

# “JAB”

# JUST A BLOKE



## DUTY FIRST

PANAGIOTIS (PETER) ADAMIS

*Seize the day by the throat  
Fight the good fight & never give up  
In the face of adversity*

ISBN: 978-1-7641313-4-6

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# DEDICATION

DEDICATED TO MY FOUR SONS  
DAVID WILLIAM, PAUL ARTHUR PHILLIP, MATTHEW ALLAN, NORMAN & MARK DANIEL

TO MY WIFE YOVANNA FOR HER ONGOING ENCOURAGEMENT

TO MY BROTHER PHILLIP AND TWINS KOSTATINOS AND SISTER ELENI

A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THOSE MAGNIFICENT PEOPLE WHO HAD A HAND MY DEVELOPMENT



ISBN: 978-1-7641313-4-6  
FIRST PUBLISHED IN DIGITAL FORMAT AUSTRALIA JUNE 2025  
ABALINX AND ASSOCIATES

SECOND EDITION GREECE ABALINX & ASSOCIATES. (PUBLISHERS)

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Printed and bound in Sparta Laconia Greece by  
George Rassias - Rassias Design 2025 - 697 201 7062  
Distribution – Dimitri Hatzidimitriou -694 580 8268

## PREFACE

As I sit down to reflect on the journey that has brought me to this point, I am often reminded of the simple truth that, at my core, I am "just a bloke." Yet, as I delve into the chapters of my life, I find a narrative that is anything but ordinary. This memoir captures the essence of a life shaped by the trials and triumphs of growing up as an immigrant, serving in the military, and navigating the complexities of civilian life.

The journey began as a humble attempt to preserve the memories of family, friends, and mentors who have walked alongside me. Over time, this collection of stories has evolved into a living testament to the resilience of the human spirit. Within these pages, you will find tales of hardship and renewal, of a young man who faced life's challenges head-on, whether they stemmed from the struggles of adapting to a new homeland or the rigors of military service.

I owe much of my fortitude to the unwavering support of those around me. My faith, instilled by my parents, and the guidance of mentors like Stan Edwards, have been cornerstones in my life. They, along with the mates who stood by me, helped channel my youthful aggression into a force for good, moulding me into a contributing member of Australian society. This memoir is also a historical reference tool to be utilised by generations and researchers some time into the future, therefore I seek forgiveness if the memoir appears somewhat egotistical, which I can assure the reader it is not my intention at all.

In sharing my story, I invite you, the reader, to reflect on your own journey. Consider the storms you have weathered and the strength you have found within yourself. My hope is that my experiences will serve as a reminder that we all have the capacity to lead extraordinary lives, no matter how ordinary we may seem. This memoir is based on the numerous oral stories, scribbled notes, messages, articles, research, recording, photographs, my own experiences and observations. I knew that the day would come when I would need to leave the history of our family for future generations.

Therefore, this memoir is dedicated to my four sons, my grandchildren, and my extended family. As you turn these pages, I encourage you to embrace the lessons within. We are all "just blokes or sheilas"—ordinary people called to live extraordinary lives. Through resilience, determination, and the bonds we forge, we find our true strength and purpose.

# FOREWORD

**To “Just a Bloke.** It is with a profound sense of humility and a touch of embarrassment that I take on the task of writing this foreword for “Just a Bloke,” a memoir by my dear friend and colleague, Peter. The honour feels weighty, especially when considering the remarkable circle of friends and acquaintances that Peter has cultivated over his lifetime. A glance at the acknowledgments in this memoir reveals an impressive lineup of accomplished individuals—any one of whom would have been more deserving than I to pen this foreword..

This memoir is not merely a collection of memories; it is a rich tapestry woven from the threads of history, family, and the extraordinary journey of a young Greek who migrated to Australia in 1954. It chronicles the lifelong friendships Peter has forged and sustained, the hardships he has navigated, and the resourcefulness he has displayed throughout his life. His choice to serve in the military for his adopted homeland speaks volumes about his character, and his involvement in the political arena—complete with all its complexities—offers insights into a world that, unfortunately, often remains unchanged.

As I reflect on Peter’s life, I am struck by the depth of his experiences. He has faced personal challenges and health issues with resilience, all while maintaining a strong connection to his roots back in Greece. His wisdom and diverse life experiences have been a source of inspiration for many, and his exceptional writing skills—skills I both admire and, I confess, have allowed him to share his insights on a multitude of topics. The bibliography at the end of this memoir serves as a testament to his prolific output and the impact of his words.

I fondly remember my first encounter with the “new” Chief Clerk back in 1987 in Ballarat, when I too was stepping into the role of a “new” Commanding Officer. To be honest, we both had our reservations about how the next three years would unfold. In hindsight, I realize how fortunate I was to serve alongside someone like Peter, who surrounded himself with a loyal, capable, and professional team of soldiers. Their initiative and can-do spirit not only eased our tasks but also brought pride to the Battalion and every soldier who served.

One of the many instances that stands out in my memory is Peter’s visionary leadership as Chief Clerk. Together with Quartermaster Bill Akell, he took the bold step of acquiring a computer for the orderly room—a daring move in an era when mobile phones were as cumbersome as bricks. This leap into the digital age was a game-changer, especially during exercises when we had to report troop numbers, depot origins—11 across western Victoria—and rank, not to mention date of birth. The 8th/7th Battalion’s ability to compile this information within hours of arrival sparked envy among sister units, scepticism from Brigade and Divisional HQs, and a well-deserved smile from Peter.

Over time, I have developed a deeper understanding of the Greek War of Independence and the Greek Civil War, and how these historical events have shaped families and communities, including Peter’s own. He has certainly faced more than his fair share of “character-building” experiences—bullying, ridicule, intimidation, and self-doubt. Yet, as a single father to four boys, he has navigated the complexities of military life, all while steadfastly adhering to the ideals of Duty First. His commitment, integrity, and service to others remain unwavering.

I wholeheartedly commend this memoir to all who have the pleasure of reading it. Thank you, Peter, for your honesty and candour—qualities that have defined your life and your approach to every challenge. Well done, my friend.

I am proud to call Peter a mate!

**Douglas J. Ball AM, RFD, jssc**

# ABSTRACT

"Just a Bloke" is the memoir of a man who confesses that he is "just an ordinary bloke." Yet, as the reader delves into the pages of this work, they will discover a life that is anything but ordinary. Born in Greece and raised in Australia, I am to remember and recall my journey from a young man grappling with the harsh realities of growing up in a foreign land to a seasoned soldier in the Australian Army. My recollections of military service, with all its triumphs and tribulations, paint a vivid portrait of the values and mateship that have long defined the Australian soldier.

But it is in the aftermath of my military career resilience and strength of character emerge. As I navigated through the challenges of civilian life, I am confronted with the heartbreak of a broken marriage, the physical and mental health battles that would have broken others less resilient and living with the ever-present demons of my past. Yet, despite all the challenges, I refused to be defined by those circumstances and looked forward to a brighter future. One could describe me as the eternal optimist.

I embraced my role as a single father, a mate, and a man on a quest for personal redemption. My words, at times may appear somewhat raw, harsh and unvarnished, but I offer a rare and unfiltered glimpse into the struggles faced by those who have served their country and then only to find themselves ill-equipped for the trials that await them in the civilian world. In this, I am not alone for there are numerous stories very similar to that of my own.

I would the reader to consider that "Just a Bloke" is a must-read for anyone seeking inspiration, insight, and a deeper understanding of the human experience. My journey is a reminder that, no matter how ordinary we may appear, what others think of us, we all have the potential to lead an extraordinary life. I thank my God to have been given that opportunity to have lived a life full of adventure, challenges and the will to fight the good fight and never give up in the face of adversity.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I look back on the journey that has led to the creation of this memoir, I am profoundly moved by the incredible support and encouragement I have received from so many extraordinary individuals. This work stands as a testament to their unwavering friendship, guidance, and compassion. Without them, this memoir would not have been possible. To my dear "Koumbarro," Peter Vlahos, whose encouragement lit the path forward, and to my adopted "brother," Giuseppe de Simone, who stood by me when shadows loomed, I owe you a debt of gratitude beyond words. My deepest appreciation and devotion go to my beloved wife, Yovanna, and our four sons—David, Paul, Matthew, and Mark. You have been my steadfast rock, my source of inspiration, and my reason for enduring through life's most challenging trials. Your patience, understanding, and unconditional love have sustained me when I thought I could endure no more. I am truly blessed to call you my family.

To my parents, Vasili and Kaliope, who have stood by me in life's darkest hours, and to my brothers, Phillip and Kon, no words can truly express the depth of my gratitude for your unwavering love, care, and affection. To my sister, Eleni, I hope you find the peace you seek. To my many close friends who have served as a haven in life's storms, providing strength and comfort when the world seemed set on breaking me, I extend my heartfelt thanks. I must also acknowledge the mentors and leaders who have guided me throughout my military career and beyond. From the NCOs who instilled the values of duty and discipline to the officers who pushed me to exceed my own expectations, your influence has been profound. Though too numerous to mention individually, your names are etched in marble at the Hellenic ANZAC Memorial in Pellana, Laconia, Greece, and your impact on my life is indelible.

To everyone who has touched my life, whether through grand gestures or quiet acts of kindness, I offer my sincerest appreciation. Your influence has shaped the person I am today. This memoir is as much a testament to your support as it is to my resilience. Thank you for your unwavering friendship, steadfast guidance, and enduring belief in me. I am forever indebted to you. To my ex-wife, Christine Balls, and her family, I hold no grudges and wish you well. To Giorgos Rassias, my cousin in Greece who published this memoir, Dimitri Hatzidimitriou for distributing it in Greece, and Nick Moraitis for publishing my articles on Anagnostis, thank you. To my dear friends from Australia, Greece, and beyond, your support has been the foundation upon which I have rebuilt my life. Lastly, my heartfelt thanks go to the medical professionals who have walked with me on my journey to reclaim my physical and mental health. Your compassion, expertise, and unwavering belief in my ability to overcome have been invaluable. To the hospital staff, paramedics, frontline support members, and countless others who have cared for me, I am humbled by your dedication. [See Appendix 4.](#)

Among you, I count the following for being part of my life: Aliko Glekas, Allan and Anne Ziebell, Amri Sannang, Andonia Glekas, Andrew and Christina Triantafyllou, Anthony Fernandez, Ashka and Fleur (ONJ), Barrie Daniels, Barry French, Barry Tolly, Barry, Pauline and Sue Ziebell, Bernie McCarthy, Bert Franks, Bill Charlton, Bill (Vasili) Papastergiadis, Bill (Vasili) Toumplis, Bill Akell, Bill Mclvor, Captain Raymond, Chris Glekas, Christine (Nee Balls) Johnstone, Cliff "Blue" and Thelma Ziebell, Clinton Breeze, Con and Maragaret Mercuri, Con Zois, Danny Wright, Dave Lowe, David Lewin, David, Paul, Matthew, and Mark Adamis (Sons), David, Wendy and Trevor Ziebell, Diamando Triantafyllou, Dimitri (Jim) and Fotini Rassias, Dimitri (Jim) and Harikleia Bakis, Dimitri and Stavroula Malliarou, Dimitri Hatzidimitriou, Doug Luik, Douglas Ball, Donald Norman, Dr Bennett, Dr Danica Wong, Dr Fung, Dr George Proimos, Dr Julian Grabek, Dr Karthik, Dr Laith Giana, Dr Leung, Dr Paul M. Collier, Dr Simon He, Dr Stan Savas, Dr Vivarini, Dr. Azhar Khan, Majr E.F. Czerw, Eddie and Lisa Black, Eddie Bryson, Ekaterina Saltis, Eleni (Nee Adamis) Smirnios, Eleni Tsihi, Eleni Vlahogianni, Fay (ONJ), Frank Hangan, Gail, Rachele, (GRS), George "Warrie" Mansford, George and Georgia Bakis, George and Panagiotis Paraskevopoulos, George Vassilopoulos, George, Betty and Jenny Smirnios, (Australia), Gerald Merici, Geza Benke, Giannis and Dina Merekoulis, Giannoula Lafogianni, Giannoula Morfis, Giorgos Rassias, Giuseppe de Simone and Karen Synon, Hans Vanswol, Harikleia (Tsotsios) Adamis, Harold Eather, Harry Masselas and his family, Jack Currie, Jeremy Furness, Jim Black, Jim Hammett, John Baker, John Best, Jim Wood, John "Rosco" Ross, Joe Zapp, Kaliopi Glekas, Kevin Myers, Kim Branson, Kim Frupp, Kon and Wendy Adamis, Kon Nicolopoulos, Kostas Mihalopoulos, Kostas Sgourdas, Leon Tsongas, Lt Savi and Denise Savi, Mac and Mary McLean, Major Lions, Marcus Bastiaan, Margaret Colliver, Mark Stephens, Marshall (Bikie), Maurice and Thelma Barwick, Mavis, Tregonning, Memories (Mates never forgotten but names elude due to age), Mario Tzortzakis, Michael Blaxland, Michael Kroger, Michelle Francis, Mick Armstrong, Mick Hardless, Mick Strong, Mick Strong, (Deceased – 1 RAR), Mick, Nick and Wife (Italian neighbours), Mira, Daniella, (GRS), Mr and Mrs Kategiannis, Mr and Mrs Roumeliotis, Mr and Mrs Zouzoulas, Mr Spiros and Mrs Marika Smirnios, Neil "Lofty" Eiby, Nick Bantounas, Nick Deros, Nick Moraitis, Nick Patsios, Noel Greaves, Norm "Ned" and Ralda Kelly, Paddy Bacskai, Panagiota Smirnios, Panagiotis "Spitha" and Evyenia Rassias, Pat Savage, Paul Prickett, Pavlos Filipopoulos, Peter Stammers, Peter "Blue" Roberts, Peter and Anne Frangos, Peter and Eleni Adamis (Grandparents), Peter and Sheryl Bateman, Peter Hatherley, Peter Jasonides, Peter Phillips, Peter Rosemond, Peter Vlahos, Peter, Arthur and Nick Morfis, Phillip and Eleni Rassias (Grandparents), Phillip "Butch" Buttigieg, Phillip and Sophia Adamis, Phillip Filipopoulos, Priscilla Gates (ONJ), Reg Bandy, Rick Brittain, Ron Hill, Ron Lovelock, Ron Lunt, Sam Mihalakos, Sandra Mercer Moore, Savvas "Kallimachos" Grigoropoulos, Scott Sneddon, Spiros Dimos, Stan Edwards, Stavroula (Nee Zouzoulas) Psarakis, Stefanos Sgourdas, Steve Zafiroopoulos, Steven Skelley, Tacia Rassias - (Next to the Rassias castle), Tasos Sotiriadis, Thanasis (Arthur) Sinodinos), Thanasis and Despina Rovolidis; Thanasis Davakis, Theophilos and Eleftheria Adamis, Thomas Hitolaris, Tony Hammett, Tony Kelly, Vasili and Kaliope Adamis (Parents), Vaso Kamberri, Vaso Sigalou, Vi and Kevin Hurley, Victorio Merici, Vince Bateman, Warren Payne, Wayne Whitrod, Yiannis "Fasaria" Filipopoulos, Yiannis and Spiros Tsonis, Yiannis Merekoulis, Yiannis Rassias, Yiannis Smirnios, Yovanna Adamis, (Wife), and many others, you have each left an indelible mark on my heart.

