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Daily Kos Democratic blogger Markos Moulitsas Zúniga

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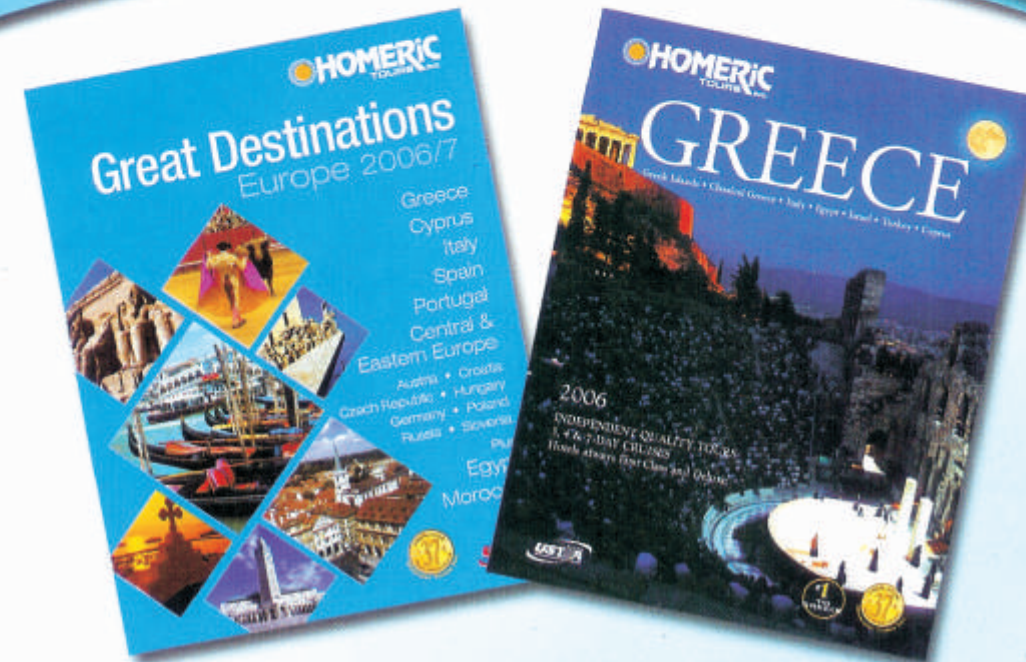
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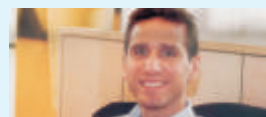
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FROM THE EDITOR

SUMMER IDYLL

I was driving behind a bus in New York City and trying to ditch the traffic, and wondering if I was going to make my appointment, and my next appointment after that, and considering if there was another route, and meanwhile trying to edge my way into the next lane to get away from the bus—when I noticed the billboard that it was carrying.

It showed the dome of a white church, it showed a blue sea, it showed a blue sky, and it had a slogan in white letters that beckoned us to “live our dreams in Greece.”

At that moment, of course, I was stuck in traffic in Manhattan—but the vision of that blue sea, and the blue sky, and the serenity of that white church took me away.

And I thought of the island of Chios, where I grew up as a boy, and the smell of the sea in the wind, the sparkle of the waves in the sun, the sweat on your neck that cooled with the breeze, the slow and stately pace of life, the siestas in the afternoon when the shops shut down, the stirring and resumption of life in late afternoon, when the worst of the sun had baked away, and the buzz of life resumed: the voices, the car and scooter horns, the whistles of the traffic cop, the clop of the occasional mule-drawn cart.

What a wonderful and natural way of life—and how had we strayed so far from it in the so-called civilization that we had created for ourselves in the big cities of the old world and the new world here in America?

I don't think our kids know there is another way of life, until they actually visit Greece, and actually roam the islands, and the towns, and catch glimpses of the way of life that is still preserved there. The big cities of Greece are wonderful—they pulse with life, now more than ever—but it's the islands and the provinces that truly restore our senses and get us back in touch with our roots and life as it was meant to be.

Foreigners flock to Greece to capture something of the magic that is life in Greece, and we Greek Americans owe it to ourselves and to our children to enjoy it every year—particularly in these late months of July and August when the crowds have dispersed somewhat and Greece can be enjoyed unspoiled. Go out there and enjoy.

For this issue, also, we're reprising some of our most popular stories from the past year, which we are bringing back by popular demand, or in case you may have missed them the first time they were published: George Stephanopoulos and how he is an example of a great Greek American success story, and like every Greek a voyager, in his case, in the world of politics. Eleni Gage and how she stayed away from the village of Lia where her grandmother was martyred, but has now made the voyage back and rediscovered her legacy.

Enjoy these stories, once again, just as much as we enjoyed bringing them to you.

