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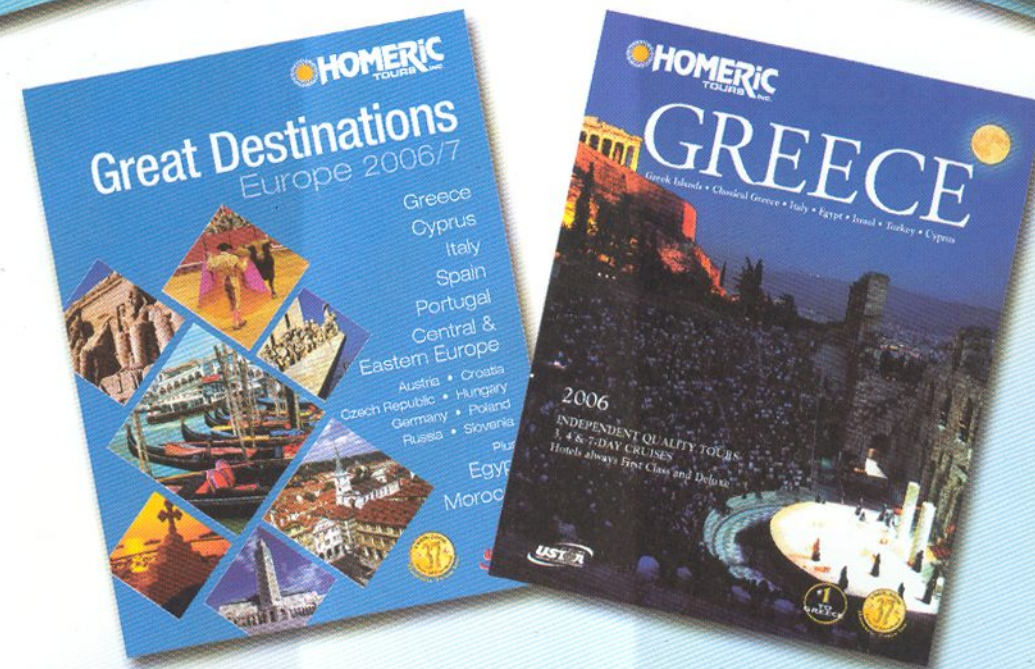
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Gen Murakoshi for Switch magazine

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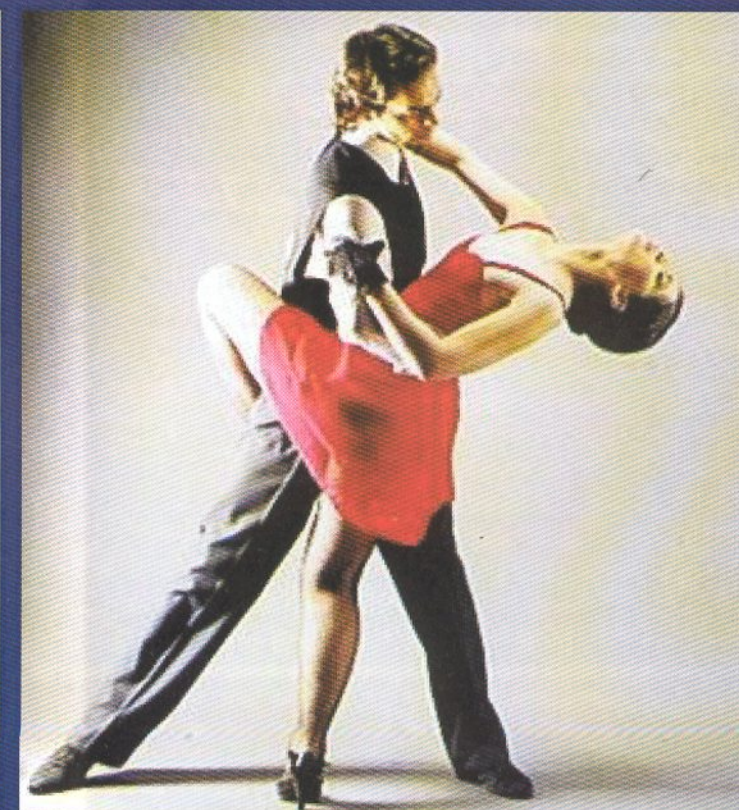
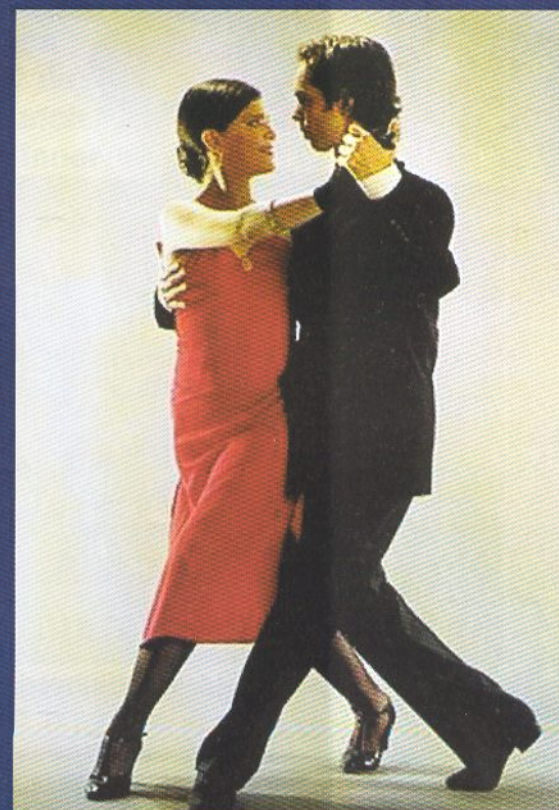
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On great men and women

:: Great men and women rarely live up to their billing in person, but who can live up to such expectations? We're all human, we all have our foibles, our Paris Hilton moments when we're young and our Donald Trump follies when we're not so young but our head is still as full as the affectation of our spun-candy hair. As the example of Easter proves every year, true greatness comes from the humility of knowing that we all belong to a common humanity and none of us is without fault, despite our income, despite how many times we visit church, despite the many titles on our business card.

:: The greatest man I ever knew was my grandfather, who raised me back in Greece and was a gentle soul and a simple farmer, but who was not simple, at all. He had the grit to survive several brutal wars (and was proud of his service and devoted to Plastiras), to survive the poverty that haunted him for a lifetime, and to weather the frustration of knowing that he was a man with dreams, but beyond his means, who had to settle for a life of toil so he could raise his family. And yet he taught himself how to read, he sold his best fields to wide criticism so his son could get an education, and he saw himself vindicated when my father earned his PhD from Columbia. Yet my grandfather wasn't a hard man, despite his privations: the eyes behind his usually fingerprint-smudged glasses always had a twinkle in them, his sly humor was legendary (he once convinced me we had to let the ice cream "cool" before we ate it) and he lived by a simple code of ethics. Nobody ever said a bad word about Dimitrios.

:: The greatest woman I ever knew was my grandmother. She wore her *mantilla* throughout her life (brown for every day, blue for formal occasions), her wedding ring was made of tin, her first house as a bride, I am told, was a chicken coop. And yet, like my grandfather, her love for life was boundless, her devotion to her children and her grandchildren fierce, her curiosity about the world she knew and didn't know breathless. When she brought me to Canada to join my family she kept up animated conversations with our neighbor (though she spoke no English and he spoke no Greek) and the man seated next to her on the bus (though he spoke to her in English and she only nodded to him in Greek or peppered him with a prim yes or no), who thought Eisenhower's head looked enormous on television and laughed along with the mechanical fortune teller at Coney Island.

:: Their gentle humanity inspires me still. And the misfortune of my children and the generations to come is that they missed out on these wonderful people who had achieved their greatness not with means, but without them, and yet lived a fuller and richer life than most of us: a life full of humor despite the heartache, a life of humility despite the backbone it had taken them to survive, and a life of genuine devotion to the important things in life: family, a sense of honor, and a faith that life was worth living and we're all God's children, great and small.

Dimitri C. Michalakakis

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The son also rises

GUS BILIRAKIS RUNS FOR HIS FATHER'S OLD SEAT

By Dimitri C. Michalakos

Like a good Greek son, Mike Bilirakis asked his father if he could switch parties back in 1970 to support a Greek American then running for governor. To run for Congress himself and go on to become a political institution in Florida he listened to his own son, Gus.



"I was 18 years old and in high school when I encouraged him to run for Congress; it was an open congressional seat," says the younger Bilirakis, 43, a Florida state legislator who now with his dad's retirement, is running for his seat in the Ninth Congressional District. "They wanted to draft him, but I was really the one. We had these testing-the-waters meetings and he didn't plan to run, it just happened."

Gus remembers the glory days of that early campaign and the big push in Tarpon Springs "where at least 1200 Greeks switched their registration in order to vote for my dad in the primary. And that made a real difference. And then of course they switched back to Democrat after the election." He was only seven

when he got involved in his first campaign and was usually glued to the conventions on TV, he's volunteered in campaigns at all levels, he proudly attended the Ronald Reagan inauguration and considers him an idol, and he's following in his dad's solidly pro-life, fiscally-conservative footsteps.

He's not happy about the current deficit, but he says some of it is money well-spent: "We have a duty to preserve Medicare and Social Security, and that's a lot of the budget. Also this prescription drug program is costly, but it's going to help a lot of people who need it the most: the elderly, who are sick and very, very poor. It's not a cure-all but it's a good first step." He's a supporter of the president on Iraq, "because it has a lot to do with security and I think Hussein was a threat. I hate to see the loss of human life and I feel sad about that, but we don't want these kids to die in vain. I think we need democracy in the Middle East and the people there should have a chance to elect their own people and have the same freedoms and opportunities that we have here in the United States. It's also in our best interest, as well."

The Ninth district (which his father has served since 1982) takes in the counties where Gus Bilirakis lives with his wife Eva and his four sons



(Pinellas), where he practices law (Pasco, in the same building where his father practices), and also includes Tarpon Springs. "We don't have as many Greeks as New York or Chicago or Los Angeles," he says. "There's about 7,000 Greeks in Tarpon and then Clearwater has about 10,000 Greeks, though we don't represent all of them in the district. I would say there are probably 20,000 in the district. That's not a high percentage."

There is a high percentage of the elderly and veterans in the district, and though his father has won re-election by almost 70%, the district has only marginally more Republicans than Democrats. He has no real opposition in the primary, but two declared opponents in the general election, and though his war chest is substantial and he's been endorsed by everyone from the governor, to the Democratic speaker of the Florida House, to Rudolph Giuliani, Bilirakis is taking nothing for granted. "Pios xerei ti tha ginei?" he says. "O Theos voithos. I'm running like I'm ten points behind. But I've worked on a lot of races in the past. People know me. I've helped a lot of people, so it's not that I'm just stepping in and I'm just Mike's son. I think I've paid my dues and people think I'm effective, and of course dad's good name has something to do with it."

