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# NEO

magazine

*Person of the Year*

*Be who you are  
you'd be  
no matter*

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**Greek American Leaders  
with Biden in the White House**

**George Schira's Day in Athens**

**Gus Sverkos promotes  
Greek Culture in California**

**"Plato's" School in Brooklyn**

**Nassau County Comptroller  
George Maragos**  
on the secret of his success:

**"Be yourself  
(no matter what they say)!"**

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**2010 NEO Person of the Year  
George Maragos**



FROM THE EDITOR

The very foundation of America has always been its self-made men and women, from Bill Gates to Bill Clinton and even Sarah Palin in most recent times. And the lifeblood of the American dream has always been the immigrant who came to these shores searching for his or her own dream and through unbelievable hard work and dedication came out successful and became a model American citizen.

Our 2010 NEO Person of the Year George Maragos fits that mold and this year with his election as Nassau County Comptroller and announced run barely months later for Chuck Schumer's U.S. Senate seat, achieves a level of success he might have thought impossible when he first came to America.

But then again Maragos has been defying the odds since he left his native Lefkada and emigrated to America by way of Canada.

"The future is wide open," he says about his current political plans, which also bespeaks the ambition that drove him to levels of achievement that might have seemed truly impossible for a young immigrant. He earned an engineering degree from McGill University in Canada before moving to the U.S. in 1978 and earning an MBA from Pace University and going on to become a vice president at Chase Manhattan.

"Becoming Vice President of Chase Manhattan Bank was a huge accomplishment, especially for a young boy from Greece to reach that level," he rightfully boasts to writer Markos Papadatos.

But he went beyond that: in the true entrepreneurial spirit of American self-made men (he became a citizen in 1985) he also founded his own firm, SDS Financial Technologies, which services the financial industry, and though he never previously considered running for public office, he felt compelled to run this year (and win on his first try) after being approached by the Nassau Republican Committee.

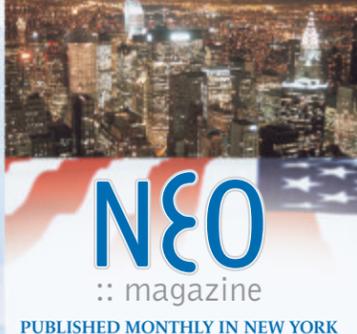
"After serious consideration, I accepted to run for Nassau County Comptroller because I thought it was time for me to give something back to the community," he says. "I felt the need to make government more fiscally responsible and more efficient in delivering its services to the general public."

He's tackled that in typical fashion in his months in office. "I have applied my 35 years of common-sense business experience in senior management to bring results by streamlining government, promoting efficiency and cutting waste and malpractice ... I moved quickly to restore fiscal responsibility," he told the Hicksville Illustrated News.

And with the zeal of an over-achiever, he thinks the same can be done for national government. America, he says, is "in the third year of a major recession during which millions of Americans have lost their jobs," with "families doing more with less," while "Washington has been doing less with more," and "our children and grandchildren will pay the price...in a limited, over-regulated economy paying more taxes for less service." This, he says, "is not acceptable" and what Americans want is "less deficit spending, elimination of earmarks, smaller government, fewer entitlements, and more individual freedom."

It is the proud ambition of a self-made man, who rightfully joins our list of Greek American movers and shakers and past recipients of our NEO Person of the Year award: Congressman John Sarbanes, Philanthropists and power couple Eleni and Markos Kounalakis, AHEPA President Ike Gulas, and entertainer Tina Fey.

Dimitri C. Michalakis



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# Posidonia: The World's largest International Maritime Event

As Greece continues its journey through the uncharted waters of fiscal uncertainty, the country was reprieved from the negative media spotlight as it successfully hosted Posidonia, June 7-11, the world's largest international maritime event and welcomed to Athens' waterfront Hellenikon Exhibition Centre leaders of the global sea transportation community from a record 87 nations and territories.

The famous colorful landmark NASDAQ tower at New York's Times Square displayed the blue and white logo of Posidonia Shipping Exhibition 2010 in a gesture of support to the listed shipping companies, as thousands of visitors and hundreds of international journalists converged to Athens for what Greek government officials

described as a lifeline to the country's tourism sector and a platform to attract much needed investments.

Speaking at the prize giving ceremony of this year's Posidonia Cup, a sailing regatta which has been heralding the official opening of Posidonia

Louka Katseli, Minister of Economy, Competitiveness and Shipping inaugurated Posidonia 2010

Exhibition for the past five editions, Secretary General of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism Development Georgios Pousseos said that Posidonia's contribution to Greece's MICE sector is vital, both in terms of generating revenues for the local economy and as an image guardian for the country's battered international reputation. Posidonia Exhibition officials put the windfall to Athens' tourism sector at around Euro 50 million, the estimated amount spent by about 10,000 international participants over the duration of the five-day event which.

"Every two years Greece becomes the centre of international attention for all the

right reasons as Posidonia's appeal in the global shipping industry is unprecedented due to its unique breadth, scope, tremendous commercial potential and the media's avid interest in the Greek shipping muscle, which is the mainstay of the country's economy with a seven per cent contribution to the country's GDP," said Theodore Vokos, Project Manager, Posidonia.

Over 1,850 shipping companies from a total of 87 countries participated in this year's event which was the biggest in its 44 year history, a tangible demonstration to the might of Greece's shipping industry, which controls the world's largest merchant fleet accounting for 15 per cent of the global tonnage and contributes an annual 13.5 billion to the country's GDP. Over 17,000 Greek and international trade visitors representing the global maritime community attended the five-day affair which spread across 31,000 square metres at the Greek capital's waterfront Hellenikon Exhibition Centre (HEC). A total of 85 industry sectors were present with the vast majority coming from the ship building and ship repair field which is represented by 416 companies.

The continuous interest of the global maritime community in Greece is due to a constant flow of new building orders and the country's leading international position in shipping affairs as it maintains the world's largest merchant fleet which accounts for 15 per cent of total world tonnage.

Posidonia 2010 was inaugurated by Louka Katseli, Minister of Economy, Competitiveness and Shipping, who praised the role of the industry and its contribution to the Greek economy. The Minister also delivered the message of Greek Prime Minister George A. Papandreou, in which he stated: "For our country, shipping has

always been and continues to be a sector of proven comparative advantage. The strategic location of our country in the Mediterranean, as well as the existence of an Aegean Sea with its multitude of islands, gave Greece one of the most powerful and successful naval traditions of the world. Historically, the shipping sector has also been a leader in our country's growth and development. Today, in this critical period that demands the engagement of all creative forces towards a common goal, shipping can also contribute dynamically to overcome the crisis and to create a better and fairer Greece. My government is determined to move forward with all necessary changes, to ensure a powerful and competitive shipping industry in Greece."

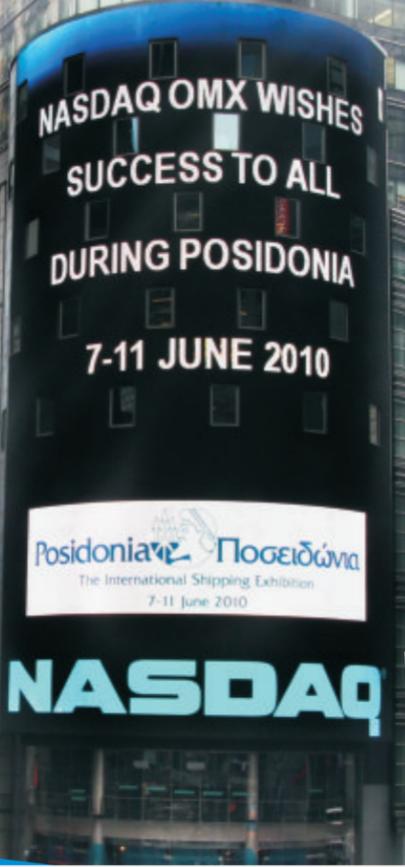
The chairman of the recently formed Posidonia Coordinating Committee, Mr Ioannis Lyras said: "There is no other maritime event in the world that compares with the spirit of Posidonia. At the heart of this success is Greek shipping, the tradition and entrepreneurial spirit of the Greeks."

The President of the Union of Greek Shipowners, Mr Theodore Veniamis stated that, "I express the hope that Posidonia 2012 will be inaugurated under conditions of national and worldwide economic advancement and social welfare."

"This year's record participation at Posidonia confirms the importance of the Greek maritime industry for our country and underlines Greece's leadership position in the field of global sea transportation," said Posidonia official Theodore Vokos. "It brings thousands of visitors from around the world to Greece, stimulating inward investments and generating business for our tourism and hospitality industries."

Nikolas Tsakos of TEN Navigation

Posidonia flies Greek flag with famous blue and white logo at New York's Times Square



Prime Minister George Papandreou visiting Posidonia

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(L to R) Representatives Steve Israel (D-NY), Russ Carnahan (D-MO), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Loretta Sanchez (D-CA), and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)



The Cuban-American Members of Congress - Reps. Ros-Lehtinen, Mario Diaz-Balart and Lincoln Diaz-Balart, with community leaders Savvas Tsivikos, Philip Christopher, Nick Mouyiaris, Tassos Zambas and Peter Papanicolaou



Representatives Brad Sherman (D-CA), Steve Rothman (D-NJ), John Sarbanes (D-MD), Shelley Berkley (D-NV), Ed Royce (R-CA)



Congressman Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) accepts an award on behalf of his father, Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA)



The Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Congressman Howard Berman (D-CA) with the President of the American Hellenic Council of California, Michael Galanakis (far right) and the Mayor of Lefkoniko, Cyprus, Michalis Pilikos (far left) and the Mayor of Famagusta, Cyprus, Alexis Galanos



State Senator Lou Raptakis (Rhode Island) and State Representative Demetrios Giannaros (Connecticut)



Leteris Kontos (left) and Philip Christopher present the Marialena Conalis Kontou Award to Alan Makovsky, senior advisor to the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee



(L to R) Cyprus Ambassador Andreas Kakouris, Cyprus government spokesman Stefanos Stefanou, Ted Spyropoulos and Andrew Athens



Basil Mossiades and AHEPA Supreme President Nick Karacostas



Congressman Charles Rangel (D-NY) and NEO's Kyrianos Bazanikas



Savas Tsivikos and Congressman Gary Ackerman (D-NY)



Greek-American Congresswoman Dina Titus (D-NV) and Andrew Athens

For the first time after many years, congressmen and senators who participated in the 26th Annual Cyprus and Hellenic Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. May 25-27, were that outspoken when it came to condemning the Turkish occupation of Cyprus, the violation of the rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and her provocations in the Aegean Sea against Greece. According to Mr. Philip Christopher, President of PSEKA (International Coordinating Committee for Justice in Cyprus), one of the two host groups, the clouds over the Israeli-Turkish strategic alliance have "liberated" many US lawmakers and helped them to take a more objective stance which certainly benefits Cyprus and Greece. Although the conference took place prior to the recent flotilla tragic incident, it was clear that things on Capitol Hill are not as they used to be for Turkey. "It's time to build on that and be very careful about our next moves," Christopher said in an interview with New York's AKTINA FM radio, a few days after the Washington conference. "Conditions are ripe for us to score some points."

U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and the second-ranking official at the State Department, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, were among the Administration officials who participated in this year's conference. A total of over 15 senior officials from the White House and State Department who help formulate US policy toward Greece, Cyprus and Turkey, were involved as well. This was the first time since he became Vice President that Biden met with national Greek-American community leaders to discuss US policy on Hellenic and Orthodox issues. The May 27 meeting at the White House complex lasted approximately 30 minutes.

A total of over 55 key U.S. policymakers participated in this conference that unlike any other in the Greek American community and like select few of all ethnic communities in the U.S., engages large numbers of

# Record number of US Policymakers and Vice President Biden at the 26th Annual Cyprus and Hellenic Leadership Conference

Senators, Members of Congress and Administration officials who actually make U.S. policy toward Greece, Cyprus and Turkey.

PSEKA and CEH (Coordinated Effort of Hellenes), who sponsored this conference, brought together over 100 Greek-American leaders from across the country with 29 key Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, 11 key U.S. Senators and over 15 key Administration officials from the White House and State Department. CEH Board Members participating in this conference included: Philip Christopher, Andrew A. Athens, Andy Manatos, Peter Papanicolaou, Nikos Mouyiaris, George J. Tsunis, Michael Galanakis, Endy Zemenides, Mike Manatos, Tasos D. Zambas, Zenon Christodoulou, George Dovellos and Basil Simon. CEH leaders included in their conference the heads of several other major Greek-American organizations including: AHEPA Supreme President Nick Karacostas; SAE Coordinator of for the U.S. Ted Spyropoulos; and a representative from AHL (American Hellenic Institute).

Secretary Steinberg, who was in a key position when the Clinton Administration aggressively pushed the EU to accept Cyprus without a solution, was also a top foreign policy advisor to Democratic Nominee for President of the United States Michael Dukakis. On May 25, Steinberg was the keynote speaker at a luncheon at which he was honored with the Frizis Award. This award, named after Mordehai Frizis, the Jewish Greek hero who was the first high ranking Greek military officer to give his life in defense of freedom against the Axis powers in 1940, is awarded each year to a



Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, receives an award



Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME), receives the George Paraskevaides Award



Mr. & Mrs. Haris Sophocles and Charis Lapas (right)



Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ)



Congressman Rush Holt (D-NJ), Brookings Managing Director Bill Antholis and Zenon Christodoulou



Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Nikos Mouyiaris and Olga Sarantopoulos



Philip Christopher introduces Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY)



Andy Manatos and Congressman Gary Ackerman (D-NY)



Vice President Joe Biden addressing conference participants at the White House

prominent member of the Jewish community in the US who has made significant contributions to Hellenic issues. Past recipients have included: National Security Council Director Sandy Berger; Chairmen of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Tom Lantos (D-CA) and Ben Gilman (R-NY); Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Carl Levin (D-MI); former Undersecretary of State Marc Grossman and Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke; and former Democratic Nominee for Vice President, Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT).

