



The

Hellenic Voice

Η ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΦΩΝΗ

The Official Newsletter of the Hellenic Cultural Center of the Southwest

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HCC-SW General Assembly Sept. 8, 2016

Review, reflect and prepare for past and future actions and events of the HCC-SW at the 2016 general assembly. All members are invited to our tenth annual meeting of the minds to discuss where we've been and where we are going.

President Yannis Remediakis will review the past year, reflect on our successes and present his plans for 2017. Officers and board members will have the opportunity to provide their thoughts on the state of our future development.

Members are invited to offer their ideas for our future, and suggest events that will promote Hellenism in Houston and the Southwest. In our past we sponsored and co-sponsored events such as Greek tragedies, musical concerts, lectures, art shows, Independence Day and OXI Day celebrations, plays and movies.

The 2016 HCC-SW General Assembly will be held at Theo's Restaurant - 812 Westheimer at 7:00 pm.

Delta District 16 Convention a Smashing Success!

"We can breathe again," Doug Harris said after the final presentation at the AHEPA 2016 District 16 Convention at the Hilton Post Oak June 25th.

To say it was a total success would hurt our arms as we patted ourselves on the back. But, with all things considered, our convention was a total success.

Friday night's program featured three Greek dance troupes, the Sons & Maids Reunion, live Greek music with Alex Kalos and non-stop pizza.

The dancers, all from the Houston and Clearlake areas, are The Olympian Dancers, St. John's Asteria and The Original Greek Festival Dancers. The standing room only crowd showed their appreciation with extended applause, whistles and hundreds of cell phone photos and videos.

The 60 Year Reunion of District 16's Sons of Pericles and Maids of Athena brought friends together from around the country. However, the majority were from the Houston area.

Alex Kalos, the Golden Greek, played until only the youngest dancers remained. It was "Greek Night" to the max!

The delegates from all four organizations met Saturday morning and afternoon to solve their various issues and were obviously very successful.

Saturday evening began with the induction of Manos Eliades as our newest brother and the renewing of the oath by all the brothers in attendance.

There were many awards presented, but the highlight for AHEPA 59 was the naming of Doug Harris as *AHEPAN of the Year - 2016*. This will be a convention long remembered by those in attendance, not only for the progress of the delegates, but also for the extreme *Greekness* of the events.

The AHEPA District 16 convention committee thanks the past, current, and future members of the AHEPA family AND the Pappas Restaurants Team for making this historic evening possible! The event was generously underwritten by Pappas' Restaurants.



Anthony Kouzounis administered the oath to Manos Eliades as many of our Brothers in District 16 looked on.

Visit the Hellenic Cultural Center of the Southwest online at www.hcc-sw.org

Ten Years Later . . .

How time does fly. It is now ten years since The Hellenic Cultural Center of the Southwest was recognized by the State of Texas as a 501 (c) 3 tax exempt organization. It's hard to believe that a decade has gone by, but then when I think about it ----I was 76 years old then and I am 86 now. That is a significant difference.

I have aged, but I am happy to say that our HCC Board of Directors has gotten younger and that is a good and wonderful thing. It bodes well for our future. We need the vigor and strength of youth and their ideas and enthusiasm to endure. I believe the future of HCC is bright and full of promise. Our ultimate goal of establishing a physical Hellenic Cultural Center is a real possibility and will eventually come to exist. We must persevere!

Our very active Board Members work very hard and one might wonder and worry that there is a danger of "burnout". As I thought about this I recalled an editorial written by my Department Chairman while I was on the faculty at Ohio State University. He wrote as follows: "Burnout has become a metaphor for 'I give up' It's an easy way to say I surrender, or better yet a socially acceptable word for fatigue, laziness or change of heart----or simply another rationalization to throw in the towel.

It's a quick and easy way to avoid facing the complexities of life — the human predicament. Saying "burnout" is to explain without detail — jargon for escaping unpleasant realities. *Burnout is a cop out! Let's leave flame out for Jets and burnout for electricians and get back to work.*"

I don't think there is any quit or give up in our people. I want to say to those who work so very hard for HCC-SW — Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the laudable goals of our Cultural Center. I know you all feel as I do that a labor of love is no labor at all. Promoting Hellenism in our city and country is a privilege and perhaps even our duty that must be done. If not by a collective us, then by whom? If not now, then when?

As my chairman said -- "Lets get to work."



The Olympian Dancers brought the audience to their feet with enthusiastic dances during the AHEPA District 16 Convention, June 24th.

