



GREEK AMERICAN SCIENTISTS

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Herald

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Greek American Scientists

“Study hard, identify early your passion and talents and focus on them like a laser beam. If you do that, you will one day be rewarded with an occupation that you love, and you will enjoy the benefits of being good at it. Always operate under ethical rules and family values. And if you are Greek, remember your heritage! If you are not, become one. We welcome you! Young people should study the classics and learn about the Greek civilization.”

These are the words of K.C. Nicolaou, world-renowned chemist. Each of the scientists we feature in this issue were guided by these same principals. That and the support of family around them enabled them to accomplish Herculean tasks in their respective fields.

I am amazed at the positive outlook they have on life, embracing it, even when faced with difficulties



and overwhelming odds. Several of the scientists we feature today came from humble beginnings in Greece or Cyprus. Quite a few faced the ravages of World War II and the Civil War in Greece.

They had to leave their families in the old country to make a new life in the United States, but they did not forget their roots. They speak of the inspiration they get from the classics and ancient Greek civilization. The scientists, even those born in America, have returned to Greece or Cyprus, not just for a visit but also to use their knowledge to enrich their “patrida.”

We are privileged to have the opportunity to showcase them and present this section as a service to the readers of The National Herald.

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Constantine A. Balanis: The New Prometheus

By Mark N. Lardas

Special to The National Herald

Constantine A. Balanis, an expert in antenna technology, has had a profound effect on our lives. Feel like talking to Thia Marika? Even though she is in Karitina, Greece, and you are in Rochester, New York, you can pick up the phone and call. You may call on your cell phone – it has better long distance rates. We do not think about how remarkable it really is.

Like Prometheus plucking fire from the Gods, antennas pluck signals from the air. That low-cost connection to Greece depends upon antennas. Even when using your landline, you go through antennas. Most international phone calls now travel via communications satellites. Communications requires sophisticated antennas both in space and on the ground.

We use wireless communications each day. Wireless computer networks, satellite radio, even that toll-road pass card mounted on your windshield, use antennas. Modern telecommunications is an everyday miracle.

Much of today's antenna technology owes its existence to Constantine A. Balanis, who emigrated from Greece in 1955. Few people outside his field may have heard of him. Yet he has touched all of our lives for the better.

His influence extends beyond his own work. For 25 years, his book, "Antenna Theory: Analysis and Design" has been the standard textbook on antennas in engineering colleges throughout the United States and the world. Through that book, virtually every antenna design of the last two decades is the fruit of his knowledge. He has been a modern Prometheus, bringing a gift of knowledge.

Balanis is an improbable Prometheus. He was born in Trikala, Thessalias, in 1938. His earliest childhood memories are of war – World War II, and the long years of the Greek Civil War, from 1946 to 1949.

Of World War II, Balanis relates, "Some Italians came to our house in the village in the valley. We also had a donkey. The Italians took the donkey. When Papou came home, we told him that Italians took the donkey. We went to visit the Italians who had camped near the railroad station. My papou told them that they could come and take the entire house but needed the donkey. The Italians gave us back the donkey."

His memories of the Greek Civil

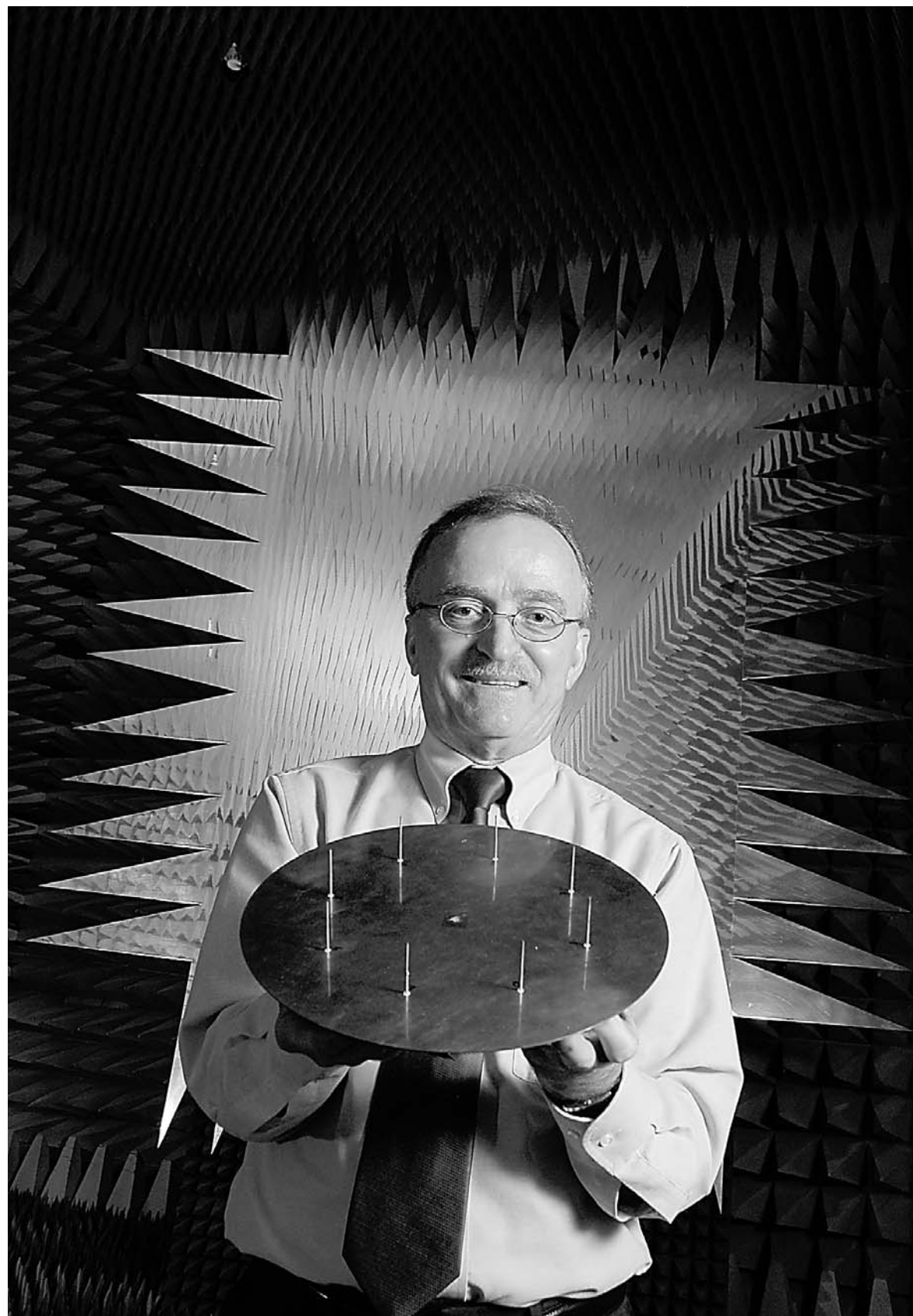


PHOTO BY JOHN C. PHILLIPS. COURTESY OF ASU RESEARCH MAGAZINE

Constantine Balanis holds an experimental model of a Smart Antenna in the ElectroMagnetic Anechoic Chamber at Arizona State University (ASU). He has taught at ASU for the last 24 years, where he is now Regents' Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering. Balanis was instrumental in developing the Smart Antenna, an array of antenna elements, which adaptively are constantly changing radiation/reception to maximize the users' signal strength while minimizing interference.

War were darker, "During the nights, my father, oldest brother and two oldest sisters would go and hide in holes covered with branches because they were afraid that the guerrillas would come to the house and take them. One summer, up in the mountains, in Gardi-

ki, the guerrillas had come into town and camped around the church property. They took some people from my village, some of whom they executed. One was a young man who had served at the same time with my mother's younger brother, as evzones at the

Royal Palace. They executed him. My uncle was devastated to have lost his best friend."

In 1955, Arthur Balanis, a paternal uncle who had settled in Newport News, Virginia, offered to host the teenaged Kostas (as his family and friends call him). He grabbed

the chance.

Constantine Balanis relates: "I lived for many years as part of their family. When I came to the U.S., I started attending high school a week or so after my arrival, while working for my uncle's clothing business in the late afternoons, evenings and weekends. Because I did not speak English when I came to the U.S., I spent a lot of time in the high school classes listening. I started regular classes in the fall 1955, and I graduated in 1958. I stayed one extra year in high school to learn English better."

After high school, Balanis had no real plans to attend college. He wanted to work, to help his family back in Greece. His uncle prodded him into finishing his education. In 1960 he entered Virginia Tech and majored in mathematics, which he loved. He soon realized that employment opportunities were better for engineers, so he transferred into the Electrical Engineering Department. It is one of the most mathematical engineering disciplines.

In his junior year he discovered antennas. "I took some technical electives. One that piqued my interest was on microwaves. It was closely related to antennas and electromagnetics in general. At that time Virginia Tech did not teach a class on antennas. I started working at NASA, Langley Research Center, in Virginia. I was assigned to a group working in microwaves. I worked in microwaves for about two years, including doing my Master's thesis. I decided to pursue a Ph.D., at Ohio State University, the leading university in Antennas. I pursued my dissertation research in Antennas."

Why antennas? "Antennas are the eyes and ears of electronic communication systems. A human can have the best brain in the world but the success often depends on good eyesight and good hearing. The same is true in wireless communication systems. They must employ antennas. Their performance and success depends on the design of good antennas."

Balanis was at the right place at the right time to make a major difference. During the 1960s, antenna design was an art. The mathematics required to design an antenna were too complex to solve on a slide rule, and computers were still new.

The 1970s saw the start of a period when computing power grew explosively. Balanis had the tools needed to help transform antenna

Continued on page 4

Constantine A. Balanis: The New Prometheus

Continued from page 3

analysis and design into a science. You could develop the equations to predict what it would do, and then develop a computer program to model it.

Between receiving his baccalaureate degree and his masters and doctorate he worked at NASA. He helped on the development of antenna designs used both on space probes and to track and to communicate with them. He helped design antennas used by NASA's Deep Space Network.

These are used both to track and communicate with spacecraft. They tracked the early manned missions. The television pictures sent from the Moon during Apollo 11 were sent through these antennas. Today they communicate with distant space probes. They can capture a signal sent from beyond Pluto.

Shortly after becoming a Ph.D., in 1969, he became a professor, first in the Department of Electrical Engineering at the University of West Virginia. Since 1983 he taught at Arizona State University, in Tempe, Arizona. For the last 16 years he had been Regents' Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering.

His influence in the field of antenna design is global. "Antenna Theory: Analysis and Design" had been published in four languages besides English. The list includes a version in his native Greek, as well as Chinese, Korean and Portuguese editions. It is the standard antenna textbook in the U. S. and is used by engineering students throughout the world.

Balanis has written three other books, contributed chapters to an additional nine books, as well as authoring or co-authoring 125 technical papers on antennas. His writing is not exclusively for a technical audience. He wrote the article on antennas for the Encarta Encyclopedia.

In 2004, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki honored its native son, Constantine A. Balanis, with an honorary doctorate for contributions to electromagnetic education and research. The honor was a source of intense satisfaction. It reflects how he has kept touch with Greece, professionally as well as personally.

Although Balanis works hard, his work is only one aspect of his life. He is a devoted husband to his wife, Helen Jovaras Balanis, and has two daughters. Both are now adults, but neither followed father's footsteps into engineering.

He enjoys travel, too. Some



CHESWICK PHOTOGRAPHY

Dr. Constantine Balanis is shown with his wife, daughters and son-in-law at his daughter's wedding in 2006. From left to right are Constantine Balanis, Helen Jovaras Balanis, Stephanie A. Coumas (nee Balanis), Bill Coumas and Erini C. Balanis.

travel is work related – attending this year's conferences and lecturing in Greece, Hawaii, Taiwan, Croatia and Brazil. He now visits Greece regularly, as much for pleasure, to touch base with his roots and visit family, as to exchange knowledge with Greek colleagues.

Ancient Greeks held that one must balance the arts of the mind with physical prowess. Constantine Balanis follows that precept. He is a sports enthusiast. "I always had an interest in sports, although I did not have the physical ability or time to play any of them in a big

way. So, when I came to the U.S., I was very much fascinated and attracted by baseball." When asked to name three people from the past whom he would like to meet, childhood hero Mickey Mantle was one.

He was an avid jogger when he was younger. Between 1968 and

1991 – when his knees forced him to stop – he ran nearly 30,000 miles, more than a trip around the world. Slowed down by knee surgery, he now walks for exercise.

He is also a passionate golfer. "It is a game that can be played basically at any age and physical size, and it gives me the opportunity to enjoy nature and fellowship with friends and fellow golfers," says Balanis.

So what does the future hold for Kostas?

He plans to work while his health holds out, and he is still productive. Work is still fun. Every year brings a new challenge. Right now, he is intrigued by meta-materials and is studying the challenges offered by smart antennas.

Balanis explains: "Meta-materials are artificial materials that imitate perfect magnetic conductors. They do not exist in nature. Yet their use promises significant improvement in antenna performance."

"Smart is the term used to describe continuously-adapting antennas. They are an array of antenna elements, which adaptively are constantly changing radiation/reception to maximize the users' signal strength while minimizing interference. It is a cross between antenna design and computer programming, because they use digital signal processing.

"Smart antennas can increase system capacity in congested areas and increase the range a signal can be captured."

So what is Balanis' view of life? The National Herald asked him.

TNH: Who were the major influences in your life as you were growing up?

CB: First and foremost, my parents who were very hard working people. They believed very much in the values of life and lived accordingly, even though they had a large family. My father was very much pro education and wanted his children to get good education and be good citizens. My oldest brother became a medical doctor and my youngest brother an attorney.

My life, especially in my first 10-15 years in the U.S., was very much influenced by my Uncle Arthur Balanis and Aunt Ethel Balanis. If it were not for them to invite and sponsor me to the U.S., I do not know what path my life would have taken. My uncle, like my father, was very much pro-education. That is why he wanted me, as soon as I came to the U.S., to attend high school, even though I did not speak English.

TNH: How do you feel your



BALANIS PHOTO

Constantine Balanis left Piraeus, Greece as a teenager aboard the Nea Ellas, Androu on March 5, 1955, arriving in New York (Manhattan) on March 20, 1955 to join his aunt and uncle in Newport News, Virginia.

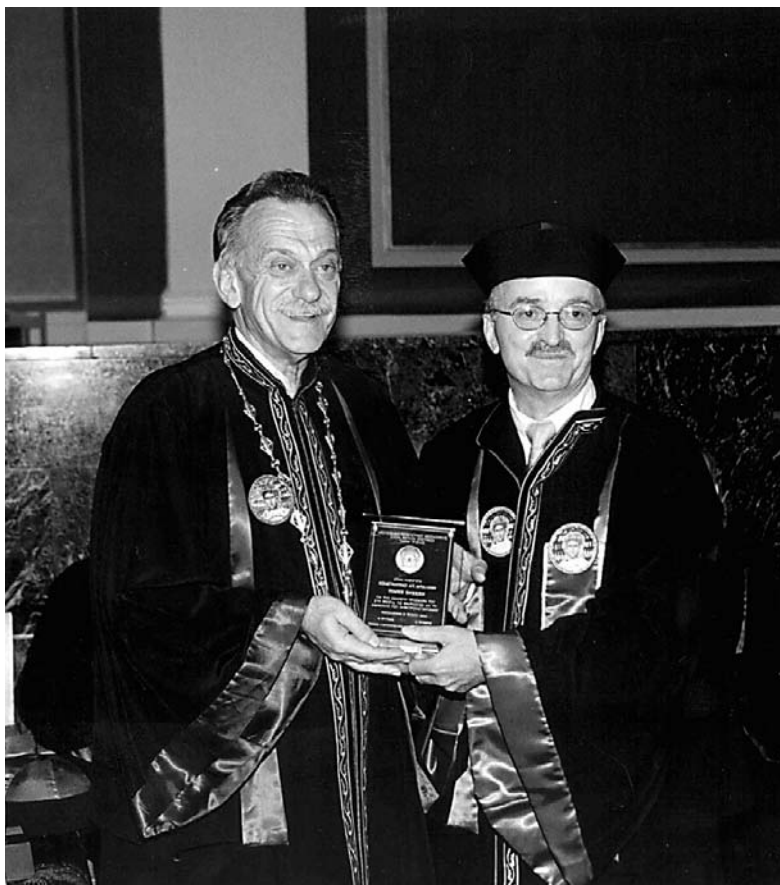


PHOTO BY ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

University Rector Ioannis Antonopoulos confers Constantine Balanis (left) with an honorary doctorate from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki on June 2, 2004.



