

110th Boston Marathon celebrates 60th anniversary of Stylianos Kyriakides win

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In the aftermath of World War II, seven million people were left destitute in Greece. Greece, which had bitterly resisted Nazi occupation, was being ripped apart by a brutal civil war in 1946. Hundreds of thousands of Greeks starved to death. In the face of disaster, champion marathoner Stylianos Kyriakides took valiant action.

The true story of Kyriakides, who against all odds entered the 1946 golden anniversary Boston Marathon, has been told in all types of media stories including the 2004 Olympic Special. Kyriakides, who had not run in six years, was not running just to win but to make the world aware of the plight of his people. And his run would eventually bring food, clothing and desperately needed medical supplies to Greece.

Although gaunt and ravaged by hunger, Kyriakides pushed his wracked body and his personal mental toughness to the limits. Boston doctors told him to quit. "You will die in the streets," they warned.

Before he started the race, George Demeter handed him a small piece of yellow paper and told him to read the top side which read in Greek a Spartan mother's adage "E tan E EPI TAS." It

meant either come with your shield or dead on it. Demeter told him not to read the back until he came to the finish line.

Kyriakides and Johnny Kelley ran stride-for-stride and shoulder-to-shoulder up the famed "heartbreak hill" as they broke away from the other runners. As the two approached Kenmore Square, a little more than a mile from the finish, Kyriakides passed Kelly.

When Kyriakides was running the closing yards he turned over the crumpled piece of paper and looked on the backside that read "Nenikamen," "We Are Victorious." These were the words of Pheidippides who had run from Marathon to Athens to announce the news of a Greek victory over the Persians.

And as Kyriakides cut through the red twine, victorious hands aloft, he cried out, "For Greece!"

Honoring Greek hero

At St. George Church in Centerville, MA, Ahepa celebrated their annual Ahepa Night February 25 by honoring the memory and historic achievements of Kyriakides. More than 125 people, including Ahepa District Gov. Alex Geourntas, attended the event. The event included a 20-minute presentation of the story of Kyriakides, dinner and music by the Makredes Ensemble. A raffle was held that included the book *Running with Pheidippides* written by myself and Andy Dabilis. The highlight of the evening came when 13-year-old Gregory



Stylianos Kyriakides looks at his watch as he crosses the finish line April 19, 1946. He finished with a time of 2:29:27, which at that time, was the fastest time in the world.

Mitrokostas gave an emotional and passionate speech, first in Greek, then in English, about what the Kyriakides story meant to him.

"I wanted to know what this story meant through the eyes of a child and I truly believe that this beautiful story should be repeated throughout every Greek community in the United States," said Ahepa Chapter President John Tanionis.

Athens Chapter remembers

Athens Ahepa Chapter 24 President Constantine Calliontzis and Geourntas presented a video presentation of the Kyriakides victory in 1946 at their April 10 meeting. Athens chapter

members George Demeter, Judge Harry Demeter and Harris Booras were instrumental in having Kyriakides sworn in as a member of Boston's Athens Chapter in 1946. Many of Ahepa's older members were present when Kyriakides attended Easter Eve Resurrection midnight service at the Boston Cathedral. They still remember Fr. James Coucouzis saying, "This time we shall light our candle from the candle of the great victor." Church bells rang loudly as Hellenes sang "Christos Anesti."

Greek radio

Ted Demetriades and Peter Cakridas, hosts of *Grecian Echoes*, a radio program in Boston, surprised their listeners with a special guest, Dimitri Kyriakides, son of Stylianos Kyriakides on their April 11 show. Dimitri passionately told his father's story in a one-hour segment in Greek and English.

Statue unveiled

The official unveiling of "The Spirit of the Marathon" statue of Stylianos Kyriakides was held in Hopkinton April 12. Honored guests included his son Dimitri; Jim

Davis, New Balance chairman and CEO; Metropolitan Methodios; Tim Kilduff, Hopkinton Athletic Association president; Mico Kaufman, sculptor; Tom Grilk, Boston Athletic Association president; Spyros Zagaris, Marathon Greek councilman and Peter Mezitt of Weston Nurseries. Davis funded the statue, which according to news sources was commissioned for \$230,000. Davis, a philanthropic Greek American, also funded the exact replica that was unveiled at Marathon, Greece prior to the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Inspirational victory

Kyriakides' victory in 1946 inspired many then, as it does today. Among two of the more notable Greek Americans who ran the Boston Marathon were, former governor Michael Dukakis and Winthrop resident John Booras, with Booras eventually winning a Canadian Marathon. The late Telly Savalas constantly told his fans the Kyriakides story. Our youth must learn the story of Kyriakides.



John Booras of Winthrop, MA was inspired by Kyriakides and ran in 25 marathons.



Stylianos Kyriakides at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Athens, Greece May 23, 1946. More than one million Athenians lined the streets upon his return.