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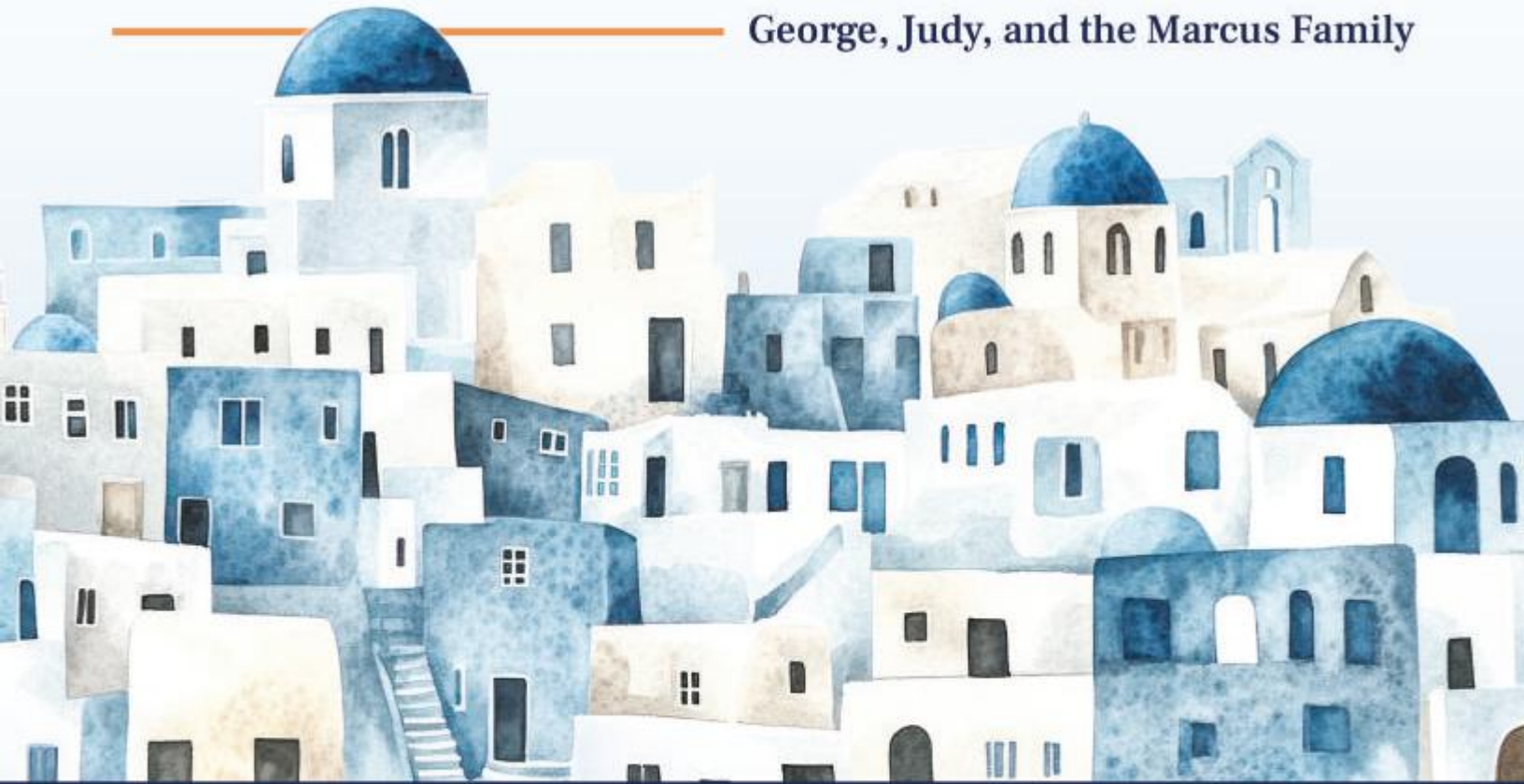
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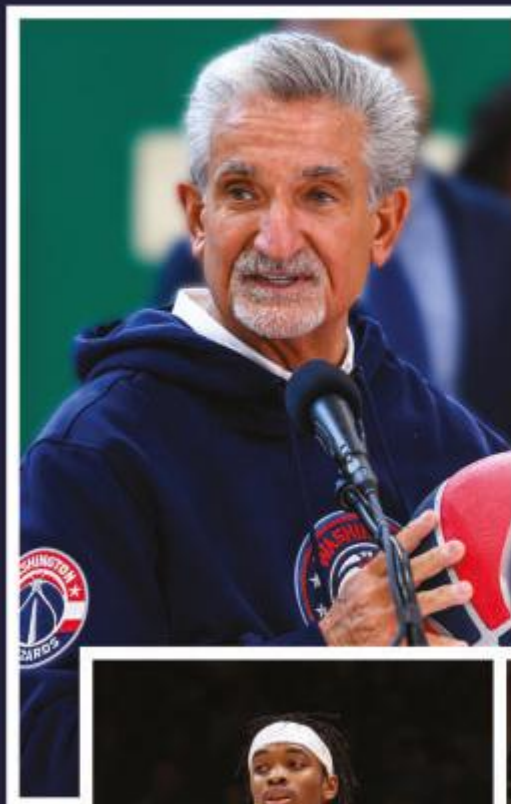
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HAS IT BEEN TWENTY YEARS?

As I mention in our cover story about the founding of NEO twenty years ago, we had an idea and an ambition, that seemed improbable then, because we had been hardened in the trenches of the Greek press, where nothing lasted for very

long, unless it was the newsletter of a civic group, and an occasional magazine would pop up, glossy and mysteriously-funded, but then just as mysteriously disappear from view: Was it even still printing?

Those were the treacherous waters we entered back when everything was printed and subscriptions were key to getting ads (now it's the hits and eyeballs on the internet). But we felt it's about time. I asked my nephews and nieces if they ever read the Greek press. And they looked at me with round eyes but tried to be polite: Like which ones? they said and tried to think of any.

There were none for the generations born in America and, for better or worse, getting most of their news and information in English. Just a scattering of civic bulletins and newsletters, and the occasional efforts of the Greek-speaking press to publish something in English that they soon realized very few English speakers would read—our new generations were not reading the Greek press in any language.

Which we tried to remedy, by publishing in English from the start, and featuring some of our best and brightest of the new generation, but also paying tribute to the generations that made their success possible: a magazine that would bridge the generation gap.

And through dogged efforts, we have kept to that purpose, and NEO is now a lasting part of our Greek American landscape, with features on most of the movers and shakers of all our generations. They self-made tycoons who made our society possible, and have funded many of our institutions, and the new tycoons of our media world, politics, business, entertainment, and civic life, who are bringing us into a brave new world.

We honor them all, for their achievements, we wish them many more, and we thank all those who have supported our efforts over all these many years: as Dimitri Rhompotis has said, this is a communal effort, and our community has supported us and given us the courage to persist.

Thank you from all of us at NEO, you have inspired us, as we have tried to inspire you with all the wonderful achievements of our Greek world.

DIMITRI C. MICHALAKIS

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“OXI” AND ITS LESSONS FOR TODAY

by Dean Kalimniou*

There are a number of reasons why OXI, an event that took place some eighty five years ago, still resonates with the Greek people, quite apart from the obvious fact that it is an event that is still within living memory. OXI is one of those events that fits neatly within the national mythology of the small, plucky, fiercely independent and ultimately patriotic and self-sacrificing people that we have constructed around ourselves. We may be dysfunctional, fractious and self-destructive, but when all is said and done, we come together in times of crisis to defend our fraught patch of earth, with fearsome results.

It is important to remember, however, that OXI was not an abstract pronouncement issued into the void. It was the deliberate response of Ioannis Metaxas, the Greek dictator who, though he may have sympathised ideologically with Fascist Germany and borrowed liberally from its authoritarian model, could not bring himself to acquiesce in the reduction of Greece to a vassal state. Whatever his political affinities, when confronted with Mussolini's ultimatum, he gave voice to the instinctive refusal of the Greek people to submit. This paradox — an authoritarian ruler articulating the principle of freedom — underscores the enduring truth that the spirit of OXI transcends political systems and personalities.

The traditional celebration of OXI thus invites parallels with other events in Greek history in which it is believed that similar traits are exhibited. The 1821 Revolution in particular, is considered to be a close parallel, for there, much like in the case of the 1940 fighters, an oppressed, weak David combined to slay a gigantic Goliath and in the process, secure freedom. Furthermore, as was the case in 1940, that freedom was largely secured in the mountains of Greece.

Those who seek to prove doughtiness as a Greek trait may even be tempted to proceed further into the mists of history, seeking parallels in the Persian Wars of ancient times. In those wars, the fragmented and perpetually squabbling Greek city states put aside their differences and combined to defeat a superpower, in much the same way as the Greeks did in 1821 and 1940. If one was to draw the parallel further, one could claim that in the century after the Persian Wars, the Greek people combined under Alexander to take the fight to the Persians themselves, though this may be stretching the paradigm too far.

Our characterization of ourselves as indomitable rascals who come through in the end acts as balsam to our assuaged egos, at times of crisis. We tend to point to key events in our history such as OXI, 1821 and the Persian Wars, in order to prove that though we may be bankrupt, socially disintegrating and lacking in the esteem of the rest of the world, we still harbor within us

the dormant seeds of greatness, which seek only some further crisis as the catalyst by which to regenerate it. National poet Kostis Palamas expresses this aptly in the prophecy section of his epic poem *The Dodecalogue of the Gypsy*, in which he foresees: “Having no further step, down which to descend, upon the stair of Evil, you will feel, for the ascent which calls you, the sprouting of your wings, your former, great wings.” It comes as no great surprise that Kostis Palamas penned this work in response to another great catastrophe that blighted Greece: the failed war of 1897 and Greece's resulting bankruptcy.



