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NEO

FROM THE EDITOR

Dreams and journeys

In this issue we feature an article about a man who decided to follow a dream: a distinguished cardiologist who went on a musical journey by financing the CD of a promising but unknown young composer named Omar Akram, who himself acknowledges his music was meant for such journeys:

"I look around and see people who are bored, restless, stagnant and I know they often take secret journeys in their mind as they daydream about other places they could be," says Akram.

He can be forgiven for assuming all our lives are stagnant because most of us don't have his background (Akram's father was an ambassador and his son got to see the world), but I think he's fundamentally right that we all dream about going to places where we've never been, or revisiting places that we once loved. We all have that wanderlust. And since I grew up with Mike Vasilomanolakis, the adventurous cardiologist, I know he was a person always dreaming about his life's journeys.

We both grew up in Chicago, and on many mornings cold as an icebox we would hitch a ride on my father's school bus (he was the principal of the Assumption's Plato School) which would pick up the first kid near our own high school, Lane Tech. Mike and I didn't do much talking on those morning rides: we just sat across from each other lost in our own teenage high-school boy thoughts (girls, grades, pimples, basketball) and we listened to the bus driver's radio playing the same old Fifth Dimension song ("Up, Up and Away") while we sat rooted to the cold seats on that bus and the routine of our everyday lives.

When we got to school, we would camp out from the cold in the drone of the auditorium, where the gray Chicago light spilled in the towering windows with the leather curtains, and hundreds of other boys (Lane was all-boys in those days, which made for an even duller life) would be talking at the same time about girls, while squeezing their pimples, or shouting about their test scores, while hitting each other on the head with their slide rules. Mike would fill me in on last night's GOYA game, and we might tease each other and our friends, or in that teenage bedlam we might even get serious and talk a little about our dreams.

I always wanted to be a writer, but Mike was searching in those days for his own dreams. There was a girl he had met, his first serious crush, and I gave him some pointers from my vast experience. But he was restless, and so was I, though we were "good" boys, and not likely to break out of our conformity.

Until one morning Mike proved his mettle. We used to wear the same old slacks in those days (probably Sears regulation) while the greasers around us wore gray, or green, or blue shop pants and the hippies wore their fanciful bellbottoms and jeans decorated with peace signs and ripped pockets. One morning I was sitting on the school bus in my Sears regulation, and my jaw dropped when Mike walked on board—wearing white bellbottoms with green pinstripes, as I recall.

He didn't say a word, I didn't say a word, he took his seat, and our breath steamed in the cold. But it came a little faster, because Mike had dared to live out a little part of his dreams, and now he had made it possible for both of us to venture on the journeys we had only dreamed about.

Happy Holidays!



Dimitri C. Michalakis

NEO

:: magazine

FOUNDED IN 2005

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www.neomagazine.com

NEO Magazine

is published monthly by
Neocorp Media Inc.
P.O. Box 560105
College Point, NY 11356
Phone: (718) 554-0308
e-Fax: (801) 880-0263
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Markos and Eleni Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis with Robert Redford and Bylle Szaggars

ROB. REDFORD AND FAMILY IN THE BAY AREA RAISING FUNDS FOR A WORTHY CAUSE

Over 500 filmgoers filled the newly renovated Sundance Cinemas Kabuki to watch the San Francisco premiere of Robert Redford's latest film, *LIONS FOR LAMBS*, starring Redford, Meryl Streep and Tom Cruise. Redford who produced, directed and starred in the film was on hand to introduce the film and the work of the Redford Center at the Sundance Preserve, the non-profit which benefited from the night's proceeds.

The film was followed by an intimate dinner at the San Francisco home of Redford Center Board member, Eleni Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis and her husband Markos Kounalakis. The dinner, which raised over \$200,000 for the Redford Center, was preceded by cocktails at the home of Mark and Susie Buell and was attended by President Bill Clinton.

Since 1998, Redford and his family have protected nearly 3,000 acres of Sundance Utah wilderness from development for all time. Redford remains active with local, regional and national organizations on a variety of environmental, arts and justice issues.

The Redford Center at Sundance Preserve will support programs focused on positively effecting climate change and environmental sustainability. The Center is devoted to a distinct brand of problem solving, convening elected officials, leaders in labor and technology, entrepreneurs, scientists and business leaders to find creative solutions to the crucial issues of our time. The Redford Center uses creative media and the arts to develop a story about complex issues, to inspire others to engage.