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## PREAMBLE

**The Extraordinary Life of “Pete the Greek”.** I consider myself just an ordinary bloke. While this memoir may center on my experiences, it is fundamentally a heartfelt tribute to the many friends who have enriched my life along the way. Some names may fade into the backdrop of memory, and that is not my intention; time has a way of taking its toll, and our recollections can dim with age. If I have inadvertently overlooked anyone, I sincerely ask for your forgiveness. This memoir has been made possible by a rich tapestry of documents, scribbled notes, articles, recordings, videos, photographs, oral stories, memories, observations, diaries, and letters. Without these contributions, memory alone cannot capture the essence of the past.

What began as a brief article has transformed into a living documentary memoir—a continuous reflection of my experiences. I envision myself adding items of interest as I revisit these memories, and with a bit of luck, I hope to create something meaningful. In due course, I will share stories from my early years growing up in Australia, as a young lad with roots in a land far from my adopted country, and I will include them as I age, hopefully with dignity. If these tales bring joy, laughter, comfort, or courage to others facing life's challenges, then they have fulfilled their purpose. Conversely, if they hold no value, then I have fallen short. Regardless of the outcome, please remember that these are simply stories about an ordinary bloke affectionately known by my mates as “Pete the Greek.”

In this memoir, I touch upon significant aspects of my life that I hope will be easy to follow. Naturally, I refer to my time as a member of the Australian Army and the profound impact it has had on me as an Australian of Hellenic descent. There is nothing particularly heroic about my service, and those seeking grand tales of valour may find disappointment. Recently, I spoke with an old friend, Maurice Barwick, who aptly described my generation as the “in-betweens,” referring to those who served during a period relatively free of major conflicts.

Our generation has been fortunate to inherit the lessons of World War I, World War II, Korea, Borneo, Sarawak, Malaya, and Vietnam—lessons that encompass the essence of the ANZAC spirit and the mateship that accompanies it. In turn, we have passed down these customs, traditions, and training skills to the current generation serving today—a generation that has made us and Australia proud in the many conflicts our nation has been involved in since 1998, a mere 27 years ago. Maurice Barwick was not wrong; I take pride in knowing that it was our generation that helped win the Cold War.



## AIM & PURPOSE

As readers delve into the pages of this memoir, they may feel that I have led an extraordinary life. However, if that is the primary takeaway, then I have failed miserably to convey the true purpose of this work. This book is not merely a chronicle of one man's journey; it is a tapestry of stories woven together to serve as a catalyst for the preservation and continuation of family legacies.

The aim of this memoir is not to simply recount my life, but to lay the foundations for future generations to draw upon, reflect, and interpret the rich history of the Adamis family and those associated with it. I have always recognized that the power of oral histories and personal narratives lies in their ability to transcend time and space, serving as a bridge between the past, present, and future.

Through this memoir, I am inviting readers to engage with the story, not as passive observers, but as active participants in the ongoing legacy of their own families. By weaving together the tapestry of my family's history, I provide a framework for others to explore their own roots, to uncover the stories that have shaped their lineage, and to build upon the foundations laid by their ancestors. These chronicles are not merely a collection of anecdotes, but a testament to the resilience, service, and extraordinary potential that lies within each family.

Through this work, I aim to encourage readers to learn from the past, to gain insights into the thoughts and behaviours of those who have come before, and to use these lessons as a springboard for their own personal and familial journeys. Each family's history is unique, a tapestry of its own, and the Adamis memoir serves as a guide, a source of inspiration, and a catalyst for the creation and continuation of these generational legacies.

I therefore encourage readers to use this book as a starting point for their own research, a reference point for further exploration, and a wellspring of images and artifacts that can breathe life into the past. By empowering readers to create and share their own family histories, I hope to inspire a ripple effect of storytelling, where each successive generation adds their own threads to the tapestry of human experience.

In essence, this memoir is not a mere recounting of my life; it is a clarion call for the preservation and celebration of family histories, a bridge between the past and the future, and a testament to the power of shared narratives to shape the world we live in. Through the story, readers are invited to embark on their own extraordinary journeys, to honour the sacrifices and triumphs of their ancestors, and to leave an indelible mark on the world, just as I have done.

# INTRODUCTION

As I reflect on the events and experiences that have shaped my life, I am struck by the realization that I am, at my core, "just an ordinary bloke." Yet, when I delve deeper into the memories and recollections that fill these pages, I discover a life that has been anything but ordinary.

This memoir began as a brief document an article perhaps and a simple attempt to capture and preserve the memories of the many friends and mentors who have walked alongside me throughout my journey. However, as time passed, it evolved into a living, breathing testament to the extraordinary resilience of the human spirit. Not only mine but that of the many who I crossed path with and were touched by their own journeys.

Within these chapters, you will find tales of hardship and triumph, of loss and renewal. You will encounter the grit and determination of a young man who refused to be defined by the challenges that life threw his way - be it the harsh realities of growing up in a foreign land, the rigors of military service, the heartbreak of a broken marriage, or the debilitating physical and mental health battles that would have brought many to their knees.

Yet, through it all, my faith and unwavering spirit shines through. My commitment to family, my loyalty to my mates, and my unshakable belief in the values I learned during my youth and time in the Australian Army have sustained me, even in my darkest moments.

In sharing my story, I invite you, the reader, to reflect on your own life's journey. Consider the ways in which you, too, have weathered the storms and emerged stronger for it. My words serve as a powerful reminder that, no matter how ordinary we may seem, each of us has the capacity to lead an extraordinary life.

As you turn the pages of this simple memoir, I encourage you to embrace the lessons it has to offer. For in the end, we are all "just blokes" - ordinary people called to live extraordinary lives.

# CHAPTER 1 LIFE DURING THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

**The Peasant Heart of Revolution.** The Greek War of Independence (1821–1829) was not merely a military conflict or a political upheaval—it was a transformative social movement that awakened a long-dormant national consciousness. While much has been written about the generals, diplomats, and foreign powers who influenced the outcome of the war, the soul of the revolution lay in the resilience and spirit of the ordinary Greek peasant. This chapter explores the daily lives, trials, and triumphs of these rural Greeks whose sacrifices and solidarity became the unsung foundation of modern Greece.

**Life Before the Fire:** The Pre-War Rural Order In the early 19th century, the vast majority of Greeks lived in rural, agrarian communities. These settlements were shaped by centuries of feudal oppression under Ottoman rule. Peasants toiled under a burdensome system of taxation and tenancy, often working land they did not own, paying tribute both to Turkish landlords and local Greek elites. Life was precarious, a constant balancing act between survival and servitude. Yet, within this hardship, Greek village life thrived with cultural richness. In mountainous regions such as Taygetos, where villages like Georgitsi, Loganikos, and Kotitsa clung to craggy slopes, families cultivated olives, grains, and grapes using timeworn methods passed down through generations. The Orthodox Church was not merely a spiritual haven but a bastion of Greek identity, education, and continuity under Ottoman suppression. Traditions tied to the land—seasonal festivals, weddings, saints' days—offered moments of respite and communal joy amid the struggle.

**War Erupts:** Chaos in the Countryside When the war broke out in 1821, it erupted like a lightning strike across the Greek landscape. For the peasantry, it marked both a terrifying disruption and an electrifying opportunity. As Ottoman troops cracked down on insurgents, villages became battlegrounds. Fields were torched, livestock stolen, families torn apart. Entire settlements were erased in brutal reprisals—as in Kotitsa, where Ottoman forces massacred civilians in a grim act of deterrence.

Many peasants, however, did not remain passive victims. Drawn by dreams of freedom, vengeance, or mere survival, they joined militias and banded together as klephtes—irregular fighters who used their knowledge of the land to wage asymmetric warfare. These former farmers turned freedom fighters ambushed enemy convoys, raided Ottoman outposts, and formed the backbone of the Greek resistance. The transformation of a ploughman into a guerrilla was often sudden. In the same hills where they once hunted wolves or gathered herbs, peasants now fought for the future of their homeland. The transition was not easy; families endured famine, poverty, and exposure, with women and children often left to tend to the ruins of homesteads or seek shelter in caves and forests.

**Survival, Solidarity, and Subversion.** Despite the devastation, the spirit of community endured. Rural Greeks turned to one another for survival. Food was rationed, tools shared, children protected communally. The Church and the village elder became the glue holding together a fraying social order. Necessity bred innovation. With few resources, peasants repurposed Ottoman spoils—tools, furniture, even stones from razed buildings—to rebuild shelters and create rudimentary defences. Tales emerged of secret tunnels beneath homes, hidden chapels in mountain groves, and signal fires used to warn neighbouring villages of approaching danger. Cultural practices adapted too: songs once about harvests now honoured fallen heroes; lullabies carried hidden meanings of freedom and resistance.

**Heroes in Homespun:** From Peasant to Patriot War elevated many previously anonymous individuals into local legends. Young men from villages like Loganikos returned as war heroes, some rising to leadership roles under generals such as Kolokotronis. Others became immortalized through folk songs and oral histories, their names passed on like talismans of courage. One such figure, Merekoulis, a humble shepherd and covert ally to Kolokotronis, constructed a fortified tower that doubled as a rebel hideout. This structure—built from ancient stones and mountain slate—symbolized the fusion of ancient legacy and revolutionary will. These towers, often stark and utilitarian, became icons of a new Greece built from the ground up by its most humble citizens.

Merekoulias efforts were mirrored across the countryside. Blacksmiths forged weapons from ploughshares; women smuggled messages in baskets of bread; children acted as lookouts along goat paths. These acts of resistance, though small, were vital strands in the larger fabric of revolution. Reconstruction and Redefinition: Life After Liberation The war's end in 1829 did not immediately bring prosperity. The newly-formed Greek state grappled with economic ruin, population dislocation, and political fragmentation. Yet for the rural population, the end of Ottoman rule brought hope, land, and autonomy. Feudal land systems were dismantled. Many veterans were granted land in return for their service. The fertile plains of the Euvrotas Valley became a haven for those who sought to rebuild their lives. Stone cottages dotted the landscape, each a silent testament to survival and renewal. Some of these structures were pieced together from the rubble of war, symbolizing both loss and rebirth.

However, land redistribution also brought tension. Old clan allegiances and new political affiliations shaped the social hierarchy of post-war villages. Those who had served in militias sometimes found themselves in positions of authority, while others, especially widows and orphans, struggled to claim a place in the new order. Education became a newfound priority. Schools opened in repurposed churches, and literacy was seen as a path to civic participation. With state support, the sons of peasants began to dream beyond the farm fields—some pursuing religious vocations, others joining the military or civil service.

**A Lasting Legacy:** Identity Forged in Fire The legacy of Greek peasants in the War of Independence stretches beyond physical reconstruction. Their endurance laid the foundation for a new national ethos rooted in sacrifice, community, and determination. They were no longer just workers of the soil—they were architects of a nation. Their stories became central to the cultural rebirth of Greece. Songs, poems, and plays celebrated their valour. Festivals once focused solely on agrarian cycles now included patriotic rituals honouring local martyrs. Schools taught the tales of resistance, ensuring that each new generation grew up with an understanding of the courage it took to win freedom. Moreover, the Orthodox Church continued to play a pivotal role, not just as a religious institution, but as a guardian of collective memory. Through sermons, icons, and liturgies, it preserved the narrative of rural heroism and kept alive the spiritual underpinning of the national cause.

