

Greek Surgeon Restores Eyesight

Cutting Edge Methods Give Gift of Sight

By Constantine S. Sirigos
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – The gift of sight, or health, or extended life, whether it ultimately comes from God or from science, also passes through the hands of physicians like Dr. George Florakis. But great doctors don't emerge by accident. One family pattern comes up often: a driven father and a compassionate mother. That is the case with Florakis, an ophthalmologist in private practice and Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at Columbia University Medical Center.

Florakis recalls being impressed with TV shows like Dr. Kildare and Marcus Welby, MD, so the wider environment also contributes to career choice. The Perry Mason show did nothing to stir any law school aspirations within him, so the path was clear to medical school for the student who graduated third in his high school class.

Florakis is not only an ophthalmologist but also a corneal transplant specialist. He had a radically different conception of the kind of medicine he would be practicing, however. "I really pictured myself riding around in a jeep in the country with a dog in the back in the middle of the night delivering babies," as a general practitioner. As a sub-specialist, he has chosen an opposite way of life.

He liked every subject in medical school, including psychiatry and general surgery. "The one thing I didn't like was sitting around and saying 'let's give this person some medication and see what happens in a couple of weeks,'" he said. He knew he wanted to pursue a surgical subspecialty. At one point he realized how amazing the human eye is, and what a great feeling comes from enabling a child to see.

Florakis obtained a work-study job in college as a junior. Having to pick between working in the cafeteria and delivering boxes at the eye institute, he chose the latter. He asked doc-

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University Greek Clubs Are Active

By Chris Papastefanou
TNH Staff

NEW YORK – The Intercollegiate Hellenic Society (IHS) held a meeting on November 20, its first since many of the affiliated schools traveled to Boston, MA for the Fall Convention held by the National Hellenic Society Association (NHSA) of America just a few weeks earlier.

The NHSA is the recognized network of Hellenic student associations (HSAs) across the United States, much to the chagrin of IHS President Costas Gurlakis, whose envisions IHS under his leadership in a healthy coexistence with NHSA and an equal share of national recognition.

The meeting focused on the biannual Convention for the most part. Mihalis Giannou of the NJ Institute of Technology took the podium first and informed the audience of 15 about the various presentations and activities that took place but the meeting really took off when the topic of the location of the next convention was discussed.

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Return of the Drachma: Is the Improbable Now Inevitable?



AP PHOTO/PETROS KARADJIAS

Following In Greece's Footsteps: Closed Airports, Government Shutdowns, And Strikes In Cyprus

A passenger use her laptop as she waits for her flight at Larnaca international airport, Cyprus, December 15, 2011. Cyprus' airports and government offices have shut down in a daylong strike by a civil servants' union and air traffic controllers to

protest a wage freeze and other spending cuts affecting them. The rare work stoppage has forced the cancellation of 79 flights to and from the East Mediterranean island. More strikes this weekend are threatening to disrupt municipal elections.

Leaving the Euro May Ignite Tourism Boom

By Landon Thomas, Jr.
The New York Times

LONDON, ENGLAND – One study done in France says a return to the drachma would mean a paradise of bargains for tourists in Greece

Instead of business as usual on Monday morning, lines of angry Greeks form at the shuttered doors of the country's banks, trying to get at their frozen deposits. The drachma's value plummets more than 60 percent against the euro, and prices soar at the few shops willing to open.

Soon, the country's international credit lines are cut after Greece, as part of the prime minister's move, defaults on its debt.

As the country descends into chaos, the military seizes control of the government.

This scary chain of events might never come to pass. But the danger that Greece or some other deeply damaged country in the euro zone could leave the single-currency union can no longer be ruled out. And it was

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Congressman John Sarbanes Leads Human Rights Initiative

By Constantine Sirigos
TNH Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman John Sarbanes organized the first annual St. Andrew's Human Rights and Religious Freedom Reception, which was held on November 30 at the Capitol Visitor Center. St. Andrew is the patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and on November 30 he is venerated in both the Western and Eastern Churches.

Sarbanes told TNH that the people involved recognized that the feast of St. Andrew presents a great opportunity to bring attention to its plight by placing it in the context of international religious freedom and human rights.

The intention is to have a reception every November 30 and to focus on a salient issue of human rights and religious freedom in addition to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. They hope that

each year it can be grown and broadened so ever more members of Congress can be sensitized.