Yet to view these key events isolated from the context in which they took place is to perhaps obfuscate our true nature. For while it is true that the freedom loving Greeks sacrificed a good deal in order to

secure their independence in 1940 and we are right to commemorate them, it is also true that the organized freedom fighters also divided in warring factions, concerned more with securing their own position and interests (which generally corresponded with that of their patrons), so that with the inevitable withdrawal of the Germans from Greece, they could seize power. A bloody and brutal Civil War ensued, whereby patriots bent on securing the freedom of Greece exterminated each other for having different views as to how that freedom actually was constituted. This in turn caused the armed intervention and in some cases, occupation by foreign powers such as Britain and Yugoslavia. The bitter after-effects of this conflict have blighted Greek society ever since.

Such internecine strife was not without precedent. The “glorious” 1821 captains, who so boldly led the Greek people in their fight against the oppressive Ottoman Empire, often proved to be more interested in abrogating to themselves the perquisites of the Pashas, rather than securing the equality and freedom of their people. In the furtherance of these interests, they fell upon each other, squabbling for power and position and ultimately, causing the first civil war of free Greece, in 1823–1824, when the heroic Kolokotronis refused to return the fort of Nafplion to the Greek state, and then, the second Greek civil war, between 1824–1825, when the noble Kolokotronis roused the residents of Tripolitsa against the local tax collectors of the government. As a result of the infighting, the Revolution itself was placed in peril and in fact it was through the intervention of no less a personage than Ibrahim Pasha, who was well on the way to conquering Peloponnesus for the Ottomans, that Kolokotronis, captured by Kolettis, was eventually released. Finally, the intervention of a British, Russian and French fleet was required to secure the independence that Greek infighting almost lost.

This too is not without precedent. For in the aftermath of the Persian Wars, the victorious Greek city states, instead of relishing their freedom, fell to fighting against each other in the Peloponnesian Wars and beyond. In doing so, they enlisted the assistance of their erstwhile enemy, Persia, which ended up, not only retaking the Asia Minor coastline of Ionia, whose revolt proved the catalyst for the war, but also becoming the arbiter of disputes between the Greeks. Again, Greek rule of the Greek areas liberated by the Persians was decidedly more brutal than that of the enemy itself. Archaeologists generally agree that the cities of Ionia exhibited markedly greater development after their re-subjugation to the Persians, than during the time of their rule by their Athenian compatriots.

Finally, if we are to include the Persian-empire busting achievements of Alexander within this paradigm, it is worthwhile considering that his diadochoi, fell to fighting each other, a fight that continued for centuries, culminating in their enlistment of the emerging Roman juggernaut as an arbiter of their disputes, and finally, their conqueror.

OXI then should not only function as a celebration and conduit for the expression of national pride, but also as a cautionary tale. After all, if the Persian Wars have an Ephialtes, the 1821 Revolution has a Piliou Goussis and 1940 has any number of sell-outs or traitors. We have a right to be proud of our spirited defence of our motherland throughout history. We do not however, have a right to completely ignore our inability to maintain a state of cohesion and our tendency to turn on each other in pursuit of our own interests, at the moment of triumph.

This, ultimately, is the deeper message of OXI: that the greatness of our resistance lies not only in the refusal to submit to an external enemy but also in our capacity to transcend the internal divisions that have so often undone us. The same spirit of free speech, critique and frank exchange that sustained the fighters of 1940 must inform the life of the Greek nation and its diaspora today. Our communities abroad, entrusted with safeguarding Hellenism in distant lands, are strongest when they are inclusive, transparent and democratic, when institutions are not used as instruments of exclusion but as platforms for participation. Just as Metaxas' personal leanings could not outweigh the imperative to defend national dignity, so too must our own private interests and animosities yield to the greater good of unity. OXI teaches us that when we open our ranks, we endure; when we close them, we become brittle, weak, and ultimately self-defeating.

Celebrating, as we have done, OXI from the bottom rungs of Kostis Palamas' ladder, we would do well to remember that our wings must not only sprout in times of peril but be guided wisely in times of calm. If they are steered by inclusiveness, they may lift us to heights worthy of our history; if by division, they will once again lead us too close to the sun.

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POWERHOUSE ACTRESS **MAIRA BONDRE** TAKES NY BY STORM

When any actor comes to New York, the place they want to visit is The Actors Studio, where Elia Kazan ruled, and Marlon Brando started a whole new school of acting, and every actor of note has studied there. And when Maira Bondre applied there, she heard back almost immediately—after coming from Greece and studying in England and while still wide-eyed in America.

“My very close colleague Stratos Eleftheriou came up with the idea that we go on their website and send them an inquiry,” she says, still breathless. “We’re actors in New York, we want to know how to be a part of the Studio—and they actually wrote back—and gave us a job! And working there is only the beginning—now I’m planning to audition and start my journey to become a full member!”

Which for Maira has been the arc of her meteoric acting career, that began with her first performances as a kid in Chalandri in Athens, to the National Theater of Greece, where she performed Andromache in *The Trojan Women*, Caliban in *The Tempest*, Family Stories on Alpha TV, which gave her national recognition, and then went to study acting in London—where she auditioned for the venerable Royal Academy of Arts.

“So it was a very good audition,” she remembers, “and we had a whole conversation about my previous roles, and they seemed very interested. Only the last question was: How old are you? And I told them seventeen—but the minimum was twenty-five!”

So she had to wait on that, but she did get into

the equally-prestigious East 15 Acting School (where many of the familiar faces in British theater and cinema have come from), through which she did several shows, including Bertolt Brecht’s *The Good Person of Szechuan*, and also got to perform for Queen Elizabeth at her Platinum 70th Jubilee—as a pansy.

“It was a pageant, with many dancers and performers, and a huge maple tree in front leading a field of pansies—and I was a giant pansy flower,” she says.

And besides the queen and the royal family (“The Queen would come out and wave to people—and I saw the royal family sitting in the bleachers and waving to everybody!”), Maira got her biggest audience so far, because the Jubilee was not only broadcast all over England, but all over the world to an audience of countless millions.

“It was a whole pageant,” she says.

But her dream, though, was still to come to America.

“I had been thinking about that since high school back in Greece,” she says, and now lives in Brooklyn. “I had always wanted to study and work here. I love Broadway. I wanted to see the theater scene. I wanted to expand my studies and experience as much as possible. And in New York, anything is possible.”

Her mother, Fay, came from Greece to help her settle in, and when she left, Maira had to learn for herself how to do those “serious adult things.”



“They sound very simple—” she laughs “—but to me they seemed like this huge task—like going to the bank, like paying my rent—those were my worries at the beginning! I remember calling my dad and almost crying: ‘Dad, I don’t know how to write a check!’”

Fortunately, she learned, while she began her



Academy—that were also my teachers. I really enjoyed my first year at the school.”

And then after graduation, the inevitable audition process began, but she was able to get a leading role almost immediately in a new play by Dimitri Michalakis called *The Visit of Mother Moses*—her first theater credit in America. Which would seem to be totally outside her realm of experience—it’s about former slave Harriet Tubman and her abolitionist friends during the Civil War—and yet Michalakis says Maira was a powerhouse on stage playing one of the daughters.

“She dominated the stage,” he says. “She delivered the lines like they were her own, and she was Ellen Wright, the haughty daughter who had grown up a Mormon in Auburn, New York and had worked with her mother to fight for abolitionism and women’s rights all her life: she was a revelation.”

in the theater, dream of going on Broadway, and being in a big show, and getting my work recognized. That would be amazing—but also to keep working on my art and become the best artist I can be.”

As for her Greek background?

“I’m very proud to be Greek,” she says, “so any chance I get to show my roots and show people through my art what it means to be Greek would be wonderful. I did ancient theater, and I would love to do it more—because the last time I did it I was very young. I would welcome any chance to show my roots through my art.”

She is, in fact, working on a number of other projects with Michalakis, a film series shot on the streets of New York about two young and aspiring Greek immigrants called *Lost in America*, a play about a young Greek immigrant working in the upscale homes of Greek American society while making a life of her own called *America America*, and another play called *Greek Radio*, about the lives of various Greek Americans as they go through their day listening to Greek radio in the background.

studies at the New York Film Academy, where, ironically for a theater kid, she first did a couple of films, often playing leads.

“They have a filmmaking program at the school, and a directing program,” she says. “And the directing students are always doing projects to get hands-on experience, and they need actors for those projects, so they come to us and we become a part of their films. So I got to work with a lot of great directors inside the

So what’s in her limitless future?

“I feel like this is just the beginning stage of my career,” she says, “and I’m very happy with everything I’ve done so far, but I want to wake up every day and work in the theater: I want to go as far as I can in this industry. I want to work

“And I would love to direct something at some point,” she says, dreaming big, even though she is only 24, but already making her mark in America. “I love all aspects of the theater, I want to be an actress, and I want to do everything!”



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Record-Breaking New York Greek Film Expo 2025 Closes

Hellenic Film Society celebrates the Expo's growth, announces awards

by Maria A. Karamitsos



During the final weekend of New York Greek Expo 2025, Hellenic Film Society presented a retrospective of the work of Master Filmmaker Pantelis Voulgaris. The director was awarded the HFS Lifetime Achievement Award. IMAGE COURTESY PANTELIS VOULGARIS

seven of the latest films from Greece, many of which were screened in the US or New York for the first time, plus a retrospective of the work of master filmmaker Pantelis Voulgaris. This year's Expo set attendance records. "We are overwhelmed by the audience response to this year's Expo, which saw its largest audience to date," said Maria C. Miles, HFS president. "And we're thrilled that, for many, it was their first time attending a Greek film."



(L-to-R) Greek stars on the Red Carpet. Director Angelos Frantzis; Actors Katia Goulioni, Andreas Konstantinou (MURPHY'S LAW); Angeliki Papoulia (ARCADIA); and Director Vladimir Subotic (UTOPOLIS) at New York Greek Film Expo 2025 Opening Night. IMAGE COURTESY ANASTASSIOS MENTIS/MENTIS STUDIO

Opening night

The Expo opened at the Directors Guild Theater in Manhattan, with a sold-out reception, featuring filmmakers and actors from Greece, followed by the US premiere of MURPHY'S LAW. The film, called a "psychoanalytic screwball comedy," was directed by Angelos Frantzis and stars Katia Goulioni and Andreas Konstantinou. The three participated in an audience Q&A at the conclusion of the film. Goulioni won the Best Performance Award for her "tour de force performance."

