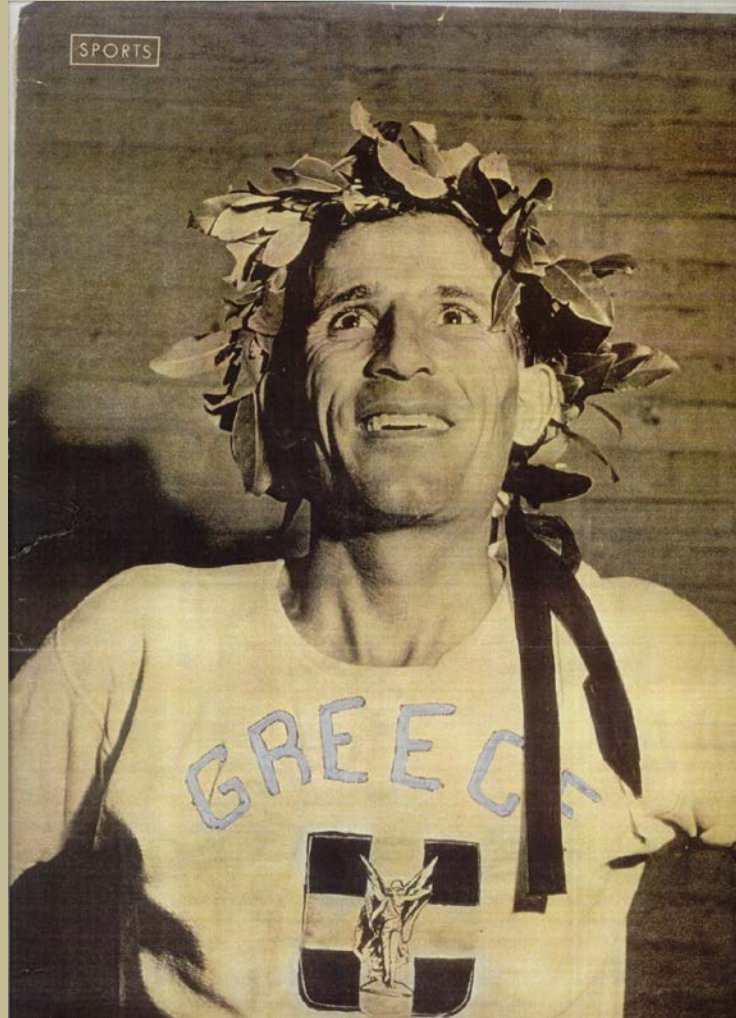
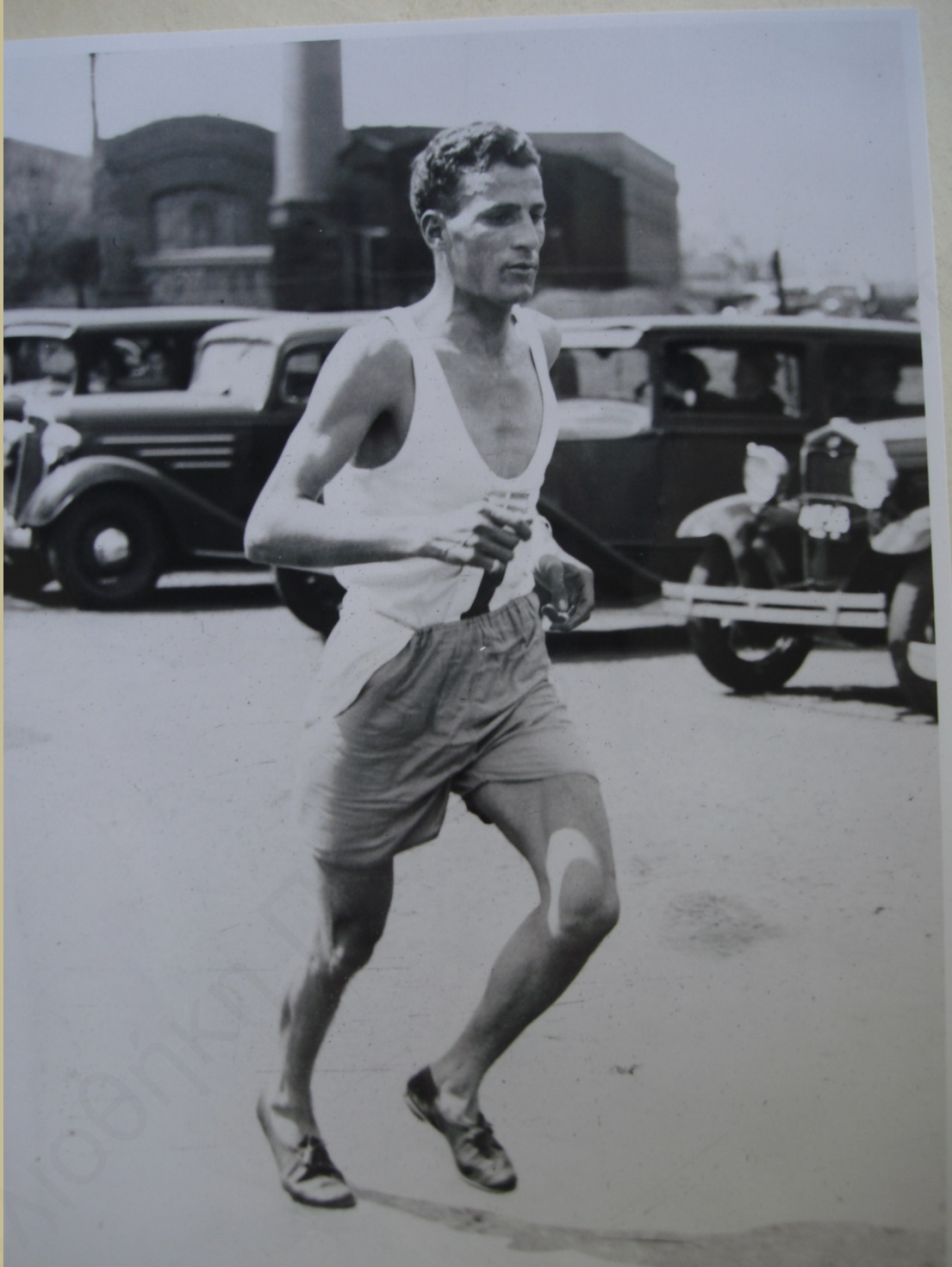