Those honored at this conference included: Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg [the 2010 recipient of the

Frizis Award]; The Cuban-American Members of Congress: Chairman of the DSCC and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Member, Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Albio Sires (D-NJ), Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL) and Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL); House Europe Subcommittee member, Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX); Chairman of the Helsinki Commission and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Member, Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Greek-American Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME) [the 2010 recipient of the Paraskevaides Award] - both of whom were introduced by former Senator Paul Sarbanes; Greek-American Member of Congress Dina Titus (D-NV); posthumously, Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), whose award was accepted by Congressman Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), and long-time senior advisor to the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Alan Makovsky [the 2010 recipient of the Conalis-Kontou Award]. As well, the conference banquet was in honor of three long-time conference participants who sadly passed away since last year's conference: George Panichas, Lambros Papantoniou and George Hajifanis.

Officials from Greece and Cyprus who participated in this conference included Cyprus Government Spokesman, Stefanos Stefanou as well as the Ambassador of Cyprus to the U.S., Andreas Kakouris; Ambassador of Greece to the US Vassilis Kaskarelis; Members of the Hellenic Parliament Eva Kaili and Canadian Parliament James Karygiannis; the Mayors of occupied Famagusta, Cyprus, Alexis Galanos and Lefkoniko, Cyprus, Michalis Pilikos. As well, President of the World Federation of Overseas Cypriots, Haris Sophocles, participated in this conference.

## Greeks win in California



Deputy D.A. Steve Councilis, an active member of the American Hellenic Council, was elected Superior Court Judge in Riverside County, CA. With all the ballots counted, Steve, receiving 56% of the votes, led his opponent Rachel Marquez who got 44%. No further election will take place and Steve is expected to soon be sworn in.



Deputy D.A. Nick Dourbetas, whose family have been longtime members of the American Hellenic Council, was elected Superior Court Judge in Orange County with 214,604 votes after running unopposed.

## FAITH announces Expansion of Scholarship Programs



In 2010, Faith: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism will underwrite two scholarships (one graduate student scholarship and one senior lecturer research fellowship) through the US-Greece Fulbright Exchange program in commemoration of His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's visit to the United States and in honor of the 10th anniversary of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios archiepiscopacy this past year.

Since its inception, grants from Faith funded many merit-based scholarships to high school students graduating from public, parochial and private high schools across the country for academic excellence. In 2010, a generous grant from Faith will

support the expansion of the Archdiocese scholarship program which originally only included valedictorians and salutatorians to also include students who display extraordinary academic achievement and display an acute need for financial support for their university studies. In 2009, a total of 37 young people received Faith Scholarships for Academic Excellence through the Archdiocese.

Faith's President, Mr. Peter Kikis, remarked on behalf of the Founders that "past scholarship recipients, all of whom are now attending the country's leading colleges and universities, are especially impressive young people. In addition to their exceptional intellectual abilities and academic

achievements, they have also actively participated in programs for the young people of the Hellenic American community and dedicated their skills and time to several extracurricular school activities, athletics, and community service initiatives. Faith scholarship recipients display the extraordinary scholarly intellect lauded by our Hellenic ancestors and a magnificent spirit of charity, philanthropy and altruism which is at the very core of our Christian Orthodox humanitarian values."

This summer, Faith: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism will continue to underwrite a series of financial aid scholarships to students traveling to Ionian Village to experience Greece and learn more about their Hellenic heritage through visits to ancient sites, monasteries, and cultural institutions. In 2009, Faith supported 34 scholarships for young people to participate in Ionian Village; in commemoration of the 40th Anniversary Celebration of Ionian Village, Faith has increased its budget for the 2010 scholarships. In 2010, the organization will continue to support several scholarship awards to the winners of the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival.

The core mission of FAITH: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism is to promote Hellenism and an understanding of the Greek Orthodox faith through a series of high quality educational programs and cultural initiatives through an endowment for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. For more information about these programs and the application process, visit the FAITH website: [www.faihtendowment.org](http://www.faihtendowment.org).



From left, Aristos Constantine, Nick Mouyiaris, Despina Axiotakis, Evangelia & Evripides Kontos, Steve Kontos, Dennis Droushiotis (the Chamber's President), Dino Kontos and Andreas Komodromos

## Cyprus-US Chamber honors Evris Kontos

More than 250 people showed up for the Cyprus-U.S. Chamber of Commerce 7th Annual Awards Gala at the New York Hilton, culminating another year of activities, reinforcing bonds and friendships and celebrating the millennia old Cypriot entrepreneurial spirit. This year, one

of the people embodying this spirit, Mr. Evripides Kontos, President and Founder of Kontos Foods, was the honoree, receiving the prestigious "Distinguished Merit Award". FOX Business Anchor Nicole Petallides was the evening's mc, introducing an array of distinguished speakers who saluted Mr. Kontos and his achievements, among them the Ambassador of Cyprus to Washington, Mr. Andreas Kakouris, the Consul General of Greece in New York, Ambassador Aghie Balta, the President of the Chamber, Mr. Dennis Droushiotis, and the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Andreas Comodromos. Also in attendance were the Honorable Koula Sophianou, Consul General of Cyprus to New York, Mr. Peter Papanicolaou, President of the Cyprus Federation of America and Archimandrite Eugene Pappas, representing Archbishop Demetrios. Philip Christopher, President of PSEKA, was scheduled to introduce Mr. Kontos, but due to a business engagement could not be at the event and his congratulatory message was read by Nicole Petallides.



FOX Business Anchor Nicole Petallides with mom Fanie Holiday

A heartfelt presentation to Mr. Kontos was delivered by his eldest son, Steve, who visibly moved went beyond the entrepreneurial side of his father's personality, recalling stories and incidents that spoke volumes to the kind of person he is.

Evripides (Evris) Kontos began his career working at a bakery in Cyprus after school. This bakery made hand-stretched fillo dough and fillo products. There, he developed the first ideas of mass production of fillo. At the age of 16, he left school and his job and with a loan from his uncle, he started his own business producing fillo for bakeries. Soon he was shipping to bakeries all over the island of Cyprus. A new chapter in Evris' life opened when an uncle from the United States urged him to come to America.

He arrived in New York in 1949 and he quickly proved his ingenuity in the production of fillo by streamlining the process, thereby increasing productivity and making it more profitable. By 1968, Evris had begun his own company in Dumont, NJ producing fillo dough. Shortly after that, Mr. Kontos moved his other company that produced spanakopita, tyropita, baklava, and kataifi into the same facility. Their hand-stretched fillo and other Mediterranean confections were distributed to restaurateurs and bakeries throughout the metropolitan New York area, as well as sold in the storefront.

Today, the Kontos Flatbread product line has expanded to over 22 varieties, more than any other flatbread baker. It is widely used in country clubs, hotels, restaurants, and business and industry cafeterias. It is sold at retail through specialty food stores and supermarkets throughout the country. Kontos also exports to Japan, Singapore, Jakarta, Canada and the Caribbean.

The Cyprus-U.S. Chamber of Commerce was incorporated in 1998. The Chamber's purpose is to help potential investors open doors and offer advice on foreign investment projects and introductions to Cypriot partners, exclusive briefings by private and government officials and much more.

The Chamber's charismatic President and founding member Dennis C. Droushiotis is the former Trade Commissioner in the United States for the Republic of Cyprus. During his tenure there, he implemented export promotion programs that saw Cypriot exports to the United States increase from \$700,000 to over \$32 million.



Marathon Bank's Chief Banking Officer Chris Koutsis (right) and Marketing Officer Panos Stogioglou

# United We Rock! The Concert for Human Rights



PHOTOS: GEORGE TRIANTAFILLIDIS



On a rainy, windy Saturday hundreds of people gathered recently at the Yonge & Dundas Square downtown Toronto, Canada, to attend the "Concert for Human Rights - United We Rock!", bringing together Toronto's independent musicians and organizations concerned with human rights, to shed light on current issues involving genocide, war crimes, racism, and the restriction of the freedom of expression.

Genocide it is humanity's problem that simply refuses to go away. More people were killed in genocides and mass murders in the 20th century than all of its wars combined. The tolerance we still seem to have for such atrocious human behavior is the reason why genocide rages on. It is the reason why war crimes still take place today. Our problems are rooted in racism. And progress can be ensured if the freedom of expression of all people is protected.

The event featured five partners, nine participant organizations including the Pan-Pontian Federation of USA & Canada and their local chapter the Brotherhood Pontion Toronto "Panagia Soumela", the NEPOMAK Canada: World Organization for Young Overseas Cypriots, the Armenian's Students' Association, the Assyrian Chaldean Syriac Student Union, the Canadian Federation of Jewish Students, the Hope for Rwanda's Children Fund and the Run for Palestine among others, as well as nine musical performances.

All participants had a booth at the event to distribute their material, raise funds and sign up new members. Visitors were Jim Karygiannis, member of the Canadian Parliament, and Shelley Carroll, City Councillor and Toronto's Budget Chief.

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Julie Frangouloupoulou, Marianthe Geroulanos, Georgia Crawford, Maria Paloumbi, Christina Geroulanos and Sia Pamoumbi



Zoe Petratos, Marilena Glyptes and Maria Demetriades



Antigone Zervos, Joanna Tzanides, Sophia Myronis, Demetra Tsafos, Yota Eliopoulos, Kyriakos Tzanides and Michael Zervos



Mr. & Mrs. Korkes and Mrs. Lambrini Gementzopoulou



Mr. & Mrs. Zesimopoulos, Sophia Myronis, George Drogaris, Zoe Koutsoupaki and friends



Alexia Markakis, Zoe Koutsoupakis, Senior Vice President Marathon Bank, Markella Hantzakis and friends



T. Demetis, Mr. & Mrs. Babis Geroulanos, Mr. & Mrs. Amarantos



The teachers: Demetra Tsafos, Panayota Koutsomihali, Maria Paloumbi, Melina Demetriou and Eleftheria Ikouta



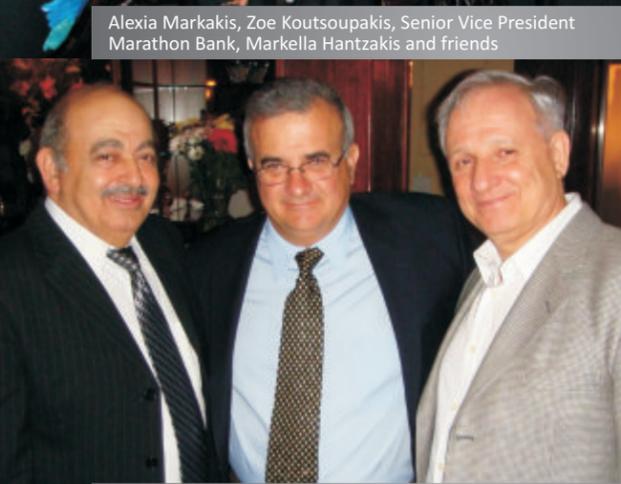
Mr. Glyptes, Angelo Petratos, John Demetriades, Dinos Demetis, Alexandros Hantzakis, Mr. Danas and Stamatias Sartzetakis



Dr. John Antonopoulos, George Vlikides, Education Attache at the Greek Consulate, Sophia Vlikides, Constantina Marmarinos and Aimilia Antonopoulos



George Drogaris (right), Gus Skoufis and a friend



Alkes Amarantos, George Drogaris and Tassos Vasilakos



Yota Eliopoulos, Mr. & Mrs. Zesimopoulos, Demetrios Kalamaras, President of the Federation of Hellenic Societies, John Demetriades, Pavlos Kotrotsios, President of the Hellenic American National Council, and Nadia Drogaris



Efthymios Zesimopoulos, Alkes Amarantos, Angelo Petratos, Alexandros Hantzakis, George Drogaris, Dino Demetis, Mr. Danas, Nadia Drogaris, Yota Eliopoulos, Eleftheria Ikouta, Stamatias Sartzetakis, Tassos Vasilakos and Spyros Demetis



John Demetriades, Alumnus & President of the Board of Directors Greek School of Plato



Eleftheria Ikouta, Demetra Vasilakos and Yota Eliopoulos



Seated: Spiros Demetis, Demetra Vasilakos, Peter Panagakos, Tina Demetis, Haroula Leka and Tassos Vasilakos. Standing: Eleftheria Ikouta, John Demetriades, Alkes Amarantos, George Drogaris, Demetra Vasilakos Jr., Antonia Korkes, Lambrini Gementzopoulou, Nadia Drogaris, Yota Eliopoulos, Marios Hatzidemetriou, Maria Paloumbi, Yota Vasilakos, Metaxia Constantopoulou and Melina Demetriou

# Plato's School: Building the Future on Ancient Traditions

By Demetrios Rhompotis

According to Spiro Geroulanos, himself an alumnus, who serves as Real Estate Acquisition and Construction Chairman, the new building have to be approximately 17,000 to 22,000 square feet in order to have 9 classrooms, 2 offices, a library, a conference room, an auditorium, gym, cafeteria, storage and utility rooms, elevator and all the amenities that a 21st century school entails. "The first step of course, is property acquisition," said Geroulanos. "We are targeting properties in Bay Ridge only. We are currently negotiating for an 8800 sq. ft. lot with potential for 17,000 sq. ft. buildable and we are also looking at an existing school building with an existing 4500 sq. ft. structure and potential for a build out of a total of 20,000 sq. feet. We have been and continue to be working with the local real estate brokers and a local architect to find the ideal property for the school."

Asked when he expects the plan to be materialized, Geroulanos is very realistic. "We anticipate this project will take approximately 6 years to complete, one year to raise money to purchase property, three years to raise money for construction and two years to build the new school." Moreover, the new building will be designed and built to exceed the NYS energy

requirements. It will be built "GREEN" to USGBC standards. The new school will be known not just for its academic achievements, its Hellenistic roots, its cultural events, and its communal presence, but also for its contribution to the environment."

