



Author Galateia Sarante passes away

Greek author Galateia Sarante, the first woman ever to be elected a member of the Athens Academy in 1997, passed away on Monday at the age of 89.

She was born in the port city of Patras in 1920, graduated in law from Athens university and published her first short story entitled "To Kastro" (The Castle) in the magazine "Nea Estia" in 1945.

Sarante went on to become a prize-winning author with her novel "The Return", which received the "Prize of Twelve" award in 1953. Two more of her books also won prizes, "To Palio Mas Spiti" (Our Old House) in 1969 that won the 2nd state award for a novel and "Na Thymsai ti Vilna" (Remember Vilna) that won the 1st state literature prize for a short story in 1979.

She also won the Athens Academy's Ouranis Prize in 1979 for her novel "Rogmes" (Cracks).

In addition to her work as an author, Sarante worked with state radio, appearing in programmes on literature, and several literary magazines.

She was married to the lawyer Stavros Patsouris, with whom she had two children. Her funeral will be held at noon on Wednesday at the Athens 1st cemetery.

Priceless icons, relics stolen

More than 50 icons and other priceless religious artifacts dating to the 15th and 16th centuries were stolen from a church in Zagorochoria, Ioannina, including the relics of Saints Panteleimonas and Haralambos.

The theft was discovered by the local priest and parishioners when they arrived at the Church of the Virgin (Panaghia) in the village of Koukouli for the Christmas service. The burglars broke into the Church from a small window after cutting its iron frame.

According to an initial inventory, the burglars made away with more than 50 icons, several gospels, exapteriga (six-winged liturgical ripidia), chalices, relics of Saints Panteleimonas and Haralambos, and several other sacred vessels, all of great value dated to the time of the church's construction between the 15th and 16th century.

Several years earlier, burglars had stolen the church's priceless Epitaphios (carved bier of Jesus Christ carried throughout the community in a funerary procession on Good Friday).

Police have launched a manhunt for the thieves.

Grief over ship tragedy, measures pledged

The government expressed grief over the loss of nine seamen, including three Greeks, in a Christmas Day fire aboard the Greek-owned bulk carrier Aegean Wind off the coast of Venezuela, and pledged that the causes and circumstances of the tragedy will be investigated in depth and all measures to avert such accidents in the future will be taken. Economy, Competitiveness and Shipping minister Louka Katseli, in a message, expressed her "deep grief for the loss of our seamen, both Greek and foreign", and the government's "unconditional support to their families".



"For our seamen traveling all over the world, the family warmth and peace of these holy days is not a given. The tragic event on the Aegean Wind confirms that, even on Christmas Day, danger lurks," Katseli said, adding that the ministry's services were mobilised from the first moment upon learning of the incident.

She pledged that the causes and conditions of the tragedy would be investigated in depth, aimed at the taking of all measures deemed necessary to avert other such situations in the future.

Greek Orthodox community call to save Bogey Hole

THE Hunter's Greek community has joined calls to keep Newcastle landmark the Bogey Hole open. The Herald revealed last week the Hunter icon was under threat by a plan to revitalise Newcastle's coastline, which suggested closing public access to the swimming spot because of safety concerns.

The Newcastle Greek Orthodox community has used the Bogey Hole for its blessing of the water ceremony each January for more than 50 years.

Greek Orthodox Parish of Newcastle rector Father Nicholas Scordilis said he hoped the 2010 scheduled celebration at the Bogey Hole on January 7 would not be their last.

"It's very upsetting that this year could be our last year," he said.

"It doesn't matter what reason it is, it's very wrong to take it away from the people of Newcastle."

Father Scordilis said he would write a letter to Newcastle City Council calling for the Bogey Hole to be kept open.

The Greek Orthodox parish is one of many communities in the Hunter with a link to the Bogey Hole.

The swimming spot has played a role in the region through the decades.

The Bogey Hole was created by Newcastle military commandant Major James Thomas Morisset who had it cut into coastal rocks between 1819 and 1822 for use as his personal bath.

It later became a recreation space for the elite, was opened to the public in 1863 and went on to become key venue for early feminists who petitioned for more hours of use for women around the turn of the century.

The swimming spot was originally 4.5 metres by two metres but was substantially enlarged in 1884 to its present size.

source: The Herald



HISTORY: The Bogey Hole in the 1950s.



FAITH: The Newcastle Greek Orthodox community's 2009 Blessing of the Waters at the Bogey Hole.



Greece votes for big budget cuts to reduce debt

Greece is trying to reassure markets about its economy

The Greek parliament has voted to adopt big budget cuts designed to lower the country's high levels of debt.

Greece aims to shrink public debt to 9.1% of overall economic output next year, down from 12.7% this

year.

To do this, it has outlined measures to cut public spending and boost revenue by cutting back on red tape.

Concerns about Greece's high level of debt have led the three main international credit ratings agencies to downgrade Greek government

bonds.

Greece's public debt currently stands at 300bn euros (\$428bn; £268bn).

The single-chamber parliament adopted the budget by a large majority, with the 160 Socialist Pasok deputies voting for, and 139 opposition members against.