



The Hellenic Society Prometheas

Newsletter 41

March 2005

Mark your Calendar

Upcoming Activities

(Information should be considered tentative until detailed announcement is issued)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Theme/Speakers</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Notes/Contact</u>
Greek movie	Beware of Greeks Bearing Guns	March 11 8:00 pm	St. Katherine's Church	Contact: Dimitris Vassiliadis d_vassi@yahoo.com
Greek Independence Day Celebration	Prof. John Anton, University of South Florida	Sunday, 5:00pm 3/27/05	St. George, Bethesda	Contact: Lefteris Karmiris (301-229-9389; lefteris.karmiris@verizon.net)
Battle of Salamis: The naval encounter that saved Greece and Western Civilization	Prof Barry Strauss, Cornell University	Tuesday 7:30 pm 3/29/05	Barnes & Noble 12089 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD	301-881-0237

Events by Other Organizations:

- ***RTO Annual Performance on Sunday, March 20th*** at 7:30 pm in the Robert E. Parilla Performing Arts Center at Montgomery College, Rockville Campus. For tickets call Mrs. Irene Konstantopoulos at H (301) 983-0055 or W (202) 965-0800.
- ***May 28, 8:00 pm: Mario Fragoulis and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra*** celebrate the Centennial of the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Annunciation at the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall in Baltimore. Info: www.goannun100.org

Mark Your Calendar

On March 11th, Prometheas will show the Greek-Australian movie: Beware of Greeks Bearing Guns (Φοβού τους Έλληνες...); see announcement for more information.

Also, please plan to join us in the celebration of the 184th Anniversary of the Greek Independence at St. George Church in Bethesda, MD (see complete announcement). This event, as always, is co-sponsored by many Hellenic organizations of the Washington DC area and this year features Keynote Speaker Dr. John Anton, Distinguished Professor of Greek Philosophy and Culture at the University of South Florida, who will speak on “Missolonghi: The Impact on the War of Independence and its Lessons’.

The program will include brief literary readings, recitation of poems and folk dances which will be performed by the Return to Origins dance troupe under the direction of Elena and Rena Papapostolou.

Prometheas’ annual masquerade dance

Prometheas’ annual masquerade dance took place on February 26th and was a big success. More than 220 friends of Prometheas attended and enjoyed an evening of fun. A significant percentage of the participants were dressed-up. Awards were given to a number of best dressed individuals, couple and groups. A large group of doctors from Greece attending a conference joined us, too.

Recommended Web Sites

<http://www.greekmidi.com> : An excellent collection of most Greek songs (lyrics and music) in Greek and English

<http://kypros.org/Real/Greek>: Greek radio stations in the internet

<http://www.e-radio.gr/> Also, radio station

Misc. News

Sailor's home on the Hill

At 72, and happily married, world-girdling yachtsman Nick Vartzikos recalls with a laugh his courtship formula: “First, I ask them if they get seasick,” he says. “Then I ask, ‘Do you love me?’”

Such priorities well suit a man who is a sailing legend in Greece and a hero to his native

island, Samos. He's now home from the sea, working through a bout with leukemia, which does not seem to bother him at all. And he recalls his most famous single-handed voyage, sailing his 38-foot steel ketch Samos from the Chesapeake Bay to the Greek island without stopping. He returned with the boat in 2002 and now keeps it in a well-known Maryland boat yard, Hartge's of Galesville.

Though a public welcome met him in Greece, and a book (in Greek) about his feat is in its second printing, he is little-known outside his neighborhood in the 400 block of Independence Avenue S.E. He is a courteous man who could well be from a previous century, but in his utterly shipshape row house, hung with rare nautical gear, including two navigation sextants and a brass binnacle and other items, shines a sense of order and utility and the calm of a good anchorage.

He hates the word "dream" when it is applied to his voyage. "There is no time for dreaming at sea," he says. "It is hard work."

Unlike many sailors, he had no seagoing heritage when he began. His father, who first emigrated to the United States from Samos, reflected the island's agricultural essence, famous for grapes, timber and fertile lands. It is less than a mile from the Turkish mainland.

The Vartzikos family gained citizenship here when the father served in the U.S. Army during World War I, and then returned to Greece, where Nick was born in 1932. Discovering his rights as a citizen, he came to the United States and sought work with the government, starting a 30-year career that ended at the Department of Health and Human Services, supervising contracts.

"I hated my job," he says. So he welcomed the chance to retire early at 55 in 1987. Thanks to frugality and investments, he was independent. He bought his pleasant row house, for instance, in 1966 for \$25,000; it is now worth many hundreds of thousands, and he bought other houses on the Hill as well. But he was a stranger to sailing.

Vartzikos applied himself to the art of sailing with typical diligence. After two smaller boats, he decided that the perfect instrument for his plan was a 38-foot steel boat, the model of which was Bernard Moitessier's Joshua. That boat won immortal fame for its French owner in 1969. Though leading, Moitessier dropped out, declining the \$25,000 prize in the first Golden Globe round-the-world race, declaring that he would keep sailing on.

"I have no desire to return to Europe with all its false gods," he radioed, a sentence that stunned the sailing world. The boat instantly became sought after by sailors, and 75 copies have been built; Vartzikos located one and fitted it out for voyaging, adding solar panels for electricity, modern electronics and self-steering.

Like Moitessier and his sailing idol, the Argentine Vito Dumas (who sailed the world in 1942), Vartzikos sought a large challenge.

Alone on May 8, 1988, he set off across the Atlantic from the Chesapeake and did not stop again until he tied the boat up at Samos on July 14, having sailed through Gibraltar and through the whole Mediterranean. His book, *Alone in the Atlantic*, tells the story — gales, whales and close scrapes — in Greek. For 14 years then, he left the steel ketch at Samos, sailing her in the summer and returning to Capitol Hill in the winter, meticulously restoring his houses.

When he returned home in 2002, he was joined by a friend, Maryland sailor Don Kilpatrick, for the ocean trek. He married his wife, Jan Campbell, 13 years ago. She's a publishing executive and, he says, is ready to start voyaging with him. The ketch waits quietly at dockside in Galesville, Md.

His advice to weekend sailors wearing out their days on shore, thinking of far horizons?

“If you can afford it, go sailing.”