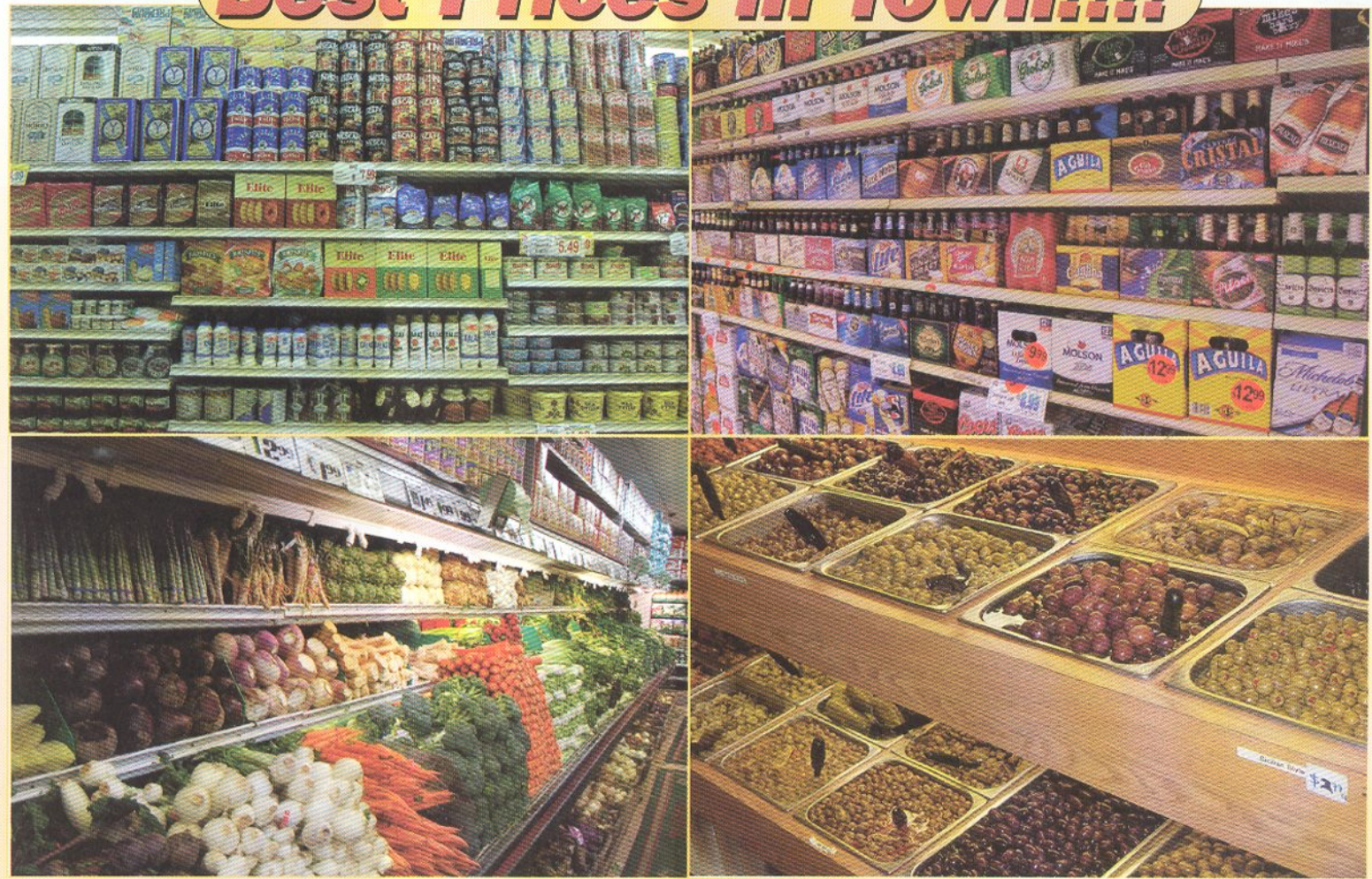
His dad has been a part of the campaign: "When he can, he comes with me. When we go around the county, for instance, to the Greek community, if his schedule permits he'll come with me and introduce me. He's strongly behind my campaign and he's going to help like any Greek parent would. But I know a lot of people, too, in my own right. It's one big family and we're doing it all together."

With his dad retiring, he says the seat becomes even more important still because, "right now my father is the only Greek American congressman and there are a lot of unresolved issues, including Cyprus, religious freedom in Constantinople, the Macedonian issue, the Greek minority in northern Epirus, Albania. I feel this in my heart and I think there's a sense of duty there, there's a sense of obligation I feel. And the Greek community has been great to me in this campaign."

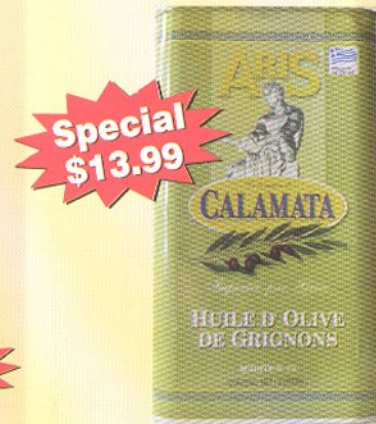
Meanwhile, though he's served part of the district already in the legislature, he's determined to meet everyone else he's missed so far. "People know me, and of course they know my dad, but I still have to get around and meet as many people as I can personally," he says. Besides, he loves campaigning. "I guess it's in the blood," he admits.



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By Dimitri C. Michalakos

This month a statue was dedicated at the Boston Marathon 1-mile mark called The Spirit of Marathon honoring the legendary 1946 run of Stylianos Kyriakides, who came from Greece that year and beat all odds to win the race in record time and bring attention and desperately-needed food and aid to a war-ravaged Greece. The statue shows Kyriakides with mentor Spiridon Louis, the winner of the first Olympic marathon, and is a companion to the 2004 statue for the Athens Olympics, both commissioned by Boston-based New Balance.

The crowds were cheering at the 1946 Boston marathon, not only for the phenomenal Irishman and defending champ Johnny Kelley who was in the lead once again, but also for a spindly-legged Greek named Stylianos Kyriakides who had arrived from war-torn Greece only weeks before vowing to win and bring the world's attention to the plight of his countrymen. "In Greece today, there is nothing, nothing!" Kyriakides told one reporter. "There are no roads, no bridges, no trams, no harbors. There is nothing, nothing except the soil of Greece and a people determined to survive and be great again." And he predicted of the race: "I think I have the strength for it. If not in my legs, then maybe here, in my heart."

The 36-year-old Cypriot had 80 medals to his credit, was the Balkans champ before the war, and had finished 11th at the infamous 1936 Berlin Olympics. But he hadn't run competitively in over six years and had barely survived the German occupation of Greece (he was picked up by a patrol and only his credentials from the Olympics had saved him) and the enduring starvation of the civil war. He was down to 130 pounds on his 5'7" frame and the doctors in Boston wanted to bar him from running. "I'm sorry," one doctor told him. "You can't run...You're too thin and weak. You are going to die if you run."

"He is a Greek!" Kyriakides' mentor, former Boston legislator George Demeter shouted. "He has a letter from his athletic club and Greece is responsible if something happens to him. You cannot keep him out of the race!" The doctor shrugged, Kyriakides was in, and Demeter pressed a note into the runner's hand. "Read the top side now but do not read the back until you come to the finish line," he said. The top side of the note read: *E Tan E Epi Tas*, which the Spartan mothers told their sons as they handed them their shields before battle, "With It or On It." "I knew I had to win or die," Kyriakides later confessed.

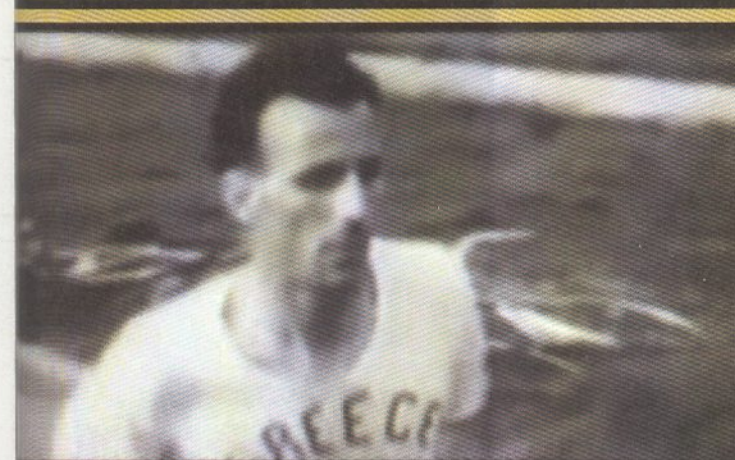
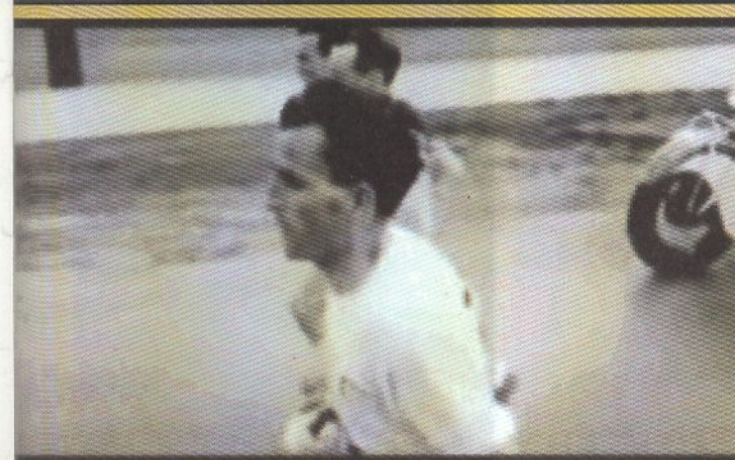
"As far as we're concerned, this was probably the greatest marathon

The marathon that saved Greece—the other marathon

run ever," says Nick Tsiotos, who with Andy Dabilis, published a biography of Kyriakides and his legendary Boston run called *RUNNING WITH PHEIDIPPIDES* (Syracuse University Press). "It really had a true meaning for mankind." Kyriakides had declared he not only wanted to win the race for Greece, he wanted to bring back at least \$250,000 worth of food and medicine that the country desperately needed. During the Occupation many of his neighbors had died of starvation and been carted away like cords of wood. And following one war another began, Athens was in ruins, thousands of orphaned children begged in the streets or took to the mountains to find shelter and fight, some barely able to carry the rifles they were given. Kyriakides had sold most of his clothes and furniture to keep his wife and two children alive and had kept only his running trophies. "The world will know what has happened in Greece," he pledged as he walked his daily route as a bill collector for the Athens-Piraeus Electricity Company and he conceived his desperate gamble to run in Boston a world away. He had run the marathon there in 1938, but that seemed a lifetime ago. And after his 5,000 mile trek to Boston (the cost of 5 million drachmas—\$1,000 dollars—paid for by the utility company) one sportswriter told him, "Little man, you have made a long, long journey in vain...You have the strength of heart but not the power of body to beat back the 26 miles and win the marathon."

"No, I'm going to come in first," Kyriakides declared. "I came to run for Greece, my country." As in '38, when he had to drop out of the race because of blistered feet, Kyriakides was sponsored by the city's Demeter family and chef Jimmy Contanis at the family's Hotel Minerva fed him a steady diet of steaks to fortify his emaciated frame. He also trained in shoes with pebbles stuck in the grooves that often gave him bloody socks, but pebbles he refused to remove. "These came from the mountains of Greece where I trained and they will bring me good luck," he maintained. "A victory," George Demeter told reporters, "might mean, by the time he finishes his tour, a whole ship of supplies that are so desperately needed back in his home country. It's a terrible burden for just one small man. But Kyriakides is a Greek and he's proud that he's the man to carry that burden."

The race was run on April 20, Good Friday, and the headline in the *Boston Globe* that day read *TRUMAN ASKS STARVATION DAYS*, days when Americans would sacrifice to feed the world. There were 102 runners in the field, the first post-war marathon and the 50th anniversary of the Boston race, and Kyriakides wore number 77 for luck ("Seven is a lucky number for Greeks," Demeter said, "and double seven is doubly lucky"), as well as GREECE on his T-shirt and the symbol of Nike, the goddess of victory. As he approached the starting line, he was handed the note from Demeter, with the passages of ancient exhortation, and then Demeter drove to the finish line to crown the victor with the customary laurel wreath.



"At the moment he read Demeter's note and clutched it into his left hand, leaving the back side for the end of the race more than two hours off, Kyriakides felt *Thelisis*, the Greek name for the will to succeed swell in his chest," write Tsiotos and Dabilis as they recount the day. He ran with a timing watch on his left wrist, unusual for 1946, and checked his pace every five miles. "Standing in the crowd along Beacon Street near Kenmore Square was a 10-year-old boy from Brookline, Michael Dukakis, a Greek-American who had felt pride that he could watch a Greek run in that race."

