

HPST NEWSLETTER

November 2009

HPST NEWS
2009-2010
Issue 1

P.O. Box 66616
Houston, TX
77266-6616

www.hpst.org



President's Message

It will be an honor to serve as the next president of the Hellenic Professional Society and follow in the footsteps of Gina Katsaros. During the past two years, Gina has been an outstanding leader who genuinely cared about the Society and pitched in to do whatever was necessary to make our events a success. I also wish to acknowledge the many contributions of our outgoing officers Stergios Liapis and Elena Nikolaou. We appreciate their enthusiasm and dedication, and know that they will remain active participants. I look forward to working with my new board: Marianthi Coronéou (vice president), Maro Yuanidis (treasurer), George Kalfoglou (counselor), George Argyros (recording secretary), Julietta Zombakis (corresponding secretary) and Gina Katsaros (counselor). Demetrios Kazakos recently resigned from the board after accepting a job offer in Washington, D.C. We wish Demetrios well in our nation's capital with their active Greek community.

The Society welcomes recent members: Eleni Beyko, Venetia Rigou, Sofia & Steve Petrou and returning member Joyce Moustakakis. New members revitalize the Society, so help spread the word about the HPST. Please bring guests to our cultural activities to see what we're all about. Your "word of mouth" recommendations are the best publicity the Society can have to encourage continued growth and development.

As we begin our new season, I hope that you will enjoy the list of upcoming activities already planned for 2009-2010. Sofia and Steve Petrou graciously hosted the general assembly meeting/kick-off at their home on September 26th. I can't say enough about their wonderful hospitality complete with roasted lamb and Greek music. A good time was had by everyone with excellent attendance. Alex Kalamarides, Dimitrios Varvarezos and Katerina Kontogeorgaki are preparing for their next poetry event entitled Palamas: A Dominant Force in Modern Greek Letters on Sunday, November 8th. This event (followed by a reception) will be held at the Byzantine Fresco Chapel, and we thank Susan de Menil for her collaboration and support. Members can look forward to our Christmas party on Saturday, December 19th at the home of Christine & Michael Economides. We are currently looking for several volunteers to help coordinate the arrangements, so please let me know if you are interested.

The date has been set for our 2010 scholarship dinner. After doing such a phenomenal job last year, we are indebted to Petro Yuanidis for agreeing to serve again as the scholarship committee chair. Thanks also to my wife, Julietta for volunteering to coordinate the dinner arrangements. Several generous donations have already been made to the scholarship fund, so we are encouraged by your outpouring of support. Look for invitations to be mailed in late November.

I am extremely excited to report that the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is hosting a series of films entitled Spotlight on Contemporary Greek Cinema during October 16-18 and 23-25. Many of you will recall that the last Greek film festival was held back in 1999, so this is long overdue. Special thanks to Marian Luntz, curator of film and video at the MFAH for taking my suggestion to heart. We have been discussing the project for several years. Let's hope that this is the start of many more Greek films in the future. Recognition also goes to the Austin Film Society, Katie Cokinos, the Consulate General of Greece and the HCC-SW.

More events will follow as the season progresses. As I have stated previously, I want to express my extreme gratitude to everyone that has enthusiastically stepped forward to say "yes" as requests are made for speakers, venues and volunteers. We have a truly remarkable group of individuals in the Hellenic Professional Society of Texas and look forward to the best season ever.

George Zombakis, President



Representatives from the various Greek organizations meet at City Hall with Consul, Alexandra Theodoropoulou and City of Houston council member, Sue Lovell for proclamation of October as Greek month in Houston.

making a difference to Houston. Dr. Simotas will talk about the importance of higher education for the four females in her Greek-American household and is going to present a \$1,000 scholarship as a tribute to her father entitled the Nick Simotas Scholarship of Academic Achievement.

Bill Herrin has given his full support to collect funds for a scholarship in memory of his beloved wife, Athena. Athena was extremely proud of her Greek heritage and helped the Society on numerous projects throughout the years. Please read the touching tribute to Athena composed by her daughter, Ileana that appears on page 3 of the newsletter. We hope that you will consider donating to this worthy cause in her memory.