DAILY PRESS, NEWPORT NEWS, VA

Constantine Balanis (right) registers as a student at Newport News High School, in Newport News, VA, on March 28, 1955. He is accompanied by his cousin, Priscilla A. Balanis Outland. To the left is Assistant Principal Mr. Thomas O. Keesee. Balanis says, "When I came to the U.S., I started attending high school a week or so after my arrival, while working for my uncle's clothing business in the late afternoons, evenings and weekends."

Greek heritage has affected your life?

CB: Greeks have a lot of history in philosophy, arts and sciences. Greeks have excellent work ethics and have been most successful in all areas of endeavor. Greeks are family oriented people with affection and commitment toward their loved ones and with deep convictions and long standing traditions in religion, language, and culture. So, I tried to continue, hopefully even advance, the legacy of our forefathers. Obviously we must have inherited some of their genes.

TNH: What is the best part about being Greek?

CB: I am very proud being part of a culture that has a history unparalleled by any other nationality in all areas of endeavor: philosophy, arts, sciences, religion, politics and culture in general. Being Greek is something we all boast. We are very proud of our heritage and what Greeks stand for and have accomplished in the past and present.

TNH: What is the best part about being American?

CB: Although Greece is my native country, the USA is my adopted country. It is a country that gave me, and millions of other immigrants, opportunities that could not be offered by any other country in the world. It is a country that is governed by laws and justice, and all people are treated equally. It is a privilege to have been given the opportunity to come to this country and become one its citizens, and participate and contribute to its advancement. So, I am proud to say that I am an American citizen.

TNH: What advice would you offer anyone starting out in life today -- people in their late teens?

CB: Very simple. Work hard and take advantage of opportunities. Opportunities cannot be created unless you try, and they do not come around very often. You will not succeed unless you try and work hard. As they say, "You cannot win unless you play the game. I never imagined I would be a professor. It was not what I planned."

TNH: We should all be glad that he did become a professor, where he devoted himself to research, writing and teaching. Prometheus stole fire from the gods and brought this gift to mankind. Balanis, a modern-day Prometheus, has perfected antenna technology and brought us the gift of better communication.

Mark Lardas, a Texan of Greek descent, was born and grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan. An engineer who works at a major aerospace company, he is also a freelance writer, amateur historian and model-maker.

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Nikolaos K. Robakis Explores Mysteries of Human Brain

By Penelope Karageorge
Special to The National Herald

Talking with Dr. Nikolaos K. Robakis, a molecular biologist devoted to the study of the human brain, is a head-trip on many levels. He's a powerhouse of intellectual energy and wide-ranging knowledge, all dispensed with spontaneous laughter, which is, perhaps, an almost darkly humorous reaction to his work. A scientist with large and serious intent, he seeks to understand one of man's worst afflictions, Alzheimer's disease, the most common cause of dementia in the aged.

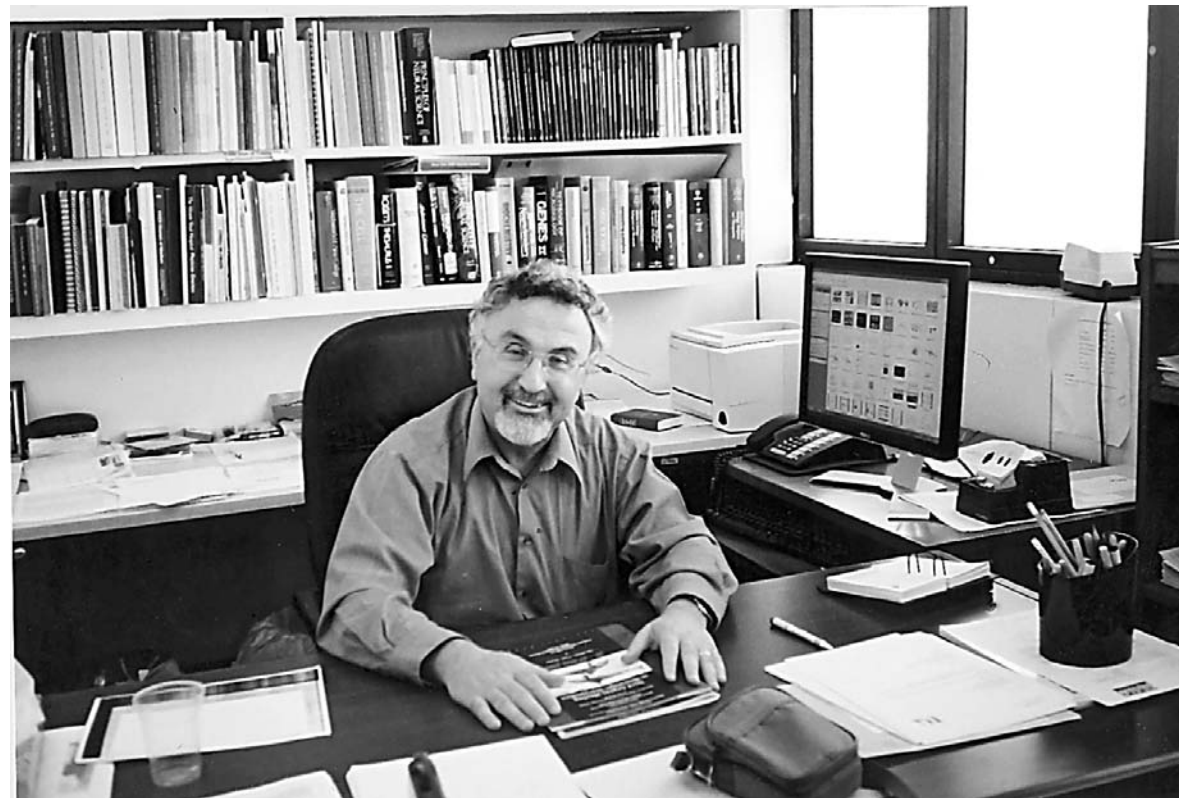
Because of his important discoveries about A.D., the Mount Sinai School of Medicine endowed him with the first A.P. Slaner Chair for Alzheimer's Disease Research. He is also Director of the Center for Molecular Biology and Genetics of Neurodegeneration at New York's Mount Sinai Medical School. Another important honor bestowed on Robakis was a MERIT Award from the National Institute of Health for his Research on Aging. In recognition of his outstanding achievement and continuing effort, the Hellenic Medical Association of New York presented him with the Distinguished Scientist Award.

In a blue shirt with graying beard, he appears tanned and fit, like the soccer player he once was, as he seeks to enlighten me, poised between a blackboard covered with undecipherable (to me) formulas and a computer, in his office on the 22nd floor of the Annenberg Building. Robakis manifests a philosophical, Socratic bent, this man who questions.

"A.D. is a terrible disease, horrible," Robakis emphasizes. "You lose yourself at the end. You don't know who you are. From that point of view, it's good for the sufferer, but it's really horrible for the family. Because these people near the end need attention 24 hours a day."

Through his research, Robakis was able to explain the origin and the mechanism by which a hallmark lesion of A.D. is formed. It's called amyloid plaque, which is used today to characterize and diagnose all forms of the disorder. This important breakthrough in the understanding of Alzheimer's disease could open new avenues of understanding of the causes of the heartbreaking malady and help lead to the development of new therapeutics.

He also showed that mutations in a protein called presenilin can



PENELOPE KARAGEORGE

Dr. Nikolaos Robakis, a molecular biologist and a leader in the effort to discover the causes and cures of Alzheimer's Disease, has won many scientific honors for his vigorous pursuit of A.D. Mount Sinai School of Medicine's endowed him with the first A.P. Slaner Chair for Alzheimer's Disease Research. Here Dr. Robakis is seen in his office down the hall from his laboratory on the 22nd floor of Mount Sinai Hospital and Medical School's Annenberg Building in New York.



Dr. Nikolaos Robakis, right, is seen at his laboratory at New York's Mount Sinai School of Medicine in 1998, with Dr. Spiros Efthimiopoulos, assistant professor at the University of Athens, and Dr. Maria Pereira, a professor at the City University of New York.

lead to abnormal production of a cellular molecule that's important for memory formation and function. Although the concepts might be difficult for the layman to grasp, they signal the possibility of one day comprehending and alleviating A.D.

Robakis grew up in Messinia, Greece, on the Peloponnese. He majored in chemistry at the University of Thessaloniki, then served in the Greek army and studied in Germany for a year. After receiving a scholarship from New York University, he came to the United

States, earned a doctorate degree in molecular biology at NYU and did postdoctoral studies for three years in molecular biology and microbiology. He began his career by doing research at the New York State Institute for Basic Research on neurodegenerative disorders and Scrapie, similar to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, also known as "mad cow disease."

He then moved on to dedicate himself to the investigation of Alzheimer's disease at Mount Sinai. Robakis heads a team of scientists hand-picked by himself, most of them from Greece. After studying with him, many of them will return to Greece to teach in universities or medical schools, following intense research into A.D. here.

"Although Nixon declared war on cancer in 1971, A.D. awareness did not emerge until the late '70s," Robakis asserts. "And it will take much longer to understand it, or find good therapies for it than for cancer. Because it's much more complicated than cancer. Definitely. All the drugs we have so far are marginal. But we'll continue this struggle, and slowly, treatments will come out. But it's not going to be a magic bullet."

Scientists distinguish between "sporadic" and "familial" A.D., with less known about causes of the former. According to Robakis,

90 percent of A.D. cases are "sporadic" rather than "familial," and occur in older people, after 65 or 70. "It afflicts a relatively large percentage of the elderly, like, 5, sometimes 10 percent, and then after age 90, it levels off. After 85, the chances of getting the disease seem to decrease," Robakis says.

"We know that there are both environmental and genetic factors; they interact. But it's not one gene – there are probably many genes – they interact – and the environment is important. Because ultimately, we as human beings are the result of the interaction between environmental and genetic factors. So there's no question that the environment has a huge impact on our brains."

The genetic or "familial" A.D. afflicts the minority of sufferers, only about 5 or 10 percent of the cases. Statistically, offspring have a 50 percent chance of inheriting the familial kind, and the child will develop the disease at the same age as the parent, a grim timetable. "We know at least 200 forms of mutation that cause the disease, and each one has a specific date of onset and a specific cause. Sometimes these mutations can cause the disease at age 30. If the father had it at 40, and the daughter is unfortunate enough to inherit the gene from her father, she, too, will develop it around age 40."

Robakis explains that one can now do genetic screening for "familial" A.D.: "If a young woman is pregnant, she can learn if her youngster will inherit the A.D. gene. She then has the option of aborting the fetus and trying again, or of doing in vitro fertilization, testing the egg, and then planting the egg if it is A.D. free. But this is the only current method of eliminating the 'bad gene.'

"Despite our breakthroughs, we know there are still a lot of things we do not know," Robakis says. "We don't really have good drugs, despite all the big efforts. But there are breakthroughs being made by other scientists. I mean, this is a huge field. There are now literally thousands of scientists working in this field. So all of us are hoping to make a contribution -- that's our dream, to try to help."

"There is lots of progress, and I think in the next five years to 10 years, we'll see some good drugs coming out. If we can, for example, delay the disease for five years, that would be a huge benefit. Instead of getting it at age 70, you get it at 75. Think of the huge emotional benefit, as well as the cost of caring for the patient. I think A.D.

is going to be with us for a long time. It's part of our cells. It's part of our makeup, and is it going to be with us forever? Nobody knows."

Is there any way for individuals to avoid developing Alzheimer's? According to Robakis, education does seem to make a difference. Those with more education are less likely to develop it, but not by a huge percentage. "It's what we call 'use it or lose it.' Using it somehow helps. It's important to be active. But if you're going to get it, there's very little way of avoiding it."

A major part of his job involves pursuing grants and funding, increasingly difficult with the U.S. government lending less support. "At Mount Sinai, we have the Center for Alzheimer's Disease Research. And that's funded by the National Institute of Health. Most of the basic research in the United States comes from the NIH and now because of the Iraq war, that funding has been decreased.

"Only one in 10 scientific proposals are being funded now, and it's terrible. It's so tough. Research is very expensive. You need to pay the people who are doing the research. And you need all the medical equipment, and the materials, which are very expensive, so you need grants. You don't get them from the medical school. Most of the grant money comes from NIH,



DAPHNE ROBAKIS

Dr. Nikolaos Robakis, a leader in the battle against A.D., gazes out at the landscape of his native Messinia, near Finikounda, in 1994. "The view is absolutely gorgeous. Unfortunately, the area is expanding rapidly with new buildings going up everywhere without a plan. I am afraid this may harm the charm of this bay. But it is still extremely beautiful and attracts big crowds from Europe and the rest of Greece."



Dr. Nikolaos Robakis stands with colleagues at the Sixth Annual Conference on Alzheimers Disease, which took place in Amsterdam, Holland in 1998. According to Robakis, A.D. afflicts individuals in every country and region of the globe, and the fight against it has become an international scientific effort.

so if NIH has no money, we have no money."

Robakis serves as an advisor to NIH. "I go to Washington every two or three months, and I evaluate other proposals and say whether they're good or not. Most of the proposals are good! But many of the good proposals are not being funded because there's no money. So that's how people could help, by pressing the government to give more money to NIH."

The Niarchos Foundation has proved extremely helpful to Robakis. "It has given me a very nice grant, which turned out to be very useful, and we have done some good work with that. The Niarchos Foundation is doing marvelous things, supporting medical research."

He leans forward to discuss A.D. in all its ramifications. "It's an exciting frontier we're on," Robakis exclaims. "We're very complicated beings, and our brain has something like trillions of cells, and all the cells cooperate and connect to each other, so it's an incredibly complicated system. Each neuron itself is an incredibly complicated proposition. Its structure is amazing. So it's easier to go to Mars than to understand how a neuronal cell in our brain works."

According to Robakis, this vastly complicated mechanism, the brain, probably the most complex structure in the universe, is the seat of everything human. States the scientist: "We believe that psychiatric disorders all have biological substrates. In other words, they all obey biological rules, and our thoughts, our souls, our spirits,



In 2001, Dr. Nikolaos Robakis (in center with white shirt) posed with the group working under his direction at New York's Mount Sinai School of Medicine in the pursuit of the causes of Alzheimer's disease. They include three Greek scientists: Dr. Spiros Efthimiopoulos, currently an associate professor at the University of Athens, and Drs. Tassos Georgakopoulos and Apostolia Baki, both assistant professors at Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

what we call "pnevma" in Greek – in other words, everything – they are really the result of brain function which is, of course, a biological function."