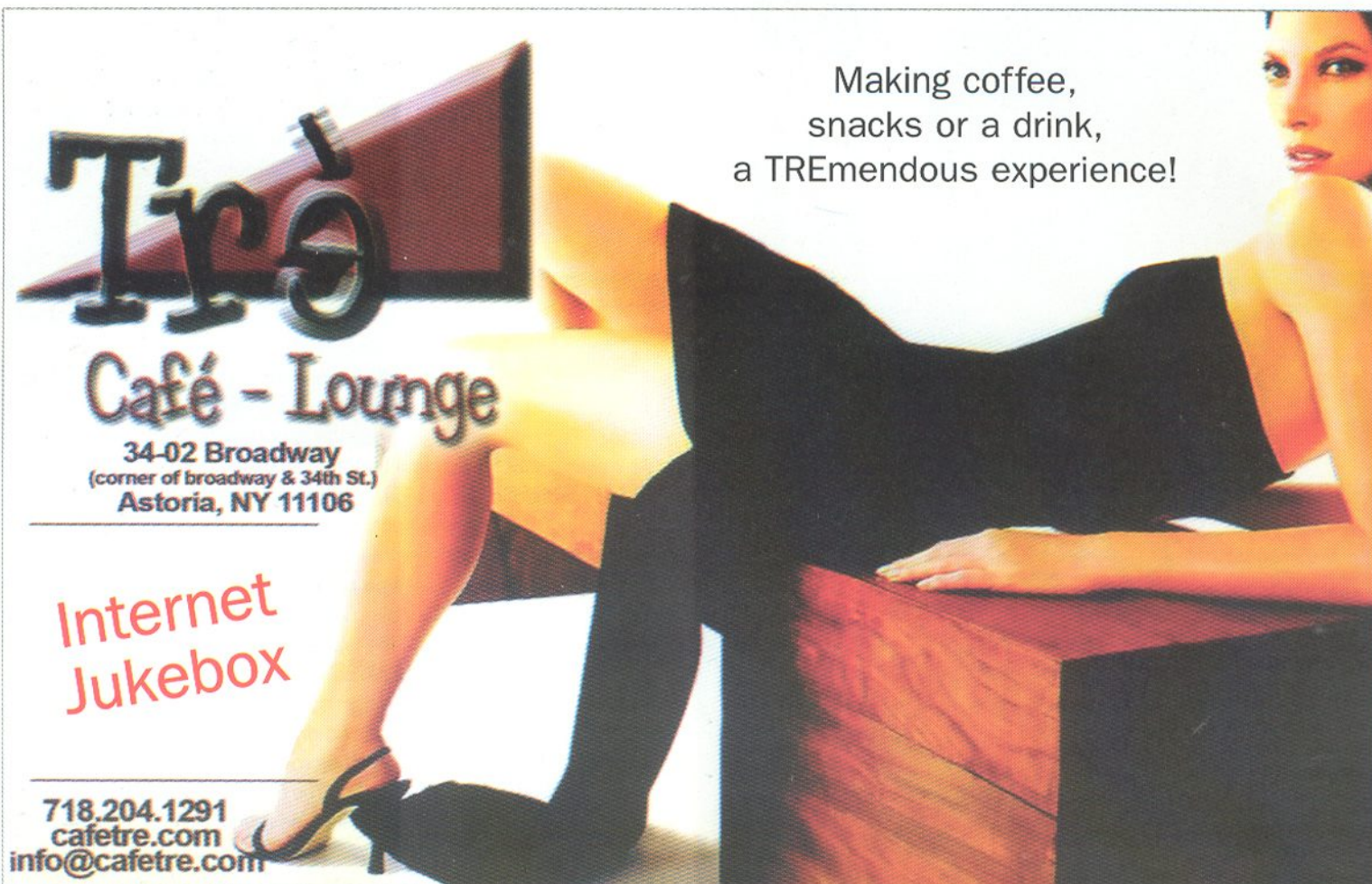
At first, Kyriakides bided his time in the middle of the pack, staying close to Kelley, who was following a similar strategy. And then almost at the 10-mile mark, he joined the pack of leaders and was running fourth. "The Greek was looking at his watch and here he announced the time to those running around him. They were puzzled or befuddled, wondering why he was even wearing a watch and giving them the time. He kept track of the runners from the colors of their shorts and started to close the gap, passing them one at a time."

At Wellesley, 12.5 miles into the race, a Greek spectator ran up to Kyriakides and offered him an orange, and when he paused to take it, the man grabbed and hugged him and Kyriakides saw in horror Johnny Kelley take a 40-yard lead on him. "Kyriakides bursts into overdrive to close the gap, but worried whether he had burnt out his reserves...But he caught Kelley and the two started a series of duels, sprinting ahead and falling back, only a few feet apart." At 20 miles they overtook the leader and they raced together towards the finish line "almost stride-for-stride as they came up a Newton Hill, crowded only by a few cars and motorcycles, each looking straight ahead and not toward each other. It was left to the two of them as the word of Kyriakides' challenge began spreading through the crowd, who pronounced his name awkwardly and finally settled on the buzz, *The Greek!*... "Then Kyriakides heard a voice in a language he understood. It came from somewhere in the crowd and reenergized him with new desire. It was a cry Kyriakides understood: 'For Greece!' For the Irishman in an Irish town came cries of 'Go, Johnny!' as the two men duelled and swept into Cleveland Circle where sportswriters said Kelley, "kissed the Greek goodbye."

"But it was then that the bronze turned fluid and Kyriakides came after Kelley like a man chasing a dream, for a purpose than was greater than life. Kelley was running confidently and smiling easily, but even as he glanced over his shoulder, he couldn't see the stern determination of the pursuing Kyriakides. But then he heard the warning shouts of the crowd, 'The Greek is coming!' Kyriakides was hearing exhortations from the crowd that he was doing well and might finish second, 'But Kyriakides hadn't come 5000 miles to finish second...looking at the man who had yelled, Kyriakides said, 'No, not second! I'm going to finish first!'"

But fatigue was catching up with him, until he saw in the crowd the face of the old man Demeter had stationed there and "the old man shouted, in Greek, like a god from Mt. Olympus sending down an order, 'For Greece! For your children!'"

And "Kyriakides became Hermes, wings on his feet and his head turned back to the charging Kelley, who thought he might have finished his friend two miles from the end...But Kyriakides felt he was running with the gods now." The two runners sprinted to the finish and as they approached Kenmore Square, a little more than a mile from the end, Kyriakides passed Kelley and the Irishman pushed himself "but Kyriakides was running above the ground now, pulling away...As he came into Kenmore Square...Kyriakides heard new cries in his language: 'Zito E Hellas.' He turned the note over that Demeter had handed him. And the back said: *Nenikamen*, "We are victorious." He burst across the finish line in 2:29.47, nearly 14 minutes faster than his time in Berlin, the fastest in the world in 1946, and "as he cut through the red twine of the finish, he raised his hands aloft and cried, triumphantly, a phrase heard 5000 miles away: 'For Greece!'"



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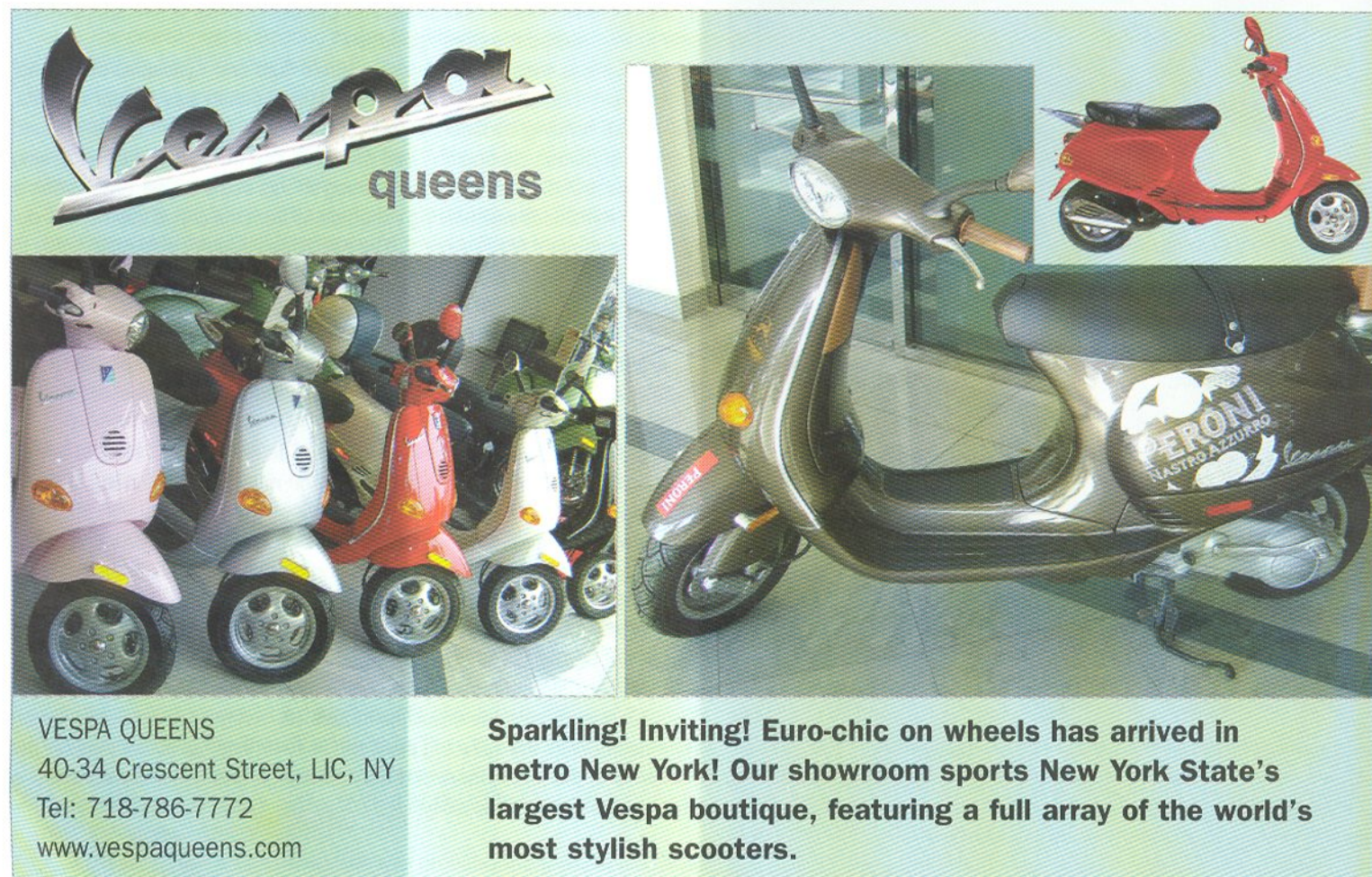


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Anthony Quinn: A lust for art

