

CON BALTAS

AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

The Voice from the Pavement - Peter Adamis



Con Baltas. Con Baltas was born in northern Greece in 1940. After completing his secondary education and fulfilling his military obligations in Greece, Con migrated to Australia in December 1963, and settled in the Melbourne suburb of Oakleigh.

Con ran a successful small business venture for many years within the Oakleigh district, a business that brought him in contact with many members of the wider community.

Con and Irene his wife, continue to live in the Oakleigh area with his family. Con Baltas presence in Oakleigh also coincides with the foundation of the Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and districts (GOCOD), of which he became a member in 1964.



Con and Irene as a young couple. Mr Baltas had served in the Management committees of GOCOD from 1964 to 2003, with the exception of the two-year period 1982 to 1984. From 1970 to 1987, Mr Baltas occupied the position of Secretary of GOCOD, and from 1987 to 2003, he served the organisation from the position of President.

During this period, GOCOD embarked upon a developmental program in the areas of educational, social, cultural and philanthropic services unprecedented within the Greek Community of Melbourne.

Owing to this program, Oakleigh has become, within the overall Greek community of Australia, what Melbourne is reputed to be in the context of the Greek Diaspora. Mr Baltas has played a pivotal role in the ascendancy of GOCOD to a leading community organisation.



This was a special period for Con as it was during his Presidency (1987 to 2003), that Sts Anargiri College was able to be developed into a major educational institution, catering for the educational and spiritual needs of over 7000 students at the Preschool, Primary and secondary levels. A major achievement for the Oakleigh Greek Community indeed.



Con Baltas and his two very good friends Angelo Kalomiris & Angelo Sardellis at a function.

These projects were carried under difficult circumstances and a time when leadership was essential.

In addition, within multicultural Melbourne, Sts Anargiri College has acquired an unenviable reputation as a centre for Greek Orthodox studies. In recognition of his substantial, and over a long period, services to the Greek Community of Melbourne, Mr Baltas was awarded the Centenary Medal in 2001 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, in the context of the commemoration of the Centenary of Australia.



Con Baltas with Treasurer Peter Costello. In 2002, the Premier of Victoria, The Honourable Steve Bracks, and the Chairman of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Mr George Lekakis, presented Mr Baltas with the Award for Meritorious Service in the Community.

In 2004 the Greek Community of Oakleigh Management Committee in appreciation of his services to GOCOD and the wider Greek Community of Melbourne, unanimously made Mr Con Baltas its Honorary President.

Mr Con Baltas was appropriately honoured by the Community as a tribute and written testament to his long and substantial public service. A special function was initiated in his honour at the Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh Centre located adjacent to other community projects such as the Church, Sts, Anargiri and the College on the 26 September 2004.



Con Baltas & Nick Bantounas. In addition to the above services, Mr Con Baltas and his wife represented the Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and District while on a tour of the Hellenic World in 2005.

During this time, he attended functions, met with Government and non-government officials and made valuable contacts and friendships on behalf of the Oakleigh Greek Community.

Con Baltas continued his support to his community long after he left the executive and became a Trustee and adviser to incoming Community leaders and Management committees.



His influence behind the throne so to speak was always invaluable, especially at times when challenges and obstacles had to be faced and solutions found. Con was always available day and night. Today you will find Con Baltas sitting amongst the elders at the Oakleigh mall chatting about the Greek and wider community. He is still sought after for his opinion regarding matters of the Oakleigh Greek community.



Although he has few regrets about life, he has on the odd occasion wished that some projects had taken a different journey to that what he had envisioned. Suffice to say Con Baltas has lived an extraordinary life for a young man who came to Australia with very little assets and/or money of his own. History look upon him with kindly and of benevolence.

PostScript: I first Con Baltas in 1979 when I was posted to Central Army Records Office in the fledging Information Technology department as a young Corporal, fresh from the 6th battalion The Royal Australian Regiment. We had found a home in Oakleigh and as such I would use the train to travel to and from work. My last stop being Oakleigh, I would walk across to the small fish & chip shop and sometimes have a coffee or even buy a hamburger while waiting to be picked up by my wife. It was here that Con and I would discuss day to day matters and chew the fat so to speak.

In the year 2005, I returned to the same area of Oakleigh, this time as the Business and Public Relations manager for the Greek Community of Oakleigh and District. I had never forgotten Con from the past, but he did not recognise me as much time had passed between us. It was only when I met his brother and sister in law, Arthur and Despina Rovolidis (lovely people) did some of those old memories return. I had good memories of the past and used them to build a rapport between us. However life has no favourites and does not always succumb to our charms and dreams.



***The Voice from the Pavement** - Peter Adamis is a (not for profit) Journalist/Commentator. He is a retired Australian military serviceman and an Industry organisational & Occupational (OHS) & Training Consultant whose interests are within the parameters of domestic and international political spectrum. He is an avid blogger and contributes to domestic and international community news media outlets as well as to local and Ethnic News. He holds a Bachelor of Adult Learning & Development (Monash), Grad Dip Occupational Health & Safety, (Monash), Dip. Training & Assessment, Dip Public Administration, and Dip Frontline Management. Contact via Email: abalinx@netspace.net.au or via Mobile: 0409965538*