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Gene Rossides on
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COVER PHOTO: ELENI WITH HUSBAND GEORGE BOUSIS

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CHICAGO'S
ELENI BOUSIS
AND HER SPIRIT OF CHARITY YEAR-ROUND

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HILLENES WITHOUT BORDERS

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND BEST WISHES FROM ALL OF US AT NEO MAGAZINE AND RADIO NEO



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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

When I was a kid living in Chicago in the Assumption parish near Columbus Park I remember one year picking up in the cold of a December evening and trekking with the family just across the street to pick out our Christmas tree in the lot near our house where my friend Chris was working for the holidays.

Chris was mellow about life, and always in my father's office for some infraction (my father was the principal of our school and Chris was a regular resident of the supply closet where he had to endure isolation for talking in class—and which, Chris being Chris, gave him a chance to nap). Chris also had beaver teeth that he always bared in his perennial good-humored smile.

Sure enough when we got to the lot that night in the bitter Chicago cold, there was Chris wearing more scarves than my yiayia and gloves like a hockey goalie.

"Hey, Jimmy," he said to me, with his smile of beaver teeth sparkling in the glare of the Christmas lights strung around the lot. "Hey, Dr. Michalakis," he said to my father. "Hey, Mrs. Michalakis," he said to my mother. "Hey, Helen," he said to my sister.

"Hey, Chris," we said to him in chorus.

"I'll pick you out a Christmas tree," he said.

And we followed him and his gloves through the forest of Christmas trees tipped against the cyclone fence.

"I'll pick you out the biggest tree," he said.

"We don't want the biggest tree," my father said.

"You don't want the biggest tree?" he said. "You want the biggest tree?" he said to me.

What did I have to do with it?

"I'll pick you out the biggest tree," he said, anyway.

And he brought us to a tree that towered over all the others and looked as proud as if it still lorded it over all the other trees in the forest.

"How about this one?" Chris said, his teeth gleaming like toilet bowl enamel.

And we all stared in wonder at the king of Christmas trees and fantasized a little about it sparkling in our very own living room and looking just as regal as the Christmas tree that towered over the entrance to the Marshall Field's in Oak Park.

But, of course, it would never fit in our apartment, and it was way over our budget, so Chris being the clairvoyant tree salesman that he was, waved his goalie mitt at the big tree in dismissal and then took us to a little Balsam fir that had a little red ribbon tied to it.

"What's wrong with this one?" said my father.

"Nobody wants it," said Chris with a shrug, "cause it's little. But I like it, so I put a ribbon on it."

And he pawed it lovingly with his goalie mitt, and smoothed down the branches, and we began to feel sorry for it, because it was a spry little tree full of personality, and it had a little red ribbon that made it very pretty.

"I don't want that," my mother said bluntly.

But guess which tree we took home? Because it would have broken our hearts to leave the little tree out there that cold winter night, and because we could just picture it sitting in the space of our apartment with all our lights glowing on it—Chris, being the tree salesman that he was, had made us see that and had us all grinning happily with our teeth freezing like him as he tied it up for us and we carried it home across the street.

"Have a good Christmas, Dr. Michalakis!" he yelled from across the street. "Have a good Christmas, Mrs. Michalakis!... Have a good Christmas, Helen!... Have a good Christmas, Jimmy!"

And his voice rang in the night like a Christmas bell and made it a part of our memorable holiday that year.



Dimitri C. Michalakis



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The 2010 Election Results Provide Opportunity

AHI Founder
Gene Rossides.



By Gene Rossides

The November 2, 2010, mid-term elections, in which the Democratic Party lost control of the House of Representatives, provide the Greek American community with an opportunity to advance its issues with both major parties in the best interests of the United States.

Why do I say this?

My reasoning is based on the fact that when the Democratic Party had control in 2009-2010 of the White House and both chambers of the Congress, the House and the Senate, they did not take any action on our issues. The Democratic Party was all talk and no action. It was the same for the Armenian community and its issues.

With the Republican Party gaining control of the House of Representatives the situation for most interest groups changes substantially. For the Republicans, their aim in the 2012 congressional elections and presidential election will be to keep control of the House and to gain control of the White House and the Senate.

The Democratic Party, in like manner, will seek to hold the White House and the Senate and regain control of the House of Representatives.

With that background the opportunity for Greek Americans to advance our issues is available if we concentrate on the Democratic and Republican leadership in the House and Senate, and on those districts and states where Greek American voters can make a difference.

Greek Americans are a recognizable minority in several key swing states such as Ohio and Pennsylvania. In swing states, the votes of interest groups are more important than in states which normally go either Democratic or Republican because each interest group's votes can determine the outcome in the state in close elections.

The new Republican leadership in the House is: Speaker-Elect, Rep John Boehner (R-8th) of Ohio. The GOP Majority Leader-Elect is Rep. Eric Cantor (R-7th) of Virginia and the Majority Whip-Elect is Kevin McCarthy (R-22nd) of California.

The GOP Conference Committee Chair is Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-5th) of Texas; the Conference Vice-Chair is Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-5th) of Washington; the Conference Secretary is Rep. John Carter (R-31st) of Texas; the Republican Policy Committee Chair is Rep. Tom Price (R-6th) of Georgia; and the GOP Campaign Committee Chair is Rep. Pete Sessions (R-32nd) of Texas.

The Democratic Leadership in the House is Minority Leader Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-8th) of California; the Minority Whip is Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-5th) of Maryland; the Assistant Minority Leader is Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-6th) of South Carolina; the Democratic Caucus Chair is Rep. John Larsen (D-1st) of Connecticut; the caucus Vice Chair is Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-31st) of California; and the Democratic Campaign Committee Chair is Rep. Steve Israel (D-2nd) of New York.