**The Earth and the Flame.** In the end, the Greek War of Independence was not just a political revolt—it was a reawakening of a people bound to the land. The peasantry, though often overlooked in grand historical narratives, were the enduring heart of the revolution. Their lives, marked by toil and terror, also bore the seeds of freedom, resilience, and national rebirth. The war's ultimate triumph was not simply the creation of a Greek state, but the affirmation that ordinary people—armed with determination, solidarity, and a sense of identity—could bend the course of history. Today, as Greece continues to navigate its place in the world, the legacy of its peasant revolutionaries remains a source of strength and inspiration—a reminder that even in the darkest soil, the roots of liberty can grow deep and unbreakable.

## CHAPTER 2 POST GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

**A Journey Through Time.** Drawing from oral histories passed down to me over the past 70 years, I have managed to gather the various threads of my family's past and weave them into a rich tapestry of stories—some rooted in fact, others shaped by my observations throughout the years.

Our great-great-great-grandfather was born around 1815, just before the Greek War of Independence. His exact date of birth remains speculative, as there are no written records to confirm it. According to family lore, the Adamis family migrated to Pellana from a village high in the mountains called Georgitsi. I can attest to this truth, having visited the area numerous times and spoken with surviving relatives. I even discovered a photograph of an Adamis hanging in Yiannis and Anna's (Glekas) restaurant, a tangible connection to our roots. My father, Vasili, further clarified our lineage, sharing that the Adamis family originated in Crete, fleeing the Ottomans for reasons unknown. They trekked over the Taygetos mountains to find sanctuary in Georgitsi.

My father also mentioned that we still have relatives living in Crete today. Researching telephone subscribers in Crete confirmed this, but whether there is a direct familial link remains uncertain. I came across references to Ottoman taxation in the Peloponnese, and an English translation noted a certain "Arthamier" being taxed, next to which was the surname Adamis. Whether this implies a connection to Ardamis in English is unknown, as there are families in Laconia called Ardamis instead of Adamis. Perhaps the name Arthamier translates to Ardamis in Ottoman records. Whatever the case, I find myself inclined to favour my father's narrative.



**The Birth of a Nation.** On February 3, 1830, after years of struggle, Greece finally gained independence from Ottoman rule, emerging as a sovereign nation. This was not the first revolt against the Ottomans, but it was the most successful. Previous uprisings had been ruthlessly quelled, resulting in the enslavement of their people. The spark of freedom was first ignited in the town of Aeropoli in Mani, a region in Laconia renowned for its fighting spirit and courage. A region where freedom fighters gathered strength as they traversed the Taygetos mountains, swelling their ranks until they successfully captured Kalamata, igniting the War of Independence.

Around 1839, my great-great-great-grandfather and his wife had two sons: Christos and Thanasis. By 1863, my great-great-grandfather Christos Adamis had married and fathered three children: Dimitri, Vasili, and Yiannis. While Dimitri did not have children, Yiannis went on to have three and Vasili raised six children. My great-grandfather Vasili who was born in Georgitsi around 1865, upon marrying, relocated to a village named Kalyvia of Georgitsi (now known as Pellana since 1930). They built a home facing South towards the Taygetos mountain range, where he and his wife welcomed six children. This home when visited in 2004 had fallen into disrepair and only the tiles and debris of walls remained in a rubble.

Great-grandfather Vasili was a poor farmer who struggled to provide for his family. In his desperation, he resorted to thieving and cattle rustling, raiding neighbouring villages and selling stolen livestock for profit. Although everyone suspected his activities, no one dared to accuse him, as he was one of their own. There was no authority strong enough to enforce the law in those days, and even if there had been, proving ownership was nearly impossible. Moreover, the police could be easily swayed by a bribe, as they had families to feed.

It was in Pellana that the six children were raised along with my grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) Adamis who was born in 1896. Life was harsh, women were expected to work in the fields, cook, sew, wash, care for the children and keep the family unit together. Every child in the family had a chore assigned to them and life in the hinterland, valleys and hills of the Eurotas valley learnt to become, strong, tough, resilient, and loyal to the clans that they were associated with. Life was certainly not easy.

**A Journey to the New World.** At the age of 15, in 1911, Grandfather Panagiotis (Peter), along with his elder sister Yiannoula, and their cousin Christos Adamis, along with an unknown uncle, set out for the United States, seeking a better life and to escape the poverty at home. At Penacook New Hampshire, they were met by relatives who had left the village in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century approximately 1885 and worked in the Wool Mills. Grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) spent approximately 17 years and six months in the USA. He and his sister worked in the fruit and vegetable business, eventually saving enough money to start their own grocery store. Having been made aware of this through oral stories, I wondered whether they had a "Barrow" business like many other Greeks who had migrated to the USA.

**Grandfather Peter Adamis and his sister Giannoula.** The tapestry of my family's history is woven with intriguing tales and enigmatic figures, none more captivating than my Grandfather Peter Adamis and his sister, Aunt Giannoula. Their stories, marked by resilience and mystery, offer glimpses into the lives they led and the challenges they faced. Grandfather Peter Adamis was a man of diverse talents and pursuits. For a time, he embraced the world of wrestling, a venture that ultimately left him injured in the ring. The physical demands of the sport, coupled with the injuries he sustained, led him to explore other avenues. He transitioned into a role as a private detective or a security guard in a hotel, utilizing his keen observational skills and strong presence to maintain order and safety.

The Adamis family had connections that spanned continents. Their Uncle Christos played a pivotal role in their journey, sponsoring them in the United States—a land of opportunity and new beginnings. It was through these familial ties that they navigated the challenges of migration and established roots in a foreign land. Aunt Giannoula's life is shrouded in partial mystery, her story pieced together from fragments of family lore and conjecture. She married another Greek, though the details of his origins remain elusive. Some speculate that her husband's name was Athanasios and that he hailed from Zakynthos, an island in Greece. Together, they are believed to have had a son named Demetrios, who reportedly served in the American army during World War II. However, much of this remains speculative, with little concrete evidence to confirm these accounts.

Further speculation surrounds Aunt Giannoula's family. It is said that her son was drafted during World War II and served in Germany. Rumours suggest that he married a German woman and had two children upon returning to the United States. Tragically, it is also rumoured that he suffered a terrible accident and passed away—a narrative clouded by uncertainty and lacking definitive proof. In my quest to uncover the truth about Aunt Giannoula and her family, I have pursued various avenues—searching through death and marriage records, social security records, World War II records, and birth and death registries. I even reached out to New Hampshire county records, though access to certain U.S. data may be restricted for Australian citizens like myself.

One potential source of insight is my Aunt Katerina (née Adamis) Valassis, who resided in Stamford and is in her late 80s. After arriving in the United States, she married a man named Valassis. Aunt Katerina is the only family member who might have known Aunt Giannoula, yet my attempts to discuss these matters with her have been unfruitful. Although she remains a kind and gracious lady, we suspect that her memories of Aunt Giannoula may have faded with time. There is also a lingering question about the fate of Grandfather Peter Adamis's letters.

As Aunt Giannoula was illiterate, it is speculated that her husband, who could read and write, may have destroyed the letters to prevent any claims on Grandfather Peter's assets. Such actions, if true, might have been driven by the harsh realities faced by newcomers to the United States, where survival often necessitated difficult choices. As I continue to piece together the narrative of Grandfather Peter Adamis and Aunt Giannoula, I am reminded of the complexities and challenges that defined their lives. Their stories, while partially obscured by time and distance, offer invaluable insights into our family's legacy—a testament to perseverance, familial bonds, and the enduring quest for identity and belonging.

In 1922, amidst the chaos of the [Greco-Turkish War](#), refugees were fleeing the mass extermination of Greeks, Assyrians, Pontian Greeks, and Armenians at the hands of the Turks. This genocide shocked the world as the Young Turks initiated an ethnic cleansing campaign against non-Turkish and non-Islamic groups. Greece was overwhelmed with refugees from Asia Minor, many of whom were not welcomed by those on the mainland, leading to widespread bitterness.

**Morphis Clan.** Around the same time, Panagiotis (Peter) Morphis, a member of our village Pellana, emigrated to Australia. He found work in kitchens and restaurants across New South Wales and Victoria, eventually serving as a defence worker during World War II for the Australian army. Panagiotis (Peter) Morphis was the first person from Pellana to migrate to Australia, becoming a valued member of the Adamis family and a favourite of Panagiotis (Peter) and Phillip when they visited him at the Morphis Seven Creeks Café in Euroa, a town north of Melbourne. Later in life, Morphis returned to Greece, passing away in his hometown.

**The Rassias Clan.** Around this same period, my grandfather Phillip Rassias and his wife, Eleni Varoutsios, from another prominent clan, had a son named Thanasis. Phillip and Eleni Rassias were our mother's parents. Grandfather Phillip's mother belonged to the Merekoulis clan in the village of Pardal. His grandfather was the right-hand man of General Kolokotronis during the Greek War of Independence. The Merekoulis clan was also powerful, living in the only pyrgo (tower) in Pardali.

My mother and father often recounted stories of their childhood and I would write down what they had said or I would record the conversations. My mother shared with me the intricate tapestry of our family's past, woven with tales of struggle, resilience, and enduring love. At the heart of these stories was my Grandfather Phillip Rassias, a man whose life was marked by conflict, both on the battlefield and within the confines of his village. Grandfather Phillip was called to serve in the Defence Force in his early twenties, at a time when young men were routinely drafted. His six-year absence from home was spent in the tumultuous theatres of Asia Minor, where he fought against Turkish forces. Despite his youth, Phillip was a seasoned soldier, having been wounded twice—once in the face, and another time in the foot. The scars he bore were more than physical; they were reminders of the horrors he had witnessed and the resilience he had forged.

Upon returning to the village, Phillip discovered that some villagers had taken advantage of his prolonged absence by altering the boundaries of his land. Fuelled by anger and a newfound assertiveness, he swiftly restored his property to its rightful state, a testament to his indomitable spirit and determination. Phillip's experiences on the battlefield had shaped his values and attitudes, instilling in him a fierce commitment to family and community. Though his expectations were high and often at odds with modern sensibilities, they were reflective of a time when survival depended on strength and unity.

Before Phillip's departure to Asia Minor, a poignant moment unfolded with Vasiliki Tsihli, his neighbour, who harboured feelings for him. As she attempted to express her affection, Phillip gently rebuffed her, signalling that his heart lay elsewhere. Life in the village was punctuated by moments of celebration and confrontation. At a festival held at the Vrisi, Grandmother Helen, Phillip's wife, found herself in an altercation. A simple misunderstanding escalated when she confronted a man who had inadvertently bumped into her. The conflict drew Phillip's attention, and he quickly inserted himself into the fray, a reflection of his protective nature.

Grandmother Helen, née Varoutsios, was a woman of similar temperament to her husband—strong-willed and unyielding. Their marriage was a union of formidable personalities, leading to frequent disagreements, though they maintained a united front in public. The harsh realities of village life took their toll on Helen, both physically and mentally. The loss of her parents within a short span dealt a devastating blow to Grandmother Helen. As she prepared for her mother's 40-day memorial, her father passed away on the same day. Overwhelmed by grief, Helen fell into a deep depression, unable to reconcile the sudden void left by her beloved parents. Her cries at her father's funeral, "Father, father, I will soon join you," echoed her profound despair. Despite the doctor's warnings, Helen attended the funerals, and the emotional strain proved too much for her fragile health. She suffered a major stroke, leaving her partially paralysed and struggling to speak. My mother vividly recalled the day when her mother laboured breathing filled the room with a haunting sound. In a moment of desperation, she called for help, and her cousin, George Rassias, answered her pleas, providing comfort and support.

At the time, I was a newborn, cradled in a cot suspended from the rafters, while my mother was six months pregnant with my brother Phillip. Uncle George Rassias's presence was a godsend, as he helped ease Grandmother Helen's suffering. My father, sensing an ominous foreboding, set out with a friend to fetch the doctor from Georgitsi. On the journey, a sudden flash of light convinced him that his mother-in-law had passed. Despite his intuition, they pressed on, reaching the doctor, who advised them to return. Tragically, their fears were confirmed; Grandmother Helen had succumbed to her grief, passing away before the doctor could arrive. He attended her funeral the following day, a sombre conclusion to a life of strength and fortitude. The story of Grandfather Phillip Rassias and Grandmother Helen is one of resilience in the face of adversity, of love and loss, and of a family's enduring legacy. It serves as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by those who came before us, and the strength that lies within the bonds of family.

**Cattle rustling.** Great-grandfather Vasili who had become involved with a group of cattle rustlers led by a notorious figure named Kalkas, whose real name was Glekas continued with their cattle rustling. This gang was infamous during their heyday, and no one dared inform the local constabulary in Sparta about their activities, as many villagers relied on the outcome of cattle rustling to survive. Despite their precautions, there was always an element of risk. Great-grandfather Vasili was eventually shot in the leg by an irate farmer who caught him and his gang in the act of rustling cattle. He was brought before a magistrate in Sparta, where he languished in jail until funds were raised to bribe the local authorities for his release. These funds did not come from Vasili but rather from his son Panagiotis (Peter), who had been sending money back home to purchase land and cattle. In his correspondence, great-grandfather Vasili informed Panagiotis (Peter) that he had bought land and cattle on his behalf, assuring him that all was well. In truth, while he did purchase cattle, no land was acquired; the money had been used to secure his freedom. Great-grandfather Vasili would come to regret his actions when he faced his son upon Panagiotis (Peter)'s return from America.

**The Return to Greece. In 1925.** while in America, grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) sent funds to his father to purchase land and cattle on his behalf. After some period of time had passed, grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) saved additional funds to the tune of approximately 123,000 drachmas. With these funds, he returned to Greece and journeyed to Pellana. Upon his return, he sought out his father, who confessed to spending the money on bribes instead of purchasing land. Great-grandfather Vasili expressed deep remorse, knowing how hard it had been for Panagiotis (Peter) to raise a family.