Thanks to your generous support, last year we collected over \$10,800.00 in donations and awarded a total of eight scholarships. The scholarship review committee identified a record number of seventeen qualified applicants, making the selection process extremely difficult. To accommodate our growing number of scholarship requests, the Hellenic Professional Society of Texas is striving to increase its fundraising efforts during 2010 for these deserving students. Education has always been one of the most important objectives of the Society, so we kindly welcome your contribution towards achieving this goal.

We invite you to continue being part of this legacy by considering that your donation is truly an investment in the future of promising students who will become the leaders of tomorrow. Honoring academic accomplishments recognizes their potential and contribution to our society. The deadline to apply for the scholarship is December 31, 2009. Help us to spread the word and we encourage your children and other eligible students to apply.

As you consider your donation to our 2010 scholarship fund, please note that your contribution is tax deductible.

The Hellenic Professional Society of Texas and all the students supported over the years thank you in advance for your generous contribution and hope to be honored by your presence at the upcoming scholarship dinner. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (713) 520-9364 or zombakis@rice.edu.

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Scholarship Dinner

Please mark your calendar for **February 20th, 2010** when the Hellenic Professional Society of Texas celebrates

its 33rd scholarship award dinner. Our dinner will take place at Le Mistral French restaurant located at 1400 Eldridge Parkway. Le Mistral was recently voted Houston's best restaurant, and its owner, David Denis was executive instructor for Alain & Marie LeNotre at their culinary institute. The upstairs banquet room seats only 100 people, so make your reservations early.

We are especially pleased to announce that the guest speaker for our evening will be Alexandra Simotas, MD. Alexandra was awarded the HPST scholarship in 1992 and has gone on to a successful career that is

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Athena Velentza Herrin

By Ileana Herrin

Athena Velentza Herrin was a modern day Cupid, striking passer-byers with her arrow of knowledge, her arrow of love, her arrow of kindness. She grew up in the city of Ioannina, reading adventures and dreaming of traveling around the wonders of the world. She was fortunate to live her dreams and left Greece to study Bio-Chemistry at Houston Baptist University, before marrying a man who helped show her Africa, India, China, Saudi Arabia, not to mention

other European countries and the back roads of Mississippi.



Though she was miles away from Greece, Athena never lost touch of her Greek heritage and the virtues and morals that built her life. She was very proud to be Greek and was the first to be there for any of her fellow patriots in need. She volunteered at M.D. Anderson, helping translate medical information to Greek

families with no prior experience in the States. She cooked savory treats for those in need of a reminder of the tastes and smells of home. She orchestrated events in honor of Hellenic achievements with such grace and pride, then later danced like an angel across the floor in celebration of hers and others accomplishments and most importantly danced in celebration of life. Athena also educated friends, family, students, even strangers with a truthfulness of Greece. No longer did people stereotype Greece as gyros and beaches, they learned the history, the art, the soul of Greece through her teachings. As my father put it, when asked about my mother's love for her heritage: "She always celebrated and supported her Greek heritage to the point of making a Mississippi boy at least half Greek."

Athena Velentza Herrin was an important component to the Hellenic Professional Society of Houston. May her memory live on to help those in the community cherish and respect their heritage. And for those not of Greek descent, may her memory and accomplishments help to fill them with a passion and an understanding of the land she came from.

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"Greek Book Club"

The HPST announces a "Greek Book Club", focusing on books about Greece or by Greek authors. The first book in this series is "The Jasmine Isle", by Ioanna Karystiani.

