

Elia Fixed the Swimming Pool

By WAYNE CRANFORD

THE NAME, ELIA KAZAN, DIDN'T really mean too much to the folks around Piggott until he came to their town and made a movie.

Only a handful of the little city's 3,500 inhabitants had even a passing knowledge of Mr. Kazan. They had seen "A Streetcar Named Desire," the picture that won him his first Oscar; and they had heard of the clean sweep his "On the Waterfront" made in 1954. But not until they heard that a motion picture company from Hollywood was going to film a movie in Piggott did they pay much attention to the name.

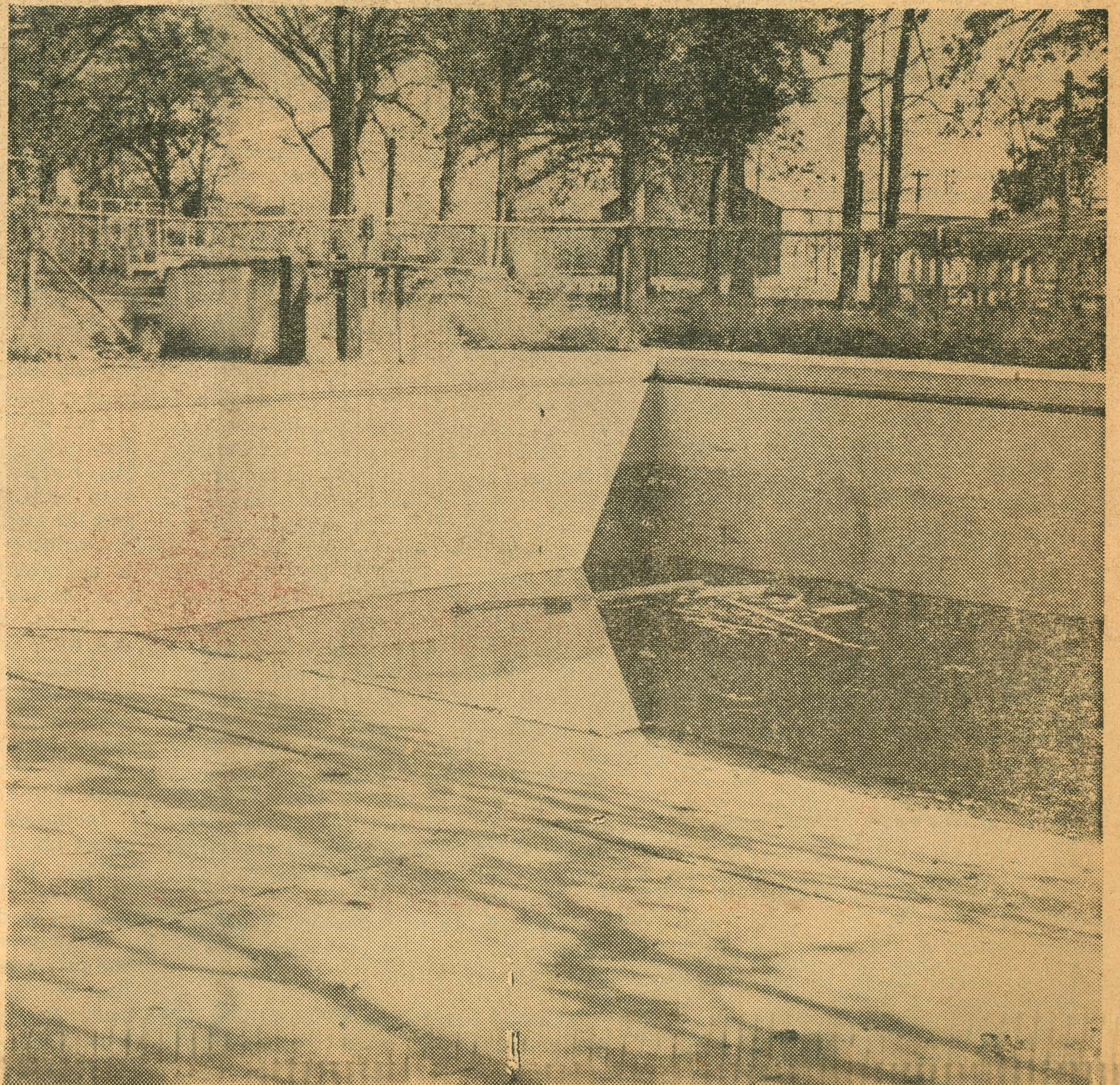
Elia Kazan was to be producer and director of the picture, "A Face in the Crowd." The story was about a home-spun boy from Arkansas who hit the big-time on radio and television, and the scenes for the early part of the picture were to be shot in Piggott.