Dimitri C. Michalakis

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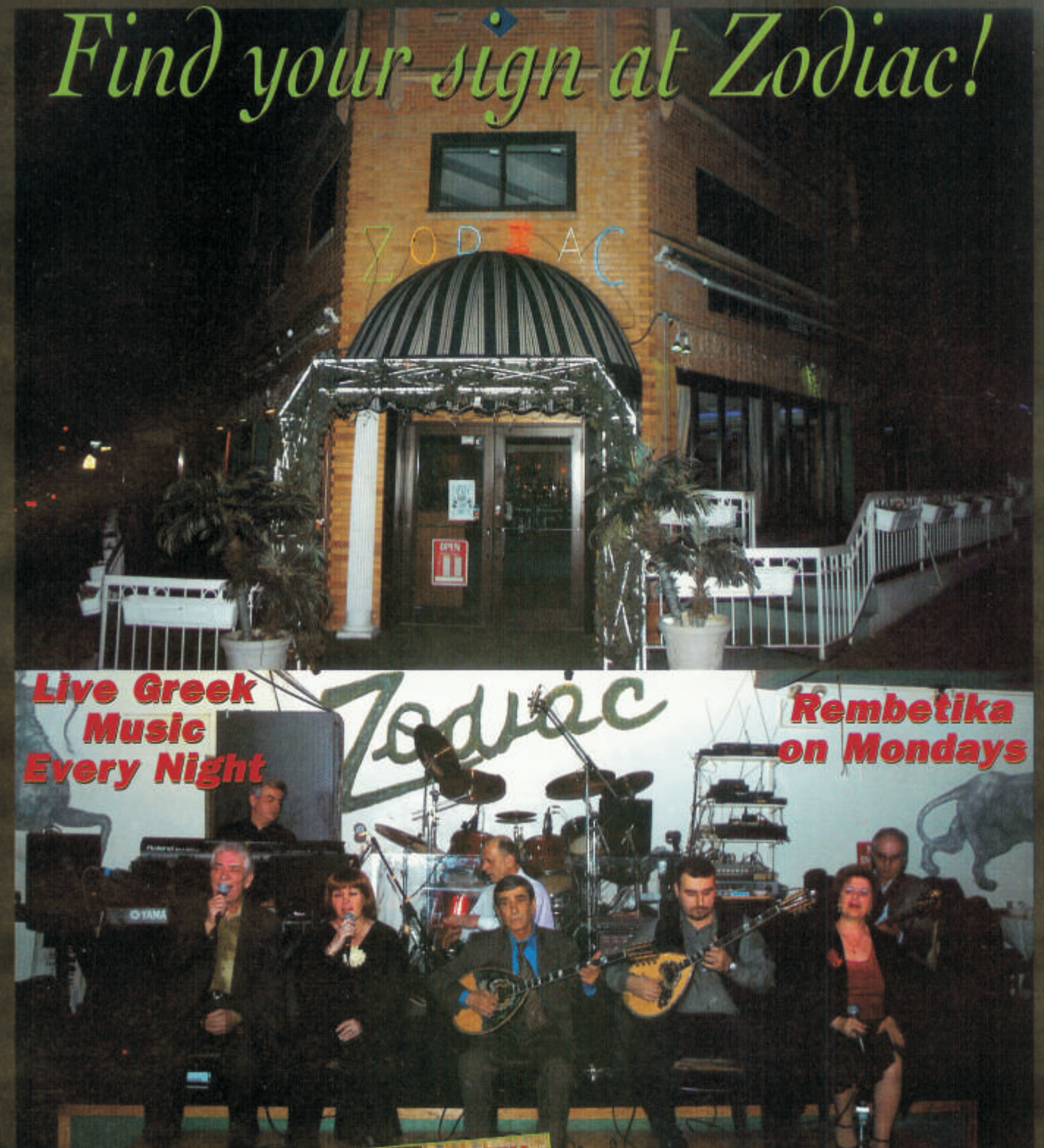
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EQUAL



He offends the Republicans on a regular basis, he offends the Democrats on a regular basis (he dressed them down in person at the Capitol after their 2004 electoral drubbing), Markos Moulitsas Zuniga even offends himself (“Everybody says I’m an a--hole, and they’re right”), but they keep coming back for more. His **Daily Kos** blog (DailyKos.com), ranting at political timidity of all stripes, registers almost a million hits a day and is the biggest forum of like-minded souls—political gadflies who use the Internet to shoot their barbs at pompous politicians and pundits of all persuasions.

“I hate Washington,” the slender, hyper Zuniga, 35, told *The Washington Times* and so he rails at the Beltway from afar, from California, where he lives with his wife and son, Aristotle. But like it or not, his clout has made him a Washington power-broker. His site plays to an audience larger than ten opinion magazines combined and he raised \$500,000 for the Democrats in the last election. He was also an early backer of Howard Dean and made him an Internet phenomenon. Which is why a guy who sits at his laptop in California gets to talk regularly

with Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid and gets to dress down the troops at the Capitol.

“The party had just lost its third election in a row, and his audience, a self-flagellatory group at the best of times, was feeling glum and a little bit desperate,” reported *The Washington Times* of the meeting. “Moulitsas told the assembled crowd that they, the establishment, had mismanaged party strategy for too long and that he, Markos, had a better plan.” In fact, he took on the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) and stormed out of a party thrown in his honor. “They want to make me into the latest Jesse Jackson, but I’m not ideological at all,” Moulitsas says. “I’m just all about winning.”

He came to his political shining path the hard way. He was born in Chicago to a Greek family from El Salvador (his uncle was briefly the country’s education minister) that moved back to El Salvador when Moulitsas was four. He talks about stepping over bodies in the street during the civil war that gave him a right-wing bent, before the family returned

to Chicago and he grew up “a loudmouthed nerd.” He also grew up a Reagan Republican (because Reagan supported the Salvadorean government) and he joined the Army as a scout, serving mostly in Germany. But in college he got into left wing politics, then earned a law degree from Boston University, and moved to Silicon Valley to strike it rich. “Maybe at some time, Silicon Valley really was this democratic ideal where the guy with the best idea made a billion dollars, but by the time I got there at least, it was just like anything else—a bunch of rich kids who knew each other running around and it all depended on who you knew,” Moulitsas told *The Washington Times*.

So he started posting comments on a liberal site called MyDD.com, and by 2002 he had a following and launched his own blog, Daily Kos (“Named after my Army nickname, rhymes with ‘prose’”). It took off the following year when he allowed readers to register their own weblogs, or diaries, through a technology called Scoop. “Suddenly, Moulitsas had transformed his site from something that looked kind of like a newspaper column into a genuinely new, that

complex community filled not with readers but with writers,” said *The Washington Times*. Those writers - Billmon, DavidNYC, Bill in Portland, Maine - joined the crusade and the wishful thinking that Democrats were going to win in the next round. They didn’t, but then Moulitsas and others in the blogger universe had a battle plan for the next round and, anyway, they were intent on perpetuating their own “noise machine” to rival the Republicans’.

And Moulitsas has been at it ever since, with the Daily Kos blasting the Bush administration over the war, blasting Democrats over their meekness and lack of tactical sense (To win back the red states he advises Democrats to avoid talking about gun-control—which they have adopted, in some cases), and rallying the blogger masses with doses of his own credo: “Be noticed. Make a stir. Don’t regurgitate the contents of a news story, but provide perspective or additional insight...Be clever, funny, original...Have attitude...I don’t care whether you like me or not.”



A Casualty of War



Army Spc. Michael G. Mihalakis

Among the casualties of the Iraq war was Army Spc. Michael G. Mihalakis, 18, of San Jose, California, who died the day after Christmas, 2003, only two weeks before he was scheduled to return home. He was a military policeman serving with the National Guard and was killed when his Humvee hit a berm near the Baghdad airport, throwing him from the vehicle and crushing him underneath. A sympathetic captain had assigned him to the airport, instead of his prior job patrolling Baghdad's streets. In letters home, he wrote about his coming of age:

"Before I left for basic, I told you guys I lived a life of little, if any, adversity. I thrived [on] the need to experience adversity and hardship to become the man I want to be...My lesson in adversity and hardship is something that can't be priced and is the ultimate reason I want to stay, rather than go home early. Whatever happens will happen, but in the end, as much as I hate it here, this is where I want to be."