Creatively authored by Ioanna Karystiani and expertly translated by Michael Eleftheriou, The Jasmine Isle is a conceptual and metaphorical tale of contemporary Greek literature. Mina Saltaferou forcibly weds her eldest daughter Orsa in spite of the love her daughter already feels for somebody else. In a classic style and with a particularly vivid depiction of memorable characters, The Jasmine Isle narratively embodies the truths and barriers of women and men as set by society's predetermined constructs. Especially recommended as a work of exceptional talent, The Jasmine Isle is very highly recommended reading for its intricate and intimate telling of a deep tale, persistently focused on the unjust social constraints felt by so many.

More details will follow on a separate e-mail. You may also contact Lena Patsidou at patsidou@hotmail.com.

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Culinary World of Alexander the Great

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
 Nov 5, 2009 7:00 PM
 Caroline Wiess Law Building
 6:00 p.m., Pre-Lecture Tour and Reception
 7:00 p.m., Lecture

Wine played a crucial role in the rations and rituals of Alexander the Great's day, and so did such foods as daily bread and dead horses. In this richly-illustrated lecture, Dr. Frank Holt follows Alexander's journey from Greece to India, detailing what the conqueror and his army ate and drank, what commodities Alexander discovered in the East, the challenges Alexander faced provisioning hungry and thirsty troops while fighting local warlords, and find out why NASA was very interested in knowing Alexander's diet.

Dr. Frank Lee Holt is one of the world's leading authorities on Alexander the Great, Hellenistic Asia, and numismatics. He has published five books and over fifty articles. His research has been featured on The History Channel and has frequently been cited in National Geographic, Smithsonian, BBC Current Affairs, and The New Republic. Dr. Holt is also a prolific writer for the public, with essays appearing in Newsweek, Archaeology Magazine, History Today, Archaeology Odyssey, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Saudi Aramco World, and other widely read publications.

Admission is free and open to the public.

Pre-Lecture Tour and Reception

- Join a short docent-led tour of vessels in the MFAH collection used for the consumption of wine during Greco-Roman rituals. Tours depart from the lobby of the Audrey Jones Beck Building at 6:00 p.m., 6:10 p.m., and 6:20 p.m.
- Reception ongoing from 6:00 p.m. until 6:50 p.m. in the lobby of the Beck Building

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The Greek Diaspora in Egypt

By Marianthi Coronéou

Twenty-six centuries before my parents migrated from Kythera to Egypt, Greeks had already arrived there as early as the fifth century B.C. Herodotus tells us they were the first foreigners that ever lived in Egypt. I am not at all surprised, given the location of a popular port between Europe and Asia a few days away across a sea that was shared by seafarers from several coasts. A century later, my Internet sources indicate 331 B.C., Alexander the Great founded Alexandria and then moved his armies eastward.

The city became the major hub of the Hellenistic world, a center of international commerce, art, math, astronomy, religious studies (the Septuagint was produced there), philosophy, and a magnet for a record number of manuscripts and scientific researchers. Its Library was the largest in the ancient world.

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C., his chosen generals continued to rule Egypt until the Romans took it over from the Greek Ptolemy Queen Cleopatra VII, 30 years before the birth of Christ. Alexandria lost her Hellenic luster only to regain it much later through commerce, industry, and ethnic pride.

The Greek presence in Alexandria rises up again in 1843, (1856 in Cairo) shortly after Greece gained her independence. In 1907, an official census showed a total of 63,000 Greeks living in Egypt. As the century progressed into epic proportions of back-to-back persecutions, the Greek Diaspora issuing from Asia Minor, the Balkan Wars and the two World Wars sent more Greek immigrants to Alexandria, to Cairo and lesser known cities and towns all across Egypt. I was born during WWII in a small agricultural enclave by the Nile, verdant with farms and plantations that provided us with our basic needs, especially shelter from the bloodshed across the waters. The number of Greeks in 1940 climbed to a quarter of a million.

With ample opportunity, hard work and a ready labor force, in less than a century the community rose to unprecedented heights. Industry, trade and Greek banking enterprises opened the way to wealth that was generously invested in both Egypt and motherland. Schools, churches, the Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa, orphanages, hospitals, housing for the elderly and poor, cinemas, theatres, sporting clubs, restaurants, and pastry shops where this teenager could order a baba au rhum changed the skyline of the two major cities. We preserved our mother tongue and we guarded our Greek Orthodox faith zealously.

