

# AHEPA HONORS PROMINENT GREEK-AMERICANS AT ELLIS ISLAND

In a moving celebration of the Greek immigrant experience, more than 1,200 AHEPANs and friends gathered on Ellis Island on April 20 for the benefit of the AHEPA Charitable Foundation.

The "AHEPA Evening on Ellis Island" specifically honored several prominent and successful Greek Americans, but the evening also served to honor the courageous immigrants who came to America, and America itself.

Whether they were third generation Americans, carrying a few stories and memories from their *papoudes* and *yi-yies* in their hearts, or whether they were immigrants themselves, thousands of stories were exchanged and relived among those in attendance. And they were told and heard with awe and reverence.

For the entire evening, everyone was caught up in the emotional experience

of being in those courageous immigrants' footsteps.

The evening began as they stepped off the specially chartered boats from Manhattan's Battery Park to the "Isle of Tears, the Isle of Joy." In the large Baggage Room, prior to an awards ceremony, the AHEPANs and their friends were greeted with the sounds of Greek period music that the immigrants had brought with them.

The ceremonies were opened with an invocation by Bishop Isaiah, the Chancellor of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, and the hall was then filled with 1,200 voices singing "Christos Anesti," the Hymn of the Resurrection.

Sevy Phalangas, a 28-year-old Greek American composer and performer sang the national anthems of the U.S., Canada, and Greece. Ms. Phalangas

then sang "Elpida", a song commissioned by AHEPA for the event, which she had composed.

Speakers included AHEPA Supreme President James S. Scofield; Past AHEPA Supreme President, and General Chairman of the AHEPA Evening on Ellis Island, Nick Smyrnis; and AHEPA Executive Director Constantine W. Gekas.

Smyrnis noted that the original Ellis Island complex had cost \$1.5 million to build in the late nineteenth century, but cost \$80 million to restore. He also read a greeting from the evenings' honorary chairman, Angelo Tsakopoulos.

Although everyone in attendance was in a sense an honoree, several particularly outstanding Greek Americans were awarded the "AHEPA Ellis Island Award of Distinction" for their achievements.

In presenting the awards, Supreme



*AHEPA Supreme President James S. Scofield and AHEPA Board of Directors Chairman Phillip T. Frangos with some of the winners of the AHEPA Ellis Island Award of Distinction. From left: Steve Stavro, John Kapioltas, George Christopher, Scofield, George Vournas, Tom Korologos, Frangos, George Canellos and Charalambos A. Zarakiotis. (Photo: Christina Margeotes for AHEPA).*

President Scofield said that the honorees had “kept the faith” of the immigrants, who struggled towards America and the American Dream.

He added: “Our honorees represent

the fusion of the greatness of the Hellenic spirit with the promise and opportunity of our sister North American nations.”

The honorees who received the spe-

cially commissioned AHEPA Ellis Island Award of Distinction were:

**Lt. Gen. Pagonis**, whose father immigrated through Ellis Island from Chios in 1917, recently received his third star in a field promotion for his much lauded work as logistics head for Central Command in the Desert Shield and Desert Storm operations.

Pagonis, who had no West Point background nor family in the military, has worked his way through the ranks, including combat duty in Vietnam and the Persian Gulf, to become one of the highest ranking Greek Americans in the U.S. Military.

Former three-term Massachusetts Governor and 1988 Democratic candidate for the presidency of the U.S., **Michael S. Dukakis**.

Dukakis, the most prominent Greek American politician in the U.S., proudly credited his immigrant roots throughout his political life and most notably during his recent candidacy for the presidency.

Honoree **Andrew A. Athens**, a 27-year member of AHEPA, is President and CEO of the Chicago-based Metron Steel Corporation which he founded in 1958.

Athens is prominent in the Greek Orthodox Church. He is an Archon of the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. He also holds the office of President of the Archdiocese of North and South America Archdiocesan Council. He is also National Chairman of the United Hellenic American Congress (UHAC).

Noted Oncologist **Dr. George Peter Canellos** is Deputy Physician-in-chief and Chief of the Division of clinical Oncology at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. He is also the William Rosenberg Professor of Medicine at Harvard University Medical School.

**George Christopher** was Mayor of San Francisco for two terms from 1956-64. He recalled being carried through Ellis Island at age two in his mother's arms.

**John Kapioltas**, prominent hotelier, businessman and community leader, was born in Akron, Ohio, to Greek immigrant parents. As Chairman, President and CEO of the Boston-based ITT Sheraton Corp., Kapioltas has brought worldwide recognition to the global hotel company which comprises nearly 500 hotels, inns and resorts in operation or in development in 67 countries. Kapi-

# ELPIDA

AHEPA/Ellis Island Commission Song  
Music and Lyrics: SEVY PHALANGAS

They're running to a haven,  
With a history of slaves.  
They're running to a haven,  
That has pushed her natives  
To their graves.

And they must fear  
That they'll encounter more resistance,  
Like in the homes they're running from.  
But in a pocket full of crumbs  
They guard persistence.  
They want to come.  
They want to come.

—To Refrain—

They're running to a haven,  
That has nursed a world of dreams.  
They're running to a haven,  
Where her needy cry  
Her angry scream.