The school has been from the beginning a real people's institution. In 1977, with the need for an independent afternoon Greek School growing in the area of Brooklyn, about 63 Hellenes, from various fields of endeavor and levels of wealth, came together and put the seed money that allowed the school to rent, for one year, classrooms at a local church ("Union Church"), purchase mini-buses to shepherd young minds to and fro, and make its first down-payment towards, what was, the original home of the school - 79th street and 3rd avenue. According to Mr. Alexandros Hatzakis, member of the School Board, afternoon classes in Greek Education had already started, but it was when it moved to its own, rented facilities, that the school began to formulate itself into the remarkable institution it has come to be. "During that same time, on the second of July, the community of Plato elected its first Board of Directors and representatives were charged with safeguarding the Hellenic

democratic spirit and Plato's commitment to quality, independent education. Those principles paved the road upon which directors, who followed, carried forth the torch of service for 34 consecutive years."

With much work and dedication, the school has continued to grow, as it did throughout the 80's and 90's toughing through any economic setbacks it may have faced, enduring all obstacles in the pursuit of its mission: promoting Hellenic heritage through afternoon schooling and programming to new generations of Greek-American students in the greater Southwest Brooklyn area.

Today, The Greek School of Plato, a 501(c)3 organization, enrolls a total of 210 students, from Pre-K to 9th Grade, with 9 educators. Although classes on Greek Orthodox Faith are included in its program, the school is independent from the Archdiocese's system and it's not connected to any particular parish. "Plato works by engaging a large force of volunteers - parents and friends - as well as imploring our community's youth to take up civic duty and develop leadership skills," says Hatzakis.

"It is a big family and I consider myself privileged to be with these people and their

kids," Eleftheria Ikouta, the school's Principal for the last five years and the driving force behind its vigorous Greek education program, commented in an interview with NEO. "The school undertakes a score of activities, we have singer groups, a dancing troupe and our well known throughout the community marching band. Without the constant participation from parents and friends who love Greek education, all that would simply have not existed." For Ikouta, this family environment was an additional reason why she decided to stay in the school, after her five year contract with the Greek government to teach Greek abroad expired. Before she assumed the duties of principal, she worked five years as teacher and she became well acquainted with the institution and its people. "I am grateful to all. They embraced me and supported my work along the way. It's a wonderful feeling and indeed the kind of moral boost that makes me and all educators here to go the extra steps that our service to community requires all the time."

John Demetriades is not just the School's Board President, but also an alumnus. "From its inception, 'Plato' had the highest of educational standards - it taught us not only the Greek language but the history,

geography, mythology and religion of our homeland," he recalled visibly moved. "And not just that: there was Greek dancing, Christmas caroling, a marching band, volleyball, soccer, dances, picnics and the unforgettable theatrical performances that included ancient Greek tragedies." It was a holistic experience that made their having to go there, "while other children our age spent their afternoons and Saturday mornings playing at home," a much easier pill to swallow. "We created lasting friendships and countless memories. Many of us, including myself, were fortunate enough to have been married within the 'Plato' community." And the saga goes on: "Today, while other children spend their free time watching TV or playing video games, our children are, once again, together at 'Plato' creating lasting friendships and countless memories. Second and third generation Greek Americans, are learning to appreciate their culture and they are preserving the principals and ideals of our Greek heritage that formed the basis of this country as well."

"Plato's Greek School is located at 1703 86th Street, in Brooklyn. For information on its academic and expansion programs the phone number is (718) 621-2226

By Markos Papadatos

# Lefkada native son George Maragos becomes Nassau County Comptroller and says the secret of his success has been: "Be yourself (no matter what they say)"



Sir Winston Churchill once said "the price of greatness is responsibility." An individual who best exemplifies this quotation is Nassau County's Comptroller George Maragos. Recently, NEO Magazine was afforded the privileged opportunity to speak with this distinguished individual of Greek origin and true Renaissance man. On January 3rd of 2010, Mr. Maragos was officially sworn in as Nassau County's Comptroller by Justice Stephen Bucaria of the New York State Supreme Court, in front of an energetic crowd which featured many supporters and dignitaries including Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano and New York State Senator Dean Skelos to name a few.



George Maragos, with his wife Angela on his side, is taking the oath of office in front of Justice Stephen Bucaria (NY State State Supreme Court)

PHOTO: ETA PRESS

As part of his job as Comptroller, Mr. Maragos serves as the financial "watchdog" for Nassau County, which has a population exceeding 1.2 million, and an annual budget of approximately \$2.6 billion dollars. Mr. Maragos and his staff are responsible for the monitoring of Nassau County's financial budget and its financial operations. Furthermore, his Office reviews county contracts and claims, audits governmental agencies in an effort to uncover economic waste and abuse, reports on matters which substantially impact Nassau's fiscal health and its operations, works with the county's administration and state legislature in an effort to help Nassau County overcome any financial challenges it may face, administers payroll and health benefits to county employees, as well as prepares Nassau County's comprehensive annual financial report.

Mr. Maragos' immediate future plans include turning Nassau County around by restoring fiscal responsibility, balancing the county budget without raising property taxes, and cutting waste in government and reducing spending. Mr. Maragos also intends on helping statewide Republicans such as Harry Wilson, Rick Lazio and Dean Skelos get elected this November. "It is critical that we bring back sanity to the New York State government by having Dean Skelos become the Majority Leader in the State Senate, Harry Wilson become the State Comptroller and Rick Lazio become the governor," stated Mr. Maragos. "We all see how dysfunctional Albany has become."

Prior to his election to the prestigious position of Nassau County Comptroller, Mr. Maragos had over thirty-five years experience in the banking industry, consulting and financial information systems. From 1981 until 1986, he served as Vice President at Chase Manhattan Bank, where he was responsible for the planning and implementing of global electronic financial systems, as well as for the telecommunications networks which supported the worldwide banking network. From 1986 until 1989, Mr. Maragos served as a Vice President at Citicorp where he presided over the investment banking system. While at Citibank, Mr. Maragos also served as Telecommunications Director for the Treasury Systems.

Additionally, in the last twenty years, Mr. Maragos also serves as chief executive officer (CEO) and founder for his own business, SDS Financial Technologies Inc., which provides financial information and

online trading services to the financial industry, whose clients include brokerage firms, exchanges, and other financial institutions.

Originally from Lefkas, Greece, Mr. Maragos' family immigrated in 1958 to Montreal, Canada when he was nine years old. He went to elementary school, high school and college in Montreal and moved to New York City in 1978. He became a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1985.

In 1973, Mr. Maragos graduated with his Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from McGill University, located in Montreal, Canada. While at McGill University, Mr. Maragos was honored as the Most Valuable Player (MVP) on the Soccer team, and served as Chairperson of the Cafeteria Committee. Following his undergraduate degree, Mr. Maragos enrolled in graduate school where he attended Pace University's Lubin School of Business. In 1983, he graduated from Pace University with his Masters in Business Administration (MBA) degree in finance.

While Mr. Maragos was in college, he remarks that "he never had any desire to run for public office and did his best to advance his career, in an effort to take care of his family." He decided to run for public office just one year before his election. He was approached by the Nassau County Republican Committee while supporting his son, Angelo, in running for City Council in District # 26. "After serious consideration, I accepted to run for Nassau County Comptroller because I thought it was time for me to give something back to the community. I felt the need to make government more fiscally responsible and more efficient in delivering its services to the general public," Mr. Maragos said. "The office of the Nassau County Comptroller was the right challenge for me given my thirty five years of professional experience and accomplishments."

His proudest professional moments include a series of important events. First, "becoming Vice President of Chase Manhattan Bank was a huge accomplishment, especially for a young boy from Greece to reach that level." Second, "starting my own business and seeing it grow and succeed was gratifying." Third, "having been elected to public office as Nassau County Comptroller on my first election, and finally, having the opportunity to reach the impossible, to run for a seat in the United States Senate against Senator Chuck Schumer." Alas, Mr.

Maragos did not win the nomination of the Republican Party, but left a good impression, and established good relationships across New York State. "The future is wide open," he remarked.

For the Greek-American youth who are

interested in pursuing careers in politics or business, Mr. Maragos recommends that it is essential for them to follow their dreams. "If I can help in any way the young Greek professionals who aspire to enter politics, I would be more than delighted to assist them. I encourage them to do so."

Being one of the few Greek immigrants to hold public office in New York, Mr. Maragos would like to provide encouragement for the Greek American community to become more active in local, state and national politics. "The Greek-American community throughout the state is severely under-represented in public life. The majority of Greek Americans are not even registered to vote. I would strongly recommend and urge all Greek Americans and our leadership to encourage the Greek community to register to vote. It is the only way for the Greek community to become empowered and to have our issues as a community responded, get our share of social services and have our ethnic interests advanced such as the Cypriot and Greek economic issues."

Mr. Maragos has been married to his wife Angela for thirty seven years, and together they have two sons, Peter and Angelo, and two grandchildren; a granddaughter named Sofia who is three years old, as well as a grandson, Alexander Dean, who was born on May 27th 2010, on Mr. Maragos' and Angela's 37th wedding anniversary. Mr. and Mrs. Maragos had an elder son Constantine Dean who passed away ten years ago in a tragic car accident.

In his spare time, George Maragos enjoys reading, spending time with his family, playing golf, vacationing in his native Greece, especially Korinthos, and his island of origin, Lefkada.

And always he says the secret of his success has been "the ability to be yourself. It is important to be comfortable with yourself and have a supportive family. Always strive to do the right thing for your family and community, and never expect rewards or compliments in return, although those will come. Be yourself!"



State Senator Dean Skelos, Comptroller George Maragos, Gregory Peterson (NY State Commissioner of Elections) and Angelo Maragos

PHOTO: ETA PRESS



Friends of George Maragos celebrating his victory

PHOTO: ETA PRESS



# HELLENIC AND ORTHODOX CHAMPIONS IN THE US CONGRESS

**Name: Michael E. McMahon (D-NY)**

**District:** New York's 13th Congressional District (Staten Island, Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, Bensonhurst and Graves End)  
**Committee/Leadership Assignments:** Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, Vice Chair; Subcommittee on Aviation; Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials) and Committee on Foreign Affairs (Subcommittee on Europe; Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia; Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade)  
**Contact:** Phone (202) 225-3371, (718) 351-1062; Fax (202) 226-1272; (718) 980-0768

**Regarding the state of the US economy, what are the prospects for recovery, and how soon?**

I remain optimistic that we will begin to see signs that our economy is once-again flourishing soon. In fact, I feel that we have already started to make the turn-around to a healthy fiscal position. Thanks in no small part to legislation like the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (Recovery Act), the HIRE Act and the Credit Cardholders Bill of Rights, our government is making critical investments in our infrastructure and workforce while establishing or strengthening the regulations needed to protect our consumers. In my district of Staten Island and Brooklyn, \$175 million in Recovery Act funds will be used to rehabilitate the Staten Island Ferry terminal. This funding will not only preserve a landmark, the Staten Island Ferry remains the only free means of transportation around New York City. We also received \$40 million in Recovery Act funds to improve the Staten Island Expressway and over \$200 million to rehabilitate 12 subway stations and the D/M subway line in the Brooklyn portion of the district. These projects modernize our infrastructure and provide honest, good-paying jobs at a time when people need them. We have also been fortunate to have over 25 small businesses receive loans from the Recovery Act to keep their businesses going. And these are just some of the ways we are working to bolster our economy. So I have faith that we will begin to see the signs of an economic upturn in the near future.

**What are some of the particular challenges that you are facing in your district?**

Creating jobs is always a priority of mine and I am constantly working with my colleagues in Congress to tap into new sources of job creation. Right now, I am also working on the financial regulatory reform bill that is being conferenced between the House and Senate. With approximately 75,000 of my constituents working on Wall Street or in an ancillary job, it is critical that we institute thoughtful regulations of our financial services industry that protect consumers but that do not push jobs to overseas markets. The Financial Services Industry is the leading force driving New York City's economy and we cannot afford to pass regulation that will be too stringent and drive investors to Singapore, Zurich or another foreign city that does not stifle the market.

I know that many people, including lawmakers, are angry at Wall Street because they want to place blame for the economic downturn and I am angry too. But we need to realize that we should be punishing the few, greedy individuals who are responsible rather than the entire industry. When we punish the "big banks," we are not only punishing their CEOs but also our local branch managers and the janitors who clean their buildings and restaurant owners who feed their employees. The ripple effect of over-regulation who be devastating for New York City, and eventually the country, so I am working hard to make sure that we institute common-sense legislation that will allow the financial services industry to flourish in a safe way.

**What would you say is the state of our democracy in these challenging and unusually polarized times?**

Unfortunately, I believe we live in the age of sound bites, and that can cause a great partisan divide amongst our lawmakers. And that is not in the best interest of the American people. I am proud to say that I will work with any lawmaker – democrat, republican, independent – to get the job done for

my constituents. In fact, since coming to Washington, I have worked consistently with Rep. Tom Rooney (R-FL) on an issue which is very close to my heart – veterans' mental health. We have a diverse country with a number of distinct challenges facing us as a Nation. We need our lawmakers to work together and come to a sense of mutual understanding so that we can tackle these challenges for the benefit of all our country's citizens.

**In various polls conducted throughout the U.S. Congress hasn't fared well with the American people. Why is that, in your opinion, and how do you address is issue as Congressman?**

I think that many working families are feeling the effects of the economic downturn and are looking to their government for answers. The American people, however, should know that many members in Congress and in the Administration are fighting hard to make things better for them. I am working to make sure our children receive the quality education they deserve, our veterans receive the services they need and our seniors can retire in comfort and with dignity. I am also working to strengthen our national security and protect our citizens. We are dealing with a number of important issues and that can be overwhelming, but we are continuing to work hard and things will turn around.