Opening weekend

The following evening, the Expo moved to the Village East Cinema in Manhattan for a weekend of screenings. It featured the New York premiere of MEAT, directed by Dimitris Nakos, who participated in an audience Q&A following the film. It's the story of a young Albanian man who may take the fall for a murder he did not commit. The film, which has garnered multiple awards including Hellenic Film Academy: Best Actor (Kostas Nikouli), received the festival's Audience Award. Moviegoers voted on their picks following each screening.



Hellenic Film Society President Maria C. Miles moderates an audience Q&A with Director Dimitris Nakos following the screening of MEAT. IMAGE COURTESY ANASTASSIOS MENTIS/MENTIS STUDIO

The weekend also included screenings of feature films like UTOPOLIS, directed by Vladimir Subotic, who along with lead actor Andreas Konstantinou participated in an audience Q&A after the film; WISHBONE, directed by Penny Panayotopoulou, who also appeared for an audience Q&A; and the multi-award-winning KYUKA: BEFORE SUMMER'S END, directed by Kostis Charamountanis. Also screened was ARCADIA, directed by Yorgos Zois, which was recently selected as Greece's entry for the 98th Academy Awards in the Best Foreign Film category. Zois and lead actress Angeliki Papoulia participated in a Q&A following the film.

Two shorts were presented. AGAPI, directed by Julia D. Speropoulos, is a hand-drawn animated film that follows 13-year-old Agapi and her family on a "death march" in 1921 that was meant to exterminate Pontian Greeks. GREENHOUSE, directed by Giorgos Georgakopoulos, is the story of a hardworking young Albanian immigrant who must overcome a series of hurdles to make his dream of a career in professional soccer come true.

TAKIS, a documentary film directed by Michael Roubis, about a man who devotes his life to rescuing stray animals in Crete, transforming local attitudes and inspiring

global support, received rave reviews from the audience. For this, the film received an honorable mention for Excellence in Social Impact. Members of the film's production team took part in an audience Q&A following the film.

Actors on Actors

The Consulate General of Greece in New York hosted a special, invite-only discussion and reception. In an Actors on Actors discussion, two-time Obie award-winning, Greek-American actor Dennis Boutsikaris and Andreas Konstantinou, one of Greece's top actors, teamed up for a fascinating discussion on acting and the art of filmmaking.



Hellenic Film Society President Maria C. Miles (far R) leads a discussion and audience Q&A about the film MURPHY'S LAW, with (L to R) Director Angelos Frantzis and Actors Andreas Konstantinou and Katia Goulioni. IMAGE COURTESY ANASTASSIOS MENTIS/MENTIS STUDIO

NY Greek Film Expo in New Jersey

The Expo moved to the Barrymore Film Center in Fort Lee, NJ for two screenings. LITTLE ENGLAND, directed by Pantelis Voulgaris, was shown on Tuesday, followed by an audience Q&A with lead actor Konstantinou. MEAT was presented on October 8.

Honoring Greece's master filmmaker

Finally, the Expo moved to the Museum of the Moving Image in Astoria for a retrospective of the films of Pantelis Voulgaris. One of Greece's most prominent directors, Voulgaris received HFS' Lifetime Achievement Award.

"As master filmmaker Pantelis Voulgaris marks his 85th birthday later this month, the time seems right to present a retrospective of his work, an opportunity to revisit, enjoy and reassess some of his major films," said Miles.

HFS noted that a retrospective honoring Voulgaris also pays tribute to his wife and long-time partner, acclaimed novelist and scriptwriter Ioanna Karystiani. "Their



Following the screening of *LITTLE ENGLAND*, Lead Actor Andreas Konstantinou ©, participated in an audience Q&A with Hellenic Film Society President Maria C. Miles (L) and Cynthia Lopez-CEO of New York Women in Film & Television (NYWIFT). The screening was co-presented by NYWIFT. MAGE COURTESY ANASTASSIOS MENTIS/MENTIS STUDIO

collaboration bears witness to enlightened creativity and has set a standard of excellence for generations of filmmakers who follow in their footsteps."

Voulgaris was unable to attend, however he sent his greetings, which Miles read in Greek and English.

"Good evening to New York. Good evening to you all. I feel as if I'm with you in the hall. I'm sitting on the edge of the very last row, watching on the screen images of all the filmmakers I've loved. And then, one after another, in close up, all the collaborators with whom I've made films. Thank you for this great honor. Thank you for everything."

Four films were presented. Moviegoers delighted in a rare screening of Voulgaris' first film: *THE ENGAGEMENT OF ANNA* (1972), a heartfelt social drama; and *THE*

LAST NOTE (2017), a harrowing, unflinching account of the execution of Greek resistance fighters at Kaisariani during World War II. From his mid-career, *BRIDES* (2004) starring a young Damian Lewis, is an epic and highly acclaimed story of post-World War I Greek mail-order brides bound for New York; and *LITTLE ENGLAND* (2013), a visually stunning tragic romance, about two sisters divided by their love for the same man.

Konstantinou discussed *LITTLE ENGLAND* and working with the team of Voulgaris and Karystiani, in a Q&A with Cynthia Lopez, CEO of New York Women in Film and Television (NYWIFT) and Miles. NYWIFT co-presented the film. Following *THE LAST NOTE*, Miles moderated an audience Q&A with Konstantinou, where they discussed the weight of history, the horrors of war, and the importance of knowing what happened.

"This year's slate of films was exceptionally strong, and we were delighted that so many of Greece's biggest film stars came to share their films and discuss them with our New York audience," Miles added.

Expo 2026

Work has already begun for next year. The New York Greek Film Expo 2026 will take place October 8-18, 2026.

The Hellenic Film Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to promoting Greek cinema and sharing the richness of

Greek films with American audiences. Based in Astoria, NY, HFS presents an array of feature films, documentaries, and shorts by Greek filmmakers and those of Greek descent, as well as works that highlight the cultures of Greece and Cyprus.



Two-time Obie Award-winning stage, film, & TV Actor Dennis Boutsikaris (L) led an 'Actors on Actors' discussion with Andreas Konstantinos*, one of Greece's leading actors. The actors' conversation was hosted by the Consulate General of Greece. IMAGE COURTESY ANASTASSIOS MENTIS/MENTIS STUDIO

In addition to its annual New York Greek Film Expo, a Greek film festival for all New Yorkers, the Society is known for its ongoing 'Always on Sunday' monthly film series, presented in collaboration with the prestigious Museum of the Moving Image. Additionally, the organization partners with other prominent film festivals across the United States, including the Chicago Greek Film Expo, the South Florida Greek Film Festival, and the Atlanta Greek Film Expo.

For more information, to volunteer, or to support their mission, their website is <https://hellenicfilmsociety.org/>.



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THE NEO STORY

How a grassroots effort twenty years ago became a lasting part of the Greek-American community and worldwide Greek identity

by Dimitri C. Michalakakis

At the outset, we were lucky to find the right people to bring NEO Magazine to life. Kyprianos Bazenikas, now a successful businessman, was the third of our founders. Thanasis Harmantzis, known as Tommy, a retired businessman, became the magazine's driving force, seeking ads and new people and managing to be everywhere, sometimes at two different places at the same time—a pillar of this effort.



And Adrian Saleescu, our designer, who's been with us almost from the beginning and has shaped the visual identity of this magazine. Kelly Fanarioti and Athena Efter, chief among our always-dogged and enterprising writers and contributors. Our photographer in residence, the legendary and beloved-to-all, Fotis Papagermanos. Not to forget our printing brother-in-arms, Ed Scheibel, who has kept us in print all these years.

Before these wonderful people joined our crusade, I happened to know Dimitri Rhompotis, because we both worked in the Greek press in New York for many years. And you couldn't miss Dimitri, because he usually wore a Panama hat like a Colombian coffee plantation owner, and no cigarette would do

for him: he smoked a cigar like he just came from his coffee plantation in Lefkada.

When we both worked at one of our Greek papers together, he would show up after lunch with one of the fat bagels he picked up at the local bagel store and offer me some, because we called them "truck tires."

I heard rumors that he was a poet, besides being a journalist, a man who knew about most things, and just about everybody. You asked him about anybody and he would thunder forth in what Kyprianos once teased was his "radio announcer voice."

He would use his radio announcer voice to have monologues about most things, at most of the cafes in Astoria, but particularly at his throno at the Lefkos Pyrgos Café on Ditmas Boulevard, where conversations were never private, and Dimitri would have conversations with several people across the room all at the same time.

It was politics, it was personal, and it was anything that Dimitri would think to declaim in his radio announcer voice, which sounded very much like a Greek radio that was perpetually on.

And then one day, when both he and I were covering a politician making a campaign stop at one of the Astoria parks, we stood next to each other waiting for the politician, and I looked at him, and he looked at me (probably under his Panama hat).

"What are we doing here?" I told him. "Why don't we start our own newspaper?"

"Yes," he told me in his stentorian tones, "the question is how?"

And then we forgot about the newspaper, and decided we wanted to start a magazine, which was even more ambitious. And it remained only an ambition, but Dimitri, who knew everybody and the praktika of the business, was the one who actually made it happen with Kyprianos, who knew how to get ads and the people who placed them to pay for them.

And what to call it? I remember the debate with Dimitri and Kyprianos until we broke down what we wanted the magazine to be: a place where the young and old of our community could come together and find out about each other. A new beginning in communication—and so we called our magazine—NEO.

Soon we were visiting a printer in Greenpoint, a Greek, who might become a partner, in return for his services, only the discussions soon escalated into a Greek discussion—where you couldn't tell the difference between talking and yelling.



With Mr. Theodosios Demetarakopoulos, director of the Greek Press Office in New York.

Dimitri was in the trenches for that, but the partnership didn't last long with that Greek printer, although the printer's mother was there at the office to offer us coffee, and she was very nice.