Unfortunately, there was more bad news for grandfather Panagiotis (Peter): his brothers had sold the sheep and cattle he had bought for the family and had left the village a week earlier to seek their fortune in Argentina. Upon hearing this, grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) saddled a horse and rushed to Athens, hoping to catch his brothers before they sailed. Upon arrival, he learned that they had departed two days earlier on a ship bound for Argentina. With a heavy heart, he returned to Pellana, and this financial setback contributed to his struggles later in life.

Grandfather Panagiotis's (Peter) brothers in Argentina, created a jewellery store and prospered, however their good fortune was short-lived for the one who was married went insane from his guilt and died and the other brother died soon after. An unknown individual with forged documents approached authorities in Argentina and stated that he was related to the two brothers and therefore inherited the Jewellery store. This yarn was handed to me by my father who had learned it from his own sources. The brother who was married had left his wife and daughter back in the village. The daughter was sent to a wealthy family in Athens as a domestic maid and the last that was heard of her was that she died in old age. The mother ended up in an insane asylum from the grief caused by her husband who fled to Argentina.

Panagiotis (Peter) remained in the village and married Eleni Mihalopoulos, who was then 27 years old. Her lineage was from the powerful Mihalopoulos clan. Her father owned an inn and was given the nickname of "Hadzi" to signify that he had been to Jerusalem. Grandmother Eleni enormous dowry combined with the 123,000 drachmas, that Grandfather Panagiotis had brought with him provided them with the opportunity to purchase land, build a home, and raise their family. Grandfather Panagiotis remained in Greece for about three years, during which he was called up for national service to serve in combat duty in Thessaloniki. However, after getting his hair cut and learning that the war was over, he paid his way out of military service and returned back home to the village. During this period, he and Eleni welcomed two daughters in succession: Alik and Christine.



At that time, although the world was not technically in a depression until the stock market crash of 1929, poverty and poor living standards persisted in the village due to the influx of refugees from Turkey, Russia, and the Balkans, coupled with high birth rates. Recognizing that he needed to provide for his family, Panagiotis (Peter) decided to return to America. In 1927, leaving behind his wife and two daughters, he set out once more to earn funds for his family. On this occasion, grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) attempted to return to America with his cousin George Rassias. However, they only made it as far as Cuba before being sent back by American authorities. When the recession struck, the U.S.A responded by imposing severe immigration restrictions and was selective about who could enter the country. Greeks in those days were considered the lowest of the lowest in some quarters of the USA and Grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) regretted not obtaining American citizenship during his earlier stay. Grandfather Panagiotis attempted on two other occasions to enter the USA and on each attempt, he was detained and sent back to Greece.

Upon his return to Greece, Panagiotis (Peter) sent letter after letter to his sister Giannoula, requesting his share of the business to be sent to him and asking them to sign documents that would allow him to migrate back to America. He and his sister had a joint partnership in a fruit and vegetable business, which was generating income. However, as his sister had married and was illiterate, she did not understand the contents of the letters. Her husband, fearing that Panagiotis (Peter) would return and claim his share of the business, refused to sign any documents. After receiving no response to his letters, Panagiotis (Peter) gave up and focused on raising his family and had lost hope of ever returning to America or receiving any proceeds from the business.

**A Family Divided.** My father recounted a poignant story about his grandfather Vasili's deathbed request to see his son Panagiotis (Peter). When Panagiotis (Peter) arrived, Vasili asked him to place his foot on his chest and forgive him for all the pain he had caused. Panagiotis (Peter) had forgiven his father ten years prior, but seeing his father's guilt made him forgive him again. The old man passed away in 1938, survived by his wife Eleni, their sons Panagiotis (Peter), Stavros, and Thanasis, and daughters Yiannoula and Kyriako. In 1938, another boy was born to Grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) and his wife Eleni, also named Kostas. Unfortunately, fate was unkind to the family, and this Kostas, too, passed away three years later, another victim of inadequate medical facilities.

**A New Home.** Grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) and his wife established their home on the hillside of the village facing the Parnona Mountains and towards the East where the Palaeokastro and site of the ancient Mycenaean palace. If my memory serves me correctly, I remember the house had two levels: one downstairs for animals and one upstairs for sleeping. It was a warm cottage, and although I cannot recall the smells emanating from the animals below, I know that they provided warmth to those living above. I remember garlic and other herbs hanging from the rafters and walls, and a window with wooden shutters facing east to let in the morning sun. I would look out that window and see dogs barking at me; I later learned they were hunting dogs. My aunts Aliki, Christine, aunt Rita looked out for me and made sure I did not fall.

The cottage had wooden floors and visible rafters in the ceiling. A fireplace served as the only source of heat and cooking. A large wooden tub was filled with hot water for occasional baths. Washing was done in a small bungalow adjacent to the main house. If a household did not have a well, water was carted from the (Vrisi) village spring located at the bottom of the village square. Due to the hilly terrain of Pellana, fetching water became a monumental task. As a four-year-old, I remember visiting my grandfather Panagiotis home and I can still remember the garlic hanging from the eaves, the cooking smells, the overhead ceiling of bamboo, looking over a window down below to a dog barking back at me. I was looked after by my grandparents and my aunts who were living with their parents. Although my memories may have dimmed with age, but I can say that I felt safe and loved.

**The farm.** The farm consisted of several fields for growing wheat, fruits, olive trees, and vegetables. They also had land for grazing animals, with children shepherding them to pastures outside the village. The community was primarily agricultural, relying on whatever remittances could be sent from relatives living overseas. As soon as the children were able to help, they were sent out into the fields to assist with the family farm. All of grandfather Panagiotis (Peter)'s children were expected to remain at home until married, which made living conditions quite cramped under one roof. The bedroom contained several large mattresses and a few blankets, with the boys sleeping on one mattress, the girls on another, while grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) and his wife Eleni shared the last mattress. The family was close-knit, cooperating in many ways to make life manageable under those conditions.

On December 12, 1928, my father Vasili Adamis was born to Panagiotis (Peter) and Eleni Adamis. From the age of six, Father began helping his parents with domestic chores. A year later, in 1929, another son named Kostas was born but tragically passed away two years later after contracting a virus. In 1933, at the age of five, Vasili joined his parents in the fields, helping to maintain their plots. He also became a shepherd, looking after the family's sheep and goats. When he was of age, Vasili began primary school in Pellana. By all accounts, he was a bright student.

**The Village finds its ancient roots.** In 1930, the village, originally known as Kalyvia of Georgitsi, was renamed Pellana, a name that echoed its ancient roots. Archaeologists had conducted surveys and concluded that the site of Kalyvia of Georgitsi was, in fact, the site of ancient Pellana. The renaming of villages and towns was occurring throughout Greece, though the reasons behind it remain unclear—whether it was for patriotic sentiment, a means of reconnecting to ancient roots, or a response to the Turks renaming Constantinople to Istanbul.

Many years later when the siblings returned back to the village for a reunion, they all agreed to give their portion of the home to the youngest sibling, Dimitri who had remained behind in Greece and looked after Grandfather Panagiotis and grandmother Eleni. When Grandmother Eleni passed away, Dimitri tore down the old home and built a new one for he and his wife Tacia. My father was upset that in the process; Dimitri his brother had destroyed all of the books that their father had brought back from America. Dimitri and his wife Tacia had three girls, Eleni, Hrisa and Panagiota. Dad was tasked with assisting his sisters Christine, Harikleia and his brother Theophilos when they migrated to Australia, whilst aunt Anna went to Canada.

### **Returning to Roots: The Challenge of Rebuilding in an Ancient Land**

After years away, my parents returned to the village of their birth, seeking to reconnect with their roots and embrace the simplicity of rural life once more. For a time, they stayed with relatives and rented a modest apartment in Sparta, all the while nurturing dreams of rebuilding a family home on the land where they once lived. Their plan was to demolish the old stable and construct a new cottage on its very foundations—a vision that symbolized renewal and continuity. As the construction commenced, under the skilled hands of my mother's brother, Evgeni, the project became a focal point for the villagers.



**Yiannis Filipopoulos, Thanasis Rassias, Kostas Tsihlis, Eleni Tsihli, Panagiota Tsihli and Grandfather Phillip Rassias – Cottage 1955**

Many of them were related to us, and visits were frequent. They gathered to watch the cottage take shape, but beneath the surface, whispers of resentment and jealousy began to stir. Gossip spread like wildfire as they questioned why, after so many years, our parents had chosen to return and settle in the village. One particularly meddlesome individual, perhaps motivated by envy or a sense of self-importance, took it upon himself to report my parents to the local building department for their new construction. The inspectors arrived to review the project, and my father confidently presented them with the building plans.

Initially satisfied, the inspectors then inquired, almost casually, whether my father had secured a permit for digging. Indignation rose within him, for he was merely building on his own land, using the stable's existing foundations. However, the inspectors informed him of a new law: no excavation or concrete laying was to proceed without prior inspection of the foundations. Moreover, due to another regulation, the archaeological department had to be notified of any digging, as the entire area of Pellana and its surroundings was subject to stringent oversight to protect its ancient heritage. Faced with bureaucratic hurdles and unforeseen legalities, my parents were forced to pay a considerable fine for failing to adhere to these newly enacted laws. It was only years later that my father discovered the identity of the person who had reported him—a former friend from his youth, who had once frequented our home for conversation and coffee.

Today, the law remains in place, a testament to the rich and ancient history of Pellana. Any new construction requires approval not only from the building department but also from the archaeological authorities. Tourists, drawn to the allure of ancient ruins, often arrive with expectations of historical grandeur akin to other regions of Greece, only to find themselves disappointed. Many vacant plots surround Sparta and its environs, where landowners are unable to build due to the presence of ancient foundations beneath the soil. These sites are under the jurisdiction of the archaeological department, which assesses their significance.

Developers are hesitant to invest in projects that involve constructing over ancient ruins, as it would require installing solid glass floors for potential tourists—a costly and complex endeavour. Until a consensus is reached between developers, the building department, and the archaeological authorities, the ancient foundations of Sparta will remain untouched, preserving the echoes of history beneath the surface. My parents' experience underscores the delicate balance between honouring the past and embracing the future. Their journey of rebuilding was fraught with challenges, yet it also served as a reminder of the rich cultural tapestry that defines our heritage.



**Maurice Barwick and I Cottage – 2019**



Many years later, when I returned to the village and took up residence in the cottage, it was not until after our father's passing that we embarked on a journey to renovate and modernize it. The structure itself remained unchanged, preserving the essence of our family history, but the interior underwent a transformation to meet contemporary living standards. We introduced new furniture, installed modern windows, added electrical appliances, and replaced the old gas stoves with newer models. The lighting was updated, internet access was installed, and the indoor taps were swapped for sleek modern fixtures. Security cameras were strategically placed both inside and out, ensuring peace of mind. Fresh bed linens, cutlery, and various comforts were added to enhance the homeliness of the cottage.

Outside, the cottage received equal attention. The tiles were painted and repaired, and a comprehensive security system was put in place to deter any unwanted visitors. The water taps were upgraded, and we introduced new gardens with enriched soil, a flourishing herb garden, and a cozy chicken coop. Additional olive trees were planted, grapevines were carefully pruned, and vibrant flowers adorned the landscape. The old, rusty fence was replaced with a new wire fence, and a sturdy gate was installed along with roof gutters designed to capture rainwater, channelling it into two large tanks to prepare for the dry season. The realization of this vision was made possible with the support of my brother Philip, who, like me, was born in the old stable. He visited the renovated cottage several times, sharing in the joy of its transformation. Our mother contributed financially to the renovations, channelling funds through Philip or my wife Yovanna. Despite the challenges posed by health issues and the prolonged Covid-19 lockdowns, which stretched the project over seven years, the work was eventually completed.

Today, the cottage stands as a welcoming haven for friends and relatives who visit, whether for an extended stay or just a few days, depending on their schedules. Sadly, both our parents have since passed, and we often reflect on how much they would have cherished seeing the renovated cottage. Their hearts had embraced Australia and its values, yet we believe they would have delighted in the chance to visit the cottage one last time. Before my mother passed away, I shared with her my wish to be buried in Pellana, the place of my birth. Her response was both touching and humorous. She turned to me and said, "Now you tell me." Curious, I asked, "Why, Mum?" She replied, "Had I known that, I would have buried your father in Greece so that you can have company." We both laughed, knowing full well the impossibility of such a gesture, yet appreciating the sentiment and shared bond that transcended time and distance.



**Cottage 2017**

## CHAPTER 3 WW2 & GREEK CIVIL WAR

When World War II began in 1939, Greece was neutral for a time but was soon attacked by Mussolini's Italy. The winter of 1941 saw Italy launch an unprovoked assault on Greece. The Greek forces valiantly repelled the Italians, embarrassing Mussolini. This marked the first occasion an Allied army had bested one of the Axis powers. However, Hitler, preparing his forces for an assault on Russia and fearing a hostile Balkans, declared war on Greece on April 6, 1941 and as such [Greece joined the Allies](#). The highly modern and efficient German forces quickly overran the exhausted Greek army, conquering Greece within a month. This invasion ultimately cost Hitler dearly, as it delayed his offensive against Russia, making an early victory before winter increasingly unlikely.

