

# Cool organization, AWOOG

Did you know that there is an "American Women's Organization of Greece?" Last Thursday (Thanksgiving day in the States) in fact, the group held elections to elect a new president for 2009. "AWOG" as it is affectionately called, is a registered non-profit organization which serves the social and cultural purposes of American and expats living here temporarily or permanently. Their goal is to support charities within Greece and they

just celebrated 60 years in Greece.

AWOG also just held their largest fundraiser of the year, the annual Christmas Bazaar, which took place on Sunday the 23rd of November at the Ledra Marriott Hotel. Thousands of Athenians came through to shop the handmade and homemade items, a little touch of the States, Santa Claus, white elephants, American candy and good will.

If you're coming to Greece from the States

for any length of time, you can contact the organization and join as an American citizen.

PS: In case you were wondering... our sources say it's pretty easy to whip up a Thanksgiving feast while in Greece. Most larger supermarkets will carry all the necessary trimmings. Although we still have our doubts on the availability of sweet potatoes!

# Greek collector has most cameras in world

The tiny basement houses the world's largest private collection of movie cameras - 937 vintage models - and projectors, all owned by retired postman Dimitris Pistiolas. The collection made it once again into the Guinness World Records in November.

"It's been listed in the Guinness Book of Records eight times ... I don't want anyone to catch up with me," says Pistiolas, a silver-haired, soft-spoken, 78-year-old.

Ronald Grant, a director at the Cinema Museum in London, where vintage movie paraphernalia and cameras are on display, says it's a difficult task to collect and restore so many old cameras. They don't just come from shops - the collector has to hunt around in fairs



Greek collector has most cameras in world. Dimitris Pistiolas has set up a basement museum of his cameras and projectors. His movie posters are relegated to another floor. (THANASSIS STAVRAKIS / AP)

and auction rooms, never mind the money it costs to buy them, Grant said, speaking by tele-

phone from the museum, which was once a workhouse for the homeless where Charlie Chaplin

briefly stayed.

Pistiolas started buying cameras at age 15 and never stopped. The cameras steadily filled the cupboards and shelves of his house and eventually took over his wife's craft shop, now the museum.

Press clippings are taped to the back of the front door, next to a prized certificate from the Guinness World Records. The cameras in the cabinets, all restored to working order, fill a space of about 270 square feet, the size of a storage shed. Pistiolas says there's every kind of camera for every kind of film.

"There's 8mm, super-8, 16mm, 35mm, amateur and professional ... I don't have a favorite," he says. "I love them all, even the most plastic-looking."

A line of switches near the entrance of the museum is hooked up to run projectors, operate a drop-down screen, and activate an alarm system. The museum is in part of central

Athens where crime is common, so the basement stays padlocked. Visits are by invitation only. "My mind is always on the museum when I'm at home," Pistiolas said.

When video became popular in the 1980s, movie cameras were easy to come by. But they have steadily become scarce, found in junk markets or through word-of-mouth.

The Pistiolas family used to watch classic American movies on a cinema screen at their home before the era of mainstream television. He remembers his two kids pulling reels of film through the house.

The 1942 movie "Casablanca" remains his favorite. And he is fond of film stars like James Cagney and Judy Garland, and Greek actors popular in the 1950s and '60s.

Pistiolas' family watched his collection grow over the decades, moving from disbelief to acceptance to pride.

The collector's daughter, Theodora Pistiola, remembers being filmed by her father as a child - "like Big Brother in the house, but in a nice way," She has hopes of moving the collection to a bigger space, perhaps with the help of private or government sponsorship. But her father might take some persuading. Pistiolas admits he's turned down a couple of offers. He'd like to get space for his collection, but he wants to stay on as supervisor. "I don't want a civil servant looking after all this, not someone who doesn't care," he says. "Because if I lost one of these cameras I'd be very upset. This is my little church."

Pistiolas says his collection is his hobby, his way of staying sharp and young in mind. He insists he'll never stop collecting. Cameras, he says, are his lovers.

## Hot heir Paris Hilton blows in

IS it just a coincidence that Stavros Niarchos, the Greek shipping heir and ex-boyfriend of Paris Hilton, is expected to be in town at the same time as the fabled blonde hosts a special New Year's Eve gig for the Bongo Virus at Trademark?

Event primer Alex Zabotto-Bentley has been called in to ensure the function meets Hilton's discerning standards.

The couple recently reconnected at a Belvedere vodka bash at the LIV nightclub, in Miami's Fontainebleau Hotel, where they were snapped in a compromising position, catching up again.

Shortly afterwards, Hilton split with recent boyfriend Benji Madden.

Niarchos has reportedly rented a Florida house for the Christmas break.

### Grenier's Odyssey

ISABEL Lucas's ex-boyfriend, Adrian Grenier, is also expected to visit these shores over the holiday season with his band, The Honey Brothers.

The guys are reportedly on the bill with The Butterfly Effect and Grinspoon at the Odyssey

Party on the Gold Coast on New Year's Eve.

The Entourage hottie is also threatening to do some gigs with his band in Sydney - but they don't come cheap, with promoters of some venues saying the asking price was \$35,000 a show.

Lucas and Grenier's relationship ended soon after she had a bingle in a vehicle being driven by the much more desirable Shia La Beouf.

### Amber's Thai tryst

DESPITE grim travel warnings about the political unrest in Thailand, and the need to fork out an extra \$2500, Adelaide radio gal and Danish royal bridesmaid Amber Petty is following her heart to Bangkok.

Petty, 38, who was due to fly out yesterday, is meeting up with her own "Frederik" - Swedish circus performer Frederik Karlsson, 25, whom she met this year at the Royal Adelaide Show.

"I'm not serious about him; it's more of a friendship thing," she revealed.

Petty has invited soapie starlet Imogen Bailey to meet them there as well.