In the Senate, the Democrats kept control. The Senate Majority Leader is Harry Reid of Nevada; the Majority Whip is Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois; Senator Chuck Schumer of New York is Conference Vice Chair and Policy Committee Chair.

On the Republican side the Senate Minority Leader remains Mitch McConnell of Kentucky who has not been helpful in the past. The Minority Whip is Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona; the Senate Republican Policy Committee Chair is Senator John Thune of South Dakota; the Conference Chair is Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee; and the Vice Chair is Senator John Barrasso of Wyoming; and the Campaign Committee Chair is Senator John Cornyn of Texas.

Ohio is an example of a swing state. In 2012, both parties will fight hard to win Ohio's electoral votes. Ohio takes on even greater significance because Rep. John Boehner, the Republican speaker -Elect of the House is from the 8th

congressional district of Ohio.

Virginia is a key state. The Republican Majority Leader-Elect, Eric Cantor (R-7th), is a rising star in the Republican Party.

Illinois is another key mid-western state. The number two leader for the Democrats in the Senate is Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois.

In dealing with our elected officials and their staffs, we should never attack their motives. We should be firm in our presentations and stress that our views are based on what we believe is in the best interests of the United States.

Stress that we support the rule of law in international affairs as in the best interests of the United States regarding the core issues of Cyprus, the Aegean, the Ecumenical Patriarchate and religious freedom in Turkey, and FYROM.

Ask for legislation withholding benefits to Turkey and placing sanction on Turkey until Turkey:

1. removes its 43,000 illegal troops and 180,000 illegal settlers/colonist from Cyprus and returns Famagusta for the resettlement of Greek Cypriot refugees;

2. returns the several thousand church properties illegally taken from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, authorizes the reopening of the Halki Patriarchal School of Theology and provides full religious freedom and protection for the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Also ask for legislation giving American the right to sue Turkey for damages for taking and using their property in the occupied territory.

Every effort should be made to visit your elected member of the House and Senate when they are in their districts and state. Call their district and state offices for appointments and also write for appointments. You can find their district and state phone numbers on

<http://www.contactingthecongress.org/>.

If you want to be part of the American Hellenic Institute's grass roots leadership team, contact Executive Director Nick Larigakis by phone at 202-785-8430 or email nlarigakis@aheworld.org.

Act today, you can make a difference.

Gene Rossides is founder of the American Hellenic Institute and former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.



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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.



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Assemblyman Michael Gianaris, Honoree Congressman John Sarbanes, President of HLA Mamie Stathatos-Fulgieri, Attorney of the Year George Stamboulidis, Assemblywoman-elect Aravella Simotas, fmr. Senator Paul Sarbanes

Hellenic Lawyers Association Celebrates Gala with Grand Fete

The Hellenic Lawyers Association (HLA) celebrated its twenty- second Annual Dinner Gala this past November at The Pierre in New York City.

Over 250 guests gathered to celebrate the momentous occasion, to honor their Hellenic roots and to pay homage to prominent Greek-Americans in the legal profession. Special guests included former U.S. Senator Paul Sarbanes, the Consul Generals of Greece and Cyprus, Agni Balta and Koula Sofianou, respectively, NY State Senator-elect Michael Gianaris and his newly elected successor in the NY State Assembly Aravella Simotas, as well as the Honorable Nicholas Tsoucalas, Senior Judge of the U.S. Court of International Trade, who is also one of the founding members of the HLA.

Among the guests were members of the federal and state judiciary, prominent attorneys from the New York metropolitan area, and representatives of several noteworthy Greek-American professional organizations. Nine law students received over \$11,000 in scholarships – the most ever given by the HLA. The HLA's president, Mamie Stathatos-Fulgieri, proudly noted how the organization continued to expand its membership and services, including continuing legal education classes, seminars, and networking opportunities. Stathatos-Fulgieri



HLA Officers and Board Members. Front Row (left-right) Christina Tsismelis, Kate Christoforatos, Mamie Stathatos-Fulgieri, Maria Hartofilis, Chrsanthy Zapantis-Melis, Panayiota Kilaras Bougiamas. Back Row (left-right) Michael J. Hartofilis, Michael Tiliakos, Peter Metis, Chris Kulakis, George Zapantis, John Saketos, Nik Matheus

highlighted the several inaugural achievements by the HLA this past year, including the HLA's participation in the Greek Independence Day Parade on Fifth Avenue, the Mentor Program, the newly formed Advisory Board and a platform to create a Political Action Committee to promote and provide for contributions toward the HLA's members who aspire to a position on the bench or public service. "These achievements are only the beginning in our continuing efforts to establish a solid foundation for the next generation of Greek-American lawyers," said Stathatos-Fulgieri.

The 2010 HLA honorees included Congressman John Sarbanes from the Third Congressional District in Maryland and George Stamboulidis, Esq., managing partner of Baker Hostetler's New York office, as Attorney of the Year.



Scholarship Recipients with honoree, Congressman Sarbanes, and Sponsors of the 2010 Scholarships

In introducing Congressman Sarbanes, Stathatos-Fulgieri observed that, in keeping with his father's tradition, the honoree "serves the Greek-American community across all state lines and borders . . . his works and contributions represent the finest examples of dedication, courage, a willingness to uphold his convictions and principles and a genuine love for our heritage and legacy, and so, for these reasons the HLA is bestowing this recognition."

PHOTOS: MARIA TOLIOS

George Stamboulidis, Esq. was praised as the "prototype Attorney of the Year" that evening. His illustrious legal career includes 13 years as an



Judge Tsoucalas swears in new board members of the HLA.