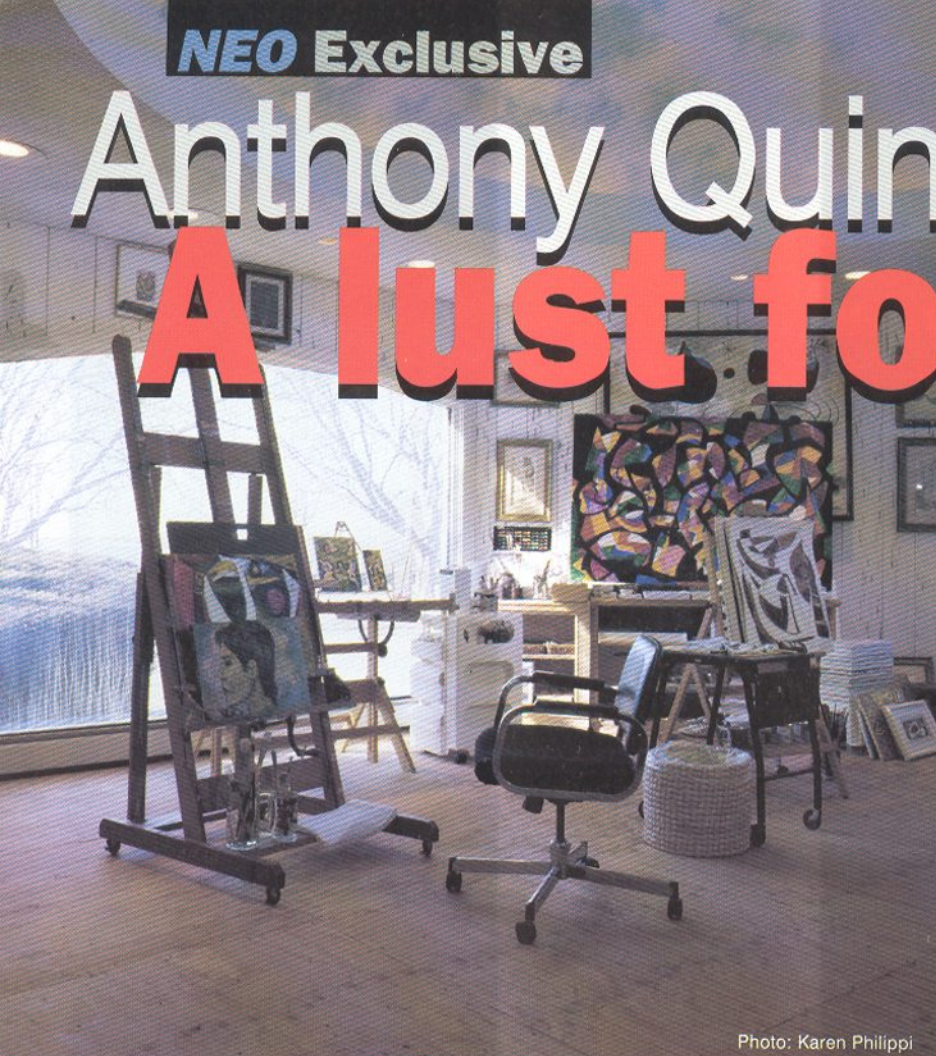


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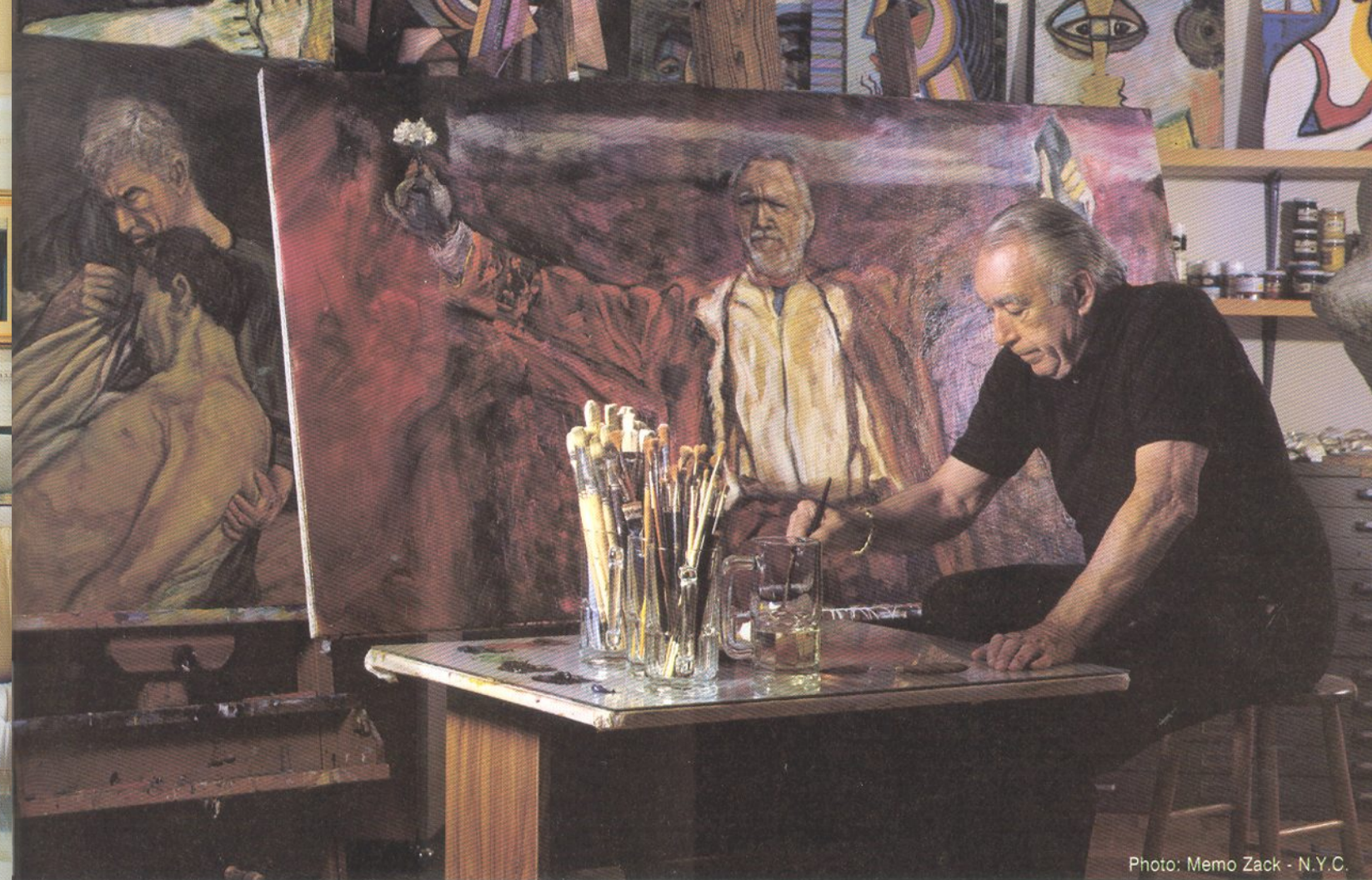


Photo: Memo Zack - N.Y.C.



By Dimitri C. Michalakis

There is literally nothing he didn't see as art. There is the gnarled old root of an oak tree he carved while filming *Zorba the Greek* in Crete. There are the figurines he sculpted in his trailer while filming *Lion of the Desert* in Libya. There is the half-buried stone he saw in a nursery outside Rome that eventually became his headstone in Rhode Island.

"Anywhere we traveled, he'd pick things up off the ground—rocks, pieces of wood," writes his widow Katherine in the sumptuous book of his art published in 2004, *Anthony Quinn's Eye: A Lifetime of Creating and Collecting Art* (Bristol House Press; Malcolm Gear Designers). "He always thought there was some beauty in them he had to find and rescue. By the time we left, we'd have a suitcase full of rocks to bring home. One time we carried home more things we'd collected than clothes we'd brought with us." There was the hotel room in Miami he thought too bare so the manager went to the art local gallery and brought back two dozen posters he could choose from and hang. "Now doesn't that look better?" the great star told him. There was the Chinese restaurant with ugly wallpaper he imagined showed a woman's bottom. "I was skeptical," says his wife. "So he pointed out the curves of her back and, damn it, I saw it. He was looking at this terrible wallpaper, and he saw something beautiful in it."

The house in Rhode Island where he eventually settled with Katherine and raised his two youngest children, Antonia and Ryan (now 12 and 9) had a 200-year-old main house and an assortment of barns and other buildings that were added over the years and that overlook Narragansett and Mt. Hope bays. The main house was sold recently and was clearly the home of a protean artist: his original life-size statutes dominated the front prospect to the bay. They now sit behind the barns and are wrapped in plastic since the main house was sold and Katherine has converted the barns (and her husband's old studio) into the family's living quarters.

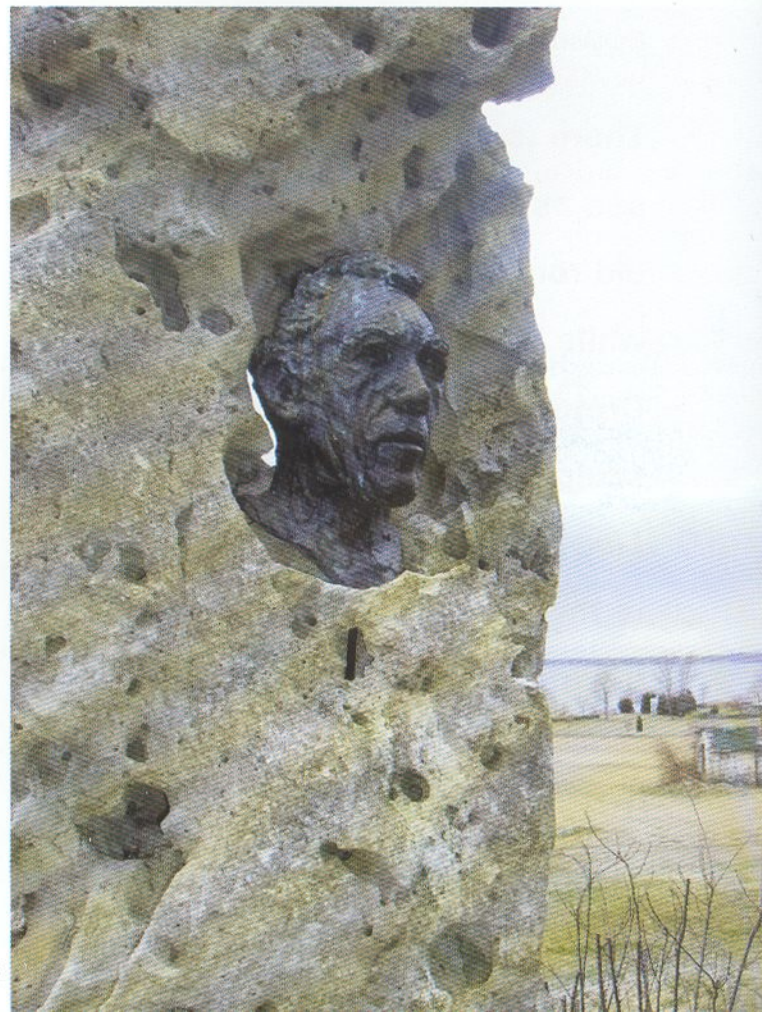


"It was a beautiful house, but it was enormous," she says, giving a tour of the property during a blustery day ("It's warmer outside than inside," she laughs). "It was a lot to take care of. I never did anything but run around and take care of the house, and this lawn: in the summer everything grows like crazy." She sold the main house, she says, "so I could concentrate on the collection and the books and the art instead of running around like a caretaker all the time."

Besides the book that was published, there are upcoming exhibitions of her husband's art scheduled in seven museums across the country, including in Texas, Florida, Utah, and Illinois, and others being considered internationally, including in Spain and Greece. And the sculptures that once sat on the lawn might soon be cast in bronze in Mexico and sold for display, including one for the front of a hotel in Kenya and another eight feet tall for the courtyard of a building in Providence.

"They make wonderful objects for the outdoors," she says standing by the huge sculptures fluttering in plastic. "He loved to leave things out in the rain and see what nature did to a sculpture...I think it's my life's work to continue his legacy and show people what he did and give it the importance it deserves, instead of having it just sit in a barn. It has to be shown and it has to be seen around the world. But you can't just do it overnight. It takes years of planning."

She knew her husband for 17 years and they always traveled together, along with the children, when he was shooting a movie, for example. "He would never leave us," she says. "We always moved with him. The kids went on the set, and went to work with him, and they stayed there and had to be quiet and wait for him to finish. That was his philosophy after Antonia was born. He left her one day, we weren't even living together at



the time, he had to go to Chicago to talk to a director about a movie and he came back the next day and said I'm never leaving her again. He said if I go somewhere, you come with me. And he never spent a day away from us."

When he was home in Rhode Island, his routine was both domesticated and the dedicated life of an artist. "He would sleep as late as he wanted, sometimes nine or ten," says Katherine, shutting close another door to another former barn now crammed with his art, "then wake up, have a nice breakfast, sit by the window, watch the birds, play with the kids, and take a walk; a walk was always part of the day. He'd walk for an hour, sometimes two, pick things up along the walk, then come back and start working. He would work all day, or it depended what struck him that day: if he wanted to paint, or sculpt. Or he might just drive around and get inspired, or write. He would never watch TV or watch a movie or sit in front of a TV for two hours. He would always flip through the channels and try to find something that interested him; old movies, most of the time. He said in a lot of the new movies they talked too much. Sometimes he would get a script in the mail and he would look through it and say, I don't like it, too many black pages, too many words, too much dialogue. It's not a motion picture, it's a talking picture."