Markos Kounalakis, Athena, Alexa, Pres. Bill Clinton, Katina & Eleni Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis



Eleni Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis with Robert Redford



Alexa, Katina & Athena Tsakopoulos with Robert Redford



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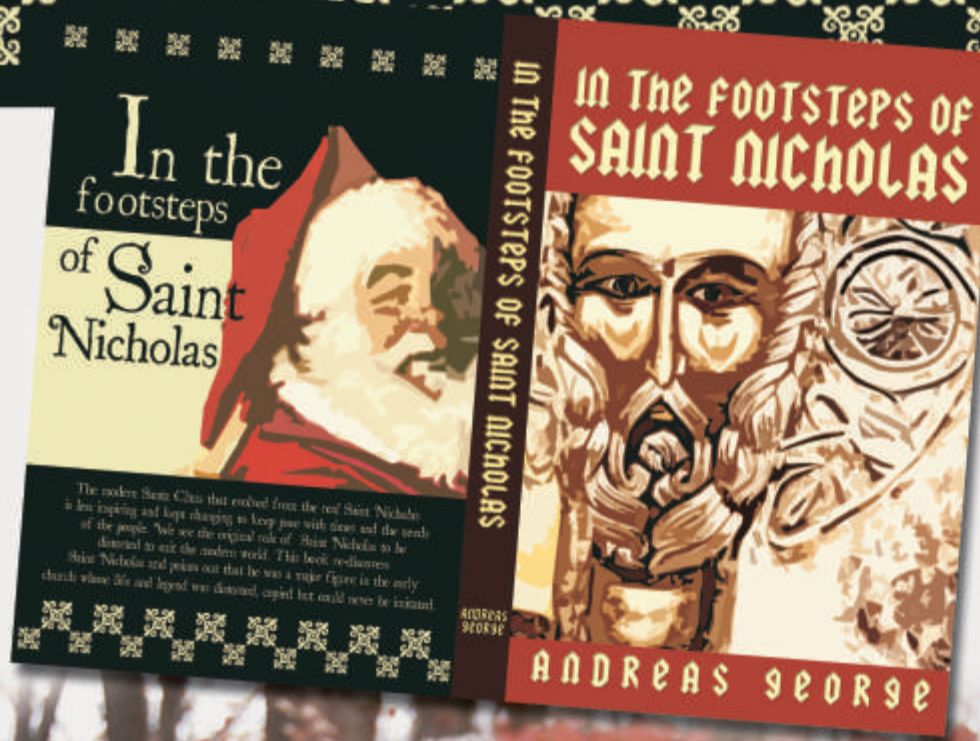


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Searching for the historical St. Nick

by Katerina Georgiou

Somewhere in the commercialization of Christmas the truth about St. Nicholas was hidden. Over the years, the beloved Byzantine saint had been transformed into a caricature of himself. The transformation didn't sit well with Andreas C. George, a radiation physicist with the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission and Department of Energy.

It all started one Sunday morning at St. Nicholas Church in Flushing when George learned that the small gold-and-jewel encrusted box on display contained part of the relics of St. Nicholas. "It was scientific proof," said George, "that there was without question a real St. Nicholas."

So when George eventually retired from his government job, he devoted himself to a new experiment: would following in the footsteps of St. Nicholas lead to the truth about the man and the meaning his life held? But researching a centuries-old figure for whom little information exists wasn't easy, especially one that blends a real person—St. Nicholas—with a cultural archetype—Santa Claus.

The facts are that St. Nicholas was born in the 4th century in Patara, present day Turkey. He was a well-known miracle-worker who later

became bishop of Myra. His life was defined by charitable acts, particularly on behalf of children and sailors. Stories of his good works depict him carrying a bag of fruit to share with poor children and saving them from harsh fates. "He was like a modern social worker," said George. "Always ready to help someone in need."

Other tales recount how he helped sailors caught in storms. Sailors praying for St. Nicholas' intercession often saw visions of him at sea and later recognized him when they came ashore. "Through prayer and divine intervention, St. Nicholas resolved bad situations," George added. It's for this reason that sea-faring countries like Greece embraced St. Nicholas as their protector and why they hang the "Timonieris," or icon of St. Nicholas the navigator in their boats.

St Nicholas' popularity transcended his death and people flocked to Myra to honor him. But in 1087 when the city was threatened by advancing Muslims, St. Nicholas' relics were brought to Bari, Italy. "I don't believe that the relics were stolen by the Italians," said George, when asked about the ensuing debate over how the relics were relocated. With the relics safe from harm, the cult of St Nicholas spread further throughout Europe and his legend picked up steam all over again. Even when the Reformation swept across Northern Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, and icons and holy statues were destroyed, the image of St. Nicholas remained resilient.

Since his accessibility expanded beyond the Church—St. Nicholas became not only a treasured presence in people's homes and ships—but a permanent fixture in their minds and spirits. But by the time St. Nicholas was introduced in the New World by the earliest Europeans settlers, cultural traditions had seeped into the legend. "In the Netherlands to honor "Sinter Klaas" (St. Nicholas) children used to put wooden shoes by the fireplace," said George. "When the Dutch settled in the New World, the name Sinter Klaas was changed to Santa Claus."

Once in America, St. Nicholas' image was transformed yet again. His simple flowing robes were replaced by a red and white fur-trimmed costume. The sack of fruit was filled instead with toys. And his white horse was substituted for a sleigh and reindeer. As far as appearances go, the only thing that stayed the same was the white beard. Still, Santa's metamorphosis wasn't complete. In 1931, the artist Haddon Sundblom built upon author Clement C. Moore's depiction of Santa, adding a plump belly and jovial face. This image, created for a Coca Cola advertisement, is the Santa we recognize today.