So when the brain goes, that's it?

"I think the majority of the scientists today believe that. Of course, there are some scientists that believe in soul and immortality, but to my knowledge, that's a very small minority. Because you see, in practice, we give somebody a drug, which is a biological product, we can change his thoughts, change his

feelings, make him happy, make him love you, make him love somebody else. How much more proof do you need?" Robakis adds.

"Meanwhile, we have no proof whatsoever that there is anything after death. How did we pass from the wonderful Greek tradition of explaining the world through logic, to the tradition of accepting revelation? Explaining the world not by our brain, but what some higher power would reveal to us? St. Paul was saying that the Greek philosophers were wrong, and we cannot really understand the world. We

have to wait for God to reveal it to us. That, to me, is nonsense. Of course I'm much more fond of Aristotle who said, no, we can understand the world through our brains.

"I would be delighted if I knew I was immortal. It's so nice, right!" He laughs delightedly. "But there isn't the slightest shred of evidence. So we don't want to delude ourselves. Right?"

Just to hedge his bets, perhaps, Robakis keeps a small icon of the Virgin on the top of a bookshelf, and also displays small bust of Zeus. "That's my favorite god, Zeus. I like Zeus." A sign on his office wall proclaims: "You look like you need a week in Greece."

Dedicated to his work, Robakis brings the same spirit and zest to the business of living. Asked to pose for a photograph, Robakis turns to the computer and enthusiastically calls up stunning pictures of his of his village, Finikounta, in Messinia, the house where he was born, and the house he has built.

"Isn't that gorgeous? You should run a picture of that instead of me. You can hear from my accent I was born and raised in Greece, and my soul is Greek. I came here old, really, at 26. I go back all the time. I've lived here for 30 years and never left this area, because it's so easy to hop to Greece."

Robakis is married and the father of three daughters. Busy with work and family, Robakis confesses: "I don't play golf but I do play tavli. I go to the movies. I go to museums. I go to the theatre a lot. I go out with Greek friends." He keeps up with political developments in Greece, reading several newspapers, and enjoys music, particularly Mozart, as well as "rebetika," and the work of Mikis Theodorakis and Manos Hatzidakis.

As for "work," Robakis says: "There's no such thing as a 9 to 5. I come in around 9:30 and leave around 7:30, but even on vacation, I work. I go to the Internet and communicate with my people here." Imbued with Greek philosophy and a brilliant, searching mind, Robakis continues his pursuit of the causes and cures of one of mankind's most persistent and elusive afflictions.

Penelope Karageorge, a freelance journalist and the author of two novels and a poetry collection, "Red Lipstick and the Wine-Dark Sea," is currently developing a film-script set in Lemnos, Greece, "Drinking the Sun." She is also working on a new novel and putting together a new poetry collection. Her short story "Reach Out and Touch Someone" appears in the current edition of "Mouth Full of Bullets."

Robert Ashford

A Tale of Two Passions: Binary Economics and Music

By Aphrodite Matsakis
Special to The National Herald

Robert Ashford, professor of law at Syracuse University, is convinced that binary economics can help rid the world of the economic fears and inequities that contribute to violence and suffering. Binary economics, however, is not just another Robin Hood type economic redistribution theory where the rich are somehow forced to share their wealth with the less fortunate. Rather, it involves establishing “win-win” economic arrangements that enable everyone to prosper – the middle class and the poor, as well as the rich.

Ashford not only is passionate about binary economics but also demonstrates a passion for music. He is an accomplished musician whose classical compositions are aired on classical radio stations throughout the country.

Ashford graduated summa cum laude with dual majors in physics and English literature from the University of South Florida and cum laude from Harvard Law School. He was also a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Stanford University. Before beginning his teaching career, he practiced law in San Francisco where he was associated with prestigious firm of Morrison and Foerster and was later a member in the firm of Kelso, Ashford and Ludwig. He also served as chief operating officer and general counsel for the investment-banking firm of Kelso & Co. At Syracuse University his subjects include corporate law, professional responsibility and binary economics. The articles and book chapters, which he has authored or co-authored on topics ranging from implied liability, professional responsibility, utility regulation, securities regulation, and socio-economics to tax and workers compensation, have been cited by numerous state and federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court. His book, “Binary Economics: The New Paradigm,” coauthored by Rodney Shakespeare of London, is available from University Press of America and amazon.com. His articles on binary economics can be downloaded for free from the website ssm.com.

When asked about the impact of his Greek background on his life, Robert Ashford stated, “My Greek background gave me a historical and cultural appreciation of the contributions of my Greek ancestors to the establishment of western civilization. Their contribution to democra-

cy, science, mathematics, art, law and politics is still felt today. This appreciation gave me a sense of both gratitude to the past and responsibility to the future.

“Learning Greek with English as a child gave me bi-lingual capacity that has enhanced my understanding of language and my vocabulary. My musical compositions are influenced by the rich melodic quality of Greek music; and the Greek commitment to education, excellence, family and ‘philotimo’ has enriched my life in innumerable ways.”

Robert Ashford’s heart and mind were influenced by his parents. His father’s commitment to intellectual honesty, continual striving for excellence, high ideals and lasting value to society, and his mother’s great love music and compassion for the downtrodden have inspired him throughout his life. He carries their passion, vision and dedication daily in the work he does.

Both were involved in helping victims of the wars and turmoil in Greece and Cyprus. Robert Ashford’s mother, Venette Tomaras Askounes Ashford, a distinguished social worker, helped thousands immigrate to the U.S. Ashford says, “My mother was a woman of great and deep feeling and compassion. She had an immense heart and was always concerned about ‘the least of

these’ in society.” (Venette Askounes Ashford is one of five Greek American women featured in ‘Greek-American Pioneer Women of Illinois,’ edited by Elaine Thomopoulos, Arcadia Publications, Chicago, IL 2000.)

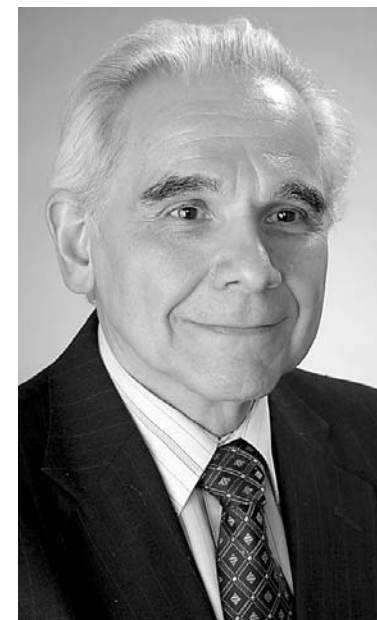
From his father, Robert learned a deep commitment to Greek ideals of rigorous thinking, intellectual honesty, excellence, virtue and social responsibility. Born Theodore Askounes, Robert’s father came to America in the early 1920s at the age of 14. He waited on tables, supported a family of seven in Greece, learned English from reading newspapers and worked his way through school. Within 10 years he was teaching chemistry as a substitute teacher in Chicago’s public high schools -- although he himself was never able to attend high school. During the Great Depression, after obtaining his Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Chicago, he found he had to change his name in order to find a job. He looked in the telephone directory under the “As” and chose the name “Ashford” and became known as “Dr. Theodore Askounes Ashford.”

Theodore Ashford became professor of chemistry at the University of Chicago and then at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. He later became the founding dean of

Natural Science at the University of South Florida. He was a pioneer and internationally recognized expert in chemistry testing.

“How do you know?” Robert’s father would frequently ask when Robert offered his opinion on a particular subject. With this kind of questioning, his father taught him the importance of rigorous, scientific thinking, of identifying the contradictions and unproven assumptions underlying theories, and of thinking beyond the mainstream. He also credits his father for teaching him the importance of devoting himself to lasting worthy activities that would bring honor to the family and to the Greek heritage. The youngest of three sons, Robert also learned precociously from his older brothers, Nicholas and Theodore, who excelled in school and music and strove for excellence in whatever they did.

His mother taught him to be a humanitarian. He says, “My mother was a woman of great and deep feeling and compassion. She had an immense heart and was always concerned about ‘the least of these’ in society. Her commitment to help the disadvantaged made it difficult for me to accept the notion that mainstream economic theory was good enough as long as I was well off or to accept the notion that there was no



Robert Ashford is a professor of law at Syracuse University and co-author of the book "Binary Economics."

moral problem in just looking out for myself and my immediate family and not devoting myself to work to discover something better for people less fortunate.”

Robert Ashford’s passion for more equal economic opportunity has led him to become a leading academic authority on “binary economics” – a unique market-based approach to alleviating poverty, helping working people, and promoting widespread, environmentally friendly economic prosperity. First advanced by Louis Kelso and Mortimer Adler in 1958 in “The Capitalist Manifesto,” the binary approach focuses on broadening capital ownership by broadening “the right to acquire capital with the earnings of capital.” The “binary” in binary economics refers to the two ways of earning income: by laboring and by owning capital (defined by Kelso as anything non-human contributing to the production of marketable goods and services, including tools, machines, land, structures, systems and patents).

Binary economics does not involve redistribution of wealth. It achieves its benefits by expanding, deepening and fortifying the institution of private property and by opening the capital markets to make them more inclusive and competitive. It reveals ways that will enable middle-class and poor people to acquire capital with the earnings of capital. It predicts that the process of broadening ownership will promote growing prosperity for all. According to binary economics, extending this right to all people will help unlock the full potential of an industrial economy to profitably satisfy unmet needs and desires.

Ashford believes that binary eco-



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT ASHFORD (C) 2007

The Ashford Family is at their home in St. Louis, circa 1957. Left to right are: Nicholas, Robert, Venette, Theodore Sr., and Theodore Junior. Robert and Nicholas Ashford credit much of their success to their parents, who worked with dedication and compassion. Venette Ashford, a social worker who came to the U.S. when she was eight years old, helped thousands of immigrants in her work with the Immigrants Protective League in Chicago. Dr. Theodore Ashford, who emigrated from Greece when he was 13, received his Ph.D. in chemistry and became a professor at several prestigious universities, and later a dean of natural sciences.

Continued on page 18

Prof's Friendly Study Ignites Global Obesity Debate

By Terry Poulos
Special to The National Herald

Many a parent insists that when it comes to raising children, "It takes a 'horio.'" So why would anyone wince at the suggestion friends influence our health? Certainly, almost all of us have been out with friends when one urges, "Let's stop for gyros," leading you to utter those seven dreaded words, "Can I steal some of your fries?" That's only the tip of the iceberg lettuce.

"What appears to be happening is that a person becoming obese most likely causes a change of norms about what counts as an appropriate body size," says Dr. Nicholas Christakis of his new study on obesity via association. "People come to think that it is okay to be bigger since those around them are bigger, and this sensibility spreads."

This summer, Christakis, a Harvard University internist and social scientist, along with colleague Dr. James H. Fowler of the University of California, San Diego, released the results of their groundbreaking "friends study." Not only have the two considerably fattened the ante on the obesity debate, they simultaneously created an entirely new food group -- you! The study makes a solid, carefully crafted socio-medicinal argument that our friends and other social contacts could very well be contributing to us becoming fat and generally not healthy or in shape and generally healthy. After publication in the New England Journal of Medicine, the study quickly became a lightning rod for controversy, spreading like a raging virus and ignited healthy media frenzy.

"You aren't what you eat," began a July 27 editorial in the Chicago Sun-Times, which added, "And you're not who you eat with, either, despite what a new report on obesity says." Considering that time and again studies have shown weight control is mostly a product of simple math -- calories in, calories out or muscle gain, muscle loss -- how can humans not be what we eat? Feta and white bread, anyone?

Meanwhile, Wall Street Journal editors, in an August 1st article, noted, "A new study says people with heavy friends are at greater risk of obesity themselves. Well, duh?" This conflicts with the Sun-Times opinion.

Critics of the friends study are most likely fearful that plugging people into the 'influence equation'

could agitate already negative stereotypes about obese persons, and a select few believe that even suggesting friends weigh heavily on friends smacks of political incorrectness. After all, is it not enough to go through life being fat, only to then have it compounded by feelings of guilt because your condition is contagious?

Without doubt, a set percentage of the population has little and sometimes next to zero influence over their own physical composition. They're forever bound by genetics or extenuating environmental factors (e.g., injury-induced sedentary lifestyle). A study published August 25, 2007 in New Scientist magazine suggested that at least some cases of obesity are rooted in a virus. The friends study counters with "even infectious causes of obesity are conceivable." The friends study, while acknowledging possible viral root causes, appears to imply there is also potential for vicarious contraction, opposed to physical spread of obesity. Medically speaking, this could ultimately prove to work in a similar fashion as the diagnosis of psychosomatic illness. Christakis expounded on that comparison by adding, "Both social and psychological contagion may work in parallel."

A timely example of how social and psychological forces can influence health was sharply exhibited only weeks after the release of the friends study. Upon coming in close vicinity with what only a few speculate even qualifies as a meteorite, 600 Peruvians -- in unison -- swore they were experiencing symptoms of a mysterious illness. Doctors and scientists overwhelmingly diagnosed mass hysteria.

To learn more about how networks influence health, The National Herald gladly seized an opportunity to catch a few fleeting moments via telephone with Christakis. He currently holds the titles of professor of sociology in the Department of Sociology in the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences and professor of medical sociology in the Department of Health Care Policy at Harvard Medical School. He is also an attending physician in the Department of Medicine at the Harvard-affiliated Mt. Auburn Hospital. Christakis has lectured across the globe, including Greece, and has served on the editorial board of the British Medical Journal, among others. His own academic credentials include a B.S. from Yale University, M.D., M.P.H. from Harvard, and Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania. Before



Dr. Nicholas Christakis, his wife Erica, and their children (left to right) Elen, Lysander and Sebastian, in 2006 enjoy the Acropolis. Christakis calls his wife Erika, to whom he has been married for 15 years, "my best friend." Erika, who was born in the U.S. and raised in Massachusetts, graduated Harvard University with a degree in anthropology, trained in public health and is now an elementary school teacher.

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Harry C. Triandis, A Citizen of Humanity

By John P. Psiharis

Special to The National Herald

“**Y**ou can influence society by discovering how and why humans tick,” says Harry Triandis. For some 50 years, he has done just that. In the process, he helped create and define a new genre in the field of psychology and received worldwide recognition for his groundbreaking research in the field of cultural psychology.

A July 2007 visit to the Congress of Interamerican Psychology in Mexico City illustrates the global recognition Triandis has achieved. Some 350 people, mostly from Latin America but some from Europe, Turkey and Samoa, attended a one-hour lecture by Triandis. After the lecture, more than 100 of those in attendance stood in line to pose for pictures and request autographs.

Born in October 1926 in Patras, Greece, Triandis learned the secret to success early on: a good education and hard work. His passion for his work elevated him to a position of worldwide prominence in academia and in the newly established discipline of cultural psychology.

Triandis' father had the difficult post-war job of rationing gasoline and oil to the Greek military and the civilian population and in later years went on to serve as a heating and ventilation systems consulting engineer for the Polytechnio (Technical University of Athens). His grandfather, an industrialist, owned a mill and distributed wheat throughout western Greece.

In January 1948, at the age of 21, Triandis left his native land to move to Montreal, Canada and study at McGill University. The Polytechnio was still recovering from the after effects of the war. The poor conditions of the labs and physical plant led Triandis to continue his studies thousands of miles from home.

