



MY OLD MAN AND I

Peter Adamis 29 August 2014

photograph. Left to Right: Dad, his cousin, unknown, seated commander unknown.

I would like to dedicate this article to my old man. A bloke who I never saw eye to eye as I was growing up and never understood him until I was 64. Mind you he is still alive bless his soul, but I felt compelled to write my thoughts down for no particular reason on this day. Over the years I have recorded his stories and yarns and written extensively on my parents hardships and struggles without publishing them. I guess a time will come when I put pen to paper so to speak or should I say keyboard to monitor in this age of information technology.

For those know of me as a friend and can appreciate that what I write this day comes from the heart and that I pull no punches when expressing myself, otherwise it would not be a true account of what I feel. To my relatives and friends I thank you for your continued support over the years and for encouraging to continue to write of a bygone era.

This brief article touches only the boundaries of my parents and I am hoping that it is the start of many other articles based on their lives. This first article as indicated above are my thoughts on my old man. Therefore to those who know little of my family, I ask for forgiveness in advance if my record of events appear to be haphazard and all over the place.

I guess the best place to start is what is on my mind at the moment given the rise of extremist groups in the Hellenic Republic. I say this because I am a product of my earlier youthful experiences and those of my father Greek Civil war experiences passed onto me and my young brother Phillip. It will also explain why I enlisted in the Australian Defence Force and why I chose a particular Australian political party.

My right wing conservatist views are those of basic human rights, a respect for our elderly, institutions, to those who hold office on our behalf, protection of our youth, support to our family, contribution to society, economic and physical security to a nation we all call home, Australia. These right wing conservative values were embed into my psyche at an age when most children were out playing.

My Dad would hang me by my two arms clasping the bough of an olive tree at the age four and insisting upon me not to give up. It was his way of hardening me and preparing me for life's experiences whatever they were to be. My father who had fought with the "HITTES" (Χηττες - right wing irregulars) during the Greek Civil war, post WW2, became hardened to the horrors he witnessed and as such instilled in his children the following:

"NEVER TO GIVE UP IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY".

From the age of 15 to 20 years old he witnessed many horrors that he wished he never had to face or overcome. It was at a time when there was no real government in Greece and brother killed brother, relative against relative, father against son and village against village. Despite his right wing views he never did subscribe to any extremist party left or to the right as both ideologies left no room for the other to breath. He knew that the right wing was created as a bulwark against the communist who were growing in numbers during WW2 and he also knew that sooner or later he would be called upon to do his bit.



When a group of communists came to the village and Dad was almost killed by one of their members for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. It was only through a sheer luck that a relative of dad's was in the vicinity that saved his life. This same relative (bless his soul) at great risk to his life put his arm up against the communists weapon just when he was about to shoot my father dead. The weapon discharged harmlessly into the air and Dad. After this incident my father ran away as fast as he could outside the village.

After hiding out until dark, Dad made his way into the mountains where one of his elder cousins who was with the right wing forces was hiding. After his near death incident Dad became a full time member of the "HITTES" (Χηττες - right wing irregulars) fighting against the communists. I must also add that despite my father fighting the communists, he never had a bad word against them but recognised that many Greeks were forced to make choices depending on which side was superior at that time and location. Education and up to date communication was poor which also led to the diverse nature of the communist and the right wing forces.

My Dad did say that they were just as bad as each other and that atrocities in some cases was for profit and not for any ideological reasons. In fact one chap my father met again on his first trip to Greece was a man who sold the weapons to the other side for profit. When this man recognised my father he went pale and disappeared quick smart never to be seen in the village. Another alleged fighter killed people in cold blood for the fun of it and incidents like these turned my father into the man we knew. I guess with time I will write upon his Civil war experiences.



Some 64 years later when dad was 85, I took him back to Greece for a two month holiday in order to breathe some new life into him, visit his remaining relatives and enjoy the tranquillity of his birth place. On the trip also came my youngest nephew and my father's grandson, which made it the father the son and grandson trip to Greece. It was to be an exhilarating, exhausting and very profitable from a relationship point of view and we finally got to know each other.