Despite St. Nicholas' many transformations, one thing has remained constant: he has always been associated with helping people in need. "As long as we keep this in mind," said George, "the trail left by St Nicholas' footsteps is endless." After all, it's the meaning of his life and not what he looked like that's important. "St. Nicholas lives on because he embodied the spirit of giving--an enduring human virtue that's not limited by time or circumstance," he said.

You can read more about George's findings in his book, "In the Footsteps of Saint Nicholas (Seaburn Books, 2005)."



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Patricia Kakridas: rising fast from “one-man band” reporter to TV anchor in Illinois

by Dimitri C. Michalakis



Patricia Kakridas is now the morning and noon anchor on WAND-TV in Decatur, Illinois and no longer has to lug around her own camera and shoot her own video as she once did as a beat reporter. But she sometimes misses that.

“That’s probably my major complaint,” says the 28-year-old Californian (though she was born in New York and once lived in the Dominican Republic). “I love going out and getting the story and being the one to break a story or do the investigating. I do miss that quite a bit.”

Not that being an anchor is a slouch. She gets up at 2:30 in the morning to get ready for her morning newscast, and then does periodic news updates on the Today Show throughout the morning, and may stay longer as the news day dictates. And when she’s not on-air she’s boning up on the news and goes to sleep watching the last news update.

“I want to be more than an anchor,” she says. “I want to be somebody who rises through the ranks, but is also respected by viewers. I’d like to be somebody like Christiane Amanpour, who is respected and is also a TV icon and not just a pretty face. I would like to be looked on as a true journalist.”

Does that mean becoming the hard-charging foreign correspondent?

“I don’t think that’s necessary,” she says. “Things have changed a lot since the days of Peter Jennings and Tom Brokaw and Ted Koppel, who are a great example. These men were able to stay in-house and still be respected. Peter Jennings knew how to get a viewer’s trust and knew how to get educated on subjects. That’s important: to be an educated broadcast journalist and not just someone who looks good on TV.”

Perhaps that’s her training as a writer talking or her background in politics. After graduating from the University of California, Davis with a B.A. in political science she began to work for then-California



Assemblywoman Elaine Kontominos Alquist (who is now a state senator).

She then skipped to doing PR for a private lobbying firm serving clients such as the California Association of Alcohol & Drug Programs and the City of West Hollywood.

“It was just a lot of office work,” she says, “sitting in an office and doing the same stuff every day.”

She left that to campaign for a school bond measure for the city of Roseville that passed with more than 50 % “which was actually the most fun I had in politics. It was grassroots legwork, as opposed to sitting in an office and doing the same thing every day.”

Then a family friend who worked for the local Fox station mentioned that they were looking for a writer and she gathered her press releases and features she had done for The National Herald and sent them in.

“And they hired me,” she says. “Then they switched me from freelance to full-time and

they asked me to be an associate producer.” She was

there for two years, and then moved to the Eureka station (“It’s obvious in this business that you have to move up,” she admits) where she finally got to hit the street as a reporter and get on the air regularly.

“It was exhilarating, I have to say,” she recalls of her first broadcast (she made it on the air at age 25). “I did the voice-over first and it was really exciting—I wanted to show it to all my friends and family. We had links online and I would send them links every week.”

She also became what she says was a “one-man band.” “Which means, I carried my own equipment, shot my own video, edited my own video and wrote the story. And I did about three or four stories a day—more than that when we were shorthanded. You’re in a small market and you have to produce a lot. Basically, you go through the ropes.”

She survived on adrenaline and coffee (“Starbucks took a lot of my salary, which wasn’t much to begin with”) and she also had fun. “I enjoyed everything about it,” she says.

“It was fun, it was really fun. It was always different and it was always hard, but I worked in politics and my worst day in this business is still better than some of my good days in politics.”

She also got to meet her boyfriend on the job, Ross Frasier, who is now her producer and “he’s not Greek, though he wishes. He’s really part of the family.”

Her family is back in California (her father Dimitri, a developer, mother Kathy, a former travel agent, and younger sister Georgette, who graduated from the University of Indianapolis and is a public relations and marketing major).

“I grew up in California and we did travel a lot,” she says. (She has relatives from Colorado to New York and Queens, where she was born in Jackson Heights.) “Now I travel a lot exploring the Midwest, where everything is so close.”

And as a TV anchor, she’s often recognized, which is among the perils of the trade.

“Because I have a Greek name people always ask me if I know how to make Greek food,” she laughs.





Mr. Michael Jolliffe, Deputy Chairman of Tsakos Energy Navigation with Mr. Troy Barratt of Lehman & Co. and Nikos Tsakos



Mr. Alexandros Kontogouris of GNTO, Mr. Nikos Tsakos, Mr. Dimitris Bertolis (TEN), Mr. Tommaso Breschi (Lazard Freres) and Ms. Jenny Van Leeuwen.



