

I would like to thank His Excellency, the Governor, Dr Ken Michael and Dr Norman Ashton for their very kind words about the works of *Australian Friends of Kastellorizo*, particularly the book, *Kastellorizo: My Odyssey*. As the writers of this book Andrew and I are honoured, along with the artist, translators, proofreaders, designer, printer and sponsors who helped to make this happen. This book is about passing on the story to children and teenagers so they understand themselves and where they have come from, and that is what this is really all about. The first bi-lingual book for young people about this subject!

So, where did this idea come from? The local women from Kastellorizo. When George Theo Kailis asked the women how they would like AFK to assist, he was told that “our children do not know the history of the island.” And there the idea was born. George has children who are 3rd and 4th generation, similarly with Nick Mitaros, who is another Director of this organisation. Their children, like many of you here today may not know the history either. Therefore, this book serves the purpose of passing on the cultural knowledge for all Australian children and teenagers whose origins are from Kastellorizo, as well as children born on the island. I would like to acknowledge George & Nick for their vision and ability to significantly contribute to many educational and cultural projects.

When the idea of the book was first proposed by Nick and George, you can very well imagine that as an English teacher I became very excited. In fact, I remember the day after effect at school. It just so happened that the Director from the Fremantle Children’s Literature Centre , Lesley Reece, was visiting MLC to conduct literature workshops. I talked to Lesley about this idea and asked if she knew an artist and writer who may be interested. After listening to me, she could hear the passion in my voice and she said ‘it sounds as if you should write it’. Lesley is here today and I thank her for her encouragement. Where did this passion come from? My family of course and I thank them for all the wonderful storytelling I grew up with.

The project was to begin. I had to research the history of the island and I would like to thank Dr Norman Ashton and Nick Pappas as they gave me permission to use their historical works. There are a lot of myths about the island and if this book was to be an accurate record to leave our children, then I had to use reliable sources. Once I completed the research I then had to think of a way of making it interesting for the children to want to read it.

I thought that the storytelling voice should be the land itself, because it is the land that has been present from the ancient to the modern. In a sense the land is a character. I think it works well as it personalises it for children. After the first draft, I realised that the story was pitched more at teenagers and it was then that I asked Andrew Johnstone to become involved. He has co-written with Libby Hathorn, an Australian children’s author. When I sent him the draft, he liked it and he had an idea about using the odyssey as a structural framework and it worked. I would like to thank Andrew for his tireless efforts. Technology enabled us to communicate from opposite sides of the continent as we spent many hours talking about the appropriateness of the words, the lyricism and rhythm to make it interesting for children. It has been a pleasure working with him.

And now for the art work. AFK commissioned an Athenian artist, Dr Platon Alexiou to paint images that would be included in the book. In July 2008, Platon and I walked all over the island and we felt an empathy with the goats trekking the tracks. Dr Platon Alexiou is also a Professor of History at the University of Athens. The advantage of having a Greek artist and historian was that he understood the different historical periods. Platon would say this is 5th Century BC or this is the Byzantine Period

or Hellenistic. He took photos of the sites that I wanted in the book and then he painted them in his studio. Many of you here today were at this very location for the art exhibition in May 2009. There are some on display today. We thank him in his absence. The visuals in the book will certainly appeal to readers and add to the way children will engage with the book.

After the writing and proofreading process was completed, we needed to send it to the translator. We were looking for a translation that suited the poetic style of the narrative and Yannis Doulgaroglou's translation is perfect for our book. Our thanks to Yannis. It was important to find someone living in this part of Greece to capture the nuances of language that is typical today. Pavlos Iosifides from St Andrews Grammar also assisted with proofreading the Greek translation. He is here today and I would like to thank him.

So we have the words, the pictures, and the translation – now all we needed was the design and printing of the book, as well as the money to pay for it. Daniel's Printing in Osborne Park was recommended to me by Arthur Spartalis. When you see the design of the book you will love the way in which the designer, Pam Whitfield has brought it all together in such a creative way. I particularly like the little boat that is a motif that runs through the book and symbolises the journey. Thank you for doing a superb job Pam. I also would like to thank Tim Northern, the Accounts Manager for his patience and understanding throughout this process. You have been wonderful.

Once it was all put together I wondered how well it would work with children from particular age groups. That's when I approached Dr Angela Evangelinou-Yiannakis, who was Deputy and now Acting Principal from St Andrews to conduct a workshop with a sample of students from Years 3, 5, 7, 9 & 10. It worked and I can remember Craig D'Cruz who was Principal then telling me that students were talking about it all afternoon. Ah... I thought...job complete.

But not quite. We needed sponsorship for the printing of the book. And it is with great appreciation that AFK would like to thank the Kailis family and their spouses in order of seniority, Peter & Bianca Kailis, the late Theo Kailis & his wife Irene, Mary & Spiro Halikis, Michael & Sophie Kailis, Katrina & Arthur Ventouras and Victor & Jan Kailis for their very generous donation to complete the project.

So you can see it has been quite an involved process.

I hope you enjoy reading the book. As our storytellers become fewer and fewer over time, this book becomes even more significant because who will be left to tell the story. It is enduring and hopefully, it will leave a cultural imprint for future generations.

And now before I hand you over to Andrew, I would like to thank the following people for today's launch. Firstly, Jim Manifis and his committee for providing the Castellorizian House. AFK appreciates your support. Also to many women – friends and family who have kindly brought along food for the occasion. Wines from De Bertoli – thank you to Manny Loucas. Finally all the helpers today, too many to mention. But there is one very special man I have to thank and that is my husband, Steve Maccora for his wonderful support and who is always there to help me when I need him. Thank you... and now to Andrew.