“Odysseus Wandered for 10; I Wandered for 50,” says Triandis when speaking of the difficulties he had in adjusting to a culture that was so different than the one in which he was raised. The differences between Greece and Canada were far greater than the change in weather conditions (from a comfortable 50 degrees in Greece to a frigid 10 below zero in Montreal). Triandis contrasts the differences in social relationships he encountered. In Montreal, an individualist culture, people had many relationships; however they were superficial in nature. In Athens, a collec-



C.Y. CHIU

Dr. Harry C. Triandis and wife Pola are with colleague Dr. C. Y. Chiu, professor of psychology at the University of Illinois. Triandis taught at the University of Illinois for 39 years.

tivist culture, people had fewer individual relationships; however those relationships were much deeper in intensity and significance. He says, “In Montreal my friends talked to their parents once a month, while if I could have afforded it I would have talked to my parents every day. In Montreal social relations were fluid and quick changing; in Athens they were stable and more or less unchanged. Traces of allocentrism remain, so that when I go back to Athens, each year, I spend time with my old

friends, even 50 years after leaving. The contrast between Canada and Greece started me thinking about cultural comparisons.”

From all appearances it seemed that Triandis would follow in his father's path. Triandis received his undergraduate degree in engineering from McGill University in 1951. For three years after graduation, Triandis worked as a methods engineer for Proctor and Gamble of Canada. This was not what he wanted. “I could not see myself spending the rest of my life study-

ing the best way to wrap soap,” Triandis recalls. Soon Triandis was to find his niche.

After pursuing a graduate degree in commerce at the University of Toronto, Triandis was intrigued by a course, Human Relations and Industry. “This class really fascinated me. I realized that you can influence society by discovering how and why humans tick.”

Triandis recalls the structure of the class. The class consisted of six students, who sat around in an informal setting to discuss the sub-

ject matter. The professor, Bob Joyner who had studied under noted psychologist Carl Rogers, gave the students a list of 200 books divided by the number of students in the class. “Rogers had the notion that the way people should study was to decide for themselves what they wanted to learn.”

Each student would read a selection of books and provide a report on the subject matter. Triandis recalled, “It was a fascinating experience for me. We covered anthropology, psychology and sociology in that class.” In later years, Triandis would try to replicate that class structure to mixed results. “I tried to run a course like that myself. I found that the motivated students learned more but the rest just coasted along.”

Soon, Triandis was enrolled in Cornell University's doctoral studies program. To go to graduate school Triandis needed undergraduate courses in psychology. So he went back to McGill for one year to take all the courses needed to get into graduate school. His thesis, “Cognitive Similarity and Interpersonal Communication,” evaluated different ways to study how people think. In 1958, Triandis received his doctorate in psychology from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

Armed with his doctorate in psychology, Triandis first worked in industrial psychology and attitudes, both considered at the time to be “mainstream fields.” At the suggestion of a colleague, a professor he had collaborated with in Greece, Triandis accepted a position at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, gaining tenure three years later. He currently holds the title of professor emeritus.

His early work in what would become the field of cultural psychology was in the corporate world. Initially, he concentrated on supervisor and subordinate interactions and relationships. He noted that when both the supervisor and subordinate thought in the same way, they got along well. This was impacted by the culture that they came from. The type of culture with which we identify influences much of the way we think. A collectivist culture considers the group's needs over those of the individual's. In contrast, an individualistic culture subordinates the group's needs to those of the individual.

We are also influenced by how “tight” or “loose” our culture is. An example of a “tight” culture is the Taliban. Followers may not listen

to music, watch television or even fly a kite. Violators are punished. A loose culture, such as that in rural Thailand, exhibits a high degree of tolerance. "If you don't do what you should do they smile. Smiling is a common response," Triandis explains.

The complexity of a society can also influence one's identity. For instance a rural society is simpler than that of an urban area.

After publishing two papers dealing with cross-cultural issues, Triandis was invited to collaborate on a project with the U.S. Navy. The early 1960's project was spearheaded by then Chief of Naval Operation Elmo R. Zumwalt who had made it a priority for "every sailor to become an ambassador." The researchers identified what elements of culture were most relevant and worked to improve communications between Navy personnel and their hosts and to enhance leadership behavior amongst naval personnel. This project led the researchers to develop a method of cross-cultural training called cultural assimilators.

Triandis used a sabbatical to further explore the concept of cultural assimilators. In 1965 and 1966, Triandis traveled to Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, India, Iran, Israel, Greece, Germany, France and Belgium to discuss the project with potential collaborators. The end result, which included data from Japan, India, Greece and the United States, was published in his 1972 book "The Analysis of Subjective Culture."

In this book, Triandis and his collaborator Vasso Vassiliou solidified their pioneering work in this field. The results provided an opportunity to compare and contrast collectivist societies with those considered to be individualistic. "Greece was reasonably collectivist. This was the first opportunity to show what collectivist cultures are like compared to the U.S. which was individualistic." The research led to Triandis receiving an honorary degree from the University of Athens in 1987.

As the discipline of cultural psychology evolved, so too did Triandis' depth of knowledge. The 1980s saw the evolution of cultural psychology into its own discipline. "I had started a new field. This was sort of a turning point, Triandis recalls. Up to 1980, most psychologists thought that what they discovered applied in all cultures. After 1980 they started researching how their findings are modified from culture to culture." Triandis continued to elevate the importance of culture in society through research, teaching, publications and lectures throughout North and

South America, Asia, Europe, Africa and Australia.

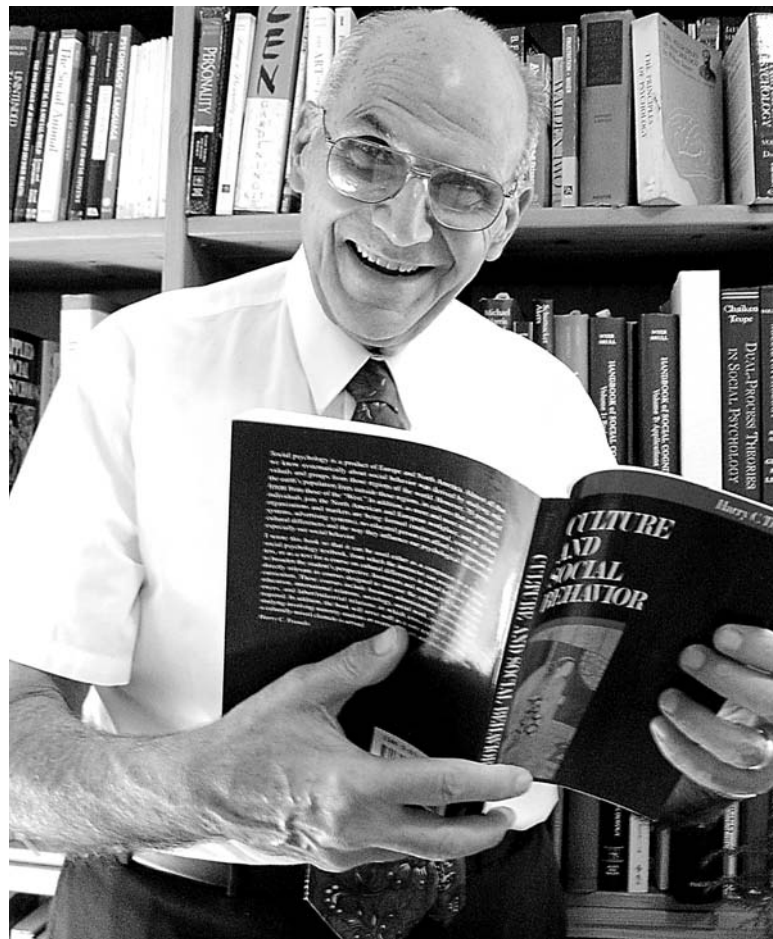
He served as a Distinguished Fulbright Scholar in India and as a Guggenheim Fellow. Other honors include: Interamerican Society of Psychology Award, Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Cattell Award of the American Psychological Society, the Klineberg Award and the American Psychological Association's Distinguished Contributions to International Psychology Award. Despite these awards and key leadership roles in both national and international organizations, Triandis is most proud that the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology has established the Harry and Pola Triandis Award that honors the best dissertation in the field of cultural psychology.

In the early 1990s cultural psychology became popular. Triandis recently described the now widely accepted definition of cultural psychology: "The systematic study of the behavior of humans in different cultures including emotions, values, norms, relations and behavior."

He adds, "In principle all groups have a culture, even an organization like IBM. All groups have attributes of culture. If someone goes into this group, he will have trouble adjusting unless he is tolerant, Triandis explains. Thus it is important to encourage greater tolerance. "They may be different, but not bad."

Although mindful of his Hellenic heritage, Triandis considers himself to be "cosmopolitan or belonging to humanity rather than a culture or sub-group." He attributes much of the success of Greek Americans to their emphasis on education and hard work. These values link with the ancient Greeks who established academies and started most of the fields in the arts and sciences. He believes that emphasizing these links to ancient Greece is the best way to maintain our own cultural heritage. "When people lose language and religion their culture changes." He adds, "If you learn the language and the ancient culture, you are Greek, regardless of where you were born."

Triandis recognizes the important role of the Greek Orthodox Church in our omogenia stating that religion is part of culture. "People need religion because it gives them the illusion that they can control uncertainty. Humans can adjust to many things but not to lack of control. They are self-deceptions. When you pray, it gives serenity. We need it (religion) but it is an illusion." He continues, "It is bad to fool ourselves too much but a little is okay." He sites studies



C.Y.CHIU

Harry C. Triandis' book, "Culture and Social Behavior," focuses on social behavior and culture's influences on how people interact.

that show AIDS and cancer patients who think they will live a long time do indeed live longer. Although he usually attends church services only on holidays, his wife attends more frequently. Triandis

values peace and notes, "There were no religious wars for 1000 years, when polytheism was prevalent (what a contrast with today)."

Triandis and Pola, his wife of 40 years, who is of Serbian descent,

have one daughter, Louisa. Prior to their marriage, Pola had worked for the World Bank, and after coming to Illinois she worked on an international relations extension program at the University of Illinois. The program featured prominent speakers including ambassadors who addressed such issues as Israeli and Palestinian peace. Their daughter, who earned a master's degree in social work, lives in the San Diego area and helps teachers and parents of difficult children to address behavior issues. They have two grandchildren.

Triandis visits Greece annually. "I love the food and the country is beautiful. There is a very emotional link between ancient, current and the future of Greece." He notes that Greece has become European and American in nature since they joined the European Union.

He is now working on a new book entitled, "Fooling Ourselves," which elaborates on his views on religion and culture as well as on such current issues as terrorism and the war in Iraq.

John P. Psiharis is president of J. Psiharis & Associates, Inc. and co-owner of Little Helpers, Inc. Both are Chicago area businesses. He is a founder and former executive director of Greek-American Community Services and a founding member of the Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Centre located in Wheeling, Illinois.



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Nicholas Askounes Ashford: Educator, Public Advocate, Musician

By Aphrodite Matsakis
Special to The National Herald

“My time on this earth might be limited,” says Nicholas Askounes Ashford, his voice brimming with gratitude, “but I feel like I live in several worlds at the same time – the world of science, of law, of economics, of music and of the cultures that are available to me because of my knowledge of several different languages: English, Greek, German, Dutch and some Italian as well.”

“And all these worlds matter to me,” he adds emphatically. Exceptionally meaningful to Ashford are the opportunities he has to combine his knowledge of these various worlds to help science and technology evolve in humane ways that help people and do not destroy the environment and endanger public health. With both a Ph.D. in chemistry and a law degree from the University of Chicago, as well as graduate training in economics, Ashford has become a leader and educator in the area of environmental policy and sustainable development on both a national and international level.

Ashford finds excitement in his multifaceted career, which he relishes with a Zorba-like enthusiasm. He is currently Professor of Technology and Policy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he teaches courses in Environmental Law, Policy, and Economics; Law, Technology and Public Policy; and Sustainability, Trade and Environment. He also holds adjunct faculty positions at the Harvard and Boston University Schools of Public Health. In addition, he teaches two intensive courses: one in Sustainable Development and another in European and International Environmental Law, not only at Cambridge University, UK, but at the Cyprus-Harvard Institute in Environmental Studies in Nicosia, Cyprus. This brings him much joy and a deep sense of satisfaction.

Cyprus is especially important to Ashford. His parents were founders and worked in the St. Louis Justice for Cyprus Committee. They also supported the Greek War Relief effort and assisted displaced persons after the Second World War.

In the early 1920s, at the age of 13, Nicholas’ father, the late Dr. Theodore Askounes Ashford, emigrated from the village of Kastri, near Tripoli, to work with his father in the restaurants in Chicago. “My father’s teachers in Kastri con-

sidered my father to be highly intelligent, but all my grandfather wanted was that my father becomes a good waiter. When my father was 15, my grandfather went back to Greece and left my father alone in the United States to fend for himself and to be the sole breadwinner for the family,” recalls Nicholas Ashford.

“My father worked in the restaurants and slept there in order to save money on rent so he could send more money to his family in Greece. In spite of these hard conditions, however, during his first 10 years in the U.S., my father managed to complete the YMCA high school in three years, college in three years and obtain a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Chicago. My father had no formal English classes, no mentor and no money, but he did have a mother who prized education, an attitude that distinguished most Greeks from other rural peoples and accounted for their amazing success in foreign lands.

“Because of both my father’s personal odyssey and because of his Greek culture,” Nicholas emphasizes, “in our family there were no such words as ‘I can’t do it.’ My father’s insistence that nothing was impossible had a profound effect on all of us. My father also believed that if someone had a talent, that person owed it to society to develop that talent. Money and social status meant little to him. The same was true of my mother.”

Mrs. Venette Ashford, who was born in the village of Filiatra, is often called the Jane Addams of the Greeks. Nicholas Ashford notes that she helped over 5,000 Greeks emigrate to the United States. Together with her husband, she personally sponsored hundreds of immigrants. But she did more than that. “She found them jobs, encouraged them to go to school, helped them to obtain citizenship and convinced them to help each other,” writes Nicholas Ashford in his biographical account of his mother’s life (in “Greek-American Pioneer Women of Illinois,” Elaine Thomopoulos, editor, Arcadia Publishing, Chicago, IL 2000). Dr. and Mrs. Ashford also adopted a Greek orphan, Maria Zabaka, who joined their family of three sons: Nicholas, Theodore and Robert.

Nicholas’ Ashford’s professional achievements clearly reflect his family’s “can do” spirit and dedication to social justice. He holds to Jeffersonian ideals and that the government and the business community have an obligation to assume responsibility for society’s



Dr. Nicholas Askounes Ashford, Professor of Technology and Policy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has become a leader and educator in the area of environmental policy and sustainable development. He is also an accomplished musician. His new textbook, “Environmental Law, Policy, and Economics: Reclaiming the Environmental Agenda,” is scheduled to be released by MIT Press.

moral fabric and economic condition and for the physical health and safety of its citizens. This philosophy finds expression in his numerous publications. To date, Ashford has published several hundred articles in peer-reviewed journals and law reviews and 10 books, many of which address the legal, scientific and public policy issues surrounding public health, the preservation of the environment, and protection and fair treatment of workers.

