society in Georgia, historical forces were shaping another group that would dramatically alter the character and purpose of Macedonia: the pacifists of World War II. Most Americans are ignorant of the story of these few, the tiny minority who refused to take up arms even against Hitler. Out of the nearly 35 million men who were drafted in the war, 25,000 accepted service as noncombatants, and a mere 18,000 refused military service of any kind. Although the majority of these came from the "Historic Peace Churches" – the Church of the Brethren, the Quakers, and the Mennonites – there were many others besides. Worried that the unrest in Europe in the late 1930's would lead to war, church leaders from these three groups in the US scrambled to ensure that potential conscription law would honor the consciences of their young men. Lack of proper concessions for pacifists in World War I had led to horrendous abuse, torture, and in some cases even death of Conscientious Objectors (COs) at that time, and the Peace Churches would not be caught flat-footed again. When the attack on Pearl Harbor in December of

Mealtime at CPS Camp # 25, Nebraska

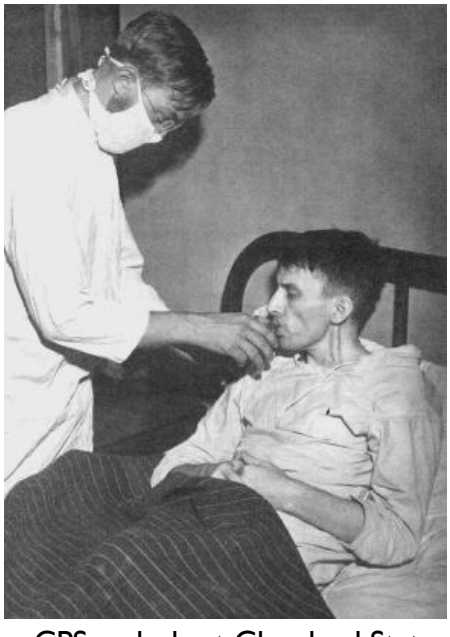
CPS men on the job. From Mark Kurtz's collection.

1941 launched America into war with Germany and Japan, ministers and laymen had a plan, albeit an inadequate one, that they hoped would serve the needs of a new generation of pacifists.

The plan the Peace Churches called for was simple enough: in lieu of military service they wanted COs to be allowed to perform "work of national importance under civilian direction." With patriotism and anti-foreign sentiment running high, however, this principle proved difficult to implement. President Roosevelt was anything but sympathetic, and no congressman ever took up the cause. But thanks to the tireless work of Quaker lobbyist Paul Comly French and other Peace Church representatives, when conscription legislation was passed in 1941 it included a provision allowing for such work for anyone who, "by reason of religious training and belief, is conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form." Thus Civilian Public Services (CPS) was born.

Despite reservations and doubts from both Selective Service and the Peace Churches, the first CPS camp opened in May 15, 1941, at Patapsco State Park in Maryland, rapidly followed by many others. Aside from the valuable work that many of them did, these camps also became a unique social incubator. They were populated by atheists,

Quakers, agnostics, anarchists, Brethren, communists and Mennonites—men of highly divergent backgrounds—but they were brought together by the common conviction that war was wrong and that something should be done about it. CPS was conceived with the dream that there could be a "moral equivalent to war," that men could work for peace and a better society without resorting to violence and killing. Across the ocean, their peers were fighting and dying, and the WWII pacifists were eager to prove that they were equally capable of courage and sacrifice. Now these men of conviction were brought together around this cause, and it bore impressive results. "We were full of idealism," remembered CPS man Samuel Legg, "Everyone else around us [was] pulling down the world; we want[ed] to build it up." It was out of this milieu that the new Macedonia of the postwar period was born.



CPS orderly at Cleveland State Hospital (CPS # 69)

The pacifists of WWII showed their conviction in many ways, some little-recognized and obscure, others highly publicized and dramatic. One way in which COs changed society for the better was in the area of mental health. When the war began, conditions in mental hospitals were deplorable. Stories of neglect, malpractice, and abuse were widespread, and the lack of manpower as conscription began only compounded an already bad situation. In one hospital, for example, there was only one physician for 1,000 patients, and some hospitals had no certified psychiatrists on staff. In June of 1942 Selective Service authorized the use of COs in mental hospitals, and as CPS men be-

gan arriving to help in the wards, many were horrified by what they saw. The pacifist convictions of the men brought a desperately needed element of compassion to this area, and left an enduring legacy. A nationally recognized journal and popular publications of the COs' ings made the country aware of the state of mental health, greatly tributing to its improvement. Many CPS men stayed in the field after Selective Service released them, and continued to make significant contributions to the education of retarded children, the establishment of private mental care homes, and other areas.

A more dramatic demonstration of pacifist convictions was a series of human guinea pig experiments for which COs volunteered toward the end of the war. Putting their health and their lives on the line, COs volunteered to be tested in experiments on hepatitis, atypical pneumonia, malaria, and deliberate lice infestation. There were also experiments testing men's nutritional needs and limits at sea, in extreme heat and cold, at high altitudes and with vitamin deficiencies.

The most challenging and infamous of these experiments, the Ancel Keys starvation experiment, will serve as an example of the conviction and sacrifice conscientious objectors demonstrated. In 1944, Keys – a physiology professor at the University of Minnesota – circulated a pamphlet in CPS camps with the title: "Will you starve that they be better fed?" His purpose was to study the physical and mental effects of starvation by starving the subjects on a low calorie diet of foods typical in wartime Europe, and then study the best methods of rehabilitation. Within months he had more than 400 volunteers, thirty-six of whom received the dubious privilege of participating in the experiment. After several weeks of starvation, the men became listless, irritable, and depressed. They were obsessed with food, and spent hours daydreaming about meals. Observers reported, "They began to manifest visible signs of starvation, sunken faces and bellies, protruding ribs, and edema-swollen legs, ankles, and faces. Other problems

such as anemia, neurological deficits, and skin changes became apparent."

Nevertheless only one man broke protocol by eating more than was allowed and had to be discharged from the experiment. The result was a classic two-volume publication, *The Biology of Human Starvation,* published by Keys. The data from the experiment have been tremendously useful to nutritionists and relief workers, and is still used today.

Even in cases less extreme than the Minnesota experiment, in many camps men were working toward their vision of a more peaceful and just society. A remarkable feature of the camps was the many informal schools that emerged from the thinking and ideas of the men. In CPS #94 in Trenton, North Dakota, the School of Cooperative Living merged two important influences on the development of Macedonia: the ideas of Morris Mitchell and the men of CPS.

When Harold Guetzkow proposed a School of Cooperative Living in the CPS system, the idea was enthusiastically recieved. Hank Dyer of CPS #30 in Walhalla, Michigan, funded with $500 from Guetzkow, sent out letters all over the country to drum up support. Harold Row of the Brethren Service Committee took up the cause and recruited Morris Mitchell as the director for the school. Morris in turn asked Horace Reed to assist him, and along with Dyer they formed a faculty of three. The school was to open on April 1 1943, and dozens of COs from all over the country began to apply for transfer to Walhalla and the new Co-op School. Soon forty-five men from fifteen camps had transferred, and the school was well under way.

It was here that a core of people began to crystallize around the idea of a post-war cooperative community. Chimes Johnson and Mel Luersen started a cooperative community study group, and when transfers from other camps arrived, Bill Darr, Mark Kurtz, Ed Moyer, Doug Strain, Dave Newton, Mommsen, Horace and Mary Jane Reed, and Art and Mary Wiser joined them, among others. They were "trou-

Lester Glick volunteered for 6 months of starvation and 6 months of rehabilitation. From his diary:

JULY 5: Yesterday, the fourth of July, we went to a church peace conference. Although the temperature was in the 80's, Phil and I each wore our topcoats to keep warm; we are always cold! Last night I thought I was going to freeze. Our body temperatures are around 94 degrees… I'm not sure whether the body is attempting to preserve itself, or whether we are in a gradual process of dying. I'm relatively healthy, though, and don't entertain thoughts of death. We also carry small pillows to protect us from the hard benches at church.

JULY 18: When I walk my ankles and feet swell so that I must loosen my shoe strings. If I sleep on one side, I awake with a swollen cheek on the pillow side. My fluffy, wavy hair has become coarse and straight and my comb is always laden with globs of loose hair.

JULY 29: Rehabilitation time at last! Food! Food! Food! …Last night I couldn't sleep much. I spent the night studying cookbooks even though I should have been studying for classes…

SEPT. 20: Our laboratory staff apparently didn't know how much starvation would ravage our bodies. We're 7 weeks into rehabilitation and our starvation symptoms have not been abated significantly: our looks, our hunger, our minimal weight gain all verify our minimal rehabilitation.

It's reported that there are millions of infants and children who are currently victims of starvation and malnutrition. There are few voices speaking out for them…

OCT. 19: Dr. Taylor told me I have developed tuberculosis in my left lung. I am to begin a six months rehabilitation program for this dreaded disease…this completely destroys my dream of becoming a doctor…

A group of CPSers enjoys a laugh in their bunkhouse.

bled, not only by the war but the kind of society that would create war, and so [they] spent time talking together, trying to figure if there was an answer." Like many C.O.s, they felt challenged to develop a moral equivalent to war, and they thought that life in a cooperative community could create a society that would preclude war entirely. Ultimately they wanted "economic and social revolution by living a cooperative life on a small community."

The relationship that developed among these men and women was remarkable. As a tiny, peace-loving minority in a war-crazed country, they had a rare strength of conscience and conviction. Drawn together by an ambitious goal in a hostile society, it is perhaps not surprising that the community they forged here lasted after the war, through the history of Macedonia, and for some, to the ends of their lives. In the turbulent history of Macedonia, shared experience and conviction helped to hold them together.

For now, though, no one seemed to be anticipating turbulent or even mildly troubled years. Carried along by a rare enthusiasm, they set to work hammering out the details of what life in a postwar community would be like. They decided that a rural community with a ba-

lanced economic basis of industry and agriculture would be best. Wage distribution was to be based on need, and it was thought that the efficiency of community would lead to "a greater amount of leisure time." The study group members envisioned a pleasant rural life with beautiful houses, few worries, friendly relationships and happy children. It would not be long before they discovered that utopia and community were not synonymous.

The School of Cooperative Living became quite popular, and by October of 1943, enrollment was seventy men and growing. Studies continued in earnest, and there were plans of turning the entire camp into a school. Small groups of COs used their furlough time to visit existing cooperatives and communities in Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Georgia, and elsewhere. Numerous speakers addressed the students. A committee on post-school plans was formed as COs began to think more earnestly about life after the war. Then, in October of 1943, word suddenly came that camp Walhalla was to be disbanded, and the "Co-opers" were scattered.

The students of the community study group were not so easily dispersed, however. Eleven of the most committed members requested and received transfers to CPS #94 in Trenton, North Dakota, known as the Siberia of the CPS system. As unpopular as this camp was, the members of the community study group felt that the Farm Security Administration land rehabilitation project underway there would be an ideal testing ground for some of their post-war dreams. They each took different jobs in the camp that they felt would best prepare them for life in a cooperative community. They opened a camp co-op store, and started a small brooch industry to earn money and acquire skills that might be a basis for a future community business. Contacts with local co-ops were established. The study group grew again to 20 or 30 men, some joined by their wives, as they continued to refine their

Dick Mommsen told this memory in 2001:

*We got permission from Selective Service, which was quite obliging of them, to transfer as a group of ten as I recall—calling ourselves the "school of community living"—to Trenton North Dakota, where the project was for the Bureau of Reclamation. It was leveling Missouri river bottom land. First of all to clear off the trees with what we call tree-dozers, big D8 cats that in the winter could snap out the trees at ground level in the frozen ground. And then we had eight or nine big LeTourneau scrapers which could scrape off a layer of earth down to one or two tenths of a foot and load it up with I think eight yards of earth. It was very obliging earth, you could pile it up in this big scraper and then you could also spread it out to a thickness of about two tenths of a foot and thus level the land at the right slope for flood irrigation. There was another crew that was building irrigation ditches and they had a big pumping station that I think the Bureau of Reclamation had already built on the Missouri River. They pumped the water up to these irrigation ditches which were at the high side of the fields and then they would let the water down by means of siphon hoses and let it flow on the ground. By the time it got to the bottom of the field, it would pretty well evenly water the whole field.*

dream of a cooperative community. As well as attempting to find an alternative to war, they were motivated by a desire for a country life, a life which integrated religion, education, and family. The group expressed a desire for fellowship and the benefits of group action yet with individual freedom. Like all community attempts, this last point would prove to be a struggle when some of the members relocated to Macedonia.

A paper by Art Wiser described some of the potential problems that the group discussed. First on their list was the "basis for the distribution of community earnings." Educational patterns, raising capital, standard of living, and, almost as an afterthought, "ethical and religious basis," were also issues of concern. The degree of de-

tail in their planning was remarkable, demonstrating that cooperative living was not just something they wanted to study, but something they were eagerly waiting to put into practice.

Dick Mommsen operating equipment at CPS #94 in Trenton, ND.

By the time the group moved to Trenton, talks with Morris Mitchell and visits to Macedonia had convinced many of them that Macedonia was the place to settle after the war. Art Wiser had worked there previously, and Dick Mommsen, Hank Dyer, Mel Luersen, Chimes Johnson and others visited Macedonia on furlough. When the wartime economy drew many of the original Macedonians away with the promise of higher paying jobs, and the effort began to falter, the Trenton group was loath to see it fail. To alleviate the shortfall in labor, they elected to send Mary Wiser and Ginny Newton to Macedonia, wives of two of the CPS men at Trenton, to keep the dairy running.

Some of the men couldn't wait. Dick Mommsen, Mark Kurtz, Mel Luersen, Ed Moyer and Chimes Johnson triple bunked their beds in the barracks to allow for some communal space and pooled their meager monthly stipend of $2.50 for pocket money. During free times, a record player played socialist and Israeli folk songs, and the five held meetings every morning to try to reach "a clearer understanding as to who will continue in the same community after CPS." Mark Kurtz later recalled:

> We moved things around and made seats out of the beds, wardrobes for walls etc. Then we were inspected by some Federal fellow. He said, "What kind of crackpots are these?" What was so funny was that we pooled all our clothing. So the first one up would have the pick of all the clothing. One guy was tall, and one was very short. Well, Mel could never find anything that would fit, so he got irritated and quit right then and there. Eddie Moyer got up early and put on Dick's nice best white shirt to go out to work. "Eddie, you have on my best shirt." "Well so I have, so I have."

Such hilarious incidents only seemed to cement their camaraderie: "I want to make it clear that the whole gang and the community school is still intact because of and in spite of the communal effort," quipped Chimes in a letter to Morris.

The study group continued to meet well into 1945, but by then time was beginning to wear on the men, and interest was flagging. Three men – Hank Dyer, Art Wiser and

CO's hang out laundry on wash day at CPS camp.