He grew up in Milpitas, California, playing guitar in a rock band while in high school. After graduating high school in 2002, he moved to San Luis Obispo to attend summer school at Cuesta Community College. He planned to study business but joined the National Guard before the fall term began.

Mihalakis' father said his son came home from Iraq after a car accident left his sister in a coma. When she began to recover, he returned to Iraq.

About 300 people gathered at his funeral in Fremont and excerpts from his letters were read by a family friend at the memorial service.

"He wanted to become a soldier and would not let anything stand in his way," said his mother, Diana Marie Mihalakis. "Only God knows why this unfortunate accident happened."

Mihalakis' mother and his father, George,

told the Associated Press that they took pride in that their son—the only boy of three children—told them in his letters he felt lucky as a child growing up in the South Bay, unlike so many of his friends who he said came from dysfunctional families. He also begged his parents not to feel guilty for letting him go to Iraq—it was his choice to make. Compared with others, his life was free of adversity and he joined the military to "become a better man."

When he returned from his assignment, he said he didn't want them to have to pay for his tuition at Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo—they had worked hard and should enjoy their money. He would take care of his own bills. The military, he wrote, was a great equalizer:

"It doesn't matter if you were a prom queen or an idiot. Once you become a soldier, everyone shaves his head and becomes just like anyone else."



Prof. Charles Moskos is the man The Wall Street Journal has called the world's "most influential military sociologist" and he's sounded off on the military and the state of its combat force since Vietnam. He was asked by George Bush senior to serve on the President's Commission on Women in the Military, has been awarded the Army's highest civilian honor, the Distinguished Service Award, and has visited every U.S. conflict overseas since the Korean War. "I have been about everywhere," says the affable Northwestern University professor. And now he sounds off on the war in Iraq, which he visited last year:

CHARLIE MOSKOS ON TROOP MORALE

NEO: Are we keeping the peace in Iraq and what's the morale like?

Peace-keeping is not the right term, this is a counterinsurgency. Peacekeeping would be Bosnia, or Kosovo, where the morale is generally pretty high. Generally speaking, the active duty has a higher morale than the reserve components, like the National Guard. The National Guard and reserve components were disillusioned, not so much about the mission, but because of second class equipment.

NEO: What effects morale in a conflict like this?

We never used the reserve components as we have in this war: About 40% of the troops in Iraq now are reserves, and that includes the National Guard. Secondly, there is the access to the Internet, which generally speaking is a morale booster. And now we have these civilian contractors, in great numbers-- we always had some numbers of civilian contractors, but never to this extent-- who get paid a lot more money for doing the same kind of work as a soldier does. By the way, the Army today is offering re-enlistment bonuses for Special Forces sergeants, so, they don't leave the Army to go work for Halliburton--a

\$150,000 bonus. That's for re-enlisting. These guys say, if I'm going to get shot, I may as well get paid for it. And we don't have a draft, either, of course.

NEO: What about patrolling what is a civilian zone?

This is the kind of a war where you're getting much closer to the insurgents. You have artillery shells dropping on you, snipers and of course these IED's (Improvised Explosive Devices). They do have interpreters and Iraqi guys working with them, but essentially it means you're going to be shooting some number of innocent people. Another thing that's different with this war is that the anti-war groups in America are not anti-soldier. In the Vietnam era, the anti-war people were anti-war, and anti-soldier. That makes a difference to the soldier's morale: When they come back now, nobody's spitting on them

NEO: What is the reenlistment rate?

The re-enlistment rates have not been that bad, it's recruiting new people that's a problem. I asked a bunch of recruiters last fall, would you prefer to have your advertising budget tripled or have Jenna Bush join the

army, and they unanimously chose the Jenna option. I asked that same question five years earlier about Chelsea Clinton, and got the same response. It's somewhat of a scandal when you think of the fact that only a handful of our Congress has children in the military.

NEO: Did you support the war?

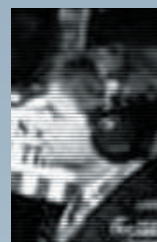
I was always against it. I didn't see the connection with Al Qaeda and the unofficial reason (we went to war in Iraq) was Al Qaeda. That meant that we lost Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan, because we shifted our attention away.



George Stephanopoulos

on his political education

by Dimitri C. Michalakis



As a boy, George Stephanopoulos imagined he would grow up to become a priest one day, like his father and grandfather and most of the family friends: "When I recall summer barbecues, I see them lounging in plastic-webbed lawn chairs, highballs in hand, wearing the hot-weather uniform—short-sleeved black shirts with detachable cleric's collars that flopped to one side when the top button was unfastened."

He did become an altar boy and "serve the

priest so he can save everyone else"—which became a fitting preparation for his role in the Clinton campaign and White House. But did it save his soul after all the scandals he had to "spin" and his dedicated work serving a tainted president?

"Altar boys are as much like young operatives as little monks," he writes in *All Too Human: A Political Education*, his 1999 confessional of his Clinton service. "Sometimes I got lost in the details, lost sight of the spiritual essence

of the service we were producing, but I hoped that doing the right things in the right place at the right time would help do some good and save our souls, including my own, even when I was just doing my job."