His new textbook, “Environmental Law, Policy, and Economics:

Reclaiming the Environmental Agenda,” is soon to be released by MIT Press and another textbook, “Technology, Globalization, and Sustainability,” is near completion. Prior to the next U.S. presidential election, Ashford plans to go on a book tour, not so much to sell these books, but to make better known the fact that many existing economic development policies and practices pose serious threats to human life and to the future of the planet, and that industrial development must become more sustainable and equitable. One of his con-

cerns, for example, is indoor air pollution and how even low levels of certain chemicals can have adverse health effects.

Ashford also authored a major work for the Ford Foundation, “Crisis in the Workplace: Occupational Disease” and co-authored four additional books: “Public Participation in Contaminated Communities,” “Chemical Exposures: Low Levels and High Stakes,” “Technology, Law and the Working Environment” and “Monitoring the Worker for Exposure and Disease.”

His research interests also reflect his concern for the humane and environmentally sensitive development of science and technology. Among his research interest are regulatory law and economics; the design of government policies for encouraging both technological innovation and improvements in health, safety and environmental quality; pollution prevention and cleaner/inherently safer production; the effects of liability in improving product and process safety; the consequences of low-level exposure to chemicals; sustainability; trade and environment; labor’s participation in technological change; and environmental justice. He has developed methodologies for decision-making in the regulation of chemicals and has extensively investigated the effects of the regulation on technological innovation in the chemical, pharmaceutical and automobile industries. His research activities include work for the United Nations Environment Programme, the OECD, and the European Union, as well as for U.S. regulatory agencies and the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment.

In the popular mind, music and science are often viewed as being polar opposites. However research has shown that individuals with high interest and aptitudes in science can also have high musical interest and aptitudes as well. One reason for this may be that both music and science have an underlying sense of form and order. Since both music and science involve highly structured mental models, it should come as no surprise that musical and scientific abilities often go hand in hand. In college, Ashford was torn between becoming a scientist and a professional musician. He was such an excellent oboe player that he was nominated for the Rhodes Scholarship to attend Oxford. (He wonders if perhaps he was not chosen among the other nominees because the British

Continued on page 17

Andrew Maniotis: Healer, Heretic or Both?

By Robert Krause

Special to The National Herald

For a scientist deemed controversial, Professor Andrew J. Maniotis has bonded with prestigious colleagues throughout his career. Still, he places himself dangerously out of politically acceptable mainstream science. "I've been vehemently pursued by a great faction of people in this country and elsewhere for my views on AIDS and cancer. I've had my job threatened, but we'll keep at it, as long as nobody shoots me in the meantime." He may be only half kidding.

We spoke recently where he is presently working, serving as program director in the Cell and Developmental Biology of Cancer, Department of Pathology, Anatomy and Cell Biology, and Bioengineering, in the College of Medicine Research Building at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He's been there seven years. Maniotis received his doctorate at the University of California at Berkeley and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University under Dr. Judah Folkman.

Although he is routinely linked with antagonists, he also enjoys stalwart support teams. At present, his department is "rigorously working on a hypothesis to see if we can't cure melanoma."

The research focuses on the outside material of the tumor rather than the gene. "Genes are irrelevant. Our recent paper presented evidence, which proved it's the microenvironment controlling the gene. Everybody thought it was the other way around, that the genes controlled everything. We don't believe it's that way; we think it's the environment that controls the genes. We've proven it. We've shown it. It was on the cover of the American Journal of Pathology last May. It's been hinted at for years, but no one could really see it or show it in an experiment this clearly.

"These are called individuation fields in the embryos. You can put all kinds of tumor cells into embryos, and they don't form cancer. You put the same cells in an adult, and they kill him in experiments. Even in plants, which don't have a centralized system of vital organs, they develop tumors too, called crown-gall tumors. You can take the crown-gall tumor's cells and put them in a growing stem, and they'll make a normal plant. So there's something about a growing field, or an individuation field as it's called, that is magical. You can take melanoma cells, put them into a bird embryo, and they'll turn into normal neurons.



ROBERTA DUPUIS-DEVLIN, UIC PHOTO

Dr. Andrew Maniotis has served as program director in the Cell and Developmental Biology of Cancer Departments of Pathology and Bioengineering at the University of Illinois at Chicago for the past seven years. He is holding a tensegrity model of a cancer cell, which his bioengineering students at University of Illinois at Chicago made to predict the effects of various drugs on the DNA of the cells.

"We know that cancer is reversible, and the cancer cells we put in the embryos have all kinds of genetic mutations that are lethal in an adult, but they will be reversed when they're put in the embryo. So if it's cause and effect you're after, it's obviously the environment of the cell and the genome, which is controlling its expression and its behavior. Simple as that - it's not rocket science."

Maniotis' tone lets you know: he wants something that works. His history has given him clear desire, not only from the family experience of having his father die from intestinal cancer but from being placed in the midst of early cure trials. "I personally watched the Folkman endostatin trials from beginning to end because my work was part of the biophysical basis on the biology that went behind the idea. I watched cancer patients wrap around the hospital four bodies deep when endostatin was announced as the 'cure all' that was going to cure cancer in two years. And I saw it fail.

"So I think the worst thing to do is to hype a cancer treatment before its time. What I'm desperately trying to do right now with the help of some very powerful individuals in the state department, both here and

in Greece, is set up dog trials. I think dogs are the way to go."

Maniotis is proposing a novel initiative for cancer study. Rather than implanting a tumor on a test animal, creating an unnatural situation, he suggests using tumors developed naturally by stray dogs, and then using various means his lab has recently developed to try to reverse tumor

growth. He believes that this will yield safe protocols for human trials. "The immune systems are very different for a naturally occurring tumor. Yet, it's been hard work to get the mainstream protocol animal care committees to get people to abandon their NIH funded ways of looking at cancer.

"You don't have to do things toxi-

cally. You don't have to hurt the patient. We want to first test things on a large-bodied mammal, man's best friend. I got the idea from reading Pasteur. Dogs seem the way to go."

Maniotis' presence has also grown publicly in the field of AIDS research. Again, his views are non-traditional, though well researched. He became interested in the topic while studying what were called the six AIDS defining cancers, a theory he disputes. Previously, if a person had Kaposi's sarcoma, the patient would be diagnosed as having AIDS. "Well, that's what they said. It's not true at all. That was the dogma in the beginning. Kaposi has nothing to do with HIV, because Kaposi lived 130 some years ago when he described the disease.

"They're trying to pass off this immune suppression as a new disease. It's essentially a redefinition of 48 old diseases. This happens from time to time during medical history. It happened with polio, which constitutes dozens of syndromes diagnosed as a single disease entity.

"There's this tendency for human beings to have misplaced concreteness when it comes to definitions of diseases. It's one thing; it's one virus; it's one bacteria; but it's not. It doesn't work that way. The body doesn't work that way. Populations don't work that way.

"It's the same with AIDS. AIDS has led to a very confusing era for the past 25 years.

"What I can tell you is there's a lot of AIDS apologists, as they're called, people that believe HIV causes AIDS. Yet, the introduction of the antiretrovirals killed about 380,000 people due to their toxicity. The rea-

Continued on page 18

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Aphrodite's Gift: K.C. Nicolaou Creating Molecules That Save Lives

By Mark N. Lardas

Special to The National Herald

When asked to name the major influences in his life Kyriacos Costa (K.C.) Nicolaou said, "My father taught me to be ethical and hard working, using no uncertain means I must say, and my mother gave me love and care. Coming from a poor family taught me the importance of earning your living through hard work."

Through hard work and by following his passion in life, Nicolaou has become one of the world's leaders in synthetic organic chemistry.

Synthetic organic chemistry, the art of building large, complex molecules from smaller ones, is a delicate task. Some chemicals that Nicolaou synthesizes involve a process with 50 or more steps. Make a mistake anywhere, however minor, and you have to throw it out and start over.

Nicolaou has been at the forefront in synthesizing drugs to treat cancer. At present, most inhibit cell growth or kill fast-growing cells. Despite flaws, these drugs offer hope – and allow millions to survive cancers that would have killed them a few years ago. Making sufficient quantities of them is a challenge. They are extremely complex.

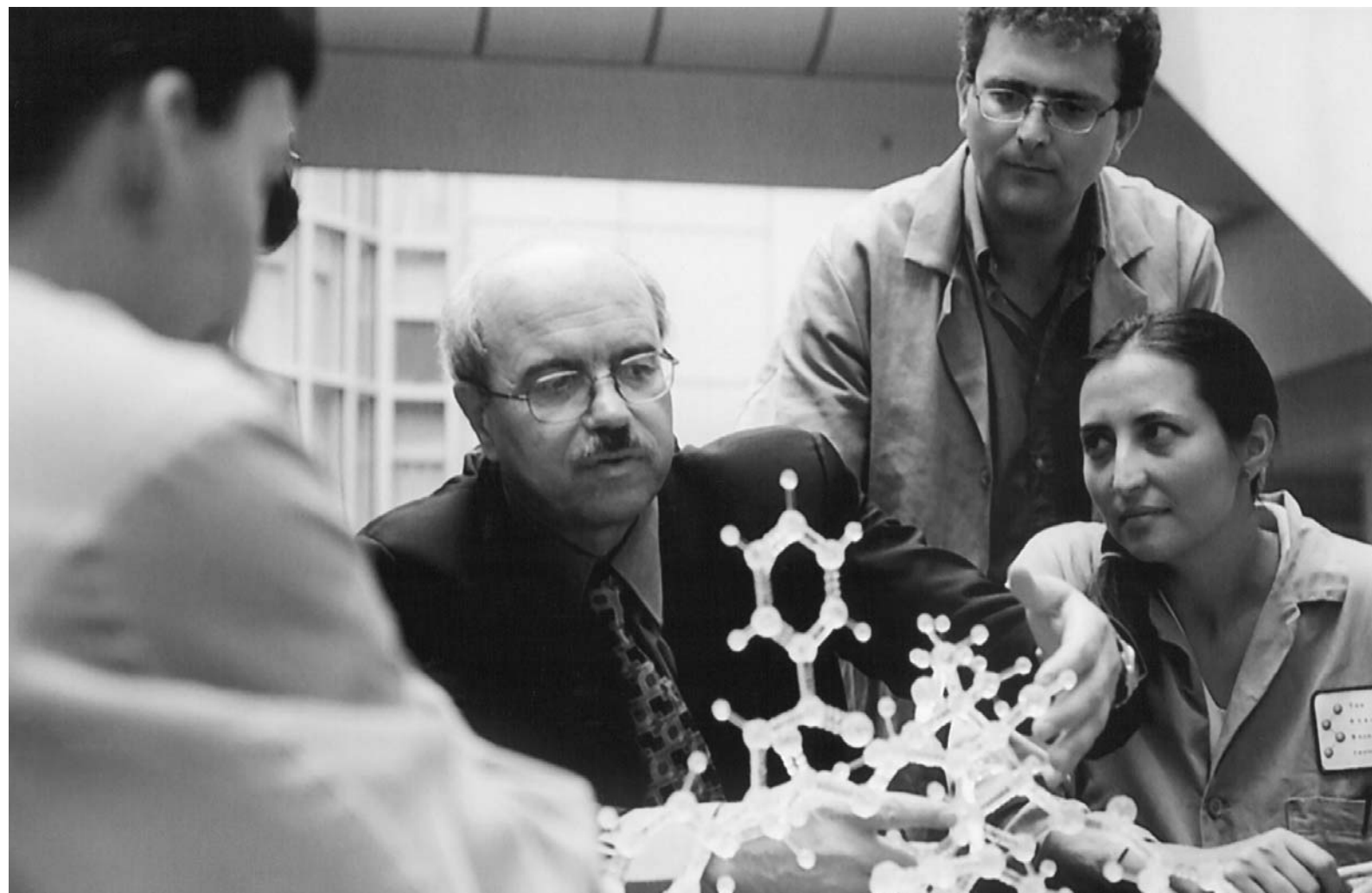
While found in nature, they are often difficult to extract. Getting enough to use, without exceeding the price of precious gems, depends on finding a way to manufacture them in the laboratory.

Since the mid-1970s, Nicolaou-led teams have synthesized Taxol™ (a major anticancer drug), calicheamicin (another anticancer drug sold under the trade name Mylotarg®), brevetoxin B (a marine neurotoxin), vancomycin (a last-resort antibiotic, used to treat resistant bacteria) and other important pharmaceuticals.

Nicolaou was born in Cyprus, the legendary birthplace of Aphrodite, the ancient goddess of love. Taxol™, the synthesis of which was one of his greatest accomplishments, is used in the treatment of breast and ovarian cancers, which has enabled innumerable women to live and love.

The son of Greek farmers from Karavas, Cyprus discovered his love of science in his teens. At 13, he moved in with his uncle, John Nicolaou, in Nicosia, to attend the Pancyprian Gymnasium. At the time, it was the best high school in Cyprus.

Nicolaou lived with his uncle



SCHERING AG.

Dr. K.C. Nicolaou, who has a joint appointment at the University of California, San Diego, CA, and The Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla, CA, is with his students in 2001. He had just been awarded the Ernst Schering Prize for his outstanding work on the synthesis of natural products. The model is of Taxol(TM), which has been synthesized by Nicolaou-led teams and used in the treatment of cancer.

John and his family for five years. Uncle John was a pastry chef. Nicolaou worked as an apprentice pastry chef in his uncle's bakery. In ways, it was a job much like his eventual career in chemistry.

Relates Nicolaou: "There are similarities between pastry making and chemical synthesis. The most striking similarity is the art that goes into both. It wasn't just getting the baklava right and the rum-babas sweet and fluffy. It was creating new recipes and imaginative ways to decorate birthday cakes and Christmas cakes. Chemical synthesis is even more creative in that it gets down to the molecular level, designing and building molecules, often from scratch and atom by atom."

At 15, he took a chemistry class with an inspirational instructor at the gymnasium. It convinced Nicolaou that he wanted to be a chemist. He went to England, to study chemistry at Bedford College in London.

He did not go directly from gymnasium to college. He spent two years prior to entering Bedford learning – and gaining English fluency – in the school of experience.

He worked at a rubber factory, a sausage plant and many different fish and chip shops in London.

He was as successful with fish and chips as he was as an apprentice pastry chef. Co-workers urged him to stay and become a fast food magnate. His dream was centered in the geometry of organic molecules, however. He entered Bedford College in London in 1966.

Nicolaou received a baccalaureate degree at Bedford and a doctorate in organic chemistry from University College, London. He then set out to find a postdoctoral apprenticeship with an appropriate challenge. He set his sights high, applying to study under E. J. Corey, Ronald Breslow or Thomas Katz. All were leaders in organic chemistry. Corey went on to win a Nobel Prize in chemistry in 1990.

Katz, at Columbia University in New York City invited Nicolaou to join his team. Nicolaou spent a year working with Katz on two different projects. The work was fun, but Nicolaou considered returning to England to take an industrial job. He liked England. He met his wife, Georgette – also Greek – while in London. Born in Egypt,

she had grown up in London.

Katz sensed the young Greek Cypriot had unique talent in chemistry. When he asked Nicolaou what would keep him in research, he replied that he wanted an opportunity to work with Corey or Robert B. Woodward (who won the 1965 Nobel Prize in chemistry). Katz arranged an offer from both men within a week.

With his wife's blessing he went to work for E. J. Corey and was firmly set on a research career. He spent nearly four years at Harvard with Corey.

In 1976 he joined the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania, leading a research team. In 1989 he moved to San Diego, California. There he serves jointly at the University of California, San Diego as a professor of chemistry, and The Scripps Research Institute as a professor of chemistry, and chairman of the Department of Chemistry. He also heads the K.C. Nicolaou Group, a chemical research team.