Assistant United States Attorney during which he successfully prosecuted high-profile cases including one against mafia boss, Vincent "the Chin" Gigante, and more recently at Baker Hostetler where Stamboulidis focuses on white collar defense and corporate investigations and serving as managing partner at the New York office. Stamboulidis expressed his gratitude and pride in being a Greek American and was proud to be a part of the HLA. He currently serves on the Advisory Board and has been an avid supporter of the HLA for several years.

The Hellenic Lawyers Association is the premier organization of legal professionals of Greek descent. The organization promotes professional excellence, cultural awareness, community service and civic involvement. More information is available at: www.helleniclawyersassociation.org.



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EMBODYING THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT OF CHARITY: ELENI BOUSIS OF CHICAGO



The Eleni and Jimmy Bousis family

By Dimitri Soultogiannis

Eleni Bousis is not just the President of the Board for the Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Centre in Chicago. She is a unique Philanthropist, a devoted wife, extraordinary mother and above all she is a proud member of the Greek American community. I had the chance to speak with Eleni at the beginning of this month. I could not help but notice her passion for life, her vision for the Rehabilitation and Care Centre as well as Hellenism in America, her great concern about the future of the Greek American Community as well as the preservation of our ethnic identity. Eleni Bousis is not a woman of words; she is a woman of actions. Through Philanthropy and hard work she has managed to, maybe, not change this world but certainly make it a better place to live in, and that is especially true for the elderly and handicap children.

Being the President of the Board for the Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Centre was not an easy task. It was a critical and tenacious job that needed to be done. "When I was elected President, I did not know that I was about to inherit over a four and a half million dollar deficit. I, along with a dedicated and committed board of directors, had to work vigorously in saving the only Greek American Nursing home in the Midwest."

She immediately structured a plan of fundraising. "We had to work aggressively in paying the IRS and a three month default mortgage payment totaling \$1.6 million dollars," Bousis added. Determined to save the home, she made personal calls of financial appeal to many supporters across the United States. "I believed in my heart that the Virgin Mary, our 'Panagia', was the moving force in saving and securing this 'Home'," she said. "Our 'Panagia' has a sentimental place in the existence of this institution."

Eleni Bousis' empathy for the home was ignited by the resident census, which was that of 100 public aids. These were all individuals that had no financial support. These individuals



The Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Centre in Chicago

crossed the Atlantic Ocean with financial and language barriers, a foreign country called America for an American dream of freedom, education, and prosperity.

"It was our duty, responsibility and obligation to have them live with dignity in a safe environment," Bousis said. "Humbly, I salute and thank our east coast donor that gave generously in saving our home. It is through his diligence and love for humanity that our home exists today. We are fortunate to have a committed staff, volunteers and board of directors that worked diligently and long restful hours in saving the home. I too, thank the many supporters, sponsors and performers that enabled us to raise over \$7.5 million dollars to erase the deficit and make the appropriate changes in compliance with state regulations," she added.

Today, the Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Centre houses 155 public aid residents, the government gives the Centre \$133 dollars per resident and the Centre has to compensate the difference that is approximately \$70 dollars. "As ethical Christians and Hellenes, we should not judge or condemn anyone for not succeeding, let us look at what is happening today, our country and the world are faced with financial instability," she said.

The minute you speak to Eleni Bousis, you instantly realize she connects well with people. It came as no surprise to me that she graduated with a degree in Child development and Psychology. Getting married at a young age and having four children, she had to attend school part time. It was difficult for Eleni to raise a

family and go to school at the same time. She believes in education and has been attentive in observing and analyzing people from all diverse cultures and backgrounds.

When asked about the people who have influenced her life, Eleni says: "I have many great mentors; my parents Angelo and Bessie Palivos. They were poor, uneducated people with hardly finishing first grade, with strong work ethics, faith, morals and vitality. They were humble people that came to America with four little children for an American dream of educating them. They wanted to give us the opportunity of education that was denied to them by poverty."

And maybe this is where Eleni's love for life and education comes from. "My grandmother Eleni, her grace, education and love for humanity and her church enabled me to gain zeal and love for the poor and needy," she said. "It was through her daily routine of visiting the ill, needy and poor that I learned to help and give without expecting anything in return. Also, Mother Theresa, for her humility and empathy for all those in need. She gave and spread love without any rewards or acknowledgements. Somehow, people relate me to her, a woman of love and contribute," she proudly added.

Eleni Bousis is not "ambitious" with the common meaning of the word, as obtaining success, power and wealth. The only time she uses this word is in relation to future of Hellenism in America. According to Bousis, we would be really successful if we manage to unite every Hellenic in the United States. That's her ambition, that's her vision, that's her real wealth.

"We have to have more transparency in the world, we should never forget or let our children, or the world, forget that we gave the lights to the world. We cannot forget our ancestors, the pain and suffering they encountered for us to live in a free country," she said.

Eleni Bousis believes in our rich culture, heritage and religion, and says it is time for all Greeks to gain respect and honor from the world. "We have to spread love and 'Philotimia'. I hope I can make a difference in building more Nursing Homes, Abusive Centers, and Living Assistant Homes across our country. There is a high demand, our children are faced with many challenges and our elderly are faced being along and neglected," she said.

The President of the board for the Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Centre has always been a multi-task person ever since she was a little girl. She showed the world that when you are content and love what you do, nothing is impossible. Her children will tell you, "mom conducted meetings, fed the homeless, visited orphanages, fashion-show events for churches, galas for her organizations with us participating or doing our homework." As a Daughter, Sister, Mother, Wife and Humanitarian, Eleni never deprived anyone of her duties, responsibilities or obligations.