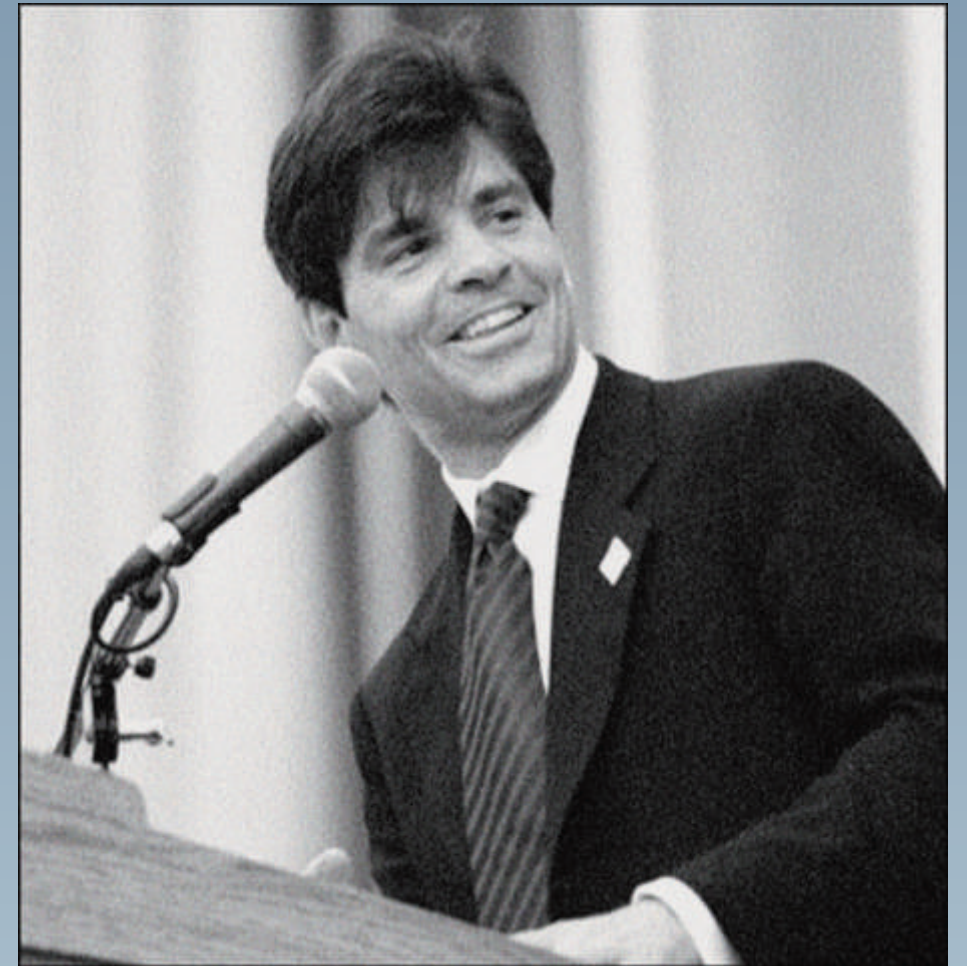
Eventually, he fled from politics, though not very far. He studied it from the vantage of a visiting professorship at Columbia University, then as a political analyst for ABC News and is now the youngest host (boy wonder, still) of the Sunday morning talk show hosts on This

Week With George Stephanopoulos, a banner which none of his seniors have.

In that role since 2002, Stephanopoulos has conducted a rare joint interview with Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Stephen Breyer, anchored from the Dead Sea for an exclusive interview with King Abdullah of Jordan, and during the war in Iraq conducted several exclusive interviews with international leaders such as Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. And in 2003, he

was widely lauded for his role as moderator of the first Democratic Presidential Debate: "ABC News' George Stephanopoulos skillfully moderated the debate," The Washington Post approved. The Rothenberg Political Report said he "asked a terrific series of pointed questions." Whatever his future holds, Stephanopoulos admits being a dutiful Greek son "didn't mean blending in; it required standing out... Make your name, and don't change it. Make us proud, and don't forget where you came from."

His namesake, grandfather George, was a missionary priest who came from the village of Neohorio in Peloponnesus to Montana in 1938 to minister to Greek immigrants toiling in the American west. "His job was to make sure the members of the flock kept their faith as they sought their fortunes, to remind them of who they were and where they came from," his grandson recalls it. His father Lamby, became Bobby when he arrived to the U.S. as a five-year-old. He met his future wife, Nikolitsa, appropriately, at a church youth convention in Minneapolis, where the future presbytera was then studying public relations



at the University of Minnesota.

"Dad was on a field trip from seminary, and there was probably no better place to meet a woman willing to become a presbytera, literally 'priest's wife'—a word that captures the idea that everybody in the family of a priest has the responsibility to the family of the church," says her son, who often leafed for hours through the school yearbooks of his popular mother.

The couple had four children, Stacy and Marguarite sang in the choir and taught Sunday School, George and his brother

Andrew became altar boys, George starting when he was four: "Going to the office with my dad meant going to church. He would slap a little Mennen on my cheeks after he shaved, and we would head to the place only men could go—the altar, the inner sanctum separated from the rest of the congregation by a screen of icons."

Stephanopoulos assumed he would grow up to rule over the inner sanctum, as well: "At home, I would preside at play liturgies with a towel draped over my shoulders, or sneak through piles of books in my dad's office to suck on the sweet metallic stem of his pipe

while tapping out a pretend sermon on his typewriter.”

But when he was thirteen, after the family moved from Cleveland to New York, he saw the light of a different path, still hazy, but not the one that all the men in the Stephanopoulos family had followed: “...the idea that I wasn’t meant to be a priest, that I wouldn’t bear the family legacy into the next generation, revealed itself with an intensity others must feel when called to the priesthood. I hadn’t lost my faith, just my vocation, but I knew the decision was final.”

And like every young son of immigrants, he tried to blend in. He was still an altar boy in high school when he experimented with the evils of golf, the track, and Friday night poker games—with money earned working as a caddie, dishwasher and busboy. “Politics didn’t interest me,” he says.

But he wanted to excel, and being in New York, he wanted to get into Columbia University. It was during his junior year there that he interned one summer for the local Democratic congresswoman and helped write her speeches about the perils of the Reagan budget: “Before that experience, I had considered volunteering for George Bush in 1979 and voted for John Anderson in 1980. But working against Reagan’s budget made me a Democrat.”

He almost got sidetracked from politics by applying one day for the Peace Corps and accepting a position over the phone. (“An hour later, I made a pot of coffee and wondered what I had done.”) He called back to say no and instead served a stint in Washington with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. There he met Norman Mayer, a man in a windbreaker who lobbied in the wilderness of Washington like a John the Baptist for peace. Stephanopoulos offered him a sandwich when he sometimes roamed into the Carnegie offices, until Norman Mayer one day threatened to blow up the Washington Monument, and Stephanopoulos called the police.

“After I called the police, reporters starting calling me,” he recounts. “So began my first foray into a media feeding frenzy.” Nightline sent a limo, he got to say “Well, Ted...” on national television (his parents made a video), he got calls from friends across the country, and a newly-elected Cleveland congressman named Ed Feighan took note and called, as well.