# STYLIANOS KYRIAKIDES



'RUNNING FOR THE HUMAN RACE'

By Dimitri Kyriakides



Boston 1938 - Stylianos Kyriakides in the leading group of runners. Running with new and unbroken shoes, without socks and unused to the hard cement surfaced roads in Boston, he develops severe blisters and has to drop out.

## Beginnings

Stylios Kyriakides was born in the mountain village of Statos, near Pafos, in Cyprus in 1910. The youngest of five children, he left home for the nearby city of Limassol at the age of 12, to find work and help his poor farming family. Following a variety of jobs he ended up as a 'house-boy' for Dr Cheverton, a British Medical Officer. An athlete himself, Cheverton encouraged the now 22-year old Kyriakides to start running, gave him his first running gear, coaching advice and taught him to speak English.

## The Runner

At his first Pan-Cyprian games in 1932, Kyriakides won both the 1,500 and 10,000 metres on the Friday, followed by both the 5,000 and 20,000 metres on the Sunday. Hailed as a great talent, he was asked to run in the national championships in Greece, where he came first in the marathon and second in the 10,000 metres.

He subsequently trained under the Hungarian Otto Simitchek, who had been brought to Greece in 1929 to revive the Greek national track and field team. Simitchek created the 'Greek Dream Team' of the 1930's and 1940's. Although Kyriakides was the youngest in the team, because of his serious approach and honest character, he was chosen by Simitchek to be the team captain.

At the Berlin Olympics in 1936, Kyriakides took the organizers an ancient warriors helmet, donated by Greece, for the marathon winner. However, the helmet mysteriously disappeared and was not awarded to the winner, the Korean Shon Kee-chung (who ran at the time for Japan). Many years later, Kyriakides found the helmet and, at a special ceremony in Germany in 1960, it was awarded to Kee-chung (the helmet is now displayed at the Olympic museum in Seoul).

In 1938 he goes by ship to the US to run the Boston Marathon, at the invitation of Johnny Kelly, who he met in Berlin, and is received by the Greek-American community. He drops out of the race because of blisters in his feet as a result of wearing a new and unbroken pair of shoes without socks. He promises Jerry Nason, the Boston Globe sports editor, that he will return and win.

The same year, he gets married with Fanuria. Sadly, the next year, at 3 months pregnant, she dies from tetanus infection. Kyriakides is devastated. But in 1942, he decides to remarry, this time to Ifigenia, who he will remain married to for the rest of his life and with whom he has three children (Eleni, Dimitri and Maria).

## War

In 1942, he and a group of other men are randomly arrested by German soldiers and is due to be executed by hanging, in reprisal for the death of one of their comrades. However, when the arresting German officer sees his Berlin Olympics ID card - which he always carries with him - he is released. All the other men are hung.