In Athens, Mihail Tositsas helped build the National University. His wife donated the land for the National Archaeological Museum. Georgios Averoff (1815-1899) whose family moved from Metsovo contributed to the building of the Polytechnic University, and the Evelpidon Military Academy. He refurbished the Stadium for the 1896 Olympics. In your next trip, you can visit the armored cruiser that the Hellenic Navy was able to acquire from funds left in his will, and defend Greece valiantly in several battles. The G. Averoff (nicknamed sheitan papor by an opposing navy) is now a floating museum anchored in Faliro. The Benakis family promoted the arts. I remember seeing a traveling collection of traditional (folk) costumes from the Benaki Museum in Dallas in the 80s.

The growth of the community peaked at about mid-twentieth century. The 50s and the 60s witnessed an unprecedented exodus prompted by the 1952 unopposed military coup of 1952. The new regime

nationalized many European companies and banks. Almost 70% of the Greek families started a second level Diaspora to other continents. (My father stayed because he was asked to teach the natives the skills of exporting cotton, a staple developed in Egypt by Greeks in the 19th century along with tobacco.)

Today, Greek Egyptians are estimated to be 3,000-3,500, a tiny number of the 3 to 7 million (depending on your information source) Greeks and Cypriots of the worldwide Diaspora. Most Greeks were attracted to the United States, of course. Current numbers show us scattered over 115 countries, although I suspect it is wider than that. Let's not forget that thousands more out there have changed their names by choice or marriage and thus lost the statistical Greek designation. In Kinshasa, DRC where my in-laws migrated after the Suez Canal crisis, and subsequently were forced to leave the then Zaire, 300 Greeks are estimated to still reside there; about 30 each in Cuba, Algeria, and Eritrea; 10 in Vietnam. You get curious about, say, Papua New Guinea. Internet statistics show that seventy Greeks are supposed to be living there.

Our geography becomes our history and often history turns into destiny. Are we not descendants of the prototypical Odysseus? In Book IX, the superman of my formative years tells how adverse winds blew him and his men off course as they were rounding Cape Malea (Kavo Malia, today), the southernmost tip of the Peloponnesus, which faces the northernmost tip of Kythera. My parents left their homes because of the unyielding soil of the island that made for a hard life. They ended up on the shores of North Africa. I left both to do graduate work in this country, and stayed because I had seen enough turmoil in my young life. "Where do you come from?" has been the toughest question to answer here, an unavoidable result of being an immigrant child of immigrants. "Home? Long story. It's where I sleep tonight." Yet, hands down, I'd rather be home-less and receive the gift of free speech fresh every morning. It is a huge blessing.

This narrative was the basis of a speech I presented at a local Rotary Club on August 4. I closed then as I am closing now with a poem by Constantine P. Cavafy (b. in Alexandria 4/29/1863 – d. in Alexandria 4/29/1933).

Ithaca

When you set out on your journey to Ithaca,
pray that the road is long,
full of adventure, full of knowledge.
The Lestrygonians and the Cyclops,
the angry Poseidon - do not fear them:
You will never find such as these on your path,
if your thoughts remain lofty, if a fine
emotion touches your spirit and your body.
The Lestrygonians and the Cyclops,
the fierce Poseidon you will never encounter,
if you do not carry them within your soul,
if your soul does not set them up before you.

Pray that the road is long.
That the summer mornings are many, when,

with such pleasure, with such joy
 you will enter ports seen for the first time;
 stop at Phoenician markets,
 and purchase fine merchandise,
 mother-of-pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
 and sensual perfumes of all kinds,
 as many sensual perfumes as you can;
 visit many Egyptian cities,
 to learn and learn from scholars.

Always keep Ithaca in your mind.
 To arrive there is your ultimate goal.
 But do not hurry the voyage at all.
 It is better to let it last for many years;
 and to anchor at the island when you are old,
 rich with all you have gained on the way,
 not expecting that Ithaca will offer you riches.

