



## MY MATE TAS SOTIRIADIS

Abalinx 23 August 2017 Peter Adamis

By the time people read this, my mate Tas will be ready to be taken for a drive to St Dimitris Church for a final farewell who attend his funeral. May he have a good journey!

This brief article was written off the cuff, so readers will just have to grin and bear my errors.

Another childhood friend has left and in doing so has left a big hole in my heart. As far as I am concerned he left us far too early. I am not the type to see him go without the world knowing what a great warm hearted bloke he was and sad to see such a talented person go so young.

I don't where to start other than primary school back in 1957. It is 60 years that I have known my childhood mate "TAS" (Tasos Sotiriadis). At primary school we sat together throughout all the grades, supporting each other and doing what all kids do when they are mates.

Tas was always a bright student and he was known for his creative and artistic drawings as a youngster. His attention to details was uncanny and it is not surprising that he became an architect. Whenever we had school projects his would always outshine everyone in the class because of his drawings and research on subjects we had to choose from. He would often do some drawings for me to enhance my project thus giving a chance to shine occasionally.

At Prahran Primary there were a number of Aussie Greek kids like Mary Fotopoulos, Peter and Chris Lambis, Marina, Bill, Tasia, and Helen Kaliviotis, My brother Phillip and I, Emmanuel Hatschidaniou, Peter, Anna and elder sister of Henry Street Windsor, John and Tasos Sotiriadis to name a few. We normally stuck together mainly because of the language, culture and traditions and we managed to share our knowledge of the English (Aussie) language. We all tried to fit in but many times were bullied and picked on because we looked, spoke and ate differently from all other kids. Life was tough but we managed to get through ok.

As we left Prahran Primary school we went our separate ways but occasionally seeing each other as we lived within a one kilometre of each other and as the Greek community was close in the early Fifties we also we would see other at church gathering, other religious related events and certainly at the Prahran market where most of the Greeks would congregate if they did not do so at church. The early years was hard on everyone including the kids let alone the parents who were struggling with families, community and work commitments.

Tas on the other hand took things in his stride and did not get involved in matters that were considered important to other kids such as playing football, scouts, games and other such outdoor activities but was a serious student in his formative years.

He found it very easy to accommodate and absorb his new environment and as such was able to progress far quicker up the social and work scale than others of his peers. Chris Lambis may be the exception to this as he ended up being an accountant and for us, well in my opinion we reached our goals later in life.

I remember Tas coming to my home in 1969 and influencing me to enlist in the Citizens Military Forces (CMF), advising me that I was just the type of bloke they were looking for. Little I would know that my smooth and slick talking mate would open the door to a career that would be the best part of my life. Life was not hard in the CMF and after some twelve months or so of reaching the dizzy heights of Corporal, I was ready to let it go because I was not being challenged enough nor my skills being developed. I remember Tas being sad that I had voluntarily left the CMF but soon had the last laugh when he heard that a local Army Recruiting bloke cornered me in the pub and influenced me to enlist in the Regular Army once my Apprenticeship had finished. That did happen but it is another story.

Tas and I lost track of each other during our developing years, he went from one star to the next making a fortune in the bargain. He had become an extremely successful architect and was in high demand. I remember him advising me that he had made millions and lost them all due to bad investments and trusting people on face value. This trust and believing in others would lead to his downfall time and time again, affecting his personal life and subsequently his work commitments.

It was in 1984 prior to my own marriage had broken up that Tas had met each other again and together we went into a joint project which unfortunately due to my marriage breakup, the project failed and it would take me some twenty years to pay my mother and father back what I owed them. Despite the project failure Tas and I still remained friends and we would often see him come to our house for a cup of coffee, catch on what he was doing and then we would not see him for months on end. He would come with us on outings with the boys when I was battling for custody of the four sons and one time he took us all up in his Volkswagen to Mount Bulla. He only wanted to help me as he knew that I was struggling.

In fact he had such a big heart that he took me on as a foreman while I had six months off on long service leave to try and patch up the marriage which just did not happen. During my time working for him, I advised him that his partner was not what he seemed and that my mate Tas was being taken for a ride. I based my assumptions on what I witnessed and observed during my time as foreman, I left the job voluntarily to save him embarrassment, and after all we were mates. A year later when he came for another of his out of the blue visits he confided in me that I was correct about his partner and that he had lost money on the project and was taken for a ride.