**Hardships of War.** During this tumultuous period, Greek citizens in rural areas did not feel the same level of poverty and hunger as those in cities, where many starved. Employment was scarce, and inflation eroded meagre wages. The streets were filled with men, women, and children who died from hunger, while young children with old faces fought stray dogs for scraps of food. In desperation, people resorted to consuming horses, donkeys, dogs, cats, and various shellfish. In the village, families coped under adverse conditions, managing to eke out a living—if the invaders did not steal their produce or destroy their goods in an attempt to subdue them. The village teacher fled upon the invaders' arrival, leading to the cessation of children's education.

Children in the village were deprived of schooling between 1944 and 1948 due to World War II and the ensuing Greek Civil War. Although Auntie Aliko and Auntie Christine had attended school before the war, they were not allowed to resume their education after hostilities ceased, as they were needed at home to help run the farm. My father Vasili, having completed primary school in the village, was enrolled in high school at Georgitsi, as Sparta was too far for him to travel. However, he did not finish high school, as the war broke out before he could complete his studies. When the communists arrived in the village, they became intoxicated, and Father managed to steal a pistol from them. When the Germans came, grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) kept our father far away to ensure that the Germans wouldn't capture him. During his downtime, Father would practice with the stolen pistol and occasionally threaten the younger brothers of those who had joined the communists. It was during this time that great-grandmother Eleni Adamis passed away.

In 1942, amidst the chaos of the war, a son named Theophilos was born. The family took no chances with his safety, taking him to a church high up in the mountains to be blessed by the clergy, hoping for divine protection. When grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) returned from America, he brought back a set of pistols, which he kept in the house. During World War II, a nephew, Kostas Varoutsios, along with another youth named Christos Mihalopoulos, came to grandfather Panagiotis (Peter)'s home to request the use of the pistols, as they planned to join the local partisan group that was aligned with communist ideology. The communists were more active in the countryside, better organized, and appealed to young men. Despite his reluctance, grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) refused to hand over the pistols, but Kostas took one and left to join the communist group. The other pistol was given to his brother Kostas Adamis, as grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) had no desire to become embroiled in conflict on either side.

**The Italian Occupation.** As the war progressed, the Italians swept through the village, asking if anyone spoke Italian or German. A villager named George Koulogiannis, thinking the Italians needed an interpreter, led them to grandfather Panagiotis (Peter)'s home. The Italians, in search of support, must have employed brutal methods, as poor George was a reluctant helper. Grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) spoke to the Italians in their native tongue, unaware of their true intentions. The Italians took him around to the surrounding villagers and countryside, demanding food. They relayed their commands through grandfather Panagiotis (Peter), instructing the Greek people to provide them with poultry, cheese, bread, livestock, and other provisions. When the villagers saw grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) moving around with the Italians, gossip quickly spread that he was assisting and sympathizing with the enemy. Grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) heard the rumours but felt helpless; refusing to cooperate would mean death for him or suffering for his family. He did not voluntarily submit to assisting the Italians.

Fearing for his life, grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) decided to approach the village communist organizer to speak on his behalf. He explained that he had done nothing wrong and that the demands placed upon him were beyond his control. He expressed that if he did not comply, his family would suffer. Grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) found himself in a precarious predicament, caught between the threats of the Blackshirts of Mussolini and the Nazis, and the communists ready to execute him. The village communist organizer, Thanasis Dimos, was a good man who took pity on grandfather Panagiotis (Peter). Sensing that the communists were likely to lose the civil war, he wrote a letter on grandfather's behalf, stating that Panagiotis (Peter) Adamis was a good man who had not fraternized with the enemy and should be left alone. Once this was done, and the villagers took note of the meeting, grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) was left in peace by both the communists and the enemy.

On another occasion, a communist (Andartes) leader from Pellana of the Mihos clan also spoke on grandfather Panagiotis (Peter)'s behalf, saving his life yet again. These were dangerous times, where family members turned against one another—brothers against brothers, fathers against sons, and cousins killing cousins. Tragically, young Mihos was killed by another village member from Pellana when he was wounded in a battle near Kastania. The story goes that young Mihos, despite his injuries, managed to crawl to Kastania, intending to surrender. He encountered a young married woman who found him in a state of distress. He offered her some English liras to help him turn himself in to the authorities. The woman took the money and informed her husband.

The husband went to the local military group, which was aligned with the Hittes (right-wing irregulars), and informed them of the situation. One of the men, also from Pellana, went to where Mihos lay and shot him at point-blank range. It appeared that this man was more concerned about Mihos potentially revealing their dealings than out of any personal vendetta against him. Tragically, the man who murdered Mihos left the village, migrating to Canada, where he ultimately died, never to return to Greece.

His body was brought back on Uncle Vlahogianni donkey and paraded through the streets of Kastania, where he was recognized. News of his death spread rapidly among the Pellaniotes, and those few who were aware of the illicit arms deals between Mihos and the other Pellaniote remained silent, fearing reprisals.

From the stories that circulate in the village even today, it seems that Mihos himself was no saint; he was also credited with carrying out gruesome killings. Others have suggested that Mihos was despised due to jealousy, and when he was reported to the local irregulars, the local policeman's revolver was used by a man named Sigalos, who shot him while he was wounded. It was not a pleasant way to die, but those were dangerous times.

Although grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) came close to being lynched by his own countrymen when the Germans arrived, he did not act as an interpreter for them. The Germans were vastly different from the Italians; they were more organized, and by the time they came to the village, they had their own interpreters or sympathizers. According to my father, the Germans did not plunder, rape, or use brutal force against the villagers. However, their tactics changed as the war progressed.

My mother recounted a story about the Germans in Pellana, who were preparing to burn down their home in retaliation for something. While the soldiers waited for orders, one of them took out his knife and pointed to a boil on Uncle Dimitri's neck, indicating that he wanted to lance it. He grabbed Uncle Dimitri and was about to lance the boil when all his siblings began to shriek and wail, fearing the German soldier would kill their brother. However, the German soldier, smiling and trying to communicate with gentle gestures, sought to explain that the boil needed treatment. Despite his kind approach, the siblings were unyielding. The German soldier ultimately lanced the boil, and then received orders to leave, thus saving the house from being burned down. He smiled and waved to the children as they departed. It was only after the Germans left that the siblings realized the soldier had intended to help.

**The Aftermath of War.** In 1943, Theophilos was born to grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) and grandmother Eleni. It was also a time when our father was almost killed by the Communists who had control of the villages. This was due to gossip and perhaps my father's devil-may-care attitude, the local communists learned that Father had stolen a pistol from them and was known to practice firing it outside the village. However, an alternative story suggests that Father had threatened the sons of those who had joined the communists, which did not endear him to them. This may explain why the communists took an interest in my father.



One day, Father found himself at Pavlo Philippopolis's tavern in the village when two communists were present. One of them, a large man compared to Father, slapped him so hard he spun around and nearly fell out the door. The same communist attempted to shoot my father, but the tavern owner raised his rifle, saving Father's life. Another communist, who was outside, kicked Father in the backside, prompting him to flee in anger. This incident, coupled with grandfather Panagiotis (Peter)'s influence and his brush with the communists, led Father to join the Hittes, who were opposed to the communists. At just 15 years old, he enlisted in the Hittes, tasked with fighting the Italians and Germans, maintaining security, and capturing communists to hand over to authorities. Interestingly, during this time, Father began smoking, only to give it up 46 years later. The Hittes operated in small groups under the leadership of handpicked members, most of whom were of the same age, from the same village, and often related to one another. Father remained with the Hittes for seven years and five months before enlisting in the regular army.



**Vasili Adamis on the right during the Greek Civil War – Member of the “Χητες” – X organisation. (Hittes Right wing Irregulars).**

**The Greek Civil War.** Life after the Greek Civil War was indeed difficult, Greece faced a period of political and economic instability, with a right-wing military establishment taking control, leading to a military junta from 1967 to 1974 and the abolition of the Colonel's regime in 1974. Many suffered the deprivations of a country still reeling from WW2 and the Civil War that followed and looked elsewhere seeking a better quality of life. In 1945, post WW2, grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) and grandmother Eleni welcomed a son named Dimitri. It was also the end of World War II, but another battle of equal severity was unfolding—the Greek Civil War.

In 1946, tensions between the communists and nationalists escalated into a full-blown conflict. Daily battles ensued, claiming many lives. This turmoil created an atmosphere of mistrust and fear, where political affiliations dictated relationships. Those who sought neutrality were also targeted by both sides and forced to comply with various demands. Father found himself on the nationalist side with the Hittes, while Uncle Thanasis sided with the communists (Andartes). The communists controlled the countryside by force, demanding enlistment from the young men. Passionate and educated, many young men easily followed the communist recruiters. In contrast, Father was influenced by his father who had spent years in America and educated him with a different perspective.

In 1948, when the schoolteacher returned, Aunties Anna (14) and Harikleia (12) were not allowed to attend day classes, as their help was needed on the farm. However, they did attend night classes, with the teacher recognizing the need for the village children to be educated. By 1949, Vasili Adamis (our father) had his sights set on Kalliope Rassias (our mother). When the civil war came to an end, Mother shared that her father and eldest brother Thanasis opposed her marrying Father, as she was the apple of her father's eye. Uncle Thanasis threatened Mother, forbidding her from seeing Father. Whether it was due to Father's humble origins or his somewhat rebellious nature, I cannot say. My father, however, threatened her brother, insisting on his right to marry her.

One day, Mother, along with her sister Andonia, brothers Evgeni and Dimitri, were working in a field near the Xerilla stream when Mother looked up at the Taygetos mountain range and heard the sounds of gunfire, bombs, and grenades exploding, accompanied by the smoke, fire, and screams of men. Around this time, her brother Thanasis decided he had enough fighting and descended from the mountains, leaving his communist comrades behind. When Mother saw him emerge from the shadows in their backyard, she rushed to embrace him, relieved to see he was alive. Yet Uncle Thanasis pushed her away, claiming he was infested with fleas. He was quietly brought into the home that night, covered in dirt and debris. Grandmother, bless her soul, thoroughly washed him, cleansing his matted hair of fleas and vermin.

Once cleaned, Uncle Thanasis was hidden in the home to protect him from villagers who might come looking for him. Grandmother hung out his webbing and clothes to dry, unaware that his comrades might come searching for him. When the communists (Andartes) arrived, they were mostly men from the village, particularly from the Glekas clan. They asked grandmother if they could have Uncle Thanasis's webbing. Upon their arrival, grandfather Panagiotis (Peter), fearing for his life, hid in the ceiling of the house, avoiding the communists. Meanwhile, grandmother, being a proud and stubborn woman, refused to hand over any materials, insisting she had not seen her son and knew nothing of the webbing, despite it hanging in plain sight. Women were often left alone and not bothered by either side during the civil war; it was the men who were targeted for special treatment.

Before Mother and Father married, Mother endured a severe beating from her elder brother, which fuelled Father's rage and prompted him to seek revenge. Fortunately for my uncle, family members hid him from Father, and others intervened to calm Father down. When Father passed by the balcony where Mother was living, he looked up and saw her. Despite her bruised body, she reassured him, saying, "Don't worry, chiftie; I will be alright." ("Chiftis" in Arvanitika means "hawk" in Greek, as well as manly, vibrant, and strong—there is no direct English equivalent, but it conveys a sense of vigour.) After the communists left, grandfather took Uncle Thanasis to the village of Kastania, where government forces and the Hittes were stationed. The Hittes were responsible for guarding nearby villages and rounding up suspected communists for authorities to process. Uncle Thanasis, bedraggled and hungry from his time on the run, was welcomed into his sister's home in Kastania. At the time, Father was in Kastania when the communists surrendered their weapons to the Hittes and government troops tasked with processing them.

Unaware of the violence Thanasis had inflicted on his sister, Father spoke favourably of him, as he was in love with Mother, Kalliope. After Uncle Thanasis was processed and deemed non-hostile, he was allowed to stay in Kastania with his elder sister Auntie Hristoula's, who was married to a Vlahogianni. However, once Father learned of what Thanasis had done to Mother, he forbade him from returning to the village of Pellana, fearing he would kill him in retaliation for beating his sister. Ironically, Father spared Uncle Thanasis's life, having previously saved him from execution after the armistice.

Not long after, Father and his cousin Papadopoulos were patrolling near the Kouveli well, known for its pure spring water. Mother was working in the area with her father and decided to fetch some water from the well. As dusk approached, she hurried, eager to return before it became too dark. Suddenly, she heard noises behind her and, out of fear, jumped into an earthen channel that carried water to the fields. Fortunately, she did so just before bullets from semi-automatic weapons erupted around her, sending a surge of terror through her. When the area fell silent, Mother cautiously emerged, making her way back to her father, who was understandably anxious for her safety.

Together with the rest of the family, they returned home, uncertain of who the assailants were. That evening, like many other families, they huddled together, fearful of what the next day might bring or whether they would survive the horrors of the civil war. Later, when Mother and Father were married, Father revealed to her that it was he and his cousin Papadopoulos who had fired the shots, mistakenly believing they were shooting at communists hiding in the bushes. Years later, during a visit to Greece, Mother refused to meet Father's cousin Papadopoulos, still holding a grudge against him for firing in her direction that fateful night.



Eventually, Mother was allowed to marry Father, and they celebrated their union on May 29, 1949, in their new home. The wedding took place in the hut, as Mother and Father did not have sufficient funds to pay for a church ceremony, nor had they been able to conduct a previous wedding at the church. Mother's dowry comprised the home (the hut) built by Grandfather Phillip as a summer retreat for his family, along with a three-pronged iron stove (siderostia), five fields, a Singer sewing machine, numerous blankets, a large chest (baoulo), an iron that operated on coals, pots and pans, and various kitchen utensils. Later in life, we were fortunate to receive a yellow blanket from Grandmother Eleni Adamis and a red blanket from Auntie Hristoula's, Mother's elder sister. Both blankets were sent to us in Australia.