Dave Newton – became disillusioned with CPS and illegally left camp in protest. All three were eventually picked up and imprisoned. The Trenton Camp later closed as well, and the community group was forced to disband. But the CPS experience had been formative for all its participants, and few could return to normal American life afterwards. Many of the members of the community school found themselves in cooperatives of different forms after the war, and some of them made their way to Macedonia.

# 1945-1948
## Cooperation

August 12, 1945, 12:15 AM: All of Macedonia's residents were asleep in White Pines, the Mitchell cabin at Macedonia. Dorothy Bodie (later Mommsen) slept in the front room, sharing the room with Alice Compton and Pat Scarlet. Morris and his wife Barbara occupied a bedroom in the back, and in a small alcove partitioned off with a curtain, Art and Mary slept. They were the first of the Trenton study group to settle in Macedonia. After writing to the president, the Attorney General, and the FBI to announce his intentions and his destination, Art had gone on furlough from Trenton and never returned. He and Mary moved to Macedonia with intentions to settle there. Art had notified the sheriff in Clarkesville that he expected the FBI to come and pick him up for deserting CPS, but the man assured him, "Oh, they won't pick you up – a nice young man like you." Several months had passed since Art had walked out, and the war in Europe was over. Two days previously the second atomic bomb had been dropped, and V - J Day was fast approaching. Returning from the milking parlor that evening, Morris Mitchell had said "Art, they won't bother you now. Forget about ever being picked up."

Suddenly, Dorothy awakened to the sound of someone pounding on the door. Art, inside, knew just what it was. "I'm coming. It's alright," he called to the man at the door, scrambling out of bed. Rather than waiting to be let in, the FBI agent barged in. shone his light in Dorothy's face, and stepped over her. Bursting into Art and Mary's room, he encountered Art barely dressed in his shorts. Following protocol, he frisked him thoroughly and called to a second agent to come in. This man also shone his light in Dorothy's face and stepped over. Morris came out in a bathrobe. Alice vacated her couch and tried to make everyone comfortable. Two troopers, revolvers on their hips, also

shined their flashlights at Dorothy before stepping over her as they entered. Dorothy was fed up. Sitting up, she called into the darkness: "Are there any more *gentlemen* out there?"

The incident exemplifies the confusion and turmoil of Macedonia in the years immediately following the war. People came and went, ideas were raised, meetings were held. The arrival of the COs caused some friction with the local conservative population and with Morris Mitchell, but it was a rich and fruitful time, and by 1948 a core group had emerged that would decide the future of Macedonia and color its history with their unique pacifist and ecumenical tint.

The war had disrupted the course of Macedonia, and Morris was eager to gather all those interested and begin afresh. He knew

The dairy was an important part of Macedonia from the very beginning. Peggy Kurtz recalls:

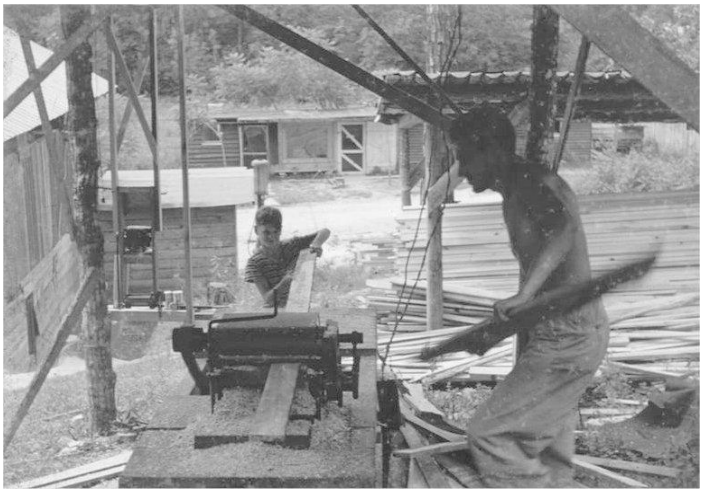
*The cows had to be called very early in the mornings, and it was Delf's turn to call them. He was down in the grape bottom calling, "Here Sukey, Here Sukey" when—whoosh, he fell into a huge hole out in the middle of nowhere. Ivan had dug a hole trying to find water for the Rosebury House on the hill. He just hadn't covered it over. Well, you can imagine how mad Delf was—fortunately not hurt, and he could get out. But there was a meeting soon to hash that out. The cows were constantly causing problems —not going where Dick wanted them too, or fast enough. So in one of those moments he hastily took two live electric wires and poked Bossy. Well, she took off all right—tearing out one side of the building. Another time Si Cantor lost patience with one cow and gave her a blast with his fist, only to find that she was quite tough and he broke his fist in the blow.*

of the interest from the COs, and had received numerous letters from others interested in cooperative living. He proposed a conference in November 1945 for all those interested in Macedonia. The Wisers were the only family that had committed to settling there, and Morris was eager that the project continue. The purpose of the gathering was to discuss plans for incorporation, raise money to complete the dam, and establish a business. As the date approached, Morris conceded that Macedonia had no money, and he himself lacked the cash to repair his White Pines cabin at Macedonia. "Come in with us if you wish to and share pot luck with us," he wrote to Pat Scarlet. "The way does not look easy for the immediate future." Nevertheless he greatly anticipated the November meeting, writing to potential settlers with unbridled optimism.

About twenty people attended. Mary wrote to her parents that the meetings were "helpful, but there is still no nucleus of folks definitely planning to settle." That fall and winter were Macedonia's lowest ebb. Along with the fitful presence of the Mitchells, several others – including Pat Scarlet, Mary Wiser, and Alice Compton – kept the dairy and the poultry plant operating. Art was serving his sentence for leaving camp by then, and no other COs had settled, despite their earlier enthusiasm.

By mid-1946, however, things began to move fast. Art was released from prison in May, and around the same time Dave and Virginia Newton announced their intention to move to Macedonia once Dave, also imprisoned for leaving camp, was released. Two hundred dollars were collected for a co-op store that was intended to serve the wider neighborhood as well as the Macedonia Community. It was a time of hectic excitement, as more and more people, many of them ex-CPS men, poured in. Dave and Ginny Newton moved in July, and were soon joined by Wilmer Brandt, Brad Rowland, Jim Neuhauser

and Hank Dyer. By September, construction had begun on five houses, and members were complaining of overcrowding. Things began to look up as a larger labor pool went to work in the dairy, sawmill, co-op store, and poultry plant. The poultry plant could produce 8,000 broilers a year, and the sawmill was capable of producing 2,000 board feet a day. By now the dairy herd had grown to fifty head, and in January 1947 Morris wrote that it was breaking even.



An early planer, from Mark Kurtz collection

A problem that would stay with Macedonia for years began to emerge now. While in Sandstone prison, Hank and Art had examined Macedonia's financial situation closely, and concluded that each member would have to contribute $2,000 in capital to finance the community. Most of the new members were young and straight from CPS; none of them had had the opportunity to accumulate any capital. With so few people there in the spring of 1946, the garden planting had not been nearly enough to feed the dozens of people now flocking to Macedonia. The community had to allocate large amounts of cash for food supplies, and did little to diminish the $6,000 debt the community still had in 1945. Macedonia would remain in debt until it closed in 1957, and the struggle for economic viability led the members to take steps toward a communal rather than cooperative model, a step which they otherwise might not have taken.

Community out of economic necessity became something of a pattern for Macedonia, and once they had participated in this level of sharing, many were unwilling to relinquish it, even when economic conditions improved. Morris was adamant that the Macedonia project was an economic experiment in cooperation, not a communal venture. Many of the post-war settlers shared this view. Virginia Newton recalled, "The original plan was to own the means of production cooperatively but to live independently. Our life became more communal as time went on." This was evidenced in Macedonia's approach to housing during the early post-war years. Many of the Macedonia settlers had distinct ideas about architecture: the Trenton group had discussed architecture and housing, and many had developed elaborate plans for their future houses in Macedonia. Although many of these plans did go forward, in the interim families were forced to share living quarters, and meals were often taken communally for limitations of space. This began a shift toward a communal rather than a cooperative style, of which

Planting in Macedonia: Mary Wiser (L) and Alma Kneeland

Morris was distinctly uneasy. This friction between Morris and the newcomers would only grow over the next few years.

By the end of 1946 it was clear that Macedonia would have to seek additional means of income if they were to keep their community alive. The poultry business had proved too susceptible to market forces: on one batch the community lost $500 dollars when the price of chicken dropped from 36 cents a pound to 19 cents a pound. Turnover in the dairy was high, and with a large number of calves in the still-growing herd, the dairy was just barely breaking even. A small woodworking shop was established with the plan to transition from sawmill work to finished goods. Art designed a small hassock, and took six samples to a salesman. The community was thrilled when the man announced that they would sell like hotcakes, and that the community should be

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On a trip to Macedonia in October 1993, Dick Mommsen told about cutting pulpwood:

*I would like us to remember our friend Milt Alan. Hank Dyer, a PhD came down here and was wandering through the woods in this hard time, picking these scrub pine trees to cut them into pulpwood. Besides the sweat involved, the pulpwood companies were very fussy about their length—five feet three inches. So they would carry a measuring stick along, a little sapling lightweight to carry, exactly five feet, three inches. As you sawed up the tree, you would measure off with that sapling and cut with a brace saw. No chain saws were heard of. The standard equipment that you went through the woods with was a coke bottle in your back pocket with kerosene in it, some white pine needles stuck into the top of the coke bottle so that the kerosene wouldn't all come out, (It acted like a self-wetting paintbrush. It was used on the blade of the bow saw to take the pitch off so you could keep sawing.) and the measuring stick and the bow saw. So Hank and Milt were wandering through looking for the next tree to cut on, and Hank said, 'How do you cut the logs? Do you estimate them?' Milt said, 'Naw, I just guess at 'em.'*

prepared to ship out at least 1,000. He advised them to procure that many cartons for shipping along with a large supply of stain. Fortunately cooler heads prevailed, and when Art went to Atlanta for supplies, he returned with fifty cartons and a modest supply of finishes. The smooth-talking salesman took six samples of the beautiful hassock and left, never to be seen again.

Following Morris's principle of using local materials, the next thing the Macedonians tried was persimmon pudding, using fruit from their property. The seeds from the persimmons were removed and used as stuffing for a bean-bag pig ("Percy the Pig") to be sold along with the puddings. These, too, failed to sell.

Dave Newton hauling "starvation sticks."

A source of income that the local Georgians often resorted to was cutting pulpwood. Though back-breaking and poorly paid work, it was a sure source of cash, and with their financial situa-

tion so insecure, the Macedonians were forced to fall back on it now. The job consisted of culling the poor quality pine from Macedonia's property – a practice in any case consistent with Mitchell's principle of timber stand improvement – cutting it to precise size, hauling it to the nearest railroad siding, and loading it into a car. Nobody liked this work ("starvation sticks," Hank Dyer called them), but it was a safeguard the Macedonians often had to return to.

Hank Dyer

Fishing for a more viable economic basis, in early 1947 the community wrote to the editor of the Children's Page of the New York Times Sunday Magazine, asking whether she thought there might be a market for children's toys. She wrote back that she was not authorized to give financial advice, but that she did not see why there shouldn't be such a market. The baby boom was just beginning, and this fortuitous advice provided Macedonia with a business that would eventually become a great success.

In the beginning, however, there was nothing to assure them that children's toys would not be as great a failure as hassocks or persimmon puddings. Morris Mitchell had the idea to produce modular wooden blocks and market them to department stores in cities in the north. In Chicago on business, Morris slipped two sample blocks into his pocket and caught the last elevator to the Marshall Field's department store, emerging with their first order. In summer of that year, Art

and Mary loaded up the Model A with a toy wheelbarrow, a table and chair, and a set of unit blocks and headed north to get some sales.

Some of the buyers were hard to convince. Of his visit to Wannamaker's, Art remembers having to wait for four hours before being summoned into the buyer's office:

> As I worked my way through the door as best I could, with the set of blocks on the little wheelbarrow and the table and chair set somehow under my arms, I hardly had a chance to look up at her when she barked at me,
> "Where's your tie!"
> "Ma'am, I don't wear a tie."
> "All salesmen wear ties!"
> "Ma'am, I'm not a salesman, I only work in a little shop in Georgia."
> "Even Southern salesmen wear ties!" Disgustedly, she had the last word.
> The buyer picked up two of the blocks and smacked them together. "Wood's too soft!"
> "Poplar is classed as a hardwood," Art muttered in defense. The buyer turned to the table and chair:
> "Those are awful!"
> Angry now, Art shot back, "My little boy likes them."
> The lady softened in an instant. "Aren't children wonderful?" She gushed, "I wouldn't care if the rest of the world went to hell, if I could just be left alone with my grandchildren. Your blocks are very nice," she added, and ordered 12 sets.

Art returned, Morris wrote to a friend, "full of hope and despair. We have orders for all the sets of blocks we can possibly produce…. On the other hand he is up against such a need of capital that he is, as he said, 'gnawing his nails' in anxiety." At this point Macedonia's "woodshop" consisted of a 10-inch band saw, a tiny table saw,

and a very small planer, which occupied the same space as the communal dining room. Before every meal the machines had to be cleared

Making silage: from Mark Kurtz's collection

away and the tables set up. One way or another, the community managed to borrow the necessary $1500 for materials, and Community Playthings was in business.

In July of 1947, Delf and Katie Fransham arrived. Delf was a Canadian CO, and had been introduced to Macedonia through the Pendle Hill Quaker study center near Philadelphia. A similar experience of community in Delf's alternative service in China (Canada had a different system for WWII COs that allowed for overseas service) had led him toward cooperative communities and eventually to Macedonia. Even as new members arrived, however, Macedonia's shaky financial situation put the future of the community into serious doubt. Before long the community's finances would force the members to redefine their definition of community in radical ways.

The problem of "distribution of community earnings" which the Trenton group had identified had never been fully resolved. In the two years immediately following WWII, there had been divergent opinions on how the community should share its financial burdens. Some, like Morris Mitchell, felt strongly that to remain viable, the community would have to pay its members wages. Hank Dyer, too, believed that this was something that the community should "stand or fall on." Others favored a more communal style of living, with income pooled and distributed according to need. Morris had envisioned a system of paying members in cash or shares, and he clung to this, at least in principle. With cash tight, the issue now seemed pressing, and Morris was disturbed by the direction of some in the group to "move in a more communal direction."

In opposition to his conception of a cooperative, Morris saw this as meaning "the nearly complete subjection of the individual to the will of the group," manifested in "no remuneration above the simplest needs nor any accounting for unpaid wages in terms of shares." Morris tried to stop the trend by urging anyone not completely in line with his conception of a cooperative community to withdraw.

Morris's position was becoming increasingly indefensible, however. With the community shouldering rising debts as they built up the business, and less and less cash on hand, matters of accounting for hours and paying wages seemed increasingly irrelevant. In the first weeks of 1948, the bank account dipped into the single digits, and only a strenuous harvest of pulpwood staved off bankruptcy. Still, Hank proposed that spring that the community commit to a $70 a month cash payment for each working person. "This is scarcely the time for increased expenditures," Art wrote to Morris, "but it would seem that several problems would be cleared."