During the day for the next two months, Dad and I fought every day verbally and on each occasion we got to know each other a lot better than we had known each other for the past 64 years. We shared stories, jokes, life experiences, hurts, grief's, dreams, past ambitions, the future and personal matters that only a father and son shared. Neither of us gave each other an inch and I realised where my stubbornness and never give up attitude came from.

At night, however it was different, we would sit and watch the local television stations and talk in an amicable manner as if nothing had occurred between us during the day. Dad would sit on the couch and I at his feet either cross legged or lounging length ways looking up at him occasionally when discussing the future. One of the taxi drivers we met in Sparta was the grandson (Peter Prekezes pictured left) of a famous Laconian Communist fighter who was renowned for his leadership and fighting abilities whom my father knew of. I took a photograph of the grandson with my father for posterity. The young bloke was eager to hear of his grandfather (Captain Prekezes) from a fighter of the opposite side.



(Dad left with Peter Prekezes pictured left) Dad gave young Peter information about his grandfather that he was a great leader of men but was unfortunately killed during the Greek Civil war. It appeared that this young bloke was trying to find out as much as he could about his grandfather. It was a chance meeting but well worth the experience for both.

Dad married my mother in 1949 whose elder brother had joined the communists and who my father saved from being shot by the "HITTES" (Χηττες - right wing irregulars) who had captured him. It was this uncle's daughter Helen (my first cousin) from whom I purchased the land with the olive tree adjacent to my parents' home. Talk about love overcoming all barriers.

During my time with him, Dad had many visitors to the home, all of whom had come to pay their respects to him and to pass on the news of the past, present of the future. It was also through them that I finally realised that there was a complete other side to my father, a side that I and my young brother Phillip never knew or were privy to. I found that he was a very compassionate, loving, overly generous and forgiving person who hid behind a veil of granite in not wanting to show his soft side.

It reminded me of a story my mother confided to me in late December 1973. I had just returned back to Australia from my posting with the 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment in Malaya and Singapore. My mother told me that my father was like a block of granite that many people over the years had tried and failed in their attempts to topple and bring him down. She said that your father always stood up for what was right no matter what the adversities and challenges he faced.

My mother then lowered her voice as if she did not want anyone else to hear and said to me softly, that she alone knew what my father had faced and went on to say that if you went closely to that granite rock, you could see the scratch marks and the damage left by those who tried to bring down your father". I never forgot my mother's words of that day and throughout the years they would haunt me during my struggles in raising my sons on my own. Today, I often step back and look at my own actions and life experiences whether they mirror those of my father.

This year Dad, by Greek standards turns 87 and by Western standards he is 86 years old. He is strong physically, his mind is alert, still a stubborn bastard and occasionally will smile that smile which so often evaded us during our childhood. I hope that in 2015 he is still fit enough for another trip to Greece. Although I am now 64 years old, and have been in Australia since the 23 July 1954, I call Australia home. Having said that I still yearn for the mountains of Taygetos in Laconia, Greece with its many meadows, flowers and trees and the tranquillity that it brings.

I would like to think that I deserve an extended holiday after having served Australia in the Australian Regular Army for 30 years, raising four sons as a single parent, contributing to the security and economic longevity of Australia. I feel that I have little else to contribute to Australian society other than to write about the past and life experiences just for the sake of future generations and not for any personal gain.



Postscript: It will be of interest to note that the olive tree (original tree still standing in 2014 left) which my father hung me on was on the property next door to mum and dad's home and when we returned in 2013, I purchased the block of land only for the sake of that lone olive tree. I also took back to Greece and buried my left thumb which I had accidentally sawed off with an electric saw and buried it at the foot of the olive tree. One could say that I have a thumb hold on Greece and that it beckons me back from time to time. The land and the olive tree is now part of the Adamis clan heritage and in trust for the Adamis family. The olive tree gnarled and pruned over the years survived the ravages of time and now has two strong saplings sprouting from the original tree.

Disclaimer: Apologies to the purists for the poor grammar and punctuation. I can but try my best to record events, personalities and lives of that bygone era for future generations in the only way I know. From the heart.



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