It was quite a different approach to movie-making, even for Mr. Kazan. He would come to their town and live as one of them. He had just finished making the controversial "Baby Doll" in a small town of the Mississippi Delta, so he knew that the idea was a practical one. But the idea attracted the curiosity of a nation's press. Later, they

(Turn Page, Please.)



The flourish at the swimming pool was the postlude to the many things that happened when a famous director borrowed a town in northeast Arkansas to make a movie.



asked Mr. Kazan what he thought of Piggott and its people.

He told them, among other things: "The people are wonderful — keen-minded people, with a real native wit. You ask, 'How are you feeling?' and you get answers like, 'I must be alive, I'm still breathing' . . . They're not Northern, they're not Southern. They have a kind of flint in them."

And what did the Piggott people think of Mr. Kazan? Besides acquiring a new respect and admiration for his obvious talent, they learned to appreciate him as a neighbor and a friend.

It all started when Toby Bruce, a Florida businessman and a native of Piggott, brought Mr. Kazan and Budd Schulberg to Piggott on Oct. 1, 1955. Mr. Schulberg, the noted writer, had done a story he called "Your Arkansas Traveler." From that came the screen play for "A Face in the Crowd." He had often heard his old friend, Mr. Bruce, tell of life in the old home town; and both he and Mr. Kazan insisted that Piggott be included on a short tour of several towns in the area that were possible locations.

At first glance, Mr. Kazan knew that Piggott was right. The old depot was right there in the middle of town, and there was even a courthouse and a square. He brought members of his technical staff to Piggott a couple of times for preliminary work. Then early in August, 1956, he arrived for the duration of the shooting. He rented a furnished home, and was joined by his wife and their son, Chris, now a freshman at Harvard.

ON AUGUST 8, A 74-MEMBER cast and crew were flown to Memphis, and proud citizens of Piggott met them in private cars to take them the rest of the way.

There were the co-stars: Andy Griffith, who made somewhat of a splash with the "Deacon Andy Griffith" recordings and later soared to stardom in last season's smash Broadway hit, "No Time for Sergeants," and Patricia Neal, a star who was in several big pictures but who never seemed to click. (Those who saw her work under Kazan's direction predict that "A Face in the Crowd" will make her.)

There was the young beauty from television, Lee Remick, who lived in Piggott for three weeks before shooting began. The supporting cast included Tony Franciosa, Sandra Wirth, Eddie Hill, Rod Brasfield, Howard Smith and Tom Bass.

The technical staff was a hand-picked one. Charlie McGuire, Mr. Kazan's assistant director, was the workhorse of the crew. An artist, Dick Sylbert, and a full assortment of cameramen, make-up and wardrobe people and public relations men rounded out the aggregation.

Mr. Kazan called the cast and crew together just before a big get-together party in the school gym. "I expect to come back to Piggott some day," he told them, "and I have heard a number of you say that you expected to come back, too. So I am going to promise you that my behavior will be such that I will not be embarrassed when I re-

On the Cover

When you are working for a perfectionist like Mr. Kazan, so the people in Piggott discovered, just being a participant in a crowd scene can run into a lot of work. Shooting for the scene shown on today's cover, for example, began at 8 p. m. at the depot in Piggott. By the time Mr. Kazan was satisfied, it was long past midnight. Andy Griffith, the star of the picture, is the fellow waving from the train.