“If you can get yourself on Nightline,” he told the budding spinmeister, “maybe you can do some good for me.” Stephanopoulos went to work for Feighan as a legislative assistant and he got to meet the legendary Washington journalist, I.F. Stone, who “looked like Yoda

come to life in a fraying flannel suit.”

“You’ve covered Washington so long,” Stephanopoulos asked him, “weren’t you ever tempted to go into politics yourself?”

Stone fixed him with a jaundiced eye. “Once,” he said, back sixty-five years in high school when the local ward boss offered him a job on the editorial board of the school newspaper—his dream job—in return for working on his campaign. “But whatever temptation Izzy felt was quickly overwhelmed by a wave of nausea and a vow never to approach active politics again,” Stephanopoulos remembers.

Cautioned, the young political acolyte did apply for a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford, and got accepted after his second try, saving him

from a paternal admonition administered, he says, only half-jokingly: “When are you going to stop playing around in Washington and get a real job?”

“The selection committee saved me from that,” says Stephanopoulos, “and the scholarship offered the professional security of law school without the drudgery.” He got a master’s in theology and read Augustine and Aquinas, Martin Luther and Reinhold Niebuhr on the high plane of right and wrong: “This would offer me a guide to which questions to ask and a reminder of where I was going wrong when I got too caught up in the game.”

“And still I loved the game,” he confesses. He went back as chief of staff to the congressman, then worked on the Dukakis campaign rdt’s



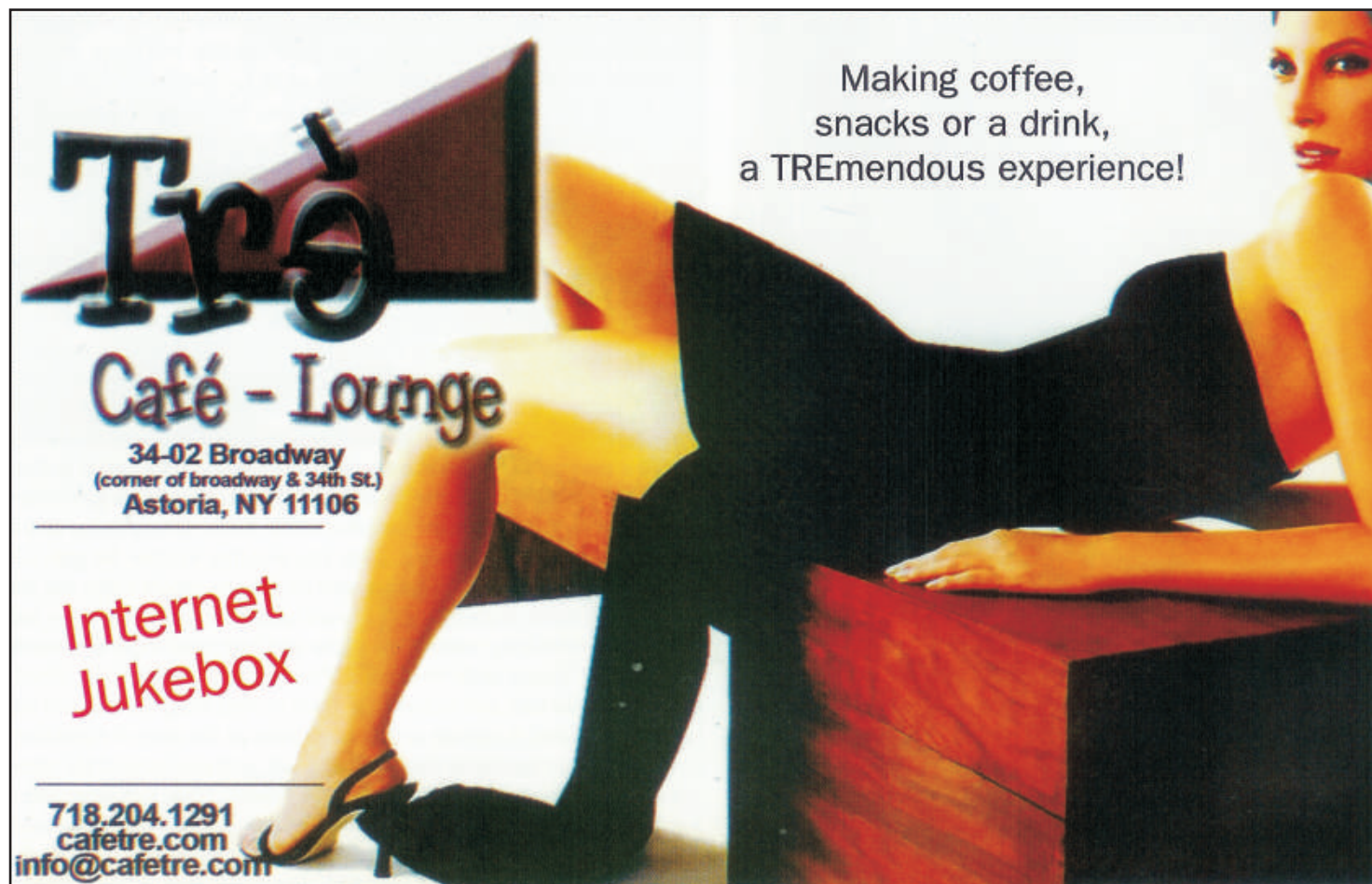
(“How could I not work for him?”) and still grappling with his soul, he became an assistant to Father Tim Healy at the New York Public Library—until Washington called, in the person of Kirk O’Donnell, scouting for House Speaker Dick Gephardt: “George, would you consider coming back to Washington to be Dick Gephardt’s floor man?”

The rest is history: Stephanopoulos, ever restless and now thirty years old, was introduced to a young charismatic named Bill Clinton: “Bulky and butter-cheeked, Clinton looked like an overgrown boy in his light summer suit. But he had the gait of a man used to being obeyed, admired, courted and loved.” Stephanopoulos signed up for the crusade of the Clinton presidential campaign (learning to field “bimbo eruptions” and finding them a spinmeister’s challenge), before Clinton was elected president despite them and Stephanopoulos acquired the mantle of presidential adviser. He resigned after the onset of the second term, “citing stress, fatigue, and depression,” and saw the Monica Lewinsky imbroglio on TV.