Mr. Nikos Tsakos with Ms. Carleen Lyden-Kluss while signing the Declaration of a Voluntary Commitment to Save the Sea by the North American Marine Environmental Protection Association (NAMEPA)

Columbia Business Alumni host Nikos Tsakos

The International Committee of Columbia Business School Alumni Club of NY (CBSAC/NY) hosted recently a luncheon in honor of Mr. Nikos Tsakos, CEO of Tsakos Energy Navigation and a Columbia University alumnus. The lunch was attended by alumni and friends of Columbia Business School and afforded the attendees the opportunity to meet with Mr. Nikos Tsakos, as well as Mr. Dimitris Bertolis and Mr. Michael Jolliffe of Tsakos Energy Navigation, and discuss recent developments in shipping and energy, as well as TEN's great economic results during the last quarter of 2007 and its commitment to protecting the marine environment. During the luncheon, Mr. Tsakos signed the Declaration of a Voluntary Commitment to Save the Sea by North American Marine Environmental Protection Association.

The luncheon was part of a series of signature events organized by CBSAC/NY's International Committee, co-chaired by Ms. Niovi Christophoulou, that aim at bringing together CBS alumni and great corporate and/or political leaders.



Ms. Niovi Christophoulou (CBSAC)

Mr. Nikos Tsakos, CEO of Tsakos Energy Navigation addressing the Columbia U. guests at the lunch



Overview of the luncheon

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Archons host Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem



From left to right: Ambassador Archon Referendarios Patrick Theros; Fr. Mark Arey, Ecumenical Officer of the Archdiocese; Dr. Anthony J. Limberakis, Archon National Commander; His Beatitude, Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem; Mr. John Halecky, Archon Ekdikos; Mr. Andrew Manatos, Archon Depoutatos; Fr. Alexander Karloutsos, Archon Spiritual Advisor.

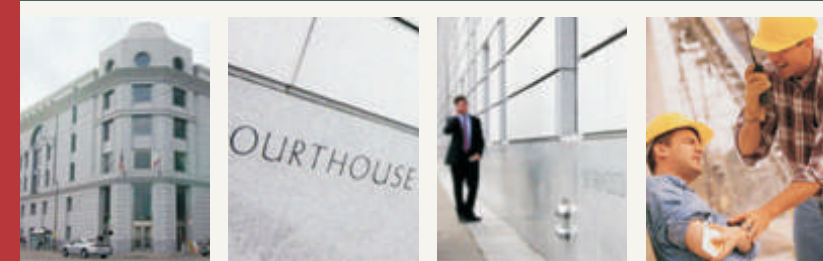
The Order of Saint Andrew, Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in America, hosted recently a luncheon and reception in honor of His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem. National Commander, Archon Aktouarios Dr. Anthony Limberakis was joined by Archon Ekdikos John Halecky and Archon Depoutatos Andrew Manatos in hosting a private luncheon for the Patriarch, together with Father Alexander Karloutsos, the Spiritual Advisor to the Order of St. Andrew, Ambassador Archon Referendarios Patrick Theros and Father Mark Arey, Ecumenical Officer of the Archdiocese.

After the luncheon, the Archons joined His Beatitude on Capitol Hill at the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), a law firm and educational organization that specializes in constitutional law that hosted a reception in honor of His Beatitude. The ACLJ is an arm of Christian Advocates Serving Evangelism, Inc., a not-for-profit religious corporation dedicated to the cause of religious liberty. Jay Alan Sekulow, Chief Counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), welcomed His Beatitude along with Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania and Congressman Trent Franks (AZ, 2nd District). Numerous Archons from the greater Washington Metropolitan Area gathered to welcome and hear Patriarch Theophilos address them on issues of religious liberty and human rights.

Following the Reception, His Beatitude was escorted by representatives of the Archdiocese to Dulles International Airport for his departure and return to Jerusalem.

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Greek-Americans stand with Armenians in recognizing Armenian Genocide

Board Members of the American Hellenic Council of CA meet with Chairman of the Middle East Subcommittee Gary Ackerman



Congressman Gus Bilirakis with ANCA Chairman Ken Hachikian



Congressman Gus Bilirakis in Committee on October 10



By Allen Yekikan

The wall of genocide denial, obstructing the recognition--and future prevention--of the scourge of genocide is finally crumbling. Despite decades-long, state-- sponsored and now multi-million dollar campaigning by Turkey to distort history, buy off politicians, and threaten the interests of nations with the courage to recognize history, the issue of the Armenian Genocide by Ottoman Turkey between 1915 and 1923 has again come into focus.

Over the last few years with the help of a growing coalition of human rights organizations and an ever-evolving advocacy strategy, Armenian Americans have gained recognition in dozens of major cities and 40 state legislatures. Now, amid unprecedented opposition, they are poised one again to gain recognition by the United States Congress as soon as Speaker Nancy Pelosi brings it to a full House vote during the next session of Congress.

Armenians have not been alone in this fight for justice. Greek Americans have been a longtime ally, working hand-in-hand with Armenians for official recognition of their past. Like the Armenians, they too are the orphans of genocide. Between 1914 and 1923 Ottoman Turkey slaughtered over a million Greeks in Asia Minor and Pontus and burned the Greek city of Smyrna annihilating its population. The Pontian Genocide shattered the lifeblood of an ancient community, completely removing any collective Greek presence in Asia Minor--a land they had inhabited for three thousand years. In 1997, legislation was introduced in Congress commemorating the Greek genocide. Met with opposition from Turkey, the resolution did not leave committee.