For helping out with projects like this, Mr. Kazan presented a check to the city, which it will use to rejuvenate its swimming pool, also pictured on the cover. In the other picture, the delegation (Doris Cox, Lloyd Russell, Jim Swift and Myron Rogers, members of the Piggott Parks and Playground Commission) is shown receiving the check from Mr. Kazan, who is at far right.

The pictures on the cover and on these two pages were made by photographers on location with the movie company, the state Publicity and Parks commission and by the author of this story, Wayne Cranford, a regular contributor to the Magazine who spent two days in Piggott in the wake of "A Face in the Crowd."



Miss Mary Thomas, Homer, La., a majorette, trained girls from Piggott and nearby towns for a twirling sequence.

turn for a visit. Please show the same courtesy."

And they did. Throughout the entire period the "picture people" were in Piggott, no one got out of line.

But the favorite of all was Mr. Kazan. Robert Anderson, whose play, "Tea and Sympathy," Mr. Kazan directed on the stage, has said of him:

"'Gadge' creates a sort of climate of friendship in all his work. He works happily. He is happiest when he is working. He is exuberant, full of joy and fun and contagious enthusiasm. With the delight of a child, he guides each person to realize the precious quality of self, the best that is in him . . . He is always surprised when anyone shows gratitude for his unfailing consideration. It has become so much a part of his way of working with people."

The people in Piggott found this to be more than true. The first trip there, Mr. Bruce introduced Mr. Kazan and Mr. Schulberg to the Spences. Miss Ayleen Spence is Clay county welfare director. Her mother, Mrs. Mary A. Spence, 85, is now a movie star.

MR. KAZAN WAS INTRIGUED with Mrs. Spence when he dropped by on a Sunday evening for chess pie and coffee. He immediately asked Schulberg to write the chess pie—and Mrs. Spence—into the script.

"When Mother agreed to be in the picture," Miss Spence said, "we were horrified, almost. It's so out-of-character for her. Why, she never even gets out of the house. They just charmed her into it."

Mrs. Spence was in five scenes they shot at her house and in one shot at the depot. All of the scenes may not be in the finished picture, but her friends love to tease Mrs. Spence, calling her "the star of the movie."

After the shooting in Piggott was over, Mr. Kazan told a columnist in Hollywood that he had found the real "face in the crowd." It was just such a face as he'd hoped to find—that of a charming, 85-year-old lady, Mrs. Spence.