The magazine got off the ground nonetheless, and there was the friend I had in Long Island who would do our layout and had a staff of professionals. I remember making trips to visit him and being impressed with his office, even if his mother wasn't there serving coffee. Unfortunately, that partnership didn't work, either (not my friend's fault), but still we soldiered on.

There were meetings in Astoria, at various coffee shops, Dimitri presiding and declaiming as each issue took shape, or at Kyprianos' backyard, and the both of them performing miracles of revenue and footwork to get each issue printed and distributed.

Meanwhile, with Dimitri scanning the landscape for stories and giving his input at out coffee shop conferences, I would in the early days try to put the issue together, and give it a tone and a voice. And I would trek up the stairs every week to the Manhattan apartment of our first layout man and huddle over his computer to put it together. He was very patient with me, and we kept experimenting, while I asked him to do the impossible and make the magazine look like it

had a million-dollar budget when we had only the latest revenue that Dimitri and Kyprianos could manage to flog from our latest advertisers.

But somehow those first issues came out, and Dimitri and Kyprianos hustled to distribute them to newsstands everywhere (in those days when print still mattered) and suddenly our new magazine—NEO—was on the stands most everywhere in New York City.

And the subscriptions kept adding up: I remember going to our mailbox and seeing the new subscriptions and checks and coming out with a smile of triumph on my face. Because how many times has a Greek magazine been tried in America and how long has it lasted? The graveyard of such publications is acres wide and their yellowing pages can be found on many a cigarette machine (remember them?) in every Greek restaurant.

I remember working at one Greek national newspaper with ambitions to rival the other Greek national newspaper, which actually had nice offices, and actually had a good staff, and looked like money was being invested in it—and it lasted a few years—until it slowly began to wither. I wrote a letter to the publisher, a wealthy man doing this as a duty to the community, suggesting how the effort was worthy, don't lose steam, this is how it could keep going and do even better. I was in the business for years, I had worked for Greek publications for decades, a whole string of them, and yet there was still a vacuum, and our community deserved better.

No reply, the newspaper predictably died the slow death of the many before.

So how was our magazine going to survive—against all the odds?

But we fought the odds.

There were countless times in those early days when we would visit people and make our pitch. We could even fly to San Francisco or Denver and back the same day, taking advantage of the time difference.

I remember us driving at night to huddle with a very nice man under a bridge in his work trailer as his company refurbished the bridge. We told him how he could help the magazine and how the magazine could help him. He was a proud Cretan and we appealed to his native pride and told him how it could highlight the many wonderful Cretan products and Cretan culture for our new generation—the very purpose of the magazine.

He listened politely, he smiled kindly, we left the trailer, we heard nothing from him.

I remember my cousin in Baltimore suggesting I visit Baltimore and talk to a friend of a friend who had been a publisher for years (had even run for governor and later tried to

buy The Baltimore Sun). The friend of the friend would arrange for me to have breakfast with the publisher and see if an alliance could be made.

So I left at the crack of dawn for Baltimore, got there in time for breakfast, met my cousin, and then over the clatter of breakfast dishes, and the appeals of the friend of the friend, the publisher listened to me patiently, hands stacked, his toast and eggs and bacon waiting, and then told me, from his experience, that a Greek magazine like ours would cost over a million dollars to get off the ground.

I told him it was off the ground already and was fueled by sheer enthusiasm and hard work.

He heard me, he kept his hands stacked, his eggs and bacon getting cold, but repeated what he told me, and then started talking shop talk and local gossip with the friend.

I thanked my cousin and couldn't back to New York fast enough.

The friend of the friend did try again another time, he was a good friend and a mover and shaker in Baltimore (he also ran for governor). And this time he told my cousin to invite me to Baltimore for a beauty pageant where I would be a judge, and, at the same time set up some meetings for me with Baltimore movers and shakers. I went, I judged the beauty contest with others, and then got down to business at the dinner afterwards by the lights and sparkling windows of the beautiful Baltimore waterfront.

Where I huddled with the movers and shakers, and one of them, with lively eyes and a mustache like Karaiskakis asked me what made our magazine different.

"Because it's American," I told him, "and published in America, with our ears to the ground, and in direct touch with our community. It's not put together in Greece and given an American title. It's put together here, and not distributed only to the members of one community or one organization. It's for every community in America. And for the young and old, and written in English, so the younger generations can access it easily."

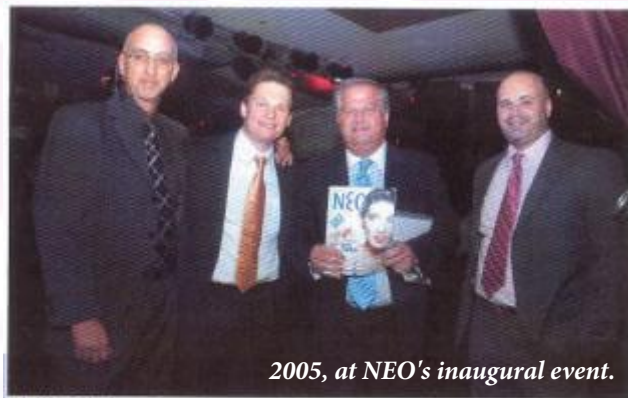
I talked and talked, while the man with the lively eyes and the Karaiskakis mustache popped his eyes and looked amused by my passion, only the friend of the friend's smile looked pleased.

So I went on.

"Where are the magazines that bring the generations together?" I told them, shoving aside the bread basket and relish tray. "How do

the young people find out about the papoudes and yayades and what their parents went through when they came to America, and how do the papoudes and yayades find out about what their children and grandchildren are doing? We want to bring the generations together so we have a common Greek forum!"

The man with the Karaiskakis mustache twitched it a little, the friend's eyes roamed: either I had them or I didn't.



Philip Christopher (second from right), PSEKA president, veteran activist for Hellenic causes and successful entrepreneur, with NEO Magazine publishers (from left) Dimitri Michalakakis, Kyprianos Bazenikas and Demetrios Rhompotis.

I drove back to New York.

I didn't have them. A few subscriptions dribbled in, mostly through the efforts of my cousin, and we did a special issue on Baltimore and everybody was nice.

But the movers and shakers were not moved.

But somehow our magazine was taking hold and soon we had notable events. Like our coming-out party in Astoria with family and friends, a whole banquet hall of them.

And our Person of the Year celebration with soon-to-be Congressman John Sarbanes of Maryland, and Senator Paul Sarbanes attending, at one of Manhattan's fabulous new restaurants. John Sarbanes spoke, Senator Sarbanes spoke (the nicest man in the world, and his wife equally nice), and former House Minority Whip John Brademas, who we profiled in a later issue.

We were even featured in the Greek press and interviewed by Greek TV, where I repeated my mantra.

"We are doing this to bring the generations together, the young and the old," I said. "Isn't it about time?"

And we kept on, with our café conferences in Astoria, after work or the weekends, where Dimitri used his radio announcer voice to inspire us and keep us on track, and I had a conference of my own with a mover and shaker I had met in Baltimore and was based

in DC and gave me hope we were getting the attention of the people who considered us important enough to have lunch with.

I asked the mover and shaker to be our DC correspondent, he agreed, and I thought we had arrived.

He did a few columns, he was a busy man, he moved on.

I talked to a man in Manhattan, a refrigeration tycoon, at a restaurant he had invested in, and I told him about the magazine, and then told the young owner of the restaurant about the possibilities of a magazine like this that would serve the new generation like him.

The young restaurateur was very nice and polite, we even featured his wife on one of our first covers.

Only the refrigeration tycoon went on to dream about building golf courses in Greece and the young restaurateur was more concerned about his restaurant.

Still we soldiered on.

Dimitri drove everywhere, Kyprianos drove everywhere, to talk up the magazine, I drove to places to give talks and get people to subscribe, a big thing in those days.

I remember going to Manhasset one night for a meeting of the Manhasset Greeks, who were very nice, and they heard me out between their coffee and cake, in the hall of church, and I gave them my spiel.

"Don't you want to find out more about your kids and grandkids? Shouldn't your kids and grandkid find out more about you?"

They listened, I got to talk to many of them, one doctor was very thoughtful about our effort, and they inspired me with the wealth of good and accomplished people we had in our community.

Maybe a few subscriptions there.

Another time I drove with my wife to a meeting of a Greek civic group in New Jersey, which turned out to be in a trailer, Dimitri had joined us, and we talked a good talk to the group: Dimitri kept them awake with his stentorian voice. But after the coffee and cake, the man in the front row began to doze off when I began to speak.

No subscriptions, that I know of.

Those were our early efforts, where getting these subscriptions was so critical. Those efforts seem a relic of the past now: we have a website and now everybody can see us worldwide.

And see that with the redoubtable efforts of Dimitri Rhompotis and the key people I mentioned that have kept us publishing, and

still here after twenty years, profiling the most interesting people in our communities not just in America, but abroad. Kelly Fanarioti most recently interviewed a young woman from New York City who went to Greece, fell in love and stayed, and revived an entire village and made it thrive with her native Greek husband.

There are Greeks doing wonderful things everywhere all over our Greek world, just as we found so many over our twenty years of publication right here in America.

There was the candle maker in Astoria who, as a matter of conscience, would visit the trouble spots of the world to bear witness: an ordinary man risking his life to advocate for justice.

There was the poet, who made donuts by day, and wrote poetry of the most soaring lyricism and deepest passion by night: a Cavafy of the heartland.

There were the loving couple who had worked together all their lives and were a mainstay of their community, and when one of them died, the other one was left heartbroken, but soldiered on with the help of the community he and his wife had fought so long and hard to support.

There was the mixed marriage couple who were an industry in themselves: she wrote mystery novels, and he was a restaurateur/dancer.

There were the folks in Arizona who set up their own ancient Greek theater on the grounds of an American university, and at their expense, presented the ancient tragedies with trained actors, under the stars.

There was the Greek comic who gave up a prosperous career to go on the road and do standup throughout North America talking about our Greek American life: like his mother stopping the car on the side of the highway to get out and pick horta.

