

ON THE SIDELINES:

Patriots Day Marathon Reunion in Greece

By GEORGE PATZER
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Ten years ago come next Patriots Day a bronzed son of Greece captured the greatest of all the distance grinds . . . the famed Boston Marathon. His name was Stylianos Kyriakides and he came from war-ravaged Athens with a message from a needy ally he brought to America, parlaying a lean body but a great heart and fine purpose into a smashing triumph.

A few days later the Greek colony of New Bedford invited him here and the shy young man of 33 came and made many friends for himself and his country. One of the friends, perhaps one of the most steadfast he made here or anywhere, was Sam Collins, a former Greater New Bedford boxing and wrestling promoter and more recently a retired wholesale fruit dealer.

Next April 19 this great friendship will be renewed, not in New Bedford but in far-away Greece. On that very day on which 10 years ago the gallant Greek captured the Hopkinton to Boston grand-daddy of all marathons, Kyriakides will be

at the dock in the Greek seaport of Piraeus to greet his old friend from New Bedford when he steps off the boat for his first glimpse of his native soil in 51 years.

Times have changed somewhat for both over the last decade.

Most of the wounds of war-torn Greece have long since healed. Kyriakides is 43 but is still a collector for the Athens Electric Light Company but he no longer does any serious running and his career in the big races is a thing of the past.

Collins retired from the fruit business here the same year, shortly after the Greek breasted the tape first on Exeter Street in Boston's Back Bay. Earlier Sam had promoted boxing and wrestling in old Bristol Arena but he was always an ardent running fan and in his young days had done some distance running himself.

"I ran third in a mile race on a July 4 celebration in Onset back in 1913," Collins reminded the other day in recalling the one big race he ran which is foremost in his mind.

The Greek winner of the '46 Boston grind won't be the only person to greet the New Bedford man who befriended visitors from his homeland when the Queen Frederica of the Greek Steamship Line docks in Piraeus on next April 19.

There should be quite a party because Althanasios Ragazos, Greek entrant in the 1947 and 1951 Boston Marathons and who finished fifth and then third, will be there along with Police Commissioner Vafopoulos of Athens. Also planning to welcome Collins for his first trip back since he left as a youth of 18, exactly 51 years ago, will be the widow of the late Captain Leon Kaiergis of the Greek Navy.



SAM COLLINS

All were guests of the retired New Bedford businessman during visits to America in 1946 and '47 when the Greeks were making a strong bid for two successive marathon victories.

Today Ragazos is an interpreter for the First National Bank of Greece and, like Kyriakides, no longer runs in the big ones.

Collins is making the trip back to his homeland with Samuel Dedopoulos of 23 Bentley Street and a nephew, Peter Panos of Brockton, and today at his home at 48 Junior Street in the West End he'll bid his friends here goodbye for some weeks and perhaps months to come. Tomorrow the party plans to motor to New York and at a minute past midnight Tuesday the Queen Frederica will sail for Greece.

It will be sort of a goodwill mission for the retired wholesaler who has just returned from a nine-week tour of Florida and he has an introductory letter from Congressman Nicholson of Wareham to meet the U. S. ambassador in Athens when he arrives on April 19, Patriots Day here and a day to be remembered by Greek followers of the marathon.

Collins and his party have no definite plans in Greece but plan to visit many cities including Sam's birthplace, the village of Temeni, about 160 kilometers from Athens. Sam plans to visit nephews and nieces while there. Youngest in a family of five brothers and two sisters, Collins is the only one living.

It figures to be quite a reunion, the arrival on the 10th anniversary of Kyriakides' great triumph in Boston.

That was the day in which the lean Greek matched strides with Boston's great Johnny Kelley and beat the American with a tremendous finishing kick and the ninth anniversary of Ragazos' fifth-place finish behind Korea's Yun Bok Suh when Stylianos finished 10th in 1947, and five years since Ragazos ran third behind teen-age Shigeki Tanaka of Japan in 1951.

Sam Collins is going to miss his first Boston Marathon in a long time, but only in body because his spirit will be somewhere along the road from Hopkinton and Boston as he and his old friends from Greece relive the past of this famous classic of them all.



STYLIANOS KYRIAKIDES