"The reason I'm doing so much of his artwork now is because he started out as an artist. These are things he did way before he even thought of acting. He wanted to be an architect, he wanted to be an artist, and then acting took over because it was a way for him to earn money. He liked acting and it became part of his life but he never stopped painting and sculpting, because it was such a big part of his life. The acting fed the artist, the artist fed the actor, and I think it was all part of being the great creator that he was. He was a wonderful writer, he wrote poetry, he loved music; he played the saxophone, he sang in the choir for a woman preacher when he was young and that image of her stayed in his mind: he said she was the best acting teacher for him because of the way she commanded an audience. He even studied to be a priest in the Catholic religion."

When he did work on his painting or sculpture she was usually by his side. "He would say, try to get this blue, because I want to use that in the background, so I would mix the paints until I got the blue he wanted," she remembers animatedly. "And then he would say remember how you did that because I'm going to need you to do it again tomorrow." She laughs. "And I was—oh, no, how'd I do that? He would get very angry when I couldn't get the same color. He was just demanding, because he was an artist. He knew what he wanted."

Very often the model was Katherine and he



Photo: Sam Shaw/Shaw Family Archives



Photo: Karen Philippi



Photo: Aaron Usher



would say to her, "Clip your hair, hold your hand out like this, stay there, don't move. And he would paint my hand, or my hair, or my back and then say, okay, fine, go. I had a friend who was visiting us and he loved her red hair. She was staying with us for a week and he asked her to pose and she was so excited and sat for him. But for a couple of days he had painter's block, and he couldn't work, he just didn't feel like it. Until she was leaving and he said to her, you're leaving? You can't stay? He got so angry. She said I have to go home; I have to go back to work. He said, sit down; I want to change the color of the hair on that painting. He said to me, I don't want to use her anymore, the bitch!"

The small study she created in the new house has only a fraction of the 10,000 books he collected over a lifetime (including the complete Shakespeare he bought from John Barrymore and his own Oscars for *Viva Zapata!* and



Lust for Life) and there is a director's chair with his name on it where his son Ryan perches for a picture, with a hole in his pants that his mother tells him to cover up. Antonia is camera-shy and remains in the kitchen on the computer; Ryan roams the house and the grounds with his mother and offers up quick portrait sketches: "I try to do them in pen because then you don't have to put the colors in," he says enthusiastically, then just as enthusiastically switches from his sketches to the football he's been asking his mother to toss him.

"It's a great honor and I try to teach my kids to appreciate it what they have around them and what they see," says Katherine. "They grew up with this, they grew up surrounded by hundreds of paintings all the time, and seeing their father creating, and their father painting, and their father sculpting. And it affects them, not directly, but in a much less formal way they absorb the colors, they absorb the shapes, they've seen a lot of art work and what they draw is not naïve. But I want them to find out for themselves what they love, not just have them copy their father, or think they have to follow in his footsteps."



Photo: ©BILD am Sonntag/Peter Timm



His wife Katherine with their children Antonia and Ryan Quinn.

He was, she says, irresistibly passionate about life ("He was like a sponge; he absorbed everything. I don't know if he became Zorba or Zorba became him") and an irresistible force in her life, while she provided the calm he needed for his work ("He was going through a difficult period in his life; I had a lot to offer him, and he had a lot to offer me"). His art is everywhere in the house still and the headstone he found in Rome now stands overlooking the small garden in the rear of the property that Katherine created over his burial plot. On his birthday the kids offer their father the stones they painted for him as a gift, and when Ryan sometimes gets scared of the dark or of being alone in his room, his mother reassures him.

"I tell him you never have to be scared because your father's always around," she says. "He's always watching over you."

All images of Anthony Quinn and the house were used courtesy of Anthony Quinn's Eye; A Lifetime of Creating and Collecting Art (Bristol House Press; Malcolm Gear Designers)



Ryan Quinn, Portrait of the Writer (Drawing by Quinn's son Ryan)



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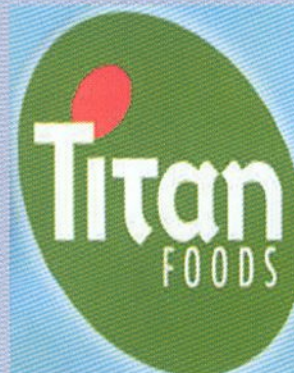
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[FILM & MUSIC]

Greek cinema and music—by way of Bollywood—and vice versa

By Valantis Stamelos

As a film student at Syracuse University, I had a warm and vibrant group of friends who were predominantly Indian, or of South Asian decent. I was a proud Greek American, but I also saw myself reflected in every one of my friends: an individual proud of his ethnicity and heritage. And with Indians at the school outnumbering the one Greek, it was inevitable that I would have the genuine Indian experience. The lavishly-colored

wasn't long before legendary musicians like Stelios Kazantzidis and Vasilis Tsitsanis started remaking the Indian songs into Greek versions: "Kardiamou Kaimeni/Dun-yame Ham Aaye" from *Mother India*, "Afti i Nichta Menei/Ulfat Ka Saaz Chero" from *Aurat*, "Oso Axizeis Esi/Dunya Walon Se Duur" from *Ujaala*. There was a bridge of understanding from the word "Dunya," meaning "the world" in both languages; Khallase(Greek)/Kalas(Hindi), Magia/Maya, Khabaria/Khabar.

Today, Indian sounds cross over in some of Greece's most popular music: Christos Dantis' "Maya Maya" and Helena Paparizou's "O.K." both include a male Indian vocalist. Kati Garbi's track "Den Boro Alo Mazisou" features a female Hindi vocalist, while Anna Vissi infuses Panjabi MC's "Mundian Tu Buch Ke" with a live rendition of "Mes' tis Polis to Hamam" on her CD, "Anna Vissi Live," and sings in Indian vocal style against a sitar for "Min Me Lipitheis" on her latest CD, "Nylon." Vasilis Karras' hit song, "Tha Mou Klisis to Spiti," utilizes the bhangra beat, native to the Punjab region of India, as its backdrop. India, in turn, borrows from Greece in several Bollywood films. *Chalte Chalte* (2004), one of India's biggest hits starring Shahrukh Khan and Rani Mukherjee, takes place in Greece, with many of the music videos filmed in Santorini and Mykonos. And Greek musicians are upfront about collaborating with Indian musicians. Acclaimed pianist and singer Stefanos Korkolis sang with famed Indian pop singer Anaida on the title track "Anaida". (To learn more go to www.saraswati.gr.)

The collaboration between these two ancient, beautiful and vibrant cultures is extraordinary and their cinematic and musical achievements could be endless: Greek culture, after all, has always reflected and worked with other cultures: Turkish, Arabic, Italian. And now Indian: like a guitar to a drum, bouzouki to a doumbek, two totally different cultures have come together to compliment each other and create a harmony of film and music.

For more information:
www.saraswati.gr
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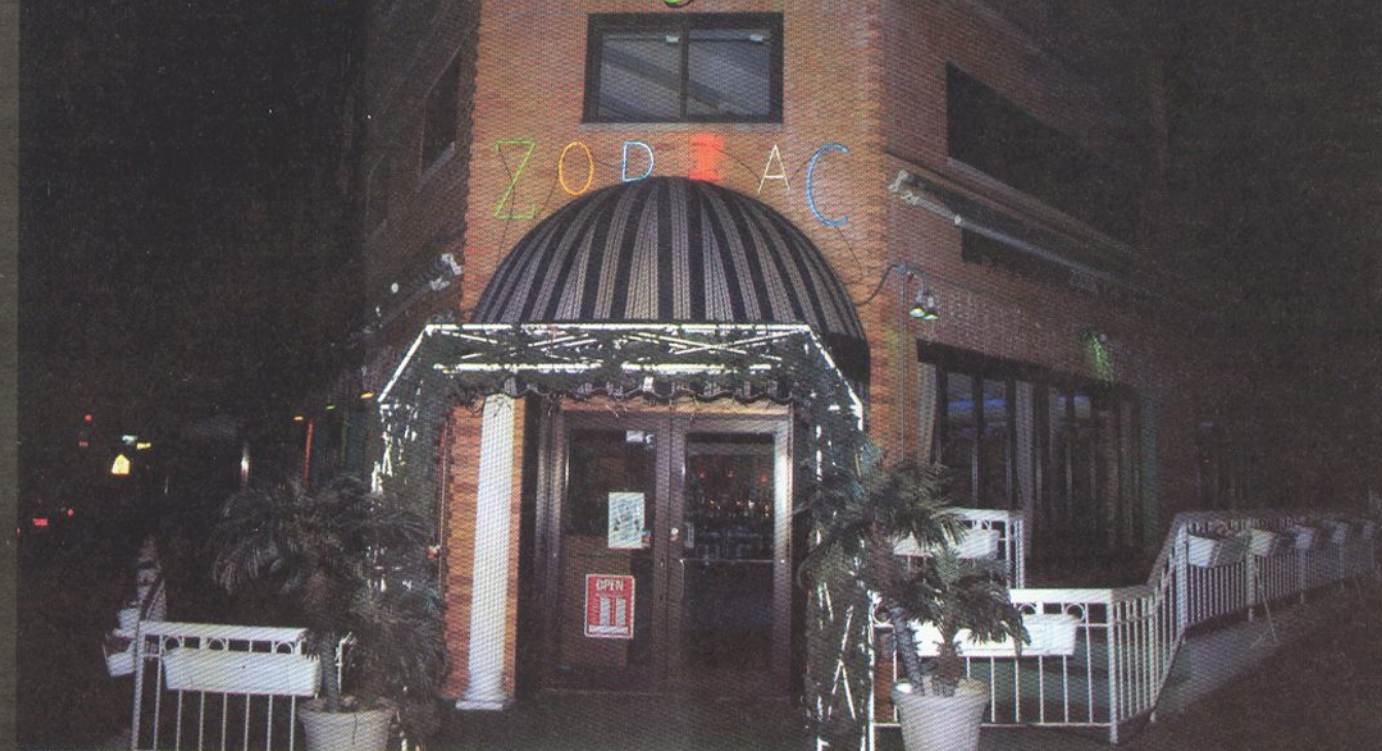


clothing, spicy curry dishes, and energetic bhangra dance beats were mesmerizing. Things didn't seem that foreign and I was able to assimilate with the community. Half the time, the Indians I met thought I was Indian, and lo and behold, I would discover that being a part of the Indian community would bring me closer to my Greek heritage.

Sharing Greek songs with my friends, and listening to many Indian songs, I saw a pattern form. Songs started to sound alike. Our cultures seemed not so distant, after all, maybe because Alexander the Great conquered his way through the Middle East to India, and to this day cultural nuances are shared between both worlds. What is not known is how India dramatically influenced Greece in the 1950s and 60s through film and music. With this discovery, I also realized my attraction to Indian culture was also an attraction to my own culture. Greek author Helen Abatzi poetically illustrates the Indian influence in Greece, starting in the late 1950s, as Bollywood films were brought into Greece. And although there was some difficulty in translating from Hindi, Greeks enjoyed the music of Bollywood. It



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Two American women discover the women of Ancient Greece

Victoria Grossack was a schoolgirl in Indiana when she first encountered Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. "It was amazing; reading something thousands of years old," she recalls. "But it was also frustrating: more than half the story was missing!" Sophocles' play was written, of course, from Oedipus' point of view, while the experiences of Iokaste, his mother/wife, were unjustly ignored. But wasn't she the mother of the infant son who was taken from her and left on the mountainside to die? Wasn't she the wife of the King Laius who was murdered and his city threatened by a dangerous Sphinx? And wasn't she the one who gave herself in marriage to the traveler who saved the city of Thebes by solving the riddle of the Sphinx — only to discover that this second husband, by whom she had four children, was her own firstborn son? The life of the Queen of Thebes was nothing but drama.

Growing up in Texas, Alice Underwood was also interested in Greek mythology, history, and archaeology forever. "I'll admit it," she says. "I was a total bookworm as a kid." She spent countless hours immersed in the Greek myths retold by Edith Hamilton and Robert Graves and loved a book called *Lost World of the Aegean*, which introduced her to the archaeology of the ancient Minoans and Mycenaeans.

