

Greek Student Organisations – Fighting Idiocy

By Harry Mavrolefteros



Many of the Ancient Greek writings that we have today tell us of the importance of education, how it shapes our lives and defines us. The very etymology of the word "idiot" can be traced back to the Ancient Greek *ιδιώτης* which literally means "a private citizen" – someone not engaged in public life, and therefore in the honest harshness of the Ancient Greek mindset, uneducated and inferior.

It's hard to argue that our Greek culture is not one of the richest in the world. As young Australians of Greek descent, surely an ignorance of this history and culture is worthy of this idiocy as defined by the Ancient Greeks. In the midst of this postmodern hedonistic surrounding the youth of the western world, how do you educate those who have no desire to go out of their way to learn?

Young Greeks have come together for over 50 years in the 20 or so university Greek societies around Australia. These organisations have been a hub of young Greek energy, with all types of social events (usually with a Greek twist). Their biggest achievement however has



been to build relationships between young Greek Australians that last a lifetime.

I have been fortunate enough to have been involved in such organisations for some time now, and it is clear that they are more than simply a group of people getting together and enjoying their youth. Sooner or later, consciously or subconsciously, individuals will look at what they have in common with all these other young Greeks. Suddenly Greek Identity is not something simply which exists in mum's cook-

ing or a half yearly church attendance, but it's something which forms a significant part of their relationships, and therefore our day to day lives.

While socialising does little by way of actual 'education', socialising with people of similar cultural background becomes a very appropriate foundation for discovering more about our Greek heritage.

In fact recent history has indicated that dancing groups, language programs, poetry evenings, theatre productions completely in Greek,

radio programs specifically seeking audience with the Greek youth and cooking classes have all sprung up out of these social networks.

I would encourage any and all young Greek university students to get involved in their university Greek organisation; we have ample means (facebook, google, etc) to find and contact the right people involved.

But the responsibility for an educated Greek youth goes beyond just the Greek youth. I would also encourage any of the businesses and organisations who are interested in maintaining the Greek identity among the youth of Australia to support these Greek youth organisations. Often young Australians of Greek descent have the passion and the desire to do great things but are lacking in the resources and experience that is abundant in the wider Greek community.

There is great potential still in the Greek University societies of Australia; let us give no one the right to call the Greek youth uneducated about their heritage again.

'He's the best con artist NZ has ever seen'

It could have been a scene from *The Sopranos*.

A late-model BMW with the licence plate "Dadu" - Greek for Daddy - pulled over in Ponsonby Rd and parked outside a recently opened restaurant.

On cue, Loizos Michaels, well dressed in a dark suit, sunglasses and gold jewellery, emerged to do business at Plato's Greek Taverna.

Of Greek descent from Melbourne, 43-year-old Michaels owned the restaurant and ate and drank for free every day with his entourage.

On any given day, the colourful cast of characters could include minder Adam Riley, the Hells Angels sergeant-at-arms, or righthand man Steve Catsicas, a bankrupt property developer.

Even rugby superstar Jonah Lomu was a regular at Plato's, as the face of a global kickboxing tournament Michaels promised to bankroll.

Former Cabinet minister John Tamihere also enjoyed the hospitality of Michaels, in talks about a bold takeover bid for SkyCity Casino.

But soon, other people began turn-

ing up at Plato's for an audience with Michaels.

Tradesmen and suppliers became sick of his excuses for unpaid work, as did restaurant staff.

Gradually, his grandiose plans fell over, leaving a trail of angry and embarrassed victims in his wake.

"He is the best con artist New Zealand has ever seen," said one associate, who asked not to be named.

"How else could he convince some very smart people, some of them leaders in their field, to drop everything and give him millions of dollars?"

Michaels persuaded two casino executives to invest more than \$2.8 million in his make-believe takeover, and used Lomu's name to get more than \$350,000 from a couple as "security" on a Taupo luxury apartment sale which never went through.

Eventually, private investigators hired by Auckland businessman Peter Goodfellow, president of the National Party, called in the Serious Fraud Office, which later laid charges over the alleged scam.

It said Michaels committed fraud



Loizos Michaels likes to call himself The Phantom. Photo / NZ Herald

that carries a maximum jail term of seven years.

But the case may never get to court.

Michaels, who told a judge that he needed his passport back to visit his sick mother in Australia, skipped the country and left a trail of debts behind.

The SFO has plans to extradite him from Australia, where he is suspected of a similar \$600,000 scam in Melbourne, but the chances of finding him again look remote.

Article from NZ Herald
- by Jared Savage



Greek Peloponnesian Festival 2010

The Peloponnesian Confederation is holding its second annual Greek Peloponnesian Festival beginning on Saturday 25 September 2010. It is expected that over 10,000 people will attend all events with over 8,000 alone expected to attend the two-day traditional outdoor carnival 'Paniyiri'.

Major highlights of the Festival include:

- Fifteen cultural and entertainment events to be held over a 15-day period
- Topics on the history of the Peloponnesian presented by high profile guest speakers
- A 2-day traditional Peloponnesian 'Paniyiri' featuring musicians from Greece, traditional foods and other stalls
- Peloponnesian traditional dancing display
- Inaugural Greek Australian Awards

The Greek Peloponnesian Festival is an initiative of the Peloponnesian Confederation NSW Inc.