On January 30 2007, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-

CA), a long-time supporter of genocide recognition, introduced a resolution in the House to properly acknowledge and commemorate the Armenian Genocide. This resolution quickly became the target of Turkey's fiercest campaign of denial with Turkish officials openly articulating their intent to openly sabotage U.S. interests in Iraq by closing key supply routes. Jewish American organizations, along with the state of Israel, were reminded that failure to quash the resolution would lead to a domestic backlash against Turkey's Jewish minority. Former Members of Congress were recruited to lobby their colleagues. American diplomats, high-ranking members of the administration, State Department officials and even the President were marshaled to kill the resolution. The reach of Turkey's new campaign to prevent recognition was unprecedented.

Nevertheless, since the resolution's introduction, Armenian and Greek Americans have taken an active grassroots approach in defense of the issue, combining traditional community mobilization with new methods of online activism. Online advocacy campaigns such as the Armenian National Committee of America's "Click for Justice Campaign" and the American Hellenic Council of CA's "Online Action Network", have allowed citizens to send e-letters to their representatives via the web, urging elected officials to support genocide recognition.

Activists from AHC's Online Action Network spanning over 30 states coordinated the sending of emails to their representatives urging for passage of the resolution. Meanwhile, the ANCA, in coordination with Greek and other human rights organizations, launched a ten day online genocide protest.

Through extensive "netroots" outreach on social networks such as Facebook and Myspace and by distributing over 100,000 "Click for Justice" postcards at events and university campuses across the country, the ANCA organized thousands of "e-advocates" across the country to send web-faxes to their representatives, urging them to vote for the resolution.

This type of online advocacy, coupled with a consistent campaign by the American Hellenic Institute, the AHC, and the ANCA to provide their membership with immediate up-to-date information about the issue helped communities build the grassroots momentum that resulted in the resolution gaining 226 cosponsors by the time it was brought before markup in committee.

Immediately after the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee Tom Lantos announced the resolution was to be considered in committee, Nick Larigakis, Executive Director of the AHI, wrote a letter to him urging strong support for the resolution. Appealing to the only Holocaust survivor in Congress "as someone who understands the tragic consequences of genocide," Larigakis urged the Chairman to "secure committee approval" for the measure, to "help prevent future atrocities and genocides."

On October 10, hours after President Bush urged the panel to vote down the issue on national TV, Congressman Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Co-chair of the Hellenic Caucus and an ardent supporter of genocide recognition, before a chamber marred by foreign influence spoke truth to power, urging his colleagues not to put the Armenian Genocide on "the back burner of history for fear of acknowledging the truth or offending our

ally, Turkey." Despite intense pressure from the administration, Bilirakis voted yes on the resolution. Congressman Bilirakis and 26 other committee members, including Chairman Lantos, voted in favor of human rights, securing a majority vote for the resolution.

The following day, the adoption of the resolution became breaking news on prime time and made the front page of every major newspaper. Turkey's ruling government immediately recalled its ambassador for "consultations."

Meanwhile, President Bush marshaled his troops for a new round of lobbying aimed at preventing a full House vote on the bill. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, however, maintained her previous commitment to schedule a vote.

Although Ankara's threats of cutting support for U.S. forces in Iraq successfully prevented the resolution from being put to an immediate vote before the winter recess, the validity of the Genocide never came into question. No member who voted against the resolution denied the historical facts of the Armenian Genocide. Much to Ankara's dismay, the media also acknowledged the Armenian Genocide as fact, debating only the timing of the resolution.

The success of Armenian and Greek advocacy is that they have finally been able to break the wall of denial; the facts of the Armenian Genocide are no longer debated. It is uncertain when the resolution will come to a vote in the House, but Armenian and Greek Americans will continue to stand together to convince elected officials that there is no better time to recognize genocide than now.

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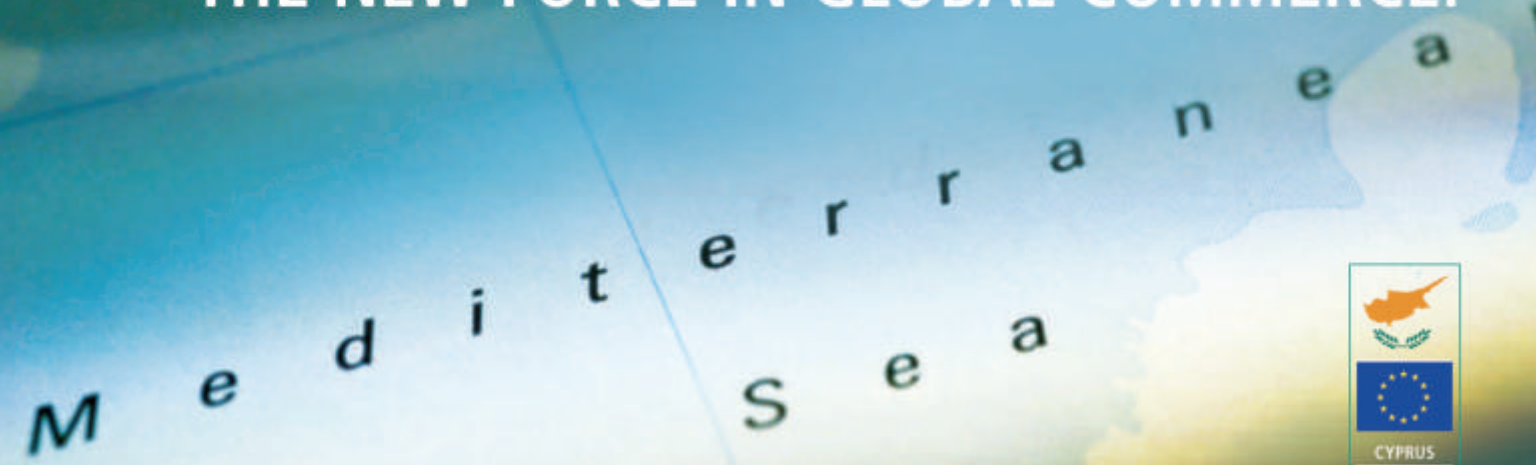
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BOOK REVIEW:

"Legends of Glory and other stories" by Harry Mark Petrakis

By Dimitri C. Michalakis

There's nothing more glorious than getting a new collection of short stories by the legendary master of the short form, Harry Mark Petrakis: his fourth collection spanning half a century of celebrated work.

As in previous collections, Petrakis gives a brief introduction to the genesis of each of his stories: "For years, each time I entered a certain bakery owned by a sullen-faced Greek man and his lovely, more amiable and pleasant wife, I wondered at the odd pairing and if that public image reflected their private lives. That is all a writer requires, a seed giving birth to reflection that spawns the words to make a story." (Beauty's Daughter)

The stories have the familiar Petrakis themes (unrequited wives married to hard men—in this case, a baker); unrequited men married to faded loves and faded lives (The Birthday); tragic racial disunion (A Tale of Color); comically-mismatched union (The Wisdom of Solon); the heartbreak Madonna (Christina's Summer); wizened sidewalk philosophers (A Dishwasher's Tale); the common man's bid for freedom (Rites of Passage).

The anchor of the collection is the grim novella, Legends of Glory, which was borne out of Petrakis' perennial outrage over the senselessness of war and a more recent conflict: "I began this novella to vent my feelings of despair and frustration about the human cost of war in Iraq, both the wounding and deaths of our own soldiers and the wounding and deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians. By the time I had finished, however, the story no longer

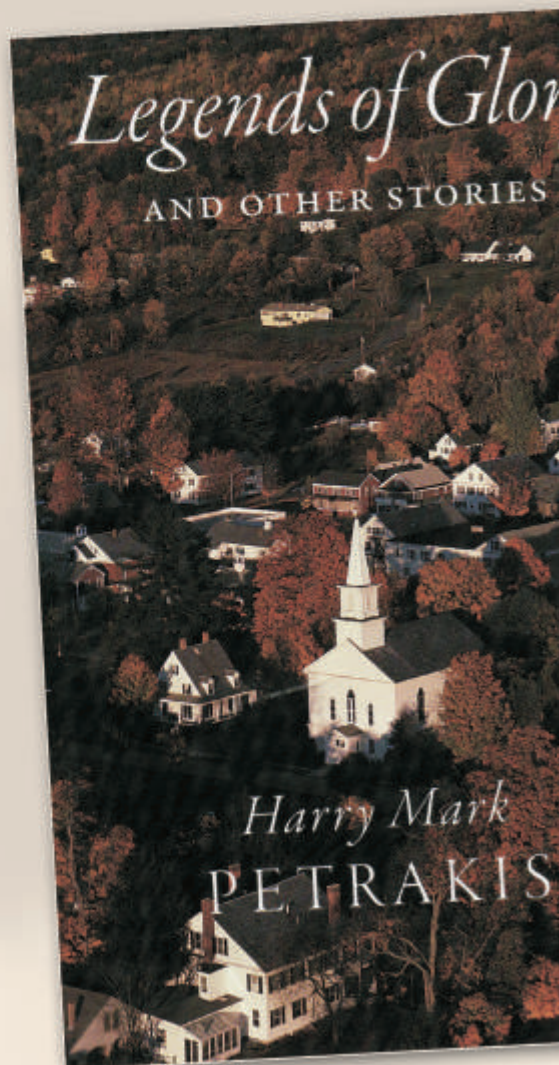
concerned the politics of a war that has bitterly divided our nation but became an effort to convey the enormity of a loss that tears asunder the natural cycle of the generations whereby sons and daughters bury their parents."

The story concerns a father in Indiana, Dan Scott, a son, Noah, and the military tradition in the family represented by the grandfather, Thomas Joshua Scott: "Although Dan had grown up between the country's wars and never felt any compulsion to enlist in the armed services, Scotts had fought and died in every war since the Civil War."

Influenced by his grandfather's military aura, the son enlists in the army, breaking his mother Molly's heart, and the parents anxiously wait out the months of their son's enlistment. When tragedy strikes, the mother is crushed and blames the old man bitterly, and her husband becomes the mediator, but somehow, despite his own broken heart, he finds the means to cope with their loss:

"To have shared such love with Molly and to have had their love conceive and embrace the jewel of Noah for even the brief span of his life was a matchless bounty. Was it so remote a hope that somewhere such love—so powerful that it overshadowed the majesty of the sovereign planets—that such love, once separated, might again be reunited?"

