



Thank you, Greece

In a letter published in Sunday "Kathimerini," Simon Gass, until recently British Ambassador to Athens, bids a warm farewell to Greece.

*"Write if you can on your last shell
the day the place the name
and fling it into the sea so that it sinks"*

*"Santorini -The naked child"-
Giorgos Seferis*

In a few days, my wife and I are leaving Greece after eight blissful years in your country; first during the 80's and the second time these past years. Greece has been good to us. [...]

Greece and its people exercise an intense influence on foreigners. British writer Lawrence Durrell wrote: "Other countries can make you discover customs, traditions or landscapes. Greece offers you something harsher: self-discovery." In Greece, us northern Europeans, leave behind some of our cold-blooded nature and reservation and become more extroverted, seeking the company of other people. [...]

We don't think Greece has given us permission to leave the country indefinitely. When we do return, it will not be just for the peoples or the landscape, but because Greece is a country which we admire for many different things.

*"May there be many a summer morning
when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you come into harbours seen
for the first time"*

*"Ithaca"- Constantine P. Cavafy
Still, it won't be Greece[...]*

Thank you, Greece.

Inaugural Peloponnesian Cultural, food and wine festival a success!

Over 3,000 people dance till they drop!!



The Peloponnesian Confederation organised a successful inaugural Peloponnesian Cultural, Food and Wine Festival which included a two day Panigiri over the Australia Day weekend 24-25 January 2009. Over 3,000 people, ranging in age from babies in prams to those with walking sticks, attended the 2-day Panigiri and took part in a celebration of Peloponnesian musical heritage.

Those attending were treated to phenomenal performances by guest artists from Greece Giota Kokkori, Giorgos Velissaris and Kostas Kokkoris on the klarino. The trio along with the support band had something for everyone when on the Sunday they played for six (6) non-stop hours. What was also even more amazing was that the dancing did not stop for six hours – people virtually danced till they dropped!!

The huge 600m2 dance floor was put to good use as virtually every corner was used by the dancers and on-lookers. People in the 3,000 seat undercover grandstand who did not or could not dance did not move from their vantage points until the sun went down and it was time for the gates to shut.

The day had many highlights. The kids were kept amused with jumping castles, everyone was well fed with over 12 lambs on the spit and a few thousand souvlakia consumed in just one day, and the alcoholic bar (thanks to the hot weather) got a work-out as well!!

For the Peloponnesian Confederation President, Andrew Kalavritinos, there are two images that will remain with him forever. "The first" he explained, "was standing in the grandstand and watching a Greek panigiri on a football field – lambs on the spit, souvlakia, Greek music and Greek dancing!! I felt so proud to be an Australian which allows its citizens to celebrate their heritage, in our case our Greek heritage, in this manner" he said.

"The second image" he continued "was at the conclusion of the Panigiri. The sun had gone down, darkness had set-in and about 300 people were still dancing. The music stopped and Velissari asked everyone to sit down on the floor. Everyone, including Velissari and Kokkori all sat down. What followed will never be forgotten by those that were present - 30 minutes of 'kleftika' songs by Velissari and Kokkori, along with a solo by Kostas Kokkoris".

"The lights were dimmed, the music and singing mesmerising. Everyone just sat and listened" he continued. "It was as if people in their minds travelled back in time and imagined was it must have been like for the 'kleftes' in the mountains where this image would have been repeated many times over" he continued.

Although there many positives in the day, we must remember there were a number of firsts. It was the first time the organisers had planned and held a Panigiri such as this. It was the first time that close to 30 Associations had worked together to bring the Panigiri atmosphere to Australia.

"Both of these firsts may seem insurmountable but they were surpassed and successfully so", said the President.

Not everything went to plan and not everything was anticipated, but when you consider that the whole event was put together and run by volunteers, with no salaried staff, the Panigiri has to be considered a success!!

"There are a lot of lessons for us" said Mr Kalavritinos. "Over the coming days we will sit down and have a debrief session and discuss all aspects of not only the Panigiri, but all the Festival events. We will listen to the feedback, good or bad, to ensure we learn" he concluded.

The overwhelming feeling amongst those attending was that this should not be the last Panigiri – only the first.

The full Festival details can be found at: www.morias.org.au

New digital systems at Navy Hydrographic Service

The development of a Maritime GIS (Geographic Information System) for the Hellenic Navy Hydrographic Service has been successfully concluded, according to an announcement issued on Tuesday by the Space Hellas-Intracom consortium assigned to carry out the project.

The announcement said that the total cost of supplying and

installing the Maritime GIS system and software and of training personnel came to 1,496,880 euros, while it also adapted the new systems to the existing communications infrastructure at the Hydrographic Service and digitalised bathymetric and landscape charts that were in an analog format.

The main aim of the project

was to create the necessary infrastructure for automating procedures for the management and processing of geographic information of the Greek sea region that is under the Hydrographic Service's jurisdiction. It also empowered the Hydrographic Service to make its products available for distribution and sale over the Internet using e-commerce.