He did return to the White House to visit a friend only months afterwards, and settled into the habitual staffer slouch on the sofa in the Roosevelt Room, until he heard the familiar shrill beeps on the Secret Service station just across the hall, announcing that the President was in the Oval Office.

“I bolted upright in my chair, ready to work,” he recalls. But “a uniformed agent reached into the room to close the four-inch-thick door facing the Oval’s formal entrance... This was not my place anymore.”





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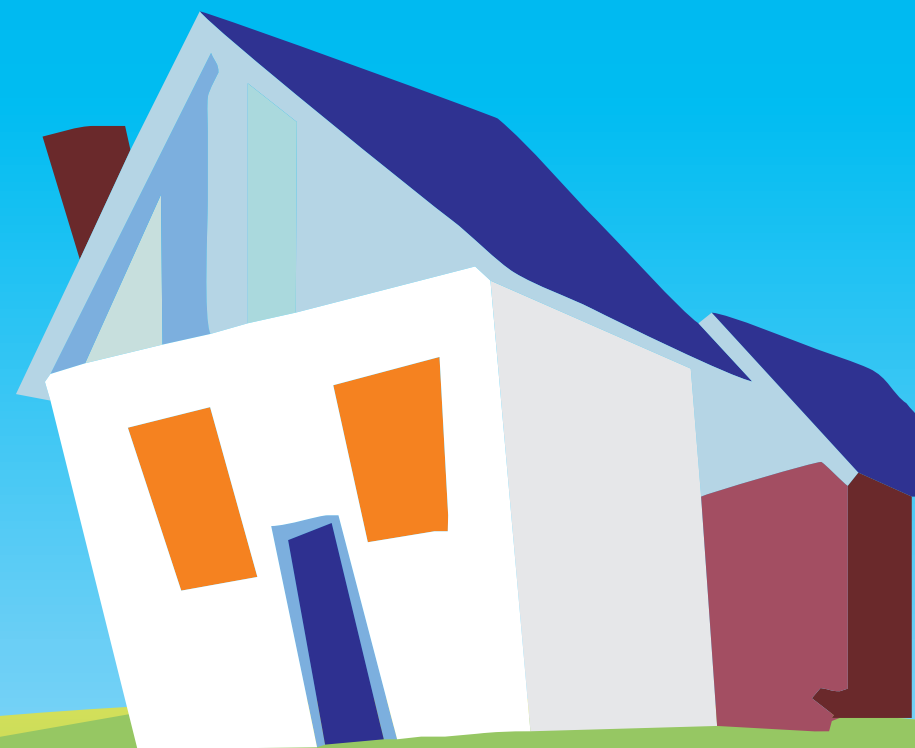
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You can go home again

*Last year Eleni Gage published *North of Ithaka* (St. Martin's Press) about the year she spent rebuilding her family's home in Epirus where her grandmother had suffered and died during the Greek civil war famously chronicled in her father's own book, *Eleni*. *North of Ithaka* has now been issued as a paperback and Gage talks about her own memorable pilgrimage to the village of Lia.*



Eleni Gage is walking through Central Park and talking on her cell phone about the little village nestled in the mountains of Epirus, Greece that has changed her life.

"I always thought it was beautiful and the people were always very nice because they were always smothering us with kisses," she says, winded from her walk and with the noises of New York in the background. "But the house always seemed sort of sinister and spooky because there was a big hole in the ground and then some piles of rocks with ivy on them. You'd be tempted to get closer—like one of the pile of rocks had an

iron window frame in it and it was freestanding and you wanted to get closer because you were curious and you wanted to look at it. But there was too much overgrowth and too many holes you can fall in. And it was sort of scary."

As the oldest daughter of Nicholas Gage, and the new generation of Eleni Gatzoyiannis, she had lived since birth with the legacy of her grandmother's story which her father had transformed into a personal tribute with the research and writing of his book. The circumstances of that history had been talked about endlessly in the family by Eleni's aunts and her father and Eleni knew every detail of her grandmother's harrowing ordeal. But though she had often visited Lia and seen the wreck of the house that had once imprisoned her grandmother before her execution for being "the Amerikanida," she was 27 years old and still had never read the book about her namesake and she had seen only snatches of the movie based on the book.

"I felt that I always knew the story and I didn't want to face it until I had to," she admits. "When the book came out, I was only

seven and I thought that it would be too upsetting. When the movie came out, I didn't watch it. I saw a few parts of the movie, but I've never seen the whole thing."

Perhaps, she says, she tried to avoid the trauma. "Not so much of our story because there wasn't a choice to be made," she says, "But I did grow up feeling that life can be difficult and traumatic and dramatic; it wasn't in my case but I did grow up thinking that life can be that way. So I never watched war movies, I liked to focus on life's happier side; I liked to watch old musicals and things like that. And, for example, when I was grown up and my parents were researching the book and my dad did and still does a lot of work for the ethnic Greek minority in Albania, we'd go to dinner at a restaurant and the head waiter would have family in Albania and he would be telling my parents some terrible story about their suffering. And eventually it got to the point that in middle school I would tell my parents, well, I'll come with you to dinner, but not if anyone is going to talk about concentration camps."

She did study folklore and mythology at he



Father Prokopi blesses the foundations

Harvard, she worked as a writer and magazine editor in New York (Allure, Elle, InStyle and most recently as the first beauty editor of People) and in 2001 when she decided to freelance as a travel writer she dipped into the family archives. “I loved my job, it was really fun, I got to interview celebrities, and I got to go to the Golden Globes and dance with Kevin Spacey, but I wanted to do something else,” she says. The proposal she wrote for a book was the idea of her going back to her family’s old village and rebuilding the house of her grandmother, the ruin that had once scared her: “I was home for Thanksgiving in 2001 and I saw a photo of my dad standing in front of the house during a visit in 1963, and the house in the photo was still standing. I had never seen it that way; I only knew it as a bunch of ruins, and that’s when I realized emotionally that it was a house once and I thought that it should be a house again.”

ENTERING LIA. WELCOME TO OUR HOSPITABLE VILLAGE read the sign in 2002 as she pulled up in her rental car and she writes in North of Ithaka, “as the sun began to set, softening the sharp contrast between the blue of the sky, the dark green of the mountains, and the early, lime green leaves of the trees. As I passed the playground and the Xenona Inn, which had not yet opened for the season, I rolled down the window to smell the village air, a scent I associated with woodsmoke, fragrant dirt, and herbs we

didn’t have back in the United States.”