Between 1942 and 1944, Kyriakides is part of the Greek resistance, organized by Grigoris Lambrakis, his friend and co-athlete. During the German occupation they form a group called the "Association of Greek Athletes". His responsibility is to pass messages to the resistance groups in the north suburbs of Athens, and circulate news from the BBC, from the short-wave radio he keeps hidden at his house. The Germans don't search his house, because of who he is, and as a result he is able to hide allied pilots in his basement before they are transported to their forces in Egypt, via the nearby Greek fishing port of Rafina.

## Boston

In 1946, after the war, he decides to run the Boston Marathon again. In order to get there, he has to sell his furniture, enabling him to buy a single ticket. The remainder of the ticket money is provided by his employer, the British Electric Supply Company.

In Boston he runs for charity: for his country. Crossing the finish line in first place, he shouts "For Greece!". He begs America for its help - and it responds. When he returns to Greece, he goes with American aid (called the "Kyriakides Aid Package"), including \$250,000. Over one million Greeks from all over the country line the streets of Athens upon his return. He declines offers to stay in the US knowing he has to help the rebuilding of his dilapidated country. He sends a message to the Greek people, still in fighting a civil war, to forget their differences and unite for the good of the country.

In 1947, he returns to Boston again, this time running for a cause: to collect money and equipment for the Greek track and field team so they can attend the 1948 London Olympics. He returns with \$50,000 and clothing and equipment for the Greek team, enabling them to make it to the Olympics the following year.

Aided by the Kyriakides story and accompanying publicity, Greece in 1946/7 is the only country in Europe to receive an advance of \$400 million, allocated from the Marshall aid plan (a total of \$1.4 billion).

## **Community and Charity**

In 1950 Kyriakides becomes a member of the Greek Athletic Association technical committee and starts assisting in the renovation of Greek field and track teams. Because of his English, he is the contact of all foreign athletic teams visiting Greece, and leads the Greek teams when abroad.

In 1952 he starts organizing athletics for the young, beginning with in his own neighbourhood of Filothei. Between 1954-56, he helps build the Filothei running track and in 1956 starts the Filothei Athletic Track and Field Club. In 1972 the track becomes only the second stadium in Greece to have a 'tartan' surface fitted. Although small, under Kyriakides' guidance, the Filothei club breeds many Greek, Balkan and Mediterranean Champions.

From 1950 to 1980, as a member of the Greek Amateur association, Kyriakides is responsible for organizing both local and international marathons, which see many of the top runners of the time (from Finland, England, Romania, Turkey, Bulgaria, Hungary) come to run. Bekila Abebe, the 1960 and 1964 Olympic champions, runs the race bare footed in 1962, training at the Filothei club in advance to prepare for the race.

Over the next thirty years Kyriakides is a pillar of the local community, organizing the boy scouts in 1957, the girl guides in 1958 and many charity events to help collect money for the greater community. When he sees homeless children, he takes them home, feeds and clothes them, and helps find them places in the local schools. Although never rich, he spends what little he has on the local athletes, buying food and drinks during any championship events. He organizes fund raising dinner/dances, with lottery tickets, to raise money for the community. He uses his connections to help those who come to him in need to find work. His whole life, Kyriakides fights for justice for all, irrespective of background, gender or race.

## **Perseverance and Pioneer**

In 1935, Kyriakides becomes one of the first long distance runner to use a hand stop-watch to pace himself. The next significant long distance runner to do the same is in 1982.

He is among the first to buy books on stretching exercises and also food/ diets/ lifestyle, something unknown for long distance runners of the same era.

He is also one of the first runners to train via long distance correspondence, with his coach Otto Simitchek.

To go to Boston in 1946, Kyriakides had to overcome the difficulties of the years of German occupation of Greece and the subsequent civil war. Suffering from malnutrition and very thin, the doctor who examines him before the race refuses to allow him to run, eventually conceding only if Kyriakides is fully responsible for the decision.

### **Records, Awards and Recognition**

Kyriakides ran the best time in the world in 1946, also a European record. He held the Greek national record for over 36 years and 217 days, one of the longest ever according to the Guinness Book of marathon records.

In 1962, Kyriakides received the "Cross of the Golden Phoenix", the highest civilian award given by the Greek state, for his contribution to the country.

At the Museum of the Marathon (in Marathon) the biggest section is the Kyriakides exhibit, which contains not only his athletic medals, diplomas and victory cups, but also many of his personal items.