That year turned out to be a decisive one for cedonia. In March Charlie Davis, an ex-CPS man trained in book-keeping who Morris knew, analyzed the community's accounts and questioned whether Macedonia could continue, suggesting that it might have to be liquidated. But with the help of friends and the leniency of creditors, the Macedonians were able to keep the community going and take steps toward consolidating their debt. Just as importantly, the community finally resolved its relationship to Morris. Although not officially part of the community leadership, and often away on lecturing engagements, Morris's charismatic presence was a constant pressure on the members of Macedonia. Perhaps most importantly, he held the deed to the land, which left the rest of

The surge of interested people coming to Macedonia meant that the Macedonians had to work fast to provide everyone with housing. On a trip to Macedonia in 1998, Van Geiger told:

*"The Franshams, Diana and I lived up here in the Roseberry house. There had been an attempt to build a well up there. I believe it was 60 feet deep but there wasn't any water in it. They had a windlass to raise the rock that was dug, up to the top. They let people up and down with this windlass and they would also carry water buckets up and down in it. One day in their enthusiasm one fellow jumped in the bucket before anybody had secure hold of the handle! So he started going down with great speed. Finally somebody managed to stop the handle from flying around. I don't know how he managed to do it, but I guess when there's a will there's a way!*
*To break the rock they would set off dynamite down in the bottom by using the switch of a portable table saw. They had it on the surface and they had the wires to the dynamite cap hitched to it so anybody who flipped the switch on the saw set off the dynamite. By good luck, nobody was ever down there when the dynamite went off! Another thing was that after the dynamite went off it used up all the air down in the bottom and set off bad fumes. Usually we waited until the air purified but one day they were in a hurry and enthusiastic and didn't wait long enough, and one person went down and came pretty near losing his life, because the air wasn't good enough down there. Luckily he was pulled out in time."*

the community without a foot to stand on in a disagreement. Something had to be done to resolve the problem. One day in July 1948 after milking, Art tried to convince Morris to deed the land over to the community. Morris was under-standably indignant at the suggestion. He had put vast amounts of his time, energy, and money into donia's development, and he could not relinquish his dominant role so easily. Macedonia was a thirty year experiment, he insisted; it was far too soon to allow the members free reign. In fact, he would rather let the current group leave and start over with a new one.

"But Morris," Art said, "You won't find another group, and if you don't sell, these people will leave."

"I'll start over." Mitchell insisted. He seemed not to be dissuaded.

Art and Morris walked back and forth from the dairy to the Mitchell residence four times, arguing all the way. By the end, Morris came round. Subdued, he told Art: "I'll sign anything you put in front of me."

It took a big heart to make this sacrifice. Morris stayed on the Macedonia property until the end of the year, when he accepted a job as the director of the Putney Graduate School of Education in Vermont. He left behind a decade of dreams and hopes for a better world in the hands of young idealists with limited experience. But he left in good friendship, and deeded over the land on generous terms. He remained closely in touch with Macedonia until it closed in 1957.

By the end of the year, the infant community had found its footing. With Charlie Davis's help and increased income from block sales, their long-term financial future looked brighter. Wilmer Brandt, Delf and Katie Fransham, Dick and Dot Mommsen, Dave and Ginny Newton, and Art and Mary Wiser formed a core group around which the growing community would develop. This nucleus "had reached the

point where they were willing to commit themselves to the unlimited liability of a partnership association for the sake of remaining together and continuing to build a way of life which they had come to find pleasant and rewarding." It was the beginning of some of the happiest years in the history of Macedonia.

# Community 1948-1952

The signing of the deed for the property from Mitchell to the members of the community was a major milestone. While Mitchell remained in residence from time to time for another year, he was never again active in the community, and the group of young couples began to blossom. A report of the year 1948 written by the group gives a glimpse into how the young community's views had crystallized and gained coherence. For the first time, they were able to come to a basic agreement of the community's organization:

> Members of the group pledge themselves to assume full responsibility for each other in a common effort to provide the conditions necessary for individual security and growth. The responsibilities of the individual to the group are: to contribute to the group whatever he has in the way of money or property (we have all done this anyway in the course of the last two years); to contribute his work and to participate in meetings and other activities of the community.
>
> In return, the member is to receive from the group (according to its ability to provide them) food, clothing, shelter, education for himself and family, vacations, recreation, medical and hospital care, care and support of his family in case of disability and aid in meeting responsibilities for the care of dependent relatives not resident in the community.

Many of the families had one or two children, adding another dimension to the lives of the Macedonians. The dairy house had become the *de facto* community center, and communal lunches were taken there five times a week. Other meals were taken in the family. Food was bought on weekly shopping trips to nearby Clarkesville or raised

in the community garden, which produced vegetables as well as pigs, ducks, rabbits, and chickens.

Each family made up a list of its needs for the week, which was taken on the regular shopping trip, and for the occasional treat, members were free to help themselves from the petty cash box and leave an accounting slip behind. No one thought it necessary to supervise these outlays, but it was assumed that everyone had the best interest and the financial situation of the community in mind.

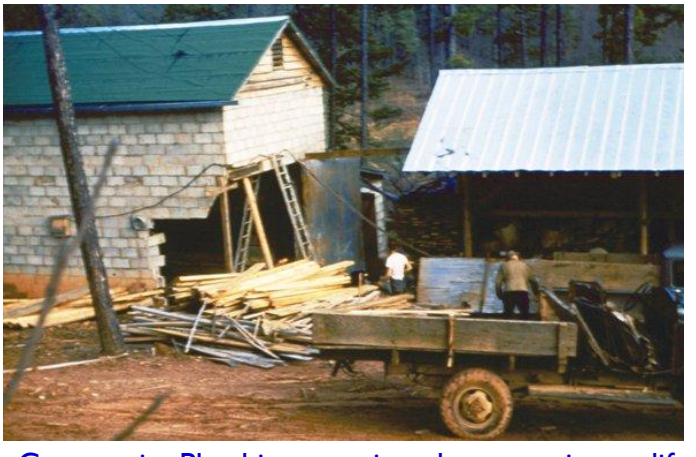
Business meetings were held every other week, and were presided over by the community coordinator, chosen on a yearly basis, whose main job was to see that all aspects of the community worked together. The community did not make a point of consensus decision making, but Dave Newton noted at the time that "so far no disagreement has been sufficient to drive us to a vote." In an article on the community

*We had our noon meals together in the Center House and they wanted to put a furnace in it down under where they had started to dig out an area. Ivan had made the furnace—quite an invention to utilize smoke and all in the heating. Katy and I were getting lunch and Arnold and Ivan came up to tell us, 'You just might like to get out of the house shortly, as we are about to set the dynamite off under the house to enlarge the space for the furnace, and we are about to set it off.' Well, when we got back in the place was a shambles—tables, dishes, silverware and floor boards. We had lunch somewhere else!*

-Peggy Kurtz, 2008

The Dairy House at Macedonia

written for the radical journal *Politics,* Dave described the development of these meetings: "There have been several meetings concerning the dairy during the last year, and they demonstrate a steady process of growth in the ability of the group to solve its problems. The first meetings would start out with a financial report on the dairy and bog down in emotional attacks on individuals or even on individual cows." Nevertheless, as the community grew and matured, their decision-making became less heated and more productive.



Community Playthings continued to experience difficulties. Peggy Kurtz remembers one incident that former members of Macedonia often recounted with great mirth (many years later, of course):

*"We had a big dry kiln just built and working near the log cabin where we were living. A group of men were loading lumber on the hill by the cabin. The Ford truck was parked on the slope, and just to be sure the brakes held, they had put a big block under the front wheel. Well, as they loaded more and more logs on the back, the front end began to lift up off the block and Whoops! Off the truck went, lumber and all, down the hill, Mark and all running after crying, "Whoa! Whoa!" And then Crash! Into the newly built dry kiln. That was a sad sight. And what did we do to somehow recover? We all took off to a concert in Tacoa, something quite big like the Philadelphia orchestra."*

This newfound sense of stability was in part enabled by Macedonia's first real economic breakthrough: in June 1948 the Honolulu school system placed an order for $5,000 worth of blocks. The community had to scramble to find sufficient lumber, and in spite of

numerous missteps, the shipment went out on time. It is doubtful if the community actually made any money on the order, but it proved to them that the business they were in could generate sales, and from then on they had an economic foundation on which to build.

During the following years the business grew at a remarkable rate. One lesson learned from the Honolulu order was that they would have to stop moving machines in and out of the communal Dairy House dining room and find a more permanent location. The poultry barn built in the early years of Macedonia seemed the only option, so in November of 1948, the machines and the inventory were moved into the one hundred by twenty foot open-sided structure. Even in Georgia the winters are cold, and Van Geiger, who came that year, remembers working the machines with gloves in the biting cold. In 1948 the business made $9,000 in orders, and the following year the figure leapt to $27,000. The American Childhood Education recommended Macedonia's blocks in its bulletin of recommended supplies that year, and sales began to increase steadily.

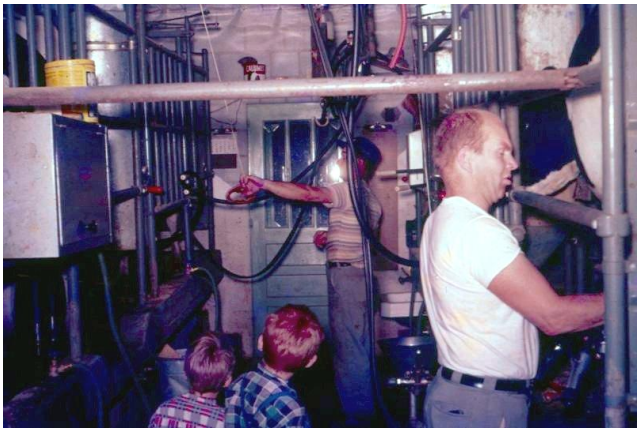
*"There was also a chop saw in the first shop for cutting the unit blocks. The saws, which weren't made out of carbide like they are now, had to be sharpened by hand after about a day's work, and that was one of the things I regularly did. Ivan Kneeland fixed up a cutting saw out of an automobile car axle and mounted a motor on it and mounted the saw blade on it so that it would swing. It cut the rough lumber to length."*

-Van Geiger, Macedonia Trip, June 1998

They had not yet been able to "get beyond the stage of making new debts to pay back old ones," however. Eight thousand dollars worth of debt fell due in the second half of 1949, and it was only through the generous help of friends that they were able to refinance

the debt and delay its payment. Macedonia would never be completely free of its debts.

As hard as the Macedonians worked in the shop and the dairy, new members kept flooding in, meaning new outlays for building and more energy spent caring for their guests. Ivan Kneeland, a WWII CO who had been involved with cooperative businesses, arrived from Massachusetts in 1948. In 1949, Eddie and Margret Moyer and Si and Halona Kantor came from a small community venture in New York. Alma Metcalfe came with her aging father. Al and Grace Foster came to stay at the end of January 1950, followed by Van and Diana Geiger and Jack Scott. In 1951 Mark and Peggy Kurtz came – old-timers from the Trenton days – bringing Mark's parents, his sister Carmen, and her husband Chuck Stanaway. The visitors and new members lived in government surplus barracks and tents until more per-



More about cows. This memory is from Van Geiger on a trip to Macedonia in 1998:

*"There's a tale about the dairy that tells how the cows were kind of fidgety and no one could figure it out. After a while people there began to get shocks. Then they found out that the ceiling was metal-covered so that it could be cleaned easily, and a nail from it was driven into some electrical wire that was carrying electricity to the light bulb. Somehow this was connected to the stanchions and so it brought the current down. So no wonder the cows thought it was kind of shocking! I think that it was a fairly good dairy at the time. The cows were fairly productive, and it wasn't like the older times when Doug and Ruby were around."*

manent lodgings could be erected. By 1951 the community had grown to fifty-six people, an increase of forty-three from the group that had formed in 1948.

Twenty five of these were children, and the young community found itself confronted with the problem of education. Should teaching be conducted at the community, where the women could oversee it? Or for the sake of neighborliness should the children be sent to the local school, where the teacher, Miss Ruby, was of questionable quality? Most chose to have their children educated within the community, and childcare and education for the early years was arranged for.

This was a time marked by a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment for many of Macedonia's members. In a letter to her parents Mary wrote:

> We find living in a co-op community a constantly soul-searching and chastening process as well as a stimulating, satisfying kind of life. We are always discovering new insights about ourselves and other people. This constant attempt to live creatively and responsibly in all our relationships both within our group and with neighbors near and far, continues to hold us. We love this place and these friends, and we are grateful for the chance to say "yes" to life in countless ways of daily living.

The pinnacle of Macedonia's apparent success came in June 1952, with Dr. Henrik Infield's study of the community. The Macedonians had invited the sociologist – a leading expert on communal studies – to conduct the analysis, wondering if empirical research would confirm their sense of well-being. Dr. Infield had designed an elaborate system for measuring the "cooperative potential" of individuals and the group, and he spent three days grilling the members about who they would like to go on a walk with, talk over personal problems

with, or have as a neighbor. Each individual's sociometric score was calculated and plotted on a complex diagram to arrive at the degree of coherence in the group.

This coldly analytical approach seems oddly in contrast to the prevailing spontaneous and joyful atmosphere in Macedonia at the time. This is no more apparent than from Infield's description of the presentation of the results to the community:

> As if sensing the favorable outcome of the study the group assembled for the final session in a mood of happy expectancy. One of the girls sat down at the piano and soon others, including the visitors, gathered around her joining their voices in a round of lively folk songs. As soon as all of the members had arrived, the meeting resumed a more formal character. As usual, the tabulated results of the tests were displayed for inspection and the principles of scoring were explained so that all members could follow and check the interpretation.

Infield, pleased with the results, proudly announced a "clean bill of health" for the community and ranked it high among the American cooperatives.

And Macedonia's success in mid-1952 certainly seemed complete. Business was at an all-time high, and for the first time, the community was expecting to make a profit of at least $4,000 by year's end. The dairy herd of 20 Guernseys was ranked third highest in the state. The community's children were happy and growing. A fifty-hour work week kept them busy, but left some time for individual and communal leisure activities. One of the foremost sociologists on group living had empirically verified their success. In spite of certain frictions and difficulties, Art Wiser wrote in 1952, they experienced "abiding satisfactions":

> Seeing green grass grow where once was raw red earth. Having a family, and a tempo of living oriented around the family. Seeing friends, and feeling oneself grow in self-understanding and competence. Knowing our work is valuable. Feeling the sheer artistic creation of establishing an affirmative, sound way of living in a world gone awry. Knowing the comradeship of a group of men and women who will stay one with another, working and creating together, accepting each other…. One feels a man as a man is meant to be.

This sense of purpose and dedication was to stay with them, in some cases for the rest of their lives. But the relative serenity and success of the community would not. In the second half of the year, a series of events rapidly unfolded that were to make a mockery of Infield's assessment, plunge the community into the most difficult period of its existence, and dramatically alter the course of its development.