Victoria went on to study creative writ-

ing at Dartmouth and later acquired an MBA, while Alice majored in mathematics. Alice took courses in the Greek classics, philosophy and history; both nurtured their passion privately and went into finance. They met during a business trip in the unlikely city of Zurich and soon became friends when they discovered their mutual passion for the history and mythology of ancient Greece. First they collaborated on articles for journals; soon they started talking about a book. "We were both intrigued by the story of Oedipus and Iokaste," Alice recalls. "We just kept coming back to the idea." But how would they meld their individual writing styles, and schedules, to write the novel they were dreaming of? "I remember when we first outlined it on the computer I thought we would never finish it," says Victoria. "But Alice was so organized that I decided to give it a try. Besides, Iokaste's untold story still nagged me, even after all those years."

Working separately, trading scenes by e-mail, doing research on the Internet and Greece, they gradually wove the myth and the historical evidence together in a novel that fulfilled their dream: *Iokaste: The Novel of the Mother-Wife of Oedipus*, which was published and reviewed as a "real page-turner" and called by the Historical Fiction Review "a wonderfully nuanced novel that repays previous knowledge of its subject matter — but never requires it." And this year the Queen of Thebes went home when Kedros publishers in Greece issued a Greek-language version.

Victoria and Alice are now hard at work on a series of interlocking novels set in ancient Greece. To learn more, visit their website, www.tapes-tryofbronze.com.



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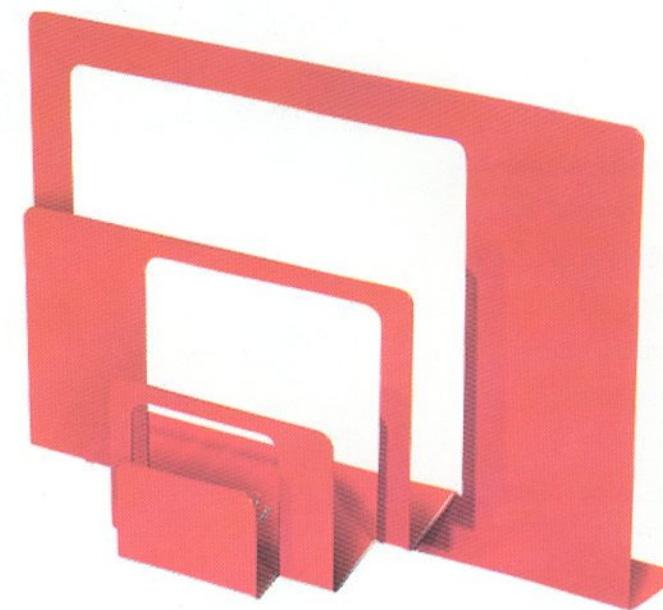
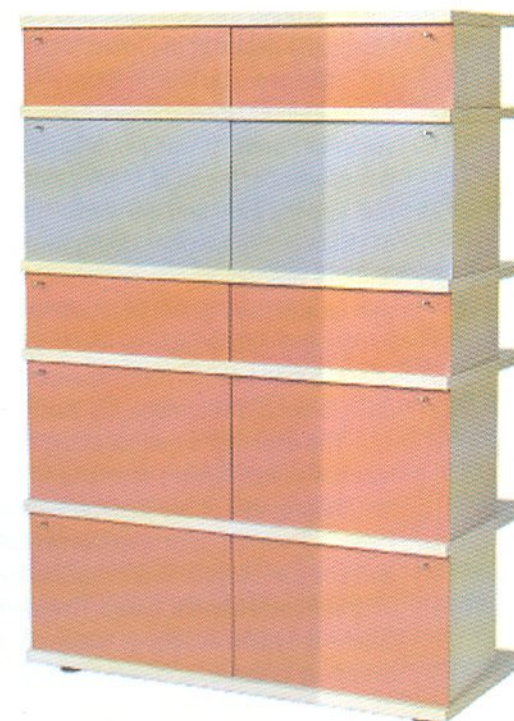
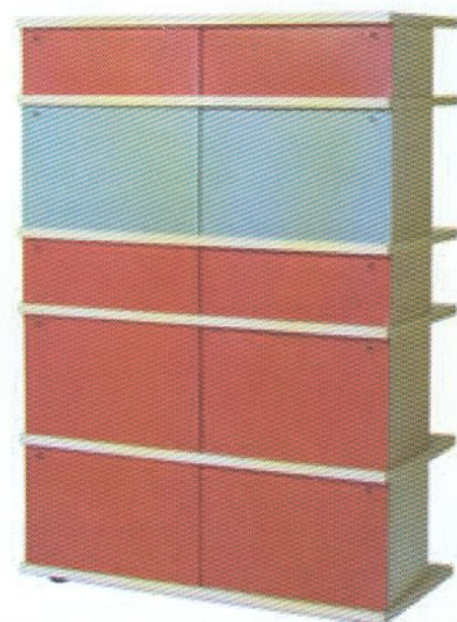
Urban furniture reinvented at Blu Dot

by Dimitri C. Michalakos

If you're a thirty-something urbanite with a sense of design, but no practical skills (or patience) and a limited budget, what furniture do you buy?

"I just couldn't find anything," says John Christakos, a sculptor and MBA, of his erstwhile furniture woes. "So I always found myself building my own stuff."

That is until with college chums Maurice Blanks and Charlie Lazor, who are both architects, in 1994 he launched a furniture business with a contemporary flair called Blu Dot ("It lent itself to a good logo," he admits of the name), whose accessories are practically ready to use when unpacked from their distinctive flat, perforated boxes (or hung on the wall as two-dimensional art).



And its ready-to-assemble furniture is now sold in stores nationwide and around the world (including Germany, France and the UK) and was also featured on TV on ER and Joey and Chandler's apartment in *Friends*.

"A lot of time we are the affordable choice in a high-end design store," says Christakos, speaking from company headquarters in Minneapolis, where he moved to get a job and stayed to build furniture. "So if somebody comes in and gets cold feet about the price of an Italian or German imported piece, they bring them over to Blu Dot."

The company's line of products is made of material as varied as tubular steel, sandblasted glass and Baltic birch. And since previewing its first line in New York in 1997, Blu Dot has numerous awards including recognition in the International Design Yearbook and "Best Collection" at the Accent on Design show in New York.

"Those who associate ready-to-assemble furniture with particle board and plastic fasteners will be pleasantly surprised by the quality of materials used in every Blu Dot piece," said *Midwest Home & Garden*.

Trendy outlets for Blu Dot furniture here in the States have included Moss and Totem in New York, Now in Miami, Fillamento in San Francisco, Room & Board in Chicago, and Shelter and City Design in Los Angeles. But the company has no plans to open a retail store of its own.

"I kind of hope not," says Christakos, and laughs. "I think it would be so far away from designing at that point that the business might not be as fun. We really started this because we wanted to design things, and if we ever get to the point where the business gets too big and we're just businessmen, I don't know if it would be as much fun."

By
Dimitri C. Michalakis

So where do you go in Manhattan when you're looking for a good *parea*? There's thousands of places to choose from, but starting this month only one **Parea** (36 East 20th Street, between Park Avenue South and Broadway, 212-777-8448), the new restaurant that is a vision of Greek sun and light and hospitality in the heart of the city and which was just opened by New York club and restaurant phenom Telly Hatzigeorgiou.



The best Parea in Manhattan

"I always felt that being Greek and hearing the word *parea*, let's all go out with a *parea*, it puts a smile on my face," says Hatzigeorgiou, who just turned 40 and runs more than half a dozen other establishments in New York. "I always felt it doesn't matter where you go or what you do as long as you're with a good *parea*. In a restaurant they say the three most important things are the atmosphere, the service and the food, but I always personally felt that the most important thing was the *parea*."

This is why the restaurant **Parea** features *meze* din-

ing and entrees served family-style on polished concrete counters with "pre-cast water troughs that, in some cases, are the vessel for sharing small plates or condiments." And the "oversized oak and concrete tables are arranged to allow for large groups of diners who may linger for hours to converse over endless courses before indulging in dessert and drinks downstairs." Downstairs there is Manhattan's only *meli* (honey) room serving coffee, cocktails and desserts, including "jewel-colored jars of candied fruits with a banquette around the perimeter and café style tables in the center of the room."

Hatzigeorgiou lived in Greece when he was a teenager and the experience has inspired his vision of **Parea**. "It was just a fantastic, fantastic experience," he says. "I grew to love the culture and the food and the whole cultural fabric of Greece. I remember going to the villages and the villagers saying come and have lunch with us and have dinner with us and then trying to offer them some money and they would get upset. It was basically my experience growing up in Greece which made me want to do this."

The chef and a partner in the new restaurant is Michael Symon, who is Greek and Sicilian (other partners are George Pantelidis and Peter J. Pappas), and who owned Lola Bistro and Lolita in Cleveland and has his own show on the Food Network called The Melting Pot. "Michael Symon is young, extremely creative, extremely talented, and very ambitious," says



Hatzigeorgiou. "He wants to take this concept to other cities and other countries, as well." (A **Parea** in Las Vegas and Miami are already being considered.) Executive Chef Jonathon Sawyer (formerly Chef de Cuisine at Kitchen 22 in New York City) wants to create organic Greek fare with a distinctly New York influence. "Parea will offer savory *mezes* (small plates) of organic meats and vegetables, succulent skewers and other aromatic dishes prepared on the custom-made *sxara* (grill) at the bar," he says. Signature dishes include Symon's potted *sardines*, with layered fresh sardines, leeks and Meyer lemons served in a honey jar. "It's my interpretation of a Grecian 'casserole,'" says Symon.

Hatzigeorgiou's interpretation of the Greek restaurant is the latest of his stylish revamps of otherwise common spaces. He was an investment banker at Chase when he put his life's savings into a pool hall in Bayside, Queens that became the original Slate billiard hall and café (a second was opened later in Manhattan and gave the name to the first). "I always wanted to do my own thing," he says.

"I wanted to be my own boss. And the location came about because my father called me and said, are you interested? And I said, well, are you interested? No, I'm not interested, are you interested? So I got a small loan from my father and he said unless you put every penny you have into this deal, which I just spent four years working on Wall Street accumulating, I'm not going to help you. So I put every penny I had and it ended up being a very fruitful business and we opened up a lot more."

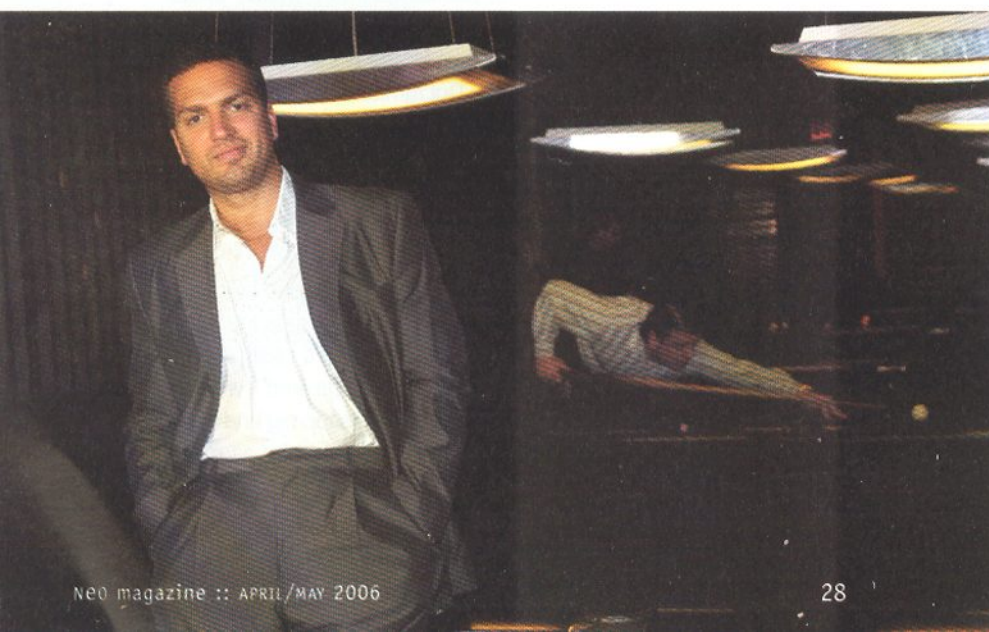
Slate led to Millennium (1997), Billiard Company (1999), Slate Manhattan (2000), Play (2003), and most recently Barminnow in Brooklyn, Soma in Astoria, and, of course, **Parea**. Not bad for somebody who knew nothing about the business when he invested his

life's savings in it. "I had no background but I think one of my biggest strengths was that I was determined to learn quickly," he says. "What I did is I looked in the phone book and found out and called all the nicest places in the Tri-State area and I talked to them. Then I would pay them a visit and sit and talk to the owners and find out as much as I could, and based on the knowledge that I accumulated I was able to bring to fruition one of the busiest rooms in all of New York."

