



Marc Clausen, One of our Aggie Grads, Sends a
Report From the Peace Corps

Marc E. Clausen

At the time of our departure from the United States in September, 1962, this, the Ethiopian No. 1 project, was the largest contingent ever sent overseas at one time by the Peace Corps. We number about 280 school teachers, and range in age from 20 to 65 years.

We are located in the oldest empire on the African continent. Ethiopia is one and one-third times larger than the state of Texas. A constitutional monarchy descended from ancient Hamite and Semite tribes, Ethiopia has been ruled since 1930 by Emperor Haile Selassie I. Of the population

Marc Clausen, son of Mr. and Mrs. R. W. Clausen of Tucson, graduated from this College of Agriculture in the spring of 1962, leaving that fall for Africa as a Peace Corps member. This account of his work written to his mother, has been given us to share with former classmates and others.

Marc, while at the University, was active in 4-H, president of the 4-H Service Club, president of Alpha Gamma Rho Agricultural Fraternity and member of Alpha Tau Alpha, Agricultural Education Fraternity.

In addition to his regular teaching at Dessie, he is teaching English to adults in the evening and has, with the other Peace Corpsmen, adopted six homeless teenage Ethiopian boys to feed, clothe, house and educate.

of 22 million, more than half is Coptic Christian and one-fifth is Moslem.

High and Beautiful

I am stationed in the north central part of Ethiopia, in the third largest settlement in the empire. The village of Dessie is situated high on the west rim of the "Rift Valley," and rises from the floor of the valley some 6,000 feet in less than 20 kilometers by road. Our elevation is almost 10,000 feet, providing a panoramic view of rugged natural African beauty.

Dessie is rather typical of Ethiopian settlements, with a piazza that serves as the slow-motion heart of the village, a reminder of past Italian colonialism. Arab merchant shops abound and serve as the "business district." Dessie is snuggled against the base of majestic Mt. Tossa, a sheer mountain face that rises another 2,000 feet over Dessie. We are located in what is known as the "WOINA DEGA" temperate zone, with temperatures ranging from 50 to 85 degrees, providing one of the most comfortable and desirable areas in the whole empire. Very few insects here.

Dessie is a picturesque area, populated by tribes of Amharas, Gallas, Arabs and we "feringes" or foreigners. The people are in general a handsome lot, with brown skin, fine features and strong, lithe bodies. Traditional costume consists of a long, white (sheath-

THE ATTITUDE... an old time horseman or mule skinner, looks like a dangerous position. Maybe Marc just has confidence in the livestock.

like) garment known as a "shama." This is worn much like the sarape of our Mexican neighbors, by both men and women. Most people are barefoot, except those of higher economic standing.

They are a busy people, always hurrying to and fro. The women scurry here and there, with large clay water jugs on their backs. The men can be seen driving donkeys or mules, laden with hay or some product to be sold in the market place. They are always happy, with peals of laughter ringing loudly. A poverty-stricken people by our standards, yet in their own world they are quite joyous.

All 18 in One School

There are 18 American Peace Corps teachers here in Dessie, all teaching in the one secondary school in this province. Our school is the one new comprehensive school in the country, with a program that will permit students to study possible future vocations in teacher training, academic, commercial, technical and agriculture. It is with the latter course of study that I am directly concerned, as I am the agriculture teacher in the school. There did not exist a course of agricultural study here until we arrived in Dessie in September, 1962. I was told by our Ethiopian headmaster to "ESTABLISH AND DEVELOP AN AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM." With no books or tools or any other equipment, this charge proved to be quite a challenge!!

I have over 200 students enrolled in agriculture, which makes the largest of any of the five courses offered. The students range in age from 14 to 20 years old, and come from varied backgrounds. Ethiopia is a country that has a subsistence farming economy, so most of the population has at one time or another been subjected to some phase of farming.

Most are receptive to instruction, but when still tied to superstition and ancient principles of agricultural production, find it most difficult to fully accept and believe what I teach and say. Therefore attempting to teach modern principles of agricultural production to a people who believe that cows that wear charms will give more milk, that black sheep are evil, and that a setting hen must be set in the direction of the Mecca, often proves to be frustrating but never dull.

To be continued