In 1950, while Mother was pregnant with me, Father was drafted into the Greek army. His army service was turbulent; he often drank and fought with fellow soldiers. He was a wild spirit, embracing life as a young man. During recruit training, he broke his left hand and spent approximately eight and a half months in a hospital in Kifissia, Athens. His platoon commander, Lieutenant Platon Sinodinos, acknowledged that although Father was a good soldier, he still charged him with detention for his behaviour. Father served in Granniti, a town near the Bulgarian border, living in barracks that had once been a sanatorium for the mentally ill. The sanatorium, with over 600 beds, was deemed unfit for its original purpose and repurposed for the New Greek Hellenic Defence Force.

Father enjoyed a free-spirited life with the Hittes, where there was no formal discipline or authority dictating his actions. However, he respected his leaders. In conversations with Father in later years, he indicated that he and his platoon sergeant did not see eye to eye. After an altercation, he punched the sergeant and was charged by his platoon commander. His platoon commander wanted Father to accompany him to Korea during the Korean crisis as part of the NATO force. He volunteered to go with his mates but was ultimately turned down due to his marriage and two children. He was extremely disappointed not to be selected for Korea. Interestingly, history would repeat itself when his son later volunteered to go to Vietnam during the 1970s.

At one point, Father belted a high-ranking officer and received a sentence of 40 days detention, which he was to serve before discharge. He eventually accumulated 160 days of detention due to his lack of discipline, drunkenness, and fighting. He also found that his army pay was barely enough to sustain him, forcing him to rely on his wits. As his discharge date approached, he became depressed at the prospect of serving out his remaining days of detention. Fortunately, a retiring senior officer made rounds of all major Greek bases to bid farewell to the troops while conducting final inspections. During one of these inspections, he spoke to Father, who explained his situation. Father told him about his wife and two children, whom he had not seen in a long time, and that his wife was alone in the village without support. He expressed his feelings of despair, particularly regarding the 160 days of detention he still faced. His platoon commander, Lieutenant Sinodinos, advocated on Father's behalf, confirming his story and requesting consideration for dropping the detention. Luck was on Father's side, as the senior officer agreed and allowed him to be discharged in May 1953.

**The Journey Continues.** As I reflect on my family's history and the trials they faced, I realize how their experiences have shaped who I am today. The resilience, courage, and determination of my parents and grandparents serve as a constant reminder of the importance of family, heritage, and the ability to overcome adversity. Their stories fill me with pride and inspire me to carry forward their legacy, ensuring that the values they instilled in me are passed down to future generations. Together with my brother and parents, we navigated the challenges of life as immigrants, building a new home in a land that was both foreign and familiar. As we settled into our new life, we embraced the opportunities and faced the challenges with the same tenacity our ancestors had shown. And so, the story continues—a tapestry woven from the threads of family history, resilience, and hope, reminding us that, despite the adversities we face, we are never alone in our journey. Each stitch represents a memory, a lesson learned, and a testament to the enduring spirit of those who came before us.

## CHAPTER 4 THE OLD COUNTRY & MIGRATION



A son named Panagiotis (Peter)) was born to Vasili and Kalliope Adamis in the afternoon on Tuesday 28 March 1950, on a dirt floor in a humble hut in a village called Pellana. He had blond hair and blue eyes, embodying the essence of innocence and potential. In the midday hours of Tuesday 26 June 1951, Panagiotis (Peter) welcomed a brother, Phillip Adamis, into the world. Like Panagiotis (Peter), Phillip also had blond hair with hazel eyes. Yes, despite the ravages of civil war, atrocities, paybacks, and the complexities of human behaviour, life must go on. Men, women, and children were born, died, or were incarcerated based on their circumstances at the time. My birth was witnessed only by my father, mother, and the midwife, who later faced imprisonment for murder. (The midwife along with another woman had poisoned a married woman because both were infatuated with her husband. My mother informed me that I was rather sickly at birth, and they were concerned I might not survive.

Since my mother was not strong enough to nurse me, another woman in the village offered to breastfeed me. Her milk gave me a kick start in life until donkey's milk was obtained to strengthen me. I thought it was a joke when I was told, but I was assured that donkey's milk had properties that could help me survive. Research indicates that Donkey's milk is packed with nutrients and is anti-inflammatory and hypoallergenic and has many benefits from its vitamins and probiotics. (Surely that must explain my unique stubbornness). I was named Panagiotis (Peter) in honour of my grandfather. Despite being thousands of kilometers apart, he influenced my early years through stories shared by my father and aunties, igniting my thirst for knowledge. My grandfather had once lived in the USA but, sadly, did not take up American citizenship, which hindered his development to his full potential.

**Phillip's Birth.** As for my father, after his leave was over, he returned back to the army and was stationed in Ioannina, Northern Greece, monitoring the border. Whenever he had the opportunity, he would visit my mother and me. On one of his visits, my younger brother Phillip was conceived and born the following June. Aunt Chrisoula, my mother's elder sister, breastfed Phillip when he was a baby, as my mother was unable to do so. Brother Phillip was named after our maternal grandfather, who had fought in Asia Minor against the Turks for six years during the ill-fated Venizelos's Great Idea of expansion beyond the borders of Greece. Not long after, my grandmother Helen (Varoutsios) passed away at a young age.

**Shadow Pictures in the Kitchen.** I remember my mother preparing a meal in our kitchen, which was divided from the main room by a blanket. She had a large pot on her three-pronged stove, called "siderostia" (with "sidoro" meaning iron), and a fire beneath it. On one particular night while Mother was making dinner, I recall sitting cross-legged on the kitchen earth floor with my brother Phillip, while Father entertained us by casting shadow puppets against the curtain made from a bed cover. Father skilfully twirled and twisted his fingers, arms, and palms to create shadow figures, imitating dogs, birds, and other animals, and mimicking their sounds. Phillip and I looked up in delight, laughing and screaming at Father's antics. My favorite was the rabbit, and I would try to emulate him by twisting my fingers to create my own shadow animals.

The pot was balanced on three or four rocks, with wood and embers crackling merrily beneath it to heat the pot. Father was still in uniform and would be released before we migrated to Australia. He had a wonderful smile that made me happy, and it was always a joy to see him grin from ear to ear. I can be accused of fabricating these memories, but as a three- and four-year-old, some moments have stayed with me as keepsakes of my early development. In hindsight, I wonder if we, as humans, retain certain memories to help us during times of crisis, similar to saving money for a rainy day. When life became tough between my father and me, I would revisit those cherished days and keep my love for him alive. I am sure that my brother Phillip has similar stories and yarns to tell.

**The Olive Press.** I remember visiting where my father worked after returning from the army. I believe it was an olive press, a machine that pressed olives to extract olive oil. I can only recall looking at a hut or small building with an overhanging roof on a very hot day; it was smelly and dirty, with adult men milling about. However, what stood out most to me was the darkness surrounding the building—whether it was from the shade, I do not know.

**Our Home: The Stable.** The hut we called home was very small and had been given as a dowry present to my mother by her father when she married my father. It was built on a small piece of land, slightly elevated, which had once been an ancient cemetery. An olive tree grew in front of the house, and a fig tree stood on one side of the hut. The front door was made of sturdy flat planks nailed together, hung on hinges, but with cracks between the planks that let the cold in during winter. The hut had two rooms: the main room, which contained a large bed in the upper right corner, had planks with cracks filled with straw and covered with blankets where my mother and Father slept when Father was on leave from the army.

I cannot recall any furniture in the hut. The other room was smaller and narrower—that was our kitchen, with a fireplace in the middle and four chairs in one corner where my brother Phillip and I slept. There was a small window in the kitchen and two windows in the main room. As you entered the hut, the kitchen was on your left, separated from the main room by an army blanket. The walls were made of stone and had many holes. Originally, when Mother and Father moved in, the hut had wooden floors, but Father broke up the floorboards and left a dirt floor.

The roof overhead was supported by strong timbers, and the rafters were visible. In the kitchen, the only utensils I can remember were my mother's cooking pot. Although the land was slightly elevated, the yard was flat with no grass, just plenty of small stones. There were some cypress trees at one end of the yard, marking the boundary. I have been told that Grandfather Phillip, while tilling the land many years before, had come across bones and a small dagger.

**Water Channel.** I remember the cypress trees at the edge of the property and playing with other kids my age. At the bottom, a channel of water skirted the property, and we would paddle our feet in the water while sitting on the edge. The water came from the "vrissi" (spring) located in the lower part of the village, which at that time had an abundance of water cascading down from the mountains above. Sadly, due to poor planning and foresight, much of the spring, along with the ancient ruins, has disappeared, replaced by a pump and pipes that bring only a fraction of the water of a bygone era.

I remember playing with a couple of other children slightly older than myself at the back of the stable, where a water channel ran. I believed it was a stream, but it was actually water being drawn from the village center and passing our property through old channels. I distinctly remember jumping up and down in the water and sitting on the bank, cooling my tiny toes in the flowing water. I cannot recall the names of the children I played with, but they are etched in my memory.

**Our Clothes.** I cannot remember wearing many clothes, just something around our waist at times, while other times, I recall not wearing anything at all.

**The Cyprus Trees.** I remember the olive tree on one side of the house, the fig tree (where Father would sometimes hide), and about three cypress trees a little further away. In later years when Mum and dad returned to Greece, they planted Australian Eucalyptus trees in memory of their life in Australia. These however were cut down and used as firewood.

**The Frog.** I also remember being outside one day when suddenly a large frog jumped out of nowhere and chased me back into the hut. I ran into the main room, screaming, and saw my mother and father lying on the bed, laughing at my fright as the frog pursued me. I immediately jumped onto the bed, and the frog hid itself in a crevice in the wall. Father then made a small fire against the crevice to smoke out the frog. After a short while, the frog was evicted and hopped outside.

**The Snake.** Then there was the snake tale. One day, while Father was trimming the cypress trees, he spotted a snake and called for me to fetch his rifle from the house. I ran as fast as my little legs could carry me and lugged the rifle to him, which he used to shoot the snake out of the tree. It must have been the poisonous type (known as "condosteri"), otherwise Father would have left it alone. With two young children, he could not take the risk of us being bitten.

**Hide and seek.** Hide and seek was another game that delighted us. One day, Father hid himself, and we had to find him. My brother and I ran around the stable, our home, countless times, unable to locate him. Eventually, we stopped, realizing we could not find him, and began to look around for other hiding spots. For some unknown reason, I looked up and saw my father spread-eagled across the boughs of a tree, a huge grin on his face, bursting out laughing. We screamed with joy, and he came down and hugged us. We stopped under the tree next to the house, placing our hands on our hips and looking bewildered until we glanced up into the fig tree adjacent to the hut and saw our father spread-eagled, looking down and laughing at our efforts. When we finally found him, we squealed with glee. It is one of the few times I can remember being so happy with my father.

**Lost Brother.** There was a time when Mother was looking for my brother Phillip. It was a scorching hot day, and Mother was concerned that he had wandered off the property, as we often did in search of adventure. She could see I was in the yard but did not ask me for help. Instead, she enlisted the assistance of her visitors to try and find Phillip, but to no avail. Eventually, my mother asked me if I had seen my brother. I took her to an old corrugated iron tin and pointed to it. Mother lifted the corrugated iron, and there, curled up underneath, fast asleep, was my little brother Phillip. When asked why I had covered him, I explained that I did not want him to get burned by the sun. Fortunately, I didn't receive a belting for that one.

**The Grapes.** Surrounding our stable were many grapevines that yielded an abundance of grapes. One day, my brother and I indulged ourselves and gorged on the sweet fruit. After filling our bellies, we returned home. For reasons I cannot recall, we found ourselves sitting among the ashes of a fire once used by my mother to cook food and boil water for laundry. Life was hard for women in the village during those days. When Mother came in and saw us covered in soot from head to toe, she began to scold us, and her reprimand frightened us. All I can remember is holding up a string of grapes, which, if I recall correctly, had only three grapes on it. Our mother looked down upon us, hands on her hips, and roared with laughter. What else could she do but laugh?

**The Herring.** One day, while on leave from the army, Father sent me to the local shops to buy a salted herring. The shops were located about 500 paces from our cottage. I know it was 500 paces because I measured it in 2017, and that 500 paces must have felt like kilometers to me at the time. Such was the safety and security of children in those days, as the civil war was supposed to have ended, and children were seen as the light and saviour of the village. It must have taken me some time to return, as I clearly remember eating the salted herring and coming home later than expected. When Father asked where I had been, I explained that I went to the shops as he requested. When he asked where the salted herring was, I revealed the skeleton of the herring I had eaten, which I had kept hidden behind my back. I cannot recall the consequences of that incident, but I was hungry and made the decision to eat the herring. As for Father, well, he was not amused.

**Uncle Jim Rassias.** Our Uncle Jim, my mother's brother, was a very special person, and my memories of him stretch back to about 1953. Uncle Jim and I were in a paddock close to home, where hay was cut and left on the ground for cattle fodder. It must have been spring because I remember the flowers blooming and figs in abundance. On this particular day, Uncle Jim was in a fig tree, hanging down from it like a monkey. At the age of 14, he was spending time with his young nephew. Suddenly, he fell down and looked up at me, urging me to hurry home and get help from my mother, his sister.