# Crisis 1952-1953

The series of disasters that struck the community during 1952 and 1953 began after the birth of Kenneth Foster, son of Al and Grace, in January 1952. He was a normal, healthy child, and the proud parents had him circumcised on Friday, January 25. Too late, they realized he was bleeding profusely, and an emergency transfusion could not keep him alive. He died the next day in a Clarkesville hospital.

This was the first time the community had experienced a death, and it left most bewildered. The stunned parents did not want a formal funeral; the undertaker brought the body home on Monday, and several members buried the tiny body in a secluded spot on the property. Art planted a white pine seedling on top of the grave, and Ginny led a memorial service that morning. Al especially was devastated. He was a man with a high degree of trust in the abilities of science and reason, and he could not understand how such a tragedy could have happened. The Fosters would have difficulty finding fulfillment at Macedonia again.

*In 1952 our Center House, where we had our common meals, burned down. That was a real tragedy with some comic relief besides. Mark Kurtz had a fire extinguisher and he said, "How do you get this blamed thing to work?" He finally pulled the right trigger and had it go off right in his face! So he was completely out of action. Then we said, "Oh, gosh—we'd better get out our new tarp to cover the piano. Otherwise the piano will be wrecked by all this water that we're pouring on." So in the end we lost both our piano and the $50 tarp.*

-Art Wiser, Macedonia trip,1998

On the morning of November 1, 1952, the community gong – used to summon the members to the Dairy House for the daily "juice time" in the morning and lunch at noon – began ringing off schedule. Worried men hurrying to the house found a section of ceiling about eight by ten feet on fire.

Later they guessed that a stove-pipe must have rusted through, and when the fire was lit for the first time that fall, sparks going up the chimney ignited the rafters. "We were rattled," Art wrote to Morris, "And did some crazy things." Their best chance to put out the fire was the new nine horsepower irrigation pump down by Shoals Creek, which had frozen solid. In the ten minutes it took to thaw out the pump, the fire had spread too far for them to control. "By the time the old hose was dragged around to the other side, fire at the first place was spreading again." When the sawdust insulation in the walls caught fire, the community could only look on in despair. Convinced that they would be able to put out the fire, no one had attempted to salvage anything from the building until it was too late. A typewriter, the business's mailing list and the community's library were consumed, along with the physical and symbolic center of their lives. Nobody was living in the house at the time, but for now they would have to find somewhere else for communal meals and gatherings. It was a tremendous blow.

As if fire and death were not enough, one after the other the members began contracting jaundice. Art had had it that February, and for a long time they were able to contain it, but now the disease swept

Ed Whitworth, a local hillbilly, came to visit Mark while he was down with jaundice. He brought him a bottle of "white lightning," the local corn liquor. He said, "This will cure your jaunders!" He would take a sip and give Mark a sip till the bottle was gone. The stuff was so powerful Mark did no more than taste.

-Peggy Kurtz, 2008

through the community. By the end of the year more than half the community had succumbed, leaving only eleven healthy adults. Work in the shop suffered accordingly, and morale was extremely low. Furthermore, a final accounting for the year showed that instead of making a profit of $4000 as expected, the business had inexplicably lost $5000.

By far the worst blow, however, struck at the very end of the year. Delf Fransham was backing up a truck loaded with firewood near their house on December 29. Macedonia had a rule that no one should back up a truck without someone else watching and directing from outside the vehicle, but Delf could see his son Johnny playing nearby, and did not realize that his twenty-month-old son Nicky was there too. Backing up the truck, he struck and killed his son.

Katie was inside putting supper on the table when Delf came in with Nicky in his arms. She was devastated. "I was beside myself—absolutely frantic—but Delf steadied me. We took our child to our doctor in Clarkesville, who was also the coroner, and explained what had happened."

It was a bitter ending to the year when Nicky Fransham was buried beside Kenneth Foster. Such an experience would be enough to tear a community apart, but instead it drew the group together in a remarkable way. Several days after the burial, Art and Mary—still stricken with jaundice—glanced out their window to see Delf and Katie coming down from their house with suitcases in hand. No one in the community felt able to give the Franshams the support they needed, and the Wisers assumed that Delf and Katie were off to Pendle Hill, the Quaker retreat center near Philadelphia, for counseling and guidance. But a few hours later, the Franshams were in the Wisers' house. They had taken Nicky's toys to the town's poorest family, who had a child Nicky's age. Then they went from family to family (most

were housebound with jaundice) to share their grief and draw comfort from the shared sense of deep loss. "They will be strengthened by this tragedy," Ginny Newton wrote at the time, "And I feel that the whole community will be. It is the sort of experience which deepens and strengthens bonds of love and friendship."

Matya and Kostya Kolitchew, pictured here, were war refugees from Russia whom Macedonia hosted until they could get themselves established in America. Although Matya's credentials as a physicist were more than enough to get him a job as a professor at nearby Piedmont College, his English was still not good enough, so Macedonia agreed that Al Foster would co-teach his classes until his English improved. This arrangement worked well until Matya was ready to teach on his own. When Al arranged to keep his job at Piedmont – without the community's knowledge or approval, a major crisis ensued at Macedonia.

Looking back on the experience, Art described it as if a rift in the clouds revealed the sky to people who had never seen it before. "That experience, more than any other in Macedonia's history, drove us deeper together and also in search of a deeper meaning in life. It lifted a veil, gave us a glimpse of a depth of sharing that we had never even dreamt of, let alone looked for." Now that they knew such a depth of relationship with each other, the Macedonians would be content with nothing short of this level of brotherhood.

Before long, however, unfolding events brought new crises to the community. Al Foster, a Cornell Ph.D., had long chafed at the lack

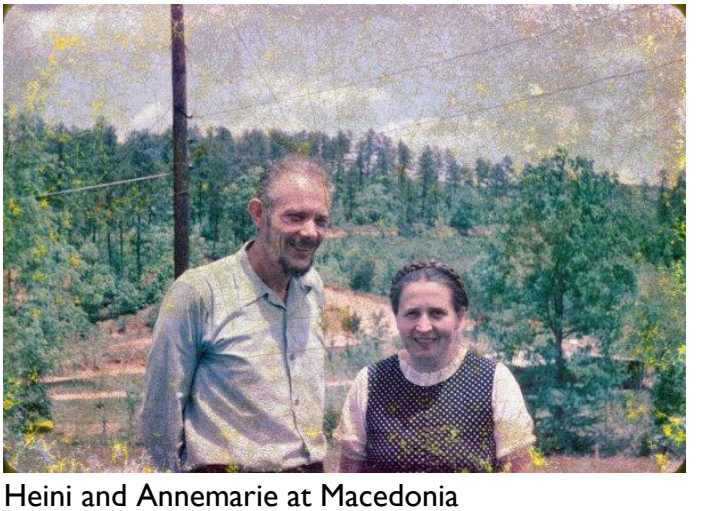
of opportunity to use his academic expertise at Macedonia. With the agreement of the community, he co-taught a physics class at the nearby Piedmont College in the spring of 1952, and before the summer vacation—this time without the knowledge of the other Macedonia members—he had signed a contract to continue teaching part time the following year. Besides being dishonest, Al's actions were especially hurtful to Si Kantor. Piedmont College had recently received a large grant from an anti-Semitic philanthropist on the understanding that they would promote his ideals. This infuriated Si. He and Hal were Jewish, and as a child Hal had had to flee from the Nazis, arriving after great difficulty in the United States. In a letter to her parents, Mary reported that Si had violent feelings toward Al. Shortly afterwards the Fosters announced that they were leaving.

By May of 1953 the community was in a state of chaos. The tenacious jaundice epidemic had gotten so bad that the Kneelands' house had to be turned into a ward to house the patients. Meanwhile the rest of the community was still using a tent for communal meetings and meals. The unhappy departure of the Fosters did nothing to defuse tensions, and conflicts became more frequent and explosive. The Kantors and the Moyers were upset and bitter over Al's actions, and harbored hard feelings on this and other issues. In this time of confusion came a visit that was to lead Macedonia on to its next step.

For some years the Macedonians had been aware of visits to the states from members of the Society of Brothers, a Christian community based in Paraguay. Since 1949, members of the Society of Brothers (most simply referred to them as "the Brothers") had had intermittent contact with Macedonia, meeting occasionally at Pendle Hill for community or business conferences. In the spring of 1953, when Macedonia heard that Heini and Annemarie Arnold were visiting Tom and Florrie Potts – a Quaker couple living in Philadelphia – they wrote a

letter inviting the Arnolds to Macedonia. Regrettable early contacts between Heini and Annemarie and visitors to Macedonia had left the Arnolds with a poor impression of the community, but nevertheless, at Tom and Florrie's insistence the Arnolds made the long trip down to Georgia in May.

The Macedonians felt an instant affinity with the Arnolds. Mary wrote to her family, "These two people are unusual, an almost new kind of human being without seeming to have pride, defensiveness or pretentions at all. He is warmhearted, quick to smile, relaxed." This steadying influence was just what Macedonia needed. Heini and Annemarie had lost two children of their own, and could give the Franshams comfort and help toward healing that none of the others could offer. Heini had considerable experience in counseling community members in his years with the Brothers, and rather than drawing back from the mounting tensions at Macedonia, he used his insight to help the struggling group. Heini realized that the bitterness of the Moyers and Kantors was poisoning the rest, which he pointed out to them and asked them if they didn't think it would be better to leave. However, they encouraged the two families not to leave without doing their best to clear the air by laying out all their grievances. To the rest of the members he pointed out the danger of committing oneself



Heini and Annemarie at Macedonia

to a community in anything but the fullest capacity. The actions of the Fosters had shown that they were unable to relinquish their self-importance, and the result was bitterness and hatred.

Shortly after the Arnold's visit, the Macedonians decided to begin a series of meetings to deal with the divisions in the community. Si Kantor and Eddy Moyer claimed that there was no real group at Macedonia, and some agreed. Through repeated talks, Delf had managed to convince Si to explain the reasons for his bitterness but felt that Si had a fundamental difference with the rest of the members in that he was unwilling to "turn the other cheek," a essential principle for the many pacifists in the group. Art, Mary, Ginny and Margret still did not feel well enough to attend the meetings, but when the Kantors announced that they were leaving, the whole community gathered in the Kneelands' living room so the jaundice patients could participate in the meeting. Si had insisted that he would not share his grievances unless all the members were present, and

*Heini liked the genuineness and sometimes aggressiveness. He came back where I was sick with jaundice to tell me he'd just seen two men in a terrific argument – it was Mark Kurtz and Si Kantor, and Si was waving his fist in Mark's nose and Mark was standing with his hands in his pockets absolutely stolid, on this narrow catwalk that had no railing. And Heini said he loved them both.*

-Art Wiser, 2002

The Macedonia Shop Crew on the catwalk where this incident took place

now they came pouring out. The community was in a state of total disunity, he said. They were a collection of egos, a collection of rugged individuals seeking love and brotherhood as individuals. Besides the Piedmont College crisis, he was frustrated and upset for the lack of personal responsibility for the community's finances and unexplained losses of money from the petty cash box. There was no group at Macedonia, he said, and nothing to give himself to. Whatever the other members may have felt of his complaints, his last words struck home:

> The trouble with this place is that everyone is hanging on to his last inch, and until he gives up his last inch, there can't be any community. I've had it up to here. I don't trust you any more; even if you were to say you're willing to give up your last inches now, I wouldn't believe you. I'm not sure I'm willing to give up my own last inch, so I'm leaving.

He was not open to further discussion.

Macedonia had never fully resolved the question of clarifying their purpose. The members had felt it necessary to be open to people of all backgrounds and persuasions, but nearly a decade in community had taught them that a clearer basis for community was needed. "We are trying to define what such a calling involves," Mary wrote to her parents, "So that folk like the Fosters who want mostly to live near congenial people won't attempt it." For a while they had tried group therapy, an exercise where all in the group say everything that comes to mind about another person. While it did teach them the importance of honesty in their relationships, Delf wrote that "these meetings were sometimes violent and emotionally painful." Once someone had become so frustrated he had said that the only way to solve his problem

was through violence. The group had abandoned this approach, but needed a new way to work through their problems.

In June the Kantors and the Moyers both formally withdrew their membership in the community, but the Moyers felt they needed to stay for a few more months so they could arrange to stay elsewhere and emotionally disconnect from the group. During this time the remaining members—the Mommsens, the Kurtzes, the Wisers, the Newtons, the Kneelands and the Franshams—began to meet regularly for what became known as "purpose meetings," meetings to work through their differences, not with the object of uniformity, but of finding some common denominator with the depth to hold them together and as a basis for resolving tensions. Common political and social beliefs, psychological techniques, sociological analysis and economic viability had failed to fill this need; now they began to move in a markedly more spiritual direction.

This purpose or basis was definitely not about faith, however. Mark was a staunch atheist, Art, Dick and Dave agnostics of varying degrees. The others, while of Christian backgrounds, remained convinced that community was possible across differences in faith, and so their meetings attempted to find ways to find common ground without faith of any specific category. After several weeks the community seemed to be gaining ground through these meetings. In late July the group wrote to Kingwood, a similar community in New Jersey with whom they had had some contact, reporting on their community and their meetings. The letter stressed that the "strength of community is related to the extent to which the life of the group is rooted in the inner faith and conviction of the individual," and declared a spiritual rebirth necessary for this.

These meetings continued throughout the summer, until September, when the community sent a report to all their friends, enthu-

siastically announcing that the six families who had begun meeting together had come to a common purpose they could all agree on, and had made an "unreserved commitment" to each other: "We commit ourselves to seeking eternal truths and the ways of perfect love, that we may learn to live with all men as brothers." Other fundamental principles they agreed to were to own all their property collectively, to maintain an "open door" to visitors, to practice honest relationships and abolish gossip, and to consider the welfare of the group more important than the welfare of the individual.

Not long after this breakthrough, the Wisers, who were still suffering from jaundice after more than a year, left for an extended visit to Mary's parents' farm in upstate New York to recuperate. The purpose meetings continued, and the rest of the community kept the Wisers closely in touch.

That summer, the Macedonians had written several times to the Society of Brothers in Paraguay, asking that they send a couple or single person to Macedonia for an extended period, to explore a closer relationship and to learn from each other as the Macedonians sought for a common purpose. In October a delegation of three arrived at Macedonia: Hans Herman Arnold (Heini's brother), his wife Gertrud, and Gerd Wegner. Through the visits of Heini and Annemarie, the group already knew they had much in common with the Brothers, despite their cultural differences, and this visit took them farther in the relationship. One day Dave Newton asked Gerd, "Wouldn't it be best to sell Macedonia and for us and Kingwood to begin anew?" Intensely inward questioning would mark the next six months as the Macedonians explored this question. By the end of October they were seriously considering how this could be arranged, and wrote a letter to the Brothers in Paraguay, declaring that they felt "impelled to explore the possibility of unity." The delegation also visited Kingwood in New

Jersey, and found a similar eagerness to join together. It was decided that there should be a conference in Macedonia (which had the bigger property and work to support such a beginning) to further explore this idea.