Today the Nicolaou Group is one of the world's most successful synthetic organic chemistry teams. More than a source for new synthetic chemicals, it also serves as

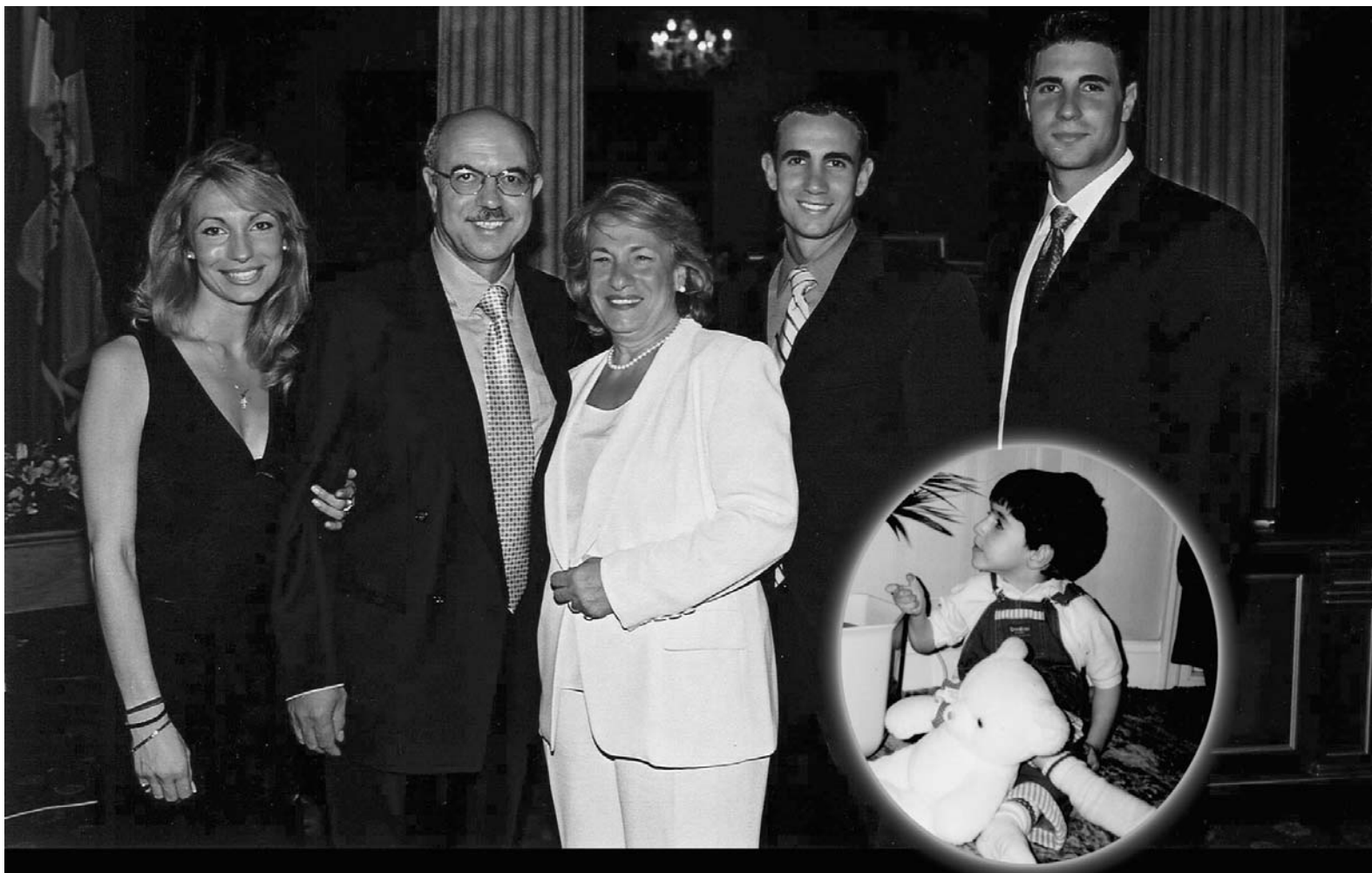
an incubator producing great chemists and chemistry teachers. It is something Nicolaou takes pride in.

Nicolaou spoke of a former student, now teaching chemistry at Columbia University: "The student evaluations for his first class in 2007 were raving with praise; 'That rare professor who combines clear and obvious brilliance with genuine care for students.' To claim this young professor as my Ph.D. student is more than I can ever ask as a teacher. I feel privileged."

"I am also proud of the book series 'Classics in Total Synthesis.' Two texts that I wrote with two of my students are educating and inspiring students of chemical synthesis around the world today."

He feels not enough young men and women are now going into science. To change that, he wrote the book, "Molecules that Changed the World." It tells the story of molecules like aspirin, penicillin, morphine and – yes – Taxol™ and their impact on society. He says, "I hope to inform the public and inspire kids to go into science."

Nicolaou now teaches all over



K. C. NICOLAOU

K. C. Nicolaou with his wife, Georgette, his daughter, Collette, and his sons Alex (left), Christopher (right) and P. J. (inset).

the world. He helped set up a laboratory in Singapore to train new chemists and biochemists.

He keeps in touch with his old home and his cultural homeland. Whenever work takes him to Europe he stops off in Greece or Cyprus. He tries to visit his mother in Cyprus annually. In 2006, his former students organized a 60th birthday conference for Nicolaou in Cyprus. Many former students attended and signed a book of good wishes for him.

He regularly gives seminars in both Cyprus and Greece. He wants to set up a laboratory similar to the one in Singapore in those countries. For supporting science in Greece, and his many other accomplishments, he was awarded the Bodossaki Prize in Greece in 2004.

What gives him more satisfaction than his accomplishments? His family.

With his wife Georgette, he has three sons and one daughter. "I am very proud of my family. Our daughter Colette graduated this year with a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, and our two older sons, Alex and Chris are excelling in the business world."

He speaks lovingly of his youngest son, Jason: "My younger son is handicapped. He is unable to think, talk, walk or take care of himself the same way you and I can. Despite that, Paul Jason taught me more than anyone else

about humanity and the world. He is my best friend. We go to restaurants together, we read books together, we laugh together, and we feel together. He embodies the naked instincts and feelings that we all have, and he does not hide them."

As for the future? Nicolaou hopes for more of the same. "My work is not a job, it is like a hobby. It keeps me young. It is particularly challenging right now, due to difficulties in science funding."

Nicolaou does not mind challenges. He finds inspiration from Alexander the Great and other figures from ancient Greece. For K.C. Nicolaou, "Meeting obstacle after obstacle makes us stronger."

The National Herald asked Nicolaou several other questions.

TNH: What did the world lose in a pastry chef, when you chose to go into chemistry?

KCN: I think I could not have lasted in any job for too long, unless I had the chance to advance it, shape it, or be creative at it. I see a lot of opportunities in pastry making and, indeed cooking in general, to satisfy anybody's imaginative impulses. A dessert is a piece of art. So is a delicious and well-presented dish. I think I could have been a famous chef. Who knows maybe I will try it one day when I retire from science!

TNH: Who were the major influences in your life as you were

growing up?

KCN: Besides my parents, my uncle John had a major influence on me, for besides teaching me the art of the pastry world — he was the master of the art in Nicosia at

the time — he showed me by example how to be a father figure and a caring citizen.

At the Pancyprian high school, I learned from my teachers about the wonders of science and was fi-



BODOSSAKI FOUNDATION (ANAGNOSTOPOULOI BROTHERS, PHOTO-REPORTERS)

K. C. Nicolaou receives the Bodossaki Prize from Kostis Stephanopoulos, president of Greece in 2004. The prize, given biannually, was awarded to Nicolaou both for his accomplishments in chemical synthesis and his contributions to supporting science education in Greece.

nally inspired into studying chemistry by my chemistry teacher whose enthusiasm and style were exciting, admirable and decisive. I encountered other wise and influential teachers later on in my education in England and the United States. My most recent mentor was the Nobel Laureate, E.J. Corey of Harvard University, who propelled me into the American academia, for which I will be forever grateful.

TNH: How do you feel your Greek heritage has affected your life?

KCN: It shaped my life. Born and raised as a Greek in Cyprus had a decisive impact on my education, my culture and my outlook for life. It is indeed not a small thing to carry the Greek heritage on your shoulders, a privilege that brings with it enormous pride, but also responsibilities. Knowing what the ancient Greeks did gives me strength and inspiration. There is very little, if anything, that our ancestors did not invent or think deeply about, all the way from philosophy to science, and from literature to medicine, art and theater, and above all freedom, democracy and courage. The classics are forever, and we should not forget them.

TNH: Any hobbies or passions outside your work?

KCN: I love gardening, a passion that begun when I was a kid. I remember planting and watching vegetables and fruits grow and ripe, with my grandfather and my younger brother in Cyprus. Now I do the same thing in California, where the climate and landscape are similar to those in my native island. I like to cook, especially fish, a hobby that stayed with me from my days in England as a student where I used to work in "fish and chips" shops to earn my living. I also read history and follow current affairs, especially geopolitics.

TNH: What advice would you offer anyone starting out in life today — people in their late teens?

KCN: Study hard, identify early your passion and talents, and focus on them like a laser beam. If you do that, you will one day be rewarded with an occupation that you love and you will enjoy the benefits of being good at it. Always operate under ethical rules and family values. And if you are Greek, remember your heritage! If you are not, become one. We welcome you! Young people should study the classics and learn about the Greek civilization.

Mark Lardas, a Texan of Greek descent, was born and grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan. An engineer who works at a major aerospace company, he is also a freelance writer, amateur historian and model-maker.

A New EPIC Unfolds: Dr. Dimitrios Trichopoulos and Dr. Antonia Trichopoulou in the Journey toward Optimal Health

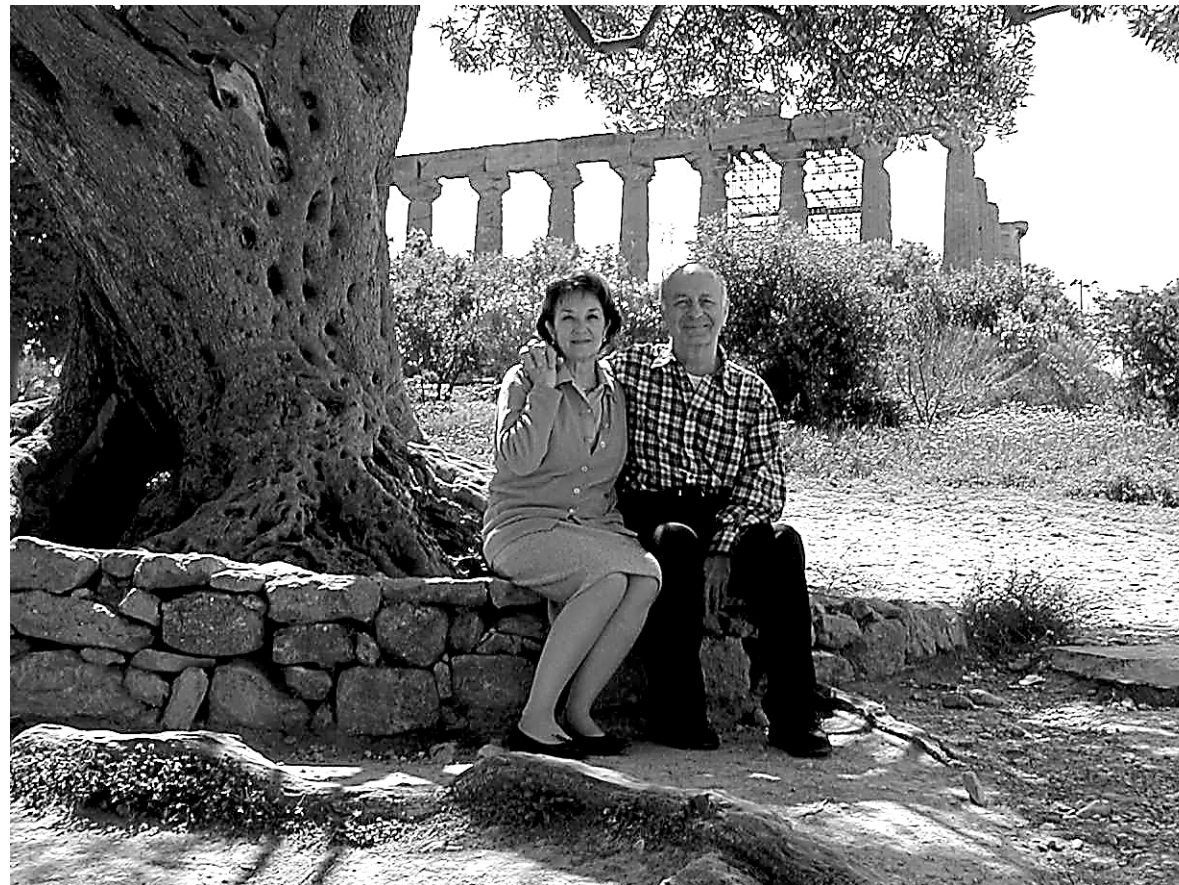
By Marianthe Karanikas
Special to The National Herald

Thanks to him, a silent killer no longer poisons us unaware. Thanks to her, we understand more fully how the Mediterranean diet enhances health. Together Drs. Dimitrios Trichopoulos and Antonia Trichopoulou now stand at the forefront of an international research Odyssey: The European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition is conducted in 22 research centers in 10 different European countries under the coordination of the International Agency for Research on Cancer. EPIC is an epidemiological investigation of the biological, dietary, lifestyle and environmental factors in the etiology of cancer. Antonia Trichopoulou, M.D., Ph.D., is the principal investigator of the Greek EPIC component while Dimitrios Trichopoulos, M.D., Ph.D., is a senior epidemiology consultant.

Aptly dubbed "Epidemiology's Odysseus" by science and health writer, Peter Wehrein, Trichopoulos is the Vincent L. Gregory Professor of Epidemiology at the Harvard School of Public Health and a member of the Athens Academy of Science. He has served as a professor of Hygiene and Epidemiology of the University of Athens Medical School for more than 30 years.

Epidemiology is the study of the factors influencing health and illness. Trichopoulos is best known for his seminal work showing the connection between passive or second-hand smoking and lung cancer. Published in 1981, this influential study showed that Greek women whose husbands smoked were 2.4 times more likely to develop lung cancer than women whose husbands did not smoke. These findings changed public laws, leading to the widespread creation of smoke-free zones in restaurants, workplaces and hospitals. Parents stopped smoking near their children, choosing either to quit or to smoke outside their homes.

While epidemiology's Odysseus revealed the link between passive smoking and lung cancer, his wife, no mere Penelope, rediscovered the Mediterranean Diet, first named by the medical researcher Ancel Keys. Keys championed the diet because it was low in saturated fat and lowered cholesterol. Antonia Trichopoulou and her colleagues expanded on Keys' work by



Drs. Dimitrios Trichopoulos and Antonia Trichopoulou find time to relax among the ruins in Sicily. Their research, which was conducted on 23,000 people in Greece, implies that taking a nap may help in the prevention of cardiovascular disease.

focusing on the many health benefits of the high consumption of olive oil and the large diversity of plant foods. Thus we began to understand the importance of monounsaturated fats, found in olive oil, in the prevention of cardiovascular disease. We also saw more clearly how plant foods help prevent both heart disease and cancer.

