

# HYLAND FLING

By DICK HYLAND

A letter from Occidental's great track coach, Payt Jordan, in Athens, Greece: "... Tonight was spent in the home of Stylianos Kyriakides, Greek marathon champion ...

"My life has placed me with many athletes but to sit as a dinner guest and share the traditional lamb roasted on a spit over the hot coals and listen to this little guy tell of his great efforts to travel to America for the Boston Marathon ...

"It was 1946. Greece had been torn by strife, both external and internal and there was little heart left in the masses. However, there was one, Stylianos Kyriakides, who by the very nature of his training was willing to try the impossible. For here is a game champion. When his feet would blister and could not stand the beatings of the marathons, he took it upon himself to toughen those feet.

"From his porch tonight he gestured to a far away mountain across a long valley and more hills ... these were the places of his training runs at night following his long work day.

"Kyriakides would remove his shoes and vanish into the stillness of night and purposely race over stones and rocks to toughen his feet. There was one stretch of about six miles where he had it especially fine — he was able to run on the stone ballast of the railroad track!

"Then there was the evening when he fell to his knees from sheer exhaustion a mile or two from home. In his words, 'I was very afraid for a minute.' Then he thought that to go to America he must be ready, he could not fail.

"His trip arrangements to America were very involved, financially and otherwise, but when things were darkest he came up with a monumental statement: 'Do I go as one or for all Greece!' This gained him the necessary support and Stylianos Kyriakides finally boarded the first TWA plane to fly out of Athens. With just \$30 in his pocket,

"Upon his departure he was given two boxes of candy by a friend to deliv-

er to a relative in America. He phoned the relative from Boston and was asked to get on a train—\$3 fare—and bring the candy to the relative. With an impish gleam in his eye Kyriakides told me, 'You know, I just sat down and ate all that candy myself. Where was I to get all that money when all I had to spend for the entire trip in America was \$30?'

"To become the Boston Marathon champion is the greatest single honor that can come to a long distance runner. Kyriakides gained that honor. To say that he received a welcome fit for a king when he returned home is putting it mildly. Actually thousands upon thousands of people jammed the streets of Athens to pay homage to the gallant little champion.

"And it was right then that a new chapter in Greek history began. The hero of all Greece spoke nervously but from his great heart when he said, 'Thanks, my people. We must become one again. Forget the past. Turn and embrace each other for we are each of us Greeks!'

"Let us fight no more, Communists or not. America wants to help us if we will help ourselves and this we must do!

"Even as Kyriakides spoke to me tonight his brown eyes became misty and then he smiled and shrugged. It had been done. I thought of another Greek who had run himself to death from Marathon to Athens to bring word of Grecian victory over Persians. Now, again, another of Grecian blood had run another historic race for love of his people and country.

"I came here to be of assistance to the Greek track and field athletes but already I have gotten more than I shall ever be able to give. The people are kind and friendly and my work is very pleasant. My best wishes and kindest regards to everyone at home, Payt Jordan."

A footnote to history.