But the year of disaster was not quite over yet. On November 2, almost exactly a year after the Dairy House fire, the Wisers' cabin burned to the ground. In their absence it was occupied by Edward Wiser, Art's brother and a frequent visitor to Macedonia. A poorly vented stove caused the blaze, and the Wisers lost almost all their possessions. As sympathetic as they were to the Wisers' plight, the Macedonians felt that even such a loss could be easily carried with their newfound unity. One member wrote:

> We cannot of course enter fully into the meaning of this blow to you, but we know it will be deep and hard to bear. For that part of the planning, dreaming and labor on the house in which we shared we also grieve. Nevertheless, the thought has come to us that there may be even in this a sure and rich sense of joy for you that this loss (and even much greater loss than this) may be shared securely in the love of God and with your brothers and sisters in that love.

The Wisers' absence caused some complications as Macedonia met with the delegation from the Brothers. Art and Mary resisted the idea of uniting with the Brothers, and being so far away meant that communication was difficult. When misunderstandings arose, the Kneelands traveled to New York to tell the Wisers about what was happening at Macedonia, but they only returned with more questions of their own. In spite of their hesitations, the rest of the community sent another letter to Paraguay, reiterating their decision to join and offering the Macedonia property as a potential *Bruderhof*, or community. After a month of living at Macedonia, the delegation from the Brothers traveled on to Kingwood, where many members were also

"Mom and Pop Kurtz" – Mark's Parents – in front of their house in Macedonia, which later became the communal dining hall.

eager to explore the ty of joining the Brothers. Mark Kurtz went with them as a representative from Macedonia, and he and Gerd visited the Wisers to discuss developments at Macedonia. After two days of intense discussion, the Wisers agreed with Mark and Gerd that Macedonia should continue the effort toward a joint community. In December the Wisers returned to Macedonia, and future plans became clearer. Macedonia arranged for a conference on their property with Kingwood, the delegation from the brothers, and Guy Johnson, a member of a *Bruderhof* in England, early in the coming year. Houses were renovated to accommodate the swell of visitors, and all at Macedonia eagerly awaited the beginning of the conference.

Nineteen fifty-three had been a watershed year in Macedonia's history. In their annual letter to their friends, the community wrote:

> This has been for us a year in which life's contrasts of joy and sorrow have been etched in strong relief. Under the impact of grief through the death of Nicholas Fransham, we became aware of a deep level of love and unity in suffering. This gave us the beginning of an experince that no matter what ills or differences might come, we had known life at a deeper level, and if we could approach life's problems in a spirit of seeking and openness, we could solve any problem. In our group search, we have known the pain of growth and adjustment through conflict, tension and crisis. Through these experiences we have sought and found a common

> inner purpose and meaning to our life that provides a religious center of belief in which we have found unity and strength together. We feel that life's unending cycle of life and death and life symbolizes what has taken place in our lives individually and in our life as a group: a dying to the self and a rebirth to a new way of life.

Now as the community celebrated the depth of their unity and prepared for the conference, no one could have foreseen that in a matter of weeks the community would face a decision that would strain this unity past the breaking point and confront the Macedonians with a polarizing decision.

# 1954 Division

The first month of 1954 was spent in feverish preparation for the anticipated conference. The opening of the year saw the brothers still in Kingwood, where Ginny joined them for their New Year's celebration, with Dave joining her a week later. The *Bruderhof* in Paraguay, sensing the importance of the developments in the States, sent Will and Kathleen Marchant, who arrived in Kingwood about the same time. The Brothers were eager to establish a community in the States, and the beginning of the meetings with the three communities was set for February 1. After nearly two days of meetings in Kingwood in early January, Gerd Wegner reported that they had decided to call the gathering a "communal start. The word 'conference' was rejected as unfitting." All three groups seemed sure the meetings would result in complete uniting, but the issue of the basis for the new community was still left unclear. So were the conditions of the gathering. Were the members from Macedonia and Kingwood joining the Society of Brothers on the Brother's terms? Or were the three groups joining and combining the best of all their principles? These questions would remain unanswered until the meetings began.


The Kingwood Community

Before long the Newtons returned to Macedonia along with Gerd Wegner, who helped the busy community prepare for the impending influx of new people. At the end of the month the others arrived: Fran and Pearl Hall, Jim and Kore McWhirter and Hazel Brownson – all members of Kingwood – and the representatives from the Brothers: Hans Herman and Gertrud and Will and Kathleen.

The first meeting began barely twenty four hours after everyone had arrived at Macedonia, and the group launched eagerly into questions of who would travel to Paraguay to replace the Brothers who had come up to the States, and where a new joint community could be located. In response to certain reservations, Hans Hermann acknowledged that "A fuller explanation of the [Bruderhof] life is due the new community," and a summary of letters from the Brothers in Paraguay was promised. The communities in Paraguay were concerned that the three communities were moving too fast and that all the issues of joining together might not be fully discussed. At the next meeting on February 3, the letters that Hans Hermann summarized also raised the question of whether the gathering in Macedonia was a uniting or a joining: were the three groups merging or were the Macedonia and Kingwood members joining the Brothers? Five Kingwood members had already requested to become members of the Society of Brothers. Macedonia, protective of its newfound and hard fought-unity, wanted to make a decision as a group. They decided to explore these questions further in the next meeting.

The third meeting would be a crucial one in the next three years of Macedonia's history. Some small business items were clarified, and then, as Art Wiser remembers it:

> Hans Hermann leaned back in his chair and took a deep breath (I think he realized the deep significance of what he was saying), and he

said, "Dear friends, the basis of our life is Jesus Christ, and about that we are not open." For me…that was like a door slamming in my face.

Dick Mommsen felt like he had been hit over the head. Many of the Macedonians felt bewildered and disappointed. Macedonia had always accepted members from any or no faith, and the members expected that the Brothers would at least be open to discussing this point. The question that had long been in the background now came to the fore: did one need to have a common faith to live in community? The Brothers were clearly not dogmatic on this point; they did not condemn Macedonia's interfaith basis, now or at any time in their relationship. But to them, community was merely a natural outgrowth of a faith in Christ. Their unity on that basis was even more important than the communal structure, and on this point they were unswerving.

Hans Herman and Gertrud Arnold

By declaring their openness in a communal start, some of the Macedonians had hoped for a combined community on an interfaith basis. Mark Kurtz remembered:

> Art and I felt we would try to divide them [the Brothers] up among us with the idea of trying to win them over to our way of thinking…. The Wisers and we were living together in one house, so we divided up and our family went into another building. Hans Hermann and Gertrud happened to be the family we had….. I tried very hard to win Hans Hermann over to our way of thinking. We talked till midnight, after midnight, and each night I would go to bed thrilled with an awakening faith. Then during the day I would think of all the arguments. We would have to go at it again each night. Peggy and Gertrud would get tired at midnight, and Hans Hermann and I would fry a steak and go on.

By the fourth meeting it was clear that there were serious divisions in the Macedonia group about how to proceed. Some, like Dave and Virginia Newton and Delf Fransham, declared themselves completely ready to join the Brothers. Some were hesitant. Others were still reeling from Hans Hermann's declaration, but all wanted to continue the meetings. Macedonia had wanted to make their decision in regard to the brothers as a group, but by now it was clear that the divisions ran too deep. Someone asked if the Macedonia members could release each other from their commitments, so that each could make the decision that he or she saw best.

When the Macedonia members met alone on the afternoon of February 9th to discuss their commitment to each other, the atmosphere was tense. Barely a week ago they had gathered with every intention of joining as a new and united community, and now the outcome of the conference was in serious doubt. That evening when the whole conference reconvened, Ivan Kneeland announced that the members had released each other from their pledges, and that "each is now free

to follow the light as he sees it at the moment." This was a defining moment in the history of Macedonia. For the past decade the members had labored through moments of elation, heartache, crisis, and struggle together. But now it was clear to all that something momentous was happening, something beyond the grasp of their intellects, and to hold each other rigidly to their mutual commitment would have been a betrayal of Macedonia's deepest values.

The meeting continued as the group grappled with questions of faith, group structure, membership in the Society of Brothers, relationships, and other important aspects of community life. Mary Wiser wrote to her sister:

> Though the questions to be worked through are momentous as regards our lives, the quality of these days is quietness, and order, humor as well as thoughtfulness, some pain of striving, quite in contrast to the times in the past when there was unrest and excitement and high tension over matters of much less importance.

It rapidly became clear that the former Macedonia members were drifting in two separate directions. The Kingwood members who were attending had all announced their intention of joining the Brothers, and on February 23, Hans Hermann asked the Macedonians to clarify where they stood. Mark and Peggy Kurtz, Dave and Ginny Newton and Delf and Katie Fransham all made or confirmed their requests to become novice members of the Brothers. Chuck and Carmen Stanaway also indicated their willingness to join. The other three couples – the Wisers, the Mommsens, and the Kneelands, were eager to continue the meetings but did not feel they could take part in a community based on a single faith. These three made it clear that if the Brothers wanted to use the property to establish a community, they would

without hard feelings move elsewhere and establish a new interfaith community.

The Brothers in Paraguay, however, had always felt that their new community should be located in the north-east, and although Hans Hermann had not revealed this out of sensitivity to the Macedonians' enthusiasm for their property, at the meeting on March 8 he told the whole group that they would look for a new community elsewhere. This decision made it clear that the eclectic community at Macedonia could not continue, and that the members who had found a new basis for community life with the Brothers would soon be leaving. It was a wrenching decision. Mary Wiser wrote of it as "a bad dream," "an experience of being torn, drawn, and quartered." There was no bitterness or resentment, however:

> We don't feel that we have been leveled by the Bruderhof, nor do we have resentment for those who will leave. Within our group was the desire for the complete loss of self in a religious group thru which God can work and with the new Bruderhof beginning in the States we see how sooner or later our group would have divided because some would feel they had to go. We who are left here do not think of Truth or God as revealed to man in such a complete creed…. We aren't as sure as the Brothers that we have the Truth and will not satisfy those whose need is for complete answers. Yet we are impelled by a strong faith and know that for us life is rich and growth comes as we try to live what Truth we see. It is in a way harder because we don't have the security that the Brothers do of being of one heart and one mind. But somehow we feel more at home out of it. Perhaps we are perverse; perhaps it is just that we see life differently.

Since half of the former Macedonia membership would be leaving and the other half staying, the divided community now faced the agonizing task of carving up the assets and liabilities of the Macedonia property. This could have been a bitter and acrimonious experience, but the mutual good will of both communities to the other was overwhelming, perhaps unprecedented in the history of communal living. The two groups split the business, and decided that they would run the two branches cooperatively. This decision was to have recurring consequences over the next few years. The debts were also divided, with $25,000 of Macedonia's $78,000 debt going to the Brothers. By the end of March the two distinct communities were meeting separately, and the decision was made that April 1 would mark the formal division of the two.

It was several months before the Brothers located a suitable property, Woodcrest, in upstate New York. On June 15 the first truck left Macedonia bound for the new *Bruderhof*, and on June 29 the last of the former Macedonia members left to begin their new lives with the Brothers.

Macedonia's split caused an upheaval among those interested and involved in American communities. Macedonia had been known for its acceptance of all creeds, and that eight of its members should join the Brothers seemed unthinkable. A Fellowship of Intentional Communities conference had long been planned in Macedonia for that May, and some of the participants, who came from all over the States, were hostile to the Brothers and to the division of the community. Henrik Infield and Wendall Cramer of Gridley community in California were particularly negative. Again as in 1952 when Infield had assessed Macedonia's cooperative potential, the scholars at the conference who studied communities were at odds with many of the members of the FIC who attended. Many attendees – like Vonnie Burleson, who later

joined Macedonia – found the academic style of the conference completely contradictory to the contagious enthusiasm of the members of Macedonia and the Society of Brothers.

Perhaps more upsetting to the community was the response of Clarence Jordan, a close friend of the Koinonia Community in Americus, Georgia. He was upset at the Brothers, as he saw it, for bringing division into the group, and wrote an angry letter to the Brothers, accusing them of tearing the community apart. Macedonia felt it was important that he understand their position, so toward the end of April they sent representatives from all four groups – Art Wiser and Delf Fransham to represent the remaining and departing members of Macedonia, Fran Hall to represent the group from Kingwood, and Hans Hermann to represent the Brothers – to clarify the situation with Clarence. Upon their arrival in Koinonia, Clarence called the whole community together and invited the visitors to share their experiences. Each of them described their experience of the preceding months, and when they had finished, there was a long silence. "This is holy ground," Clarence finally said. He apologized for his letter and retracted his accusations.

Clarence Jordan, Koinonia

Most of the attacks at the time accused the Brothers of taking over Macedonia or otherwise coercing its members to join, and that the members who had joined had betrayed their com-

mitment of openness to all faiths. Yet the events of the early months of 1954 were no betrayal, but an affirmation of the strongest convictions of the Macedonians, both those who left and those who stayed. Delf and Katie wrote later to their friends at Macedonia: "I feel there is nothing left to say at this time; that having made our choices in the light of our deepest inner conviction we must be prepared to let those choices stand the test of time." Those who remained were equally convinced of their calling to represent their belief that community was possible across differences in faith.

Many of Macedonia's critics in 1954 attacked Macedonia as if it had made a "community" decision to divide, which was an unfortunate mistake. That the step was taken out of individual conviction was underlined by the fact that there was no group to be loyal to when those who joined the Brothers made their decision. As Art emphasized to Infield in rebuttal to his criticisms, "the community which you tested did in fact disintegrate."

> All of the remaining twelve full members and two provisional members, having decided together to seek uniting with the Brothers, at one point…disbanded Macedonia as a community…. When one couple of us would have doubts, we did not convey them to others. That is not a "community" response. There was at that time no Macedonia Community in existence. The only community here was the Bruderhof, with a group of individuals who had been at Kingwood and Macedonia trying to find their way clear in relation to the Brothers. When one and then another of us came, after much anguish, to feel that he had a different calling, it was as lone individuals.

This chapter of Macedonia's history was not just decisive for Macedonia but for the brothers as well. The interaction with Macedo-

nia and other contacts in the States infused the movement with fresh perspectives and challenged them to new expressions of their faith. When Hans Hermann accepted the eight Macedonians into the novitiate – a time of testing in preparation for full membership – he told them:

> Your time of novitiate will be unique in our history. Much more responsibility will rest on each of you than we have asked of novices before. In fact we ask you to carry with us the burden as if you had joined the Brotherhood fully. We hope and pray that this will knit us together and that questions still unclear, like the experience of Christ as He was, is and will be, or the personal recognition of where one's own hindrances to full community life [exist], and of what stand each has to take against his weaknesses, will never become an obstacle but that the Spirit will lead us from one recognition to another, from one clarification to the next, from one experience into another.

