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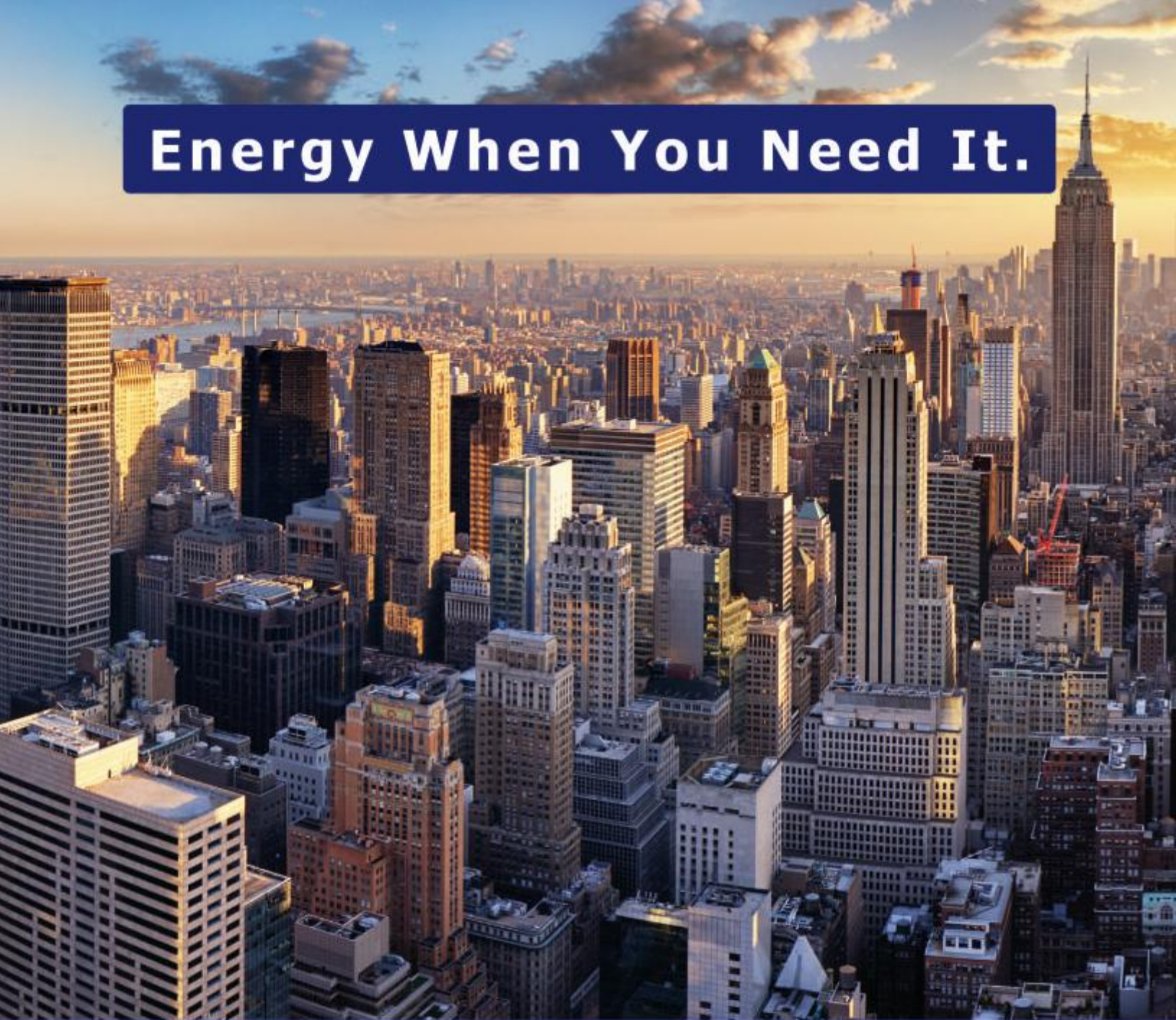
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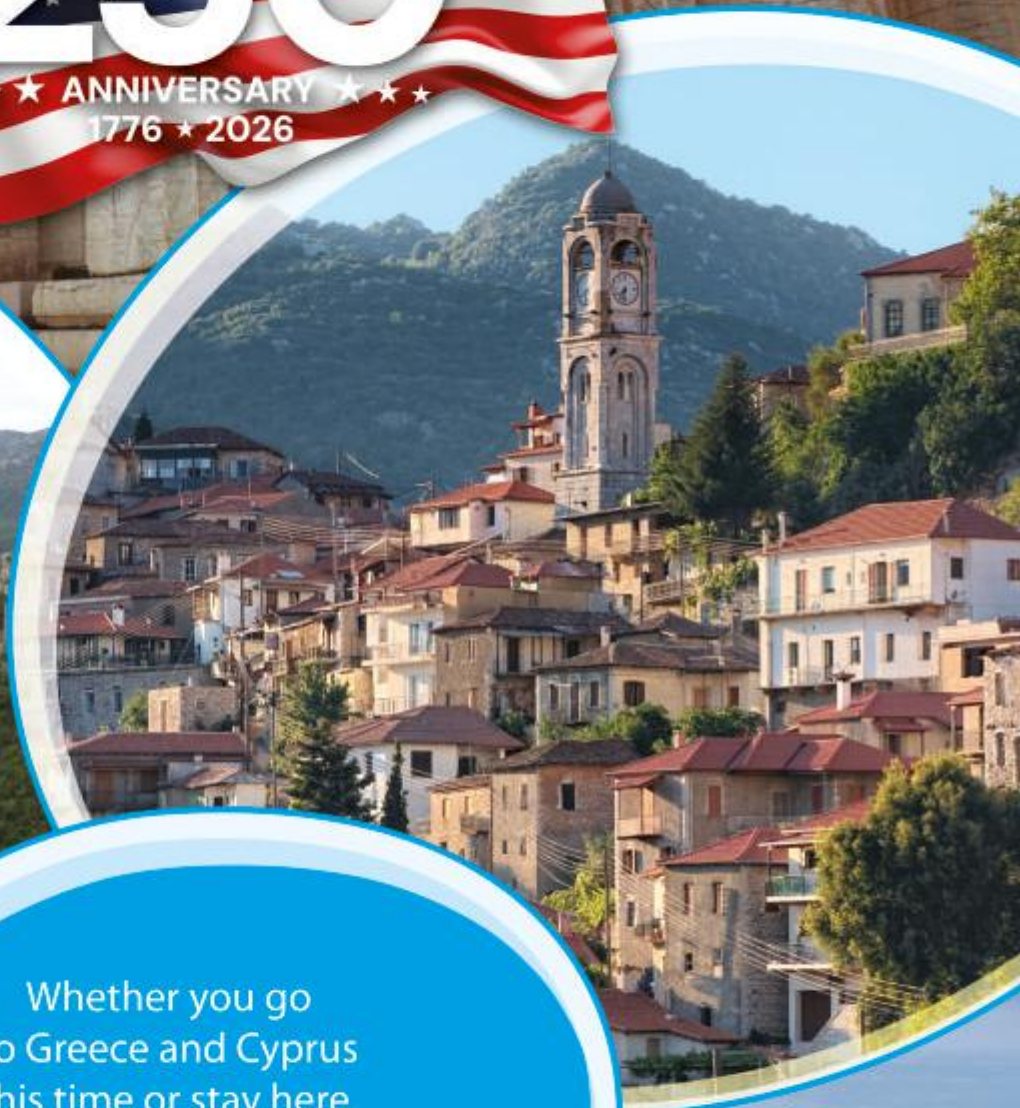
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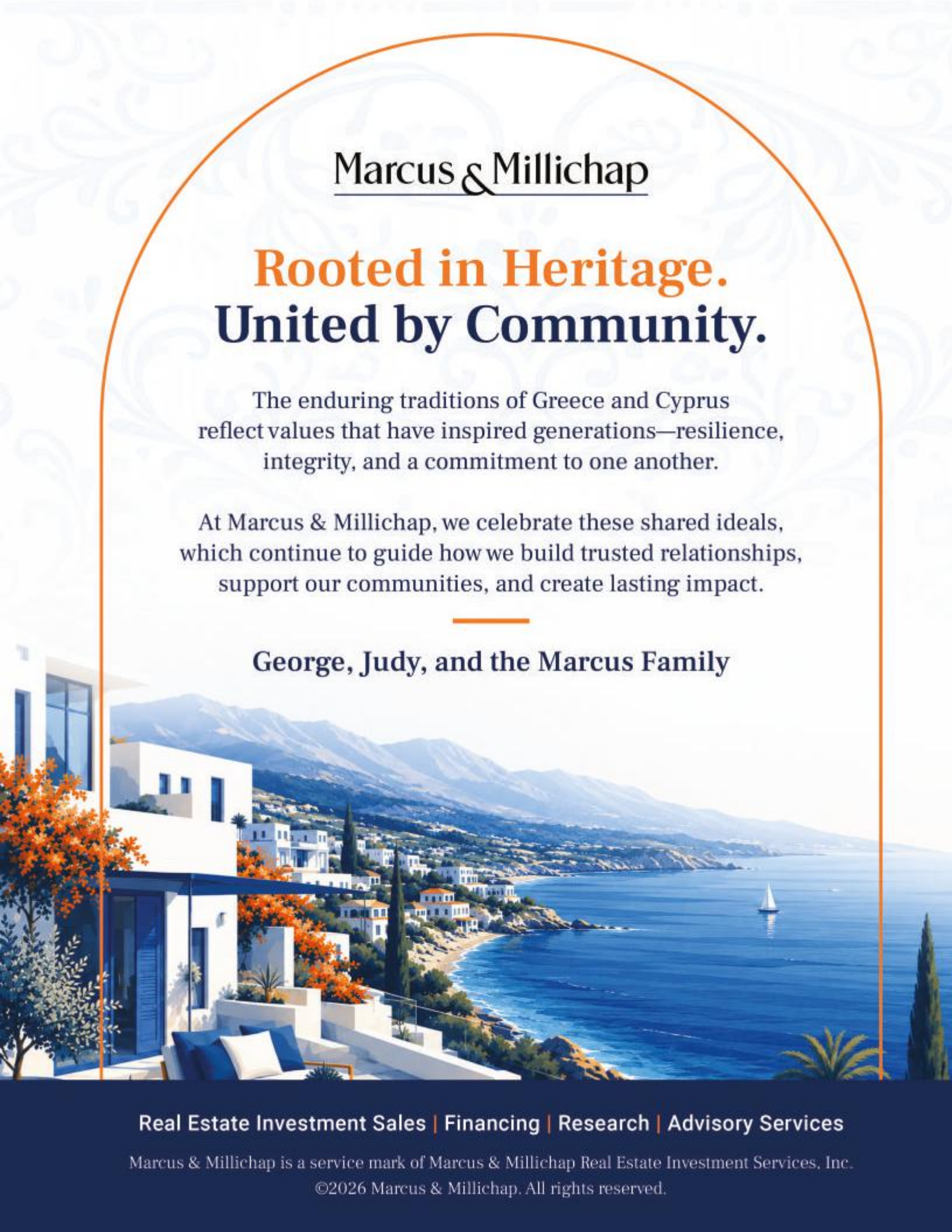


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FROM THE EDITOR



The courage in blood of this American republic

When I lived in Greece as a boy I lived on Chios and all around me were the remnants of the Turkokratia that had subjugated the island for centuries: the horse trough with Turkish letters, the old mosque in the old Genoese castle, the way my grandmother called her neighbor Mustapha, for some

reason, the Turkish music playing on the radio from the stations in Cesme and the groan of its amanedes, the old buttons from old uniforms (supposedly Ottoman) we found in the dry riverbed, the curved saber with the ornamental hilt we also found and surmised about, the trek one time to Anavatos, the haunted and abandoned village that had been depopulated by the Turks and all its inhabitants massacred.