**Would you encourage more active voter participation in your decision making as Congressman, using the advances of technology, like the Internet and other forms of communication?**

I have always said that hearing from my constituents is critical to doing what's best from the district. In fact, I have often credited my constituents with pointing my attention to various needs in our community. Because of all the constituents who have spoken to me and whose voices have been heard, many key, community initiatives are taking place. As a way to engage my constituents, I have use various types of online and social media since taking office in January 2009. I have an active Facebook page and Twitter account, which informs the constituents following me of my recent work. I also send our regular eNewsletters, held tele-town halls and keep my website as up-to-date as possible. I hope that these forms of outreach, and in particular, my website, serve as valuable resources for the residents of Staten Island and Brooklyn.

**How did you become interested in the Greek-American community, and who introduced you to them?**

I have always been interested in the Greek-American community. As you know, before Congress I was in the New York City Council where I worked to introduce a resolution condemning Turkey's occupation of Northern Cyprus. Running for Congress, Greek and Cypriot American supporters including Peter Papanicolau and others were early supporters of my campaign and I am proud to represent them. I have continued this advocacy through my position on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Throughout my life, I have lived near Greek families and I very much relate their plight to that of the Irish, which as you may know, I am intimately familiar with.

**What are your thoughts on the Cyprus issue and what are some of the things you've done to support settlement efforts?**

Ending the occupation of Cyprus has long been a focus of my political career. Greece and Cyprus's steadfast commitment to finding peaceful solutions

to ending the occupation have touched and motivated my own work on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. After over 30 years, the division of Cyprus continues, despite thousands of peaceful crossings through the years. I am proud to say that each time Secretary Clinton has come to address the Committee, I have brought up Cyprus. In fact, Secretary Clinton described Cyprus as a strategic focal point in response to my questions on integrating the Island. I have also hosted Minister Kyprianou of Cyprus at a Members-Only briefing for the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The bottom-line is that I will not allow the ongoing occupation of Cyprus to be ignored, and I hope to lead a congressional delegation with the subcommittee on Europe to Cyprus next year to further highlight the issue.

**Do you consider Turkish provocations in the Aegean a threat to regional stability and international peace? Also, what actions have you taken or do you plan to take to encourage the US to take a stronger stance against this kind of irresponsible behavior?**

I think that any type of unnecessary military aggression is a serious threat to the region. There is no need for it, and I must commend Greece for continually standing strong against taking the bait and entering into conflict with Turkey over these provocations. I am particularly encouraged by last month's summit between Greece and Turkey where, for the first time in history, the two countries signed 21 agreements to boost trade, cut defense spending and increase tourism. I believe that this is a positive step in the right direction for the Aegean. I will monitor it closely and definitely respond if Turkey continues its harassment in the Aegean, despite the recent agreements with Greece.

**Are you aware of the state persecution against the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey and what have you done to address this issue in Congress?**

I am very much aware of the fragile state of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and am concerned for the future and longevity of this historic institution. I have signed legislation expressing this view and have sent letters expressing my disapproval of Turkey's refusal to recognize this body. I have met with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and know that despite Turkey's refusal to reopen Halki's doors and grant the Church the legitimacy that it is owed and had in the past, the Ecumenical Patriarch is a peaceful leader who patiently works with both sides to resolve the matter. I believe the US must play an integral role in encouraging Turkey from moving away from any xenophobic moves to diminish the Patriarchate. After all, I believe that this recognition would not only benefit the Patriarchate's legacy, but Turkey's multi-cultural history, as well.

**Since the Bush Administration recognized FYROM as "Macedonia", the country has become more intransigent when it comes to territorial and cultural irredentism against Greece that happens to be its major financial supporter. What kind of action on the part of the US would you promote in order for a mutually acceptable solution to be facilitated?**

The Bush Administration made a serious mistake when it inaccurately labeled FYROM as "Macedonia," and we continue to see the repercussions of this action to this day. I have denounced this move through co-sponsoring legislation in the House, and I will work to make sure that a mutual agreeable name for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FYROM, is reached. After all, Macedonia is Greek!



**Only ten dollars per year**

By Theodore G. Spyropoulos



The intentions of the Greek Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs for the rationalization of teaching staff detachments abroad, due to the economic crisis in Greece, has caused concern for the future of Education in Greek here. Feelings of concern and agony are being expressed mainly by schools currently running on a Greek curriculum which do not have enough teaching staff to fill the teaching hours of Greek Language, History and Culture courses. We do not know yet, if and how many

educators will be recalled and from which schools, but a decision has already been taken to refrain from new detachments of teaching staff abroad for the 2010-2011 period. This current development affects us all as a community, in a collective sense.

We forwarded our request to the Ministry of Education, so as to give us time in order to seek alternatives for our schools. However, only the Coordinators of Education have a collective overview of the existing needs. According to their estimates, the absence of detached educators who are being paid by the Greek state, taking into account that some of the schools employ an average of three teachers, will lead to an extra cost of 50 to \$60,000 per year. Nevertheless, apart from the financial implications for schools, we are being faced with the issue regarding the lack of qualified educators which will become an even greater problem, as the majority of Greek teaching staff abroad is reaching retirement.

We, as Greek immigrants, have always had the foundation and maintenance of schools our prime concern for the preservation of Greek language and culture subsequently. In 1944, under the aegis of Archbishop Athenagoras, the Philoptochos Society launched a large financial campaign, instituting the "monodollarion" (one dollar) annual contribution, under the motto "only one dollar per year", in order to raise awareness among the Greek Diaspora here and support the institutions of its Academy.

Today, we proudly claim to be a successful community/ethnicity, coming first on the educational level and second in money. This issue however, brings us face to face with our responsibilities; responsibility for our contribution and especially financial contribution towards the preservation and dissemination of Education in Greek Language in the U.S., which is priceless.

Greece will pursue its valuable contribution to the most possible extend. However, we are the ones who must think ahead for the creation of academic programs leading to the graduation of certified bilingual educators and at the same time encourage our youth to attend these courses by providing scholarships. On a short term basis, we do not have to provide financial assistance to schools that need to retain or hire new qualified educators.

Let us prove that we respect the efforts of all those who created our schools and induced Greek curriculums in public schools and all levels of the American Education. There are companies of Greek American interests that are exempt from taxes for donations, which could take over the salaries of teaching staff on an annual basis. And all of us, according to our capabilities can collectively or individually contribute in this effort.

Let us learn from the example of the pioneer members of the Greek Diaspora and provide "ten dollars per year" (per family) as minimum contribution. Hundreds of Greek-American families, with their contribution of ten dollars annually, can raise half a million dollars in one day.

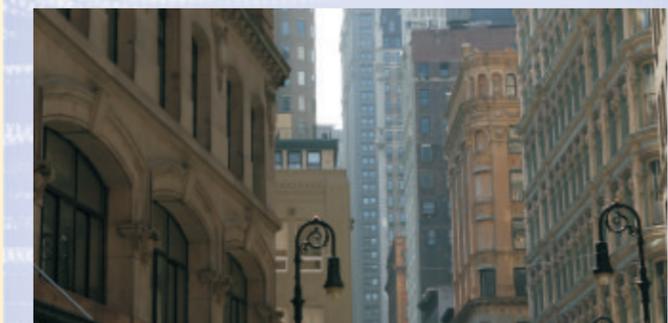
It is up to us to prove, first to ourselves, that we are capable as an ethnicity to turn this financial crisis into an opportunity for the future of Education in Greek in the country we live.

*Theodore G. Spyropoulos is President of the World Council of Hellenes Abroad, USA Region*



by Peter Shakalis

## More Tangible Positives for the Manhattan Office Market...



There are encouraging signs of stabilization in the Manhattan office market for the last several quarters; and the story isn't any different for 2010's first quarter, except that the signals are even stronger and more numerous. The amount of available office space dropped from 13.8 percent at the end of the fourth quarter of 2009 to 13.6 percent (a total of 9 million square feet or three times the amount of space in the Empire State building) by the end of the first quarter of 2010. The total amount of office space in Manhattan is 450 million square feet.

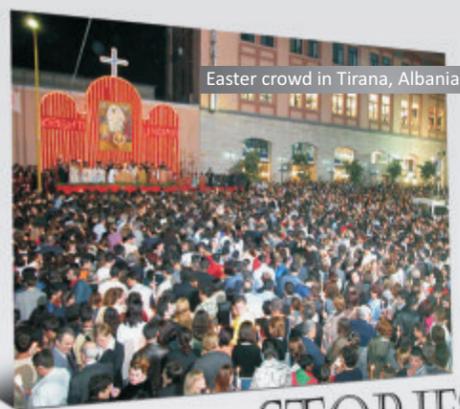
While the average asking rent did decline by 0.5 percent from the fourth quarter of 2009 to the first quarter of 2010, with the exception of the downtown market, the average asking rent actually increased slightly in the Midtown and Midtown South markets. This change in direction indicates either simple hubris on the part of landlords, or their response to an actual tightening up of available space in the face of continued demand by tenants. Our research indicates that the market's supply/demand balance has improved in some sectors of the Manhattan office market.

Additionally many in the real estate community believe that an excess of sublease space is the critical element in keeping downward pressure on rental rates. Sub-landlords are more interested in reducing the net cost associated with office space that is not being used, even though this predicament is often a relatively short term issue. (The majority sublease space available from tenants has 1 to 4 years left on the term) Property owners, on the other hand, may well be thinking about pricing in terms of maximizing returns over a long term basis. Hence they might be less willing to lower their asking rents to capture a deal in a momentarily depressed market.

Overall, Manhattan had a small but significant decline of 2.6 percent from the fourth quarter to the end of the first quarter of 2010 in the amount of sublease space available for lease. Hence, a continued decline in this segment of the market may be a positive indicator of things to come.

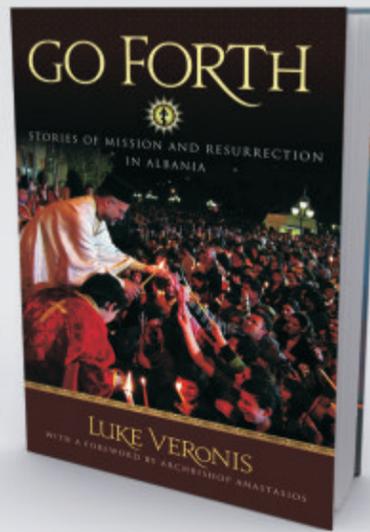
**Peter Shakalis is a Director at FirstService Williams Real Estate**  
 pshakalis@fswre.com

In "Go Forth: Stories of Mission and Resurrection in Albania," a book by Fr. Luke A. Veronis, published recently by Conciliar Press, you will find one of the most interesting and engaging collections of real life personal experiences! The stories engage you with all of the drama and pathos of a contemporary struggle against the real and violent forces of evil and for the astounding rebirth of an almost extinguished Christian community in a small nation of southeastern Europe – Albania.



Easter crowd in Tirana, Albania

By Fr. Stanley S. Harakas  
**"GO FORTH":  
 STORIES OF MISSION  
 AND RESURRECTION**



Fr. Luke Veronis, the son of one of the most distinguished missionary minded Priests of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Fr. Alexander Veronis, has moved forward in advancing the sense of mission in the Orthodox Church in the United States and Canada. In "Go Forth" he has provided a beautiful, moving and truly inspiring collection of personal stories describing both the triumphs and successes, as well as the painful failures and disappointments of a modern day missionary. It is almost impossible to stop reading these stories, one after another, that describe realistically his missionary experiences. Page after page describes real life efforts, real human encounters, real suffering, real victories and real experiences of God in the mundane realities of a dirt poor nation struggling to overcome and realize a spiritual reawakening.

Fr. Luke became interested in Orthodox missions as a student at Holy Cross School of Theology in Brookline, MA. Soon after graduation he responded to the missionary calling by serving as a missionary in Africa where he got to know Archbishop Anastasios. Later, in 1994 he followed Anastasios to Albania. The Albanian Orthodox Church, along with all religious expression had been almost exterminated by the four decade ruthless, atheistic communist rule of Enver Hoxha. With the end of the communist rule in 1992, the resurrection of the church commenced, hence, the sub-title of this engaging book "Stories of Mission and Resurrection in Albania."

One of the most inspiring characteristics of this volume is how effortlessly and unobtrusively Fr. Luke garners spiritual lessons from the multitude of authentic stories of the struggles and ordinary yet courageous and uplifting relationships of his and his family's life as missionaries.

Most Orthodox Christians are unaware of the rich history of missions in their Church. An

even more closed door is the actual life of Orthodox missionaries. What in fact do Orthodox missionaries do? Well, if you are curious enough to find out, I heartily recommend to you this book, which is a collection of very human, very inspiring, very interesting, and very attention-grabbing missionary stories. After reading this book, you will have most of your questions answered, and will have entered into the real life experiences and reflections of a modern day Orthodox missionary.

Perhaps the reason for most Orthodox Christian indifference to Orthodox Christian missions, is that following the fifteenth century, most Orthodox Churches found it almost impossible to do what Jesus Christ told us to do: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). The reason for this lack of mission sensitivity was the stifling conditions of the Muslim oppression of the Church that reached to the beginnings of the 19th century. When, at long last the Ottoman Empire came to an end, there was, with the exception of Orthodox Russia, an almost total lack of comprehension of anything related to missions by Orthodox Christians. Four centuries in the self-preservation mode had left the Orthodox, clergy and laity, without a missionary consciousness.

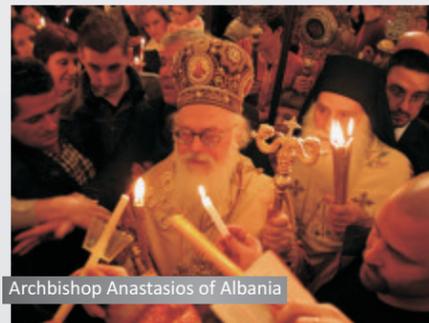
All this began to change radically about 50 years ago in the minds and hearts of a small number of clergy and laity in Greece. One of the leading figures in this tiny movement was a young Greek clergyman, Anastasios Yannoulatos. He and his associates began a revival of Orthodox mission consciousness with the publication (at first mimeographed and only later printed) of a magazine titled "Poreftendes." The periodical was also issued in English, with the title, "Go Ye!" which essentially is also the title of this book,

"Go Forth!" In one sense, Fr. Veronis' book is a fruition of the aspirations of that first effort in re-kindling Orthodox interest in missions.