The Brothers went out on a limb by accepting these new members, almost none of whom had ever been to one of their existing communities. Nevertheless they took the step, and were rewarded by the rejuvenation of their movement that came at Woodcrest.

# Seeking 1954-1957

The departure of the Brothers in June 1954 left a tiny core group of six adults at Macedonia. The next three years of the community's history would be marked by a growing population and a rapidly expanding business, hallmarks of financial and cooperative success. It would also see Macedonia's remarkably friendly and honest relationship with Woodcrest grow increasingly tenuous as the two communities, although strikingly similar in outward structures, nevertheless maintained deep differences in their character and purpose. These differences would come to a dramatic head in 1957, with profound repercussions for all involved.

Fortunately for Macedonia, a burgeoning membership kept pace with soaring orders in the shop. Norman and Ann Moody came in May, and Sharon Pratt in July; Staughton and Alice Lynd arrived in August, and before long became provisional members. By the close of the year, although there were still only six committed adult members, there were 11 helpers and an equal number of children. A new center building was completed that summer, and in spite of the reduced share of the business following its partition with Woodcrest, shop sales continued to be high. Although the group lived frugally, there was enough to go around, and they were able to pay the bills. It was a remarkable recovery from the devastating loss earlier that year.

By 1954 it had become clear that the converted pole barn chicken shed that served as a factory for the toy business was insufficient to meet the increasing demand, so in the spring of 1955 work began on a new shop. The new building was "a dream come true," Mary wrote to Morris, "People go there on their free time for fun now." Whether for fun or not, sales were so high the Macedonians had to work day and night that summer to get the orders out.

As Macedonia continued to grow, the relationship with Woodcrest grew as well. Neither community was content to go its separate way, but both wanted to stay in touch and continue to find ways to cooperate even if differences in belief persisted. In spring of 1955, Art visited Woodcrest with a proposal that the communities exchange members for a month. Heini Arnold, now the leader of the new *Bruderhof* in New York, was impressed by Macedonia's openness and willingness to discuss their differences. He wrote at the time, "[Art] is sent by Macedonia to seek a deeper and warmer contact and in spite of the fact there is no full unity in everything now, Macedonia could not be content with the situation and could not rest on the experience of several months ago so that they must seek this unity as far as it is possible on the basis of honesty." Touched by the visit, he wrote to Macedonia, "It is the earnest wish and desire of all members of both groups that there should continue to be complete frankness and openness between us and we are very thankful

*One little anecdote which Dick loved to tell: They were always getting pestered by starving hound dogs snooping around for scraps and company. Dick rigged up an electric contraption in the back that was wired to the house and had a little metal dish to hold food scraps. The dog would come to eat the food and his wet nose would touch the live metal—Screech! And away they would go. Only he forgot to tell Dorothy it was there, and what would happen. The howling was terrific of course, and she did not think it very funny. I think she also got zapped by it!*

Peggy Kurtz, 2008

for all the efforts that have been made to maintain this position."

Woodcrest readily agreed to the proposed exchange, and in April 1955, Tom and Florrie Potts, both new members of the Society of Brothers, came to Macedonia from Woodcrest, and Dick and Dot Mommsen went to replace them from Macedonia. The experience was significant for both parties; Dot later said that the experience had left her with "a longing and desire for unity" between the two communities. Although over the next few years she would be frustrated by Macedonia's apparent inability to share or understand her feelings, the visit left a deep impression on her.

For Tom and Florrie the visit revealed a new Macedonia:

> Earlier the conversation centered entirely on Macedonia and the practical or inner problems they were facing at the moment. Now, as visitors come, questions are answered about the community but there seems to be more a reaching out to the individual to confront him with a decision as to what he will do with his life and a desire to help him play a positive role in building the new society.

The Pottses also noted that the small core of committed members seemed to be "pushing themselves beyond their physical strength" in their work to support the large group of uncommitted guests and visitors. The physical and emotional needs of the community, however, were probably the reason that the Pottses found Macedonia to be more outward-oriented. An apparent sense of purpose and fulfillment in helping others seemed to sustain the members through such demanding times.

The Pottses also noticed that the lack of a common faith seemed to complicate matters at Macedonia. Without a clearly stated purpose and basis, much time had to be spent discussing differences among

both members and guests, and conflicts were only resolved with great difficulty. Each newcomer seemed to "rock the boat" as the Macedonia membership tried to explain the basis for their community and accommodate their visitors' beliefs. While Tom and Florrie were in Macedonia, a family unhappy with Woodcrest's Christian basis came to Macedonia, which seemed the logical alternative. Both communities operated on similar structures; the only significant difference was their attitude to faith in community. Such visits began to happen with increasing frequency, meaning that Macedonia had to deal with a large number of visitors who came to Macedonia because they were unhappy with or hostile to Wood-

When Staughton Lynd first arrived at Macedonia, he was impressed by the way the members resolved their problems. Years later he remembered:

*"It happened that a benefactor had given us a planer, the kind of planer that you push boards through. And a member of the community had taken a truck from our community in northeastern Georgia to somewhere in Michigan to pick up the planer, and he drove it back, going day and night. He got in about five o'clock in the morning. He went to sleep with the strongest kind of instruction that no one was to touch the truck or the planer until he woke up, because he had directions about how to move it. So while he was sleeping another member of the community who, like the man who had driven the truck, was also very handy with mechanical things or thought he was, tried to unload the planer. The planer was sitting in the back of the truck. It was lifted by using pulleys with a metal cable which goes up over something and then down to something else. It all went well. The truck drove away, the planer hovered in the air and then the cable broke and the*

*planer came down on its head, like this, and the cement floor cracked. Well, my reaction was: "That's it! The community is over. Let's go back home." Not so much because the planer dropped, but also what Dick would say to Ivan when Dick got up. But after a while I noticed a strange phenomenon. It was true that Dick and Ivan had gone off and had a little discussion with each other, and nobody seemed to be getting ready to leave. As a matter of fact everybody was going on getting ready for Easter which was three days hence. In a quiet way I scurried about making sure that everyone knew about the disaster which had occurred, because I assumed that once they knew, well of course we would forget about Easter and turn to the problem of the planer. And it finally dawned on me that people there really felt Easter was more important than the planer. And that simply because the planer had dropped, they had no intention of dissolving the community."*

Staughton Lynd in
*This Book is About Schools*

crest. Since the Macedonia membership continued to have a close relationship with Woodcrest, this became a source of able tension over the next years.

The year 1955 began with a flurry of contact with Woodcrest regarding the exchange of members, but during the summer the contact seemed to have lapsed. The heavy work load at Macedonia limited the time any of the members had to maintain the relationship, but by the end of the year tensions between the two communities were beginning to show, and the difficulties of running a business concurrently with Woodcrest would only cause these tensions to increase over the next two years. Macedonia had other obligations, notably the dairy, which kept them from contributing all their time and energy to the toy business. Furthermore, their standard of quality was not high enough to meet Woodcrest's expectations. Chronic shipping delays were the cause of increasing tensions: when gathering the silage or partitioning a house sapped Macedonia's workforce, they inevitably fell behind. In

July 1955 Macedonia received a large order that they accepted without consulting Woodcrest, causing difficulties for both shops. As Macedonia fell further behind, Woodcrest sent a sharply worded telegram questioning whether it was right that they continue to accept orders. The situation was compounded by the difficulties in communication between Woodcrest and Macedonia. Macedonia had no phone – the nearest one was on the wall of the courthouse seven miles away in Clarkesville – and throughout 1956 there were numerous visits between the communities to try to keep the business running.

As time progressed, the relationship between the two communities was becoming increasingly uneven. In August 1956 Heini wrote, "Macedonia comes here and there closer to us and suddenly one feels that the development grows apart again." In September Annemarie Arnold wrote that the relationship "fluctuates." Heini especially was troubled by an apparent contradiction in their relationship: although the two communities remained close, a certain reservation on Macedonia's part frustrated him. This was clearly evidenced in 1957, when a fire destroyed Woodcrest's center building. The disaster was a poignant parallel to Macedonia's own experience, and to show their sympathy and support they sent Staughton Lynd to Woodcrest with a $1000 check, a tremendous gift given their financial difficulties. Yet in spite of the warmth of this gesture, Staughton's visit showed that there were still roadblocks in their relationship. To both communities, unity of purpose was fundamental, and over the past three years, many on both places had wondered why the two could not overcome their differences and join together. Heini summed up Woodcrest's attitude in a letter to another community, Koinonia farms, regarding their relationship to each other. He wrote that if two communities are to be united, the members must "feel they cannot rest and will not fear any struggle until every inch of difference is faced up to and questioned as to

whether it is important enough to let it stand between the two groups or if it should be sacrificed for the sake of unity." From Macedonia he did not sense such willingness. He wrote to Macedonia after Staughton's visit, "It is somehow the first time in my life that I experienced such a close relationship, up to a certain point, and then over months and months not an inch further…. It is, seriously, a baffling thing to me that people can act so close and stop at a certain point."

As always, the rubbing point between Macedonia and Woodcrest, and indeed among the Macedonia members themselves, was the question of the role of faith in their communities. Why could not Woodcrest, as Macedonia did, allow each member to choose to believe in Jesus yet still accept those who did not? In regards to this question Art wrote that spring:

> Somewhere in this area the difficulty seems to lie, that we feel a deep truth; we feel it as a universal truth that we experience with all our heart and confess that there is a uniting force in which men can find complete brotherhood. That this finds expression in every religion and also outside of any established religious heritage; that men can stand together across these differences in expression and be truly united.

Heini responded:

> For us Christ is not a question of terminology, nor an established religion, nor a religion at all. It is the foundation on which our life is built. The deepest problems our communities and every individual has to undergo are the problems of sin, of despair, and of death. Sin and death as the separating power, and despair as the result of this. If it would be for us a question of terminology, it would be not right if we would not be open for change. But for us it is the rock on which our life stands or falls.

By spring of 1957, difficulties regarding the business had exhausted Woodcrest's patience, and Tom Potts, manager of the toy business in Woodcrest, recommended that the two branches of the business split into separate entities. Citing repeated problems in quality, delivery, and communication, he indicated that the differences of the two communities were not merely a matter of business policy but of the fundamental basis of the two communities:

The problem of correcting these difficulties resolves itself into one of a brotherly relationship or not. As long as Macedonia is a separate community we are not in a position to straighten out things on a common basis. We can sit down and agree on a procedure, but if they do not then follow it we have no recourse.

Macedonia responded to the request with distress and surprise, and not a few counter-accusations of their own. In the tense exchanges of the proceeding weeks, it was clear that whatever the details concerned, at the bottom of their disa-

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In spite of frequent tensions during this time, the Macedonians still found plenty of time for practical jokes. Art wrote to Heini in January 1957:

*One thing on the light side: George Burleson brought down a pile of diapers to the laundry, on which Vonnie had written, "To be boiled." George could not resist adding "with two tablespoons of baking soda, one cup of whole wheat flour, and a teaspoon of salt." It just happened that Diana Gieger had to be switched from laundry to cooking that morning, so that Joan Nicholson, a young girl who had just arrived, was doing the laundry by herself. Joan read the note and began to collect the ingredients. It was only when she reached the kitchen and started to get the flour that a question was asked. Whereupon there was a conference over this new idea of boiling the diapers. Had it come from Janet? (Janet being a nurse, we have turned to her frequently in questions of sanitation.) It took several phone calls and one or two trips before it was ascertained that it did not seem a good idea, so the diapers were set aside until the matter could be cleared at a meal! George was much mortified to discover all the repercussions.*

greements was a different understanding of what it meant to live in community. Given their contradictory beliefs about the role of faith in community, there remained questions and resentments that seemed impossible to resolve. In response to Tom Potts's suggestion that the two businesses separate, Art wrote to Heini, "In all these things we sense a basic question as to whether it really is possible for us here to be living in complete community, that is in your minds. Is it an impossibility that you can feel what is here, because of what you believe necessary for the foundation of community?"

Meanwhile, the emotional difficulties of Macedonia's guests were sapping more of their time and energy. Since the difficulties of 1952 and 1953, Macedonia's members had come to believe that "if we could approach life's problems in a spirit of seeking and openness, we could solve any problem." This conviction extended to the problems of their guests and visitors as well, and in the last three years this belief had certainly been tested. Among the influx of "helpers" – Macedonia's uninitiated or temporary members – that had begun shortly after the Brothers' departure were a number of emotionally troubled people. There was "Jane," a single mother who had arrived in August 1954 with three children and a host of emotional problems, which often kept others up into the early morning hours trying to counsel her. "Sam" arrived about the same time, a young man whom Mary described as a "philosopher who doesn't know the first thing about work," but came "looking for discipline, purpose and faith." Bob and Hilda Fransham, parents of Delf, came hoping to save their marriage. Although both lived and worked in the community, they remained separated, presenting the community with a very difficult and painful situation. In July of 1956, a recently married provisional member disappeared with one of the community's station wagons and $80, leaving a note stating that for three weeks he had "come within inches of wrecking" the life

of an 18 year old girl, and that the only way he could control the damage was by leaving. All these difficulties pushed Macedonia to the limits of their emotional resources.

Eventually Macedonia overreached in their efforts to help struggling people. A man came from a mental hospital, thinking that community life might help him overcome his difficulties. He had to be watched day and night, but even such precaution was not enough. One day he escaped from his caregivers and ran naked across the community to the center building where he took out a kitchen knife and began to sever his left arm. He had cut through to the bone before three men were able to restrain him and return him to the hospital. The membership met for almost an entire day to decide how to deal with his case. Although there were some who felt strongly that community life could solve any problem, in the end they were all forced to admit that this situation was more than they were able to undertake. In the midst of this ferment a new bombshell precipitated Macedonia's final and most dramatic crisis.

# Faith 1957

At Macedonia, the communal meals held every noon and evening were an opportunity for the members to talk about things that interested or concerned them, so when Staughton Lynd began reading D.H. Lawrence's *The Man Who Died* at a communal mealtime, he thought the rest of the community would find it interesting, as he had. Not Alma Kneeland. She was a Christian and a former missionary; the book attacked some of her deepest beliefs. As Staughton read on, she became tense, and before he had finished she left the room in tears. She could not be persuaded to come back.

It was a turning point for Macedonia. Unity was a crucial part of their purpose, and on nearly every issue they felt they had a common understanding. Whenever faith or religion came up, however, hackles would rise. In another indication of the same problem, that same month three members had declared that a personal faith in Christ was not enough; they felt Jesus had to be the center of their life as a group. The three eventually backed down, but the incident touched a nerve. Although they had always declared that their community was open to all faiths, it was clear now that somehow the Macedonians would have to clarify their feelings regarding faith. They decided to explore this by reading the writings of different religions, starting with the New Testament, since several of the members were Christians, and the Bible was the source most readily available. Although some had the idea that after that they would progress to the Torah, the Koran, and the Bhagavad Gita, as it happened, they never got past the first seven chapters of Luke. It took several months, and by the end of the summer, the experience had changed all of them profoundly.