I did not hesitate; I can still remember huffing and puffing, running as fast as my little legs could carry me back home, through the multitude of poppies, tulips, and other flowers that someone had planted in their paddocks. I ran up to Mother, panting and blurting out that Uncle Jim was hurt and needed help. I later learned that my lovely Uncle Jim was just teasing me and playing a prank to see what I could do. Years after his passing in Australia, our family still mourns his loss. What a wonderful man he was, and his war cry at parties was always the same: "Everybody happy!"

**Climbing on a Roof.** At one point, while left alone in a one-room building in the Rassias castle located at the vrissi center, I managed to climb onto the roof. I cannot remember exactly how I got there, but I climbed on whatever furniture and boxes were in the room at the time. Luckily, someone below saw me and rushed up to haul me down, saving me from a potentially dangerous fall. That woman later recounted the story and confirmed it when I met her again in 2017. She was 14 years old at the time.

**A child's walk alone.** I remember making my way from the stable to the lower end of the village called the "plateau" (the center) or "vrisi" (spring) and finding my grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) and grandmother Helen's home. It was located north of the village, a little higher up, near where the ancient tombs were situated. When I arrived, I was asked how I got there, and I simply replied that I "pittered, pattered" my way up to their home. In those days, children were looked after by everyone, and we always felt safe.

**The Walnuts, My Grandfather Phillip, and Aunt Andonia.** Sleeping at my grandfather's home was always a treat. I often shared a bed with him, and I remember wetting the bed more than once. However, he was very patient and kind. My memories of those early years are scarce, except for a moment involving him and Aunt Andonia. In one corner of the room on the wooden balcony, there were sacks of walnuts that had been gathered. One day, feeling hungry, I began to eat them and discovered they were rotten inside. My grandfather, observing me, burst out laughing and asked his daughter, Aunt Andonia, to bring another sack of walnuts for me to enjoy. Aunt Andonia did so, and I remember trying to crack them open to get to the nuts inside.

**Stuck in the Rassias Castle.** This story has been confirmed by several sources, as my recollections of being left alone to care for my young brother Phillip are scant. Apparently, hunger and a lack of family support forced my mother to leave Phillip and me in a room in the Rassias castle with only some water and bread. Her very good friend, Aunt Tacia, who has since passed away, would check in on us from time to time. Aunt Tacia was once an orphan with her brother and had endured much in her life. Born in 1917, she was deeply involved during the Greek Civil War. She married a much younger man, but they were happily married. Years later, Aunt Tacia would recount her experiences looking after me, which my mother corroborated. My mother regarded Aunt Tacia as a mother figure and mentor. I met her son Kostas recently in 2017, and he is a retired policeman.

**Cyprus Tree Planting.** In 1954, when we left the old country, a series of tall cypress trees stood at the bottom of our property, facing east, with "Kouremenos" (Baldy Hill) in the background. Beyond the trees was a water channel that flowed to the gardens surrounding the village. This water was strictly controlled by "horofilekas" (field or agricultural constables). As young children, my brother Phillip and I often played among the swiftly flowing water, muddying it to the dismay of the villagers. Yet, we were merely children, oblivious to the dangers that surrounded us—snakes, wild dogs, insects of any kind, crevices, and other hidden hazards.

In fact, I remember helping to find and kill a snake in the cypress tree, an adventure I participated in as a four-year-old. After migrating to Australia in 1954, the cypress trees continued to grow to enormous sizes. So much so that in 1989, when Mother and Father were rebuilding the cottage on the ruins of the old stable where we were born, the trees were cut down and used in the construction. Their girth and length were remarkable. I remember my Aunt Andonia giving me some walnuts. When I asked for more, I mistakenly selected the wrong sack, which contained bad walnuts.

**Father Returning from the Army.** The following story was related to me in 2017 by Nick Patsios, who was responsible for returning the body of my uncle Ilias Kamberris to his birthplace. Uncle Ilias had been in Australia with us, but we lost contact with him after his brother Dimitri passed away. Nick Patsios vividly remembers seeing my father returning from the army, walking down to the lower end of the village center with both of his sons on his shoulders, beaming with pride. This left such a lasting impression on Nick that he wanted to share it with me. It must have been late 1952 or early 1953.

Despite returning from the army, Father remained a member of the right-wing Hittite irregular organization and could be called upon at any moment if required. These were difficult years, depending on which side an individual chose to associate with. Many young men and women were misled, believing they were fighting the Germans, only to find out later that they had been targeted by communist forces to be trained and politically influenced toward communist ideology. Although Father was with the Hittites for a total of eight years, he was compassionate and caring toward those who held opposing political views, knowing that many of his relatives and kinfolk had been unjustly influenced by the communists.





**Vasili Adamis Greek Army – Forefront with the Greek Flag**

**Recollections by My Mother.** While my father was away serving in the army, my mother had to survive on handouts from friends, as she was initially shunned by both families due to her marriage to my father, who was a right-wing "Hittes" (Greek WW2 and Greek Civil War "X" [H in Greek] irregulars, against the communist partisans). Mother also recounted times when she had to beg for food to feed us, as no one from the family would help her. Before her marriage, she had learned to become a seamstress, sewing and mending clothes for those in need. This skill would hold her in good stead later in life in Australia, as she raised her family and earned a steady income. My mother once told me that when Father finally returned from the army, I asked her, "What is this soldier doing sleeping in our bed?" I found it unusual because I had been sleeping with my mother while Father was away, and I had grown accustomed to that arrangement. This man who shared my mother's bed was a stranger to me—what right did he have to take my father's place? Mother and Father laughed at my confusion.

**Recollections by My Father.** Father once told me that he made me hold onto an olive tree branch that grew on the side of the house, insisting that I hold on for dear life and not let go, even threatening me if I did. He said he did this to teach me the importance of perseverance. Father also recounted a time when he sent Phillip and me to buy a dried (smoked) fish known as "rega" in Greek. After waiting for what seemed like an eternity, Father walked to the shop to find us, only to meet us on the road. My brother and I had eaten the fish on our way home and presented him with only the skeleton. On another occasion, I was sent to buy cigarettes for him. However, I had other ideas and hid the money in a very safe spot, opting instead to play in the water. When Father came looking for me, he asked what I had done with the money. I took him to the safe spot and showed him where I had hidden it.

**Recollections by Auntie Christine and Auntie Hariklia (Rita).** I was told that once I walked all the way from our hut down below the village to my grandfather Panagiotis (Peter)'s home on the side of the hill. When my aunts asked how I managed to get there by myself, I told them that I had "petrista, petrista" all the way up (pitter patter), and they all laughed at my response.

**The Decision to migrate.** In 1953, after Father's return from the Army, Mother and Father discussed leaving the village and traveling to Australia for a better life. There was no work in the village, and the Greek economy was still trying to recover from the Second World War and the Greek Civil War. Mother and Father spoke with Grandfather Panagiotis (Peter) about migrating overseas to Australia; however, he advised against leaving until he could use his contacts to determine the right time to go. For the remainder of 1953, Father found odd jobs in the village to support the family. He is believed to have worked for one of the oil producers in the village, extracting oil from olives. Life was hard, and both mother and Father tried to make ends meet. Father noticed that a villager named Nick Morphis had left for Australia earlier and was living with his uncle Panagiotis (Peter) Morphis.

**Leaving the Village: A Journey of Transformation.** As I sit down to pen this narrative, I am filled with a sense of nostalgia and reverence for the journey that began in the quaint village of Pellana, Lakonia, Greece. This story is not just a recounting of events but a testament to the resilience, hope, and courage that characterized our migration. It is a story that began over sixty years ago, and its echoes continue to shape the lives of my family today. Our departure from Pellana was part of a broader narrative of Greek diaspora that unfolded during the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. While many Greeks found new beginnings in the United States, our journey led us to Australia—a decision that was not made hastily but was the result of careful deliberation.



**Vasili (Father), Peter, Phillip Kaliopi (Mother)**

My grandfather Panagiotis, known affectionately as Peter, had spent considerable time in America and understood the potential that lay in the promise of migration. Initially, America seemed our destination, but a timely opportunity for migration to Australia redirected our path. In early 1954, my grandfather received notification that migration to Australia was feasible, and it was the right moment to leave the village behind. With this newfound hope, my parents, brother Phillip, and I travelled to Sparta to meet with other hopeful migrants. A government official from Kalamata, Messenia, arrived to assess our status and suitability for migration. Her role remains somewhat enigmatic, yet it was a necessary step in the process of embarking on a new life journey.

Our family received the coveted approval to leave, prompting my father to make the necessary arrangements for our departure. The financial aspect of the journey required careful planning. My parents sold one of the fields my mother had received as a dowry, raising 8,000,000 drachmas. The cost of passage for our family was 2,000,000 drachmas, equivalent to approximately 2,000 Australian dollars at the time. The remaining 6,000,000 drachmas were converted into 364 English pounds sterling, a sum intended to support us as we began anew in the land down under. Before leaving the village, our home became the site of a grand farewell party. Friends and family gathered to bid us farewell, their warm wishes accompanying us on our journey. As a lasting reminder of our departure, my father carved "June 1954" onto the wooden door of our home. This simple act of marking the date served as a symbolic gesture, signalling the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. Those words remained untouched until I returned to Pellana in 1973 during a leave from the Australian Army—a poignant reminder of our departure so many years before. Our journey began on 12 June 1954, as we left Pellana and travelled to Kastania, where we spent the night at Auntie Hristoula's home, my mother's elder sister. My brother Phillip and I, then three and four years old respectively, were perched atop a black-and-white donkey, with Phillip at the front and me behind, surrounded by our baggage.



Our parents walked alongside us, their steps filled with both trepidation and resolve. The following day, we boarded a bus from Kastania to Sparta, and from there, we travelled to Athens. In Athens, we stayed for 16 days at Auntie Kostadina Glekas' home in the suburb of Liosia, awaiting our departure on the ship Kyrenia. These days were filled with a mix of anticipation and uncertainty as we prepared for the next leg of our journey. On 29 June 1954, we embarked from the port of Piraeus aboard the Kyrenia. The voyage was a significant undertaking, taking us through the Suez Canal and making stops in Aden and Colombo.

The vivid blue waters of Colombo left an indelible impression on me, with local divers collecting coins tossed by passengers—a scene that was both vibrant and emblematic of the cultural exchanges that occur during such journeys. The journey was not without its challenges. A severe storm rocked the ship, and I recall the chaos as a large swordfish landed on the deck amidst the tumultuous waves. My father, in a moment of daring, held me upside down by my ankles over the ship's side—a terrifying memory that remains etched in my mind to this day.



**Cyrenia.** As a young child, I found ways to entertain myself during the voyage. One particular incident stands out: my brother and I, determined to maintain cleanliness, locked all the ship's toilets, causing mild panic among the passengers.

The crew and fellow travellers quickly became familiar with my antics, remembering me as the child who momentarily held the ship in his grasp.

This phase of my life, as a four-year-old, is filled with snippets of memory—a glimpse into a time of innocence and adventure. On July 23, 1954, we arrived in Fremantle, Perth, setting foot on Australian soil for the first time. It was a land that would become our new home, a place of hope and opportunity. But that is a story for another time—a continuation of the journey that began with our departure from Pellana, a journey that shaped our family's destiny.

Reflecting on these experiences, I am reminded of the resilience and determination that characterized our migration. It was a journey marked by farewells, new beginnings, and the forging of a new identity in a foreign land. The lessons learned and the love shared during this time continue to resonate, shaping who I am today.

As I write these words, I am filled with gratitude for the sacrifices made by my parents and grandparents, whose courage paved the way for our family's future. The story of our migration is a testament to the enduring bonds of family, the power of hope, and the transformative nature of the journey itself. It is a story that has been passed down through generations, each retelling adding depth and richness to the narrative.

In the years that followed our arrival in Australia, our family embraced the opportunities presented to us, forging new paths and building a life in a land far from the village of Pellana. Yet, the memories of our journey remain vivid, serving as a reminder of the strength and resilience that carried us through. As I conclude this part of our journey, I am reminded of the importance of preserving these stories for future generations. They are a vital part of our heritage, a record of our family's journey from a small village in Greece to the vast expanse of Australia. It is a journey that continues to inspire and guide us, a testament to the power of transformation and the enduring bonds of family.



## CHAPTER 5 THE EARLY YEARS

Our family's journey to Australia was fraught with challenges. My mother was very ill during the voyage, as she was six weeks pregnant at the time. Following the advice of the ship's doctor, we disembarked in Fremantle, Perth, Western Australia, on July 23, 1954. Our arrival did not create much excitement among the locals, as Perth had approximately 2,212 Greeks in 1954, with 1,905 being Greek-born and approximately 307 Australian-born.

**Northam Hostel.** Upon arrival, we were taken to the Northam Hostel, where new migrants were housed until they found work. We lived in army barracks-style accommodations and were well looked after. The hostel was filled with refugees and genuine migrants from all over Europe. We stayed there for approximately two to three weeks while my father was unemployed.



**Northern Immigration camp – West Australia**

**Manjimup.** During our stay, Father was offered a job repairing railway lines in Manjimup. One day, while working over a river, he fell in and was struck by a large splinter from one of the sleepers, injuring his lip. He received treatment at a medical clinic. During this period, the family lived in a canvas tent with wooden frames.

**A Struggle for Food.** Living in these conditions was tough, especially since we went three months without eating meat. One day, while at the medical clinic, Father and his friend Grigoris Politronis spotted a delivery of meat for patients. They considered stealing some but quickly abandoned the idea due to the number of people around.