She passed the church of Agia Triada, the stone building where her father had gone to school and was now used as offices for the village and the border police. “My aunts had told me that during the civil war, a man had been tortured to death in that building; I remembered and sped on, through the heavy mist, turning past the Goura, a spring covered by a plane tree so old that it has been declared a national monument. Then I arrived at the road that ran along the hillside just above my great-grandfather Kicho Haidis’s home, where I would live while rebuilding the Gatzoyiannis house.” She parked under a walnut tree, behind an old van used by the neighbors who were traveling fabric salesmen and their sign in block letters advertising, “‘Dowry supplies’; everything a woman needs to get set up in her new life. A good omen, I told myself, trying to forget about the haunted schoolhouse and the fact that I’d be living in the house below all alone.”

“Much against everybody’s advice” she moved to Lia for nearly a year and supported herself writing travel articles while she launched the restoration, and kept the journals for the book she would write about her journey. She also, finally, sat down to read Eleni: “It was much less traumatic than I thought, because you know how you fear something when it’s abstract, and then when

you experience it you say, well, that’s no so bad? I was glad to have read it. I didn’t read it sitting alone in the house; I read it when I went down to Yannina to visit some family friends of ours, so that was helpful. And it’s a difficult book to read, I think, for lots of people but for me it was mainly sort of a relief.”

She negotiated the restoration of the house with her philosopher-architect George Zervas (“Time is just a construct,” he instructed her when she asked him how long it would take. “I’ve been able break the boundary of time, like scientists are always trying to do. It’s easy—just don’t wear a watch!”), the hiring of the work crews that make up the new fabric of Lia (her Albanian neighbor Vlad and his son Net) and the ministrations of the village’s extended family of “thitses and thious,” including Foti Tsandinis, related to her aunt by marriage and former shepherd boy who had once herded her grandmother’s flock and now assumed the task of herding Eleni through the vicissitudes of village life. “I thought I’d see how you’re doing,” he said in welcome, kissing her hello. “I promised your aunt I’d keep an eye on you.”

Her aunts had warned her about returning (“Scared of the house—you should be scared of the whole village,” Thia Kanta had told her), but they returned during her stay and approved of her progress (“By the end of their stays they were leading tourists around the house to see it”), and her parents and sister came also. “He was pleased,” she says of her father, though his visit provided a scare when he totaled her car. “It was a miracle,” said Foti. “The saint saved him.” “But the only way Thitsa Kanta and assorted other Liotes of Lia and Worcester would believe that NickGage (as Thia Kanta called him) was all right was if they heard he danced at the panegyric as he had the night before. That was what it meant to live in Lia; the entire village became your meddling extended family, relatives who love you too much to leave you in peace. As I watched my father dance opposite the clarinetist, I realized that I knew what the skeptics who had studied the Anastenarides hadn’t been able to figure out. Life is risky, and people get burned. So you’d better pray you have saints—or even civilians—looking out for you.”

She returned to New York with her journal and worked on the book in a freezing apartment. She missed the solicitude of Foti and the other villagers—“As you’re sitting and writing people would be coming by all the time, saying, I cooked some squash blossoms, or I’m going to pick oregano, or there’s a panegyri in this town, do you want to come?” But when the book was published in





hardcover last year (and the paperback last month) she found that she had acquired a whole new “village” of family and friends.

“A lot of people who aren’t Greek have said to me, oh, it gave me village envy,” she says. “I wish I had a village to go back to you. That’s been an interesting reaction I didn’t expect. Also, I’ve gotten tons of e-mails from people, some particularly moving. One woman e-mailed me to say that her mother had been my aunt’s roommate on the boat they took to go to Greece when my aunt went to find a husband. So I put the two of them in touch and now they’re writing letters and sending photos. Another woman gave me a cross stitch tablecloth that her mother had made and I put it in the house. And this man e-mailed me a picture of his dad, not a Greek, of his dad during World War II with these two other soldiers on leave visiting Pompey and shortly afterwards one of the men was killed. He said his father was now in his 80s and was trying to track down the daughter of this man who had never met her dad so he could tell her his memories, and the book reminded him of that experience. That’s been really moving.”

She’s in New York again, (she plans to study for a master’s in fiction at Columbia starting in the fall), though she visits Lia regularly and marvels at the rebuilding going on everywhere. “The older generation from there is now retiring and they’re building large homes,” she says. “And a lot of the young people come back in the summer and for vacation and for Easter. I like to think, because I’m an optimist, that as people in Greece get more into telecommutery, more and younger people may return.”

Back in her apartment now and still on her cell phone, she talks about the other self she discovered those thousands of miles away in a little village she thought was miles away from home. “It was definitely a turning point in my life,” she says. “I had a great time. I realized what I wanted to focus on, writing books. And I now have this new anchor in the village and have created a new home for myself and I’ll keep going back. Which even though it makes me sad that I can’t be there all the time and I’m divided, I think overall that’s a good thing. I’m really lucky that I have my two homes.”

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Dimitri Hatzigeorgiou: Bringing Starbucks to Greece

By Dimitri C. Michalakis



Dimitri Hatzigeorgiou had worked for Starbucks for years and had thoughts of doing business in Greece. And the two came together one day when Starbucks asked him to open up the first of their coffeehouses in what is a traditional coffee-drinking culture.

"The Greeks are incredible operators as businessmen," says Hatzigeorgiou, 44, and it

wasn't easy, but he spent two years in Greece launching Starbucks coffeehouses all over the country (now well over 40, with several in Cyprus, and still opening up at the rate of one or two a month) for the Marinopoulos Group.

Marinopoulos was an ideal partner (Hatzigeorgiou's first offices and model store debuted in Alimos near the old airport) and

Hatzigeorgiou's initial fears of the spanking-clean Starbucks image of product and service taking a hit from Greece's more laid back culture were soon allayed. "Boy, was I wrong," he admits. "That was the most amazing thing: looking at young people that were working for us, and their enthusiasm and passion, and how readily they embraced our culture and wanted to be part of this. It

really restored my faith.”

