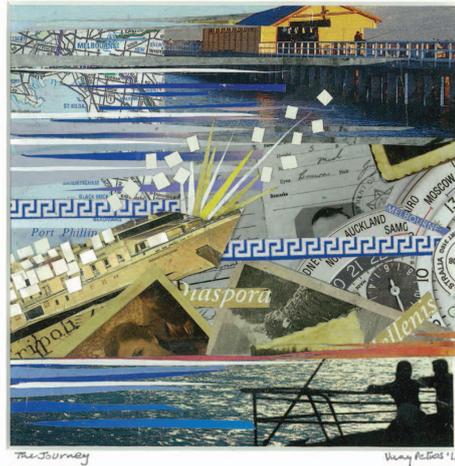




Homeland 1.

Vasy Petros '13



The Journey

Vasy Petros '13



The Legacy

Vasy Petros '13



Homeland 2.

Vasy Petros '13

The Odyssey: Paper collage, by Vasy Petros, 2014

1. Homeland 1,
2. The Journey,
3. The Legacy
4. Homeland 2.

The artist exhibited this work with the following text:
Time and place change.

From the known to the unknown the Diaspora scatter.

This four-part collage depicts the modern day odyssey.

A migrant's soul-searching journey, questioning what and where is home.

Finally, establishing and accepting a new existence.

Inspired by the poem *Ithaca Now* by Anastasia Gessa-Liveriadis.

Ithaca Now

Look how boundless Ithaca has become!
 It overgrew the rocks from which it sprang,
 it oozed over the oceans and plains
 and stretched over the earth's entire span!

It built a new abode in every place.
 It lit the hearth in many a new home
 and in her loom sweet Penelope is weaving
 fabric to cloak the children of the world!

Odysseus, your island today has no bounds
 in a world that rapidly is getting very small.
 My homesick hero, cast your eyes around
 and in your soul embrace the world!

Anastasia Gessa-Liveriadis



Celebrating Diversity (Cont.)

by Connie Gregory, Melbourne

When the Greek-Australian Cultural League (GACL), Melbourne, (www.gacl.com.au) was invited by Multicultural Arts Victoria to participate in a festival, and a concurrent exhibition of artefacts, to honour immigrants who arrived in Melbourne by boat at the historical entry points of Princes and Station Piers in Port Melbourne, we immediately knew that the artwork *The Odyssey*, by Vasy Petros should be included, and that Anastasia Gessa-Liveriadis should read her poem, among others, at the story-telling segment. The artwork and the poem speak volumes. As a member of the League, I worked on the events with its President, Cathy Alexopoulos.

The 4th Piers Festival was held on Sunday 25th January 2015 (over the Australia Day weekend) at the Port Melbourne Piers Precinct, and celebrated the pivotal role it played from 1915 to 1969 in Victoria's growth and as a gateway to the diversity of cultures that enrich our community. The festival featured a wide range of music, dance, food, forums and historical exhibitions that celebrated and reflected on the collective migration stories at this significant entry point.

The GACL stand at the festival focused mainly on Greek-Australian literature, as the aims of the League are the advancement, support and dissemination of the creative endeavours of Greek-Australian writers and artists whose work primarily reflects the confluence of the Greek and Australian cultures, and contributes to the enrichment of Literature, the Visual Arts and the Performing Arts. We also had some beautiful posters, a commissioned short film of an original song by Anthea Sidiropoulos, and, to add a bit of life, set up a Tavli table and some activities for children.

You might wonder what all this has to do with Kastellorizo. Read on.

My mother and my father both came to Melbourne through Port Melbourne. My mother, aged two, and my maternal grandparents arrived, from Kastellorizo, on the VALDIERI in 1923, and my father and uncle arrived from Crete, aged thirteen on the CEPHEE in 1926, – they would not see their mother again until 1956. So, I was more than happy to coordinate the GACL stand at the festival and to work towards putting together artefacts for the exhibition running as part of the Festival, entitled 'What Happened at the Pier' which ran from December until February, curated by Lella Cariddi.

The exhibition of objects explored the human tendency to keep family memories alive through iconic objects. I chose, of course, to include my own objects from Kastellorizo and Crete, along with a few other contributions. As a "Memory Keeper" it was a reflective journey, as each object needed a story.

Guidelines for submitting objects included questions such as: "What were the social, political and economic circumstances that made you/your family decide to leave home and all that was known to you, to migrate to Australia and confront the unknown?"; "What and who did you leave behind?"; "What happened during your journey to Australia?"; "What objects could you not leave behind and brought with you?". Objects and documentation came from first, second and third generations from diverse cultural backgrounds.