The redesign of the original Slate has won the prestigious American Institute of Architects award and is on display at the Museum of Modern Art, and it became one of the busiest rooms in New York because Hatzigeorgiou insisted on making it more than just a pool hall. "I wanted to make sure we brought it to the next level," he says. "It had to have a kitchen, we had to serve food, and at the time coffee started becoming trendy so we served a lot of high-end coffee from lattes to cappuccinos, and we had a lot of pastry makers from the city bring a lot of beautiful pastries to Queens. We also put tables next to each pool table and we had waitress service and telephones that people could pick up and order from the waitress."

Parea is his interpretation of the Greek restaurant done, he says, after analyzing "everything in Greek cuisine from the spices, to the way fishermen used to store meat on their fishing trips with lemon in retsina bottles, and we got away from the traditional interpretation you see in the usual Greek restaurants and put a different twist to it. I think Greek cuisine needs to go to the next level and I think we can do that."

Now in New York, and soon to be in Las Vegas and Miami. "They're real exciting towns, real exciting cities," says Hatzigeorgiou, "but there's no great Greek restaurant in Miami and no great Greek restaurant in Las Vegas, and they're missing out."

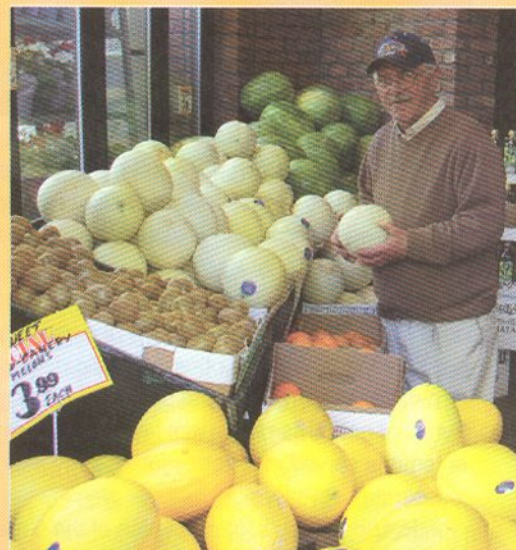
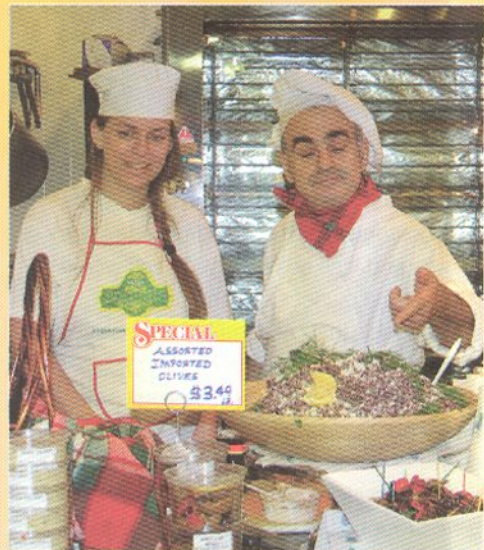


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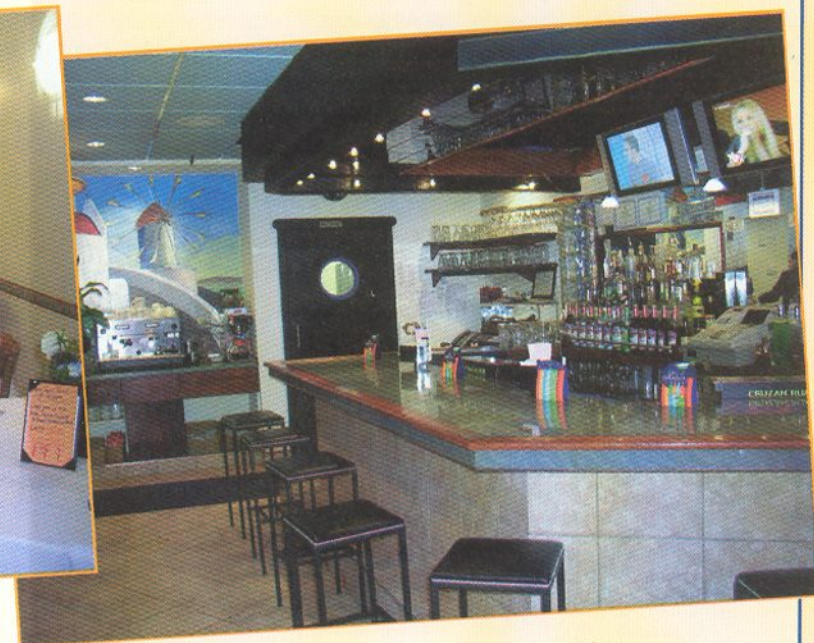
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Bringing our two worlds closer together

As we stated at the very beginning of this effort, *NEO* magazine was not meant to be just another Greek publication, but one less "ethnic" and more mainstream. We saw *NEO* becoming something of an institution, one that would try to shed light far beyond the range of a magazine. With impressive results in such a short period of time—both in quality and caliber—we proved, if anything, that we have been true to our word (in terms of ambition at least). Our latest endeavor featured Petros Papaconstantinou, a prominent Greek journalist and author from *Kathimerini* Greek daily, who in a weeklong lecture tour organized by *NEO* came to New York, spoke and visited various venues and got valuable firsthand experience about America and the Greek community here that he will certainly communicate to his readers and colleagues. Reciprocally, we and the rest of the participants in his lectures had the opportunity to get a more substantial idea of the way our brothers and sisters in Greece view us and our country, its policies and its stance on issues that affect both sides of the Atlantic. We consider of paramount importance this kind of communication, the exchange of views and fostering of understanding, and we are extremely proud to have contributed so early on to that effort. We are also grateful to *Kathimerini*, the Chian Federation of America, the Athenians' Society, the Cathedral Fellowship, the Cyprus Federation of America, the Columbia University Hellenic Association and Mesta Construction for helping us to bring about this latest series of events that with our continuous support will hope-



At the Chian Federation Cultural Center. From left are Elias Neophotistos (president Athenians' Society), Demetris Kakkavas, Stavroula Boutsis, Kyprianos Bazenikas, Petros Papaconstantinou (speaker), Demetrios Rhompotis, Roula Angelidi, Alex Doulis (president Chian Federation) and Christina Kostaki.

fully become routine. To realize the importance of such exchanges, it is worth looking at what Dr. Papaconstantinou himself had to say upon returning to Greece: "Visiting for the first time in my life New York City (but also Boston and New Haven, CT.) has been a great experience, something that I am really grateful to *NEO* magazine for. From a European journalist's point of view, perhaps the most striking impressions come from the deep immersion in the amazing 'melting pot' of the Big Apple, so different to anything we are familiar with in the Old World. I was personally touched during my lecture at Queens College on the developments in the Middle East, presented in a classroom with students from 40 different countries! I consider myself lucky because my visit coincided with the massive demonstrations for immigrants' rights all over the country and especially the fascinating demonstration along the Brooklyn Bridge and Chinatown in Manhattan. It was of great interest for me to follow the heated debate in the US media on the immigration and the new challenges that it poses to a nation of immigrants and to discuss these major issues with

Greek American and Hispano colleagues working in the US. It seems to me that the multicultural model of the modern, western democracies is under heavy pressure in the age of globalization and I cannot help but wondering that if this is the case for America, what should we expect in Europe, where xenophobia is far stronger and assimilation policies far less effective. Visiting the prestigious universities of MIT (where I had the opportunity to interview professor Noam Chomsky), Yale and Columbia I was glad to discover an atmosphere of academic freedom and political pluralism, in spite of the ramifications of the so called 'war against terror' on civil liberties. My experience from everyday life, at least in New York and New England, does not seem to point to a 'police state in a perpetual state of emergency' - not more, in any case, than what happens in London or Paris.

I was also surprised positively by the dynamism of the Greek American community, manifested in the parade for the anniversary of the Greek Revolution and all the events in the framework of it organized in New York. I must admit that I had underestimated the role and the efforts of the Greek American community on Cyprus and the other Greek national issues before my interviews with Philip Christopher and other prominent Greek Americans. My discussions with Archbishop Demetrios and Rev. Bob Stephanopoulos were very enlightening as far as the role of the Greek Orthodox Church is concerned. If you add the very strong interest of the audience during my lectures at the Chian Federation and the Cathedral Fellowship on Cyprus and the developments in the Balkans, you can understand why I was so glad and, I should add, proud to discover that «Greekness» in America is much more than folklore and business."

DEMETRIOS RHOMPOTIS



At the Cathedral Hall. From left, Dimitri Michalakos, Kyprianos Bazenikas, Andrea Pappas (president of the Cathedral Fellowship), Petros Papaconstantinou, Rev. Robert Stephanopoulos (Dean of the Cathedral) and Demetrios Rhompotis.



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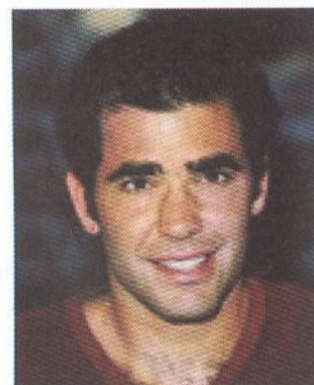
Hellenic Times Scholarship Fund Gala honors Alexis Christoforou and Nick Gregory; "American Idol" star Constantine Maroulis hosts



Constantine Maroulis



Olympia Dukakis



Pete Sampras

The Hellenic Times Scholarship Fund will honor CBS MarketWatch anchor Alexis Christoforou and Fox 5 meteorologist Nick Gregory at its 15th Anniversary Gala at the New York Marriott Marquis Hotel on Saturday, May 13, 2006. The HTSF will also welcome Greek pop singer Elli Kokkinou and the legendary '60s pop group, The Drifters, who will perform at the event, hosted by American Idol's Constantine Maroulis.

Scholarship presenters will include Fox News anchor Ernie Anastos, Oscar winner Olympia Dukakis and Judge Nicholas Tsoucalas. Big screen presenters will include: CSI:NY star Melina Kanakaredes, NBC sportscaster Bob Costas and tennis ace Pete Sampras. Over 1500 guests are expected to attend as scholarships are awarded to students from across the United States.

Alexis Christoforou, Nick Gregory, Elli Kokkinou, Constantine Maroulis and The Drifters uphold the tradition of outstanding HTSF honorees and performers including Oscar winner Olympia Dukakis, Anna Vissi, CBS News Anchors Ernie Anastos and Thalia Assuras, Marilu Henner, CSI:NY star Melina Kanakaredes, daytime drama star John Aniston, Director Nick Cassavetes, Emmy winner Michael Chiklis, NBC Sportscaster Bob Costas, Saturday Night Live's Tina Fey, Gloria Gaynor, Jim Gianopoulos, Chairman of Fox Filmed Entertainment, CSI:Miami star Sofia Milos, Thomas O'Brien, Paula Cale, Costas & Louis Mandylor, Humanitarian Tita Scandalis-Monti, The Alexander Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, Elizabeth Perkins, Star Trek's Marina Sirtis, Special Effects Creator/Producer/Director Patrick Tatopoulos, Natassa Theodoridou, Judge Nicholas Tsoucalas, Jay Black and Amber.

