

DIMITRIOS ROUMPOS

In a far flung village in Northern Laconia, called Foundeika, the bell tolled recently for one of its sons. A son called Dimitrios Roumpos who had left the village as a relatively young man. Strangers may well ask who was Dimitrios Roumpos and his friends would respond that he was resourceful and courageous man by nature. Born in the tiny village of Foundeika during the depression years, Dimitrios grew to rely on his instincts hewn by his early life experiences. Dimitrios was a strong willed man whose courage never failed him in the face of adversity.

Life in Greece was indeed harsh, employment was at all time low where one had to have his wits about him to live and still retain ones sanity. The arrival of WW2 and the subsequent Greek Civil War only added further to the stresses faced by many of his generation. Dimitrios served as a soldier in the mortars section with the Government forces fighting against the communist rebels during the Greek Civil war.

During WW2 Dimitrios and his brothers lost their mother who died of shock as a result enemy air raids over the village. When their mother died, the brothers, Dimitrios, Giannis and George banded together to help with the domestic chores in order to assist around the home in memory of their mother. It was a terrible time for many where it bred a generation of fear and mistrust into the hearts of the populace and only the fit could survive the maelstrom of the evils that besot the land of Greece. However despite these early childhood life experiences he survived the ravages of time and lived to a ripe old age while others around him succumbed to the maladies of life.

Like many others of his generation, he left his village to seek a better a life in a country far from home and familiar surroundings. He arrived in Melbourne in January 1955 he and his wife Vasiliki was sent as a couple to Bonegilla, a northern town of Victoria and was employed in Shepparton picking stone fruits and returning back to Bonegilla at the end of the day. After a period of time, Dimitrios and his wife relocated to the inner suburb of Melbourne, to a boarding house in Moore Street Fitzroy while both parents worked. One parent worked at night and the other during the day in order to look after Peter their son. They raised funds to purchase their home in Carlton, and it was there that they could be found some 59 years later. If life was tough in the old country, then Australia became an environment where Dimitrios earlier skills and knowledge helped him to acclimatise and raise his family.

Dimitrios being an unskilled migrant worked diligently in a variety of industries such as glass, plastic electro plating, and service of motors and also in manufacturing. The early years were difficult but he and his wife Vasiliki managed to gather together the necessary funds to purchase a home and pay off the mortgage as well as raising their two children Peter and Helen. Their home was also used as a first point of call for the many migrants that arrived from their parts of Laconia seeking advice and support in Australia. Those were the days when families were close knit and many a party was held much to the chagrin of their neighbours not used to boisterous and happy go lucky people.

Given his background and life experiences he ensured that his children were equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to face the challenges of life and to overcome them. On reflection one could say that he may have been somewhat harsh and tough love meted out to his children, but that was the only way that he knew how to toughen them up.

Although a man of few words and reserved in demonstrating any affection towards those close to him, he loved his wife and children dearly in his own way. He and his wife ensured that their children received the best education that they could afford and provide as well as instilling into them the necessary mental toughness that many other children did not possess or acquire. Dimitrios loved fishing and would often be seen fishing at Kereford Road Pier at Albert Park for hours and would come home with enough fish to feed the family for a week.

Both his children, Peter and Helen are strong, silent and courageous with the capacity to see things through no matter what life challenges they face. Peter and Helen have families of their own with children of their own who are now adults and in the work force. Both Peter and Helen have said that despite their harsh upbringing, they have felt nothing but love and admiration for both their parents of whom their mother Vasiliki is still alive and living in Carlton on a pension. Dimitrios and his wife Vasiliki gave their son Peter a deposit to purchase his first home, encouraging him to pay off the mortgage whilst he had his first job. Dimitrios and his wife Vasiliki also gave much assistance to their daughter Helen throughout the years, especially through times of great need and hardship.

In his later years, Dimitrios would often be seen at the Pallaconian Brotherhood 'Leonidas' community hall, conversing with men and women of his generation, many of whom he grew and developed during the early years of migration. Dimitrios would be picked up by his son Peter from Carlton, dropped off at the community hall and return the same way, unless Dimitrios took public transport. One of the many joys that Dimitrios enjoyed was through the eyes of his grandchildren. Dimitrios was overjoyed to be at his grandchildren graduation and seeing them develop into young adults made his day, often speaking of them in an affection manner. He was very proud of the extended family and rejoiced in following their careers as they developed.

As time wore on it became apparent to the family that Dimitrios required specialist help as his wife and children were not in a position to provide the health services and support to retain a certain quality of life. As such Peter his son during his research found an aged care home where his father's needs would be met. Whilst Dimitrios was a guest at the aged care Peter and his sister would visit their father regularly along with other friends of the past. Unfortunately Dimitrios had a fall which reduced his capacity to enjoy a reasonable quality of life and was bedridden for some time before he too succumbed to what society calls old age. He passed away peacefully with his family by his side. Dimitrios will always be remembered for his smile, his tenacity, courageous in the face of adversity, strong willed and confident manner that could always be counted upon to find a solution.

This is dedicated to Dimitrios Roumpos and his wife Vasiliki who were close friends of my father and mother Vasili and Kaliopi Adamis throughout the years.

Peter Adamis