Five documentaries have been made of Kyriakides, including the Emmy award winning 2004 NBC documentary, "Stylianos Kyriakides, the journey of a worrier". Also included is the 1981 Freddy Germanos documentary, "Front Page", during which he is awarded a trophy "from 9,000,000 Greeks". The trophy is now in the Marathon museum.

Disney is currently making a full feature film about his 1946 epic.

His biography book, "Running with Pheidipides", was written and published in the US, and translated into Greek as "Born a winner".

As well as many exhibits about Kyriakides around the world, there are four sculptures in his memory: in Filothei; in the city of Marathon; at the 1 mile mark of the Boston course; and in his birth place in Cyprus.

The Filothei stadium that he built between 1954-56 (mainly with donations from fans) is now named after him.

In 1946, President Truman requested an audience with Kyriakides at the White House. Moved after hearing the story of the conditions in Greece, Truman went on to authorize special assistance for Greece called the "Kyriakides Aid Package", which consisted of 25,000 tons of grain, medicine, tinned food, clothing, tents, blankets and other items. He also received cows and bulls to take to Greece from the Governor of Massachusetts.

Kyriakides has been - and remains - an inspiration of many long distance runners, both experienced and also new. He was a believer in the Olympic ideals of clean amateur sport and fair play. Many Greek marathon runners attend the Boston Marathon to try and get closer to his spirit.

### **Final**

In Boston in 1946, Kyriakides was allocated the No.1 running bib, as an honor. Kyriakides asked instead for the number 77, which he said was a lucky number for the ancient Greeks. When he dies in 1987, he was 77 years old. His winning time in 1946 was 2h 29m 27s. So it's fair to say that the number '7' played a significant part in his life.

## Athletic achievements

**1932** Starts training for first time. At the Pan-Cyprian games, wins the 1,500, 5K, 10K and 20K.

**1932 – 1948** Greek champion 12 times: 5K (1934, 1936, 1937, 1938); 10K (1934, 1936, 1937, 1938); and marathon (1933, 1934, 1936, 1934). Best times: 5K, 15m 33s (1937); 10K, 32m 28s for the 10K (1936); marathon, 2h 29m 27s (1946)

**1934 – 1940** Balkan champion 10 times: 10K (1934, 1936); and marathon (1934, 1936, 1937 1939, second in 1933, 1938, 1939 and third in 1940).

**1934 – 1940** Marathon champion: Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria.

**1935 and 1937** Silver medalist in the marathon at the London AAA British championship (2h 40m 20s).

**1936** 11<sup>th</sup> place in the marathon at the Berlin Olympics (2h 43m 20s).

**1938** Boston marathon. While in the leading group, using his new and 'unbroken' shoes, and without socks, he develops severe blisters and he drops out in the 21<sup>st</sup> mile.

**1940 – 1945** WWII interrupts his carrier. He does not train or run at all.

**December 1945** Undernourished and extremely thin, he decides to start training to run the Boston marathon. Goes to Cyprus for better training conditions and corresponds with Simitchek.

**1946** Boston marathon. Takes the first air flight between Athens and New York. Wins in 2h 29m 27s, world best time and a European record. After 1946, Boston becomes a truly international marathon.

**1946** Oslo European games marathon. Drops out because of cramps.

**1947** Boston marathon, 10<sup>th</sup> place.

**1948** London Olympics, 17<sup>th</sup> place in the marathon (2h 49m 00s). A dramatic marathon. Most runners drop out because of excessive heat and humidity. 41 start, with only 30 finishing. The leader is passed by two runners after entering the stadium, because of dehydration.



**1949** After 16 years, five of which were interrupted by war, Kyriakides ends his athletic career at the age of 38.

**1951** Kyriakides joins the Greek Athletic Federation. From 1955 until 1981, he is responsible for organizing the Athens international marathon, which sees many great runners take part (including Abebe Bekila in 1961, Fin Veiko Karvonen in 1955, and Ron Hill and Bill Adcoks in 1969).