You will not be able to put this book down easily once you start reading. A goodly number of photographs adorn the volume giving it a concrete and human context. On the cover of the book is a photograph of Fr. Luke offering the Paschal light at a Resurrection Service held outdoors at one of the main boulevards of the capital city of Tirana with 20,000 people joyfully receiving the light of the resurrection with the candles in their hands. If you look very carefully at the front cover, pictured in the bottom corner there is a woman receiving the light. She is smiling with radiant joy in sharing in Christ's Resurrection. I predict if you read this book, you will share in that same joy!

**You can order the book from [www.conciliarpress.com](http://www.conciliarpress.com) and [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)**

*Fr. Stanley S. Harakas, Th.D., D.D., is Archbishop Iakovos Professor of Orthodox Theology, Emeritus, at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Brookline, MA. He is also the Dean at the Christ the Savior Greek Orthodox Church of Hernando County, FL.*



Archbishop Anastasios of Albania

N&O



Following the very successful series "New Generation of Leaders" that featured members of the Leadership 100 Partners Program, Neo Magazine and the Hellenic Medical Society of New York have come together to present a monthly profile of "New Generation of Doctors."

# THE NEW GENERATION of DOCTORS



**Name:** James M. Melis, MD, DABFM

**Position:** Attending Physician, Diplomate, American Board of Family Medicine

**Education:** Family Medicine Residency - Stamford Hospital/Columbia Presbyterian College of Physicians and Surgeons MD - University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, New Jersey Medical School BS (Biology) - College of New Jersey (aka Trenton State College)

**Where were you born and where did you grow up?**

I was born in Manhattan, and raised in New Jersey. My early childhood was spent in Weehawken, NJ, before my family moved to Cliffside Park, a quiet suburb in Bergen County, NJ. We grew up attending church regularly, Greek School twice a week, participating in Greek cultural events and the Greek Independence Day parades. My sister and I were very active with GOYA, Scouting and the Kardamylian Youth and dance group. Upon graduating from Cliffside Park High School, I was accepted into the 7-Year BS-MD program jointly run by Trenton State College and UMDNJ.

**Who or what were the main influences in your life?**

My parents were the main influence for my sister and me. I was blessed with a nuclear family that embraced the unique qualities of being Greek-American. This meant loving both countries, taking pride in my work, and feeling honor with service. Because my parents recognized the importance of exposing us to both cultures, we took family vacations to many US historical sites in addition to our summer vacations in Greece.

**Why did you become a doctor?**

Growing up, I remember always being fascinated by how the human body functions. I remember drawing pictures for my younger sister, explaining to her how the eye works (as I thought it did at 6 years old). In 5th grade, while using a dictionary for an English assignment, I recall constantly being drawn to the medical entries, further piquing my interest in the human body. By 8th grade, my interest and aptitude to the sciences was self-evident. At this time, I was also earning my Eagle Scout Award from the Boy Scouts. The Scouts taught me the importance of service for a greater good. As I realized how much I could help people by becoming a doctor, it seemed to be the perfect dovetailing of my interests.

**As a new generation doctor, how do you evaluate the state of health care in the US?**

This country is home to the greatest medical achievements to the world. I feel proud to be able to offer my patients a variety of medications, procedures and approaches for addressing their medical needs. However,

doctors are finding many expanding encroachments on the doctor-patient relationship. Increasing paperwork and regulations, born of third-party interests and litigiousness, are disrupting an once-sacred bond. It is frustrating to have coverage for a therapy denied because it is not deemed cost-effective. Patients should be making medical decisions side-by-side with their doctors.

**If you were a patient, what would the ideal doctor look to you like?**

My ideal doctor would be one that is extremely knowledgeable and patient. The ideal doctor must encourage collaboration on the decision-making process. Most important, they should never take my trust or respect for granted. I would like to have continuity of care with such a physician and entrust my family to their care as well. I aim to be this doctor.

**Has your Hellenic heritage influenced your professional conduct and in what ways?**

Definitely. Most influential is the basic ethical precept derived from the Hippocratic Oath: to do good, but first do no harm. This sounds simple, but it is both powerful and humbling. I use this guiding principle with each patient encounter, as I am following in the footsteps of Hellenic physicians before me. Hellenes are instilled with a strong sense of family and a responsibility to better society. This helps me to reach out to my patients as I would members of my family, encouraging and guiding them along their path to health.

**As a successful American you could and perhaps have joined major organizations that are focused more on mainstream society. Why HMS (Hellenic Medical Society)?**

The HMS strives not only to assist physicians and allied-health professionals, but also the community at large. The HMS offers continuing education courses, informative lectures and well-attended symposia all year round. Every year, the HMS awards an impressive number of scholarships to students aspiring towards the medical field. Through my membership and involvement, I am honored to stand together with my mentors and peers in strengthening our profession while serving our community and promoting our history and culture.

**What qualities do you most admire or value in others?**

Integrity, humility, loyalty and a good old-fashioned Greek work ethic are the qualities I admire most.

**Who are your heroes in real life?**

I have many. The Orthodox religion has a vast array of saints and martyrs who promoted and protected Christian ideals, in the face of great challenges. There are also everyday heroes that surround us, whose acts are less noticeable, but no less important. That being said, my personal heroes actually turn out to be my parents. Beyond the extraordinary they have done for my sister and me, they have helped and continue to help, others. My mother does this through the Philoptochos and my father as an individual; sometimes they work in tandem. They support missions such as St. Basil's Academy and St. Michael's Home Quality Care for the Elderly. They have never sought for personal recognition; rather, they work to bring attention and compassion to their cause. In the process, they meet others who are equally open-hearted and compelled to act, surrounding themselves with a network of good citizens. It is their selflessness and dedication that I try to emulate in my practice and in my life.

**Where would you like to be in your professional and personal life 20 years from now?**

In my personal life, I hope to be blessed with a happy and healthy family, affording them the same love and support as I had growing up. Professionally, I hope my dedication builds a satisfying and rewarding practice that provides superior medical care to the families in our community.

**How do you spend your time outside of work?**

My wife and I spend most of our free time with family and friends. We enjoy being active in our Greek-American community by regularly attending many of the cultural, professional and social events that honor our Greek and Orthodox heritage. We also enjoy traveling, and look forward to our next big trip.

**What is your idea of happiness?**

Happiness is a life blessed with good health, a loving family and the time to enjoy both.

For your photos of the events please contact **ETA PRESS - Fotis Papagermanos**

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The Hellenic Medical Society of New York (HMS) has its origins in the Greek-American Medical Fraternity, an entity co-founded by the renowned physician George N. Papanicolaou during the First World War. This organization officially registered with the New York State authorities in 1920.



Jim Chanos (left) receives the Award from John Catsimatides



Georgia Mouzakis Tavlarios, President of HABA



Michael Jaharis and C. Dean Metropoulos



Nikolas Kostakos, Tina Handras & Emanuel Polichronakis, from Marathon Bank



Nora & James Orphanides



Karen Kalkines & Constantine Soras



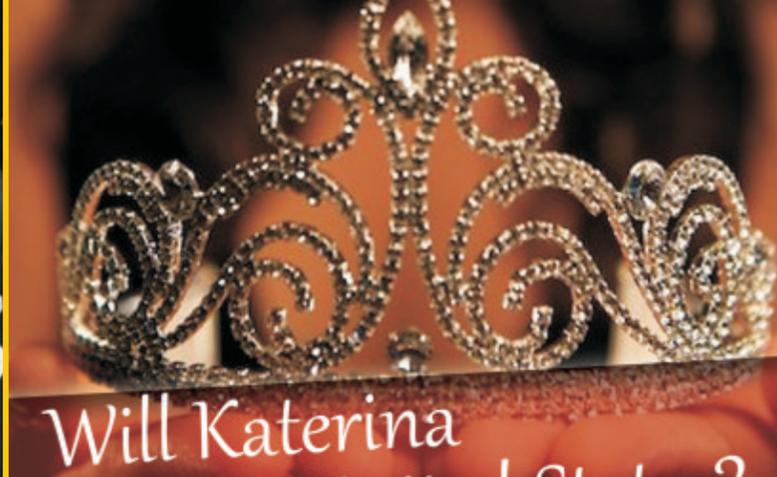
Georgia Mouzakis Tavlarios, Peggy Delfinopoulos, John Markos, Costas Kellas, James Chanos, Consul General Aghi Balta



Melanie Koundourou & Ariana Franciscovic



Spiros J. Voutsinas, President of Atlantic Bank, with Eftychia Pylarinou-Piper



Clifton's Katerina Dimitratos, 23, the reigning Miss New Jersey, will be traveling to the Miss United States Pageant in Las Vegas next month. A Seton Hall graduate with a degree in diplomacy and international relations, minors in economics and eastern European studies, she speaks four languages and has work experience in banking and county government.

Dimitratos explained that the contestant criteria are similar in the Miss United States pageant, which was featured in the film "Miss Congeniality" and is separate from the Miss America contest. "Yes, there are evening gown and swimsuit competitions, but the main part is a personal interview with the judges," she said, adding that there is no talent portion in the competition.

Dimitratos said when she arrives in Las Vegas in July for the national contest, her platform will be education, an issue that she has made her personal quest. She is currently studying for her Master's degree in business administration and would like someday to become a lawyer for human rights.

Whoever is crowned Miss United States will receive a modeling contract but must also devote her time to three non-profit organizations in the United States. "That especially would be a wonderful experience," she said.



"I've always been interested in foreign studies and business," said the Clifton native, whose natural beauty and sparkling smile are quite engaging. "I never even gave it a thought to enter a beauty pageant until my brother suggested it." At her twin brother Andreas' urging, she entered the Miss Greek Independence pageant in New York City and was chosen first runner-up. That gave her the confidence to shoot for the state title. "I had to answer lots of questions and present my resume to a panel of judges," said Dimitratos, who admitted she is very comfortable speaking in front of large crowds as well as one-on-one. "I think that's my forte," she said. "I love to talk to people."

# HABA honors Jim Chanos

Jim Chanos, founder and Managing Partner of Kynikos Associates, the man who predicted the financial meltdown of two years ago, joined a prestigious group of people, such as US Senator Paul Sarbanes, Nikolas Tsakos of TEN Navigation, Peter Peterson of Blackstone Group, to name just a few, upon receiving HABA's (Hellenic American Bankers Association) prestigious Executive of the Year Award during a lavish gala held recently at New York's historical Union League Club. Entrepreneur John Catsimatides presented the award, praising Mr. Chanos for his vision and grasp of today's labyrinthine financial world.

HABA's President Georgia Mouzakis-Tavlarios welcomed the honoree and the more than 2500 guests, among them such notable figures as Michael Jaharis, C. Dean Metropoulos, James Orphanides and the Consul General of Greece to New York, Ambassador Aghi Balta. Mrs. Mouzakis-Tavlarios thanked HABA's members and supporters for another fruitful year of activities and invited all to keep helping the organization to continue providing its invaluable service to the Greek American community, before passing the baton to Dorie Klissas, Director of Media Relations at NYU Langone Medical Center and the evening's mc.

Jim Chanos, who was a guest speaker at a previous HABA event, right after the 2008 meltdown, said he was humbled and honored by the award. Speaking of Greece and the tough situation the country is going through, he reminded that none is completely water proof nowadays and he expressed his optimism for her ability to overcome, especially after a meeting he had with Prime Minister George Papandreou.

Born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Mr. Chanos currently lives in New York with his four children and is active in many charitable foundations and educational institutions. He opened Kynikos Associates in 1985 to implement investment strategies he had uncovered while beginning his Wall Street career as a financial analyst with Paine Webber, Gilford Securities and Deutsche Bank. Throughout his investment career, Mr. Chanos has identified and sold short the shares of numerous well-known corporate financial disasters; among them, Baldwin-United, Commodore International, Coleco, Integrated Resources, Boston Chicken,

Sunbeam, Conesco and Tyco International. His celebrated short-sale of Enron shares was recently dubbed by Barron's as "the market call of the decade, if not the past fifty years."

As the largest exclusive short selling investment firm, Kynikos provides investment management services for both domestic and offshore clients. Through investment funds, partnerships, corporations and managed accounts, both domestic and offshore, Kynikos Associates maintains private portfolios of securities for clients. The funds, Ursus and Kynikos Opportunity, attempt to profit from the unusually high alphas found on the long and short side of the U.S. and non-U.S. equity markets.

The Hellenic American Bankers Association, Inc. is one of the premier Greek-American organizations in the New York metropolitan area. HABA is a not-for-profit organization established in 1982 to promote the professional and educational interest of Greek-Americans in the banking and finance industries. Its current active membership consists of over 200 professionals representing more than 50 institutions across the financial spectrum.

Since its inception, HABA has strived to serve the professional and educational interests of Greek-American financial professionals through the sponsoring of lectures, seminars, cocktail receptions with guest speakers and other events. Over the past years, HABA has had many distinguished speakers and lecturers. More info on the organization and its activities and be found at their website [www.haba.org](http://www.haba.org)

# Marina Moustakas: A True Woman of the Greek Diaspora

By Andrea Photopoulos

The Pacific Pulse



Marina Moustakas with fellow Daughters of Penelope "Daphne 29" Athena Mastora and Mina Masters at the Philoptochos Annual Fashion Show

SAN JOSE (CA).- Anyone who has ever met Marina will tell you she makes a memorable impression, not only because she radiates strength and confidence, but also because of her passion and dedication to keeping Hellenism alive. When you meet Marina you know she is a very special woman and now after years of hard work and dedication, she has earned an amazing honor, as one of the Women of the Greek Diaspora.