And getting Greeks to switch from Nescafe to frappuccino was easier than he imagined. “It was already in motion even before we got there,” he says. “There were a tremendous amount of young Greeks who had been educated in the UK, and had traveled in Europe and were exposed to Starbucks there. Plus, the timing was right with the Olympics coming, and Greeks being a coffee drinking culture and Greece being a warm weather climate. I remember a reporter interviewing me who drank our frappuccino and he said, You know what? This is the frappe they serve in heaven: The frozen beverage that only the angels would drink. And I was like, Bravo!”

The first Starbucks in Greece opened in September, 2002 on Korae Square in Athens. A month later two more stores opened in one day, in Voula (“Downtown, suburban, seaside Voula—people thought we were crazy—but that was a neighborhood that had gone from a sleepy resort town to a lot of new wealth and young people and a tremendous amount of expatriates living in the area, so it was a hit right off the bat”), and at Palio Falero. “It was insanity,” Hatzigeorgiou remembers. “And then, of course, we took on Cyprus and opened up a store in Cyprus a year later. It was the hardest thing I ever did in my life. I was in way over my head, to put it mildly, but I made it, and we made it, with the commitment and dedication from the Marinopoulos Group and the people I worked with.”

And from the corporate culture of Starbucks. “There were times,” he says, “that I felt like a colonist, a missionary on the outer fringes of the British Empire. But the Starbucks culture is so transferable, and that’s what kept me going: If I closed my eyes, I could be in a Starbucks back in Seattle and the only difference is that here the people are speaking Greek. And it was an exciting time when you’re an expatriate and all of a sudden you’re being invited to the American embassy for luncheons with the ambassador and other expatriates, and it’s the prelude to the Olympics, and you’re on TV and being ing for



interviewed and all.” (And exciting for his mother, as well, who had once warned him about the perils of serving coffee for a living, and now took to passing around his business cards and announcing, O gios mou, o genikos dieftindis—“Until I took the cards back,” he laughs.)

The Starbucks stint in Greece was literally a coming home for Hatzigeorgiou, who was born in New York but had moved to Athens at 14 and attended high school in Athens at the Hellenic International School: “The joy of being bicultural in Greece and being able to be the Amerikanaki or the Greek at the flick of a switch, and having the richness of the islands, and being able to go to a taverna and drink some wine at 16—your American counterparts weren’t quite doing that; I think we grew up much quicker.”

Ironically, for his first job in Greece his father took him down to Monastiraki to sell trinkets and learn “na pazarevis,” and, Hatzigeorgiou says, “Here I am in the summer of ‘77 and I’m selling trinkets and I’m running around to get coffee, and then in the summer of 2003, I’m back in Greece with Starbucks looking at a location right next to Monasteriki and still in the coffee business.” He came back to the States to take hotel administration at Cornell and worked in the hotel business after college with the French-owned Accor Group (“I opened hotels in Toledo, Ohio and Chicago and Miami”). Then he got into the gyro business briefly back in New York at Kronos Gyros Products (“Like every good Greek does and worked in the restaurant side of the business”), before he left that and moved back to Chicago to help a friend with a startup, and soon got into the habit of visiting his local

Starbucks. He joined the company as a store manager in Chicago (“Pouring coffee and mopping floors”) and now oversees the company’s 68 stores back in the States in Chicago and its northern suburbs.

As for his stint in Greece and future plans, “I loved the experience,” he says, “but I want Greece to be again a place of escape for me and not a place where I work.”



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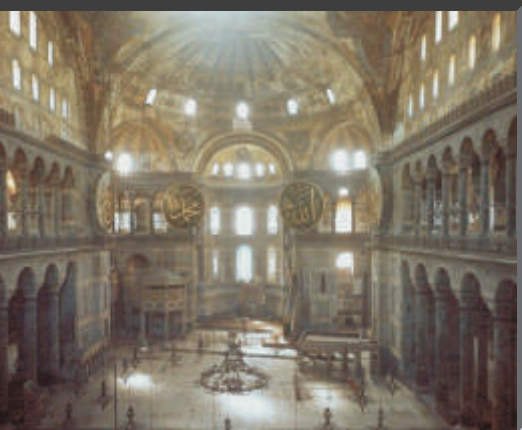
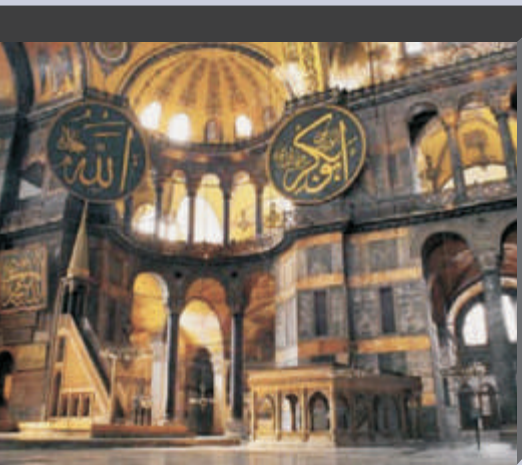
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Chris Spirou launches effort to “free Agia Sophia”



The Free Agia Sophia Council of America spearheaded by former New Hampshire Democratic party president and gubernatorial candidate Chris Spirou is launching what it calls an international “movement committed to restoring the great church of Agia Sophia located in Istanbul (Constantinople) Turkey, as a functioning church of the Orthodox Christian Faith and to reestablishing Agia Sophia as the Holy House of Prayer for all Christians of the world and the Central Basilica (seat) of Orthodoxy that it was before the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks.”

At a press conference in New York, Spirou said, “At the time of its capture, Agia Sophia, the ‘Great Church,’ as it was known, was the largest, most revered and most majestic Christian Church in the world. It was called the ‘Mother Church’ of Christianity and served as the symbol and central Basilica of the Orthodox Christian Faith.

“Nothing like it has been built before or after Agia Sophia. Today, the government of Turkey operates Agia Sophia as a so called ‘museum’ named Ayasofya Müzesi, hosting local and international trade shows, music festivals and fashion shows. Talk about sacrilege. Talk about defacing of a holy site. Talk about disrespect for a church of God. Talk about abuse of holy spaces and holy figures.”

He said, “The Free Agia Sophia Council of America is committed to pursuing every peaceful, diplomatic, political and legal avenue available in the European and International arenas to attain our stated objectives.” The Council’s lead attorney is the noted international human rights lawyer Steven Schneebaum, who is based in Washington, D.C.

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