From Crete I submitted three family pieces of handiwork and a poster about the two young boys from Crete – my father and my uncle. I had at my disposal an interview I had done with my father years ago and as I reduced the story to its essence and sorted out

photographs, I became quite emotional. It was a labour of love. How easy we live now compared to then! This is a quote I used on a poster about them: "We felt that it was an adventure. The heartache of missing our parents came later."

For objects brought to Australia from Kastellorizo I submitted a boucla, a traditional scarf, a talisman, a very old icon of Archangel Michael Panormitis (patron saint of sailors of the Dodecanese islands), a copper lustre jug, a silver spoon, and my Grandfather's massive brass, copper, and iron pot. He was the pastry cook and confectioner for a few years on Kastellorizo and he used that pot to make Loukoum (Turkish Delight). Each object had a detailed story of its provenance displayed. Nick Pappas' story of migration from Kastellorizo (featured in *Filia*), and the *National Geographic* publication featuring Kastellorizo were also displayed. Items under the GACL umbrella had their own showcase. In addition, a poster on Kastellorizo was produced in honour of my grandparents, which evoked many comments, particularly on the costumes that so many women brought to Australia with little opportunity to wear them.

Florence Livery, archivist for the Kastellorizian Association of Victoria, visited the exhibition to find that the Emerald Hill Heritage Centre was particularly interested in the Kastellorizian exhibits and history, and there may be an opportunity down the track for an exhibition at the Centre focusing on Kastellorizo.

What better way to honour our ancestors than to record their stories and pass them on, and to also document objects that have been handed down. The Castellorizian Association of Western Australia is to be commended for its work in recording objects, and has set up a virtual museum – www.castellorizo.org/museum – well worth a visit. Kastellorizians are very proud of their heritage, and the Kastellorizian associations throughout Australia are actively engaged in preserving that heritage.

As a "Memory Keeper" participating in the Piers Festival and associated exhibition, it was very good for my soul. I know that I am not alone in this pursuit as many Kastellorizians are active in recording their family history. May you find the journey rewarding.

The Piers Festival, with so many different cultural groups participating, was a celebration of diversity, but at the story-telling section diversity receded and the commonality of emotional responses to circumstances of settling in Australia came to the fore, as stories were shared of separation, longing for one's original homeland, alienation, resilience, arriving and surviving, and prospering. It became very clear that there are more similarities than differences in our Australian multicultural community. We are all part of the tapestry of the human condition.

To end on a lighter note, we collected many quotes for a poster entitled "Words from the Water" – (some of them heart-wrenching), but Alfred Kouris injected some humour with this quote:

We arrived in Melbourne on 14th March 1956. We were very moved to see thousands of other Greeks waiting for us on the dockside. They were throwing Australian chocolates and shouting "Welcome!" They were so happy to see us that we immediately felt safe. "Great!" we thought, "with so many Greeks here, we'll survive. We won't get eaten by the crocodiles and the sharks everyone told us Australia is full of".

Stories from my boyhood

By Charles W. Stewart, Aberdeen, Scotland

I would like to share with you a vivid story from my boyhood in which my father told me about his experiences during the Second World War. This was when I was about seven or eight years old, back in the 1960's.

I had always thought that his story was about his time in Crete in 1941, but it turns out, the events he was describing actually took place on Kastellorizo.

He told me about his taking part in a secret commando mission. About landing on a Greek island, and about the battles to capture it and becoming a Prisoner of War. I was fascinated mostly by the description of the battle he fought just before being captured. He described the terrain he was fighting in as being rough, with stony hillsides and a number of low walls running through it.

I remember him describing how one night, he was leading his section across an area of ground near the clifftops, listening and looking for any signs of enemy activity. His section was hidden behind one of these stone walls, when they heard some voices approaching. Dad's section was only lightly armed with rifles, a few 'Tommy' guns and their famous Middle East Commando knife. This incorporated a dagger blade with a heavy knuckleduster in the handle. (The commandos called these knives 'fannys', and it was the emblem on the 50 Commando's cap badge).

An enemy section was approaching the same wall where my father's section was. Perhaps they would move on without seeing the commandos?

It was not to be, as a soldier stepped through a gap in the wall and the commandos sprang into action. There was fierce hand to hand fighting, much shouting and the noise of gunfire. The Italian troops and the commandos were locked in a deadly battle for survival.

This was 'Boy's Own' stuff. In my mind's eye I could picture the scene, just like the war comics I used to buy with my pocket money in the 1960's.

