

THE AUSTRALIAN LAKONIAN FESTIVAL OF THE OLIVE 2016

Abalinx 19 June 2016 Peter Adamis

History was created on this day when Australians of Lakonian heritage based in Melbourne Victoria hosted their first ever Festival of the Olive. It was a momentous occasion, attracting the local and wider community from all walks of life as well as Federal and local government representatives. One could honestly say that it was truly a sight to see.

It is true that other Australian Hellenic communities have had their brush with the olive, but it is only the Australian Lakonians who would do it in a style not yet seen since the days of an ancient past. Lakonians known for their passionate exuberance, wild spirit, and compassionate nature; are not averse to having a jolly old time when it came to celebrations. The Festival of the Olive was just that. A time when they could let their hair down so to speak and enjoy the company of their fellow man, sharing their life experiences, family matters, jobs, health, economy and the security of the nation. All of these matters were open to discussion and it was pleasing to note the various age groups involved.



The Festival of the Olive conducted under shelter to insure against inclement weather was compensated by various tables upon which a diverse collection of sponsors had gathered to demonstrate their wares, products and practices. While local producers sold their products, there was also olive tasting, making bread, Greek doughnuts (Loukoumades) for sale, the traditional souvlaki being cooked over hot coals, jars full of olives to be guessed by chance, traditional Greek coffee, face painting, drawing and picture books for the youngsters and those who wanted to doodle. In addition an overhead projector displaying Hellenic images, news and culture along with music that was aimed bringing back a time lost to the ages.



Furthermore the festival was blessed with a local painter by the name of Jason Roberts who painted a number of images based on the environment around him. It is of interest to note that Jason will soon be visiting Greece on a tour with the aim of painting the Hellenic landscape. As an interested bystander it was marvelous to see the brush strokes creating an image based on the Festival of the olive.

It was a pleasant reminder of another interesting and well known painter whose paintings were displayed at the Pallaconian Brotherhood Cultural some years ago. Thalia Andrews a talented Australian Greek lass had brought beauty to the cultural centre, thus lighting up the area with their vivid colours.



Last but not least the guests were entertained by the well-known and famous Pallaconian Brotherhood Dance Group, splendid in their new costumes purchased recently from Greece. The dances brought many a tear to those watching and I must admit became somewhat emotional at some of the music and dances being played out. They brought back many wonderful memories of my youth.

It reminded many of us who had migrated to Australia we call home, in the mid last century of a past that is but a memory to most. The youthful dancers were a sight to see and yes their performance was nothing short of outstanding. The Dance Group are well sought after by many other Australian Hellenic communities which goes to enhance the Lakonian presence in Australia.



What can one say when confronted with the opportunity to revive a Hellenic tradition steeped in the ancient past devoid of any misapprehensions or clash of cultures! The Festival of the Olive is here to stay and we can be sure that it will be conducted on an annual; basis with enhanced being made on the way. Congratulations to the Lakonians for reviving an ancient festival.

This form of tradition is a wonderful demonstration how diverse cultures and traditions can be successfully woven into the Australian culture and become synonymous with the Australian environment. To be sure, we will hear more of this festival in the future. Well done to all the organisers for the concept, planning and hard work that went into making it a success.



As always, my apologies for the poor grammar, punctuation and savagery of the Aussie English language. All that I can say is that it is great to be alive and one does not give up in the face of adversity.



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