Upcoming Greek Events

Aug. 25th

AHEPA 29 Whisky & More Social

Sept. 8th

HCC-SW General Assembly

Sept. 17th

Tavli Afternoon @ Byzantio

Oct. 6th – 9th

The Original Greek Festival

Oct. 28th

OXI Day

HCC-SW Newsletter Editorial Staff: *The Hellenic Voice* is the official publication of the Hellenic Cultural Center of the Southwest and is produced by members and friends on a quarterly basis. Member organizations include: Consul of Greece in Houston, Alexander the Great Chapter #29, Order of AHEPA, Cretans of Houston, Daughters of Penelope, Macedonian Association of Greater Houston, Pancyprian Association of Texas, Inc., and the Marathon Exchange Organization. Postage is Paid at Houston, Texas. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HCC-SW, P.O. Box 66431, Houston, TX 77266-6431. Send your comments, articles, suggestions for articles, and/or news to the HCC-SW Newsletter Editorial Staff. HCC-SW is a 501 (c) 3 Not For Profit organization. Editors: Nick Checkles, 281.370.2124 - nscheckles@yahoo.com/ Mel Mamula, 832/692-3761 - mmel@comcast.net. View our web site at www.hcc-sw.org.

Editor: Thanks Alex for your letter and kind words. The geopolitics in the eastern Mediterranean are in constant flux indeed.

Subject: The Hellenic Voice / Greece, Cyprus, and Israel Change the Military Balance in the Mediterranean

Hello Nick:

You do a fantastic job with the Hellenic Voice, and anything about Greece in general. As you no doubt are aware the article by Asst. Prof. Andreas Stergiou is very outdated.

Greece recognized the State of Palestine earlier this year, which very much upset the Netanyahu regime in Israel. And Turkey and Russia have become enemies after the downing of the Russian military aircraft that crossed the Syrian-Turkish border. The Turkish regime of Erdogan is certainly a threat to Middle Eastern stability, which of course has ceased to exist anyway after the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

The Obama government is supplying the so-called Free Syrian army with all kinds of weapons, and also being funded by Saudi Arabia, which has been the enemy of all secularist governments in the region. They have been against the Assad government for many years because it is a secular government, and has been supported by the Alawites (a branch of Shia), of

which the Assad's are Alawites, and by the Kurds, Christians, Armenians, Shiites, Sunni secularists, Circassians, and other minorities, which have all been protected by the Assad governments, present and past.

The ones supported by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia are Sunni, and probably Wahabi Sunni Muslims, who, if they were to win against Damascus, they probably would impose Shariya law. Cyprus and Israel apparently are on good terms, and sharing the exploitation of the offshore gas deposits.

But Greek-Israeli relations are rather bad, if I am not mistaken. And of course, Cypriot and Turkish relations remain terrible, due to the unlawful takeover of Northern Cyprus by the ethnic Turks, with the help of Turkey. And Greek-Turkish relations remain as always, not on friendly terms, but at least they are not at war with each other.

Best wishes,
Alex Gavrilis

AHEPA's District 16 Convention Featured 3 Greek Dance Troupes



© Steve Magoon

The Original Greek Festival Dancers stirred the standing room only crowd with their lively dances.

Houstonians Translate for Migrants in Greece

HOUSTON, TX – On Wednesday, March 9, 2016, the Houston chapter of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), in association with the members of their sister organization The Daughters of Penelope, welcomed three volunteers who have recently returned from Greece.

Over the 2015 Christmas holidays, Houston-based Iranian-Americans Negin Sobhani, Yunus Ahmadi, and Yalda Ahmadi departed for Lesbos, Greece, armed with thousands of dollars in donations from family and friends from across the world. Spurred by the largest refugee crisis since World War II, the pleading of international volunteers for translators, and the urge to act, the three spent over a week at the Moria Refugee Camp in the medical tent run by Health Point Project and in the family compound run by the Danish Refugee Council.

On the evening of March 9, 2016, these three shared their stories and discussed their experiences with locals, humanitarian agencies, volunteers concerning the refugees in Lesbos, Greece.

Anthony Kouzounis, past Supreme President of the Order of AHEPA facilitated this event, points out

the significance of this crisis and its relevance to the Greek community worldwide. “Like so many of our American brothers and sisters of Greek ancestry,” observed Kouzounis, “we are struggling to come to grips with the emotional components of this relief effort and it's debilitating impact on a country already dealing with economic challenges. How do we address the issues of national security, divergent faiths, and global politics while maintaining our commitment to the elimination of suffering and the preservation of human life? This is a complex situation and these guests helped us understand the realities of this tragic circumstance.”

James Cargas, a member of AHEPA Chapter #29 and candidate for U.S. Congress (TX-7) this November, introduced the humanitarians. “Houston is an international city because its people trace their roots across the globe, and because we maintain and continue to build these connections. We are all looking forward to hearing about the selfless actions of these Houston humanitarians and to learn from them what the refugees and their Greek hosts need most from us.”