On the high ground, the Italians had mounted a machine gun post. When they heard the noise below and saw the fighting between their comrades and the commandos, they opened fire.

The machine gun fire was heavy and accurate, taking casualties, and it became clear to my Dad that there was no escape. He and the remaining commandos surrendered and were taken prisoner. The following day they were taken by seaplane along with some Kastellorizan menfolk to Rhodes. The Kastellorizans never returned.

Thereafter, my father found himself in a Prisoner of War camp in Sulmona, Italy. (Campo PG 78). Between 1941 and 1943 he attempted to escape on three occasions. In September 1943, following the Italian armistice with the Allies, Bill Stewart walked out of the camp with one of his comrades. He subsequently got back to Britain, and was awarded a Mention in Dispatches for gallantry for his efforts to escape.

For me, these stories of my father's actions during the war were enthralling. For me, these are vivid childhood memories. Sadly though, Bill Stewart passed away in 1983.

Little did I think that later in my life, I would actually visit the spot where he was captured on a remote island somewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean!

A few years ago, I resolved to find out more about the history and facts surrounding my father's stories. I started to research into the background. I found out that 50 Commando (Middle East) was one of the first commando units formed on instructions from Winston Churchill, after the events of Dunkirk in 1940.

I started my research by obtaining my father's war service record. I went on to obtain the official wartime Admiralty Report of the Kastellorizo mission from the National Archives in London. The commandos mission was code-named Operation Abstention. Thereafter, I found a book titled, 'The Middle East Commandos', by Charles Messenger, which described the action in more detail. Having read this book, my Dad's war records and the Admiralty Report, I resolved to visit the island.

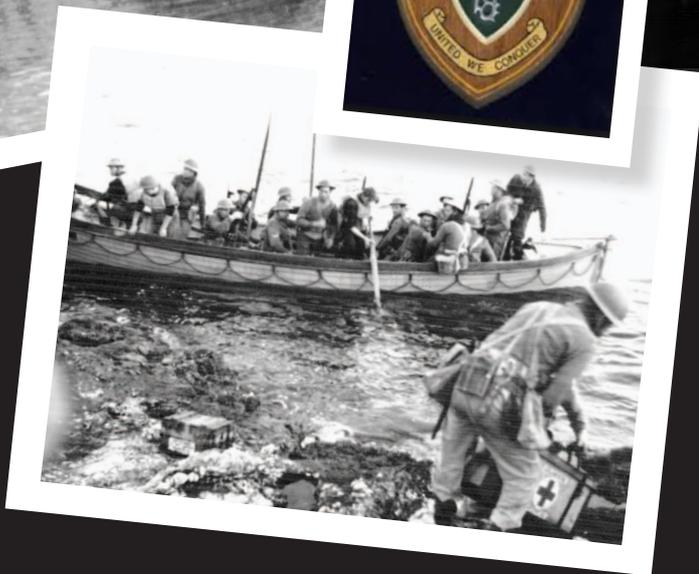
In October 2014, my wife Karen and I boarded a plane from Rhodes and flew to Kastellorizo.

On Kastellorizo, we stayed at the Megisti Hotel. We arrived by taxi at the quayside and then we proceeded to bump our bags along the cobbles towards the hotel. The sun was shining and I couldn't quite believe that we had arrived! What a beautiful view with all the coloured houses and the impressive mosque at the harbour front.

We spent the rest of the day just walking around the harbour, having a few drinks and then tired out, we headed back to our hotel and slept really well.

The next day, we went to explore around the customs house and the old Delegazione building and square beside the mosque. This building had been the main target of the commando raid. I knew that after landing at Niftis Point, the commandos had made their way into the town. We looked at the former Delegazione building





which had been shelled when the Italians had returned to recapture the island. We were fascinated that the Delegazione had been almost completely destroyed, whilst the Customs House opposite and the mosque were relatively untouched by the battles.

We then took the path from the square around the buildings which are built into the bedrock and climbed up to the Venetian Castle.

I remember my father talking about the castle and describing the cliffs above the harbour looking towards Mount Vigla near where he was captured.

From the castle we looked across over Mandraki and towards the cemetery and Niftis Point. The cemetery had been the site of fierce fighting when the commandos had been withdrawing following the Italians recapture of the island. We decided that we would walk out that way the next day, but as it was already past the middle of the day, lunch was on our minds!