Dinner Chairman is New York Attorney Nick Katsoris, General Counsel of the Red Apple Group. Katsoris is also author of the children's book Loukoumi. General Chairs are John & Margo Catsimatidis. John is Chairman of the Red Apple Group and Publisher of the Hellenic Times with his wife Margo, who is an advertising executive in New York City and is involved in numerous charities. Ticket prices are: General admission tickets, from \$200 per person; Youth tickets \$150 (35 and under if purchased by May 6; \$175 thereafter). Tables (including sponsorships of scholarships) may also be purchased as follows: Chairman Table (\$20,000); Vice-Chairman Table (\$15,000); Tribute Table (\$10,000); Benefactor Table (\$6,000); Patron Table (\$3,500).

For further information, to receive an invitation, or to purchase tickets, visit HTSF.org, or call 212-986-6881 or 333-7456.



Alexis Christoforou



Nick Gregory



Elli Kokkinou



Bob Costas



Judge Nick Tsoucalas



Melina Kanakaredes



Ernie Anastos



The Drifters

AHEPA Family Excursion



The American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) arrived in Athens on April 8 to commence the 78th Annual AHEPA Family Excursion, a two-week journey aimed to strengthen ties and promote programs between American Hellenes and the Eastern Mediterranean region. More than \$140,000 was expected to be donated to health and day-care facilities and Orthodox Christian institutions during the course of the trip by AHEPA.

AHEPA honored the Hellenic Republic on April 10 at a banquet with more than 600 persons in attendance at the Intercontinental Hotel. According to Supreme President Gus J. James, II, it was the first event of its kind to be held in Athens in recent memory. "We felt strongly this event was long overdue," said James, II who headed a delegation of 100 Greek-Americans on the excursion. "We're proud of what we were able to demonstrate here this evening which was a commitment to Hellenism and an appreciation for the Hellenic Republic, its citizens, and



their historic and modern contributions to the world."

AHEPA honored Greece with the inaugural Spirit of Hellenism Award, Prime Minister Kostas A. Karamanlis with the AHEPA Socrates Award, and president of the Parliament Anna Benaki-Psarouda with the AHEPA Pericles Award. From Athens, the delegation flew to Cyprus to host a reception in honor of the Republic of Cyprus and George Paraskevaides in Nicosia. The delegation then continued to Thessaloniki and concluded the journey at the Ecumenical Patriarchate, where AHEPA participated in Holy Week services and visited the Theological Seminary at Halki. "We're excited about what we are doing to meet the core principles of our mission that include the protection, preservation, and promotion of Hellenism," said James. "This excursion exemplifies our dedication to that part of our mission and we look forward to sharing our experiences with our communities back home in the United States."

U. of Michigan hosts Modern Greek Teaching Workshop

The University of Michigan's Modern Greek Program hosted a day-long workshop recently on Greek Language and Undergraduate Education, made possible in part through a grant from the Modern Greek Studies Association.

The workshop, organized by University of Michigan's Artemis Leontis and Despina Margomenou, brought together from the U.S. and Canada scholars who teach Greek at the University level. The purpose was to exchange information and ideas on resources, methods, syllabi, and curricula, including distance learning and on-line tutoring and distance learning. In addition, participants talked about particular challenges faced by those teaching the Greek language and other aspects of Greek culture to undergraduates in North America. Participants were: Christopher Brown from Ohio State, Maria Hnarakis from Cornell, Martha Klironomos from San Francisco State, Panayiotis Pappas from Simon Fraser, George Syrimis from Yale, Karen Van Dyck from Columbia, Vassilis Lambropoulos, Artemis Leontis and Despina Margomenou from the University of Michigan.

Top Photo, from left to right: Karen Van Dyck from Columbia University, Martha Klironomos from San Francisco State University, George Syrimis from Yale University, and Panayiotis Pappas from Simon Fraser University

Bottom Photo, from left to right: Christopher Brown from Ohio State University, Maria Hnarakis from Cornell University, Vassilis Lambropoulos from the University of Michigan, and Artemis Leontis from the University of Michigan

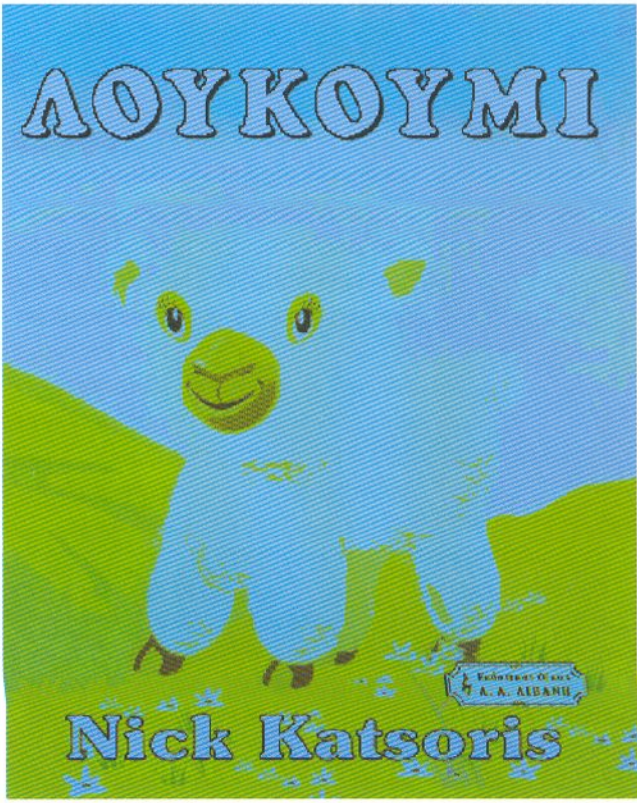


Loukoumi in translation

Livanis Publishing in Athens, Greece this month published a Greek translation of Nick Katsoris' children's book *Loukoumi*. The book is the story of a little lamb who tries to go to America with her family, but gets lost in what becomes an international journey through Greece, France, Italy and Morocco and a meeting with friends Fistiki the cat, Dean the dog and Marika the monkey, each helping Loukoumi find her way home.

Since the release of *Loukoumi*, Katsoris has embarked on a national book signing tour with Barnes & Noble Booksellers and other venues. A custom-designed Loukoumi plush toy and t-shirt have also been created after the beloved character. Katsoris also plans to design a series of Loukoumi books, with the second children's book expected to be released later this year.

The author is a New York attorney and since 1995 has served as General Counsel of the Red Apple Group. A graduate of Fordham Law School, Nick is Entertainment Editor for the Hellenic Times newspaper, and has published several articles for the American Bar Association and the National Law Journal. Katsoris is also the author of the legal thriller *Crimes of Fire* (www.crimesoffire.com). Nick is also an advocate of education and in 1989 co-founded the Hellenic Times Scholarship Fund. Since its inception, he has served as President of the organization and over \$1 million has been awarded to over 500 students. He currently resides in Eastchester, New York, with his wife, Voula, a real estate attorney, and their son, Dean. For more information or to order a copy please visit www.Loukoumi.com or contact: 212-397-2804 or info@loukoumi.com.



Face the Challenge celebrates 3rd year anniversary

The Face the Challenge foundation, which helps the disabled make over their appearance and their lives, is holding a cocktail reception on June 12 from 6-9 at Kellari Taverna, 19 W. 44th Street, in New York City. Tickets are \$100 to benefit the foundation and there will be an open bar. For further information call (212) 699-7786.

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Greeks on parade



April 2nd marked the day of this year's Greek Independence Day Parade along New York's Fifth Avenue. Thousands of Greek Americans joined by local and overseas notables marched or watched under a smiling sun reminiscent of Greek summer rather than New York spring. This year, the parade, organized by the Federation of Hellenic American Societies of Greater New York, had as Grand Marshals the city's Mayor Mike Bloomberg, the president of the Council of the Hellenes Abroad, Mr. Andrew Athens, philanthropist and entrepreneur John Rangos and Marathon Bank president, Mr. Paul Stathouloupoulos. Archbishop Demetrios of America was among the official guests as was the minister of Thrace and Macedonia, Mr. George Kalantzis. The famous Evzons, members of the Greek Presidential Guard, opened the parade, making it "as Greek as possible," according to the Federation President Nick Diamandides.



Photos: ETA PRESS

Yes we can!—play baseball in Greece

By Dimitri C. Michalakos

For the New York Yankees during their 1970s doldrums, Chris Karalekas was the kid in the stands who carried the Yes We Can! banner that his mother had made him from bed sheets and tablecloths and that cheered George Steinbrenner so much that he offered the 16-year-old fan a seat on the team flight to the 1974 Cleveland pennant series.

"Make a long story short," says the still-fervent 48-year-old baseball fan and FedEx executive, "the Yankees swept the weekend series and I made a numerous amount of friends."

And he's kept his baseball fervor alive. Seven years ago he started Baseball Acropolis with his cousin Gus that has brought more than \$70,000 worth of baseball gear to Greece and conducted clinics that Karalekas himself takes the time to coach. Only recently one of his FedEx clients, Lion Sports referred him to Regent Sports on Long Island, which donated 400 baseball gloves that went to kids in Greece who are quickly becoming converts to the game.

"It warms my heart, because just last week I got a couple of e-mails from the kids who were the ones who got some of the fifty uniform tops that we had sent from my local little league out here in Huntington," says Karalekas (who coaches a Baseball Acropolis team that last year won Long Island's Huntington Junior Championship). "They sent me an e-mail picture and it's so wonderful to see the sight of these kids in Athens with the caps and the uniform tops and the bats and all the equipment."

Greece already has a six-year-old Hellenic Amateur Baseball Federation which fields over 16 teams that Karalekas first read about in Sports Illustrated and called from America to lend his support ("They thought I was some nut"). But he's since become the goodwill ambassador for the game in Greece and a liaison to Major League Baseball and Peter Angelos of the Baltimore Orioles, who helped field the team for Greece at the Athens Olympics. Now he wants to bring organized Little League baseball to Greece (Little League ball is already played in a number of countries including Germany, England, Spain, Italy, Poland, Ireland, and even Russia).



"I think, inevitably, for the game to succeed we need to focus on the youth in Greece," says Karalekas. "It's imperative if the game is going to prosper in Greece that the youth have to be the focus and that's one of the reasons why I'm so involved in trying to get Little League there. That's what inspired me from the get-go and what Baseball Acropolis was all about: a grassroots effort to get the game there, plant the seeds there. I knew it was going to take ten years or so, now we have six or seven years on the clock, I have a couple of more years left."

The connection to professional Little League has already been made ("I was blessed to get the connection with the Little League in Europe through the commissioner of our Little League here in Huntington, who unbeknownst to me wrote a beautiful letter to the Little League in Williamsport telling them of this guy Chris Karalekas"). And besides his usual quiet passion ("I tell my mother the R in Karalekas stands for relentless—she says you'll need it"), Karalekas hopes to bring the wealth of his organized baseball knowledge to the cause. He not only coached his Long Island teams to championships, he coached (and scouted with his cousin Gus) the team of Greek Americans that in 2003 won the first baseball championship at the Elliniada games in Thessaloniki, competing against other teams of diaspora Greeks from around the world and also against the Greek national team.

"For me it was a dream because I coached Greek American boys from Chicago, Illinois and Iowa and Tennessee and California and New York," he says. "And the thing is they had never been to Greece before and they saw the beauty of the culture, of their heritage, of the land for the first time. To me that was everything. It was something that I'll never forget." (He also won't forget that when the team encouraged "Skip" to take his own turn at bat, the man who could never hit the curve ball walloped one for

the first home run in organized ball of his career—"Five thousand miles away from home—that was special").

And special, he says, will be when baseball becomes a major sport in Greece. "I really believe that with all my heart," he says with the fervency of the Yes We Can! kid. "There are enough people there who love it and I think we can make it happen, but it's not going to happen without getting to the youth and that's why I pin a lot of my hopes in getting Little League there. The birthplace of democracy deserves the most democratic game in the world. In baseball you can be tall, short, pudgy, skinny—it doesn't matter: that's the beauty of baseball."



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