Dozens of refugees desperately cling to a life raft as they near the shore of the Greek island of Lesbos. Many did not make it to land and those that did suffered from malnutrition and hypothermia. The situation was worsened by the lack of sufficient facilities, food and medical personnel. Greek residents and businesses provided what they could, but need more supplies from donor countries.

Greek Government Crashing with the Refugee Situation?

The world of Mr. Tsipras has collapsed - Saturday, March 26, 2016

What is going on? Where are we headed? What will happen to us and to our country? These are agonizing questions that are being asked in homes, offices, coffee shops and social gatherings.

There is not a single person that is not asking questions, after all of the uncertainty and distress around us. Especially the terrorist attacks in Brussels and Paris and the escalation of the refugee problem, the sense of insecurity is having a profound effect, as it burdens the effort to exit the long-term financial, political and social crisis. The Tsipras government had the opportunity to act for a significant amount of time with absolute support and trust. However, it failed spectacularly in its mission

Based on problematic assumptions and constructed truths about the economy and the modern world, it only jeopardized the country put the country, in a worse position and clearly limited the people's opportunities. The failure in the refugee issue was equally huge. The devious approach of open borders, where Greece would act as a hospitable and safe passage for refugees on their way to Europe, turned out to be totally problematic.

A conundrum of major proportions faces countries that accept the immigrant hordes. First reaction is to aide those fleeing oppression and death in their homeland. Humanitarian aide is sent from the most civilized nations. However, after a month of unrest, crime and filthy surroundings, what is to be done with these throngs of the poorest of the poor? This is the issue that Greece faces today.

The increasing flows of refugees caused reactions from Central European nations and, as expedited, led to their borders being closed with thousands of refugees stranded in unorganized areas without infrastructures and sufficient control. The deal hastily reached with Turkey is currently on hold and nobody can guarantee that it will be implemented properly.

Now, the government is facing a major humanitarian crisis and that is why Mr. Tsipras created reception centers for 30,000 people. The situation became more complicated after the recent heinous terrorist attacks by the Islamic fascists in Brussels and Paris. Among others, it unfortunately raised security issues that our government downplayed and perhaps continues to do so.

Understandably then, the people are desperately seeking answers for their existential problems. Of course, they will not find them for the simple reason that those currently in power cannot provide them.
Antoni Karakousis

Originally published in the Saturday print edition of the Greek publication The DHMA.



HCC-SW Membership Has it's Benefits

Happy Summer!!

2016 has been a great year to be an HCC member! We have more members this year than any other year! It's not too late to create your membership if you have not done so yet...you don't want to miss any of our great offers!

Our March events were fabulous and gave us an opportunity to launch our new event series, the Patron Highlight. These events are for those members at Patron level and higher. In March our special members were able to dine and mingle with the wonderful performers who came from Greece specifically for our March 25th celebration. An unforgettable night to say the least! A very big thank you to our friends at *Alexander the Great Restaurant* for their generous hospitality!!

There are other perks to becoming a member. No matter what level you choose, you will be offered a discounted rate on HCC-SW sponsored events and special notices for upcoming events. Also, as a Household level and higher, you have access to the Hellenic Circle; discounts at local area businesses as long as you show your membership card! Look for the Hellenic Circle sticker at these participating businesses:

- Briargrove Texaco (1621 S. Voss): 10 cents off per gallon
- Byzantio (403 W. Gray St): 5% off your purchase of \$40 or more (excludes alcohol)
- Mama Elpis Greek Desserts (www.mamaelpis.com): 2 free cookies of your choice with a purchase of 1 Koulouraki Box
- Niko Niko's (various locations): 10% off 1 order (appetizer, entrée and drink)
- Simply Greek (1900 Blalock): 1 free dessert with a purchase of an entrée (limit 1 per table)
- Sta Dika Sas (www.stadikasas.com): 5% off orders of \$200 or more
- Theo's Restaurant (812 Westheimer): 10% off your purchase
- Alexander the Great (3055 Sage #170): 10% off your purchase (excluding alcohol)

If you would like to become a member, please fill out the membership form and send with your check to: The Hellenic Cultural Center of the Southwest, PO Box 66431, Houston, TX 77266-6431 or go online at www.hcc-sw.org.



Our Patron Highlight event L to R: Anthony Kouzounis, Mary Verges, with performers Thanos Polydoros, David Nachmias and Evelina Nikoliza.

Hellenic Cultural Center of the Southwest Membership Form

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Select your membership:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$ 1000 |
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Performance Of Aristophanes' "The Birds" In Houston

Reviewed By Dr. Alex Kalamarides

The long-awaited performance of "The Birds" (ὄρνιθες), the hallmark 414 B.C. political comedy by Aristophanes, took place at the theater hall of the Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart in Houston on Saturday afternoon, April 23, 2016. Presented jointly by the Hellenic Cultural Center of the Southwest and the Archaeological Institute of America, Houston, the ~75 minute performance by local actors Luis Galindo, Julia Traber, Carl Masterson, Greg Cote, and others, was preceded by a well-conceived introductory presentation by Rice University's professor Harvey Yunis.