Ithaca has given you the beautiful voyage.
 Without her you would have never set out on the road.
 She has nothing more to give you.

And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not deceived you.
 Wise as you have become, with so much experience,
 you must already have understood what these Ithacas mean.

Translated by Edmund Keeley

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Socrates John Zavitsanos

Socrates John Zavitsanos, 86 years old, passed away peacefully after a two year struggle with congestive heart failure.

He was born in the village of Poros on the island of Lefkada, Greece on March 30, 1923. Educated and trained as an expert tailor in the English style, his fondest memories were his apprenticeship as a young man in the city of Patras, Greece to become a custom tailor. Following completion of his training, he opened tailor shops in various locations on the island of Lefkada. Socrates married Tasoula Thiakos on October 18, 1959.

In 1965, he came to the United States hoping to realize the American dream for himself and his family. He worked for six years and then in 1969, he brought his wife and two children from Greece to join him in Chicago. After much hard work and struggle, he opened the Indian Hill Custom Tailor Shop in the exclusive suburb of Winnetka, Illinois. His customers included U.S. Senators, heads of Fortune 500 companies, and prominent local business leaders. It was there that he enjoyed serving his many loyal customers for over 25 years until his retirement when he moved to Houston to be close to his son and grandchildren. Socrates earned many achievements for his expertise, including 3 U.S. patents on his clothing designs. Socrates was the inventor of the women's tuxedo, which was a stylistic sensation in the late 70's. He also received many commendations from dignitaries in both Greece and the United States. Besides his passion for sewing, Socrates had a love for poetry and music, and wrote many poems throughout his life. He was proud to be related to the great poet, Aristotle Valeoritis, the national poet of Greece. He also loved Greek dancing and playing the harmonica for his grandchildren.

Socrates is preceded in death by his daughter, Vissaria Zavitsanos, mother, Eleni Konidaris Zavitsanos, father, Ioannis Zavitsanos, sister Theodora Vlahos, brothers Dimitrios (Mitso) Zavitsanos, Alexandros (Alekos) Zavitsanos, and Andreas Zavitsanos. He is survived by his wife Tasoula (Thiakos) Zavitsanos, son John Zavitsanos (wife Joni), daughter Eleni Zavitsanos, brother Christos Zavitsanos, and grandchildren Anastasia, Socratis, Diamantis, and Irene Zavitsanos. Please direct any charitable gifts to the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral, 3511 Yoakum Blvd., Houston, Texas 77006. Online tributes may be posted at www.bradshawcarter.com. "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39).

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Members in the News

- ▶ The Society wishes to welcome **Father Jordan Brown**, the new Proistamenos at the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral and his family to Houston.
- ▶ **The First Victory: Greece in the Second World War by George Blytas** will be released soon. The Society looks forward to collaborating on a book signing event when the volume is available.
- ▶ Meredith Long Gallery recently featured a show by artist, **Bas Poulos** entitled "The Dance Series and Other Figures". The show was very well received.

SAVE THESE DATES:

- **November 8, 2009, 6:00 PM**
 "Palamas, a dominant force in modern Greek Letters" Byzantine Chapel Fresco Museum, 4011 Yupon, poetry reading and reception.
- **December 19, 2009 7:30 PM**
 Holiday party at the home of Michael and Christine Economides.
- **January 31, 2010, 3:30 PM**
 Choefore (Libation Bearer) by George Blytas
 St. Basil the Great Greek Church
 1100 Eldridge Parkway
 Free

The Hellenic Professional Society of Texas is a non-profit organization that was established in 1975 by people wishing to preserve the rich culture and heritage of Greece. Among its goals are:

- To organize and sponsor activities that promote Greek language, culture and the spirit of Hellenism to the Houston community.
- To facilitate fellowship and cooperation between professionals of Greek heritage.
- To encourage the pursuit of higher education among people of Greek descent.