I remember being shown the kotetsi where the Turks had kept their captives before slaughtering them, many in the church, where on the stone floor you could still see the imprint of toes: supposedly the toes of the Turks butchering the Greeks in their own blood.

It's hard to imagine how fearless people were to start a revolution against their overlords after centuries of subjugation. The Greeks did it, perhaps with the inspiration of the American Revolution only fifty years before, which, in turn, was inspired by the democratic ideals of ancient Greece. The American founding fathers were landed gentlemen, but in their soul they worshipped the ideals of freedom the ancient Greeks had once practiced, and the brave example of the little polis' that defied the mighty Persian Empire dared them to think they could defy the mighty British Empire.

"Yes, we must, indeed, all hang together," said John Hancock, "or most assuredly we shall all hang separately."

It was not a given that America would win, as we comfortably think now: it was a given that the American colonies were foolish and Britain would crash them with her arsenal of redcoats and warships like a forest in her harbors. And George Washington and his men barely escaped with their lives over their many skirmishes with the British. "I am worried almost to death with the retrograde motion of things," he said during the disastrous rout of his army during its New York campaign.

But he persisted, as the Greeks persisted in believing they could meet the hordes of the Persian army at Marathon and Salamis, and the Greeks against the Ottomans in the battles at Tripolitsa and Valtetsi and the naval battle of Chios where Kanaris, in a fireboat, blew up the Turkish flagship.

It takes blind courage to start a revolution, and dogged courage to create the miraculous model of democracy America became: a beacon to the world by a nation made up of immigrants from all over the world, who came here with nothing many of them, and formed the bedrock of this country and are a roll call of some of her most distinguished citizens.

Somebody said to Benjami Franklin at the Continental Convention that created our nation, "Well, doctor, what have we got—a republic or a monarchy?" And Franklin replied, "A republic—if you can keep it."

The amazing republic of America will hopefully live on, if we can keep it.

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ARISTOTELIS MOUMAS AND THE FACE OF AMERICA

by Dean Kalimniou*

Every festive gathering in our family has its invisible guests. Some arrive in the form of stories. Others emerge from photographs passed from hand to hand across the table. A few inhabit recipes whose origins have long since been forgotten. Among them all, however, there is one presence whose arrival is so inevitable that it has acquired the force of ritual. No chair is reserved for him. No toast is offered in his honour. Yet sooner or later, usually somewhere between the second helping and dessert, his name enters the conversation and remains there, hovering over the proceedings like incense.



The path by which he arrives is almost always the same. My mother begins recounting her favourite Christmas. Long before I understood who he was, I knew that somehow he belonged within that story, although it would take many years before I understood precisely why.

Every family possesses a foundational story, a narrative repeated so frequently that it eventually ceases to belong to any one individual and instead becomes part of the family's collective consciousness. Ours takes place in Perama, beside the waters of Lake Pamvotis, Epirus at a time when poverty was not regarded as an unfortunate circumstance but rather as one of the ordinary conditions of existence, accepted with the same resignation as winter rain, political instability or the certainty that life would demand far more than it would ever return.

Repeated so often that every gesture accompanying it has become part of family

folklore, the story ought by now to have exhausted its emotional power. Familiarity, however, has achieved precisely the opposite. Certain pauses have become as important as the words themselves. A fleeting expression crossing my mother's face can evoke an entire vanished world. Memory, gathering momentum with each retelling, carries us away from suburban Melbourne and deposits us once more in a small house overlooking the lake, where a ten-year old girl sits weeping on Christmas Day.

Across the village, preparations for the feast are underway. Smoke rises from chimneys and drifts across the water. Children move excitedly between houses. Somewhere, meat soup simmers in a pot. Decorations fashioned from coloured paper transform humble rooms into places of celebration. Christmas has arrived. It has simply neglected to visit my mother's house.

Seated beside the stove, my great grandmother watches fragments of ash rise from the embers towards the rafters before disappearing into the darkness above. Her granddaughter sits on the floor crying. Hunger contributes to her distress, though it is not hunger alone. Children possess an acute sensitivity to exclusion. The knowledge that Christmas is occurring everywhere else while somehow bypassing one's own home is almost impossible to bear.

Neither grandmother nor granddaughter knows precisely when my great aunt will return from work. From time to time, the child wanders to the doorway and gazes along the road before retreating once more into the room. Outside, evening is beginning to settle upon Lake Pamvotis. Beyond the mountains enclosing the basin, beyond Athens and beyond the Atlantic itself, an envelope has already completed most of its journey. Oceans lie behind it. Only the village road remains.

When the door finally opens, my great aunt enters carrying a parcel. Within it are rice and two beef stock cubes. To most people, such provisions would scarcely constitute a Christmas feast. To the occupants of that house, they represent abundance. Purchased with money sent from America, they transform despair into possibility. Yet what follows is what secured a permanent place within family memory.

Producing several sheets of butcher's paper, my great aunt begins attaching them to the rafters. For the first time in many months, the room possesses a ceiling. Gathering the remaining scraps together, she folds and

refolds them before attacking them with a pair of scissors. Soon, intricate patterns emerge. Unfolded once more, the paper resembles lace. Carefully arranged throughout the room, the decorations alter the entire atmosphere of the house. Looking back across the decades, my mother remembers those decorations with greater clarity than the meal itself. The rice was consumed, the stock cubes dissolved. Beauty lingered.

Christmas, such as it was, had arrived from America, thanks to my great-grandmother's cousin, Aristotelis Moumas.

Long before I met Aristotelis Moumas, I knew him. Not in the ordinary sense of knowing someone, but in the manner one knows a landmark whose presence is so constant that it eventually becomes inseparable from the landscape itself. Stories concerning difficult years invariably drifted towards him. Recollections of the village frequently arrived at his name. A parcel would appear in one story. Assistance would emerge in another. Elsewhere there was mention of clothing, opportunities or quiet interventions undertaken without fanfare. Although physically absent, he seemed curiously omnipresent, inhabiting family memory with an intensity that many of those who remained in the village never achieved.

Perhaps this is because Aristotelis belonged to a generation for whom migration did not imply departure. Crossing an ocean did not require severing one's connection to the place left behind. Distance altered geography. It did not necessarily alter allegiance.

Born in Perama, he left Greece in 1946. Even before embarking upon that journey, history had already demanded much from him. As a youth leader in EPON, the youth movement associated with EAM, he participated in efforts to obstruct Nazi vehicles transporting the Jews of Ioannina. Service to others appears to have come naturally. The instinct accompanied him across the Atlantic.

Military service followed migration. Fighting with the 24th Infantry Division during the Korean War, he earned four Bronze Stars together with the Korean Service Medal and the United Nations Service Medal. Peace introduced another chapter. Establishing the Country Squire Diner in Atlantic City in 1963, he built a successful business and became deeply involved in civic life. Membership of the Morris Guards of Atlantic City, participation in local politics and engagement with community affairs all reflected a personality incapable of remaining on the sidelines.

What distinguished Aristotelis was not merely that he prospered. Thousands of migrants prospered. Nor was it that he remembered the village from which he came. Memory alone demands little. Rather, he appears to have possessed an instinctive conviction that success carried obligations. Prosperity enlarged responsibility. Achievement created duties.

Thus money continued finding its way back to Perama. Clothing arrived as well. At one point, three container loads were shipped for distribution amongst families in need. During Desert Storm, more than one hundred thousand boxes of homemade cookies, amounting to over three million individual cookies, were dispatched to American servicemen and women stationed in the Middle East. Reading through such accounts, one gains the impression of a man for whom generosity was less an occasional virtue than a permanent disposition.

When I finally encountered him in Perama, reality somehow exceeded expectation. Already in his eighties, he possessed an energy that rendered age almost irrelevant. What struck me most, however, was his resemblance to my great-grandmother. Standing before me was a face that appeared simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar, as though some branch of the family tree had travelled across the Atlantic, acquired an entirely different

history and then returned bearing stories from another world.

Having grown up hearing of his generosity, I kissed his hand and thanked him for everything he had done for my family. Embarrassment flickered briefly across his face. A warm embrace followed. Moments later he was peppering me with questions because he was not entirely certain who I was. Then this spry octagenarian (we are all long lived in my family) swooped past me, executing the moves of a virile zeimbekiko. The exchange remains among my most treasured memories.

This year, the United States commemorates two hundred and fifty years of nationhood. Others will celebrate that anniversary through parades, speeches and commemorations. My own thoughts travel elsewhere. Before America existed for me as a political entity, it existed as a relationship. Prior to encountering it in books or public discourse, I encountered it through the life of Aristotelis Moumas. Through him, I first came to associate America with energy directed towards achievement, prosperity tempered by generosity, patriotism expressed through service and a profound sense of obligation towards one's fellow human beings.

As the years pass, I find myself thinking less about the rice, the stock cubes or even the

decorations fashioned from butcher's paper and more about the extraordinary chain of relationships that made that Christmas possible. Somewhere beyond the mountains enclosing the basin of Ioannina, beyond Greece itself and beyond the Atlantic Ocean, a young villager from Perama had entered a world immeasurably larger than the one he left behind. Military service, commercial success, civic engagement and public life would all follow. Yet for all the distances he travelled and all the identities he acquired, some essential part of him appears never to have departed the shores of Lake Pamvotis.

Whenever my mother tells her favourite Christmas story and memory carries us back once more to the little house beside Lake Pamvotis, my thoughts return to the man who made that evening possible. For a Greek born and raised in Melbourne, Aristotelis Moumas remains the most persuasive expression of what America at its best can be: energetic, generous, patriotic, civically engaged, successful without becoming self-absorbed and possessed of an instinctive sense of responsibility towards others.. Consequently, whenever I think of that country, it is not the faces of presidents that come to mind, nor monuments, flags or institutions. I think instead of a villager from Perama who crossed an ocean, built a life in Atlantic City and never forgot the people he had left behind. We will never forget him.

