

George Demeter

Hellenic Chronicle
Editorial 3-17-83

An editorial appeared in a special 1924 Ahepa Supreme Convention magazine, edited by George Demeter. Demeter, second supreme president of Ahepa, included an editorial, the theme of which has significance even today.

George Demeter has passed away. His great contributions to Hellenism, to the Greek Orthodox Church, to Ahepa and to the various facets of life in the Greek community were myriad. We at The Hellenic Chronicle remember him most fondly as the first subscriber to our paper in 1950. Editor of the Hellenic World at the time of the start of the second World War, a role he relinquished to enter the US Army, he was empathetic to journalistic ventures and was always willing to support these endeavors.

He was, of course, much more. A lawyer and teacher of the law, he was recognized widely as an authority on parliamentarianism, and his book, "Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law," was recognized as a bible on the conduct of assemblies and meetings. He was also the first Greek-American elected to the Massachusetts State Legislature.

The following editorial, titled "Why Greek Organizations Fail?" is reprinted in recognition of our departed fellow journalist:

"The question still lingers in our mind 'Why Greek Organizations Fail?' At least one thousand Greek organizations have been started in this country and all of them disappeared after a short period of existence. At the present time there isn't a single local, state or national Greek organization — except The Ahepa — that really functions as an organization should. . . Now what are the real causes of the destruction of Greek organizations?

"Disobedience or insubordination is the principal and most frequent cause. The Greek does not disobey or violate the laws of any nation. This is true. He is inherently a law-abiding citizen. He does, however, disobey and violate most shamefully the laws, rules, and regulations of a small institution of government such as his local Greek business or social organization. In this respect he is glaringly insubordinate. He is independent and indifferent. The Greek will not understand the word subordinate. He will never acknowledge that it means 'submission to authority.' He will not carry out the instructions of his superior officers.

"It must not be understood from the foregoing paragraph that the Greek is insubordinate to the laws of his *American organizations*. The Masons, the Elks, the Knights of Pythias and other prominent brotherhoods acclaim the Greek as a most loyal and obedient member of their Order. He pays his annual dues promptly, he respects the decision of his officers implicitly and contributes to all his moral support towards the preservation and perpetuation of the principles of his American fraternity.

"All this the Greek does in his American Order. But he is an entirely different man when he finds himself in his own Greek organization. He fails to respond to any payments, he challenges his officers' judgment and humbles them, if he can, he kills worthy purposes and dislikes to have his organization become permanent. What is the reason for this sort of conduct? Jealousy! That's what wipes out the Greek organizations. Petty jealousy has buried innumerable worthy institutions.

"The Greek is not jealous of his Worshipful Master in Masonry, his Exalted Ruler in the Elks, or his President in the Ahepa Chapter. But he is jealous of the President of his local Greek club or society. If he can't be the President he won't have anyone else hold that position. . . He will have his idol. If it isn't the venerate King, it is the eminent Premier. This idolization is perpetual. . . The excessive attachment which the Greek has for his idol has been responsible for the downfall of hundreds of well-founded Greek organizations, including the Greek nation. . . He will even go so far as to disregard completely the ability, loyalty or fitness of his idol for the reward he seeks.

"Thank God that The Ahepa is an American institution and not a Greek organization! The Ahepans experience but few such dangers, for they will neither incite them or tolerate them." — George Demeter.