Meanwhile, however, there was work to do in separating the business from Woodcrest. In the visits that resulted from negotiating

the separation, the members at Woodcrest could tell that Macedonia was in turmoil. When Ivan and Staughton visited Woodcrest that June, Heini noted that Ivan seemed depressed, while Staughton defended Macedonia's interfaith basis as "the higher truth." Although many of the visits that summer were ostensibly regarding the division of the business, they never passed without prolonged discussion about the two community's religious differences.

These visits became more and more emotionally charged. Following Ivan and Staughton's visit to Woodcrest, Heini and another Woodcrest member, Eric Philips, visited Macedonia on their request to clarify feelings between the two communities. Regarding their reading in the Gospels, however, the Macedonia members requested that Woodcrest allow them to find their own way. Art remembered that Eric, in tears, said, "Here you want to share with us a business and then you come to this thing which is the most precious on our hearts, the thing we most long to share with you, and you cut us out. You don't want to share that with us."

But things were changing rapidly in Macedonia. One by one the members felt they could understand better the position of the Society of Brothers, and before long they requested that Woodcrest send a family to participate in their meetings. Mark Kurtz, a former Macedonia member, and Duffy Black, traveled to Macedonia, and found a wide range of feelings among the Macedonians both toward the Brothers and their faith in Jesus. Some repeatedly expressed an enthusiastic desire that Macedonia join the Brothers, while others were completely opposed. Paramount for some members was the Macedonians' commitment to each other, and there were unspoken fears of another split as in 1954.

This did not seem likely. The Macedonia of 1957 was quite different from the small group who had come together with the brothers

in 1954 still reeling from the tragedies of the past year. Of their visit Mark wrote, "The community is experiencing a good time. They are expanding in numbers, and the relationships between them are good. They are enthused about what they have experienced and found in life. Their letters are aglow with it." Business was good, and an all time high of 50 guests resided at the community, drawn by Macedonia's success at building up an interfaith community. There seemed little incentive to venture into the uncertain territory of questioning their commitment to each other.

But as the summer progressed, the members continued to read from the Gospels. Art Wiser later described what happened. "One after another of us was hit in his conscience by something there. I couldn't point to any particular verse…but each of us was struck in his own conscience." It was not as if an overnight conversion had occurred, but the Macedonians felt they were out of their depth, and once again they asked that Woodcrest send someone down to join in their meetings. Duffy went, this time with Gerhard Wiegand, and immediately the two found themselves in a difficult situation. Macedonia was as divided as ever on how to go forward, and the issue of the Macedonians' commitment to each other hampered any meaningful progress. Feelings ran high, and eventually Duffy and Gerhard had to call on Woodcrest for more help to get through the difficult situations they encountered.

By now, Heini was nearly finished with Macedonia. On the eve of Duffy and Gerhard's departure, Annemarie had written to her mother, "Perhaps we shall withdraw from there very soon. It might be good, thinking of all the other tasks." Woodcrest was itself stretched to the limit. They were in the process of absorbing a large number of new members and were searching for a new location to house them all. The

last thing they needed was another dispute with an intractable Macedonia.

When the Arnolds arrived at Macedonia on September 6, they entered a highly charged atmosphere. Most of the members were reserved towards them, and many of the guests were downright hostile. For the first two days the members met without them. Heini wrote, "I had to think of all the other tasks and hoped we could bring this time to a quick end….I had suggested to Art that we had better realize that we were at a 'dead end' with our 'seeking time' and that such a realization would only be helpful to our relationship." Then, as the members gradually warmed to the Arnolds, a series of meetings began that were probably the most intense in the history of Macedonia.

The next few days are hardly to be described. Long meetings

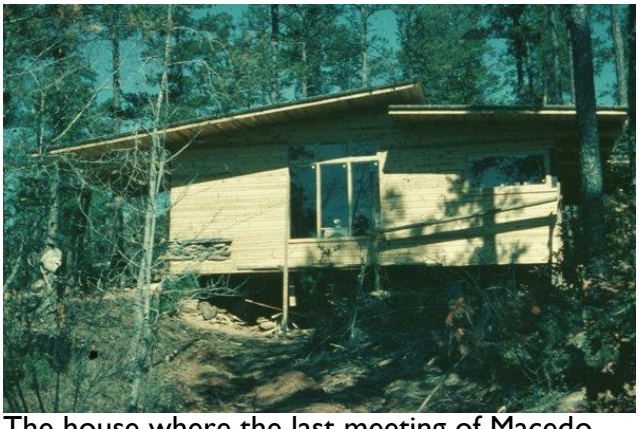
Macedonia in 1957

with the membership went late into the night, and continued with individuals during the day. Matters seemed to be spiraling out of control; the meetings were chaotic. Jack Melancon seemed deeply troubled, and declared his faith in Christ. Others followed suit. Staughton challenged them with Macedonia's commitment to each other. Guests intervened with hostile questions to the Arnolds. Ivan asserted that Macedonia needed a center, and that the group should attempt to join the Brothers. Janet Keith protested. Van Geiger said confessing to Jesus only divides people. Art said that he felt he had harmed some members by opposing their desire for a common faith. Jack asked that his commitment to the community be rescinded. Heini wrote later, "It is not possible to describe the atmosphere of bewilderment and confusion."

On September 10, the members met again with Heini and Annemarie, and everything seemed to fall apart. According to Heini's account,

> After quite a number of people had spoken, Art spoke. Art said that Macedonia has harmed people. He said the fire in Macedonia was in any case kindled by the brothers, but it never was a light and burning flame but a smoldering fire. He suggested that a group be formed around Jesus. People's faces became pale and shocked. Staughton was as though paralyzed. After a while he said, "I feel lost. I feel an urge to put up the banner of truth anew and to call people around it. The truth remains even though people (looking at Art) become unfaithful." Vonnie asked the brothers to take the lead now. It was for the members of Macedonia as if the main pillar had fallen and that the house had to collapse now. At the end of the meeting, some people left the room in tears and would not shake hands with us….It looked to us as if a break or a split of the group could not be avoided.

After several more days of intensely emotional meetings, it was clear that the Macedonian's commitment to each other would have to be addressed. On September 14 both the full members and provisional members met on their own to discuss this. Art described the meeting:



The house where the last meeting of Macedonia's membership took place.

> We went around our circle, and my memory is that there were seventeen of us…. We went around that circle, and by the time each of us had spoken, we all realized we were at a different place than we had been three days before, and we were all very close to the brothers. What had happened during these weeks and months was that one after another of us had been struck in his conscience, for example…Sharon and Alma felt that they had known that Jesus was the answer, and they felt that they had not represented that enough. So they felt struck and were in tears. I felt (now different ones were hit in different spots, so I'm speaking personally now), here are these two, and there may be others…whom I have been keeping apart from each other on the theory that if you represent what you think is best, and I represent what I feel is best, we're bound to help each other, which is like taking logs off a fire and putting them out into a twenty-foot circle from each other. I knew that Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together *in my name*, I am in the midst of them." And if you put three smoldering chunks of

> wood next to each other, they'll burst into flame. But you take those three same smoldering chunks of wood and separate them, and they'll go out. And I felt, *this* is what I've been doing to these people whom I love. And I felt smitten. In the name of truth I've been unloving, and it's not been the truth, and I have nothing to stand on.
>
> So I and one or two others, probably Staughton, were saying, "Those of you who *do* feel close to Jesus, you should be the community, and let the rest of us find our way." And those two or three were saying, "We're the last people to try and be a community: we feel we have betrayed something." By the end of that meeting we were saying "We need the brothers."
>
> So we called the brothers in, Heini and Annemarie, Duffy and Gerhard…. And each one spoke for himself, these seventeen, and every one of the seventeen of us asked the brothers to become the community at Macedonia. The brothers and Annemarie had not said a word. From the beginning to the end they just listened. And I remember Heini sitting, and he said, "That is a miracle." And that was it. We gave them the keys to whatever was locked, and we went in with them to the bank to get their signatures recognized by the bank, went through the legal proceedings, and Macedonia became a Bruderhof.

The reaction from the guests was instant and vicious. Heini related some of the responses he heard in a meeting half an hour later: "'You betrayed us,' 'Gandhi is betrayed,' 'The Brothers used psychological methods,'… 'Art is dishonest,' 'A great injustice happened to Staughton.'" Many left the meeting enraged. Vonnie Burleson remembers one guest responding "I hate you, I hate you, I hate you." Similar responses rippled through the cooperative movement throughout the United States. To observers of Macedonia,

the community's collapse meant that the Macedonians had betrayed their unique mission as an interfaith community. To the Macedonians it meant that they had just given their last inch. They had finally accepted Jesus.

# Afterthoughts

**We're goin' to leave old Georgia now**
**We've got no use for the Holstein cow**

**Ain't got no use for the mud and rain,**
**And the rutted roads are such a strain.**

**We'll take our jeep, we'll take our coat**
**And hit the trail upon a lope.**

**We're goin' to leave old Macdon**
**Ain't got no use for a Beehive home.**

**Done tramped and trudged these rocky hills**
**And kind of tired of paying back bills.**

**We'll say good-bye to Macedonio**
**And turn our head toward Ohio.**

*- found in the Woodcrest Archives, author unknown*

The author of this poem (probably Dick) at least got the general direction right: the members of Macedonia and their families all left within the next few days for Woodcrest or its new sister community in Pennsylvania. Macedonia continued as a Bruderhof for only another six months; in March 1958 local difficulties compelled the Brothers to sell the property. To many in America's intentional community movement at the time, the collapse of Macedonia represented the failure of a bastion of religious tolerance. The response of Dave Dellinger,

a long-time Macedonia supporter, was typical. He heard the story at the 1957 FIC conference, which happened in New York only days after the upheaval of Macedonia. George Burleson, who had only just arrived in Woodcrest, went straight to New York City for the conference, where he reported what had happened. After he had described the collapse of Macedonia and its new foundation of faith, he spoke of coming to Woodcrest as a "new beginning." Dave Dellinger said, "That sounds more like a funeral then a new beginning." But an unexpected defense came from Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker Movement: "Dave, when you meet the living Christ there is something of a funeral, but there's also a new beginning."

Another common misunderstanding of the Macedonia story is the perception that the members bowed to religious pressure. This was most emphatically not the case. The idea to read the gospels, which precipitated the community's dispersal, had come from the members themselves. They asked for guidance from the Brothers when they felt their understanding of what they had read was inadequate, but Woodcrest never initiated religious discussions. The letters of Heini, Mark, Duffy and others reveal that the one thing they feared most was that their actions might be perceived as pressuring the Macedonians to join Woodcrest. They respected the group too much for that. The intensely personal nature of the Macedonians' seeking is reflected in the letter they sent to their friends summarizing the events of that summer:

> Our experiences of the last weeks have been shaking and chastening, as well as joyful. Three or four months ago the members began to read together in the New Testament. Several among us had begun to feel a new experience of Christ in their lives, and those of us who had not felt this believed they should expose themselves to it as best they could. As we read, we all felt a deeper understanding of Jesus'

life and a fresh appreciation of its power and validity. We invited the Society of Brothers to send one or two of their number to join us in that reading, as we sought together to find the meaning of Jesus for our community.

This period of searching led to a deep inner conviction on the part of one member and then another and another that he must find a way to give his life in community to Jesus. Slowly there grew among us the recognition that while we had encouraged each individual to follow his own deepest calling, either we had not recognized or we had not faced the need of some of us to belong to a circle gathered in Christ's name. This recognition brought on us intense struggle as individuals and as a group. For some, it came as an imperative demand to follow Christ with all others similarly called; for others, it brought the harsh truth that the inter-faith basis of Macedonia during the last three years was not as strong and deep-reaching as we had supposed, and that it was not adequate to meet our needs. Each one of us felt driven to question his faith and commitment and strive to give his life more fully.

In the end, the full members and provisional members of Macedonia met, and with no one else present, each one said what he felt he must do. To our wonder, after each expressed themselves, we all felt the same thing: that a new community should be formed based on Jesus and that the Society of Brothers should constitute that community. There were marked differences among us, in that some felt ready to ask for the novitiate in the Society of Brothers, while for others there were strong questions. But for each of us the next step was to live in a Bruderhof community, that we might continue to expose ourselves to the challenge of Christ's life and teaching. At the invitation of the old Macedonia membership, therefore, Macedonia has become a community of the Society of Brothers.

> This came as a shock to some of the non-members here, as it may to some of you, our friends, and we ask each one of you, as we are asking ourselves, that we put our lives completely at the service of the spirit of love and the search for truth. Truly followed, these can ultimately only lead men together. We hope you will try to understand our experience, rather than explain it away.

Ever since Si Kantor had uttered the words in 1953, the life of the community could be described as an attempt to overcome the "last inch" in each individual for the sake of community. Whether it was due to personal ideologies, concerns about the members' commitment to each other, or any other factor, for some time the Macedonians had been resisting giving up their last inches by avoiding the difficult question of faith. This shows that where people expect such a total commitment to each other, they must, as Heini wrote, "feel they cannot rest and will not fear any struggle until every inch of difference is faced up to and questioned." As in 1954, each member had made a personal decision; the proposal to join the brothers came unanimously in the meeting of September 14, and the members were themselves surprised at their unanimity. For those that left Macedonia for Woodcrest, Macedonia was not the fulfillment of their search; it was simply a beginning. As Mary Wiser wrote to Morris Mitchell, "There is a deep nostalgia in parting and leaving yet not really a leaving since Macedonia continues to be our community as we gain also other communities….It really is a wonderful adventure we have been in these twelve years and that we continue in still."

Staughton and Alice Lynd were the only Macedonia members who did not eventually join the Brothers. Still, for Staughton, his years at Macedonia were the highpoint of his life, as he described in his memoir *Living Inside Our Hope*:

> Why did our three years at Macedonia mean so much to us? Because it showed us that people could live together in a manner *qualitatively* different from the dog-eat-dog ambience of capitalist society. The qualitatively different atmosphere of human relationships that we encountered at Macedonia has been our objective ever since. We found it again, to some extent, in the Southern civil rights movement, which sometimes called itself "a band of brothers and sisters standing in a circle of love"; in the practice of solidarity by rank-and-file workers; and in Latin American notions about "accompanying" one another in the search for "el reino de Dios," the kingdom of God on earth. We found it in these other places because we were looking for it; because, after Macedonia, we knew it could happen.

For the rest of the former Macedonians, however, their experience at the community was not something to be proud of or boast about. On one of his visits, Hans Herman had remarked, "Macedonia is so close to the truth that it will lead men to despair." More explicitly, Heini wrote to Macedonia in 1957:

> What I feel is that it is Christ who unites you all in Macedonia, even if you do not recognize this. I thought of the incident of the disciples walking to Emmaus. There Jesus appeared to these two men but they did not recognize him. This incident shows that it is possible that the hearts of men can burn without recognizing the one who kindles them. But there came a moment when the disciples on the road to

> Emmaus did recognize him. It is not for us to say that you should have recognized this then or at this time or that time, but we feel a great danger if it is Jesus who kindles your hearts and over years there are some among you who insist that it may have been Buddha or Mohammed, or someone else.