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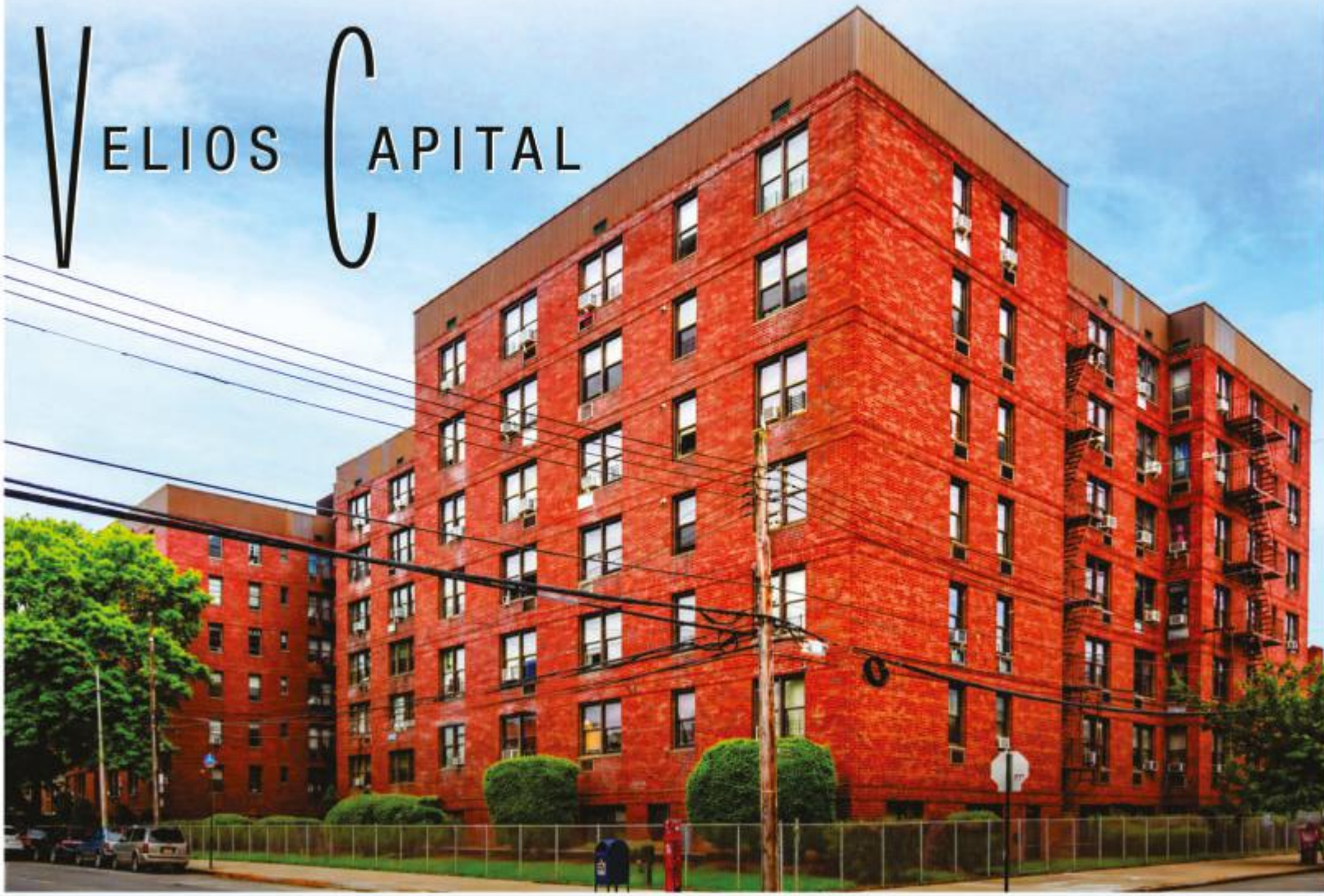
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America celebrates its founding and how Greece made it possible

When Thomas Jefferson sat down to write the Declaration of Independence in June of 1776 in a rented house in Philadelphia, the seminal inspiration he took was from the countless books of ancient authors that filled his library back in Monticello, which he read in the original Greek.

“The Greeks by their laws, and the Romans by the spirit of their people, took care to put into the hands of their rulers no such engines of oppression as a standing army. Their system was to make every man a soldier, and oblige and repair to the standard of his country whenever that was reared. This made them invincible, and the same principle will make us so.”

He considered himself an Epicurean and a Stoic, who believed in moderation, virtue and the pursuit of happiness (in the Declaration: “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”).

He believed in the Greek ideal that all power must be limited, checked, and be held accountable, and that the polis was the perfect model for civic virtue and citizen participation.

“The course of history shows that as a government grows, liberty decreases. So let us tie (government) down with the chains of the constitution so (it) does not become the legalized version of (criminality).”

He studied Thucydides, Herodotus, and Plutarch not as historians, but as political guides. He believed their accounts of tyranny, corruption, and democratic decay were essential lessons for America.

He also considered ancient Greek architecture as the embodiment of reason and built his home on classical lines, and also the buildings of the University of Virginia, which he founded, as symbols of the new republic's connection to ancient ideals of reason, balance, and civic virtues.

Jefferson saw the new American republic not as a copy of Rome, but as a rebirth of the Greek polis, where free citizens shape their own destiny.

He was the founder who looked at America and saw Athens rising again.

George Washington himself believed in the Stoic virtues of self-control, duty, and moral discipline. He saw leadership as a burden, not a prize—a deeply Greek idea. When he resigned his commission after the war, Americans compared him to Cincinnatus—but Washington's private writings show he was equally drawn to the Greek ideal of the leader who serves reluctantly, with humility. He believed, like the Greeks, that character is the foundation of a republic. He prided himself on the ancient Greek virtue of *sophrosyne*—self control.

John Adams quoted from Thucydides, Plutarch, and Demosthenes like modern politicians quote polls and echoed the ancients when he wrote that republics survive only when citizens cultivate virtue. He believed a democracy without virtue would collapse—a lesson drawn straight from Athens.

Like the Greeks, he felt that freedom survives only when citizens are educated, vigilant, and morally grounded. And he saw the Revolution as a chance to prove that the lessons of ancient Greece had not been forgotten.

James Madison studied Greek political failures—factionalism, demagoguery, mob rule—when he wrote the Constitution, where he argued that power in a republic must be divided to avoid tyranny. From these lessons he built the American system of checks and balances, a structure designed to prevent the very dangers that had shattered ancient democracies. Madison imbued the American constitution with the lessons learned from Athenian democracy.

Alexander Hamilton admired the Greek emphasis on strong civic institutions. He read Greek historians to understand how weak governments fall prey to chaos and foreign influence. He believed, like the Greeks, that a republic must be energetic, organized, and capable of defending itself. His arguments for a strong central government echo the Greek belief that liberty requires structure, not just passion. Hamilton saw in Greece a warning: freedom without order is short lived.

So, it was ancient Greece that provided the intellectual framework for the American Revolution and the government that followed: the American founding fathers, fighting tyranny and for their freedom, built their new nation on the model of the oldest democracy in history and the belief that freedom is the natural state of mankind.

And the few Greeks who lived in the colonies at the outbreak of the Revolution put their lives on the line to fight in the battlefields of the new freedom.

Around 1768, a Scottish doctor named Andrew Turnbull decided to build a plantation in British East Florida and he wanted workers that were tough, sun-hardened and could till unforgiving land. So, he went to Greece and other Mediterranean countries and gathered hundreds of hopeful souls, with more than 500 Greeks among them from Mani and Crete and the other islands.

They thought they were starting a new life and they were promised land, wages and freedom.

But what they got were hardship and oppression. They soon discovered they were slaves, not workers. They planted indigo, they dug canals, they built roads, they survived

hurricanes and disease—working from dawn to dusk in the blistering sun, and soon buried countless of their compatriots.

But, somehow, with the hardiness of Greeks, they survived this oppression for nine years, and then in 1778 the surviving settlers escaped 70 miles north to St. Augustine and appealed to the British governor there.

Miraculously, he freed them, and that's where they settled and

formed the first Greek Orthodox community in America, establishing the Averro House chapel (now the St. Photios Shrine), and though small in numbers, they might have fought at the Battle of Monmouth in 1778 under Demetrios Ypsilanti.

Who led the Greek Revolution fifty years later, and in turn took inspiration from the American Revolution.

And the Greek thread continues to America's second great conflict in the American Civil War, when Abraham Lincoln wrote his Gettysburg Address as a dedication to the fallen.

At its core, it is built on the bones of a much older speech: Pericles' Funeral Oration. Modern scholarship shows that Lincoln consciously echoed the structure, themes, and rhetorical strategies of Pericles' address, delivered in 431 BCE during the Peloponnesian War.

Both speeches begin by invoking the ancestor. Pericles opens by praising the ancestors who built Athens and preserved its freedom. He frames the fallen soldiers as heirs to a noble lineage.

Lincoln mirrors this:

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation..."

This parallel is not accidental. Scholars note that Lincoln is following the epainesis structure — praise of the ancestors — that Pericles used.

Then both speeches transform the dead into symbols of democratic ideals.

Pericles argues that the fallen Athenians died not just in battle, but for the idea of Athens — its democracy, its freedom, its way of life.

And Lincoln echoes that: the Union dead become martyrs for the proposition that "all men are created equal."

Garry Wills, in *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, shows that Lincoln used Periclean logic:

The dead sanctify the nation. Their sacrifice

gives the living a moral duty. The battlefield becomes sacred ground.

And both speeches use contrast and antithesis to elevate meaning.

Pericles' oration is famous for its antitheses — pairing opposites to create moral clarity. Lincoln does the same: "The world will little note, nor long remember..."

"...but it can never forget what they did here." This rhetorical strategy is directly linked to the Greek funeral oration tradition.

Both speeches also redefine the purpose of the war. Pericles uses the funeral to remind Athenians why they fight — to preserve democracy. Lincoln uses Gettysburg to redefine the Civil War as a test of whether any democracy can survive.

So, both speeches turn mourning into political meaning, elevating grief into civic purpose. And both are structured as an epitaphios logos, which is traditional structure of an Athenian funeral oration: Praise of ancestors. Praise of the dead. Praise of the city and its ideals. Moral instruction to the living.

Lincoln compresses this structure into 272 words — but the architecture is unmistakably Greek. Everett, the main speaker at Gettysburg and a classical scholar, explicitly modeled his own speech on Pericles — and Lincoln, speaking after him, distilled the same form into something immortal.

Finally, both speeches universalize the meaning of sacrifice.

Pericles says: "The whole earth is the sepulcher of famous men..."

Lincoln echoes the idea that the dead belong not just to their families, but to history, and that their sacrifice demands the living continue the work:

"...that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

This is the Periclean move: turning the fallen into guardians of democracy.

And memorably, both speeches elevate the nation through sacred language. Pericles speaks of Athens almost as a sacred ideal. Lincoln sacralizes the American experiment, calling the nation "conceived in liberty" — a birth metaphor straight out of classical rhetoric.

Pericles stood before Athens and said: "These men died for the idea of our democracy." Two thousand years later, Lincoln stood on a Pennsylvania battlefield and said: "So did these men."

And Lincoln took his inspiration from Pericles — and from the oldest democratic funeral tradition in the Western world to create a speech that sounds both ancient and modern at the same time.

The Greek influence even inspired the vast and beautiful “rural cemeteries” that were built during the 19th century.

Before Mount Auburn, Green Wood, Laurel Hill — the dead were buried in cramped churchyards, crowded plots behind meetinghouses, places where bodies were stacked, stones leaned, and the living hurried past with their collars turned up.

But in the early 1800s, Americans began to look backward to the ancient world. To Athens, where the Kerameikos stretched like a marble lined avenue of heroes. And where the dead were honored with sculpture, gardens, inscriptions, and the belief that memory should be beautiful.

And Americans asked: Why should our dead not rest in beauty too?

In ancient Greece, cemeteries were not hidden. They were public, open, walked through, visited, admired. The Kerameikos in Athens was a place of sculpted stelae, shaded paths, olive trees, family monuments, public memory. It was a place where the living went to reflect, to honor, to learn. And the Romans had continued this tradition. Their tombs lined the roads leading into the city — a reminder that the dead were still part of the civic world.

This idea — that the dead deserve beauty, space, dignity, and public presence — struck American thinkers like a revelation. Urban reformers, artists, architects, and physicians began to argue that America needed something better — something classical.

The spark was Mount Auburn Cemetery (1831)—the first rural cemetery in America. Mount Auburn in Cambridge, Massachusetts was explicitly modeled on ancient Greek and Roman burial landscapes. Its founders modeled it on the Kerameikos and introduced classical sculpture in it and the ancient idea of the cemetery as a place of moral instruction.

They included a garden, museum, sanctuary, school of virtue, and the Periclean precept that the dead ennoble the city.

The movement spread to the establishment of Green Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn (1840), where its founders spoke of Greek ideals of beauty, included classical architecture, showed the moral power of landscape, and made the cemetery a civic monument.

In this spirit, Green Wood became a park before parks existed, a museum before museums existed, and a pilgrimage site before tourism existed. It was America's Kerameikos — a place where the living walked among the dead and felt elevated by them.

You can walk through Mt. Auburn or Green-Wood and see obelisks (which had been adopted by Greece and Rome), temples, columns, urns, laurel wreaths, draped Greek figures, sarcophagi modeled on ancient prototypes.

It was a deliberate revival — a belief that classical forms ennobled the dead and uplifted the living. A revival of the ancient ideal that death is part of life, memory is a public duty, beauty consoles, nature heals, the dead teach virtue.