And they must fear  
Their fate amid the contradictions,  
What is this place they're running to?  
But Grandma wove their humble threads  
With strong convictions.  
They'll make it through.  
They'll make it through.

—To Refrain

REFRAIN      ELPIDA, ELPIDA  
                  ELPIDA, ELPIDA  
                  Where there's hope,  
                  There's still a chance for answers.  
                  Where there's hope,  
                  There's will to bear the strife.

ELPIDA, ELPIDA  
ELPIDA, ELPIDA  
Where there's hope,  
There's still a chance for answers.  
Where there's hope,  
There's still meaning to life.

Bridge—

**Sevy Revised Bridge.** They love her—Despite all her imperfections,  
**It is now "Hope" in** They love her—'Cause she dares to say what's true.  
**many languages as** They run to her—'Cause she fights for their protection  
**represented in the** They run to her—To build upon the haven too.  
**recording.**





*New York-based singer/composer Sevy Phalangas electrified the audience with her renditions of the U.S., Canadian and Greek national anthems. She also sang "Elpida", a song she composed for the AHEPA Evening on Ellis Island. (Photo: Christina Margeotes for AHEPA).*

oltas is an Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and received the 1988 Aristotelian award from AHEPA.

**Tom C. Korologos** is President of the Washington-based consulting firm of Timmons and Co. Before helping to found Timmons, Korologos spent four years in the White House as Deputy Assistant to the President for Senate Relations under Presidents Nixon and Ford. Korologos is very active in the Greek American community. He is a member of AHEPA and an Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

**John G. Rangos** is President and CEO of the Pittsburgh-based Chambers Development Co., the fourth largest environmental services firm in the U.S. Chambers has operations in 21 states, and has compiled an outstanding record of service, environmental protection and cost effectiveness.

In 1988 Rangos was elected an Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for his support of the Greek Orthodox Church. He has also been cited for his tireless efforts on behalf of the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.

**Steve Stavro** is President and founder of Canada's largest independently owned food chain, Knob Hills Farms, Ltd. Born in Greece, Stavro and his family joined their father in Canada in 1934. Stavro began his career in his father's food store. He started his own business with open-air markets and supermarkets in the 1950's. In 1986, he opened the world's largest food market. Stavro is also recognized in Ontario and Toronto as a generous humanitarian,

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**George C. Vournas** was Supreme President of AHEPA during World War II. Under his leadership, the AHEPA raised over \$500 million in War Bonds, an unprecedented and still unsurpassed service of an ethnic organization to the U.S. Vournas was also a Captain in the U.S. Army Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during the war. He served in Cairo and recruited many AHEPANS and members of the AHEPA's young mens auxiliary, the Sons of Pericles, into the OSS. He immigrated to the U.S. through Ellis Island in 1914.

Actress **Betty White** is currently starring in the top-rated television sitcom, "The Golden Girls."

The four-time Emmy Award winner has worked in television since the late 1940's and was a co-star on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." She has also

worked extensively on the stage, often starring with her late husband, Allen Ludden. White has tirelessly crusaded for animal welfare and has devoted her time, energy and money to such organizations as the Fund for Animals and the American Humane Association.

**George D. Zamias** is a Pennsylvania-based real estate developer and is a first generation Greek American. Zamias began his fulfillment of the American Dream working in his parents' hot cleaning and shoe-shine business. In 1961 he established his first real estate company and now heads George D. Zamias Developer, ranked 11th among the nation's top shopping center owners.

**Charalambos A. Zarakiotis**, a US citizen born in Greece, is President and CEO of the Atlantic Bank of New York. Zarakiotis has almost thirty years' experience in banking with the National

Bank in Greece and its subsidiaries and affiliates.

Former San Francisco Mayor George Christopher, who was carried across Ellis Island at the age of two by his mother, spoke on behalf of the other honorees. In a moving speech, he called the evening "AHEPA's finest hour."

Looking out on the audience of Greek Americans, one of the most successful ethnic group in America, Christopher noted their humble origins. Where were, "the starry-eyed young men who came here long ago... the peanut vendors, the push cart vendors, the ditch diggers, the menial task workers and those who built the railroads..." he asked.

"They are here — in every seat in this great hall," Christopher said. "The bootblacks, the ditch-diggers and the pushcart peddlers" had become attorneys, medical doctors, engineers, professors and executives in business in what Christopher called "a great transformation."

Christopher also urged the audience to, "in the Athenian tradition, transmit our country even better than it was transmitted to us."

He also said that now that the Greek Americans "have achieved this stature", that they "have every right to speak out for Cyprus" and to "differ with our president."

After the awards, those who contributed to the Ellis Island Wall of Honor through AHEPA were presented with a medallion specially commissioned and struck for the event. All those in attendance also received a commemorative flashlight.

A buffet dinner followed in the Registry Room and the crowd then toured the museum. Despite threats of rain, the weather held up and those who had placed names on the Wall of Honor encircling the Island were able to locate those they had honored.

From its opening in 1892, over 17 million of Europe's poorest immigrants passed through the halls of Ellis Island. They and their descendants account for over half of all living Americans.

After immigration laws were tightened in the 1920's immigration through the Island tapered off and in 1954 the facility was completely closed. For 30 years this symbol of diversity, tolerance and courage decayed.

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