Along with Care Centre, Eleni Bousis has devoted a big part of her life caring for and helping out, through related projects, handicap children. "My passion with handicap children was ignited when I was 15 years old, through the love that I shared with a young girl 'Zela', when I was hospitalized in Greece," she said. Witnessing her roaming the corridors of the hospital in a wheelchair, Eleni asked her why she was confined in a chair. She told Eleni her father had struck her with a hammer and left her crippled since 12 years old. She also told Eleni she wanted to go to school and her stepmother wanted her to work, therefore, she was



Eleni Bousis with the residents at the Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Centre

punished forever. Zela was left in an orphanage for handicapped children in Liosia, Athens, Greece.

"This girl has been a part of my life ever since. This was the start of my compassion for children with developmental and intellectual disabilities. That is how I got involved with Little City Foundation. As a Board of Director, I am humbled with the love and kindness of these children; they view the world with innocence and not hate or vengeance," Bousis said.

Through the supervision of the late Archbishop Christodoulos of Greece, Mrs. Irene Dorkofigi and Eleni were asked to help establish the "Frontida" abusive center. According to Bousis, his Eminence was a visionary man that like the late Archbishop Iakovos, knew the need for a safe haven for women and children that were faced with many challenges. This organization was established and serves many families in need and it's located in Pendeli, Athens. Eleni's love for children knows no borders. She has a special connection to a town called Kakamega in Kenya where Eleni helped to build an orphanage and church when approached from Rev. Charles Omaruca, approximately 30 years ago. "A group got together and helped build what was much needed. Four years ago a genocide occurred and the orphanage was destroyed, so I decided to rebuild the orphanage for the children in need. Today, the orphanage serves as a safe haven for children that need moral and ethical support."

Eleni feels blessed to be married to her high school sweetheart, Dimitris Bousis. He too, a poor young man, came to the US with his family for the American dream. Together, they have four beautiful, intelligent, humble, giving and talented children, three boys and one girl. They are different and yet similar in many ways. They too, have learned from a young age to help and care for the sick, poor and elderly of the community. They humbly participate in helping with all of Eleni's endeavors.

As for her husband, he is a humble individual that believes that God has lent us everything therefore, it is important for us to give and help. "I could have never succeeded in my passions if he was not the wind beneath my wings. He gives me hope and encouragement," she says. She also feels blessed to have wonderful and humble parents that worked three jobs to educate them and not deprive them of anything. "They taught us work ethics, love and respect for our church, God, humanity and country. Having three brothers, all three attorneys, was a joy. I was the princess of the household! I was and am very blessed by God. I hope and pray that everyone will have a beautiful story to share with the world. May the blessings of the Christmas Season, and the birth of our Savior bring love, health and peace to the world," Eleni concluded.

Margarita Vartolomeou contributed to this story



Eleni with parents Bessie and Angelo Palivos



With Irene Dorkofigi from the "Frontida" Center for the Abused



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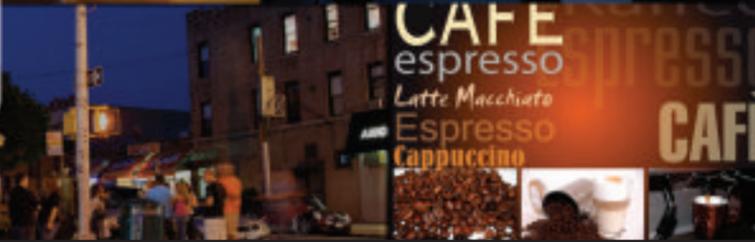
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Cosmos FM holds Annual Gala

PHOTOS: ETA PRESS



Stavros Soussou, GAEPIS Cbairman, Archbishop Demetrios, Manny Velivasakis, Bob McCabe, John McK. Camp II.

Greek American Public Educational System and its flagship Hellenic Public Radio Cosmos FM 91.5 held recently their 16th Phidippides Award gala dinner. This year's honoree was renowned and distinguished archaeologist, scholar and philhellene Robert MCK. Camp II, Director of the Athenian Agora Excavations of the American School of Classical Studies. The Phidippides Award is bestowed upon persons or organizations for their passionate advocacy of Hellenism globally.



Peter Krekoukis, George Makkos, Chris Koutsis, Thomas Makkos

The event was held at the Yale Club and was attended by members of the community, including his Eminence Archbishop Demetrios who praised the honoree for his significant work. Also in attendance were the Consul General of Greece, Ms. Agie Balta, Consul General of Cyprus, Ms. Koula Sofianou, the Director of the Greek Press Office, Ms. Polyxeni Mastroperou, and many dignitaries and leaders of the community.



Christos Rafalides, Stelios Stroubakis, Panos Stogioglou, Polys Kyriacou



Orsa Velivasakis, Paulette Poulos

Mr. Stavros Sousou, G.A.E.P.I.S. Chairman of the Board, remarked that it was 2500 years ago that Phidippides ran the distance from Marathon to Athens to announce the message of victory "Nenikikamen." Mr. Soussou discussed how this year's honoree is instrumental on helping us understand how and why the Athenians of that era were victorious not only in war, but also in peace. He also pointed out how Hellenic Public Radio serves the community at large and strives to promote the principles of our ancestors; he further thanked all responsible for the success of Cosmos FM, including the Director of Programming Ioanna Giannopoulou and Administrator Alexandra Triantopoulou.

The President of the Board of Trustees of the American School of Classical Studies Mr. McCabe and its director Mr. Jack I. Davis spoke in detail about the worth of Dr. McK Camp's efforts and labors.