Which, in fact, is the same philosophy behind Pericles' Funeral Oration — the idea that the dead are not lost; they are woven into the moral fabric of the city.

The cemeteries were, in fact, a classical revival, a rebirth of the ancient belief that the dead deserve beauty and the living deserve places where memory can breathe.

Mount Auburn and Green Wood became America's Kerameikos and a quiet, profound tribute to the ancient world.

And like their forebearers in New Smyrna, American Greeks fought and died in American battlefields.

More than 25,000 Greek Americans enlisted in World War II (out of a Greek community of 200,000) and fought in every theater from Normandy to the Pacific.

And the U.S. Merchant Marine was overrepresented by Greeks, who carried on their seafaring tradition. They were the backbone of the Merchant Marine fleet that delivered supplies over U-boat infested waters. Which is why their casualty rate was the highest of any American service.

Among Greek American war heroes were Lt. Col. James Megellas, the most decorated officer in the history of the 82nd Airborne. Michael Stratikis, who won the Navy Cross. Peter Tomich, who won the Medal of Honor and died saving his comrades in Pearl Harbor. And Steve Pisanos (“The Flying Greek”), who was an ace pilot in the Air Force.

And even before that, they had fought in the trenches of World War I, the Spanish American War (again becoming a mainstay of the Navy and Marine Corps) and the Civil War, on both sides. George Colvocoresses, a Greek orphan rescued by an American naval officer, went on to become a Union commander.

And in peacetime, Greeks have made their own contribution to the America that we know.

Ted Leonsis built AOL, Nicholas Negroponte built the MIT Media Lab and foresaw the media world that we know today, Peter Diamandis thought of space and created the X Prize, Dr. Stamatis Krimigis built many of the

rockets that took us to space, Michael Dukakis ran for president, Spiro Agnew became vice president, Maria Callas became the diva of divas, Dr. George Papanicolaou created the Pap smear and saved millions, Dr. Lia Merminga of Fermilab became a leader in particle physics, Dr. George Yancopoulos a biotech pioneer, Harry Mark Petrakis became the bard of Greek immigrant life, Nicholas Gage the chronicler of his mother's sacrifice in Greece and rebirth of her family in America, Eleni Gage went back to Greece to chronicle her own communion with her grandmother and family history, and Jeffrey Eugenides put a modern spin on the Greek American experience.

Not to mention how Greek Americans have transformed business in America. Jamie Dimon runs JP Morgan Chase with \$4.4 trillion in assets, Peter Angelos owned the Baltimore Orioles, Alex Spanos the Los Angeles Chargers, Ted Leonsis the Washington Wizards, John Paterakis made all the buns for McDonalds, Leo Stefanos invented the Dove bar, Paul Mitchell cosmetics was co-founded by John Paul DeJoria, whose mother was an immigrant.

And with their success comes philanthropy: John Pappajohn has donated over \$100 million to charity, including scholarships for Greek American students, George Marcus has funded universities, hospitals and Greek studies programs, George D. Behrakis, among other charities gave \$10 million to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston to fund exhibits of ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian civilizations.

Not to mention the Greeks in entertainment (Zach Galifianakis, Jennifer Aniston, John Stamos, Rita Wilson, Tina Fey, Nia Vardalos, Billy Zane among others) and politics (Paul and John Sarbanes, John Brademas, Charlie Crist, Gus Bilirakis, Chris Pappas, Eleni Kounalakis among others), with six seats in the House, five statewide offices, 12 state senate seats, and 19 state assembly seats.

The celebration of America's 250th Anniversary is also the celebration of the many ethnic groups that have created the American mosaic and none has been as vital as the Greek American community.

And President Prokopis Pavlopoulos of Greece paid them their tribute:

“The story of Greeks in America is one of courage, dignity, and quiet triumph. They carried with them the values of our ancient democracy and, through hard work and integrity, helped strengthen the democracy of their new homeland. In every field—science, business, the arts, public service—Greek Americans have honored both nations. They remind us that Hellenism is not only a heritage of the past, but a living force that continues to enrich the United States and inspire the world.”

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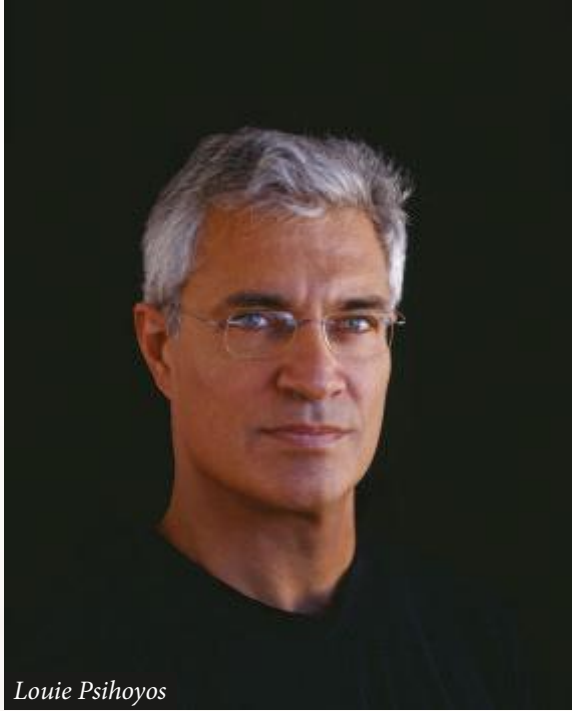
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Beyond Fertility: The Bigger Message Behind “The Plastic Detox”

Greek-American Academy Award-winning director Louie Psihoyos talks to NEO

By Kelly Fanarioti



Louie Psihoyos

Greek-American Academy Award-winning documentary filmmaker Louie Psihoyos has built his career translating complex scientific and environmental issues into compelling documentaries that resonate with audiences worldwide.

Following “The Cove,” which won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 2009, and Netflix’s “You Are What You Eat: A Twin Experiment,” his latest documentary, “The Plastic Detox,” explores the possible links between everyday exposure to plastic-related chemicals, fertility and human health.

The film follows six American couples who had been trying to conceive for periods ranging from 22 months to more than a decade. For three months, they drastically reduced their exposure to plastic-related chemicals by replacing plastic water bottles, synthetic fabrics, scented personal care products and dozens of other everyday items with safer alternatives. By the end of the intervention, three couples conceived. Speaking to NEO, Psihoyos revealed that a fourth couple had learned they were expecting a child just one day before the interview.

While describing the outcome as remarkable, he was careful not to oversimplify the findings.

“Fertility is an incredibly complex issue influenced by age, genetics, stress, sleep, overall health and underlying medical conditions,” he said, explaining that participants were asked not to change anything in their daily routines apart from reducing their exposure to plastic-related chemicals.

Although the project involved only six couples, he believes the findings raise important scientific questions and warrant much larger future studies.

For Psihoyos, however, “The Plastic Detox” is about far more than fertility. He says the film was conceived with three broader goals in mind: to show people they have the power to reduce their own exposure to plastic-related chemicals, to encourage consumer demand for safer alternatives, and ultimately to inspire stronger public policies that better protect public health.

“Our goals with “The Plastic Detox” are threefold. First, we want people to understand that they do have agency. Reducing the plastic burden in your body is difficult, but the intervention documented in the film shows that meaningful change is possible. Second, we hope to create consumer demand for safer, non-plastic alternatives. Markets respond when consumers begin asking better questions about the products they buy and use every day. Third, we hope the film helps inspire stronger public policy to better protect citizens globally,” he says, adding that the regulatory gap is striking.

“In the United States, only 9 chemicals banned in personal care products, while in the European Union roughly 1,100 compounds are restricted or prohibited. That difference alone shows how much more urgently this issue could be addressed at a policy level.”

The documentary also reflects Psihoyos’ broader approach to science filmmaking. Rather than relying solely on statistics and expert interviews, he once again places real people at the center of the story. As he points out, the data consistently shows that people are more likely to change behavior when they

understand an issue affects them personally and directly.

“That was part of the strategic thinking behind structuring the film around real couples and real interventions. We wanted the science to feel tangible rather than abstract. At the same time, we genuinely did not know whether the intervention would produce measurable results. The outcome exceeded anything I could have hoped for. Watching these couples experience real changes in fertility and health made the science emotionally undeniable in a way statistics alone rarely can.”

Is a Plastic Detox Really Possible?

The question, however, is how realistic that message is. If plastic-related chemicals are now found in food, drinking water, clothing, household products and even the human body, can individuals still meaningfully reduce their exposure?

The Greek-American director believes they can. While acknowledging that eliminating exposure entirely is impossible in the modern world, he argues that significantly reducing it is both realistic and, in many cases, far more affordable than people assume.

“I absolutely believe people can meaningfully reduce their exposure, and in many cases, it is more affordable than people assume. The



biggest challenge is often not cost, but information. Researching products takes enormous time and effort. My team spent nearly a year curating hundreds of products and identifying safer alternatives across many categories of daily life.”

“We tried to create options for every budget. If someone wants the “Ferrari” version of a product, we found those. If someone wants the



Still from *The Plastic Detox*, now streaming on Netflix, illustrating common household sources of exposure to plastic-related chemicals

practical ‘Toyota Prius’ version, we found those too. No one can eliminate exposure completely in the modern world, but reducing exposure significantly is both realistic and worthwhile”.

Despite its ultimately hopeful message, “The Plastic Detox” also sparked anxiety among some viewers. Many described feeling overwhelmed after realizing how pervasive plastic-related chemicals appear to be in everyday life, with some even saying they wanted to throw away many of the products in their homes. Psihoyos says he understands that reaction.

“Welcome to my life. It is hard to ‘unsee’ this issue once you understand it. But I always remind people that even the longest journey starts with a single step. You do not have to change everything overnight. Start with one thing. Then another. Over time, the process actually becomes an empowering journey rather than an overwhelming problem. There are three primary ways plastics enter the body: ingestion, absorption, and inhalation. One of the simplest changes is avoiding plastic water bottles whenever possible. Even many aluminum cans are lined with plastic coatings containing chemicals like BPA that was considered a potential male contraceptive

back in the 1930’s. Glass and stainless steel are much safer alternatives.”

Another major source of exposure is fragrance. As he adds, many scented personal care products contain phthalates, which are used to help fragrances bind and absorb into the body. Unscented products are often a much safer choice.

“The same applies to scented candles, synthetic fabrics, and heavily fragranced household cleaners. Choosing natural fibers, simpler cleaning products, and fragrance-free personal care products can dramatically reduce exposure without making life complicated.

The goal of the film was never to create paralysis or fear. It was to help people recognize that practical steps do exist, and that those steps can make a meaningful difference”.

Months after filming ended, Psihoyos says he is still in touch with the couples featured in the documentary.

“What surprised many participants was that once they took the first step, the lifestyle changes became much easier than they initially expected. Over time, it stopped feeling restrictive and instead became a more conscious and intentional way of living,” he concludes.



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Mnemosyni's Musings...

You've heard of Mnemosyni, the Greek goddess of memory. Mythology buffs will know that she's also the goddess of storytelling—and mother of the Muses! So, it's only fitting to name a literary column in her honor. Here, you'll learn about authors, poets, books, and all things "Greek" literary.

by Maria A. Karamitsos

New Fiction Set in Greece

Looking for your next read? Take a virtual trip to Greece with one of these new releases.

Secret (Lake Union Publishing, 2025) and Under a Greek Sky (Lake Union Publishing, 2025).



The House of Hidden Letters by **Izzy Broom** / Berkley (March 17, 2026)

Suffolk-based Author Izzy (Isabelle) Broom is the bestselling author of 13 novels, including *The Summer Trip* (Hodder &

Stoughton, 2023) and *My Map of You* (Penguin, 2017), both set in Greece.