For the past three years the Prefecture of Thessaloniki in cooperation with the World Council of Hellenes Abroad (SAE) have chosen seven distinguished women to honor as women who are admired for their passion to preserve Hellenism, Women of the Greek Diaspora. The event took place at Porto Palace Hotel in Thessaloniki, Greece, earlier this year. Marina Moustakas from San Jose, California, was chosen to be honored from the region of the United States of America. Unfortunately, she could not accept the award in person due to health reasons, but was able to send a video thanking the organizers for the special honor. In her acceptance speech Marina emphasized the magnitude of responsibility of all the Greeks of Diaspora, in Preserving and Perpetuating the Hellenic Heritage.

A woman of many dreams and visions, Marina was born in Kozani, Greece, and

ended up in the United States at the University of Oregon on a scholarship through Fullbright Institute to study Sociology. While studying in Oregon, Marina met her husband, Evangelos and soon after graduation they moved to sunny California for an amazing career opportunity for him to teach at San Jose State University as a Professor in Electrical Engineering.

Over the years Marina has been very much involved with the Greek community in San Jose and the greater Bay area of California. Among Marina's many accomplishments are starting and directing the St. Nicholas Hellenic School and the Greek Dance groups, being a co-founder of the Greek Culture and Food Festival of San Jose and producing and hosting an ethnic television show, which aired from local TV stations in San Francisco. She is an active member of the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, the St. Anna Philoptochos Society and the Golden Years of the St. Nicholas Church, a member of the Daughters of Penelope, SAE and the Pan-Macedonian, Association, USA, of which she is Governor of the Pacific States. She is also seated on the Greek Education and Culture Committee of the Metropolis of San Francisco. Most importantly Marina is the founder and CEO of the Hellenic Heritage Institute in San Jose.

The Hellenic Heritage Institute founded in 1999, ([www.hhisj.org](http://www.hhisj.org)) was one of Marina's many visions for Hellenism preservation. The museum is located in History Park in San Jose, a whirlwind back in time with a mini-city of historical buildings, antiques, historical Victorian homes turned museums, a historical fire house, and even a train. Inside the museum are folk dance costumes, books, pictures, home decor, and other Greek treasures all personal donations from local Greeks in the community. The Hellenic Heritage Institute also offers a number of classes from cooking to language. Definitely a site to see as one of the only Greek museums on the West Coast.

From starting Greek dance groups to being founder and CEO of the Hellenic Heritage Institute, Marina has done it all and is still doing. Like the energizer bunny, she keeps going and going completely saturating herself into the preservation of Hellenism. She will not stop until her ultimate dream of creating an authentic Greek village, the next best thing to visiting Greece has been achieved. Women such as Marina should all be recognized and applauded for their work, a true Woman of the Greek Diaspora.



The Hellenic Heritage Museum at History Park in San Jose, CA



Marina Moustakas on the big screen giving her acceptance speech behind her fellow honorees of Women of the Diaspora Awards dinner

## SALONIKA: HELLENISM'S ETERNAL SECOND CITY



While Athens speaks to yearnings for Classical Greece, Salonika eloquently expresses Hellenism's continuity and rich cosmopolitanism through Byzantium. No city within the confines of modern Greece matches Salonika's pithy Byzantine credentials; it is second only to Constantinople itself. Though Salonika has always lived under the shadow of its national capital, the city has "that something"—"to kati" as we say in Greek, which enralls visitors and instills in its natives a breathless devotion. I met in Chile a Salonika-born Jew who became misty-eyed recalling his natal city, its crescent-shaped harbor, and its crowning citadel. Balkan Slavs also choke up when mentioning her name.

Each time I visit Salonika, the city captivates me. Salonika is the cauldron of Byzantium, mixing together its Hellenic and Slav elements to create a pastry appreciably different from that of Athens. The city more fully expresses the reality and diversity of the Balkans and post-Byzantium than Athens, chosen for its Classical Greek associations to be Greece's capital in 1834, when it was a small town. In contrast, for over 2000 years Salonika has been a major port city with open horizons, and more accurately reflects the Hellenism of pre-1900, with Greek communities stretching from Marseilles to Tblisi, cosmopolitan, commercial, and intellectual. If any city in the Balkans represents the region's center of gravity, it is Salonika. As a Diaspora Greek, moreover, I feel more at home in Salonika, with its hidden diversities, than in deliberately statist Athens.

One million Greeks inhabit the city and its environs, and the city's once thriving Jewish community was near totally destroyed by the Nazis in World War II. The Orthodox Slavs and Vlachs of the city have generally assimilated into the Hellenic Orthodox mass, though Salonika has small, distinctive Serb, Bulgarian, and Russian expatriate communities, bolstered by thousands of recent immigrants. The city's Muslim community left to Turkey with the 1920s population exchange, brokered by the Salonika-born "Father of Modern Turkey," Kemal Attaturk. Their place was taken by hundreds of thousands of Greeks from Asia Minor, Pontus, Bulgaria, and Russia. This process has continued since the collapse of the Soviet Union, as ethnic Greeks from Russia, Ukraine, and Central Asia repatriated. Though Athens is also a primary destination, somehow the more Balkan, Byzantine, and Anatolian Salonika seems more familiar to these wide-horizoned "New Greeks."

The first time my wife visited Salonika, she remarked on its similarity to Belgrade. These things are so subtle, but there is much truth to the familiarity between the two cities. Salonika, with its northerly winds from the Vardar River, clearly does possess some kinship with Belgrade. Belgrade I describe as a city both at the center and on the periphery, and much the same can be said for Salonika. The Aegean port constitutes the

fulcrum of the Balkans, the center of gravity for the cultural world of ex-Byzantium, an hour's flight from Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest, Istanbul or Sofia. Salonika's deliberately named Macedonia International Airport flight scheduler tells an interesting story. Destinations such as Bucharest, Belgrade, Skopje, Odessa, Tblisi, Kiev, Moscow and other "Byzantine Commonwealth" venues outnumber West European destinations. The Headquarters for the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank also boasts a Salonika address, as does the Center for Diaspora Hellenism, the Institute for Balkan Studies, and other centers of Balkan cooperation. Athens may have a political and economic hold on the Greek state, but Salonika holds its soul. Further, like Byzantium, Salonika resonates well beyond the borders of Greece, while Athens speaks only for Greece.

And yet, Salonika somehow seems on the periphery and suffers from a mild complex as the perpetual second city. Eclipsed by Athens in the modern era and Constantinople in the Byzantine times, Salonika lies outside the fast lane of its particular civilization. Indeed, its proximity to Slav Orthodoxy often fosters tongue-and-cheek taunts from Athenians, who call them "Bulgarians." It was, however, Salonika's proximity to the Slav world which fostered and perhaps created the basis for Byzantium's crowning achievement—the conversion of the Slavs to Orthodoxy. Geography is destiny, and Salonika's position as a Byzantine island in what was, during the early eighth century, a Slav-inhabited sea, clearly positioned Salonika to play a vital role in the Slavs' Christianization and absorption into the Byzantine cultural, though not political, realm.

On one trip to Salonika, I took a cab up to the old city and the fortresses. Locals call the fortress area "ta kastro"—using the plural form. As a visitor, I called the area "to kastro," revealing my outsider status. I climbed upon the walls of the fortress, not far from modest but smart, gentrifying homes, and I thought of what these walls have witnessed—sieges, conquests, successful resistance—but always the walls were permeable, like a cell membrane, defending against diseases, sometimes succumbing, and sometimes expanding outside their circumstances. Cities always played this role of mediator and processor, and in Salonika's case the urban Hellenic Christian culture successfully fended off Perun-worshipping Slavs, and then undertook a soft, osmotic conquest of the Slavs' souls.

Two Salonika boys, Cyril and Methodius, brought the word of God to the Slavs in their own language, with their own alphabet, and carried the institutional and cultural infrastructure of Byzantium wherever they went. As I sat on the walls, as certainly, the brothers had done over one thousand years before, I could not help thinking that this proximity and intimacy with the Slavs outside—and probably inside—the wall lent itself

to a great understanding between Slavs and Byzantines. I have always suspected that Hellene and Slav are culturally complementary—certainly in my own family! But this closeness and understanding of both peoples for one another—characteristics no doubt shared by the brothers—contributed to the wholehearted and utter assimilation of Byzantine Orthodoxy by the South Slavs, and later the Russians. The religious and cultural accoutrements of Orthodoxy fit Slavs and Greeks like a glove, though each hand retains its separate—though mirror—identity.

They say that familiarity breeds contempt, but it also brings both understanding and humanity. There is no doubt that Byzantine citizens such as Cyril and Methodius, whether or not—as Bulgarians and Slav Macedonians claim—they had Slavic blood, might have looked down on the Slavic hordes they set out to convert. Their condescension, however, was of a milder version than that of Western Europeans who converted north Slavs and Balts—often by the sword. Further, Byzantines would never assume that Greek alone was fit for the liturgy and gospel and they provided the liturgy and the means for the Slavs to express themselves in their own language. They fully assimilated the religion, liturgy, and the trappings of state, on their own terms, voluntarily, and speaking their own language.

The Greek Army liberated Salonika on St. Demetrios Day, 1912, about 18 hours ahead of their Bulgarian allies. Salonika thus suffered longer the weight of Ottoman rule than southern Greece, and in its aura one feels greater coloring of Turkish culture than in Athens, a situation exaggerated by the presence of so many descendents of Asia Minor Greeks. In other ways, however, the city feels more Western, or at least Central European, than Athens. Salonika's broad avenues and cafes have a hint of Vienna, like a crème shlag on your coffee. Salonika had been a major outlet of Central European goods to the Mediterranean and like its northerly "sister," Belgrade, Salonika was not immune to the cultural trends from the Hapsburg realm.

Perhaps, though, Salonika's more European, Western feel comes from its Byzantine civic pride and continuity. Salonika from its founding in the Classical Era has been a major commercial, administrative, and cultural center. When Athens was a minor town, Salonika was the second city of the Byzantine Empire, and during the Ottoman era, Salonika continued to be a major city with a diverse population and economy. Again, Athens, Sofia, and Belgrade were far smaller towns until the end of the nineteenth century and none had the civic grandeur of Salonika. What I may be revealing as an author is my own biased preconception that civic and orderly is somehow "Western." Salonika's civic depth, its Byzantine legacy together with its former ethnic diversity, in my opinion, makes the northern capital a far deeper experience than its southern colleague.

By Alexander Billinis

essay

Alexander Billinis has spent a decade in international banking in the US and Europe, most recently in London. He is particularly interested in Greece's economic and cultural position in the Balkans. He has worked with companies invested in the Balkans, and is writing a travel-historical book about the post-Byzantine states of modern Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania.

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# The International Propeller Club holds event in Piraeus



and shipping industry, either we will all row together with solidarity or we will all sink," he concluded.

In attendance were 1st Vice President of the Propeller Club Nikolaos Tsavlis, the Regional Vice President for Southern Europe and Africa Apostolos Doukas, the President of the Greek Shipowners' Association for Passenger Ships and 2nd International Vice President of the International Propeller Club, U.S.A. Markos Foros, Mr. Athanasios Christopoulos, General Secretary of Security -Ministry of Citizen Protection, Mr. Paul Malik, Counselor for Economic Affairs of the U.S. Embassy in Athens, Mr. Mpournias Vasillios, Rear Admiral of Hellenic Coast Guard, Cpt. Panayiotis Tsakos, Founder of Tsakos Group, Cpt. Vassilis C. Costantakopoulos founder of Costamare Shipping Co and Chairman of HELMEPA, and Mr. Gregory Timagenis, Chairman of NAT and Board Member of the Club.

Other attendees included, the President of

Entrust Maritime Co. Ltd, Mr. Elias Tsakos, Mrs. Eleni Plessa, representative of Prime Maritime Inc., Mr. George Aggelopoulos, Mrs. Eirini Moustaki, Mr. Damianos Constantinou, Mr. Antonios Faraklas, CEO of Chartworld Shipping Corp. and Treasurer of the Propeller Club, Mr. Alexandros Tourkolia, General Manager Corporate and Investment Banking, Mr. Michalis Nomikos from Royal Caribbean Cruises, Mr. Apostolos Poulouvasilis, Managing Director Hellenic Lloyd's S.A., Cpt. George Koumpenas, Senior General Manager Fleet Operations, Mr. Miltiadis Wanger, President of NEL Lines, Mr. Dimitris Patrikios, General Manager of Springfield Shipping Co., Chairman of the European Navigation, Mr. Karnesis, members of the Board of the Propeller Club, Dimitrios Zorbalas and Costas Constantinou, Managing Director of Moore Stephens, former Presidents and members of the Propeller Club, distinguished guests and representatives from the shipping, tourism and business community.

The International Propeller Club of the United States and the International Port of Piraeus organized a membership luncheon with guest of honor and speaker, Mr. George Anomeritis, President and Managing Director of the Piraeus Port Authority SA (O.L.P.) The event was held recently at the Yacht Club of Greece, in Piraeus.

The Club's Secretary General, Mrs. D. Foros-Tsirozidis, conveyed the welcoming message on behalf of the President of the Propeller Club, Mr. Nicky Pappadakis. "Mr. Anomeritis has demonstrated over the years his close connection to the sea and Piraeus and has a close understanding of problems facing seafarers and owners alike," Pappadakis noted, while he emphasized the important connection of shipping, tourism and the Port of Piraeus to Greek economy and the importance of working closely with China for both countries' best interest.