For their resistance to the truth the Macedonia members felt that they had to repent for the rest of their lives. The following accounts tell how Hans Hermann, Mark Kurtz, Mary Wiser, and Dorothy Mommsen viewed their experiences at Macedonia years later.

## Hans-Hermann Arnold

***Told at the 20th Anniversary of Woodcrest:***

The meetings [at Macedonia] were very deep seeking meetings, also the many private talks. The question after Christ and why Christ went through and through and challenged me to search my own heart to the last corner why I believed in Christ. Many times we were asked, "Tell us why Christ is more than Gandhi or anyone else." To try to witness for it shook us to the core. Each day shook me up more because we felt it was a life and death question to them. The same we felt was when bitter feelings were expressed like, we had come to destroy "a beautiful garden they had planted and nourished."

Guy[Johnson] had joined us also and we six from the Bruderhof met as often as we could in the wood to pray and consult for the next steps. This was noticed by the others and we were also with some feelings asked about it. We spoke openly then about our human need to

find the right way and that without God and Christ we could not do it and that we had to ask God for help. One after the other came to ask to take part, Fran and Pearl, McWhirters, Hazel, Franshams, Kurtzes, Stanaways and Newtons. Shaking questions were asked why should God demand us to kneel before Him if He is a loving God? But the way opened more and more that it was seen that we owe it to God to do it, in humility. The first meeting of the Gemeindestunde to which Delf and Katie also brought their little Wilym was a real victory and a great joy. During these weeks many other questions were raised. The Services of the brotherhood, the structure of communal life. There was a fear that admonition would harm the inner integrity of man. Over-population and birth control also came up. These were intense weeks, in daytime working in the shop, in the evening meetings, also sometimes in the daytime, and talks. With Mark I had often long talks till after midnight snack. It finally broke through – after someone had said, "We have struggled for a center over years and now they from the Society of Brothers had to point to Christ. The question is are we 'all ready?' I for myself am ready to follow in order to find Christ."

After that the Macedonia group asked to meet alone. This was a tense moment; we wondered what would happen, but as I understood later they released each other from their commitment which must have been a shaking experience for them and moved me very much. Soon after Kurtzes, Franshams, Newtons, Stanaways, Halls, McWhirters, and Hazel asked for the novitiate and on March 28, 1954, after weeks of inner seeking and much struggle they were taken into the novitiate….

The weeks that followed were not always easy. There were two groups in Macedonia now. We from the Bruderhof and the new Macedonia group and those on the journey to look for a place. We were also very short of money and had no capital. Halls and Hazel were keen to

go to Kingwood to sell and settle that. I went there three times to be of some help. Gertrud went to Haddonfield on May 10 in order to take over the Clement family while Bob and Jane went to Primavera. When I had seen Jane first after our searching time in Macedonia, she had asked: "How can you unite with Macedonia; should not Christ be always the only door?" This and other questions showed how intensely people were watching what happened at Macedonia. Many who had rejected churches and with it God and Christ supported the new Macedonia group and others wondered whether we had given in and lost our deep Christian faith. Three events that followed made this very clear soon. We who wanted to build up a new Gemeinde with so many new novices had no place, nor any money, though a work department, and were very weak and scattered looking for a new place. Yes, we had faith in God and had felt his uniting power among us but many deep questions had not been faced yet. The first event was our (Franshams, Art, Gertrud, and my) visit to Koinonia. We met difficult questions from Clarence and others there. But here again it was Art who helped witness for what had happened in Macedonia and we felt that many of Koinonia were spoken to and looked for a deeper community and more sharing also in educating the children. The second event was the F.I.C. Conference that took place in Macedonia on May 7, 1954. Wendell Cramer, Vonnie Burleson, Nicky Maas, Clarence Carr, Harold Winchester and Infield and some from Koinonia had come. Wendell Cramer took the floor right from the beginning trying to prove that we were fundamentalists, European Protestants and Lutheran and a danger to the free spirit of American communities. He regarded himself as living in community. Art challenged him on that and somehow the end of this conference made our witness to Christ a little clearer. We felt quite close to Vonnie B. and Nicky and our talks with those from Koinonia went much deeper. Art was a real help but also a danger, try-

ing to represent as somebody put it, a power against Christ because he tried to compete with humility while only in Christ can we be humble. This had really been the issue in our seeking weeks in Macedonia. Can we really be good, meek, humble, honest, free, living as men alone? Is man that good and loving, or have we to accept Him to become new men in all respects? Are we not all evil men and need redemption?

## Mark Kurtz

***Told at the 20th anniversary of Woodcrest:***

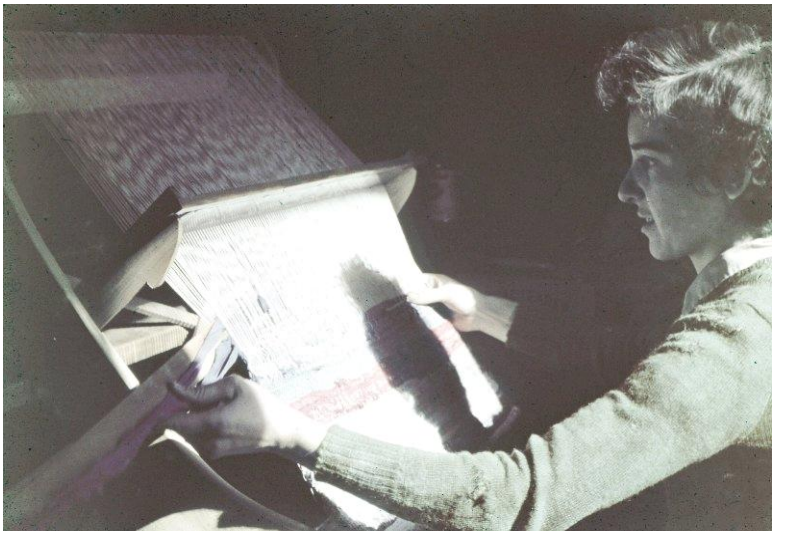
In 1951, Peggy and I went to the meeting at Pendle Hill for the display of our products, and we attended the meetings where Hardy shared about Primavera. It was the first time I had ever met a brother, to my knowledge, at least, and I was very much impressed by what he had to say. I think he was staying with Tom and Florrie Potts, and they invited us over and we had an evening together with Hardy. Now, I was for the first time somewhat moved – I was actually *quite moved* by what he had to say. I was very cautious about the religious side of the life; still, it was the first time that I felt the *living* expression of faith. I recalled the many things my father used to quote from the Bible, from the Gospels and Acts, for which we came into such difficulties in the world Churches; my father (and I, in school time) was called various names for it. These experiences made me turn completely against a belief in God; I felt there was more to be found among those people who gathered together in cooperatives, unions, or Socialist parties where

there was a real concern for the poor and something was done about it. And my life had gone more in that direction. But hearing Hardy awakened something in me, and we asked him to come and visit Macedonia. That didn't take place, but shortly after that Heini and Annemarie came to Macedonia. I was sick at the time. I know the first visit of Heini and Annemarie meant something to many at Macedonia, but I have to say, to my great shame, that I was not open to it then. Macedonia was going through a relatively good time, and I felt "we can do it, and do it without God." Now that is a shaking statement to make, but that's what I felt and expressed it to Heini.

After this visit, things began to go very wrong in Macedonia and continued to come to a crisis among us. At the same time we had outward difficulties in fires that burned down the dining room and the Wiser house; we had sickness (jaundice) where I think very few were still up and working. On top of that the strife between us became stronger, and I was very shocked one day to go to the office and there was some argument about some money being spent, which ended up in a fist fight. Now all, or most of us, had come from C.P.S camps and were very shocked about that. I think we all realized more and more that we had to find something deeper for our lives. For me, on top of all that, to experience the death of two of the little children, one a baby and one a very small child, hit me very hard. I didn't know what to do with it, and I knew of no way to comfort the parents – that's what struck me. Although I felt strong sympathy for them, I knew *nothing* to say. It came to me very strongly that I was actually not basing my life properly and right – that it is not possible man was created to live for just a few years only to return to the dust, and for that to be the end. There had to be a deeper answer than that. And I was well aware that whenever my life came into deep need, I prayed hard in spite of what I would say. Into this terrible time of need Heini and Annemarie came

again. I don't know how they happened to come, if it was just their own inner feeling, but anyway, Annemarie is right here to say. We were then in a completely different mood to receive them than we had been the first time. It started meetings going that meant something to me for my life. I began again to be able to use the expression "God" which I had not been able to use for a long time.

This visit of Heini and Annemarie, I feel, was a turning point for Macedonia; and afterward in our searching together we felt that we wanted to ask the Brothers if they could send somebody to us or if we could send somebody down there for a year. As a result of this, Hans Hermann, Gertrud, and Gerd Wegner came, and this started again a more intense time of searching. It was a continuation for us all of a deepening in the direction of our lives; I think that for the most part we were feeling together to go in that direction.



## Mary Wiser

***From her memoir* Roots:**

How we were led by invisible powers that we did not actually know about, is very humbling! During the time we and the Kantors and Moyers were agonizing over the gulf that was now between us, in May 1953, we were visited by Heini and Annemarie Arnold. Quoting from a letter I wrote my parents on May 17, 1953:

> We have two visitors from Paraguay, from the Bruderhof there—Heinrich and Annemarie Arnold. Heini is 39, son of the founder, has lived 33 years in community. There are over 700 people in their group in Paraguay, Uruguay, England. These two people are unusual, an almost new kind of human being without seeming to have pride, defensiveness or pretention at all. He is warm-hearted, quick to smile, relaxed. They have seven children being cared for at home!

They at once understood that as a group we were in great need. They spoke directly with different ones when we asked for their help, and then they left. But the seven couples of us were never quite the same after that. We had been having 'purpose meetings' to see what level of community we might seek just as the Bruderhof was investigating starting a community in North America.

The story of the search together in the months of February and March 1954 with the Bruderhof has been told many times. It was a very deep-going struggle. We had already come to see that community was only possible in a circle that was united in a faith, where everything else, one's personal tastes, one's relatives, *all* one's property must be given up. There came a point when four of our seven couples were ready to go with the Brothers, turning to Jesus as the basis of faith for life together. The three couples that were left were very close, but stumbled over basic issues; for Art and me, the place of Jesus. We put it that we wanted to go on in full community, but on a basis that would include commitment across religious faiths. We divided all our goods, debts into two, and huge trucks drove out over those mountain roads as our beloved Macedonians went north to help start Woodcrest Bruderhof.

The Stanaways were the last family to leave, and they were to come to us for breakfast on June 29, 1957, but instead they said goodbye to Dana and me at the medical center in Cornelia! Dana, our beautiful healthy boy given early that morning was an encouragement for the new beginnings and a wonderful joy.

We were all different after this experience of encounter with the Bruderhof and the division; we were chastened. We were very sober. I have to confess that I became very identified with the 'success' of this second Macedonia. I think that this is the point when the fight for my soul became serious. Perhaps the same thing could be said for the

whole group, because actually what we were proposing as our basis was false prophesy. We were out to prove that salvation, brotherly life that presumed to look to the kingdom of God, could be had without the sacrifice of Jesus, without the forgiveness of sins.

Considering what I have just said, how great is the love of God that protected us from some of the worst sins to the left, and from spiritualism (though we were faced with this), and led us through the next three years. We are responsible for some things which are a heavy burden still, for which we must forever repent.

What a grace it was that by the end of the summer 1957 we had all been judged, each in his own heart for his own sin, so that we could come as beggars to ask that Macedonia could become a Bruderhof. I experienced a remarkable response as soon as I asked Jesus to show me who He is. Since college I had abrogated to myself the right to decide who Jesus is. I had been reading C.S. Lewis *Mere Christianity*. It helped to open my heart, and very soon after I asked Jesus to show me *who* he was, I found I could believe everything that he says about himself. When I told Heini how I thought I was experiencing Jesus, to my astonishment he said, "Just like me, only my life has been judged." I at once had a burning need for Jesus to judge my life.

## Dorothy Mommsen

I packed up some things and I arrived on the Macedonia farm which was in northeast Georgia. The land is red clay, and there were rolling hills, rugged country, forested with mostly pine and some hardwoods. It was ten or eleven miles out of a small town, Clarksville, up in the hills. This has since become a tourist place but then it was a really sleepy little Georgia town. That was the beginning. There was the Mitchell family, Morris and his wife, and there were a few college students who had come from hearing about it, much the same as I. Morris had started it maybe four years before that. There was a small herd of dairy cows and there was a saw mill.

Our work was to milk the cows and then bottle the milk and get it to two schools about fifteen miles away. For me, coming from my life which had been just going to school, going through the routine of college or the routine of an office job and going to movies, riding a bike, and so on, this place where people were working hard and had a purpose and the air was mountain air was very very attractive to me. So I learned how to milk cows and bottle milk and drive a little model-A Ford. I just enjoyed it and I wrote home very glowing letters to my father, but of course he just could not understand.

The aim of Morris Mitchell had been to build up Macedonia and have the local people work there. But it wasn't long before I realized that people are people everywhere. There was one girl living there with us that the Mitchell family just could hardly abide, and there was a neighbor who had worked with them but didn't any more and they had feelings against him, and so on. People didn't talk straight to each other of course. But still it was the closest I'd come to real life in my entire grown-up life. I had never thought about community living before then, in fact I never heard of it. Then the war ended and the CPS couples came and were wanting to start community, to start sharing and living together – not for anybody's benefit but to build up something. That was totally new to me, and conscientious objection was totally new, I had never heard of it.

Art and Mary came to Macedonia after he had walked out of CPS camp. But just at that time Morris Mitchell decided to set up a course in Chicago to teach cooperative living. He sent out mailings and some people signed up. He wanted his wife Barbara to come, and me, and at that time they had a baby maybe six months old. So we were all to go and devote ourselves to this course. It was called the "Rochdale Institute." So we did that, and Art and Mary and a few others took over the dairy and kept things going. When that was over I went back to Macedonia for a short time.

But going up there to Macedonia made me realize that I hadn't ever thought about war really. I had read Teststament of Youth and it gave me a glimmer, but I still didn't realize that if you take part in all these little patriotic eff orts you are part of the war.

The CPS men had thought out the goal of Macedonia, which was to get away from working for wages and for gain and to make a comfortable life for yourself and let the other people go hang. They

had studied these principles of cooperation, and so it wasn't just to live together, it was to share life, but we did not have a common faith basis.

There were other tiny communities that we were in touch with, like Koinonia and Celo. There was a movement to break away from capitalism, to break away from all that it meant: isolated lives. Of course we were up there in the hills of Georgia, did not read the newspapers, and we just managed to achieve the physical work and some improvements to the place, and start things where we were hoping to make a living.

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