There was the sister of Pete Sampras, who was a noted tennis player in her own right, and who talked about their rivalry when they were growing up, turned into newfound respect and support when she became the tennis coach of her university.

And there was the story of my father, which I wrote shortly after his death, as a tribute both to him and the epic generation he represented: our greatest generation that had survived war and immigration and had come to America to flourish on its own, but also to give the future generations a better life.

These are stories that we told in NEO over our twenty years, and there are so many more to be told over the next twenty years and beyond, when hopefully a new generation will take up our effort and continue this journey more successfully along with our community.

We want to thank everybody who has

contributed with their support, personal effort, and ads to this project. Thanks to you we made it to twenty years and you have every right to share this accomplishment! This is not a business like any other: it's a collective effort that works for the common good. We were in this together for twenty years, through all our efforts, and together let's make it another twenty years and more.

NEO

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NEO's articles are up to date and refreshing, covering a variety of topics, including shipping, history, tradition, church, politics, business etc. We publish and distribute 10,000 copies a month. It is estimated that over 50,000 people get to read the magazine every month, among them some of the most influential Greek Americans (NEO has perhaps the widest VIP Greek American list). Through distribution and subscriptions NEO reaches almost all 50 US states. There are regular distribution points in New York, New Jersey, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles, bringing the magazine to the key places of the American Hellenism.

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MARIO MICHALAKIS: AN IMMIGRANT SUCCESS STORY

(My brother-in-law passed away a few years ago. He came to America, worked hard and became a success, raised a family, and was both a friend and big brother to me)

by Dimitri C. Michalakis

I first met my future brother-in-law Mario at the Bay Crest Restaurant in Brooklyn, where he would come in for lunch between his work as a landlord of several buildings in the area, and with his customary work clothes on, but spotlessly neat.



You couldn't miss Mario (last name also Michalakis), with his hawk eyes and hair cropped short (he later told me he made a fetish of brushing his hair a hundred strokes every day and showed me the brushes to prove it), and a voice that could be soft and attentive, but get loud as a buzzsaw when he got excited or laughed.

In those early days in the '60s, when I was around twelve, I was the summer dishwasher at the restaurant, which my family co-owned with our cousin Mike Mallas. And Mario would show up and perch on a stool and we would get into conversations, on my way to get a squirt of seltzer from the soda fountain or a soda, before I plunged back into the kitchen. Or during a longer break, we would sit at one of the booths and he would listen to my kid tales, and I would listen to his story.

His father Nicholas had been a merchant seaman from Kardamyla in Chios (and he worshipped him), but when he died from a heart condition after the war, the family was shuttled to a series of refugee camps run by the

British in Egypt and Ethiopia, where they survived for years through the toughness of his mother, Evdokia. Until he was old enough to work on the ships like his father, reach America, and jump ship in Virginia, before he met up with relatives in Ohio, worked in a factory, and then joined other relatives in Brooklyn and worked in restaurants.

Only he was caught and deported, but then he came back legally, married and had a child, but that marriage dissolved, and for a stint he worked as a tool-and-die maker both in Brooklyn and Long Island.

But Mario was smart and ambitious, and soon he was buying property in Brooklyn, first a house on Third Avenue, then another on Senator Street, where the tiny Danish lady on the first floor, Marie Overgaard, became both his friend and adopted aunt of the family, and the matron of the building (forever chasing the cats out of the garbage).

Buying one building led to buying another, and I remember he was forever juggling houses and mortgages, and talking to "Mr. Minor" for credit on his next oil delivery, and "Sigountos" for his real estate transactions, and "Manolis" for his legal work, double-parking everywhere and making himself one of the business landlords in Brooklyn, while he built up a life that was all his own.

Because Mario was nothing if not independent.

He was the only Greek I knew, and one of the few people in Brooklyn, who actually drove a Rambler in his early days as a bachelor, with custom slipcovers, immaculate floor mats, and the first sugarless gum I ever tasted that he kept in packets in the glove compartment.

So the car in those days always had the distinctive smell of sugarless gum.

And then one day, after our talks by the counter of the Bay Crest Restaurant, my sister Helen, who worked as a waitress and hostess, asked me my opinion of this guy, Mario.

We were at our house, on Parrot Place, in the kitchen, I think she was getting our dinner ready, and the question was casual.

Yeah, he's a nice guy, I think I told her casually.

Only then my sister brought my dinner and asked me more about this guy Mario.

So he's a nice guy, right? she said.

I said he was, and got down to dinner.

And suddenly Mario became a part of our life, always crisp in his workmen's khakis, unless he got dressed up in his innumerable coordinated outfits with Hush Puppies as he took us for evening drives to Kennedy Airport, down the Belt Parkway, to the blizzard of lights at the airport, like a perpetual Christmas, and to the garden by the parking lots that had benches. And there we would sit and ogle the people that would get out of cabs and hustle into the terminals to fly to the romantic parts of the world, and share the romance with them, even though we weren't going anywhere.



I remember Mario picking us up in the Rambler on this and many other outings, scrambling around to open the door for my sister, like an old-world gentleman, while she stood there like a lady and waited, and I sat in the back seat with my mother and waited impatiently for the whole ceremony to finish. (My father worked in Chicago at the time).

And in the Rambler we would cruise through the streets of Brooklyn to the airport, or some nights, on a whim, he would pack us up and drive us out to Long Island to have some "parea" with our Thio Stelio, which I remember was a feast of fruit and nuts and coffee and "astia" and

"yelia" around the table, before the drive back on the expressway, with the radio playing soft music, the dashboard glowing, and me drifting in and out of sleep.

One summer when my dad was here for the summer, I remember we drove to Jamesport, Long Island for a getaway, where we strolled to the beach every day lugging our blankets and

cooler, and Mario wore his summer coordinated outfits with the Hush Puppies, and one time he made plans to go fishing with Mike Mallas in a rowboat and remember his old seafaring days.

Back in Brooklyn, he would take me every Wednesday to Carvel to get the two-for-one sundae special, and then the two of us sit in the Rambler and lap it up. In return, I would be his designated live body when he double parked to visit the bank, or “Sigountos,” or the plumbing supply store to get “vides” and “peepes.”



Or I would be his kid helper holding the wrench and flashlight as he fixed the leaky pipe in somebody's bathroom (with the flowery shower curtains, and the clothes hanging from them), or some grim basement like a coal mine, where some asthmatic furnace was breathing its last.

Only then when he got through with his work day, Mario would often help me with my math homework--I hated math--but Mario loved it, and suddenly my math homework would become immaculate, until the teacher got so impressed that she started asking me questions in class, while I sat there frozen like a popsicle.

I remember the science project she asked us to do, only I was hopeless in practical things, too, a family trait: my grandfather in Greece once built a ladder too heavy for him to carry. Only for this science project, Mario decided to help me and he created a masterpiece: this elegant and simple display of magnetism on a wooden board, with a spool of orange wire, that would attract a metal piece when you tapped a button, and it was beautiful.

I put my name on it, brought it proudly to class, and my teacher got so impressed again (she didn't learn her lesson from my pretending to know math) that she entered it in the Science Fair, where I won a prize (actually Mario), and then the teacher kept it in the classroom for weeks afterwards to show that even a science dunce like me could turn my life around.

And it remained in our basement for years afterwards and never stopped working: it was immortal.

He also used to drive me to church in the morning, Kimisis Theotokou in Sunset Park, where I was an altar boy, and he would scoot

off again (he was not a big churchgoer). And I remember one night he and my sister picked me up from an Easter service, and as I sat in the back seat I told them all about the visit of the Bishop for the service and how his sermon addressed the story of Christ's agony on the cross, complete with vocals.

“Me tin foni tou pano—” the Bishop thundered at us theatrically “—aaf, oof, eef!”

And as I thundered it from the back seat of the Rambler, Mario started laughing and couldn't stop and I was proud I could make him laugh so much.

Another time, I told him confidentially (cause now we were buddies) about the night I was supposed to go to sleep when my mother had gone out with them, but I got up instead and watched The Rat Patrol and Dean Martin, until I heard them coming back, so then I made everything “cold” again and tumbled into bed.

And Mario started laughing and couldn't stop about how I made everything “cold” again.

Eventually, Mario and my dad got into the restaurant business together, which Mario didn't want, but he did it for the family, and I remember the countless nights all of us spent at The Colony House on Fourth Avenue, where Mario made himself go back into the kitchen and give up his independent life for us.



It was hard for him, but we were at The Colony House when he married my sister and we had the reception in the big room with the mirrors and fancy chandeliers, and the place became my second home. I worked there as a dishwasher (of course) and bus boy after school, and the staff there became my second family: Mike, the bartender, with wavy hair and a perpetual tan like Phil Harris, and Miss Overgaard as Mario's assistant chef, who would make me turkey sandwiches on white toast and I would smear it with ketchup and crunch while we sit in a booth just the two of us and she would tell me dramatic stories, with a nod for emphasis and her jaw waggling (so she looked like Winston Churchill), while we heard Mario's voice peeling in the kitchen over the rattle of pots and pans.

And after we closed by midnight or later, Mario would be the old school gentleman again and drive many of the staff home: the cooks and waitresses and bus boys, including Louis the dishwasher, with the softest voice in the world and the gold tooth, who eventually became Mario's alter ego.



Then when the nightly rounds were over, and we were all deposited safely home, Mario and Helen would get back to their house on Third Avenue, the one next to the Irish store, which played Irish music during the day: that was the house that during Mario's bachelor days would have linoleum tiles polished so slick (and he insisted you take your shoes off) that you could easily go flying.

Only Mario being Mario, he had a line of slippers thoughtfully waiting that you could slip into—of all sizes and genders.

I will always remember him as the most relentlessly curious man in the world, one who would sit hunched with my dad over the kitchen table, learning all about the Greek history he had missed, always beat me at chess on the chessboard played with ivory knights, and who would always listen with his hawk eyes riveted when you told him something, even if you were just a kid.