We walked down from the castle, through the winding pathways, admiring the many picturesque buildings and quaint doorways. We arrived back down at the harbour and thought about where to have lunch. Just as we were choosing our seats, there was a crack of thunder and the rain began to pour down. We ducked inside, but the tables were pretty full.

The place was full of Aussies! I was about to go further inside, when Karen called me back. However, some of the Aussies had overheard her, they called out 'Charles, over here!', and we were invited to sit with them. Little did we know that this would lead to some wonderful moments for our stay at Kastellorizo.

As it happened we sat down amongst others, with Nick Bogiatzis and his wife Vasiliki. They asked us how we had found out about the island, and we told them we had a story to tell, and so we did.

After recounting my father's exploits, Nick told us more about the recent history of the island and the appalling events which took place after the British had arrived in 1943. Nick described the fire which almost destroyed the town in July 1944. How the island had been looted and neglected by the troops garrisoned there, and the events surrounding the sudden and forced evacuation of the island's population to Cyprus and Palestine. We also spoke about the memorial we had seen commemorating the devastating loss of islander's lives in 1945 from the sinking of the SS 'Empire Patrol' when they were returning home from exile in Palestine. It really made us both see the island with very different eyes.

After lunch, Nick and Vasiliki invited us to their home and we spent the rest of the day exchanging our family stories and talking about the history of the island. Nick told us about how hard they had fought to re-assert their ownership of their family's house and to restore it to its former glory.

It was amazing to see some of the original wooden features and masonry which had been restored over many years of hard work in their home. It was truly a tribute them to have worked so hard to make their house so beautiful again. It really showed us how much damage had been caused to the housing on the island during the war. However, it was also great for us to see that more and more houses are now being brought back to life. It was heartening to look at all the new work which is on-going by many expats to restore their family homes.

Nick also showed us the book he co-wrote entitled 'An Island in Time' which describes the recent history of Kastellorizo in pictures. It was entrancing! Karen and I spent several happy hours with Nick and Vasiliki, and we enjoyed a lovely afternoon with them. Nick mentioned our hotel had a copy of the book, which I asked to look at when I got back. We spent many more hours looking at the photos and reading the stories, both happy and sad. We both felt that we



had discovered the true Kastellorizo in those hours of reading and spending time with Nick and Vasiliki.

We spent the next two days wandering happily amongst the streets and alleyways and taking a poignant walk out to Niiftis Point via the cemetery, to walk in the footsteps of the commandos.

I was eager to climb the steps to the top of the cliffs to see if I could picture where my father's last battle had taken place. I chose to go up on our last afternoon on the island, just as the sun was beginning to set. I set out with a bottle of water and began climbing the steps.

It was a wonderfully clear afternoon and the heat of the day was abating. The view from the top of the cliffs was spectacular. I looked towards the Paleocastro and Mount Vigla, and over to the left I couldn't believe what I could see. In front of me, was a wide enclosure of low, dry stone walls. The enclosure sat directly under the view of Mount Vigla, where today there is a Hellenic Army observation post.

Could this be the very site of the battle and his capture which my father had described?

It seemed possible. I walked along the path and I could see how the walls sat in the dip below the mountain. I started to imagine how my dad's patrol had probably come forward from the direction of where the airport now lies. This was where a lot of the commandos had been located latterly, waiting to be taken off by the Royal Navy from the South of the island. By 27th February 1941, the Italians had landed hundreds of troops who had recaptured the island and they had made their way up to the hilltops sending out their own patrols to probe the British positions.

I was sure this was the place! It seemed so peaceful now. The sun was just setting behind Mt. Vigla. It was eerily quiet, and I relived my father telling his war stories to me when I was a wee boy. I couldn't quite believe where I was standing! Perhaps I was actually at the very spot where seventy three years previously, my father had stood, fighting for his life. It was a humbling moment for me and a privilege to be there.

I went quietly back down the steps. Thinking so many different thoughts, but looking down at Kastellorizo thinking how peaceful it now was. I could not help noticing how the scars of those dark days were still visible in Horafia on the hillside above the harbour. I walked down to the waterfront and sat down to have one of the best cold beers I could remember!

But there is a final instalment to our amazing visit to Kastellorizo. I had prepared a tribute to my father in the form of a framed set of pictures and some words telling my Dad's story from the past. I had noticed that the Megisti hotel had a display cabinet in their lobby, and I wondered if they would be kind enough to display my tribute. I spoke with our host Roslyn Geronikolas, who said she would be happy to. Roslyn also said that her husband, Manolis Geronikolas, had been a little boy in 1941 and he remembered the day the commandos arrived. We agreed to meet up with him at breakfast the next day to find out more before we left to go home in the afternoon.