"I was skeptical at first," said Trichopoulos, regarding his wife's early work on the Mediterranean Diet, "but the evidence grew stronger and stronger. Even I became a believer."

Antonia Trichopoulou is professor emerita of Preventive Medicine and Nutrition in the School of Medicine at the University of Athens. She has directed the World Health Organization Collaborating Center for Nutrition at the Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology in Athens. Dimitrios Trichopoulos met Antonia Polychronopoulou at medical school in Athens about 50 years ago. He was born in Volos; she in Athens. They got married and have been together ever since. They have no children. Science is their passion, life and legacy.

"My life is very boring," Dimitrios Trichopoulos told me in an interview, "except for the excite-

ment of science."

Antonia Trichopoulou was not available for interview, since she was conferring with colleagues in Luxembourg. Her work with EPIC is monumental, involving the study of a plethora of biological, environmental and sociological factors — from antioxidant level to air pollution to food habits — that may influence the development or prevention of different types of cancer. The EPIC studies are longitudinal, meaning the research will follow the same people throughout a long period of time, often many decades. Approximately half a million Europeans are being studied across 10 countries.

Studies in Greece have brought major discoveries over the last 50 years, including the pivotal evidence linking passive smoking to lung cancer, as well as overwhelming support for the many health benefits of the Mediterranean Diet.

In an interview with Wehrein in *The Harvard Public Health Review*, Trichopoulos says, "In general, I have taken up unusual ideas.... This may not reflect originality. This may reflect the constraints of limited resources of working in Greece. The saying is that poverty is the mother of ingenuity. Limited

resources—they force you to think." As Wehrein writes, Trichopoulos learned to "maximize resources early in life."

Born in Volos in 1938, he thrived and excelled as a student, despite civil war and a ruined economy. His father, a surgeon, encouraged him to study medicine at the University of Athens Medical School. There Trichopoulos met the epidemiologist Brian McMahon of the Harvard School of Public Health. McMahon urged him to pursue graduate work in epidemiology at Harvard.

Since then, Trichopoulos has divided his time between Athens and Harvard. As Wehrein notes, Trichopoulos transformed the epidemiology department in Athens into one of the most productive in the world, without the "well-funded research infrastructure American researchers take for granted." At the Harvard School of Public Health, he served as the chair of the Epidemiology Department from 1989 to 1996.

Trichopoulos is internationally known for his ingenious, creative and elegant research ideas. In addition to his work linking second-hand smoke to lung cancer, Trichopoulos has also

linked stress to fatal heart attacks. This remarkable study resulted from his observations that heart-related deaths had doubled in the days immediately following the earthquake in Athens in February 1981, measuring 6.7 on the Richter scale. This study was so remarkable that Richard Horton, editor of the world's leading general medical journal, *The Lancet*, identified it as one of the 27 texts in what he calls "the canon of Western medicine" all doctors must read.

Today Trichopoulos is hard at work investigating his most controversial hypothesis, first proposed in 1990. Trichopoulos argues that the principal cause of breast cancer occurs in utero, that is, while the woman is not yet born but is instead a fetus in her mother's womb. There, in that seemingly safe and protected environment, the developing fetus is exposed to high levels of naturally occurring hormones, including estrogen, which can cause breast cancer later in life. Why? According to Trichopoulos, in utero exposure to hormones increases the number of undifferentiated cells (stem cells) in the mammary glands.

During cell division in later life, mutations in stem cells are associated with increased risk for breast cancer. Larger mammary glands have more cells at risk. The size of mammary glands is not reflected in breast size, which is largely determined by body fat.

Trichopoulos' hypothesis is supported by evidence presented in epidemiological studies that indicate certain early-life conditions, such as large birth size, are associated with breast cancer risk. In addition, correlates of mammary gland mass, such as the density of breast tissue, are considered to be predictors of breast cancer risk.

In 2005, Trichopoulos received the U.S. Department of Defense's Innovator Award to explore fetal and early-life factors associated with adult breast cancer, including whether exposure to hormones such as estrogens and insulin-like growth factors while in the womb may cause the disease years later. The grant, for \$5.8 million over five years, is given by the DOD's Breast Cancer Research Program of the Office of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs. According to Christina Roache of *The Harvard University Gazette*, "The Innovator Award recognizes individuals who have a history of visionary scholarship,

leadership and creativity.”

With the Innovator Award, Roache reports, Trichopoulos and colleagues in the United States, Sweden and Greece have undertaken a series of five complementary studies designed to investigate links between early-life exposures, mammary gland stem cells, mammary gland mass and adult breast cancer.

“It is too early to tell,” Trichopoulos told me, regarding these preliminary studies. “We have to follow these daughters for at least 60 years to see if they develop breast cancer. Nevertheless, we must lay the groundwork. It makes sense that the more stem cells, the greater the risk of cancer. We must make the observations and then continue to do a thorough follow-up for many decades.”

Trichopoulos is now 70 years old. It is unlikely he'll be alive in 60 years to see if his hypothesis turns out to be right. If his hypothesis does turn out to be right, we will have to revise our thinking about what constitutes healthy birth

weight. Currently, we think big babies are healthy. Perhaps not. Perhaps it is better to be smaller. According to Trichopoulos, the bigger and taller the person, the more stem cells. The more stem cells she has, the more potential for cancer to develop.

No matter what our height or weight, there is much hope. We trust that, in the coming 60 years, science and medicine will progress and offer better treatments for disease. As for prevention, it's comforting to know that our rich Greek olive oil and delicious vegetables protect our health. And now, thanks to Androniki Naska, Trichopoulos, Trichopoulou, and colleagues, we also learn that an afternoon siesta can help heart health.

In February 2007, these scientists published a new Harvard School of Public Health study that indicates the siesta offers significant protection against heart disease. This study followed more than 23,000 people in the Greek component of EPIC for six years

and showed that regular siestas can cut deaths from heart disease by as much as 37 percent, providing a benefit in the same order of magnitude as that linked to lowering cholesterol, eating a healthy diet or exercising.

“If confirmed by other investigations, these results would imply that a siesta could be added to the several means available for the control of coronary heart mortality, like healthy diets or cholesterol-lowering medications,” Dimetrios Trichopoulos told Alvin Powell of The Harvard University Gazette.

Trichopoulos explored the link between coronary heart disease and midday siestas out of intellectual curiosity. He noted that heart disease rates are lower in Mediterranean and Latin American countries. Trichopoulos told Powell that while the dietary differences had been explored, the cultural acceptance of a midday nap or siesta hadn't received adequate attention.

In Greece, Powell notes, it is typical for people to live fairly close

to their workplace and to take a break in the middle of the day. That allows for a midday meal -- typically the day's largest -- and for a siesta afterward. Stress is a known factor contributing to heart disease, Trichopoulos and colleagues remarked, and taking a nap may serve to relieve it.

“I would not really advise major changes to work habits here (in the United States) without confirmation (by further studies),” Trichopoulos told Powell. “We know there's no harm at all to a siesta, and it's actually enjoyable, so if you can, do it.”

Trichopoulos receives infinite joy from his scientific labors, reminding me that 95 percent of the time, scientists don't get the right answer, and yet “we always hope that our efforts will lead to some helpful insight.”

A journalist once asked Trichopoulos if he resented not being as well known as an actor or athlete, since his contributions to humanity are so important.

Trichopoulos replied, “No. I

have no regrets. When we watch an actor or an athlete, we can participate in the experience. To watch a scientist at work, it's rather dull most of the time. The excitement comes with the hope you'll find something that will make a difference to science, something that will help people improve their lives.”

Thanks to the work of the Trichopouloses and their colleagues, we can revel in many of our traditional Greek habits, knowing that our vegetables, olive oil, pleasant exercise, wine, and even our delightful siestas bring us much closer to optimal health. We are all the beneficiaries of the Trichopoulos legacy and thank these magnificent scientists for their ceaseless labor on our behalf. Thanks to them, we enjoy our beautiful Hellenic heritage and relax, knowing our welfare is in good hands.

Marianthe Karanikas, Ph.D., teaches scientific and technical writing at Missouri State University. She is also a poet and essayist.

Nicholas Askounes Ashford: Educator, Public Advocate, Musician

Continued from page 12

Counsel in St. Louis, who was the judge of the Rhodes competition in the Midwest at the time, was familiar with and perhaps quite unhappy about the Ashford's family involvement in the Greek Cypriot cause). Nicholas' late brother, Theodore Askounes Ashford, had a double major in math and music, but went on to get a Ph.D. in music at Northwestern University where he subsequently served on the faculty. Theodore, who died at age 46, was a highly regarded jazz pianist, composer and the author of a book on music theory and composition. Nicholas played bass in his brother Theodore's jazz trio and with him played in a Greek band, the Greek Lads, which produced a lively LP of Greek dance music called “Dance, the Greek Lads.” As a result of working as musicians throughout their high school, college and graduate school tenures, both brothers were financially independent of the family and contributed to easing the financial burdens on their parents, who worked at professions that were not well remunerated at that time.

“Because my name is Ashford, few know that I am Greek. But I am immensely proud to be Greek and wouldn't want to be anything else,” says Nicholas. He continues, “It provides me with a cultural grounding and confidence to take

on problems others think are too difficult to address.” But there are some aspects of “being Greek,” he feels, which can be a double-edged sword: more specifically, the intensity of his temperament and his willingness to challenge the status quo. On the one hand, his intensity results in a “kefi” and “joie di vivre” that makes life beautiful and exciting, and his willingness to challenge the status quo for purposes of promoting economic justice and environmental sanity make his life profoundly meaningful. On the other hand, he finds that not all cultures, especially the Anglo-Saxon one, easily tolerate dialogues that involve strong emotions and challenging ideas.

“Confronting truth is different from confronting an individual; there's a difference between confronting someone about their ideas and being hostile towards them as a person or attacking their personally,” explains Ashford. “But in this country, passionate dialogues where another person's ideas are challenged are often viewed as impolite and threatening. So sometimes, I have to bite my tongue.”

Nicholas visits Greece often, for work and pleasure and has a summer home in Cape Sounion outside of Athens. When asked why he visits Greece so often, he laughs and says, “One reason is because in Greece, I'm not the loudest person in the restaurant. Zorba lives!”

Ashford is deeply involved in the United States-Greek Initiative for Technology Cooperation with the Balkans (the ITCB), serving as its co-chair. The ITCB was established in order to (1) promote economic stability, restore peace, and facilitate peaceful transition to free enterprise economies in the Balkan Region; (2) strengthen the friendship and understanding in the relationships among the U.S. and Greek private-sector firms and among private and public entities in the Balkan Region; (3) provide economic benefits to the Balkan Region, and (4) promote collaboration and cooperation among technology and industrial organizations, researchers and engineers for the benefit of the Balkan region. The ITCB has held several Balkan-focused workshops in Greece on technology assessment and transfer to promote its mission. While the ITCB does not apply its technology transfer programs to Greece, Nicholas has been a long-time observer of environmental conditions there. “Unfortunately,” says Ashford, “Greece does not take European environmental law requirements as seriously as it might and much improvement is needed.”

In the past, Ashford served as a public member and chairman of the National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health; served on the EPA Science

Advisory Board; was chairman of the Committee on Technology Innovation and Economics of the EPA National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology; and served as an advisor to the United Nations Environment Programme. Currently, he is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and former chair of its Section on Societal Impacts of Science and Engineering. He is also legislation, regulation and policy editor of the Journal of Cleaner Production and serves on the editorial board of the Journal of Environmental Technology and Management. Visit <http://web.mit.edu/ctpid/www/tl/> for further information.

How can one man can be so professionally active in so many areas, yet still find time to enjoy life

Greek style – with music, visits to Greece, and heated political discussions (with emotional Greeks only)? The answer may lie in the spirit of Zorba. He, like Zorba, not only loves music and dance but also has an acute awareness of human suffering and injustices and works hard to make the world a better place for us to live.

Aphrodite Matsakis, Ph.D. is a counseling psychologist and the author of “Back From the Front: Combat Trauma, Love and The Family” (www.backfromthefront.org), as well as 13 books on a variety of psychological topics, and “Growing Up Greek in St. Louis” (Arcadia Publishing, 1998). Visit www.matsakis.com for further information.

**IOANNIS ARAPIDIS, D.P.M., A.A.C.K.A.S
ARGYRIS MANTZOUKAS, D.P.M.**

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Andrew Maniotis: Healer, Heretic or Both?

Continued from page 13

son they're toxic is they're toxic cancer chemotherapy drugs that come from my corner of the block as a cancer researcher. The only difference is with the AIDS patients they were telling them to stay on the stuff constantly to keep their viral load down, when the same drug used in a cancer patient is withdrawn to give them time for their bone marrow and t-cells to bounce back. With AIDS, it was a mistake from the very beginning, from the Pasteur Institute's belief they had isolated HIV from a person harboring syphilis, who had had two cases of gonorrhea, herpes and cytomegalovirus. Finally the pharmaceuticals popped up. AZT got involved, a failed cancer drug. It didn't cure cancer; it just made rats sick. They decided to give that to a generation of people.

"I'm connected to a number of Greeks, Lennie Papadopoulos in Perth and George Miklos on the other side of Australia who have for years lobbied against the AIDS establishment. We've had threats."

For all the turmoil created by his work, Maniotis seems to have a wonderfully satisfying home life. He and his wife Rita have two teenagers, James and Barbara, as well as 10-year-old Nikolas. The family manages to have dinner every Saturday with Uncle Constantine. Maniotis is well aware of the importance of his history as a Greek American. With very little prompt-

ing, he spoke at length of his family's heritage.

"Grandmother came from Alepohori, the Village of the Foxes. Grandfather came from the nearby village, Mani. Grandfather was one of 13 children. They didn't have enough food for him, so he used to get his milk from the goats in the village nearby. He was sort of sold into the service of a druggist, making Mercurochrome-type remedies for people with syphilis. He went to Africa and from there he came over to the United States.

"He got a job as a cook on the railways; he went all throughout the United States, but finally ended up in Detroit. He became a chef in a hotel. Eventually he was able to get enough money together to open up his own little restaurant called Andy's Lunch.

"During the depression when there was no work, he'd go across the Ambassador Bridge and wash dishes in Canada. Then he sent for his wife from the village of Alepohori, and my uncle came over at that point, having spent five years growing up in Greece.

"When my father was born, the three of them eventually manned the restaurant. My father described it as thankless hard work. They'd get up early in the morning, do the dishes, and then get lunch served to all the factory workers.

"My father had the good fortune of meeting a druggist of the neighborhood, who turned him onto read-

ing books. He was able to climb out of a very depressed factory area down by the Ambassador Bridge. That and the Army got him out of there. Because he was an avid reader, he finally went to college, and that's how he became a teacher."

Maniotis' father was much more than a teacher. James Maniotis was a renowned member of Washington University in St. Louis, eventually teaching there for more than 35 years, affecting thousands of students. He may be best remembered for his love of the study of mushrooms. Walter Lewis, emeritus professor of biology at Washington University, spoke well of him on his passing in October of 2002. "He taught with a passion. He loved his students and had the ability to make anyone share the fascination he held for mycology."

Maniotis speaks of his father with pride and respect. "He was the most sought after man during springtime when people used to eat poison mushrooms. The poison control center of the nation used to call our house. I remember him bringing his students over to the house every spring. They'd go out field hunting for mushrooms, cook them in sherry and serve up steaks. He was quite a man."