Although we lost touch in later years, we did see each other for family occasions, and the last time I visited him (now in his 80's and finally retired), he was reading book after book and wearing square reading glasses and telling me all about the last one he read, by someone named Tolstoy. I thought it was the famous Leo Tolstoy, who wrote War and Peace, so I told him about Leo Tolstoy, one of my literary idols, but it turned out to be the wrong Tolstoy.

Only Mario didn't care, he listened amiably and learned something new and was glad for the company, and he looked like a man at peace with himself, his relentless drive abated, and grateful for the family he had around him and he could now sit back and enjoy: my sister Helen, who had always stood by him heroically, his children Nick, Eva, Kally, Kosta, and his grandchildren Peter, Elle and Jack.

He was demanding of himself, and demanding of all of us, but that's what had made him a classic immigrant success story. And yet inside he was still the little boy of the refugee camps, who would give you his heart if you gave him yours: the most incredibly alive and vital man I knew.

I will always miss him.

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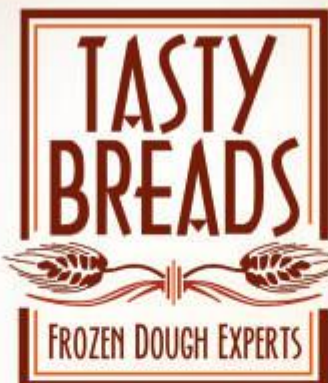
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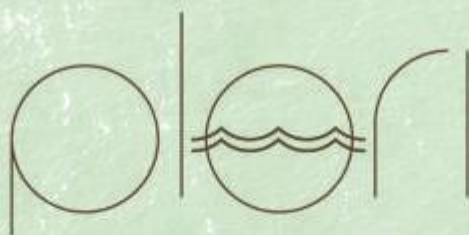
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A Night to Remember: Celebrating Hellenic Professionalism & Unity



EVENT TEAM: Julius Villanueva (Philo4Thought Tech Director), Christina Salboudis (Philo4Thought CEO), John Papaspanos Esq (HACC/HLA Board Member), George Georgiades (Philo4Thought Sponsor), Paul Pavlakos (AHEPA Delphi Chapter 25 President), Elizabeth Psaltos (Philo4Thought Volunteer), Demetri Giannopoulos (CUNY Baruch Hellenic Students Assoc. President & Philo4Thought Musical Technician)

Friday, September 26th at the Classic Car Club of Manhattan (CCC, PIER 76), as Nyx swept her dark cloak across the blazing New York sky, the vibrant heart of the city pulsed with Hellenic pride and professional synergy at the spectacular inter-organizational Fall 2025 Cars & Cocktails waterfront mixer. As the sun set on the Hudson River, the figurative sun rose on a new Golden Standard for NextGen leadership and community outreach.



Paul Pavlakos (AHEPA Delphi Chapter 25 President)

This landmark collaborative event, spearheaded by three influential leaders in community outreach – Christina Salboudis (CEO, Philo4Thought Hellenic Mentoring Initiative), Paul Pavlakos (President, American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) Delphi 25 Chapter) and John Papaspanos (Director, Hellenic American Chamber of Commerce (HACC) Young Professional Division), was made possible by the generous sponsorship of Gemean Consulting, as well as the support of several long-term Philo4Thought and AHEPA sponsors: Kellari Taverna, Welby, Brady & Greenblatt LLP, Lountzis Asset Management LLC, Styled Sharp, the Tyson family, Let's Ducking Write, Top Golf, On The Road Again Motorcycle School, and Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church NYC.

The CCC, a private club established in 2005 by Michael Prichinello and Zac Moseley for the enjoyment of vintage and modern cars, was the luxurious backdrop to an amazing night of inspirational connectivity and professional development among emerging and seasoned professionals of the extended Hellenic-

American population across the Tri-State area.

Attendees and supporters from several other major organizations were also in attendance, including Hellenic Lawyer's Association, Hellenic Medical Society, HABA, Hellenic Professional Women, Greek Tech and New York Life's Grandison Group. Additionally several student groups, including Columbia University, St. John's University, the University of Pennsylvania, CUNY Hunter, CUNY Baruch and NYU.

Driving Force: Common Mission & A Synergistic Vision for Collaboration

The concept of φιλοξενία stands at the heart of Philo4Thought, AHEPA and HACC collective missions. The success of the event is inherently linked to the passion and dedication of the three community leaders' collaborative efforts to empower their respective networks in unique ways. "In achieving community impact, we bring φιλότιμο to life... creating a wider philanthropic reach throughout the city... helping individuals who share our home, our workplace, and many times our struggles," says Paul Pavlakos.

The Cars & Cocktails Mixer served as a kick-off event for a meaningful and event-packed year and, more importantly, for the dawn of more integrative collaboration between Philo4Thought, AHEPA Delphi 25 (Manhattan) and HACC, which have served the Hellenic-American community for years. For those who are yet unfamiliar with their work:



Christina Salboudis (Philo4Thought CEO)

I. The Philo4Thought Hellenic Mentoring Initiative is a 501(c)3 philanthropic educational nonprofit foundation that aims to educate, inspire, and empower emerging and transitioning professionals from marginalized groups.

Additionally, in the sincere pay-it-forward spirit of the mission established by their founder, Prof. Christina E. Salboudis, Philo4Thought is committed to highlighting the efforts of outstanding professionals who truly

embody the spirit of φιλότιμο. With this in mind, the team often celebrates select students, young professionals, and seasoned executive mentors at their Annual Founders Day Glendi (October 10, 2025 at Kellari

Taverna) and their Annual Spring Symposium (April 25, 2026 at St. John's University Manhattan Campus). "Philo4Thought was always meant to be 'the training wheels' for young professionals to connect with senior professionals, and it's so great to see this happening tonight, with the help and support of Paul Pavlakos, John Papaspanos and George Georgiades....," says Prof. Salboudis.

Prof. Christina E. Salboudis, Founding CEO, Educational Director, and Editor in Chief of Philo4Thought Inc. (est. 2009), is an award-winning mentor, professor, and certified coach with over 30 years of experience serving students and emerging young professionals globally.

All are welcome to attend and support Philo4Thought events and initiatives! For details and registration, please visit <https://www.philo4thought.org/events> or email info@philo4thought.org to join the event mailing list.



Philo4Thought Sponsors Andreas & Anastasia Aktipis (Kellari Taverna), Christina Salboudis (Philo4Thought CEO)

II. AHEPA Delphi 25 is the Manhattan-based chapter of the Order of AHEPA (American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association), an international organization with a mission to promote the ancient Hellenic ideals of education, philanthropy, civic responsibility, integrity, and family and individual excellence through community service and volunteerism.



Welcome Address George Georgiades (Philo4Thought Sponsor), John Papaspanos Esq (HACC/HLA Board Member), Paul Pavlakos (AHEPA Delphi Chapter 25 President), Christina Salboudis (Philo4Thought CEO)



Christina Salboudis (Philo4Thought CEO), Julius Villanueva (Philo4Thought Tech Director), George Georgiades (Philo4Thought Sponsor), Demetri Giannopoulos (CUNY Baruch Hellenic Students Assoc. President & Philo4Thought Musical Technician), Paul Pavlakos (AHEPA Delphi Chapter 25 President), Nick Tsoukaris (AHEPA Delphi Chapter 25 Treasurer), Nikki Geogiades, Elizabeth Psaltos (Philo4Thought Volunteer), Andrew (CCC Management)

Recently, Delphi announced one of its new core goals – The Delphi Network – and the commitment to community impact.

Paul S. Pavlakos, Esq. is AHEPA Delphi 25's current President and District 6 (NY) Advisor to the Sons of Pericles (as well as former Supreme President of the Sons of Pericles, which celebrates its 100th Anniversary in 2026). As such, he is at the forefront of executing AHEPA's core principles throughout the NYC community. In recognition of his work, Philo4Thought, under the aegis of the New York State Assembly, honored him on Friday, October 10th at Kellari Taverna.

All are welcome to attend and support AHEPA Delphi 25 events and initiatives! For details and registration, please visit www.ahepa25.org.

III. The Hellenic American Chamber of Commerce (HACC) was formed for the purpose of promoting and strengthening the economic and cultural ties between the U.S., Greece and Cyprus. Beyond its traditional commercial role, HACC is a multifaceted organization that offers a network and forum for its members to meet, conduct business, exchange ideas and promote the business interests of the Hellenic community.

HACC looks forward to honoring Dr. John Coustas (President/CEO of Danaos Corp.) at their 73rd Person of the Year Award Gala, November 14, 2025 at Cipriani Wall Street, ft. guest performance by Anna Vissi! All are welcome to attend: <https://www.hellenicamerican.cc/copy-of-73rd-person-of-the-year-gala-1>.



John Papaspanos Esq (HACC/HLA Board Member)

John Papaspanos, Esq. (2015 Philo4Thought Honoree and primary author of the Arete guidebook for pre-law students), is a Board member of HACC, and fully committed to promoting the flourishing of the Hellenic community. He studied International Relations, conducted research on energy geopolitics as a Fulbright Scholar at the Law School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece under a law professor and

E.U. energy expert. He studied law and business at the University of Pennsylvania Law School and Wharton where he earned a J.D. and is currently Partner at the international law firm Baker Botts L.L.P.

Featured Upcoming Event: Philo4Thought and the Grandison Group of New York Life look forward to hosting several celebrated specialists in FinTech Innovation and Global Impact Assessment on November 21st at One World Trade Center. To register, visit <https://events.livemazi.com/e/globalfintech>.

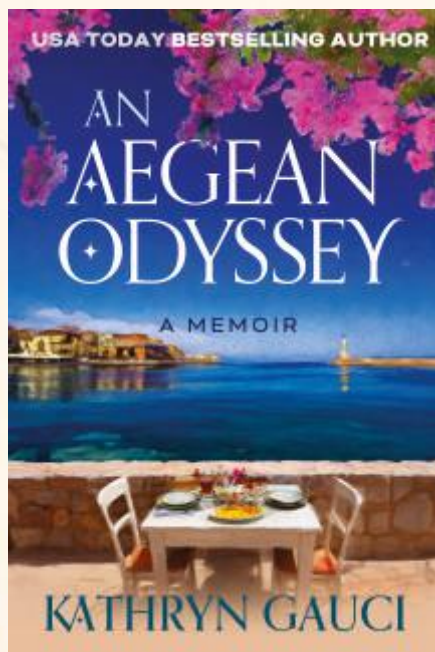


Mnemosyni's Musings...