The reception was hosted by Senator Ben Cardin and Chris Smith of The Helsinki Commission, Representatives Frank Wolf and James P. McGovern of The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, Representatives Trent Franks and Heath Shuler of The International Religious Freedom Caucus, and Representatives Gus

Bilirakis, Carolyn Maloney, and John Sarbanes of The Hellenic Caucus.

Opening remarks on the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate were offered by Peter Marudas. The State Department's Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom, Suzan Johnson Cook, spoke about Obama Administration's support for the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Congressman Sarbanes was very pleased that many in the audi-

ence were able to speak with her.

One of the highlights was the presentation of *The Apostle of Love, Hope and Reconciliation*, a short documentary film about the mission of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

Sarbanes said the inaugural event was very successful and they hope that November 30 becomes known as St. Andrew's Religious Freedom Day. He was

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Greek-American Power Broker Stelios Zavvos

By Demetrios Tsakas
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – Greek-American Stelios Zavvos, founder of the private equity fund Zeus Capital Partners, is a well-known investor and power broker on both sides of the Atlantic. Funded by major financial institutions, sovereign wealth funds, world-famous investors and Greek shipowners, Zeus succeeded in developing residential communities and acquiring income-producing offices in Southeastern Europe – the Balkans. That fund, based in Athens, plays a major investment role in countries like Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Greece.

Concurrently, Mr. Zavvos founded the Harvard Business School Club of Greece, which has evolved into one of the leading economics, business, and public policy forums in Greece and the greater Southeastern European region.

As the president of the Club,

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The famous Guru of Wall Street, NYU Professor Nouriel Roubini, with Stelios Zavvos, a noted investor and power broker, and founder of the private equity fund Zeus Capital Partners.

To Kafeneio: A Greek Institution

By Demetris Tsakas
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – The Highlight of the Chian Federation's 32nd Annual Gala at the Hellenic American Cultural Center in Astoria on December 3 was the presentation of its Homeric Award to retired US Lieutenant General William (Basil) G. Pagonis.

The organizing committee, headed by Dr. Nicholas Rallis and Alexandros Doulis, and the Board of the Women's Auxiliary – which performed traditional Greek dances – had hoped it would be the best gala in years. Their devotion and attention to detail made it a glittering evening.

Father George Anastasiou, the pastor of the Church of the Transfiguration in Corona, offered the benediction and conveyed the blessings of Archbishop Demetrios of America.

Former New York State Assemblyman Matthew Mirones,

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Chian Org. Honors General Pagonis

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Retired U.S. Lieutenant General William (Basil) Pagonis.

who was the event's Master of Ceremonies, spoke of the Federation's history of the Federation and the significance of the Homeric Award.

Josephine Foundation Vice President John Shea warmly introduced Pagonis and said he considered himself lucky to have served under his command. Despite being heralded as the "genius of the first Gulf War" for having served as General Norman Schwarzkopf's logistics commander during operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Pagonis accepted his award with modesty. Pagonis said "the award belongs to each one of you" and dedicated it to his father, who at 15 arrived at Ellis Island and then nurtured his family with love for the island of Chios.

"Until the age of ten I did not know that Greece is not only Chios," Pagonis said before focusing his attention on the values he learned from his parents and the role played by the ideals of Greek heritage in his military and professional career. He

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Concert Honors Maestro Anagnost

By Constantine S. Sirigos
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – The Little Orchestra Society's Annual Christmas concert at the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, this year titled "Making a Joyful Sound," filled the Upper East Side church with holiday spirit on December 11. The 35th annual concert in the series which is billed as "Great Music under a Byzantine Dome" had a special subtitle this year: "A Holiday Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Maestro Dino Anagnost," in honor of the man who made the concert a holiday tradition in New York.

As always, the Cathedral - packed with a holiday audience and with Archbishop Demetrios present - looked magnificent in its blue, white, and gold with glinting marbles and mosaics spiced with red Christmas ribbons and lamps. The Orchestra was smartly dressed in black and the singers from the Orpheon Chorale and Metropolitan singers/The Greek Choral Society were adorned in festive colors.

The orchestra and the Orpheon Chorale began on a sublime note with *I Parthenos Simeron*, which begins "Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One." The hymn was part of an arrangement by Anagnost titled *Suite on Byzantine Chants of the Nativity*, which included the Hymn of St. Basil, whose percussion and string elements evoked the heart of Asia Minor, the rhythm becoming more and more driving and rising to a crescendo before the thrilling climax.

The beloved hymn *I Genisis Sou – Your Nativity, O Christ our Lord* began a cappella with male voices in monophony and grew some simple harmonies before orchestra and chimes joined in. The women's voices then came in like a burst of

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