Initially Maniotis did not follow a career in science as his father had done. He started out in a career field more closely aligned with his mother. "Genetics wasn't what I first went out for. My mother had an interest-

ing history. She comes from the village of Elefsina, about seven miles from Athens. It's a different part of Greece, east coast instead of west coast, right there at the gates of Hell, literally. My mother used to play in the ruins there where the Eleusinian Mysteries happened.

"She was in Greece until she was 15. Her name was Sassa, Alexandra. She was sent for by her father who came over to Detroit to start a candy shop. She worked there and went to college, but her talent was in the arts.

"From a very early age she was taking piano lessons. She became very gifted at the piano and finally ended up with a very famous pianist as a teacher, Karl Haas, who used to have a radio show every Sunday." Haas ultimately was the creator and host of the longest running daily classical music program in broadcast history, "Adventures in Good Music."

"Through (my mother's) career she gave piano lessons and small performances. She ended up with my father in St. Louis at the St. Louis Conservatory of Music. I've started a piano scholarship in her name."

Still playing classical piano today for recreation along with guitar, Maniotis initially began his education in music. "I got a music scholarship to the University of Iowa, my first school. My dad's influence really didn't kick in until later, but I was always fascinated with his way of looking at science. I used to work in his lab in the summertime, transfer-

ring spores for him."

Reading and literature eventually provided the key to the direction his education and consequent future would take. "When I was at Iowa I started reading a lot about philosophy, a lot of Nietzsche in particular, James Joyce. I was really frustrated because it really didn't do it for me until I read Darwin.

"I was playing piano at the time and teaching. Then I went back to school. On the first day I was sitting in a geology course, and then an anthropology course, which really stunned me. I started reading everything I could about physical anthropology and primates. I got my degree at Washington University a few years later in that subject. I taught and worked in labs there for a few years afterward."

When speaking with Maniotis, I often sensed concern in his voice. Controversy in the scientific community aside, he doesn't come across as an angry man with a political agenda. I rather sensed a caring individual compelled to seek evidentiary proof toward the truth. I wondered if he was more involved with political human rights, or was merely a concerned natural humanitarian. He'd probably be the first to instruct me, based on evidence alone, the two are not mutually exclusive.

Robert Krause works in two public libraries as an assistant librarian. He reads and writes in Lake County, Illinois.

Robert Ashford: A Tale of Two Passions: Binary Economics and Music

Continued from page 8

nomics is in harmony with many Christian principles fundamental to the Orthodox faith. It finds support in what we read in the Bible about Jesus sharing the bread and fish; there was more not less at the end of the meal. Ashford says, "Inclusion produces God's abundance; whereas hoarding leads to scarcity and deprivation." He believes that the economic deprivation that prevails in the world is the unnatural result of human institutions that can be reformed to produce more of the abundance that naturally comes from loving inclusion. Compared to the present system in which capital acquisition with the earnings of capital remains largely concentrated in a few, the inclusive binary approach is structured to work more in harmony with Christian principles, and by those principles may produce greater abundance. See "Using

Christian Principles to Reform Economic Theory" available on his web page at Syracuse University (syr.edu).

With seemingly boundless energy, Robert Ashford not only writes, lectures, and teaches principles of binary economics to other teachers, government officials, business representatives, foundations and churches, but also organizes conferences on binary economics and raises funds to establish centers for binary economics in universities and colleges.

Ashford's mother, who taught him to feel and act compassionately for those in need, also instilled his love for music. Venette Askounes played the piano with passionate, yet tender feeling. Parties at the Askounes Ashford home always included plenty of Greek dancing, music and food. Some of the flavor of Greek music can be heard in Robert's musical compositions.

Robert began composing at the piano at the age of four; and by his high school graduation he had learned to play and compose by ear using a number of instruments including piano, flute, French horn and string bass. In speaking to him, one can hear music in his voice. He says, "I try to compose music that makes people feel loved." He has even organized an informal organization called "Friends of Melody" which endeavors to promote beautiful melody in music.

Robert Ashford has released two CDs of his compositions, "Heroes and Heroines" and the "Lord's Prayer" both available at cdfreedom.com and baby.com.

His first CD, "Heroes and Heroines," contains 18 instrumental compositions featuring solo piano, and small string and wind ensembles. Selections from this CD are frequently aired on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" as mu-

sical interludes. Noted musicologist Dan Campbell, champion of "the Mozart Effect" describes Ashford's music as both "awakening and calming at the same time ... clean, beautifully structured and inspiring." Pulitzer Prize Winner, Jazz legend Ornette Coleman states, "Robert Ashford's music has natural and spiritual quality everyone should hear."

"The Lord's Prayer," his second CD, features a sweet, new hymn-like melodic setting for the Lord's Prayer that is easy to learn and sing. According to Dr. Craig Jessup, Music Director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Ashford's setting of "The Lord's Prayer" has "an appealing melody and would indeed be quickly learned by a choir of virtually any age and ability."

My parents were close friends with Robert Ashford's parents, the late Dr. Theodore and Mrs. Venette Ashford. As a child I couldn't quite

understand the meaning of the many discussions about Cyprus, politics, and social and economic justice held over the many dinners our family enjoyed at the Ashford home. But I did hear the concern for others that motivated these conversations, as well as the jazz and Greek music that Robert's two brothers, Nicholas and the late Theodore Ashford, were playing in another room. The Ashford home was alive with ideas, with caring and with song and so is Robert Ashford.

Aphrodite Matsakis, Ph.D., is a counseling psychologist and the author of "Back From the Front: Combat Trauma, Love, and The Family" (www.backfromthefront.org), as well as 13 books on a variety of psychological topics and "Growing Up Greek in St. Louis" (Arcadia Publishing, 1998). Visit www.matsakis.com for further information.

Prof's Friendly Study Ignites Global Obesity Debate

Continued from page 9

returning to Harvard as full-time faculty, he served an assistant professorship, which began in the late-'90s, at the University of Chicago. He is the author of the book, "Death Foretold: Prophecy and Prognosis in Medicine."

When we reached him, he was in the midst of a world-wide public relations and lecture tour, but kind enough to take time to summarize his team's findings and address his Greek heritage and our own indigenous lifestyle.

"Our group is interested in the idea that because people are interconnected, their health is interconnected, and we study the spread of health related phenomena from one person to others to whom they are connected via social ties," Christakis told us. "We picked obesity as one of the first topics to investigate because it was something that was directly observed since the people were weighed. So while we have studied other phenomena, such as the widowhood effect and how illness in one spouse contributes to the other, and how smoking cessation behavior spreads in a network, obesity happened to be the first project we tackled. It received a huge amount of interest which, quite frankly, we didn't expect."

There exists virtually zero doubt the developed world is currently mired in an obesity crisis of epidemic proportion. The friends study reports that in America, the rate of obesity has risen from 23 percent to 31 percent in the last two decades, with a total of 66 percent of adults overweight. According to most recent studies, one-third of Americans are obese, a number rising fast.

A separate 2004 Harvard study, conducted with assistance of Greek scientists, cited these numbers for Greece: The prevalence of overweight individuals and obesity in men was 53 percent and 20 percent, and 31 percent and 15 percent in women. Again, numbers on the up in recent years, although not as acute as U.S. figures. Still, Greek men would be wise to take note of yiayia's busy nature.

To define obesity, Christakis' team used a body mass index of 30 (weight in kilograms divided by the square of the height in meters) as their standard, a common medical benchmark. Their study relied on data from the Framingham Heart Study. The data analyzed spanned 32 years with a social network encompassing 12,067 people, including family, friends and



Dr. Nicholas Christakis is with his father, Alexander, last year in Crete. This summer Dr. Nicholas Christakis released the findings of a seminal study on obesity which suggests that our friends could influence whether we become obese or not. His father, who spends six months in Greece each year, is managing partner of Leading Design International, a management consulting firm.

neighbors.

Findings indicate that when someone becomes obese, the chances their closest friends will follow increases by up to a whopping 171 percent. The study also found an inverse relationship, that when one loses weight there is a vastly increased chance friends will also lose weight proportionately. Most peculiar is that geographic distance has almost zero bearing. Regardless of where your friends reside, you're more apt to get your just deserts if your friends are obese, implies the study. American friends seem to be more prone to this syndrome.

"The obesity epidemic is much more advanced in the U.S.," explained Christakis of a country more connected via technology than perhaps any other. For the record, Christakis, who is fluent in both English and Greek, was born in the U.S. but lived in Greece until the age of five. He was raised in Washington, D.C.

"Greece is very paradoxical,"

said Christakis. "While on one hand it's not a wealthy country, the rate of longevity is nonetheless high. In the top five worldwide, native Greeks live longer than anyone except maybe the Japanese. Usually, the wealth of a society has a direct correlation to the life-expectancy of its inhabitants."

And what of the Greek diet, replete with olive oil, goat cheese, lamb, fish with omega-rich nutrients and other antioxidant-filled fare? Researchers were meticulous to account for a range of factors that might potentially skew statistics.

"A lot of research has been conducted on the Mediterranean diet," Christakis continued. "The traditional diet is known to be extremely healthy. As for Americans, there are lots of theories as to why we're experiencing disproportionate rates of obesity. There are, however, many so-called rich societies that are behind even America. On the flip side, there's also a possibility Greece could one day get there

(overly obese) too.

We asked Christakis about role models. More specifically, anorexic-looking 'super-models' and how they conversely affect body image to where ultra-thin is the aspired-to prototype. Christakis was adamant that "these are ideals. Society has many ideals that it nevertheless flaunts. For example, we have the ideal that torture is wrong, but, as we are seeing at present, that sensibility is often violated. The ideal of fitness doesn't necessarily translate to fitness. (Study authors) are of the opinion that those closest to us are highly significant factors (in weight control)," he concluded.

The Christakis family originated on the island of Crete prior to migrating to Athens. They have a history of scholarly achievement. His father Alexander Christakis, born and raised in Athens, was a Princeton undergraduate who went on to achieve a Ph.D. in nuclear physics from Yale University. Now a U.S. resident, he spends half the year in

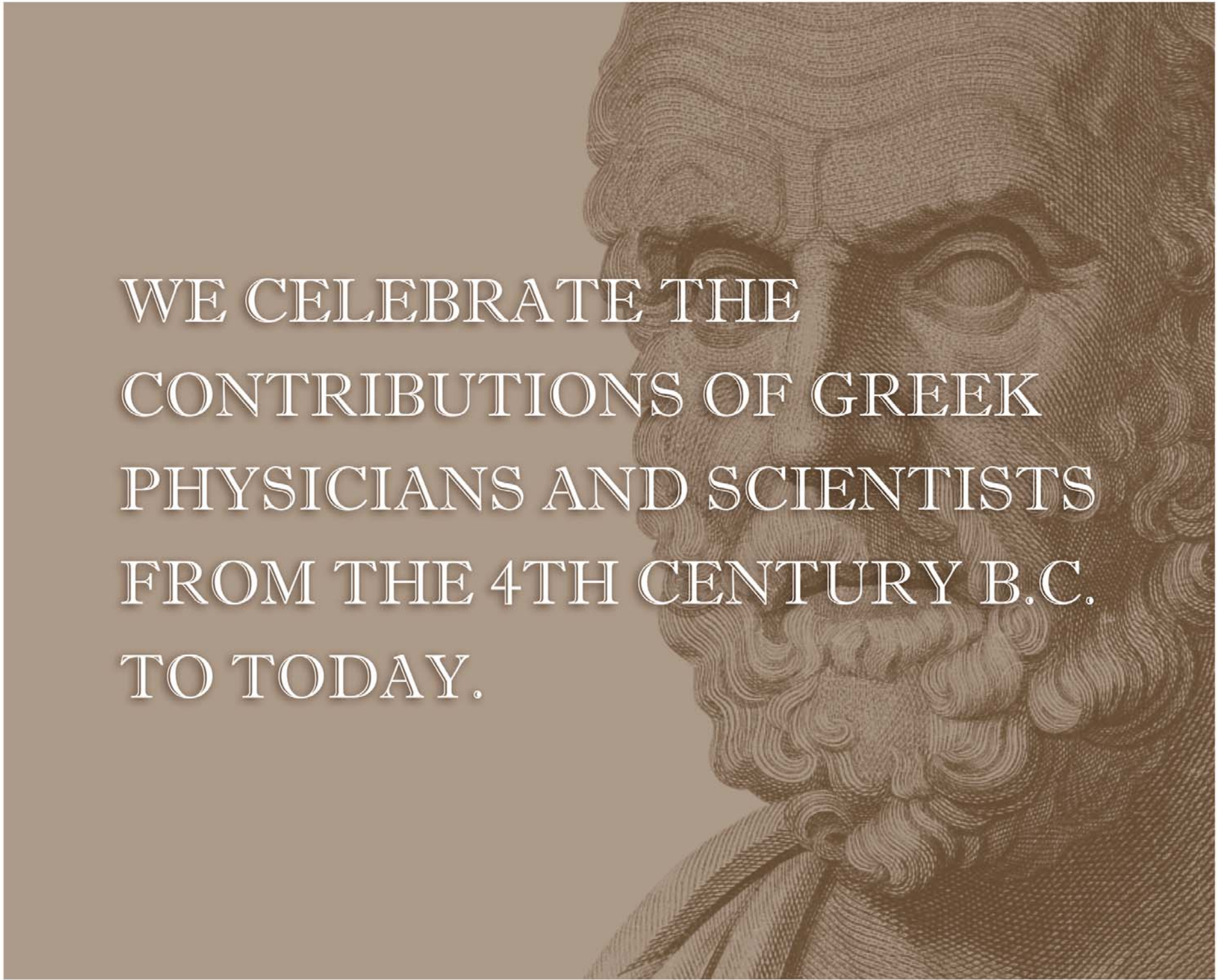
Crete. As a management consultant, he "helps companies solve complex problems," said Christakis. His mother, the late Eleni Sarantis Christakis, attended Vassar College and graduated Yale University with a degree in physical chemistry. "She was born in 'Constantinople,'" said Christakis, "and moved to Athens when she was 15."

Both parents were Fulbright scholars. His brother Dimitri is a graduate of Washington University and now a well-known pediatrician, and sister Katrina is an attorney with the blue-chip Chicago firm Arnstein & Lehr. We didn't ask about the B.M.I. of his siblings, but if they were influenced at all by their now 45-year-old lean brother, one could safely presume they're in reasonable shape.

Leaving few pita's unturned, the friends study looked at family and determined that if one has an obese spouse, that person is 37 percent more likely to become obese. There was almost zero influence between neighbors, it should be noted. Obese siblings make a person 40 percent more susceptible to obesity. An obese friend can cause you to have a 57 percent increased likelihood of becoming obese, and obese mutual friends (a close reciprocal friendship) can bring the increased rate of becoming obese all the way up to 171 percent. Study authors say "directional" friendship with "mutual" endearment is key. If both parties considered one another anywhere near the 'best friends' category, percentages skyrocketed. Opposite-sex friendships held much less influence. According to the study, as reported in New England Journal of Medicine, "Among friends of the same sex, a man had a 100 percent increase in the chance of becoming obese if his male friend became obese, whereas the female-to-female spread of obesity was not significant."

You might think there's a fat chance you'd ever fall victim to the friends and family diet. Personally, I could do with a steady diet of Jennifer "Friends" Aniston, the thought of which makes my jaw drop -- just wide enough to insert another helping of "koulourakia." Alas, my own just desserts.

Terry Poulos is a veteran writer covering Greek American issues for various newspapers and magazines. He has performed media outreach for a high-tech company and closely follows latest developments in science, technology and medicine.



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