Talented soprano Lina Orfanos recited the national anthems and Jazz Mediterraneo entertained guests with Greek and Mediterranean tunes. Dorie Klisas was Mistress of Ceremonies.

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Christian Pappas Needs our Help



year. This 2nd tumor was even more mysterious and complicated than the first. This tumor contained aggressive, cancerous cells and its diagnosis: osteosarcoma in the head. Osteosarcoma is a form of bone cancer for which almost ALL cases are in the legs. Christian's case is extremely and the prognosis for it is still unknown as there are very few known cases, and no clinical trials done on bone cancer in the head.

Christian Pappas is a 13-year-old boy who was recently diagnosed with bone cancer. He began ten long months of intense chemotherapy in September, and will be in and out of UCLA for most of the year. His health does not permit him to go to school, and he will miss all of his 8th grade year.

He has had more than his share of health issues. At 7, he fell off a trampoline and broke his arm just days before first grade. When he was 10, he had surgery for a benign five-inch tumor in his sinus cavity, resulting in him missing his last day of school. At 12, he broke his ankle and growth plate, and was in a full leg cast for 3 months, once again missing the end of his school year. Around his 13th birthday, his eye began watering, and an MRI showed yet another new tumor. Christian begged to postpone the surgery until school was out, and had a very intense surgery in June of this

Christian is a straight A honors student who loves school, playing soccer and runs a 5:53 mile. He is a friendly, funny, and kind boy with a positive outlook on life. He has an eleven-year-old sister, Nicole, who began middle school this year who he had promised to look out for. His mother, Julianne Pappas, is a 7th grade teacher and a single mom. Christian and his family have a long, painful road ahead of them and any support is greatly appreciated. Exceptionally enlightened and quite the "old soul", his bravery throughout all of his struggles and challenges in life is inspirational. Everyone who has been touched by Christian knows what a special young man he is.



Peter Valaskantjis and Bros is organizing a Dinner Reception to benefit Christian Scott Pappas on Saturday, January 29th, 2011, at St. John the Baptist Reception Hall (405 N. Dale St., Anaheim CA 92708). Please make your reservations by January 24th at 714-403-2456 or email j_kantz@hotmail.com

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The Greek Square in Odessa, Ukraine

When we speak of Greece today, we generally associate her with the Aegean archipelago, and the various peninsulas of the southern Balkans, a Mediterranean country. The Greek state of today is just that, quintessentially Mediterranean, but much of its soul and many of its lost children lived (and live) on the littoral of another, neighboring sea, the Black Sea.

There is something so organic about the Greeks' connection with the sea. From time immemorial, Greek speech and Greek consciousness—Classical, Byzantine, and Modern—has always been associated with the sea. It is probably a virtuous cycle of geography reinforcing predisposition and when Greeks founded settlements, generally they were seaborne.

Greek association with, and settlement in, the Black Sea basin also has ancient roots. The Mycenaean Greeks sailed there; every child knows of Jason and his Argonauts sailing to distant Colchis (now Georgia) to find the Golden Fleece. Greek settlements soon dotted the entire Black Sea littoral, though rarely did the Greeks venture far from the coasts. These Greek settlements, as often happens with colonies, grew wealthy and independent, maintaining their Greek culture while often having a symbiotic relationship with the peoples inland. Roman and Byzantine rule resulted in the reunion of these far-flung Greeks with the rest of the Greco-Roman world.

The establishment of Constantinople as the Byzantine capital brought the Black Sea from the periphery to the center of the Greek world. The Black Sea was a veritable El Dorado of raw materials, particularly fish, gold, timber, wheat, and slaves, which powered the most advanced empire of medieval Europe, Byzantium, until the empire, assaulted by the Roman Catholic West and the Muslim East, finally succumbed. The last outpost of Byzantium to fall to the Turks was neither Constantinople in 1453, nor Mystra in 1460, but the Black Sea port of Trebizond in 1461.

Though the Turks decapitated the Byzantine state, in some ways they continued it under new management. Byzantine Orthodox Christians existed as a parallel, though conquered, society. At once brutal and easygoing, the Ottomans did not overly interfere with Byzantine society, which continued to flourish in the Black Sea under a negligent though at times vicious Sultan.

Speaking a number of Greek dialects, Turkish, or another local language, these Romioi continued in their maritime and mercantile activities. When Russia began to expel the Turks from the north shore of the Black Sea, many more Greeks accepted the Tsars' invitation to immigrate and to live under an Orthodox sovereign.

The Greeks who immigrated to the Russian and Ukrainian shores to some extent were bolstering communities that had existed in the area since antiquity. The century of seesaw, no-quarter warfare between Russia and Turkey, resulted in severe depopulation and the Russians sought to repopulate this incredibly fertile and strategic area with loyal and hardworking settlers. Tsarina Catherine the Great, of German birth, brought in German craftsmen and administrators but she also sought the Orthodox populations of the Ottoman Empire, Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgarians, who could be counted on for loyalty to an Orthodox sovereign, and they had an axe to grind against the Turks. The Greeks, too, were the region's finest merchants and seafarers, and Greek colonies, in some cases whole villages, sprang up throughout the Black Sea coast under Russian control.

Not for the first time (or the last time), Greek naval capabilities and Russian raw materials formed a profitable alliance. After one of several Russo-Turkish wars in 1774, the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire received the right to sail under the Russian flag and this spurred the rapid development of the Greek merchant fleets, particularly those of my island, Hydra, neighboring Spetses, and the eastern Aegean island of Psara.