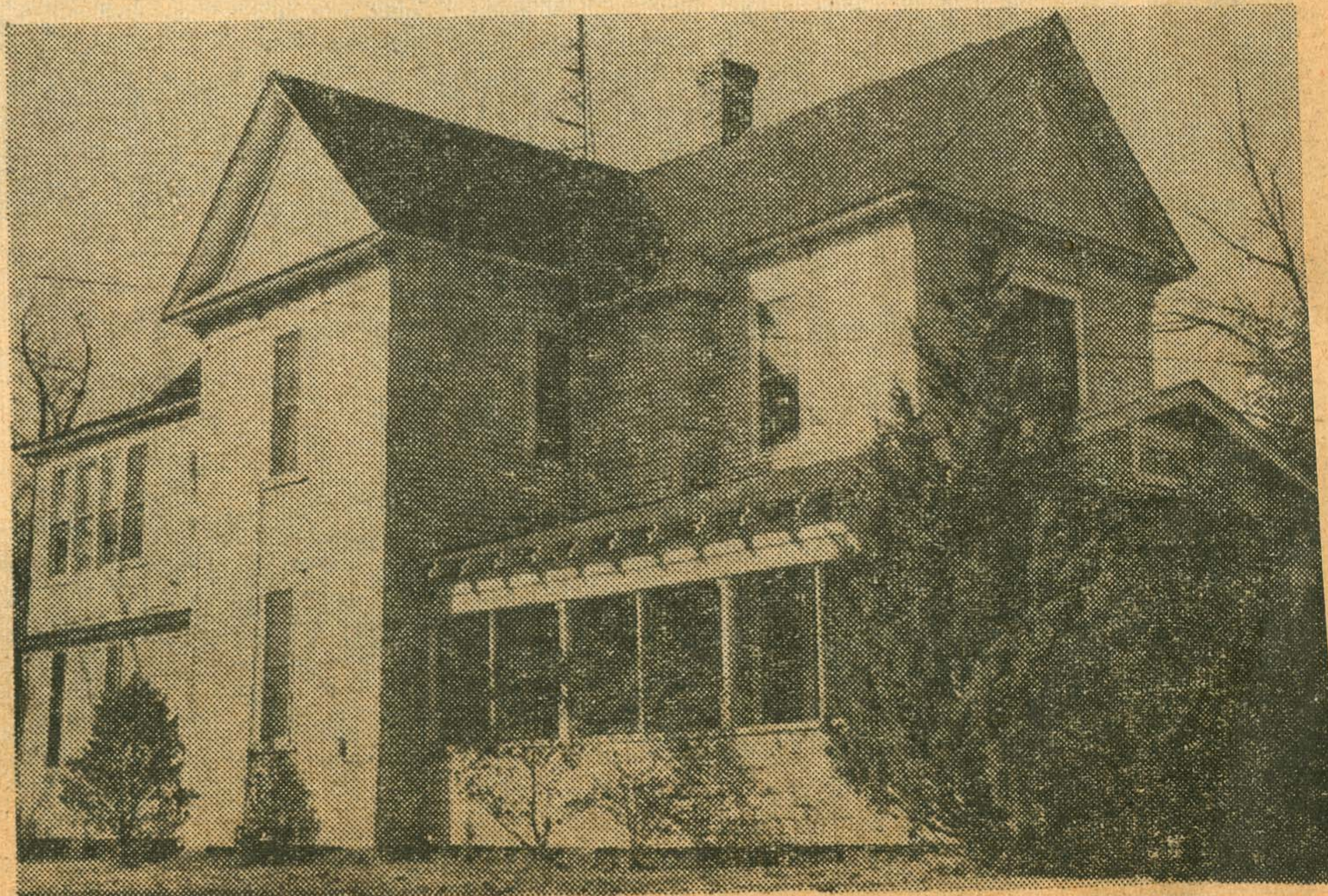
Of Mr. Kazan, Mrs. Spence says he was "just wonderful . . . kindness within itself. When he first asked me if I'd like to be in the movie, I told him I wouldn't do it for a million dollars. But it turned out to be such an interesting summer, I never even noticed the heat."

Her daughter said, "Mr. Kazan is magnetic. He was interested in everybody and everything, and he has a grand sense of humor. He's the most responsive person you've ever seen. When he looks at you, you think he knows exactly what you're thinking."

"They were all just grand, though. There just wasn't any criticism of any of them from Piggott folks. To his crew, Mr. Kazan was the law. They treated him like a king, only with more admiration. Of course, he's temperamental. You should see the expressions on his face when he's directing. He said he's terrible to live with while he's working on a picture.

"And what a perfectionist! He'd say, 'That's just wonderful, tremendous — but let's do it again.'"

LLOYD RUSSELL, PRESIDENT OF the Chamber of Commerce, said that



Mr. Kazan, his wife and their son, Chris, lived in this house in the heart of Piggott's residential district; they took part in many community activities.

everyone who was connected in any way with shooting the Piggott scenes had the utmost respect for Kazan. "He told us that he had never seen anything so well organized for him."

"Because just a few of us had to do all the work and hear all the complaints and get all the criticism, we sort of got disgusted before it was all over," Mr. Russell admitted. "But any misgivings anyone may have had were certainly not brought about by Mr. Kazan."

