

THE PALLACONIANS
THE GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY MELBOURNE 25 MARCH 2012



**The Pallaconian Brotherhood
of Melbourne & Victoria**

Arise o Hellas, do not dwell in the misery of slavery or labor under the yoke of an oppressor. Shake off your shackles and become the proud people that you can be. Life was meant to be free without the threat of external burdens. Remember that this is your day for independence. So said the Klephte warrior standing upon the craggy Taygetos mountain range looking down on his people who were suffering under an unforgiving occupier. So began the Greek Independence Remembrance day.



The Pallaconians

One could be forgiven if they thought they were Greece as they watched a procession of people in blue and white costumes marching towards the Shrine of Remembrance. Not so for it was the annual Greek Independence Day march being held in Melbourne just like other parades being conducted across the globe in the lands of the free. At this year's parade the Pallaconians had a strong contingent representing Lakonians in Greece and those of the Melbourne and Victoria, Australia. The other contingents represented various communities, colleges, schools, welfare, womens associations and the various bands playing to the delight of the crowds.



Organisations, such as Peloponnesians, Pallaconians, Cretans, Womens Associations, Epirotes, Pan Macedonians, Cypriots, Athenians, Islanders, Peloponnesians, AHEPA and various school bands, stood around, making their final adjustment to their dress, costumes, unfurling their banners and flags in preparation for the parade. The passion, enthusiasm, and certainly the dedication to show their communities colours was evident, each vying to outdo their brother in arms, marching proudly with their chest puffed out, their cheeks glowing with pride and their arms marching to the rhythm of the music



Chris Paikopoulos and Angelo leading the Pallaconian contingent

Proud Australian of his Hellenic origins, Chris Paikopoulos the president at the head of the Pallaconian contingent leads his Lakonians people towards the direction of the shrine. Chris is one of the new generations of Australians with a Hellenic background dedicated to forging closer the bonds between his native Hellenic origins and that of his country Australia. He is passionate about the vision and direction the Pallaconians are heading. Chris is one of a few to watch for future Australian Hellenic leadership positions.



Amidst the many colours of various Hellenic costumes, banners, placards and flags of both nations fluttering in a breeze, the chatter of birds flying overhead added to the din of the congregate of the crowd below. The crowd mingled around the shrine in no ordered fashion reminiscent of a time when such crowds in the old-world would have looked upon with suspicion and hostility by the occupying powers at the time Hellas was under foreign occupation. Still those days are long gone and in Australia the free and the brave live on without the fear of aggression and hostility towards one another. After all it's the Australian and the Hellenic way.



The official commemoration

Visitors had lined both sides of the steps leading up to the shrine, which in many aspects reminds the Australians of Hellenic heritage of their own icon, the Parthenon atop the Athenian acropolis. Australians of Hellenic heritage had come together to commemorate a day that is forever a passionate part of their makeup and embedded within their hearts and minds.



Guests and representatives

Amongst the guests was The Hon Ted Ballieu (Premier of Victoria), Eleni Lianidou (Greek Consulate General of Melbourne Victoria), Member of the Hellenic Parliament, The Bishop Iakovas and Mr. Kon Kontis (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia), Maria Vamvakinou, (Member for Calwell), Nicholas Kotsiras (Minister for Multiculturalism), John Panadazopoulos, (Member for Dandenong), Vasili Papastergiadis (Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria), Sophie Mirabella (Member for Indi), Anne Barker (Member for Oakleigh), Chin Tan and Phillip Bain (Multicultural representatives), Jenny Mikakos, (Member for Northern Metropolitan Region) Martin Ferguson, (Member for Batman), Victoria Police, Australian Defence Force representatives, community leaders, and Hellenic representatives



Pallaconian supporters outside Victoria Barracks Melbourne

It was a sight that brought many a tear to the older generation who had known and could remember the horrors of WW2 and the Greek civil war. To be sure, The Greek Independence day would take priority for those of a Hellenic background as it is synonymous with freedom and everything associated with it.



The Greek Independence Day is what ANZAC Day is to all Australians and both nations commemorate to Remember, Revere, and Respect and to reflect on the sacrifices of a generation now in the bosom of mother earth. Unfortunately many have forgotten that the Greek Independence insurrection first started as a spark in the area of Laconia where like a fire that fed on a fuel of passion and a desire for freedom overload any risks that may bring with it.



The Laconians of Melbourne and Victoria

It was most pleasing to see a number of women associations being represent at this year's parade. It was also a reminder to the crowds that "Eleuteria" was not won by the men alone, but that their women folk stood side by side fighting and arming the muskets with powder and ball for their menfolk.



Australian Hellenic Women Associations

The parade began at the lower part of the shrine near St Kilda road and made its way up the centre towards the dignitaries', veering to the left and finally coming to rest at the eternal flame for the official presentation. Various presentations by the dignitaries gave the parade its official blessing and the crowd looked upon the speakers with degree of awe and appreciated their words of courage for only a people who have been enslaved for four centuries can never forget that freedom always comes at a price.



Mums and dads were out in force each with their respective flags

At the conclusion of all the speeches relating to the Greek Independence day, the crowd dispersed into their particular groups and slowly melted away. The cumulus clouds above scattered allowing the sun's rays to penetrate the earth, bringing warmth to the crowds below was like an unseen signal that it was time to go home.



The Pallaconians had done their bit for the Greek Independence day parade, satisfied in having paid their respects and homage to a generation long gone but never forgotten; return back to the Pallaconian Brotherhood Community centre in Albert Street Brunswick. **Lest we forget**