"The Birds" is Aristophanes' longest surviving play. It has been hailed as A perfectly realized fantasy in which the protagonists, Pisthetaerus and Euelpides, to escape the dysfunctions, everyday woes and decline of power associated with Athenian democracy, ascend to the realm of the birds in the clouds where they found a new city, Cloud Cuckooland, and get the gods to accede to their power-restoring demands.

The original play, besides exploiting — to comic effect — the universal themes of what can go wrong in a free democratic state and how the phallically symbolized exercise of power in that state can be diminished and restored, is largely driven by wordplays, sub-plots, jokes and references that relate, indirectly, to the main political events that shaped the time when it was written as an entry for the famous theatrical contest at the annual Panathenian

celebration — events like the Peloponnesian war, the ill-conceived Sicilian expedition, the emasculation of the Hermean statues of Athens, and so on. Consequently, contemporary interpretations of the play strive to adapt the spirit of Aristophanes to the present time, affairs and symbols, so as to maintain the playwright's intent while making it accessible to today's political landscapes.

In that sense, the abridged version presented on April 23, directed by Houstonian Philip Hays, was quite timely and successful. Presented at a time when our American democracy's shortcomings are challenged by an unprecedented presidential election season that echoes of hard-to-pin dissatisfaction exploited by demagoguery, the play's jokes and indirect allusions, although far removed from the original, were quite well-placed to our times, often in ways that, one imagines, would make Aristophanes smile. "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" (the more it changes, the more it stays the same), as the French like to say.

The event, therefore, was a success, and it led the very diverse and somewhat eclectic audience to lively discussions during the Greek light-meze-and-baklava-filled reception that followed. An additional note of satisfaction for this reviewer is that the fruitful collaborations between the Archaeological Institute of America and the Hellenic Cultural Center are set to resume on a good footing by our active Hellenic community.

FAMILY PROFILE — MIKE SPARTALIS

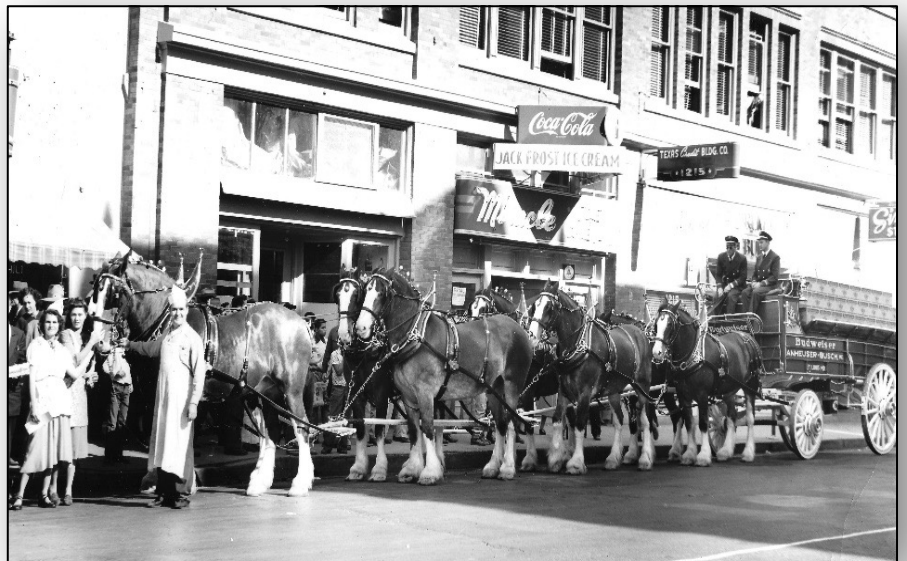
In the beginning . . . With Anastasios Spartalis and Son Mike

My dad owned and operated Pioneer Coney Island in the 50's, 1211 Prairie, across the street from Palace Boot shop and few blocks from JCI. That is him in the front, Mr. Tom (Anastasios) Spartalis, from Rhodes.

He was a hardnosed Greek immigrant who worked his heart out for me. When I was graduating from college I asked him — "let's open a restaurant together." He said, "fine, but I am going to Greece, if I come back we will do that, but if I die there you bury me there in a wooden box." Well he called it, my mom and I went there and buried him there with the remains of his parents at his feet.

If we would have gotten the James Coney Island place or been closer to main street and central Houston, I would have been in the Hot Dog Business today, instead of being a CPA. I believe I saw this picture except, with the new owners and the same set of Horse and wagon, at James Coney Island.

What memories and times!





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