Skye MacKinnon is desperate for an escape. When she wins a lottery to buy a run-down cottage on a Greek island for only one euro, she jumps at the chance to get out of England and start over. As she unlocks the tattered blue door of her whitewashed new cottage, the sun-kissed sea glinting in the bay outside her windows, Skye immediately feels like she's found her true home. She and the other lottery winners—the first residents in these houses since the 1940s—form a tight-knit group, finding in one another the strong relationships they'd been missing in their own lives. When Skye and local contractor Andreas find a set of mysterious letters, they begin to unravel the history of the prior residents, and the truth about life on Folegandros during World War II.



Reminders of Greece by **Francesca Catlow** / Lake Union Publishing (May 15, 2026)

UK born and bred author Francesca Catlow now lives in the South of France. She's the author of several

novels set in Greece, including *The Greek*

Secret (Lake Union Publishing, 2025) and *Under a Greek Sky* (Lake Union Publishing, 2025). Sara and Mia are more than just mother and daughter—they're best friends, confidantes, and partners in adventure. Mia's dad's identity may still be a mystery, but Mia's independent, adventurous mum has more than made up for it over the years. So when Sara suggests a sun-soaked escape to Kos, the stunning Greek island shaped by volcanic forces, Mia jumps at the chance for their perfect summer getaway. When Mia meets Leonidas, a handsome local musician, the white-washed villages and crystal-clear waters become the backdrop for revelations neither woman is prepared for. As family mysteries begin to unravel and long-buried truths rise to the surface, mother and daughter must decide: is protecting the past worth sacrificing their future?



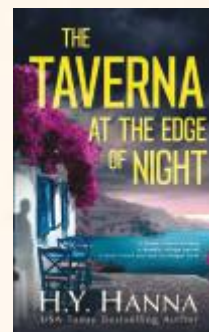
Beneath the Orange Blossom by **Emma Cowell** / Avon (July 14, 2026)

Emma Cowell is the author of several escapist reads set in Greece, including *Under the Lemon Tree* (2025) and *The*

Island Love Song (2024). A former actress and BBC presenter, she and her husband now live in Greece.

Two years following her husband's death, dressmaker Ellen is learning how to live again and put memories of a difficult marriage behind her. However, never far from her mind is another memory: Alexandros, her first love from the summer she turned 18. The moment she'd arrived in his hometown of Kardamyli, Ellen had been intoxicated by the scent of orange blossom in the air, the days of endless sunshine and sparkling azure waters—but most of all by Alexandros himself. They were meant to be, until a devastating secret forced Ellen to leave and never look back. But now, when her best friend suggests they

recreate their teenage summer in Greece, Ellen knows it's time to confront her past. Will Greece give her the freedom—and happiness—she desperately craves? And there, amidst the lush olive groves, could she rediscover the love she thought she'd lost forever?



The Taverna at the Edge of Night by **H.Y. Hanna** / Independently published (May 11, 2026)

USA Today bestselling author Hsin-Yi (H.Y.) Hanna is the author of more than 30 novels, which collectively have

sold over 1 million copies. 'Taverna' is her psychological thriller.

When Daphne travels to a remote fishing village on the island of Crete, she's looking forward to sun-drenched days, dazzling sea views, and a happy reunion with the best friend she has idolized since university. But from the moment she arrives at the whitewashed taverna perched on the cliffs above the sea, something feels wrong. Roxy is jittery and evasive, the locals avoid questions, and rumors of a cliffside murder have everyone on edge. Then there is an attack in the night. Daphne is left reeling and desperate for answers. She turns to her best friend for help, but all she's met with is gaslighting and lies that make her question her own sanity. Completely isolated and unsure who to trust, she now finds herself trapped in a lethal game of deception, and caught in a dangerous attraction to a stranger with secrets of his own. As Daphne digs deeper, she realizes that someone in this idyllic village has a deadly secret... and that her closest friendship might be the most dangerous thing of all.



Bitter Almonds by **Hanna von Feilitzsch** / Feilitzsch-Verlag (April 18, 2026)

In the latest novel from German-Greek Author Hanna Von Feilitzsch, the author of *The*

Last Ouzo (Feilitzsch-Verlag, 2024), a murder mystery set in Greece (2024), is back with a historical novel set in waltorn Greece in the 1940s.

Anna flees from a village in the Peloponnese to distant Athens with her children during the Greek Civil War to ensure her family's survival and create better living conditions for her children. The young woman prevails in a male-dominated world and builds a flourishing business in the capital. When her husband Manolis returns years later from a prison camp, broken in body and spirit, she must face the reality that as a woman, she has no voice. Anna accepts her circumstances and stays with the man she loves. Yet she never loses sight of her goal: that her children, including her daughters, will one day be able to live independent lives, free from the constraints imposed by society. But this comes at a price.

Mrs. Papadakis: A Nove of Crete and Choices by Florence Wetzel / Independently published (June 7, 2026)



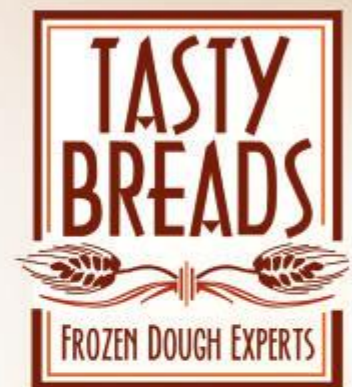
2025), is also set on Crete.

After five years of married life in a Cretan fishing village—milking goats, sidestepping village gossip, and contending with octopus in her refrigerator—American Carolyn Papadakis starts to wonder if she should return to the US. An unexpected visitor deepens her doubts, and a new friendship with a pair of traveling hippies draws Carolyn into risky choices. As her marriage teeters on the edge, Carolyn must decide between the life she created and the one she left behind.

A Brooklyn, NY native, Florence Wetzel writes across multiple genres. She fell in love with Crete and lived there from 1990-1995. Her novel, *Aspasia: A Novel of Suspense and Secrets* (independently published,

Lots of great books to add to your list. Happy reading! See you next time for more of Mnemosyni's Musings.

Maria A. Karamitsos is a journalist, author, and poet. She's the founder & former publisher/editor of WindyCity Greek magazine and former associate editor & senior writer for The Greek Star newspaper. Maria also contributes to Greek City Times and TripFiction. Her work has been published in The Magic of Us-A Moms Who Write Poetry Anthology, The Pen Poetry Magazine, Voices of Hellenism Literary Journal, Highland Park Poetry, Recipes & Roots, GreekCircle magazine, The National Herald, GreekReporter, Harlots Sauce Radio, Women.Who.Write, KPTH magazine, and more. Maria has contributed to two books: Greektown Chicago: Its History, Its Recipes and The Chicago Area Ethnic Handbook. She's currently editing her 1st novel. mariakaramitsos.com



TASTYBREADS.COM

Days Gone By: Finding My Childhood Again in Palaio Faliro



by Tony Matarrese

I recently fulfilled a lifelong promise to myself and began spending the summer in Greece. Not as a tourist, traveling to a different ancient site every few days, throughout the homeland of my γι α γ ι ά κ α ι πα π ο ύ ... but renting a home, and focusing on blending into the local community.

After only a week in Palaio Faliro, as I was returning from an evening walk (βόλτα) down to the waterfront Promenade, it hit me! All at once, I realized what I was seeing!

Not a busy city, with cars speeding down the street, and stores displaying one national chain store after another. Instead, I was passing by the neighborhood περίπτερο, and just watched for a few minutes, as the owner and one of his “regulars” sat and talked. As I continued, I walked past an optical store, with big letters above the huge glass display windows, spelling out the name of the owner “Karvelas.”

Across the street was a chocolate shop, “Leonidas” – Est. 1913. A great Greek name, I thought to myself...but why the 1913? I did a little research and quickly learned that Leonidas Kestekides was a Greek from Cappadocia (in what is now Turkey). He had emigrated to the US as a young man, and learned about confections, like chocolate. After moving to Belgium and winning awards at international exhibitions, he opened his first shop in 1913. What began as a family shop, over the years, grew to over 1,000 stores and is now recognized as one of the premiere chocolates in the world.

Instead of Starbucks everywhere, there is a local coffee shop called ελληνικός καφές, where the older folks sat, enjoying their καφέ veío, and a few doors down was another καφέ ...where the outdoor tables were filled with young people, enjoying an evening μέντα, along with a little sweet, talking and laughing with the company at their table, or a few tables away!

From there, I found myself walking past the ψαροπούλα, where on several mornings, I had observed the local fish monger, setting up his display of the daily catch. Not on Styrofoam trays covered in cellophane but displayed openly on beds of ice. Octopus, shrimp, calamari and all sorts and sizes of Greek fish... propped up on the ice beds, so fresh, I could swear I saw some of them moving!

And then there was the local λαϊκή αγορά last Friday, stretching for blocks, table after table overflowing with the freshest fruits, vegetables, nuts, local honey, eggs and even household goods and clothing. Each vendor “singing the praises” of why their produce was the best and why you should buy from them. Listening to the banter between vendors and residents and watching shoppers return to their favorite merchant to bargain for the best price, was as entertaining as the market itself.

All this brought back memories of my neighborhood, on the far west side of Chicago.



Of course, when one thinks of Chicago, New York or any other big city in the US, you think of big grocery stores and cars speeding everywhere. But in our little neighborhood, known as “The Island,” we had a slower pace with our local bakery, butcher shop and fruit store...and at the Italian deli, when you walked in, you could smell the fresh cold cuts from behind the meat case and the cheeses hanging from the ceiling hooks: the box of salted “baccala” and the barrels of different olives that they would spoon out for your order and put in a cardboard container (no plastic!)

And besides the trays of fresh ricotta and mozzarella cheese, they also had a few trays of Greek feta and Kalamata olives, for the smattering of Greek households that were scattered amongst the other families on “The Island.”

Sure, we had a Jewel grocery store for eggs and milk and an ACE hardware, but for “the good stuff,” the freshest bread and



produce, we went to the local merchants who knew your name and knew exactly what olives or cheese to put in your order, making sure to not make a mistake and risk having your mother come back to ask Joe or Dominic “why her son came home with ‘last week’s cheese?’”

Now, mind you, my walk in Palaio Faliro was all going on at 9:00pm...and the walkways were full of people. EVERYBODY is out for their evening έλα εδώ αγάπη μου”, not at the end of a harness for their safety, but freely, within earshot, so if they hear, “γιαγιά και παππού, walking with their parents and παιδιά, from the teenagers walking and joking with each other to little 3 and 5 year old βόλτα, they come running back, laughing all the way.



Again, my mind drifted back to my childhood, when our mothers sat on the back porches talking with the other mothers, while we were playing in the courtyard with our friends, a few flights below. No one worried if a stranger was going to suddenly show up to cause some harm...but when we heard those magic words from mom, or we heard “that special whistle” when our dad returned home from work, we

knew the night play time was over, so up the back flights of stairs we ran...right into the strong arms of dad.

And as I grew into a teenager and was allowed to hang out at the schoolyard during summer nights...we’d have a game of “clinchier” softball or sometimes pitch pennies...but everybody got along with each other...and when it started getting dark and the streetlights went on, that was the signal to head home.

So, here I am, 60 years later, walking down the sidewalks in Palaio Faliro...its own “little Island”, far from the hustle and rush of Athens. Perhaps that is why Greece feels so familiar to me...not because I had been here before, but because it reminds me of my neighborhood, where people still knew one another.



I’ll keep observing and begin to be a part of this community and lifestyle in Greece...a community that reminds me of those beautiful “days gone by.”