It turned out that in 1941, the four year old Manolis and his family lived in the house where the bank is now situated. In the early morning of 25th February 1941, Manolis was awakened by the sound of gunfire and explosions. He told us how he recalled being ushered out of the house by Italian soldiers with his mother and baby sister on a stretcher. His mother had just given birth to his sister the day before!

They were taken to safety away from the harbour side where much of the fighting took place. Manolis told us that one of the Italian soldiers who had helped carry his Mum to safety, was shot and killed whilst he had been making his way back to his position down at the harbour. A tragic loss, and it was very sad to hear about the other side of the battle in which my Dad and his unit had been involved in.

It illustrates how tragic war is, and made me reflect upon how much the people of Kastellorizo had suffered throughout the war and for many years afterwards.

However, enough of the past. Look how much Kastellorizo is changing!

During our brief stay, we believed we could feel the real joy, pride and happiness amongst the people there. The good food, the excellent wine, and meeting new friends was very special for us. Everyone who talked to us was so friendly. When we recounted the story about my Dad, everyone showed a genuine interest about the background to our visit and they made us feel extremely welcome.

It was sad to leave Kastellorizo after such a brief visit, but the wee island is very much a part of us now!

We will look forward to coming back and sharing more good times in the sun with our new friends and to explore much more of the island when we return. 'Special' is too small a word to describe Kastellorizo. If Kastellorizans could speak Scots, I'm sure they would say: "Haste Ye Back", and we will!!

Climbing Tourism on Kastellorizo

by Pantazis Houlis, Kastellorizo

Recently, I met a new couple who moved to Kastellorizo during one of my walks around the mountain paths of the island. I was astounded when one of them, Apostolos Tsomakidis, told me he was the Greek Champion in mountain climbing for the past two years. His partner was also the Women's Greek Champion last year. We started exploring the island together, and I showed them as much of the landscape as possible.

Their conclusions were amazing. Kastellorizo has a huge potential to become an island that could attract quality climbing tourism during the winter months, complementing the summer months, and ensuring that the island is alive throughout the year.

Our National Climbing Champion has identified and assessed several promising places on Kastellorizo:

1. Includes world class climbing routes,
2. There are countless routes with negative slope, while the rocks are very stable having every necessary structure.
3. The routes are accumulated in specific fields and have trails of varying difficulty for all (beginners or high level).
4. The "Kolones" place offers high quality Deep Water Solo, i.e. without climbing equipment, since there is only the sea below.
5. The cliff of "kir-Nikitas" can be easily accessed by land.

There is a great opportunity to make our island a destination not only for its natural beauty, history and monuments, but also for quality athletic tourism.

With support from the Municipality of Megisti we would like to acquire the necessary tools (drill, plugs and boards) to form the climbing routes on the cliff of "kur-Nikitas". We look forward to the creation of at least 200 routes, which will be recorded on a special map for the convenience of the athletes who want to "tame" them. There are many quality routes of 35 and 40 metres in height, while the maximum height of the cliff reaches (and perhaps exceeds) 150 metres.

To host a competition, a minimum of 200 routes are needed, while according to our National Champion, there is potential for the creation of over 500 routes. After two meetings and a presentation

to the Municipality of Megisti, all members seem to support the chance of hosting such climbing events. The initial costs for those 200 routes plus the equipment is 17,200 euro. We need to raise funds for this project to support the Municipality. Of course, the goal is to create as many routes as possible, so any extra help is more than welcome. It is also planned to provide a new map of Kastellorizo with the most important sites of the island, as well as the new names of those routes. We are seriously thinking of naming these routes with people who will donate, to honour them.

I feel the urge to highlight the importance of showcasing the amazing little paths on Kastellorizo. I have walked around many places, yet I still discover new "secret" paths and places. It is extremely difficult for me to describe the beauty of all those I have seen. Some of those paths need to be repaired, especially some that lead directly to cliffs. The reward, only by watching the view while walking on them, is enormous.

Walking around the island (St George of the Mountain, Navlakas, Avlonia, St Stefanos, Palaiokastro, Pounentis, etc), is part of my everyday life. Especially during last summer, I enjoyed the company of many people who joined me in some memorable excursions, including the unique catacomb inside St Charalambos church. The island itself, is filled with ancient monuments, old wine presses, caves, secret paths, and even places full of fossils. And by definition, I always like to show the island to anyone who is willing to burn some extra calories!

To become a member, to advertise or for general information contact Marilyn Tsolakis
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