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

In this 'Odyssey', Ithaca is a New Life



An Aegean Odyssey: A Memoir reveals author Kathryn Gauci's return to Greece to search for the old—and the new.

USA Today Bestselling Author Kathryn Gauci just released her 15th book—and first memoir. *An Aegean Odyssey: A Memoir* follows a return trip to Greece in 2005. But in this odyssey, she's not searching for a literal home. She's searching for the old and the new, and the experience changed the trajectory of her life.

Born in Leicestershire, UK, Gauci has lived in Greece and in other parts of the world. She now calls Melbourne, Australia home. From her time living in Greece in the 1970s, to her life-changing trip in 2005, to subsequent return visits, she is a veritable philHellene.

Designing a life abroad

Gauci enjoyed a first career as a carpet and textile designer. "I was always interested in art from childhood," she revealed. "My parents always encouraged me." Her parents were also creative. "My father painted, and my mother embroidered."

As she prepared to finish high school, she took the General Certificate of Education, a test all students took to get into college, in embroidery. Gauci began her studies in fashion and embroidery, then shifted to textiles and ceramics. Ultimately, she decided on a graduation course in carpets, as "there was hardly anyone doing it at the time". She specialized in carpet design and technology.

Her first job as a carpet designer took her to Vienna. After a time, Gauci decided she should try out another city. She applied for positions in several countries, including Italy, Portugal, and Iceland. "But Greece responded first. The company flew me over for an interview and allowed me a few days to explore. I hadn't been to Greece before. I had to pinch myself when I finally got to see the Acropolis, and to this day I never tire of it."

Living history in Greece

In 1972, Gauci accepted a position with Anatolia Carpets, then located in Nea Ionia/Kalogreza in suburban Athens. This area was populated by Asia Minor refugees. Through them, she was introduced to Greek and Asia Minor Greek history and has been fascinated by it ever since. "Almost everything I knew until that point had to do with Ancient Greece, particularly the art. I wanted to learn everything." When she discovered that she lived near the site of Greek heroine and Resistance leader Lela Karagianni's operations base, "I had to know everything about her, because every day I walked where she did".

Her early years in Greece were under the Regime of the Colonels. "They were harsh times, as almost everyone knew of someone who had either been imprisoned by the regime or who was being watched." She lived within walking distance from the Athens Polytechnic and witnessed the historic events. "I lived history. I saw the events that led up to that fateful night when the tanks rolled in and several students were killed, and the aftermath of it all." She recalled that after the Junta fell, "there was a period of enormous optimism."

She adored Greece. Gauci was an anomaly, as most foreign women there at the time worked as nannies. "I was the only English person, and I was thrown into learning Greek at the deep end. I didn't need to know Greek for my job, as I worked on the same machines I had previously, and I knew how to design for that sort of technology." She eventually learned the language. But after enduring the process of work permit renewals each year, she reluctantly left Greece in 1978. "At the time I was married to an Englishman, an artist who later became a wonderful carpet weaver. When he couldn't get a work permit, he wanted more security. So, we found work in New Zealand. I later learned that security is a state of mind. From there, I settled in Melbourne."



Finding Ithaca

Over 30 years in the carpet and textile industry, Gauci had seen much. She enjoyed this career, but the industry began to change. "Companies closed or moved offshore. And I'd lost some of the passion I had for this work. I wanted to find another love that would give me that surge of adrenaline again." Writing intrigued her. "It ticked all the boxes. I could be creative, study history and culture, and travel when and where I wanted. Greece called to me because I felt so at home there. I'd been back several times since I'd lived there, but only for quick visits." Then in 2005, Gauci headed to Greece, hoping to reconnect with the Old-World traditions she experienced. But she also had a dream: to tap into the spirit of some of her literary heroes, like Nikos Kazantzakis, Lord Byron, Patrick Leigh Fermor, and others.

On a two-month solo trek, Gauci visited her old Athens haunts, then set out for the islands: Chios, Crete, Karpathos, Lesvos, and Rhodes. "It was a hard choice, as all the islands offering something unique." She did find the "Old Greece" she was searching for, and so much more. She found her Ithaca—not a particular place, but a bridge to a new life, a new adventure, and a new career.

Back at home, she painstakingly typed up all her notes. But it didn't feel right to publish them at the time. "I didn't know why. But I followed my gut instinct." Nearly 18 months after that fateful journey, she set to work on her first historical novel, *The Embroiderer* (2014). The story weaved her experiences as a carpet designer and her time living in Greece. It's a saga that spans nearly 150 years of Greek history, beginning with the Massacre of Chios through WWII, including the Asia Minor Catastrophe, with a modern-day period (1972). The story follows an English woman who is summoned to the bedside of her dying aunt in Athens and uncovers her family's dark past. Gauci went on to pen 13 more historical novels, set not only in Greece, but also in Austria, France, and Turkey.

She's won multiple awards for her work and is now a USA Today Bestselling Author.

Odyssey revealed

Her 15th book, called *An Aegean Odyssey: A Memoir*, came out last month. "After reading many wonderful memoirs set in Greece, I realized none recounted a journey like mine. Few had touched on the Greece that I knew when I lived there. When I went to Greece in 2005, I had hoped to find—and I did—the old Greece, the one that's fast disappearing due to modernization and tourism. And now, having had more experience as a writer, the timing felt right. Sometimes putting a little distance in our work can be beneficial. I'm glad I did this, as it has fired me up to take another odyssey."

Currently, Gauci is working on a new book, on World War II Malta. There's more to come after that, including more stories set in Greece. "I hope to explore other areas of Greece further north."

An Aegean Odyssey: A Memoir is available now. Don't miss it. Learn more

about Kathryn Gauci and her books at <https://www.kathryngauci.com/>.

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



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From New York to Zitsa: How an American lawyer found a new life in the mountains of Epirus

Anna Ellis talks to NEO

By Kelly Fanarioti



Anna Elis and Kostas Karamihos (the owners of the bakery)

When Anna Elis, an American environmental lawyer from New York, first visited Greece in 2009, she had no plans to stay. She was finishing her law degree and had traveled through Europe after a climate conference in Copenhagen.

Only a quick holiday stop in northwestern Greece turned into something life-changing when she met Kostas Karamihos, a young baker from the small mountain village of Zitsa. What began as a chance meeting grew into a long-distance friendship that soon

turned to love.

“We stayed in touch every day after I left,” Anna says to NEO. “Eight months later I came back, and we realized this was real.”

Within a year she had left her job offer at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and moved to Greece permanently.

“Looking back, I think I would never have survived in New York,” she says with a smile. “Here, life has a rhythm that feels human.”

Building a life in the village

At first, adjusting to village life was not easy. “The first year felt magical, but then reality set in,” she says. “I didn’t know the language, I missed friends, and everything worked differently.”

But over time, she grew to love the slower pace, the closeness of the community, and the connection to nature.

“In the city, everything is constant. Lights, noise, deadlines. Here, you live with the seasons. You eat what grows, you rest when the weather slows you down. The rhythm makes sense”.

Fifteen years later, Anna and Kostas are raising two daughters in Zitsa, surrounded by vineyards, forests, and an ever-changing circle of visitors from around the world.

“Our children are growing up seeing people from every continent,” she says. “They talk to travelers in English, in Greek, even in bits of French or Italian. It’s completely normal to them”.



Baby tomatoes, eggs, mushroom, feta cheese in fylo dough

The bakery that became a cultural hub

And then what started as a small family bakery has grown into one of the most distinctive community spaces in Epirus. Kostas’s long-fermentation sourdough has earned a reputation far beyond the village, and his seasonal creations (focaccia, holiday breads,



Anna serving visitors during a mountain picnic she organized for foreign travelers

and the now-famous panettone) have been featured in international food blogs.

"Last Christmas our panettone went viral. We even shipped to Italy and Saudi Arabia", Anna says.

Beyond baking, the couple has turned their craft into an experience. Visitors from across the world come to take part in their traditional pie-making workshops, learning to prepare local specialties such as spanakopita, tiropita and even creative versions like a "pestopita" with basil pesto. Each four-hour class ends with a shared meal of fresh pies, local Zitsa wine, and conversation among new friends.

"People are amazed that something so simple can bring so much joy," says Anna. "They see how food connects cultures. You don't need to speak the same language to bake together."

A library and a home for travelers

A few steps from the bakery, Anna manages another project close to her heart: The Book Garden. Originally a small bookshop, it now operates as a free community library and guest space for travelers.

"We moved all our books - around six thousand of them - into a large basement room next to a garden shop," Anna explains. "It's open to anyone who wants to borrow a book or needs a place to stay for a night or two." The space has hosted hundreds of travelers over the years, from cycling

adventurers and students to artists and families. "We've had people from every continent. Some stay a night, some a week, and many come back again."

Tradition Epirus pie with spinach



The mix of cultures has brought a quiet transformation to the area. "There are days when we sit down for lunch and realize there are five countries represented at the table," Anna says. "That's what I love most—how the world meets here in this little mountain village".

Reviving a village

Zitsa, with a population of about 400, is one of the few Epirus villages that still has all levels of schooling, from kindergarten to high school. But like many rural areas in Greece, it faces a declining population. When a local teacher warned that the elementary school might close due to low enrollment, Anna and Kostas decided to act.

They launched a project to attract new families to the village, inspired by similar efforts elsewhere in Greece. "We now have fifteen families who want to move here," Anna says proudly. "The first family with four children is arriving next week".