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SHIPOWNER DR. NIKOLAS TSAKOS JOINS PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE EFFECTS OF HORMUZ CRISIS ON THE GLOBAL ENERGY SUPPLY CHAIN

by Athena Efter



The Strait of Hormuz crisis and its effect on the world's energy supply and economy was the topic of the day at Columbia Business School's panel discussion on "The New Art of Energy War" at Reed Smith in New York City. Hosted by attorney Niovi Christodoulou, Chair of the Global Business and Tech Committee of the Columbia Business School Alumni Club, the event featured prominent speakers such as Dr. Nikolas Tsakos, the prominent Greek shipowner and CEO of Tsakos Energy Navigation, Ltd. as well as several other experts on both global energy policy and investment. Moderated by energy consultant Yavuz Arik, the discussion provided some insightful observations by all those participating.

The discussion began with a question on the immediate pragmatic consequences of the supply and demand disruption. Dr. Tsakos explained that the cost of energy transport is based on the cost of the product delivered. Since the crisis began it has gone up fivefold. Especially notable since 60 percent of the world's oil is moved by sea. He mentioned a current workaround in which his ships could dock in Syria and thousands of trucks could then move the oil to Europe.

The next question revolved around how producers of energy have been affected by infrastructure beyond their control. To which, Alex Whittington, an executive at Cheniere Energy, one of the US's largest natural gas suppliers said every node along the supply chain has vulnerabilities, but, being that the US is the world's largest natural gas supplier, the affect has been minimal since natural gas moves across the Atlantic to Europe.

The panel conceded that the current crisis makes for some tumultuous times because of the one-two punch of the capture of Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela, as well as the war with Iran. That a shortage of 20 million barrels a day could lead to a one billion-barrel disruption in the aggregate. There's also a larger disparity in how refiners see the crisis as opposed to Wall Street, which could lead to unpredictable fluctuations in the markets.



As the topic moved onto the Qatar LNG (liquefied natural gas) plants that were damaged in the Iran war, there was a conclusion that about 17 percent of the world's LNG production would be wiped out at the outset. Dr. Tsakos said that pragmatically there would be no "winners" from that crisis because the demand for renewable energy has been very elastic over the past two decades. He added that things will fluctuate in an environment where renewables are promoted in lieu of fossil fuels and that "losers" could be those who, ironically, invested in greener LNG investments.

Whittington also added that the big loser in the crisis is South Asia: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and that Europe would be much less affected since it only imports about the 3 percent of the total gas supply. The biggest risk to LNG is the long term demand in Southeast Asia, and it is further complicated by the fact that no one knows when the conflict will end. Diego Rivera Rota, of Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy agreed with the panel and added that rising prices would affect Southeast Asia because other products, such as fertilizer which is dependent on LNG for production, will face severe inflation. He also mentioned that in the immediate timeframe Russia is in a good position because the sanctions were lifted. Other beneficiaries would include coal producers. He mentioned that China was in a unique position because of its infrastructure to function more and more on renewable energy.

Olga Khakova of the Atlantic Council's Global Energy Center, also agreed with the panel, but indicated that the bigger existential threat of a "loser" in all of this could really be the climate and pointed out the ecological calamity that could result. She also added how all other

industries are affected by this disruption. If fertilizer supply is affected so then is the global food supply chain, she added as ready example.

Tsakos emphasized that one of the residual effects of the closing of the Strait of Hormuz has been the spike in insurance premiums which went up to five percent per the value of the cargo. It's also complicated insurance on crew safety which has already gone up because of Houthi pirates who've prompted rerouting through the Suez Canal. When asked about



US-Greek relations during the current crisis, Tsakos stated that the current war in the Ukraine has forced Europe to find LNG suppliers from across the Atlantic which has been beneficial to Greek shipping companies. He also mentioned, however, that the US may start building ships again, but that would be a very long term project to actualize. Whittington added that there has been increased investment in Asia to build cargo ships, especially in South Korea.

The discussion then moved on to global policy and the role of shipping in the policymaking arena. Tsakos stated that because shipping tends to have a much smaller seat at the table because the industry is both viewed as unglamorous and is mostly controlled by private companies, but a growing number such as his own company, TEN Ltd., are on of the dozen or so to be publicly traded. Whittington further added that governments are still unsure of how to react to the crisis because of the volatility of the situation and its ripple effects on elevated prices across the globe on all products dependent on oil and LNG. He also mentioned that the US, the world's largest natural gas supplier, tends to have relative independence as the American government doesn't interfere with its business model. The panel also agreed that Europe needs to establish ways of creating its own LNG procurement strategy by potentially creating a "buyer's club" which could be beneficial to all parties along the supply chain.

The panel then discussed the future of renewable energy and how that may or may not be jumpstarted by the Hormuz crisis. The speakers agreed that for several regions such as South America and China there's been a better infrastructure to create a baseline for renewables, but Tsakos stated that a well-developed transition to renewable energy would be a long time away and that the best strategy would be to maintain the current supply of fossil fuels and natural gas to allow the time for that infrastructure to be built.

Finally, the discussion ended with a talk about both what the future holds and what China's position in it is. Tsakos said that shippers simply want to do their job with "toll free" roads and no tariffs and that the expectation of a peaceful resolution to the conflict would take at least six months for the global supply chain to normalize and have prices come down to pre-crisis levels. He added that shipping is still the most environmentally friendly way to move energy supply around the world and that the current rates, if they continue, could become unsustainable. He also remarked that China's exposure to the crisis has been less than expected because of their self-sufficiency and the State purchases of significant reserves.

Ms. Christodoulou thanked Dr. Tsakos and the other guests for their participation and concluded the talk by emphasizing that the chokepoint at the Strait of Hormuz has made clear the domino effect of vulnerability on the multilayered systems that are in place which keep the world's energy supply moving. That, in a way, it would have the positive effect of preparing for future crises by understanding all the moving parts that are affected and coming up with viable solutions at every point in the supply chain.

Alexandrian Dreams

by James Terezakis

The sun began its slow descent on the Agora in the ancient city of Pergamon.

Pergamon is an ancient Asia Minor city of 200,000 indigenous people. A polyglot of local slaves and immigrant Greeks from the mainland and Aegean islands.

"Pergamon" was known for its great library, vibrant marketplace and its "Temple of Zeus" and was complete with its wooden theater.

Perdaeus, an immigrant from Mytilene was closing his two kiosks at the Agora. Two kiosks he had for 25 years, selling fine ceramic vases. His inventory included fine linens, as well as foods like cheese, grains, lentil beans, olive oils and wines.

Perdaeus had come 30 years ago as a poor immigrant from Mytilene. He had married a local girl, Ariadne. They had a family of 2 boys and settled just outside the main city in a quiet suburb. The town was Myrina - 5 kilometers outside of Pergamon.

Perdaeus loaded his donkey and began his walk home. The walk home was the same every day, passing homes and farms. Exhausted, he finally arrived at the homestead- a modest 4 rooms designed around a courtyard.

Perdaeus, tired but happy, greeted his Ariadne. She had prepared a feast tonight. The occasion was their son Nestor's announcement. He had won a scholarship to the "Mouseion in Alexandria." The Mouseion of Alexandria was the most famous learning and research center in all the world.

The table was prepared. There was pork, anchovies, sardines and shellfish. Olives, goat cheese and feta. The dessert of figs, raisins, honey and fruit.

Nestor and his brother, Achilles, were already seated. Perdaeus sat at the head of the table. Ariadne, seeing that everything was set, announced that Nestor had been accepted into the Mouseion to study medicine and science.

Perdaeus, busy eating, seemed unaffected. Nestor, frowning, said, "Father, aren't you impressed?"

"Why should I be impressed?" replied Perdaeus.

"Pergamon has the Asklepieion dedicated to the son of Apollo. I have built a thriving business at the Agora that I wanted you to take over," Perdaeus said.

Nestor now replied angrily, "I don't have any intentions of selling lentil beans and ceramic plates!"

"My son, that business has paid for your home and education up to this point!"

"I'm sick of Pergamon! I'm leaving for Alexandria! I hope I never see this place again!" Nestor said, running to his room.

Achilles kept eating quietly.

"By the Gods, Perdaeus. Why were you so mean to Nestor?" asked Ariadne.

Perdaeus slammed the table and left to his room. Ariadne ran to Nestor's room.

To be continued in the next issue.

THE 41st PSEKA CYPRUS CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, DC



Hellenic Leaders gather for the 41st annual PSEKA Cyprus Conference

The 41st annual PSEKA Cyprus Conference hosted by PSEKA, with the leadership of its president Philip Christopher, took place in Washington, DC on June 9-11. It was cosponsored by AHEPA, AHI, HABA, the

US Senators in positions key to the future of Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean addressed a robust group of over 80 Hellenes dedicated to Hellenic issues. The Cyprus Government Spokesman Konstantinos



(left to right) Minister Michael Damianos, Philip Christopher, H.E. Ambassador Evangelos Savva, and Cyprus Government Spokesman Konstantinos Letymbiotis

Cyprus-US Chamber of Commerce, FCAO, the Chian Federation, and the Pancyprian Association of America, and coordinated by Manatos & Manatos/Coordinated Effort of Hellenes.

Cyprus Minister of Energy, Commerce and Industry Michael Damianos addressed the group on its opening day and attended the reception hosted in the home of the H.E. Ambassador of Cyprus Evangelos Savva, before travelling to Houston to participate with other cabinet members in the 3+1 meetings.

Twenty-five US Members of Congress and six

Letymbiotis, joined this year by his wife Irene, gave remarks as did of course Ambassador Evangelos Savva and Ambassador of Greece Antonis Alexandridis.

The Greek-American delegation included: Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV), Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Rep. Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY), Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH), Rep. Maggie Goodlander (D-NH), Rep. Mike Haridopolos (R-FL), and Rep. Jimmy Patronis (R-FL)

The attendees also heard from Julie Fishman Rayman, Senior Vice President of the American Jewish Committee, Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of the Armenian National Committee of America and John Kirakou, former CIA agent and influencer who reaches tens of millions of listeners.

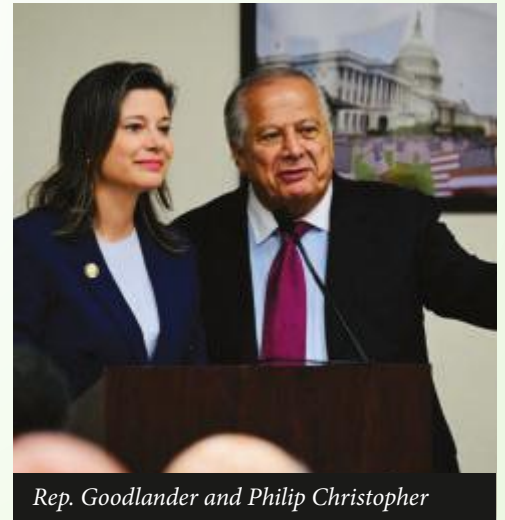
The evening banquet provided an opportunity for Cyprus Government

PHOTO: DIMITRIOS PANAGOS

Spokesman Konstantinos Letymbiotis to give a keynote address and for Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Michael Kratsios to give remarks and be presented with a special award.

The two and a half day conference concluded with a stimulating panel discussion on Cyprus energy, commerce and trade led by Demetrios Comodromos, president of the Cyprus-US Chamber of Commerce with

participation by Nicolas Nicolaou, founder of Kinisis Ventures and past president of the Cyprus-US Chamber of Commerce, Member of European Parliament Geadis Geadis and Niovi Christopoulou, Partner at AI.fund.



Rep. Goodlander and Philip Christopher



Speaker Emerita Pelosi with Hellenic Leaders along with HE the Ambassadors of Greece and Cyprus, the Cyprus Government Spokesman and the member of the European Parliament




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HABA Honors Dean Dakolias as 2026 Executive of the Year

by Athena Efter

PHOTO: ETA PRESS



Mr. Dean Dakolias, the Executive of the Year award recipient

This year, The Hellenic-American Bankers Association (HABA) honored Dean Dakolias, former Co-Chairman of Fortress Investment Group at its annual “Executive of the Year” awards dinner. Dean Dakolias was co-founder and Managing Partner of American Commercial Capital LLC, a specialty finance company, and Coronado Advisors, an SEC-registered broker-dealer. Both firms were acquired by Wells Fargo & Co. in 2001. In that same year, he moved on to become Co-Chairman of Fortress Investment Group, where he also served as Co-Chief Investment Officer for the firm’s Credit Funds for 25 years.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Dakolias is deeply involved in philanthropy, education, and international development. He serves as Treasurer and Trustee of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, the oldest and largest North American research institution dedicated to the study of Greek history, archaeology, and culture. He is also a board member of Endeavor Greece, an organization focused on fostering entrepreneurship and economic growth to support Greece’s economic recovery.