While merchant and naval activities flourished, in the bustling boomtown port of Odessa in today's Ukraine, three obscure Greek merchants founded the Filike Etairia in 1814, dedicated to Greece's liberation. The Etairia spread through the Greek commercial network, gaining followers, and the first shot in the Greek War of Independence was fired, not in Greece, but in what is now Romania, not far from the Black Sea coast, where Russian-based Greeks under Ypsilantis made an ill-fated attempt to start a pan-Balkan war of liberation against the Ottomans.

The Greek merchant fleet, having grown rich on the Black Sea-Mediterranean trade, now fought for

Greece's freedom. A tiny kingdom emerged, though most of Hydra's and Spetses' fleets were at the bottom of the Aegean. Other fleets, from other islands soon emerged and once again plied the waters between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, and beyond.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, Greek commercial colonies ringing the Black Sea continued to thrive. In every Black Sea port, Greeks formed a key shipping and commercial element, and in some areas, such as Pontus, the settlement was ancient and in depth. Greek was the region's commercial language.

Times were good. Notwithstanding the extreme autocracy of both Russian and Ottoman empires, and their penchant for state violence, the end of the nineteenth century was one of considerable prosperity for the Greek merchant communities in both countries. Whether loyal subjects of the Tsar or the opportunistic and only partially willing subjects of Sultan, these Greeks remained Greeks first and foremost, but the tiny kingdom at the bottom of the Balkan Peninsula was too constrained for their broad horizons. Indeed far more Greeks left for either the Ottoman or Russian Empires than returned to Greece. Then as now, these "Hellenes without Borders" loved Greece, but felt the same frustration as we often do with a country that simply could not seem to "get it together." The broad imperial systems of that period created large markets and a degree of stability for commerce that has only recently, fitfully, reemerged.

By the turn of the last century, Greek communities were to be found in every Black Sea port, including newly independent Bulgaria and Romania. Some were relatively new communities but the vast majority particularly on the Bulgarian and Turkish coasts, were autochthonous Byzantine communities often with roots stretching back millennia. Though Greece's borders did not (and only briefly, for about three years, ever did) reach the Black Sea, in many ways the Black Sea was as Greek as the Aegean. The next century would change that.

Next Month: Hellenism in the Black Sea, what remains?

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.

By Alexander Billinis

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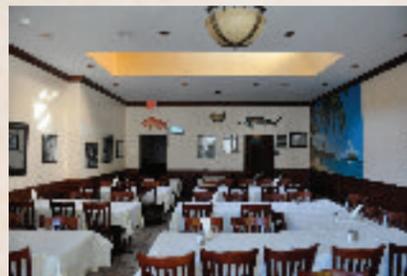


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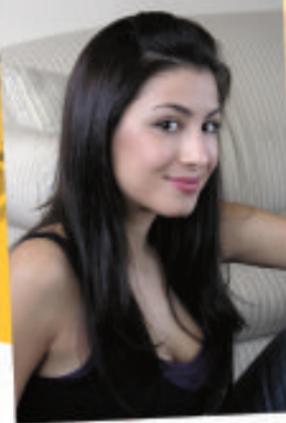
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Χριστόψωμο - Greek Christmas Bread

After going through an endless amount of my family's Christmas recipes for our December issue, I kept reverted back to a sacred classic, Christopsomo, which translates to Christ's Bread in Greek. This walnut adorned sweet bread is made using the most wholesome and finest ingredients and decorated with long ropes of dough shaped in the form of a cross. Christopsomo is made on Christmas Eve in most Greek Orthodox households to ensure the well-being of the home and family in the year to come. This brioche like, licorice infused bread breaks the 40 day nativity fast and marks the start of the Christmas celebrations.

This recipe may seem overwhelming at first since there are many ingredients, all with different measurements. However, if you simply take the time to carefully read the recipe from start to finish and assemble all your ingredients before you start, it will cut your time in half and make you a much merrier baker!

Prep Time: 2 to 3 hours

Bake Time: 50 to 60 minutes

Yield: 16 servings (serving size: 1 wedge)



Preparation

1. Lightly grease an 8 inch round cake pan. Dissolve yeast into warm water, add 1 tablespoon sugar and let stand for a few minutes.
2. Meanwhile, combine the eggs with the butter in a large bowl and beat at a medium speed until well blended. Slowly add the sugar, milk, spices, and mix well.
3. Add yeast mixture, flour, raisins and walnuts; continue to beat well. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Add more flour if mixture is too moist or a tiny bit of water if too dry. Using your hands, knead dough until smooth and elastic (about 10 minutes). Shape into a round loaf.
4. Place dough in a large bowl, cover and let rise in a warm place for 1 1/2 to 2 hours.
5. While dough is rising, preheat the oven to 350. When dough has rise, using your hands pres down the dough and pinch off 2 balls (about 1 1/2 inches each) and set aside, these pieces will be for your cross. Shape remaining dough into a round ball and; place onto a greased 8 inch round cake pan. Brush top of bread with egg white.
6. Shape remaining dough into two 8-inch-long ropes and place over top of bread to resemble a cross. Using a pairing knife, cut a 1 to 2 inch slash at the end of each rope and curl. Brush cross with egg white and garnish with sesame seeds, walnuts and sugar in the raw.
7. Bake on middle oven rack at 350° for 35 to 40 minutes or until lightly brown and loaf sounds hollow when tapped. Transfer Christopsomo to a rack and cool for at least 1 hour before slicing or serving. This bread will store for about 3 weeks and tastes better as it matures.