Legends of Glory and Other Stories (Southern Illinois University Press, \$25, www.siu.edu/~siupress)



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A doctor's musical journey

by Dimitri C. Michalakis

Mike Vasilomanolakis was returning from Greece as a boy on the Queen Frederica when the ship stopped in Naples and he made the first investment of his musical career: he bought himself an accordion and later learned to play it.

"As I learned to play this somewhat complex instrument, I developed my passion for music," says the 54-year-old Vasilomanolakis, now a respected cardiologist in Long Beach, California.

And about ten years ago he made the second major investment of his musical career: he met a talented young musician named Omar Akram and he became the executive producer of his three widely-praised New Age CDs.

"From the very first piece that I heard (in 1996) I was impressed," says Vasilomanolakis, who juggles his music producer role with his private practice and duties as the director of Cardiac Services and the Heart Catheterization Laboratory at the Community Hospital of Long Beach. "The music is extremely melodic, with an excellent blend of additional instruments, including violin, guitar, percussion and the Duduke, which is an Armenian flute of sorts. It is extremely well orchestrated and it is hard for me to imagine that there is a better orchestrated CD anywhere."

In fact, one reviewer said of the duo's current CD, *Secret Journey*, that "not only is it a number one hit, but may actually be the darling CD of the year." It's also being considered for a Grammy nomination.

"We believe that if we had the notoriety of some of the more established artists, our CD would be the number one CD of the year," says Vasilomanolakis proudly.

Akram has been asked to perform for *The Kite Runner* motion picture release, has New Age guru Deepak Chopra as a booster, and numbers Bill Gates, John Travolta and Sharon Stone among his fans.

"I look around and see people who are bored, restless, stagnant, and I know they often take secret journeys in their mind as they daydream about other places they could be," says Akram, 43, who was born in New York City to the Afghan ambassador to the UN and through his father's career was exposed to musical influences throughout the world ("When I was six, I began taking piano lessons from a member of the Prague Symphony Orchestra").

Vasilomanolakis, despite a distinguished career, remained fond of music and was looking for a musical journey (among physical journeys he climbed Africa's Mt. Kilimanjaro in 1998), and despite their varied past, the cardiologist and the musician became travelers together.

"We met in my office that November in 1996," Vasilomanolakis remembers of Akram. "He came in with a plastic bag containing cassette tapes of music that he had made... We talked about producing a 4-song CD sampler to shop around to record labels in hopes that he would obtain a music contract. Subsequently, people recommended that we do an entire CD rather than just four songs."

Vasilomanolakis put up the money and their first CD, *Opal Fire*, rose to Top 15 on the Billboard national New Age sales chart. Their second, *Free as a Bird*, utilized the talents of fabled jazz musician Gregg Karukas and was ranked the #2 contemporary instrumental album of 2004 by the *Wind & Wire* review of instrumental music.

Their third, *Secret Journey*, was not released until this September because Vasilomanolakis says their record label (Real Music) felt, "it was a tremendous hit and they wanted to put everything in order in order to be able to make a big splash from the start. This included getting the graphics just right for the CD cover, as well as getting appropriate people involved to help publicize and

distribute it."

Because of his medical practice, his own role in all this is limited, but he says the function of the executive producer anyway is to find the money and let the musicians do their thing, though he will stop into the studio "to see how things are going. And Omar would bring me samples of the pieces that he was working on. He would play the piano piece for me and then later in the studio would add the other instruments. It was always fun when he completed a song."

And since Vasilomanolakis and Akram share a friendship as well as a musical bond, the doctor says, "I become an integral part of the production of a CD. I am able at times to effect or alter the way some of the music is going, though by-and-large I let the artist do this. Nonetheless, I have been able to change some notes on some songs and to influence the tune. Music is the universal language."

Vasilomanolakis' own son Costa, 20, is now playing and producing techno music ("I would love to see myself being his executive producer," admits his father), the doctor still keeps the old accordion around just in case and has composed tunes on the piano that he runs by Akram, and he and his wife Niki might catch Akram in concert.

"I feel his music is truly wonderful and I enjoy listening to his music again and again and again," says Vasilomanolakis. "I will oftentimes introduce him to the audience."

Besides their musical kinship, they also share a personal and cultural affinity ("Every time Omar and I sit to eat we both say our prayers"), as Vasilomanolakis' mother Alexandra can attest.

"I introduced him to my mother and was very impressed at how he treated her," says the doctor. "He referred to her as 'Mom' and when he first met her he bent over and kissed her hands... I believe he is a person who has a great deal of respect for other people."

Akram certainly has that for his mentor and musical partner.

"Without him, none of this would have been possible," he says.

Omar Akram's recordings can be purchased at record stores and specialty gift shops and online at the record company's website (www.realmusic.com) and the artist's site (www.omarmusic.com), as well as webstores such as www.amazon.com, and many digital download locations, including iTunes.