The biggest challenge is housing. She says there are many empty homes, but often they belong to several cousins or families abroad. People don't want to sell or rent them, even if they haven't used them in years. Jobs,

however, are less of a problem. "There's potential here, like bakeries, small shops, farms, wineries, local food businesses, even positions in Ioannina, which is only twenty minutes away".

Their efforts have drawn national attention. Last summer, Anna and Kostas spoke at a CNN Greece symposium on the demographic crisis, alongside government officials and other local innovators. "It was amazing to see how many people care about keeping these communities alive," Anna says.

For readers of the Greek diaspora, Anna has a clear message. "If you have a family house in Zitsa or in the surrounding villages, please consider renting it to a family. It can make a real difference."

She also invites anyone interested in a slower, more meaningful life to consider moving. "Zitsa isn't a tourist village, it's a living one. You can build something here. There is opportunity, nature, community, and space for new ideas."

Anna no longer dreams of Manhattan. Her dreams live on the hillside, in the scent of sourdough, in the laughter of her children, and in the quiet belief that one village can welcome the world and maybe even grow again because of it.



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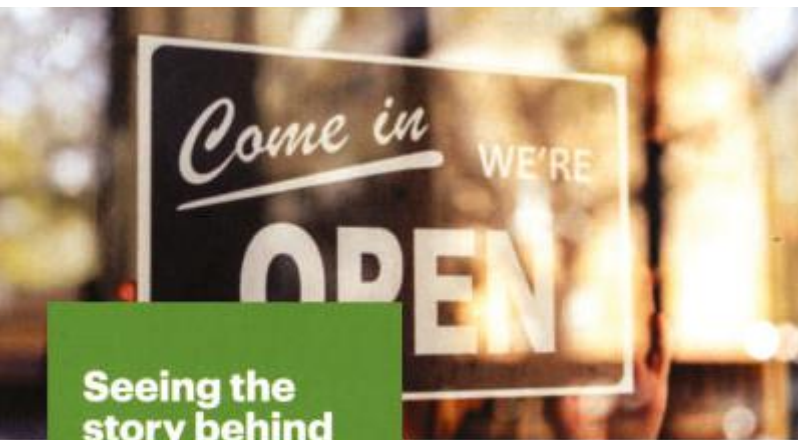
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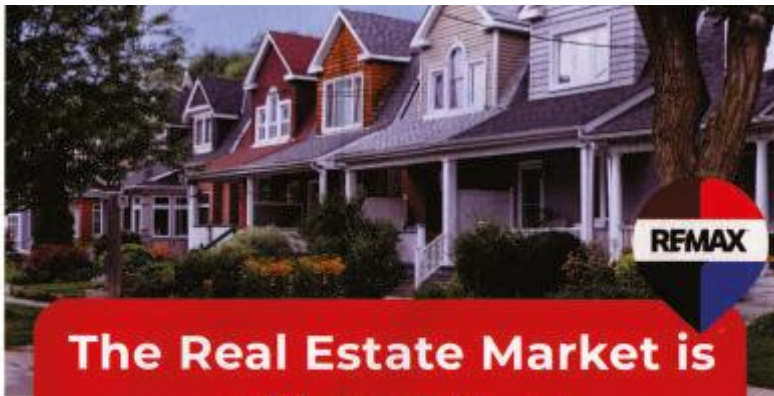
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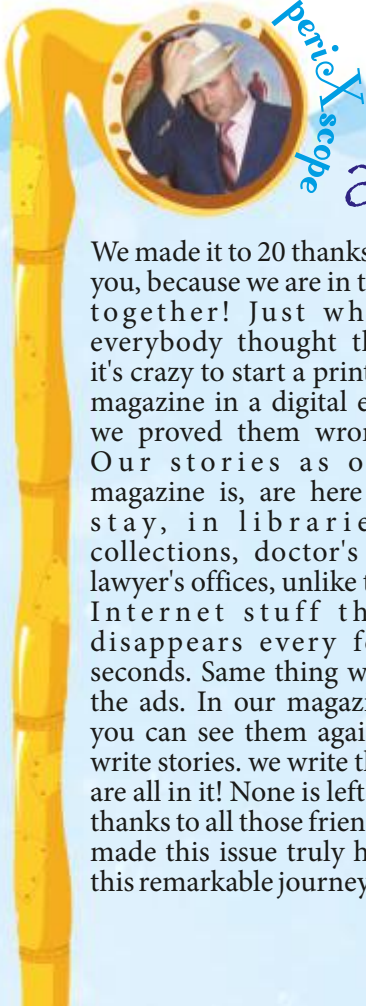
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by **Demetrios Rhompolis**
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Michael Chiklis of 'The Shield' discusses his Greek heritage and starring in 'The Senior' film



by Markos Papadatos

Primetime Emmy award-winning and Greek-American actor Michael Chiklis ("The Shield") spoke with Markos Papadatos about starring in the new Angel Studios sports drama film "The Senior."

Greek business magnate Aristotle Onassis once said: "It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light."

An individual who has been bringing light, positivity, and levity to film and TV fans worldwide for well over 30 years is veteran entertainer Michael Chiklis. Rod Lurie directed "The Senior" from a screenplay by Robert Eisele.

Aside from Chiklis as Mike Flynt, it stars Mary Stuart Masterson as his wife Eileen Flynt, Brandon Flynn ("13 Reasons Why") as his son Micah Flynt, James Badge Dale as J.V. Flynt, and Rob Corddry ("Bookie") as Coach Sam Weston.

The synopsis is: At 59, Mike Flynt might be too old to play college football—but not too old to settle some unfinished business. Nearly four decades after leaving his team, he returns to his alma mater to face the moment that changed everything. Bruised, doubted, and nearly broken, he fights for one last game—not for glory, but for the teammates he lost, the family he fractured, and the ending he still believes is possible.

On starring in "The Senior," he exclaimed, "It was such a great time. I'm very fortunate; there are certain flagpoles along the way of your career that are the great ones. This is one of the great projects for me, especially from an experience standpoint, from a material

standpoint, and a familial standpoint," he noted. "It's one of those things, where everything came together. It was a wonderful cast, we had an incredible director, and great producers, all of which got together to tell a really compelling, amazing, true story."

On playing Mike Flynt, Chiklis said, "It allowed me to play football for the first time in 40 years. I was the captain of my football team in high school. 'I never imagined in a million years that I would actually suit up in pads again and play tackle football again, but I did and we did it, and I had a great time,' he conceded. 'While I was sore as heck, it was worth every minute

of it, and it was just fantastic," he exclaimed.

On starring in something like the hit procedural drama series "The Shield" (where he played Detective Vic Mackey) vs. doing a project such as "The Senior," Chiklis stated, "Well, 'The Shield' was just an entirely different tone and tenor. The Shield was really dark and it dealt with a lot of the darker aspects of the human condition. This movie delves into some of the darkness, but it is about coming out of the darkness and overcoming that," he explained. "I love Mike's story because it's a redemption tale. As much as this movie is a football story, it really isn't. It's much more of a redemption story and it's about second chances. We all have regrets in our lives. We all have things that we wish we could do a little differently, or maybe a lot differently. We've all looked back at things that we've done or said, and facepalm. There are things that we want to do good on, and Mike Flynt really did that. He is an inspiration," Chiklis underscored. "When you see a movie like 'The Senior,' you get to be entertained, but it also makes you think, feel, laugh and cry. It's just fantastic."

Chiklis acknowledged that his Greek heritage is "very important" to him. "I could talk about that for three hours," he admitted. "The older I get, the more I really appreciate what it is to be a Greek, and what it has meant to Western society in general, and to Western civilization.

I feel really fortunate that my parents were innately philosophical, and as we Greeks tend to be, they were very adamant about me learning about Greek history and my Greek heritage," he explained. "Although I did lose the language, that's one thing I deeply regret. I think that my grandparents were very concerned about assimilating into society. So, they wanted us to speak English all the time," he elaborated. "We were going to school and speaking English. So, the Greek language is somewhere in the back of my brain, but I would have to go and spend some real time in Greece to get the language back," he added.

On the title of the current chapter of his life, Chiklis revealed, "Grandfather" or as they say in Greek, "Papouli. My oldest daughter is about to make me a grandfather, or I should say 'Papouli' in Greek."

On his definition of the word success, Chiklis said, "Success means equilibrium, a balanced life, being able to look at your life in totum and say, 'I have a beautiful family, I have beautiful friends, and I have a wonderful career. I get to travel and I get to see and explore the world. I know that the simplest things are the greatest things in this life. Also, if I can make a beautiful meal, some 'stifado' or some 'spanakopita' or sit on a table and have a little wine, enjoy the company of my friends, and get to look at a beautiful sunset, then, there's nothing better than that in life," he concluded.



American track and field running legend Steve Prefontaine once said: "To give anything less than your best, is to sacrifice the gift." Michael Chiklis embodies this wise quote from the running icon.

To learn more about Michael Chiklis, follow him on Instagram.

For more information on "The Senior," visit the official Angel Studios website.

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OXI Day (Greek: Επέτειος του "Όχι") is celebrated throughout Greece, Cyprus and the Greek communities around the world on 28 October each year. *OXI Day* commemorates the rejection by Greek Prime Minister Ioannis Metaxas of the ultimatum made by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. This ultimatum, which was presented to Metaxas by the Italian Ambassador to Greece Emanuele Grazzi, shortly after 03:00 am on 28 October 1940, demanded Greece to allow Italian forces to enter Greek territory and occupy certain unspecified "strategic locations" or otherwise face war. It was allegedly answered with a single word: *όχι* (No!). In response to Metaxas's refusal, Italian troops stationed in Albania, then an Italian protectorate, attacked the Greek border at 05:30 am—the beginning of Greece's participation in World War II.

Greece defeated the far superior invading forces, expelling them from Greek territory and liberated Northern Epirus, a sizable area in southern Albania. The Greek military success marked the first series of victories in the war against the Axis. On the morning of 28 October, the Greek population took to the streets, irrespective of political affiliation, shouting "oxi". From 1942, it was celebrated as OXI Day, first mostly among the members of the resistance and after the war by all the Greeks.

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