"Port of Piraeus in the Next Decade," was the theme of Mr. Anomeritis' speech, in which he highlighted the areas of transformation and investment necessary for the Port of Piraeus in order to become the major Cruise Port of Eastern Mediterranean, the service modernization required in the ferries sector and the containers with logistics support in the port. He also emphasized the need for modernization and for increased cooperation among various entities that are connected to the port. "In the international and multinational circles of tourism



Captain Vassilis Constantakopoulos, Mr. Markos Foros, Mr. George Anomeritis, Mr. Apostolos Doukas and Captain Panayiotis Tsakos



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# LEFKAS ISLAND GREECE

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The south coast of Lefkas is a jigsaw of long inlets and sheltered harbours and beaches nestling beneath the pine carpeted hills. To the east is Sivota, a favourite port of call for yachting flotillas and, in the west Vassiliki, host to the world windsurfing championships. Beyond Vassiliki is the wild, windswept peninsula that ends at Cape Lefkas. A good road runs down the east coast to provide easy access but the south-west resorts are more tricky as the roads get steadily worse as you head south.

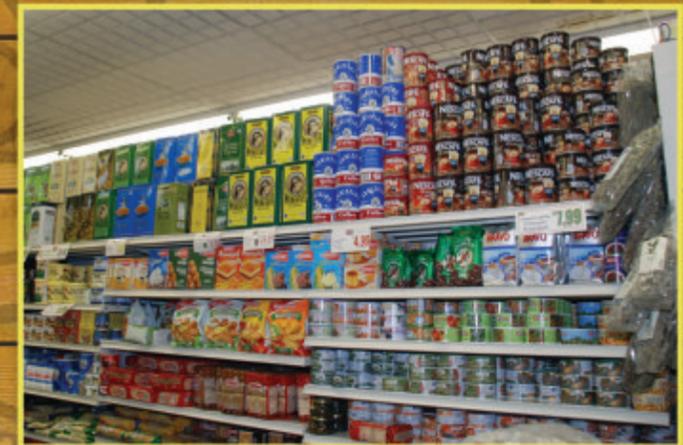
Wilder and windier than the east, the west coast has the island's best beaches. Much tamer in the north-west, they get progressively wilder as you head south. The reward for those that tackle the narrow hairpins of the west coast road of Lefkas are staggering views from the cliffs and breathtaking beaches below that many rank as among some of the best in the Mediterranean.

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Maria A. Pardalis

## Aginares me Koukia

(Artichokes with Fava Beans)

At no other time of the year can Aginares me Koukia be replicated to taste as glorious as when made in the spring. Artichokes and fava beans are in season and readily available at your local farmer's market or neighborhood grocery store. The vibrant combination of these two nutritious vegetables appears in nearly every Mediterranean country, from Portugal to Lebanon. Fava beans, also called broad beans, are globally representative of springtime and are especially loved in Greece where they are a culinary event. Mixing this ancient legume with savory artichokes makes for a comforting traditional Greek dish that is centuries old.

Slow cooking causes the vegetables to lose their color but intensifies the flavor which results in a sweet and succulent stew that even shameless carnivores will adore. Fava beans may still be considered a novelty in America but that should not intimidate you from trying this easy recipe.



Prep Time: 5 minutes  
Bake Time: 2 hours  
Serves 4 to 6



### Ingredients:

- 6 Artichokes, trimmed and halved
- 2 1/2 cups shelled fava beans
- 2 cups peas
- 1/2 cup finely chopped fresh dill
- Sea Salt and Ground Black Pepper, to taste
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/3 cup red wine vinegar
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil

### Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Mix first five ingredients together in a large baking pan. Add one cup water and cover with foil. Bake for 1 1/2 hours.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil in a skillet. Once oil is hot, add minced garlic and onion. Sauté for 5 minutes or until softened. Remove from heat and add to artichokes and fava beans in baking dish.
3. Stir vegetable mixture well. Add 1 more cup water and bake for 30 minutes uncovered.
4. Remove from heat and mix in red wine vinegar. Allow to sit for 10 minutes.

Serve warm with rich cheese, olives and fresh bread. Although Aginares me Koukia tastes wonderful all by its self, pairing it with a crisp glass of dry white wine dramatically enhances this dish's flavor and brings it to an entirely new level. I recommend using your favorite Chardonnay, which will compliment this healthy meal beautifully.

## Kali Orexi!!

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# Moniodis receives Award in Baltimore



George and Lillian Moniodis



Standing: Lee & Ester Gonano, Jennie & George Degermentzidis, George Moniodis, Linda Kotrotsios, Jason Filippou; sitting: Dr. Nahid Shahry, Georgia Vavas, Aris Melissaratos, Paul Kotrotsios



Jack Stansbury, Foundation Board Chair, Bonnie Phipps, President & CEO, St. Agnes Hospital, George Moniodis, James Klink, Barbara Bozzuto, Chair of the St. Agnes Board of Directors

PHOTOS: MAXIMILIAN FRANZ

By Georgia Vavas

George Moniodis of Baltimore was honored recently with the prestigious St. Agnes Foundation Caritas Award for his 37 years of service. During this time, he served as Director of Public Relations, Development (fund raising) and Government Affairs, for St. Agnes, the 5th largest hospital in the Baltimore area.

This annual Black-tie Spring Gala was held at the Baltimore Hyatt Regency Hotel and was attended by more than 500 physicians, associates and friends of Mr. Moniodis and Mr. James P. Klink, who was also a co-recipient of the Caritas award. The Gala raised in excess of \$120,000 for the St. Agnes Neo-natal unit.

Mr. Moniodis for many years has been active in community service in both Baltimore City and Baltimore County. He has served as President of Buddies, Inc. a non-profit organization of local businessmen and women who raise \$60,000-\$70,000 each year to fund the Baltimore Police Department's Youth

Program known as the Explorer Scouts. Buddies, Inc., was established in 1971 for the purpose of enriching boys and girls from ages 14 – 20 and to expose them to different alternatives and opportunities. Every year Moniodis eagerly raises funds for this charitable organization by hosting a baseball game at Oriole Park in Baltimore. Buddies also award a \$5,000 scholarship each year to the most scholastic young person in the Explorer's program.

Mr. Moniodis, a 1960 graduate of the University of Baltimore, is also the President of the Baltimore City Greektown Community Development Corporation, a non-profit organization that was formed in the late 1990's to improve the quality of life for the residents of Greektown. He also serves on the Board of the Daughters of Charity St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Shrine Center in Emmitsburg, MD, the Redline Community Advisory Council and he is a board member of AHEPA's Lord Baltimore Chapter #364.

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37 JOANNA XIPIA

## GUS SVERKOS: PROMOTING GREEK MUSIC, FOOD AND ..."KEFI" IN CALIFORNIA

Let me tell you all a little story about how a person's determination and passion can shape his/her destiny for the good of not only that individual's realization of their dreams, but also for the community at large in helping to preserve our Hellenic Identity. What it all boils down to, in this Melting Pot that we live in, is that that key to our roots lies right in front of us, in our very personal up-bringing in our own homes by our families, and the value we heavily place on just that very word: "family". It's no wonder then that despite the varying degrees of 'Greekness' lingering in the air through my travels in different parts of the U.S., the fact still remains that each of us needs to find unique & modern ways of preserving our culture, our language, and our heritage for our children - our future! And that alone is the most difficult challenge we face - despite the resources (or lack of) that physically exist in the 'communities' around us. At first glance, you might assume the odds are against you living in the West Coast, with the under-represented Greek Communities here in comparison to back East; however, you might want to reconsider that notion and focus your attention in awe of what this young SoCal Native (the term locally deemed as Southern California) of the X-calibre-generation has done to beat those odds!

Introducing Gus Sverkos of Goodtime Productions (www.goodtimeevents.com) - the multi-talented Promoter/DJ/ Restaurateur whose success he contributes to the role models closest to him - i.e. his parents: Dennis hailing from Argos, and Efstathia from Tripoli, who came to America with humble beginnings eager to start a future for their five children (Frances, Tula, Dino, Gus and Pete). His father taught him the value of hard work & determination, "grit" as Gus calls it, in describing his father's unsurpassable endurance that admittedly he himself will never be able to duplicate: "I can never say I worked as hard as my father has". In describing his mother, the saying made famous by the movie "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" comes to my mind; while his father was bringing home the bacon as the head of the house-hold, his mother was definitely "the neck", with an entrepreneurial mind of a Real Estate tycoon, shaping the future of their investments. From her own sense of independence and forward thinking, she also helped other women in the local Greek community in applying for their licenses and learning to drive. This is the teamwork in a marriage that we all can only hope to strive for. Through his parents, Gus learned the importance of placing family first, ahead of his career... especially to know when enough is enough (work,



KafeNeo in Long Beach, California

that is) to be able to take off for family vacations to Greece or anywhere else in the world where their relatives dwell.

It so happened on a summer vacation to see his relatives in Sydney Australia in 1993 that he was taken back at how close-knit the community there was, especially with the constantly busy nightlife that brought together crowds for the common love of Greek music and dance. Upon his return to the U.S. he was dead set on starting local Greek nights in his own neighborhood. If the Aussies can travel across the miles (or kilometers) to come together for the love of our music & spirit, so can we! At the time, his first job out of college was as a Marketing & PR Manager for a local bar in downtown Long Beach, called Barwinkles. Gus convinced the upper management that bringing in ethnic music would draw crowds to their otherwise "Americanized" locals, so they allowed him and his then partner, Jonathan Condos to test out his proposed every 2 weeks on the slowest night of the business: Mondays. As simple as mixing together a few CD's from the popular summer Greek hits of 1993, the first-ever Greek night started in March of 94" and brought in well over 200 fellow Hellenes to the establishment, introducing to the Greek-American community that authentic 'kefi' and passion that flows within our veins!

Eventually they branched out organizing Greek Nights on major holiday weekends at Club Cohiba, and other nightclubs around the city with over 400 followers at that time. Gus eventually honed in on his DJ skills mixing modern Greek with American music. His popularity allowed him to branch out into doing weddings, baptisms and special events. After a few years he brought on "DJ Trellas", Theo Giannoulas, and continued doing Greek Nights! Their hip and modern approach to mixing together all kinds of Greek music, from folk to pop, has set new standards and expectations in the eyes of the surrounding Greek Communities.

Today he is very proud & honored to be involved as the Director of Events for the F.D.F. (Folk Dance Festival), which started over 30 years ago, by the San Francisco Diocese, and has become the largest event for the youth in California. In 2009 Gus brought to the table an idea that had never been attempted, to bring a famous Greek singer to perform at the ceremonies. He convinced the board to invite the Superstar Thanos Petrelis to perform at the Awards Banquet in the Ontario Convention Center. With over 2,500 people in attendance, the show was simply amazing.

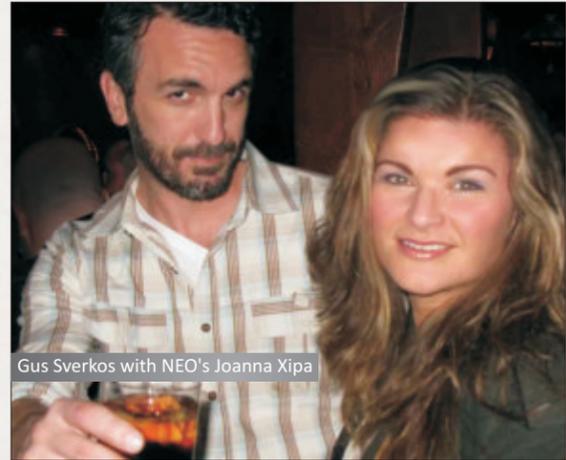
Gus' underlying passion is to extend that bond beyond the youth, and bring together the generation gap between father and son... and even grandfather! During most of his career he noticed a pattern of catering to the younger generation right up until point that they got married, and had children themselves. Sadly though, and unlike the family life & traditions we see in Greece (where all ages come out to play at night, together with their families), here, Greek-Americans (being stuck in the rat race that we've grown accustomed to) seem to be experiencing some sort of missing link that breaks the chain of those very strong family ties that we so proudly possess and boast to our Phil-Hellenes and non-Greek friends! Besides relying on major holidays to spend time off with family, we can we still look forward to coming together, sitting shoulder-to-shoulder, at a club or concert (whether it's modern or traditional bouzoukia style) simply to celebrate life! We Greeks are fortunate enough



Antonis Remos performing at Club Nokia, downtown Los Angeles

that at our passionate love of music, coincidentally seems to cross all generations, whether it's the traditional folk music & laika or modern Greek pop or even hip hop... why not use that to our advantage in keeping us together?

In answer to that question, Gus is constantly reinventing himself to continue to be involved in the rest of our lives (beyond just the weddings & the baptisms!). Now he has been entering into Concert Promotions where he has brought famous names to perform such as Pamela, the Dionisiou Brothers, Thanos Petrelis, Anna Vissi and most recently, one of the best concerts of the decade, Antonis Remos at Club Nokia in downtown Los Angeles. What Gus strives to do through music, is re-ignite that passion within us who nostalgically yearn for our 'patrida' since we are, in our hearts, home away from 'home'! That is exactly why he's always extending a helping hand to support and promote other beginning Greek Artists, introducing them to the local Greek Community through his popular Greek Nights. His most recent event was the Sunday Night of Memorial Day Weekend at "H Wood" Nightclub in Hollywood; where he brought Australia's #1 DJ, "DJ Krazy Kon" all the way to LA to perform, and also featured Greek-American pop singer "Vassy" who sang up a storm in front the local crowds.



Gus Sverkos with NEO's Joanna Xipa

When that storm finally settles and all is said and done, Gus's restless ambitions have taken him one step further to preserve the family values he holds near & dear to his heart. Together with his brother, he's opened up to the doors to the public, the hip & modern, "Kafe Neo" building it from the grounds up on top of the existing property their father worked on for 35 years in his auto-shop, "the Carriage Shop". While combining American staples together with Greek-style cuisine, this wonderful little hang-out has already become a favorite to the local Long Beach neighborhoods in the 2 years since it has opened. The kafe's website www.kafeneolb.com and the historical short video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuSWEmGgE8c) will set the mood to feeling of enjoyment we get whenever we visit the actual 'kafenias' in the various 'plateies' in almost every town/village in Greece! To some it all up, I think you would agree that it's plain to see what he passionately believes in no matter what he's promoting: our future!