Βιβλιοθήκη Πανεπιστημίου Κύπρου

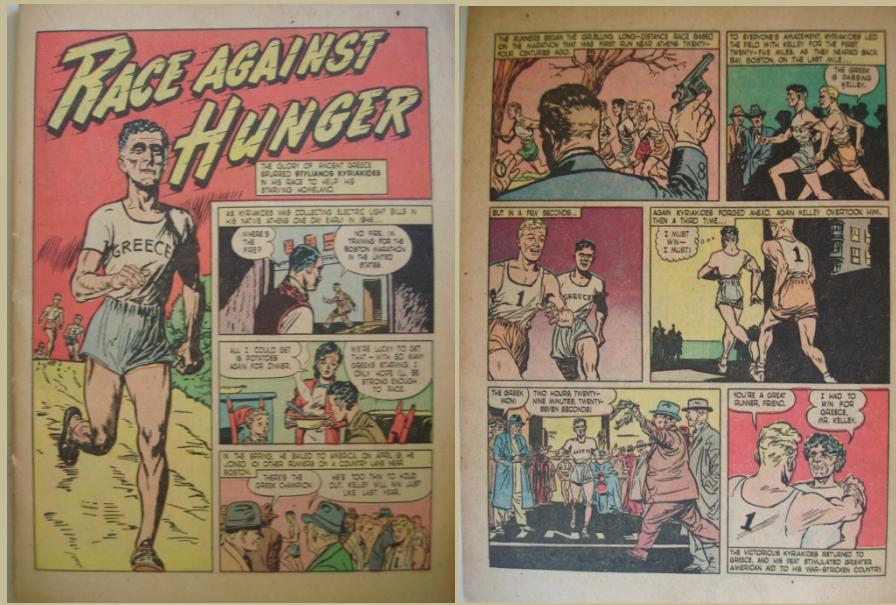


Olympics, ID cards (Berlin 1936 and London 1948).

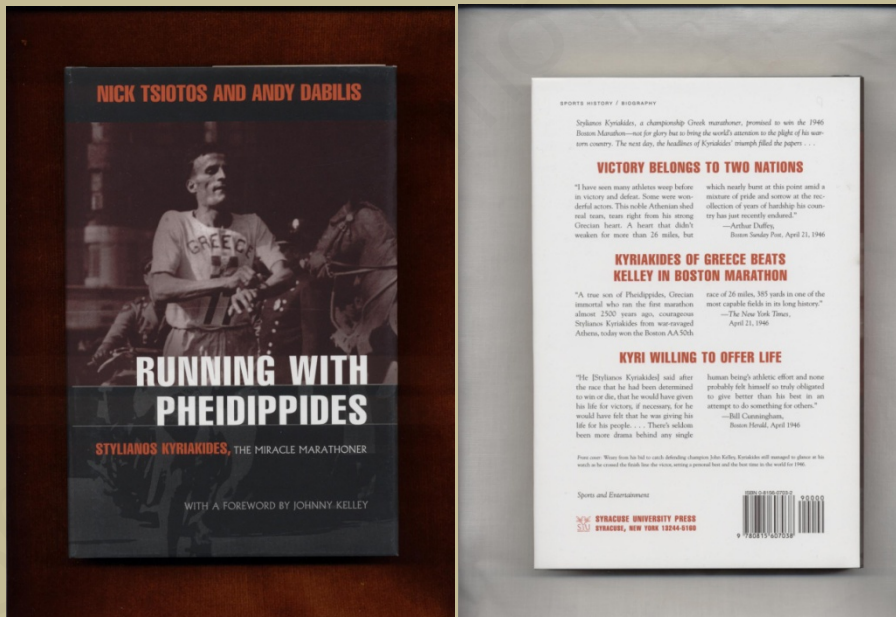


Some of Kyriakides' many trophies.

Boston 1946 bib and gold medal.



US comic book (1946)



Biography, published in the US in 2001 (translated into Greek, 2003).



Over half a million Greeks wait to welcome Kyriakides back in Athens (1946)



Balkan games, Zagreb 1934, winner in the marathon, with a new Greek national record.  
The wrist stop watch he was using from 1935 to check his pace.



One-metre high 'Winner's Cup', received from the Cyprus Brotherhood (Detroit, 1946).



Crossing the finish line in Boston 1946. Greek-American George Demeter (Massachusetts lawmaker) holds the laurel wreath.

Wearing bib 77, his time was 2h 29m 27s, the best time in the world that year and the European record. Kyriakides died at the age of 77 in 1987. So 7 was definitely the number dominating his life! Note the stop-watch on his wrist. Kyriakides was the first long distance runner to use wrist stop-watch to pace himself.

The NBC documentary "Stylianos Kyriakides, the journey of a warrior" won the (*NAME OF CATEGORY*) Emmy award in 2004.

Disney Films, is now producing a full-length film on the life story of Stylianos Kyriakides.



Statues of Kyriakides in Boston (with elite Kenyan runners) and in Filothei in Greece (where he lived for many years).





The Kyriakides statue in the city of Marathon (Greece) and in Statos (Cyprus), his birth place.



In 2006 Kyriakides was honored by the BAA (*what is this?*) in Boston.