

# The Hopkinton Independent

The Big Picture in a Small Town

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## Stylios Kyriakides: The Inspiration for the "Spirit of the Marathon"

by Michelle Murdock

The story of Stylios Kyriakides is one that inspires, and his triumphant win of the Boston Marathon in 1946 has provided inspiration for many. Back in 1946, Kyriakides came to Boston to run the marathon in an attempt to draw attention to the plight of his fellow countrymen in Greece, who were suffering from the after effects of World War II. Greece, after fighting to resist Nazi occupation, was further torn apart by civil war, and its people were suffering. Kyriakides hoped that by winning the marathon he could also win support and aid for his homeland.

Winning the 50<sup>th</sup> Boston Marathon was quite a feat for this marathoner from Greece. Kyriakides was not in good health when he came to Boston in 1946, and in fact, was told by doctors that they did not think he would survive the race. But run he did, ultimately defeating the defending champion, Johnny Kelly, and setting a record for best time in the world for 1946.

His victory is the stuff legends are made of and this year, to commemorate his triumph, a statue will be unveiled in Hopkinton at the Mile One mark of the Boston Marathon on land donated by Weston Nurseries, in close proximity to "Lucky Rock," the start line of the 1946 race.

The statue, "The Spirit of the Marathon," is the second one commissioned by New Balance Athletic Shoe, Inc., and is identical to the first one located in Marathon, Greece, which was the starting point for the marathon event in the 2004 Summer Olympics. The statue is 10 feet in height and cast in bronze. It depicts Kyriakides and his mentor, Spiridon Louis, the winner of the first modern Olympic marathon in Athens in 1896. Kyriakides is shown running uphill with Louis by his side, urging him on. The base of the statue is a depiction of Pheidippides, who ran from



Marathon, Greece to Athens in the year 490 B.C., with the news that the Greek army had defeated the Persians. Also shown on the base is the Greek god Pan, who was believed to have caused the panic that drove invaders from Greece during its early history.

The statue is the work of sculptor Mico Kaufman, who said, "Who could not be inspired by such an achievement?"

Inspiration for the statue also came from the book about Kyriakides entitled, *Running with Pheidippides: Stylios Kyriakides, the Miracle Marathoner*, by Nick Tsiotos and Andy Dabilis.

"The story transcends cultures, ethnic and racial groups, and stands for the universal inspiration for mankind," said Tsiotos. "The statue and the story will always link the democratic ideals of America and Greece."

The official recipient and caretaker of the statue will be the Hopkinton Athletic Association (HAA). As quoted in the press release from New Balance, the Founder

and President of the HAA, Tim Kilduff said, "To the marathoner, Hopkinton is hallowed ground. The statue symbolizes the magnitude of the event and the twin-city link between Marathon and Hopkinton, where both races begin. Not only does it recognize the strength of the human spirit that Kyriakides and Spiridon Louis embodied, but also the worldwide respect for the race and the people who run it. As an international emblem, it will greatly enhance the image and development of our community."

At a pre-marathon party to kick-off the 110<sup>th</sup> marathon season, Tim Kilduff also said, "There is a spirit that surrounds the marathon and I truly believe it resides in Hopkinton."

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