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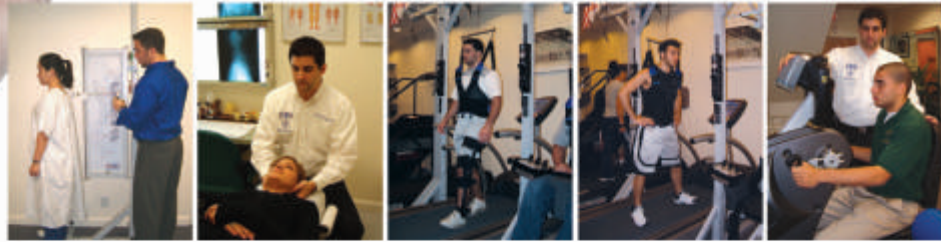
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CHRIST THE SAVIOR MONASTERY SUFFERS A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF DAMAGE.



LOCAL TURKISH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS REMOVED AND THREW AWAY ROOF TILE, BROKE ALL THE WINDOWS AND DESTROYED THE WINDOW FRAMES OF CHRIST THE SAVIOR MONASTERY.



ON NOVEMBER 13, 2007, CHRIST THE SAVIOR MONASTERY WAS VANDALIZED BY LOCAL TURKISH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

TURKISH FORESTRY OFFICIALS VANDALIZE HISTORIC CHURCH

In response to unlawful destruction of an historic Orthodox Christian Church by eight officials of a local Ministry of Forestry in Turkey, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew sent an official letter to Mevlut Kurban, the District Elder of Princess Islands, expressing his "strong disappointment and shock." He also emphasized that Christ the Savior Monastery "had survived numerous fires and earthquakes throughout hundreds of years. It is uncivil to brutalize a sacred building that carries so much cultural history, and unjust to destroy it, especially when Istanbul (Constantinople) has been picked to be the capital of civilized Europe in 2010."

Dr. Anthony J. Limberakis, National Commander of the Order of Saint Andrew (Archons,) condemned the illegal actions of Turkey's Forestry officials and called the authorities "to put an end to the incessant harassment of the humble caretaker and workers who live on the Monastery's property." He also emphasized that the Archons in America are strong advocates for Turkey's admission into the European Union and asked that all friends of Turkey urge the government to "treat all Turkish citizens equally and fairly, regardless of their religious persuasion... Muslim, Jewish, or Christian."

The Monastery, which is undergoing renovation due to a generous grant from Dr. Stephen and Dr. Anna Yallourakis of Kingsport, TN, was vandalized on Tuesday, November 13, 2007. Local government officials removed and threw away roof tile, broke all the windows and destroyed the window frames. The officials threatened the residents and demanded that they abandon their homes because the houses were being demolished. Dr. Yallourakis remarked, "We here in the U.S. enjoy all of our freedoms and believe all people should enjoy basic unalienable rights... We pray for a positive resolution to this tragic event and anxiously await the repair of the damage which has destroyed our beloved Monastery."



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From left, Peter Kakoyannis, President of Cyprus Federation of America Peter Papanikolaou, Consul General of Greece Ekaterine Boura, Ambassador Daniel Speckhard, Consul General of Cyprus Andreas Panayotou, Tasso Manassis, International Coordinating Committee Justice for Cyprus President Philip Christopher, John Catsimatides, Dino Rallis and Andreas Komodromos.

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MEETING THE NEW US AMBASSADOR TO GREECE

The Cyprus Federation of America and the International Coordinating Committee Justice for Cyprus organized recently a reception in New York for the new U.S. Ambassador to Greece, Ambassador-designate Daniel Speckhard, which other prominent members of the Greek-American community attended, along with Consuls General of Greece and Cyprus Ekaterine Boura and Andreas Panayotou respectively. Among the well wishers was Former Interior Minister of Greece, Professor Spyros Flogaitis.



From left, Professor Spyros Flogaitis, Paul Stathouloupoulos, Mr. Manolas, Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the UN Andreas Mavroyannis and his wife Kalliope, Peter Papanikolaou, Nikos Pafitis, Consul General Andreas Panayotou, Despoina Axiotaki, Tassos Zambas, Andreas Komodromos and Thanassis Tsitsas

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The Ambassador committed to work hard towards further improvement of Greek - U.S. relations and resolution of issues concerning Hellenism. He said Greece was one of the most important countries in the world both historically and politically. She served as a critical ally to the US throughout the years, and honored the role of the Greek American community in relations between Greece and the States.

Daniel V. Speckhard was sworn in as U.S. Ambassador to Greece on November 7, 2007. His last posting was at U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission from August 2006 to July 2007 and as the Director of the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office from August 2005 to July 2006. From 2003 to 2005, he served as Director of Policy Planning responsible for advising and assisting the Secretary General, senior NATO management, and the Council in addressing strategic issues facing the alliance. From 2000 to 2003, he was NATO's Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, covering political relations with the countries of Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the former Soviet Union, and the Mediterranean. During this period he received the NATO Service Medal for his crisis management work.

Mr. Speckhard has a Masters Degree in Public Policy and Administration and a Masters Degree in Economics; also a Bachelor Degree from the University of Wisconsin.



John Rakkou, Tasso Manassis and Dennis Droushiotis

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Ambassador Daniel Speckhard with Maratban Bank CEO Paul Stathouloupoulos

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