Piggott's postmaster, Harold Jinks, acted as co-ordinator for the Kazan company, Newtown Productions, and the Piggott interests. His wife and two Piggott High School girls, Miss Amanda Robinson and Miss Suzanne Ballard, flew to New York for additional work in the picture. The final scenes, shot in New York, were finished in November. The picture is scheduled for release in April or May.

Mr. Jinks said the people of Piggott were "grateful to Elia Kazan for what he did for our city. He told me that he was definitely coming back for a visit. There'll be a lot of friends of his here looking forward to the visit."

Part of the easygoing atmosphere that prevailed was credited to dress. Mr. Kazan brought very few clothes with him; so did the rest of the crew and the cast. Mr. Kazan bought a pair of corduroy trousers and a light jacket in a Piggott dry goods store. On set, most of them wore big straw hats and no shirts. Mr. Schulberg wore shorts and went barefoot.

While the movie makers were in town, they went to fish fries and barbecue suppers and "just visiting." The ladies had a big coffee for Mrs. Kazan. "She is really a lovely person," they said, "but she dressed as tacky as sin."

Including his 1955 visit, Mr. Kazan spent about six weeks in Piggott altogether. In this length of time, he got to know the city very well and he wanted to do something for it.

A swimming pool had been built in the municipal park about 20 years earlier, but it had never had a filter system. Every time the swimming pool was filled and opened for the kids to

use, the state health department had it closed.

DURING THE EARLY ARRANGEMENTS for filming, Mr. Kazan had offered the Piggott Chamber of Commerce a check for \$5,000 if they would round up enough people for two crowd scenes—a baton twirling contest and a depot scene. A local newspaperman sparked the publicity campaign to get everyone in the surrounding area to "come to Piggott and be in the movie." When it was time to shoot the crowd scenes, there were more than enough people.

In the meantime, Mr. Kazan learned that the little city's biggest need was the filter system for the swimming pool. The low bid, he found, was for \$8,502.57. He immediately wrote a check for that amount to the Chamber of Commerce in payment for the work of the "extras."