I can remember him telling me yarns of his exploits as a pilot and that he had amassed enough money to buy and fly a plane. This bloke was just unbelievable but even then his business sense was poor and again went insolvent losing more millions. He did not seem to care as he had this enormous capacity to see opportunities and loopholes where other entrepreneurs could not see even if the project was in front of them. I guess his uncanny ability to see such opportunities kept in high demand as well as the greed of his clients.

Still I loved the bastard because with me he did not attempt to influence in any shaded deals once he realised that my priorities were my four sons and that they were my life. I must admit he did entice me a couple of times, but I had become wary and cautious over the years given my own predicament and environment. As he grew older I noticed that he would often make trips to Asia for work and pleasure and had innumerable contacts overseas. So much so that he was able to get back up on to again and make another fortune which enabled him to get married and have two children. Although he was much older than his bride, he stuck it through the early years waiting for his bride to join him against the wishes of her parents who were against her marrying my mate Tas.

Although the marriage was rather turbulent, the two children in his life meant the world to him and he would often tell me during his more frequent visits that he was proud of his two kids and wished that he could do more for them. When the marriage broke up, he was devastated and his visits to our home were more frequent and always telling me that he was glad he had me as a friend no matter what happened in his volatile and turbulent rises and falls throughout his life. I would give him advice on what I thought was the best approach, but I felt he wanted to be back on top far quicker than the average bloke and looked for schemes that would return him to the social status he was used to. I found that as we both grew older, he felt hurt and devalued because his faith in others took a beating each time.

In the last twelve months of his life he looked half the man he was and he had dallied briefly in another marriage which lasted a few months when he realised that woman was gold digger and truly interested in him. He packed off quick smart and tried to get back on the straight and narrow using his vast amount of contacts and overseas networks. Unfortunately none turned out as he wanted them and his health deteriorated to the point of not being able to look after himself and was fortunate that he had a good friend who was also in the same boat who had a spare room when he was not living at his parents' home.

In March of this year he dropped by on two occasions looking worse for wear and his illness had become worse and unable to make ends meet. He spoke warmly of his children and of his need to see them more often, but it was not to be as they were now in their developing years and had grown in stature as well as in the academic field. I advised that I was going overseas and looked forward to seeing him on my return. He chuckled and smiled like he always did and said if he was still alive. He advised me that his illness had become worse and that he was not sure what the outcome was. I said that I would ring him from Greece to find out how his operation went.

A couple d days before I left for Greece I rang him to ask about his operation and his response was that it had been delayed. I said stay strong and give it your best shot as doctors these days can do marvels. He told me to have a good time and enjoy Greece. Later when I was in Greece for a couple of months I felt guilty that I had not contacted him and rang his mobile number to see that he was all right. This time the conversation was short advising me that he was at a mate's place, to have a good time in Greece and will see me when I get back. That was the last conversation we had.

Last week, my wife advised that she had received two messages on the answering machine from Tas's ex-wife advising her that Tas passed away and that details of the funeral would be passed on. I contacted my childhood fiend Tasia who confirmed the death of Tas with her brother Bill and I also attempted to ring Chris Lambis with no luck as details were not correct or sketchy. I don't what else I could have done other to pass on m t condolences to the kids but even they would not answer calls which was understandable given the circumstances.

This article does pay sufficient tribute to a childhood friend who only wanted to see the good in people and his expectations of what goodness meant was not in many cases reciprocated as they should. I will say that did enjoy life to max and was not known to allow the challenges of life bring him down and give up. In m y eyes he was battler that overcome many difficulties, embraced the Australian culture, ran with it, made fortunes lost them and got back up on top time and time again.

My Dear dear friend Tas, I wish you a great journey where it is that you are travelling to. I know that whatever you are now facing is probably child's play and you will be looking out for more opportunities. I wish you well and condolences to the family. I would love to have written much much more about a childhood friend but as always I write from the heart and hope that what I have written is not taken in a negative way by the readers or relatives alike. Such is the way of life and when the end of time comes for us, may it be swift and gentle.

Don't bitch about the challenges you face, just get on with living and making the best of your environment. Life will always be full of surprises, enjoy them all and smile at adversity and the world will smile with you. As always I welcome positive and constructive criticism. Don't be shy as I can only retaliate in a manner worthy of an Aussie bloke. If I have upset anyone, please accept my apologies, but I write from the heart and what I believe in. As always, apologies for the savagery of the English language and errors of grammar, blame it on my English teacher.



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