A strong advocate for refugee and humanitarian causes, Dakolias has dedicated particular attention to supporting vulnerable populations arriving in Greece, including unaccompanied minors, at-risk women, and survivors of torture. He supports

organizations such as METAdrasi, which provides comprehensive resettlement services through innovative public-private partnerships.

Dakolias is also a co-founder and Executive Committee member of The Hellenic Initiative, a global nonprofit supporting economic development and crisis relief in Greece, and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Physics from Columbia University, where he was a four-year member of the Lightweight Crew team. He continues to support his alma mater through service on the Columbia Engineering School’s Board of Visitors and the University’s Athletic Leadership Committee.

Maria C. Miles, entertainment attorney and President of the Board of the Trustees of the Hellenic Film Society served as the host for the evening. In her opening remarks, she welcomed friends, colleagues, and leaders of the Hellenic-American community, and introduced the mission of HABA, formed in 1982, “to promote the professional and educational interests of the Greek-Americans and Pan-Hellenes in the banking and finance sectors”, stating that today the organization has a membership of over 1000 active professional across the industry. She invited His Grace Bishop Athenagoras of Nanzianos to the podium to give an invocation, followed by James Gerkis, Vice President of HABA,

who thanked Dean Dakolias for being the honoree this year, as well as welcomed various attendees including the Secretary General for the Greek Diaspora for Greeks Abroad and Public Diplomacy Maira Myrogianni, the Permanent Representative of Greece to the UN Aglaia Balta, the Consul General of Greece in New York Iphigenia Kanara, Consul General of the republic of Cyprus Kyriakos Pogiatzis, Judge Michael Hartofilis of the Supreme Court of Queens County, along with former HABA presidents, and past honorees Nicolas Bornozis and Dean of Columbia Business School Costis Maglaras.

Secretary General for the Greek Diaspora for Greeks Abroad and Public Diplomacy Maira Myrogianni took to the podium and addressed the importance of solidarity and connection among the Greek diaspora and how that contributes to success. The Consul General of Cyprus in New York Kyriakos Pogiatzis resonated the remarks of fellow dignitary Maira Myrogianni, highlighting the Dean Dakolias’ work in his efforts to connect the Greek-American community to Greece.

Costas Kellas, Treasurer of HABA, was introduced as the next speaker, who thanked all the sponsors including platinum sponsors Fortress Investment Group and Reed Smith LLP; Gold sponsors Dakolias Family, Daniel S. Janis III, Motor Oil Hellas S.A., Navios Partners LP; Silver sponsors Andrew and Paul Liveris, Broadridge Financial Solutions, KPS Capital Partners, LP, The Crimson Lion/Lavine Family Foundation; Bronze sponsors Anthony Diamandakis, Capital Link, Chuck Peck, Columbia University, Flagstar Private Bank, FundStudio, Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP, GL/RJ, Hellenic Lawyers Association, Heritage Realty Services LLC, James P. Gerkis (Norm Ai), Libra Group, Lountzis Asset Management, LLC, MacArthur Capital Group, Maria Pappas, Piraeus Bank; and Friend sponsors Alma Bank, Hellenic-American Chamber of Commerce, Marwick Associates. In addition, he thanked those in attendance from the Hellenic Medical Society, Hellenic Film Society, the Cyprus-U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the Baltic American Chamber of Commerce.

After a brief intermission, Mari Miles introduced Gibson Dunn Partner George P. Stamas, who is also President of the Board and Co-Founder of the Hellenic Initiative, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and a director of the Paris based Soparexo s.a., the parent company of Chateau Margaux. He



The board of Directors of HABA with the Honoree, Mr. Dean Dakolias

congratulated HABA for their 44 years of service and mentioned that the last time he took the podium at a HABA dinner was when they honored the late Alex Navab, who was a founding director of The Hellenic Initiative, and compared honoree Dean Dakolias to Alex Navab in his accomplishments, “building Fortress Group into a giant on Wall Street”, noting that Dean himself invested almost 200 billion dollars around the world, travelling extensively throughout every business community around the world. Most importantly he noted that he is the embodiment of philanthropy through his work with Hellenic Initiative and became the organization’s moral compass with the human side of Dean outweighing all of his business accomplishments. He also noted Dean’s “overwhelming focus on the plight of refugees in Greece. He sees in them what we’ve all dealt with, either our generation, our parents, our grandparents...the challenges of a new land, the reliance of family values, the importance to a country’s future of a society that promotes assimilation, not pushing it away. We see in Dean, the real Dean, a long list of pursuits dedicated to the importance of a society preserving Greek culture and heritage.” He then addressed Dean directly, remarking that he is “an unending inspiration to Hellenes and philhellenes worldwide...ending it with “axios”, which was followed by applause and shout-outs of “axios”, which means worthy and deserving in Greek.

Also speaking on the honoree’s behalf was Costas Maglaras, Dean of Columbia Business School, who echoed the words of George Stamas, referring to Dean’s “moral compass”, as the Vice Chair of the Columbia Business School Board of Trustees, and calling him a “true steward” of the institution’s true mission to excel in education and research, tirelessly pushing them into that direction. He also highlighted Dean’s efforts in bringing people together,

with his strategic insight, he is helping countries is helping Columbia Business School with a highly ambitious program at the Athena Polytechnic Institute.

The Honoree, Dean Dakolias was then presented with an award by the Board of HABA. In his speech, Mr. Dakolias, paid homage to his friend and fellow Columbia Business School alumnus Alex Navab. He then talked about his roots and added some humor about how his mother would say she was from Mani or Sparti, depending on her

stories of his parents and grandparents, and how he wished he had made more time to learn more about their stories. He offered advice to the younger generation and encouraged them to capture those stories that shaped their parents and grandparents’ journeys, while they are still alive. He then talked about the importance of helping people in countries that are struggling develop more skills. He noted that his mother was one of few women in her day that went on to receive an MBA and PhD in finance, and that his father earned his PhD in Economics at Columbia University, and recounted the story of how he was not allowed into the US for 6 months. During that time, he worked on a freighter and learned German, until he could reenter the

country. He talked about the importance of “pushing the freedom of dialogue at universities”, something that has been lost over the years. He concluded his speech by quoting Bob Dylan, whom he jokingly referred to as a famous Greek philosopher with “strange how people who suffer together have strong connections that people who are content”, and in the spirit of that message he ended his speech by stating that “today our collective bonds are as strong as they have ever been, I hope we never grow content breaking those bonds.”



From left, Costa Kellas, treasurer of HABA, Maira Myrogiannis, Secretary of Greeks Abroad, Dean Dakolias, Honoree, and Ifigenia Kanara, Consul General of Greece in NY

mood. He talked about his journey parents journey and added that they experienced the hardships of a civil war and quoted his mother as saying “they often felt like refugees in their own country”, which inspired his mission to help refugees in Greece today. He also talked about how all he had of their journeys are the

Closing remarks were given by Chris Thomas, the President of HABA, who highlighted that membership to HABA continues to increase, especially among younger members with recent college graduates joining, which show promise for the organization’s future. He encouraged applications for this membership to continue.

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THE HELLENIC INITIATIVE EXPANDS MICROFINANCE SUPPORT TO THE PELOPONNESE

George P. Stamas, President and Co-Founder, The Hellenic Initiative, commented: "This partnership is Diaspora investment in its purest form: capital and know-how flowing back to the very villages and towns that sent so many of our families abroad generations ago. This program lets us turn that connection into real jobs and real businesses on the ground."

Andrew N. Liveris, Chairman and Co-Founder, The Hellenic Initiative, added: "The Hellenic Initiative was founded on the idea that the Diaspora and Greece succeed together, not as donor and recipient but as partners. This program is that idea in practice: local expertise from AFI, local roots from CVF and the global reach of our Diaspora network all aligned behind entrepreneurs in the Peloponnese. Programs like this are how we build long-term resilience in Greece's regions, not just short-term relief."

The Hellenic Initiative (THI) is a global nonprofit organization that brings together the Greek diaspora and Philhellenes to invest in Greece's future through programs that support economic development, entrepreneurship, and crisis relief. Since its founding in 2012, THI has mobilized resources and partnerships to create opportunities, strengthen communities, and foster long-term growth and prosperity.

For more information, their website is thehellenicinitiative.org

The Hellenic Initiative announced a new partnership with AFI Microfinance (AFI) and the Captain Vasilis & Carmen Constantakopoulos Foundation (CVF) to launch a microfinance program supporting local entrepreneurship and agrifood business development across the Peloponnese. The program "Supporting Local Development and Agrifood Entrepreneurship in the Peloponnese", opened for applications on July 1 and targets new and existing businesses in the regional units of Messinia, Laconia and Arcadia.

The partnership brings together THI's global network of Diaspora Greeks and Philhellenes, AFI's proven microfinance infrastructure, and CVF's deep, place-based commitment to Messinia to unlock capital for entrepreneurs who have historically struggled to access traditional bank financing. Eligible businesses can receive up to €25,000 in financing at a fixed 3.5% interest rate, with no guarantor or collateral required, a grace period of up to six months, and reduced processing fees of 1.5% - terms designed specifically to help founders modernize, grow, and sustain their businesses.

The program is open to businesses across all sectors with up to one year of operating history, with particular emphasis on the agrifood ecosystem - including primary production, processing, marketing and export of agrifood products, as well as agri-technology solutions that support modernization and sustainable growth. Businesses in this category face no limit on years of operation. THI and its partners expect the program to support approximately 60 agrifood businesses across the three regional units.

Beyond financing, participants will receive mandatory training delivered by AFI's specialized partners and, for beneficiaries in the primary sector, in collaboration with the American Farm School, covering entrepreneurship, financial management and sustainable agricultural practices.

For THI, the program is also a direct expression of its mission to connect the Greek Diaspora with the regions its members come from. Messinia, Laconia and Arcadia have sent generations of emigrants abroad - to the United States, Australia and beyond - many of whose descendants remain active in THI's network today. The program gives the Diaspora a concrete way to reinvest in the places their families once left.

Stamatis Velegakis, Chief Executive Officer, AFI Microfinance, said: "Supporting local and decentralised development has always been at the core of what we do. With the valuable support of these two foundations, we aim to strengthen the local economy and entrepreneurship by offering access to financing, knowledge and advisory support."