Ingredients:

- 1 package dry active yeast (about 2 1/4 teaspoons)
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 6 tablespoons butter, softened
- 2 large eggs
- 4 cups all-purpose flour, divided
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 large egg white, lightly beaten
- 1 1/2 cups raisins
- 1 cup walnuts, chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon aniseed, crushed (optional)
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom

~For the garnish and glaze~

- Sesame seeds
- Whole walnuts
- Sugar in the raw

Καλά Χριστούγεννα! Ευτυχισμένο το Νέο Έτος!

Kali Orexi!!



From left to right, Chrysantbos Petsilas (Greek Tourism Organization), Manos Angelakis (editor-Luxury Web), Dimitris Kagioulis (Trade Office), Basil Sudborough (SETH), Apostolos Dighassanis (Head of the Trade Office), Akis Ventiris (SETH), Vice-Consul Vassilios Sitaras (Trade Office) and Vice-Consul Sam Zisis (Trade Office)

Greek Fish: The Healthy and Tasty Choice

After many wine-tastings and traditional food-tastings, this time it was all about seafood. Recently, the Greek Trade Office of New York - under the new leadership of Counselor Apostolos Dighassanis - and the Federation of Greek Maricultures (SETH) organized a promotional luncheon at the Hellsmy Park Lane Hotel in order to celebrate the greatest success story of Greek food exports in the US during the past five years. Almost 100 top fish importers, whole sellers, chefs, restaurant owners and members of the media were

Americans consume big quantities of delicious fresh fish, such as branzino and dorade which travel 5.000 miles by plane to America, especially to New York City. Although these comprise some wild-caught fish, too, they are mainly the products of the booming Greek aquaculture sector, which didn't even exist 30 years ago, but it has become the most powerful in Europe.

The fact that Americans and especially New Yorkers pay an ever growing attention to healthy food has been tremendously beneficial for the Greek fish industry: from less than \$5 million (import value) in 2004, Greek fish exports to the US tripled to almost \$15 million in 2009, thus becoming the fourth most important food export. The Greek Trade Office in New York estimates that by the end of 2010 - or by 2011 the latest - fish will surpass cheese and olive oil, being second only to table olives, as far as Greek food exports to the US are concerned.

present, some of them traveling all the way from Baltimore or Boston to attend this event, which was really a first for this particular kind of product (it will be repeated in 2011).

Mr Akis Ventiris, Director General of SETH, and Mr Basil Sudborough, Marketing Manager of Selonda (one of the biggest fish producers in Greece since 1981), spoke about the unsurpassed quality, taste and freshness of Greek fish. More and more

Regardless of the benefits to the Greek economy, Greek fish is also very beneficial to our health, because of the unique quantity of Omega 3 fat acids it contains and the fact that contrary to the case of the American farmed salmon, no mercury or other harmful materials are used. No wonder then that an ever greater number of restaurants and households go Greek when it comes to fish, something that European consumers have discovered long ago.



Chris George (CBS) and his wife



Akis Ventiris (SETH)



Dorade Royale

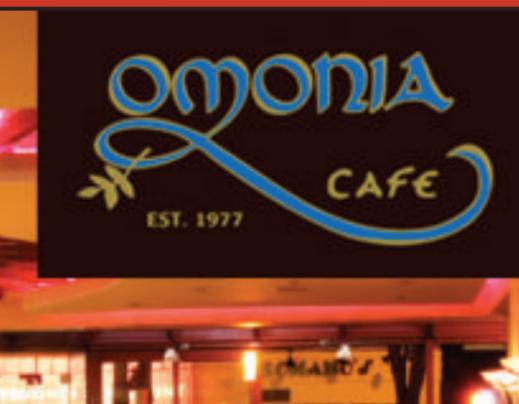
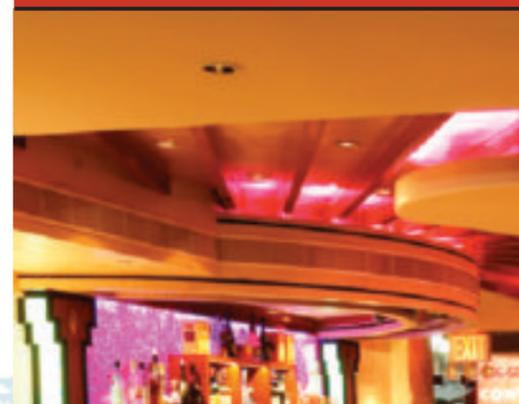
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Reason's Greetings!

It's cold, extremely cold and the fact that it started all of sudden, with a steep dip reminiscent of the New York Stock Exchange in its worse - so far - days, made it feel even more painful. The chilly wind penetrates our clothes like X rays and unlike the airport security machinery, there is nothing that you can really cover from its reach!

But enough with the cold already, let us all rejoice this season and celebrate the fact that we (almost) made it into one piece this (almost) past turbulent year. We all deserve a thick, room temperature dark beer, a thick, maduro, well bitten cigar and a special reserve Metaxa to balance the tobacco bitterness with its implicit, muscatel (from the variety of grapes they use) sweetness. And not just one, perhaps two and why not three or four (but, let me warn you, it's expensive)!

Well, until then, we are happy that another December issue came to a close and although we know it's not going to be any break, since the big (hopefully) January issue is already under way, we can stop and take a deep breath.

Those of you who wanted but did not get to place an ad this time, don't panic! You can do so in our January issue which is the real celebratory edition every year. Please call and invite your friends to contribute their ads or Happy New Year messages. We need your help more than ever, as we just inaugurated our 24/7 radio station, Radio NEO, which already has won throngs of fans all over the US. We have live programs in English and Greek from New York, Athens, Chicago, Los Angeles, Austin TX, and soon Nicosia, Cyprus. But more on that later. For the moment just tune in online www.radioneo.us and enjoy what our producers are preparing for you on a daily basis.