"Kafe Neo" is located at 2800 East 4th Street Long Beach, CA 90814, tel: (562) 987-1210.

### PERISCOPE

## Greece still alive and kicking (hopefully in Woldr Cup too)!

June is well under way and I don't know why every year I feel that summer has come so early; it seems to me that I can't control time anymore (as if I ever could)! Well, nobody won the race against time, except, perhaps, for some great civilization, like ours, but again, who knows what will happen in another 2,000 years; maybe our modern civilization will make it to the top and be viewed the same way we now look at Classical Athens with awe. Speaking of which, it hurts when friends view modern Athens with awe, not as the cradle of civilization, but as a cradle of instability and fear. When even American Greeks ask if it's safe to go there this summer, I realize the country's image has been damaged more than I thought, the result of an onslaught of negative images parading daily in the major media. Unfortunately, Greece and her government don't seem to be in a position to do damage control, which by default can only do more harm. The baton passes to the private sector: companies and the average Greeks that once more will have to do the job in spite of the government's inability to react. Thus, it is absolutely inspiring to hear that a Greek medical doctor, Demosthenes Bouros, doing

research at a remote city in northern Greece (University of Thrace in Alexandroupolis), came up with a new treatment by which an incurable pulmonary disease can be treated effectively by cultivating stem cells from the patient's own body! Yes, this is a Greek first and about a month ago, Dr. Bouros revealed the results of his treatment on real people at an international conference in New Orleans. This breakthrough could lead to the reinforcement of other vital organs, such as the pancreas or liver, using stem cells not from previously frozen embryos, but from the patients themselves!

A couple of days ago, I visited the famous ABC store in the City, where you can find state of the art, innovative things for your home. Well, I wasn't in a shopping spree mood, nor I was looking for an art nouveau chaise lounge chair to enjoy the nice summer days, hopefully to come, with my frappe coffee (another Greek invention, despite the French name) on one hand and my Dominican handmade cigar on the other (this one too has a Greek connection, since the company is founded and owned by our own Stanley Pappas, based in Denver). Back to reality, I was invited by Mr. Emmanuel Stefanakis, a Greek American from Boston who's the Director of Operations in Coco-Mat, the renown (in more than 10 countries) Greek mattress company that promises to make you feel like you're sleeping with nature, making believe that nothing is underneath or on top of you (the presence of an exotic figure, perhaps from the same place my cigar came from, only enhances the feeling, but I won't go to that evasion techniques that sooner or later we will need here!

Last but not least, those of you who live in the tri-State area are mostly invited by my friends Nick Katopodis and John Frankis to a fundraiser in support of NEO magazine, Monday, June 21st, 7:00 - 10:00 p.m. at Roselyn's absolutely fantastic Limani Restaurant ((1043 Northern Boulevard Roslyn, NY 11576, tel. 516 869-8989). Minimum contribution per person is \$200.00, a fair amount that will help this magazine to sustain growth, especially now that we have expanded distribution to include Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Jose, in the West Coast, Chicago in Mid West and soon other parts of the country. Those of you who can afford this pledge please show up and give us your vote of confidence. Unlike other community media, we have no backstage financial supporters and we don't promote anybody's particular agenda. We are independent thanks to all of you and our allegiance goes only to you.

For reservations or additional info on the fund raiser, please call (718) 554-0308. If you can't make it, please mail your checks payable to NEO magazine, to PO Box 560105, College Point, NY 11356.

See you there!

DEMETRIOS RHOMPOTIS  
dondemetrio@neomagazine.com



Demetrios Rhompotis and Kyprianos Bazenikas (right) offering US Senator Olympia Snowe NEO's cover at the Cyprus and Hellenic Conference in Washington DC

## REFLECTING ON THE PATRIARCHAL VISIT TO MOSCOW

By Sergey Bychkov

On the eve of his recent visit to Russia, Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew effectively stated its purpose and scope: "... our visit will be a sign of brotherly love and solidarity and a means of further strengthening the unity of the Orthodox Church. One of our proposals as Ecumenical Patriarch, which was adopted unanimously by those patriarchs and primates present, for the renewal of the 1993 agreement is inter-Orthodox consultation in order to resolve the pressing issue of the Orthodox Diaspora." The Patriarch knowingly mentioned the Agreement of 1993, which was concluded the same year he visited Russia for the first time. That first visit could not be called a success, because the political situation in the country was messy. The second time he visited Russia, in December 2008, it was for the funeral of Patriarch Alexy II. Things were less pressing this time and his visit lasted 10 full days!

The relationship between the two churches in the past 20 years cannot be called even neighborly. It is worth remembering the suspension of communication in the mid 90's because of the recognition by Constantinople of the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church. Moreover, disputes about the primacy of Constantinople in the Orthodox world, the pastoral nourishment of the Russian Diaspora by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and, finally, the question of the de jure recognition of the Ukrainian autocephaly, made the situation precarious. The Ukrainian Question became more complicated since the de facto independence of the Ukrainian Church afforded on June 10, 1990, when Patriarch Alexy II issued the corresponding Tomos. But he did not act with Fanar's consent. At the same time, Patriarch Bartholomew is well aware that as soon as the split in Ukraine will be overcome, the question of her autocephaly will immediately be faced by both Constantinople and Moscow.

Patriarch Bartholomew intends to hold a Pan-Orthodox Council in the near future. He expects the church to develop a mechanism of "autocephaly on merit" and his Patriarchate to play a considerable role in the process. So far, the situation with the Orthodox Church of America (OCA), to which Moscow had granted autocephaly back in 1971, hasn't been dealt with. OCA is still not recognized by any other Orthodox Church. Only the Ecumenical Patriarch can issue the corresponding Tomos, granting autocephaly, with prior consent of all the local churches. Regarding Diaspora, Patriarch Bartholomew said: "... the administrative divisions that characterized the status of the so-called Orthodox Diaspora, is often determined by national interests. The fact is that all Orthodox Churches must put first the need for unity, not their national identities."

Were these pressing issues brought up during the recent visit of Patriarch Bartholomew to Moscow? The answer is no. There was an effort to amaze the Ecumenical Patriarch with large numbers of parishioners expecting him wherever he went, with the wealth of Churches and the splendor of worship. But Patriarch Bartholomew is an experienced politician and even a personal meeting with the President of Russia, as well as an abundance of black caviar, could hardly impress, forget about, confuse him. However, it was of paramount importance that for the first time the Ecumenical Patriarch could comfortably visit Russia, go to shrines and pray together with Russian Christians. For sure, this spiritual experience and prayers will help him to continue guiding the Church ship as carefully and wisely as he has done so far.

Dr. Sergey Bychkov, a journalist, is a historian of the Russian Orthodox Church and author of numerous books on the subject.

# A Day in Athens

By George Schira



Athens: The old Parliament

I arrived at the Athens Airport on May 27, 2010, in the year that marked the 25th Anniversary of the TWA hijacking and my first trip to Greece to which I had come as an aide to former President Jimmy Carter on his first visit to the country. This time it was the day before my birthday, May 28, which I wanted to avoid by being abroad hoping that time travel would keep me younger, and two days before the infamous May 29, which marked the Fall of Constantinople. Back then we began our trip in Corfu (Kerkyra in Greek) meeting Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou. The plan was to restore confidence in Greek tourism and raise money for the Carter Center and Presidential Library being built in Atlanta. The hidden agenda was to meet Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios and leaders of the Turkish government in Istanbul to assist in a decades-old effort to rebuild the Patriarchal headquarters of the world wide Orthodox Church in the old quarter of the Phanar to which the Church had been relegated since that capital of the New Roman Empire fell to the Turks.

Papandreou had been dealing with a rather tense modern-day geographical dispute with Turkey. What also emerged from the trip was the drawing up of a commercial agreement between Greece and Turkey, sponsored by our host, George P. Livanos, who was American-born and then the largest ship owner in Greece, under the theory that successful commerce equaled peace in the region. Papandreou ultimately decided not to sign the agreement despite the willingness of his Turkish counterparts.

My own agenda then was a personal one, to pursue and ratify my remote origins as a Greek. I was born to Southern Italian-American parents, an immigrant father and immigrant maternal grandparents who had fast become New Yorkers but who had moved to Northern New Jersey where I was born and where my ethnic identity was under playful but hurtful attack. After some precocious research into the Greek proper names and surnames that proliferated in the family and into the history of Southern Italy and Sicily, which formed "Magna Graecia" or "Greater Greece", I decided that I was truly Greek.

Those were heady years with the former President, from 1982 to 1987, meeting heads of state and wealthy business leaders around the world. This trip, however, was largely generated by my relationship with Greek American friends of Carter, Arthur and Anna Cheokas and their son, Mike, who lived in Americus, Georgia, next door to Plains, the former President's home. They became my adopted family just as Greece was to become my adopted country of sorts, for better and for worse. They also introduced me to the prominent Greek Orthodox priest, Fr. Alex Karloutsos, who was close to the Metropolitan who is now Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew but was then sort of Secretary of State to Patriarch Dimitrios.

All of this is by way of prologue. The trip was highly successful. The Carter Presidential Center, as we called it then, got built as did the Patriarchal headquarters, though the latter required a dozen or so more trips on my part working with the aforementioned Metropolitan and Turkish leaders. My career as an aide to the former President, however, came to a sorry end, but that is another story. Between that time and now, I had learned some Greek, became Greek Orthodox, and came to better understand Ancient and Modern Greek history and the glory that was Byzantium, but my prolonged exposure to Greek Americans was somewhat disappointing as many of them seemed to exhibit the same ambiguity and ambivalence of my own identity crisis.

This time around I had planned a leisurely lunch on my birthday with an old friend, sipowner Nicos A. Vernicos, President of International Chamber of Commerce-Hellas, not revealing my age but only the occasion of the anniversary of my first trip. However, Nicos had other plans and before I could get a moment's rest, he had arranged a whirlwind of activity, beginning with a speech by a prominent Greek American "Harvard/Oxford scholar" on Greek Foreign Policy in the 21st Century in the glorious mid-19th century old Parliament building and ending with an evening in Kastri, the town north of Athens that is the home of the Greek Prime Minister, George Papandreou, and that was also the home of his father and grandfather, both Prime Ministers of Greece. The occasion was a presentation of the leader of the five-man Greek team that had successfully reached the summit of Mount Everest in 2004, in the spring of the same year of the highly successful Summer Olympics in Athens, to little acclaim and with virtually no support from the Greek

government. The leader, Panagiotis Kotronaros, was joined by a panel of businessmen that included my friend Nicos and the idea was to tie the methods and strategy of that feat, under the rubric of "leadership", to modern management and business.

Both events, as well as the hyperactive lifestyle of my host and friend, left me exhausted and irritated, only to spend the next day, my birthday, sleeping late and trying to figure out what had happened the day before. At first, it was an honor and pleasure to sit in the seat of a Greek Parliamentarian in the beautiful old Parliament building in the birthplace of democracy. What ensued, however, was an exercise in chaos and confusion as prominent politicians were given the microphone in their front row seats or grabbed it on exiting all before the panel or keynote speaker got to speak. The panel consisted of a strange assortment of government leaders, including a representative of the Greek Communist Party. Everything was conducted in Greek, of course, and I could only catch the drift and gist of the speeches, but one thing caught my attention, the main speaker's proposal that all the European debtor countries go together to the European Central Bank as the crisis was not just Greek, but European, and, indeed, worldwide, and everyone bore responsibility. The comments, an exercise in Athenian democracy, ranged from denial or rationalization to anger and over-analysis, but never to resignation and acceptance, following a variation on the classic stages of death but short of the last two. Clearly, the Greeks were not about to roll over dead.

Prior to the trip, I had followed with interest the American media coverage of the "Greek Debt Crisis" with all the usual clichés from "It's Greek to me", "The Greek Tragedy" and "The Trojan Horse" to the pejorative characterization of the debtor countries as "pigs" (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain), with debt-ridden Great Britain being given a pass, as if these countries were places on some vast Monopoly Board and we were playing with fake money to buy and sell properties. In fact, these were cultures and peoples and even great civilizations of the first order without which there would have been no America, no Christianity as we've come to know it, no Renaissance, no Enlightenment, no American or French Revolution, no capitalism, and, mostly due to Greece, no democracy.

But I do admit to American impatience at the endless proceedings, exhibited even more dramatically at the evening's event when the leader of that successful expedition to the summit of Mount Everest would not let go of the microphone and an endless assortment of guests spoke at length more than one time each, sometimes spontaneously beginning a dialogue with the speaker, with the panel interspersing their presentations. There had indeed been no support from the Greek government, even down to the team providing their own Greek flag to be erected at the summit. But the topic was "leadership" and only my friend Nicos seemed to grasp the moment and engage the audience.

That is what it all came down to – "leadership", whether of the young and promising Greek Prime Minister or of America's young and promising President, who held great hope and achieved a great deal, but was being weighed down by the leadership demands of a "jobless recovery" and a devastating oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

The trip was a coming of age or coming to terms with age, my life and experience and with civilization and its discontents, 25 years after that first momentous Odyssey. I had seen seven decades of life, with ups and downs, but here in Greece I was confronted by five millennia of history. Civilizations rise and fall, leaders come and go, but the people, like my immigrant father, American-born mother and her immigrant parents, seem always to find hope amid the ruins and start over, living good and full lives.

Tomorrow I shall go to the new Acropolis Museum where I will not feel so old or doubtful and remember to prize individual heroism, the true wonder of human culture, and the importance of leadership in our fee and vital societies. After all, we are all Greeks.

*George Schira was the first Executive Director of the Carter Presidential Center. He lived in Greece from 1989 to 1991. Since 2000 he has served as a communications consultant to the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Endowment Fund.*

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