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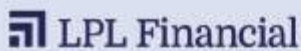
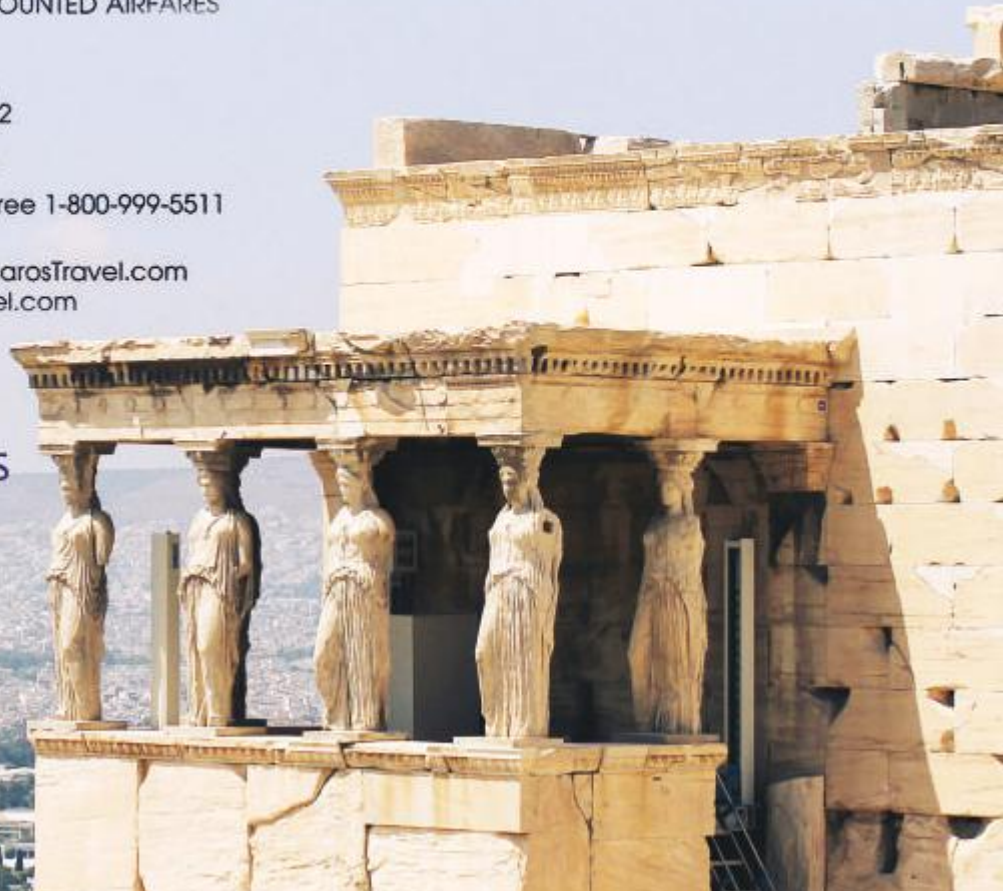
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Enjoy summer – have fun!

For those of us who are still here, enjoy. For those who went to Greece and Cyprus have fun and come back replenished, ready to work because we need your refreshed energy to move us along. Our community, the Greek-speaking sector of it, is in shambles! Nothing seems to work and how, since they are recycling older – not in age necessarily – people and failed practices expecting(?) different results. Greece isn't in better shape, despite the summer tourism boost. The Greek Tourism Organization advertises Greece to the Greek media in New York, only those that publish in Greek, because it's the Greeks from here that are needed to save the old country from itself! Good luck! Cronyism, stupidity, mediocrity are in the forefront of everything!

Sorry, friends, I didn't mean to spoil the summer mood, but sometimes a little spoiling goes a long way. Or more likely nowhere, like me this summer. Health issues have anchored me here, in the heat, the humidity and the brown water of the local beaches. Worse, I can't drink or smoke or even eat many, if not, most things. Which makes not going to Greece this year less burdensome, because who wants a vacation with so many restrictions?

Anyway, have fun whether you cross the Atlantic or not, and take advantage of everything good in your life! There is always time for worries after the trip...

by **Demetrios Rhompotis**
dondemetrio@neomagazine.com

continued from page 38

Regarding the title of the current chapter of his life, he revealed, "Gratitude."

Wagner has been happily married to his wife, Jill St. John (the inaugural Bond Girl in "Diamonds are Forever") for well over 36 years. They reside in Aspen, Colorado.

Family is of utmost importance to Wagner. He has three daughters, Katie, a television and media personality, Natasha, an actress and author, and Courtney, a jewelry designer, as well as his two grandchildren, Riley (Katie's son) and Clover (Natasha's daughter), and Josh Donen, his stepson. "7th Heaven" actor Barry Watson is his son-in-law (Natasha's husband). "Barry is so great. He is such a wonderful young man, and I am very happy that he is in my life," Wagner said.

On his definition of success, he noted that, "success has brought me a lot of happiness. I've had some wonderful moments, and I am very thankful for how my career has turned out."

American track and field running icon Steve Prefontaine once said: "To give anything less than your best, is to sacrifice the gift." Robert Wagner best exemplifies this quote by the running legend.

Wagner's longevity in the entertainment industry has made him one of the most recognizable actors of his era, and rightfully so.

Beyond his acting career, Wagner has authored memoirs reflecting on his experiences in Hollywood, and his relationships with many of the industry's most notable figures.

His career remains distinguished by versatility, longevity, and his lasting contributions to the entertainment industry. Wagner will go down in history as one of the most significant actors that American cinema and television has ever known.



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Robert Wagner talks about the Golden Age of Hollywood and recalls filming in Greece

by Markos Papadatos

Robert Wagner, who is a living legend in every sense of the word, chatted with Greek-American journalist Markos Papadatos about “Hart to Hart” and his illustrious career in film, stage, and television.

“The important thing in life is not victory but combat; it is not to have vanquished but to have fought well,” said Pierre de Coubertin, French Educator who was primarily responsible for the revival of the Olympic Games in 1894. Robert Wagner embodies this wise quote. He starred in over 100 films, and he has guest-starred in more than 150 television shows.

Robert Wagner is an American actor who is best known for his work in film and television, which spans more than seven decades. He was born on February 10, 1930, in Detroit, Michigan, and he rose to prominence in the 1950s with a series of starring roles in Hollywood films before becoming a familiar television presence in subsequent decades. He is affectionately known as “RJ.”

Wagner has appeared in numerous motion pictures throughout his career such as “A Kiss Before Dying,” “The Pink Panther,” and “Harper.” He is one of the last surviving leading men of the “Golden Age of Hollywood.” On being a part of the “Golden Age of Hollywood,” he said, “It’s an honor, and it’s a fortune and a blessing. I am just very fortunate.”

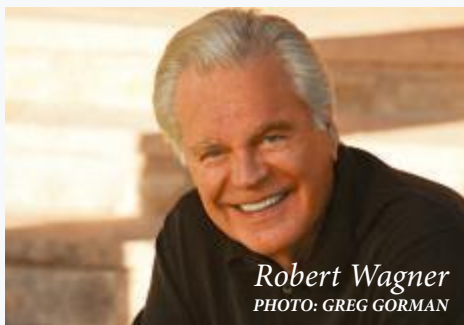
Wagner achieved widespread television success as the star on the popular series “It Takes a Thief,” “Switch,” and “Hart to Hart,” the latter of which earned him enduring recognition as Jonathan Hart opposite actress Stefanie Powers as Jennifer Hart.

Speaking of “Hart to Hart,” he described it as the role or project that has brought him the greatest sense of joy. “I would say ‘Hart to Hart’ has a lot to do with a sense of fulfillment,” he said. “I loved Jonathan’s attitude, and I like what he did,” Wagner admitted about what he enjoyed most about his iconic character.

Earlier this year, Wagner reunited with his “Hart to Hart” co-star Stefanie Powers. “That was a nice shot,” he said, about the picture of them that he posted on his social media pages. “Stephanie was incredible to work with on ‘Hart to Hart,’ and she does great work with the William Holden Wildlife Foundation.”

Wagner praised the exceptional writing of the mystery TV series “Hart to Hart.” “The writing on the show was excellent,” he exclaimed. “That was all Tom Mankiewicz and Mart Crowley. We had a lot of very good writers on the show.”

In the police procedural TV series “NCIS,” Wagner portrayed Anthony DiNozzo, Sr., the father of Tony DiNozzo (played by Michael Weatherly). “I loved ‘NCIS.’ I liked all the cast members, and it was such a wonderful way to kind of wind down my career while being on that show! ‘NCIS’ still has such a dedicated fan following,” he said.



Wagner had worked in Hollywood across many different decades and eras. Regarding the changes in the entertainment industry that have surprised him the most, he observed, “The whole entertainment business has changed

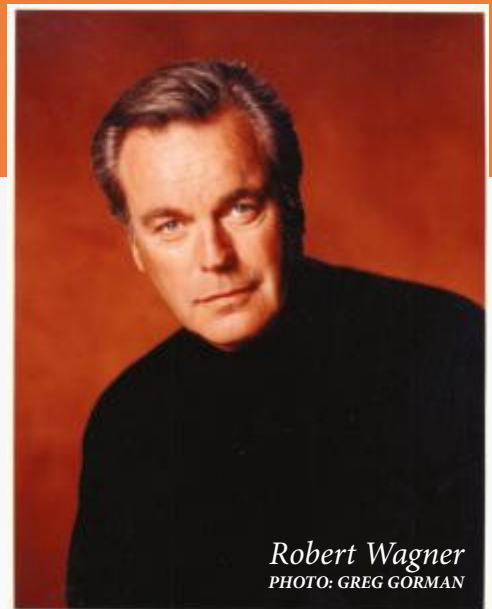
tremendously, you know. That is a tough question to answer. It’s the digital age now with streaming and social media. Streaming in itself is difficult,” he noted. “These days, there is too much content to the point where it’s oversaturated.”

On the key to longevity in the acting and entertainment business, he shared, “Well, the roles have been good, and I’ve had some very lucky moments, you know? Those play a great deal in longevity.”

For young and aspiring actors, he said, “Get set for rejection, especially now because it’s the age of self-tapes. You don’t even go into an audition room anymore. The whole audition process has changed so much! I think I was very fortunate to be in the position that I was, and in the business at the time that I was,” he acknowledged.

In addition to his leading roles, Wagner introduced himself to new generations of audiences through recurring appearances in film and television projects, including the “Austin Powers” film series, in which he portrayed Number Two, who was the nefarious henchman of Dr. Evil, the nemesis of Mike Myers’ titular role.

For Wagner, the “Austin Powers” trilogy was such a remarkable experience. “That was so great,” he admitted. “Should Mike Myers ever decide to do another one, I still have the eyepatch and I’m ready to put the patch on!”



Robert Wagner
PHOTO: GREG GORMAN

This past February, he turned 96 years old, which is quite the milestone. “Well, that felt great,” he exclaimed. “I am very happy. My wife, Jill, is so wonderful to me and my kids. I want to tell you that it’s a real pleasure.”

When asked to reflect on his impressive and lengthy body of acting work, he is proud of the following accomplishments: “Well, I think some of the relationships that I’ve sustained with some of the people that I’ve worked with has been a great deal. Let’s remember... it’s always entertainment.”

If Wagner were to have any superpower, he responded, “That’s a wonderful question. I think I would like the power to understand.” “I would like to understand more, you know?”

Wagner had great words about the country of Greece. In the early ‘80s, he traveled to Athens, Greece, and to the Greek island of Rhodes to film on-location for the “Hart to Hart” episodes titled “Passing Chance” and “Death Dig” respectively.

“I’ve been to Greece, and I love it there so much! We had such a great time there... the food, the people, the mountains and the beaches. It was such a wonderful trip, and Greece is such a beautiful place,” he recalled about his experience in there.

Speaking of Greece, he played the role of Greek sponge fisherman in the 1953 classic film “Beneath the 12-Mile Reef,” but ironically enough, that was not filmed in Greece. In reality, that movie was shot on location in Tarpon Springs, Florida, which is known as “Little Greece” in the United States.

For his dedicated fans and supporters, Wagner expressed, “I appreciate everything that the fans have done for me all these years. They have been with me for so long, and I love that the fact that my fans are multigenerational; that’s incredible. The fans have just been so great to me, so passionate, and they are so kind. I am forever indebted to them.”

An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely Chicago, viewed from a high vantage point. The city is densely packed with skyscrapers and buildings, extending to a shoreline. The water is a deep blue-green, and the sky is filled with soft, golden clouds from a setting or rising sun. In the foreground, a large American flag is draped across the bottom half of the image, its stars and stripes clearly visible. The flag appears to be waving in a breeze.

Happy 4th of July!

Michael and Robin Psaros & Family



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