Before space is up, let me wish you a very Merry Christmas, full of meaningful joy (like being with the people that you really want to be with), uncompromised good spirits (and I'm not referring to alcohol only) and ... plenty of innocent guilt!

DEMETRIOS RHOMPOTIS
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SPICE UP YOUR WINTER WITH FOOD OF THE GREEK ISLANDS



On Cyprus, they make sausages with grape-must. On Santorini, they turn paximadia into a sweet by flavoring them with dried grapes or honey. On Skopelos, they fashion pies out of leeks and fennel.

"Island cooking is a very frugal cuisine and makes good use of everything that can be produced on the islands," says acclaimed food writer Aglaia Kremezi, who wrote a lavish book on island food (*The Foods of the Greek Islands*, Houghton Mifflin). "The cooks are very ingenious in creating all kinds of dishes with the seasonal ingredients they have on hand. And nothing is wasted."

Pumpkin, for example, is used throughout in recipes savory and sweet—on Sifnos, it is mixed with almond into a cake excellent with coffee or tea. On Syros, a poor man's chaviari is made mostly with olives, black and green. And patties throughout the islands come in every variation, for example, with tomatoes on Santorini and fennel on Chios.

Yet while the ingredients are homegrown, the dishes they produce are anything but rudimentary and the pride of island cooks is often as fastidious as a Parisian chef's. When Kremezi baked a stuffed pasta called latzania on the island of Astypalaia in the Dodecanese and presented it proudly to her hostess, the good lady wrinkled her nose. "Well, I suppose you can't do better with the summer cheese," she sniffed.

But for the most part, islanders are invariably generous with their cooking secrets and Kremezi, who has a house in Kea and has visited the islands since she was a girl, is practically a native and feels duty-bound to preserve them. "I think some of these recipes are on the verge of extinction now that many women in Greece work, and the next generation is not that interested in keeping the recipes."

Which would be more than a culinary shame, because the recipes also are a distillation of island history and reflect the myriad character of the 170-plus islands that adorn the Greek mainland.

The seven Ionian Islands, for example, variously ruled by the Venetians, French, and English, understandably have a more sumptuous and cosmopolitan cuisine.

Corfu retains not only Venetian words in its dialect but flavors in its cooking, some of it now forgotten even in Italy. There is a stuffed stew made with quince, vegetables, and meat or poultry and a sofrito flavored with garlic, parsley and vinegar.

The Aegean Islands are similarly bicultural, especially the big islands of Chios and Lesbos, which were centers of trade and commerce for centuries.

"In Chios, as in some of the other islands, like Corfu, there are two distinct traditions," says Kremezi. "The tradition in the houses of the rich, who had books and who were merchants or were in shipping. And then there is the tradition of plain cooking in the villages, which is also very interesting. And sometimes the two intermingle."

Lesbos is famous for its poets, olive trees, and ouzo (Elytis and Sappho were natives and eleven million olive trees carpet the island) just as Chios is famous for its poet (the island claims a Homer's rock), sweet mastic which once beguiled the sultan and his harem, and its own ouzo.

But Greeks are Greeks and islanders fiercely-proud despite their common history, as Kremezi found out when she ordered Mini, a Lesbos' ouzo in Chios. "Are you from Lesbos?" came the scornful response. "Obviously you know nothing about ouzo."

And then there are the Cyclades, once considered barely habitable, even by Greeks, and where the cuisine was correspondingly spare. In Santorini (where parcels of volcanic cliff now fetch Park Avenue prices), the baking of paximadia became a high art because there was little else available. The dried bread, usually made from barley, was baked only three times a year because the island barely had wood to fire the ovens and the paximadia were easily stored for later use.

"So they had to bake breads that they dried and then they dipped in water and ate with chick peas and the fava and the various beans that are the staple of the islands," says Kremezi.

Similarly, the wonderful cheeses of the Cyclades were the product of the goats kept by the islanders because

they were the few animals that could survive on the once-barren outposts.

"And then the cooking of the Dodecanese is much more spicy,"

Kremezi reports, shifting outposts and traditions, and recalling the day on Karpathos when the daughter of the local priest at Olympos showed her the art of mixing spices: "Every woman in the village has a bowl filled with an aromatic blend of coarsely crushed coriander seeds—grown and dried in the village—and ground all-spice berries, cinnamon, cloves, cumin and black pepper. Each cook has her own special proportions...making the mixture hotter with a generous amount of pepper or more fragrant with cinnamon and cloves."

The common thread, of course, among all the islands is the cooking for church holidays and celebrations, such as Easter, preceded by the 40 days of abstinence during Lent that produces some inspired recipes: Lenten grape leaves stuffed with rice; pasta with olive oil, onions and spices; tomato and onion flatbread; zucchini or chickpea fritters.

And while many traditions have influenced the islands, they in turn have affected mainland Greece as well.

"My research shows that the actual food of the mainland, especially the food of Athens and the urban food of Athens, started from the islands," says Kremezi. "Because the islands were more cosmopolitan and much more advanced long before Athens became the capital. The cooking of Corfu, for example, was a basis for the urban cooking of Athens."

Greek island cooking has now made inroads into Greek kitchens in American and Kremezi encourages people to "go out and shop for vegetables and fruits and greens at the farmer's market, so that they can get more flavorful, seasoned produce."

She says you might miss the vine-ripened tomatoes of Ithaca when making chicken stuffed with tomatoes, feta cheese, and garlic, "but then you can use sun-dried tomatoes that deepen the flavor and then you can make the dish all year round."

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The Founding Members wish you

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and a new year filled with peace and joy!

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