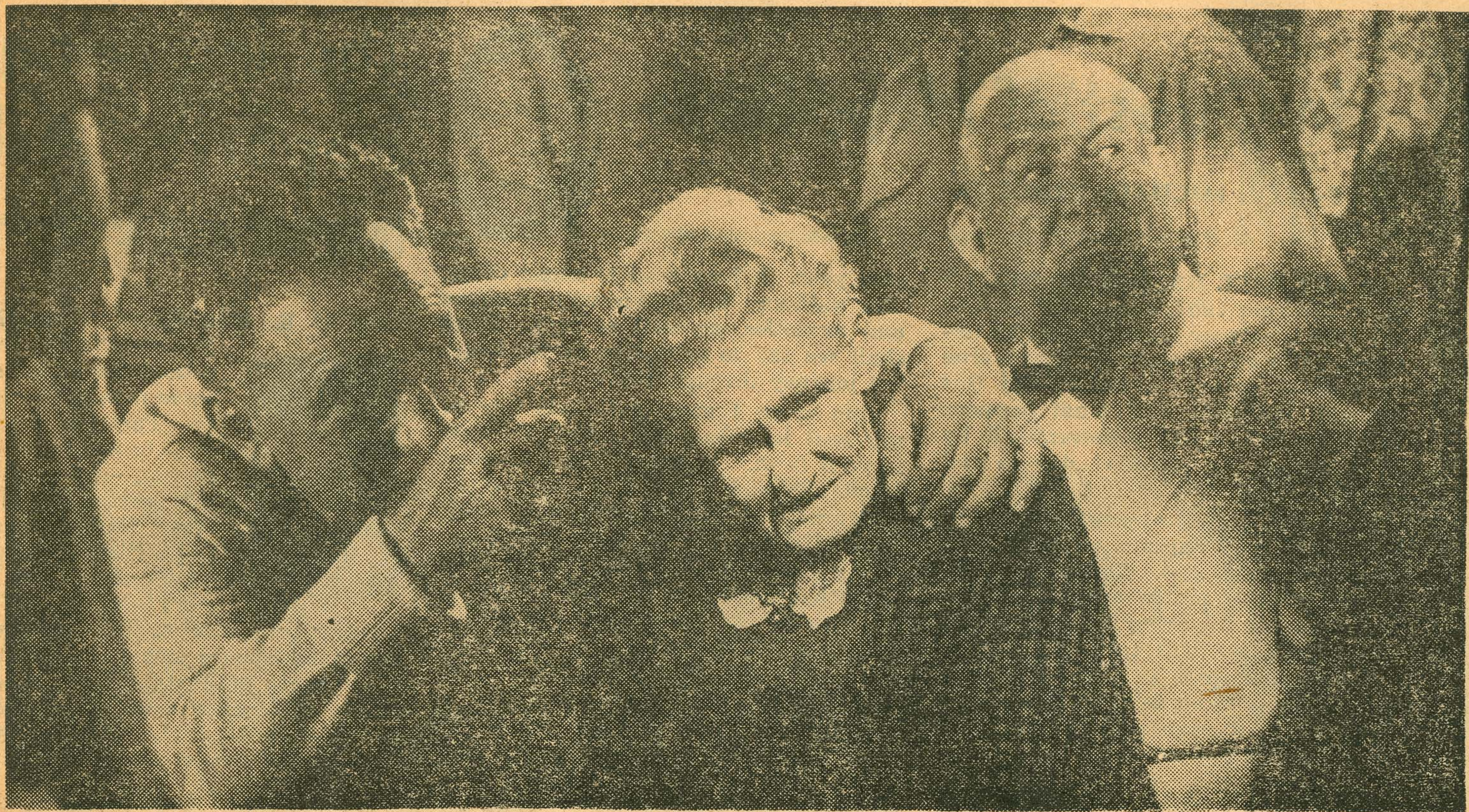
When the pool is re-opened and dedicated next summer, Mr. Kazan has promised to be there for the occasion. There's no doubt in the minds of his friends in Piggott that he will.

He has said: "I love the South and its people. I'm terribly moved by their problems and their attempts to meet them. Under an onionskin-thin surface is a titanic violence. That is drama. I don't think Northern people, especially Northern intellectuals, know much about it. I didn't until I went to the South and lived there."

Since his artistry has become widely recognized, a pet argument piece has been concerned with the pronunciation of his name. Some say "ee-LIE-uh kuh-ZAN." Others insist that it's "AY-lee-uh kuh-ZAHN."

He calls it "EE-lee-uh. kuh-ZAN." But it really doesn't make a great deal of difference to the people of Piggott. Because to them, 'Gadge' is their friend. And in their book, he's just "real folks."

This attitude probably will prevail even if the name "Piggott" is changed to "Pickett" in the movie, which is something Mr. Kazan warned might happen.



Movie Memorabilia

Left—Mr. Kazan explained to Mrs. Spence just what he wanted her to do in the scenes where she appeared with actors in the film. He later told writers in California Mrs. Spence was the "face in the crowd" he had hoped he might find in Arkansas. He became her close friend while in Piggott.

Right—Miss Remick, a Hollywood actress in the movie, signed many autographs for her Arkansas admirers while she was in Piggott. She was 21, but looked more like a school girl. In the picture, she won a baton twirling championship judged by the hero of the picture, who was Andy Griffith.



Above—Mr. Kazan was influenced in his decision to consider Arkansas as the location for the movie by Mr. Schulburg, the writer of the screen play. Right—The movie men used the top of an air-conditioned bus as a platform to give instructions from and worked on the script inside it. Ed White, Piggott High School band director, and Miss Thomas helped direct the bands and the baton twirlers.