Shortly thereafter, Father and Grigoris encountered a rabbit hunter laying traps in the bush. They seized the opportunity, stealing twelve traps and laying them elsewhere. The next morning, they were thrilled to find four rabbits caught in the traps. This discovery significantly improved our diet, which now included spaghetti and rabbit. Father recounted a time when they found one of the rabbits had a litter while skinning it, and he advised me to keep quiet, fearing it might upset the pregnant women around. On another occasion, Mother ventured to the local butcher to buy meat. Unable to speak English, she resorted to gestures, mimicking the sounds of a cow ("moo, moo") to indicate her desire for meat.

**Living Under Canvas & Battle with Pneumonia.** Our canvas home was vulnerable to snakes and lizards, making life hazardous. I remember walking in the bush with my brother Phillip and spotting a man with a car near a cool, refreshing stream. We watched him from the tall grass. I also recall struggling to sleep under the canvas amid the oppressive heat. Between September and October 1954, I fell ill with pneumonia, and my parents took me to a hospital in Perth, where I was kept under observation. During my hospital stay, Father brought me a toy pistol, leading to a comical incident where I playfully hit a nurse on the head.

**Settling in Perth.** After my recovery, we moved to Perth, securing hotel accommodation on the corner of St James Street while Father worked at a petrol and oil tank plant and the Kwinana docks, which were being constructed for Aristotle Onassis's ships. Father worked there from November 15 to December 15, 1954, before transitioning to other employment. Living in a hotel required daily rent payments. One day, Father forgot to pay the landlord, resulting in our eviction. When he returned home and discovered we had been put out, he was devastated. He quickly paid the landlord to allow us to stay, but a nearby resident took us in without offering food.

**A Transition to Stability.** Shortly after our eviction, Father found us a one-room lodging. The landlord promised to provide beds but did not honour his word. Fortunately, we had thick woollen blankets from Greece, which we used to make makeshift beds for Mother, who was heavily pregnant, and for Phillip and me. Father slept on the floor in his raincoat. We lived in that single room for about six weeks while Father worked at a nearby nail factory, earning ten pounds a week, which was insufficient to cover our expenses.

**Shopping.** Many migrant families were taken advantage of during this time. When Mother visited the local shops to buy fresh food and milk, using gestures to communicate—mooing like a cow for milk and clucking like a chicken for eggs. Embarrassing, some may say, but what else could a woman do under those circumstances. During this challenging period, Father befriended other Greeks who provided additional support.

One such friend was Demetrius Mexis and his wife Helen, who hailed from Alexandria, Egypt. Demetrius became my sister Helen's godfather and helped Father secure a job as a waiter at the local Greek lesches club, providing much-needed stability for our family. Father worked there for about 13 months. My brother Kon's godfather, Foti from Macedonia, was a tailor in Perth. Another friend was Peter Giannopoulos, whom Father reconnected with during a visit to Perth in 1982.

**The Lesches (Kafenio).** Cafes known as kafenions' served as vital cultural institutions for Greek migrants. These establishments became social hubs for Greek men, particularly when the male-to-female ratio among Greek immigrants was high. Lesches were often owned by successful regional fraternities and Pan-Hellenic organizations, catering to their members and friends. Through his connections, Father found work at a local lesches, which brought stability. However, he occasionally gambled and stayed out late, causing anxiety for Mother, especially as she was six months pregnant while caring for two young children.

**Growing Our Family.** During this period, we moved to better accommodation in a two-story building owned by the Greek Orthodox Church, located across the street. We remained there for approximately 12 to 13 months, during which Mother gave birth to twins, my sister Eleni and my brother Kon, via caesarean section on March 14, 1955. I remember visiting the hospital, standing at the entrance of a clean, white building. Years later, Mother told me she dreamed of naming the child after the church, not knowing she was pregnant with twins.

It was a challenging time for Mother and Father. Father worked during the day, and Mother stayed home to look after four children. Uncle Jim Kamberris, Mother's cousin, arrived at that time and was a great help for about six months before moving to Melbourne. It was during this period that Mother and Father met their very good friend, Andoni Papazatiropoulos, who was of immense help to my parents and was always remembered as a kind and compassionate person.

My recollections of Perth are scant, but some memories remain vivid. There was a time I heard a commotion downstairs. I went to investigate and found Father telling me to return to my room. Later, I learned a friend of Father's, wanted by the police, was seeking refuge. As a child not yet accustomed to Australian life, I remember opening the window to the back garden and defecating outside, unaware of the cultural norms.

**Memories of the Greek Church.** As a five-year-old, I remember going to the church with my younger brother Phillip whenever there was a wedding. We would wait for the bride and groom to arrive, hoping an adult would throw money into the air for the children to collect. We would eagerly gather pennies, half-pennies (farthings), and the occasional sixpence, racing home to show our mother, who undoubtedly pocketed it, as money was scarce in those days.

**Cultural Encounters.** Father had his first contact with an Australian Aborigine when one chased him home. Why the Aborigine chased Father is unknown, but Father was agile enough to hurdle the fence and reach the safety of home without injury to either party. Times were hard, and it seemed that migrants or new Australians were not always welcomed by the locals. I remember my first Christmas in Australia, where my brother Phillip and I received toy Christmas stockings. We argued over which was the biggest and best present, and my very placid brother eventually gave in to my demands. I also recall arguing over who would get the ball or the gun. Our family still has a photo of us with those two presents.



**The Move to Melbourne.** In February and March 1956, Father decided to take the family to Victoria, where employment appeared more promising. We packed our belongings once again, this time with two extra mouths to feed, and travelled overland by train to Victoria. In August of that year, we boarded the train to Melbourne. The train journey took three days to complete, with stops at Kalgoorlie and Adelaide to change trains due to railway gauge differences. We arrived in Melbourne on Saturday, August 21, 1956.

Our family friend Andonis Papazatiropoulos made the trip with us. Upon arrival at Spencer Street, Melbourne, we were met by Uncle Nick Morphis and Uncle Jim Kamberris. Uncle Nick, also from the village of Pellana, had migrated to Australia in 1951, followed by his brother Uncle Thanasis and then Uncle Jim. Uncle Nick and Uncle Thanasis lived with their Uncle Peter, whom we came to know as Pop. Pop had arrived before the Second World War and worked various jobs throughout Victoria and New South Wales. Uncle Nick and Uncle Thanasis became our best uncles during our primary school years, and we loved them dearly.

**Settling in Clifton Hill and Fitzroy.** Nick Morphis and Jim Kamberris took us to the home of Kostas Haritos in Richmond for a day before moving to a home in Clifton Hill, where we stayed for two to three weeks. We were then moved to a one-bedroom rented apartment in Fitzroy with an Italian landlord. The apartment was cramped and far too small for six people. The toilet and kitchen facilities were scattered throughout the building and unsuitable for a family of six. We stayed in the one-room accommodation for about two weeks while Father looked for work. The family was relocated again to another one-room apartment on King Vasili Street in Fitzroy for another two to three weeks. This house had a small backyard and a lane at the rear. The brick fence was lined with jagged glass cemented in to keep out intruders. Adjacent to the house was a small playground with a seesaw, a roundabout, two swings, and another swing with a long wooden plank.

I remember Father hanging me up by my hands and lighting a fire with newspaper underneath to scare me into listening to Mother. My brother Phillip recalled a large drain and a rabbit running into it when we lived on King William Street. I also remember a boy swinging so high on a swing that he jammed his arms and broke them, a lesson I never forgot. Across the road, I recall a factory of some sort. Another Greek family we became friends with had a girl named Messina Loukas, but that is all I remember about her. While living there, I would pretend I was Superman, running down the street and getting a good run-off so I could soar into the blue yonder, away from my problems and worries on the ground. I had these dreams whenever I was scared. Another dream during this period involved the fear of opening doors at night and looking into the unknown. Why I had these dreams, I do not know, but I had them for years to come. To overcome those dreams, I would hide under the blankets and refuse to look out in case the "bad old man" came to get me, as my mother would say if I misbehaved.

After the two to three weeks stay, the Greek welfare organization visited the family and said it was unsuitable for us to live in one room under such conditions. A small flat was found for us around the corner at 34 Morris Street, Fitzroy, where we stayed for approximately six months. Our home at 34 Morris Street was a flat upstairs. To reach it, you had to climb the stairs as soon as you opened the front door. The flat consisted of a tiny kitchen with a gas stove, which had to be kept alight by feeding the gas meter outside the flat in the landing with pennies. The bathroom was communal to all the residents, and it was first come, first served, located upstairs in the hallway. The lounge room doubled as the main bedroom, where Mother, Father, and the twins slept, while the outside landing, which was enclosed, served as the sleeping quarters for Phillip and me.

I remember one time when two shillings went missing, and I received such a hiding from my father that I have never forgotten it to this day. Father later found the two shillings behind the cupboard. Another time, I received another hiding for jumping off the top of the cupboard and onto the bed, nearly breaking it. The house had a backyard that was elevated near the back. It had wire strung across it from one fence line to another, propped up with a large forked stick when the washing was on the line. In the back garden, there were tall-stemmed flowers in various colours. Phillip told me that down the road, a young boy our age had a frog, and he remembers that we used to try and catch it. The rear of the backyard led onto a lane, and many times, I would peer over the fence to see drunks come and go, or I would see the odd lady or two for reasons unknown. It was not unusual to see a group of men huddled in a ring, making all types of noises as they tossed two coins into the air.

As the home we lived in was a terraced home adjoined to another terraced home, the rear of both homes was not separated but shared the backyard. Two young Maltese boys lived next door to us, about the same age as Phillip and me, and we became instant friends. By this time, we had mastered the Aussie strine and could be understood by other children our age. In fact, I reckon we could do a really great "G'day, howyagoing mate." At one time, Phillip and the two Maltese brothers were in the backyard, looking up at the sky as it turned red and crimson. I told them that God was fighting the devil and that we should help God win. We decided to throw stones at the red sky. After what seemed like a long time, the red clouds began to drift away, and we four boys shouted with glee, believing we had helped God beat the devil. Such is the innocence of youth.

In the back of the homes, a lane separated the properties. This lane was used in days of old to collect the night soil (human waste), as most toilets were located in the backyard. The lanes were paved in granite cobblestones with a narrow, shallow drain in the center for rainwater to flow down and into the main drains in the streets. These lanes were also littered with rubbish, newspapers flying about, and the smell of methylated spirit bottles was always in the air as drunks, homeless people, and prostitutes plied their trade. The odd fistfight, the yelling of couples, and others down on their luck frequented the back lanes in those days. It was not a place for young children, let alone grownups.

Once, when Mother was under a lot of stress from looking after four children while Father worked, and we were not listening to her, she got fed up with us, stripped all our clothes off, and took us downstairs, about to throw us into the street. We began to cry and plead with her, promising to behave and be good boys again. We were saved by the lady from downstairs, bless her soul, who intervened on our behalf and persuaded Mother not to carry out her threat. After a short interval, Mother's anger subsided, and we remained inside. Phillip and I were terrified at the thought of being put out in the street naked.

I remember running down Morris Street to play at the small playground around the corner. However, as I was running along, I passed an electricity pole, slipped, and fell. To cushion my fall, I placed my hands forward and fell onto a broken beer bottle, which cut into my right palm. I raced home, but not screaming, to my mother, who bandaged it up. We had many friends while living here, and many of them came to visit the family. Mother would welcome many newcomers, as they had been told to come to our address and that mother and Father would help them as well. Mother would, therefore, be forever making meals and helping others. I remember being happy in that environment.

Behind the rows of terraced houses of Carlton lay a labyrinth of laneways, hidden pockets of urban life that told stories of hardship and resilience. Each day, these narrow corridors were strewn with rubbish, discarded beer bottles, and the remnants of forgotten revelries. Amongst the debris, stray dogs and cats darted about, weaving through the chaos of everyday life. The laneways were also frequented by figures who, at first glance, appeared to be mere drunks, sprawled on the ground or leaning unsteadily against the walls. The air was thick with the pungent smell of methylated spirits, a scent that clung to them like a second skin. As children, we would sometimes be startled by their antics, their faces twisted into grotesque expressions meant to amuse or frighten. Occasionally, we would witness them supporting one another, staggering down the street in a haphazard dance, singing and drinking in unison.



It was only years later that I came to understand the deeper narrative behind these scenes. Medals glinting on their chestnut coats hinted at stories untold—these were not merely drunks, but ex-servicemen, veterans who carried the weight of wars past, from the harrowing battles of World War II to the rugged terrains of Korea.

Many were homeless or sought solace in the company of fellow soldiers, their camaraderie a balm for unspoken wounds. Society at the time had little understanding of what we now recognize as PTSD. The horrors these veterans had witnessed and endured remained locked within them, manifesting in ways that were misunderstood or ignored.

The laneways, with their raw and unfiltered reality, served as a testament to lives affected by conflict, to individuals battling their own private wars long after the gunfire had ceased.

**Starting Primary School.** I was old enough to go to school, so Mother and Father sent me to my first primary school at Fitzroy State School. I believe Messina Loukas, who was older than me, may have taken me to school.

The school was a typical big brick primary state school with the odd tree on one side and plenty of asphalt as our playground. The entire school was enclosed by wire to prevent us little ones from wandering onto the main road, where traffic was particularly heavy. Across the main road was the school tuck shop, where you could buy your lunch, but I believe Mother would bring my lunch to school. I remember very little of my schooling there, but I certainly was not unhappy, as I recall running around the schoolyard just like any other Aussie kid with a wild streak. One particular incident I never forgot was when a young boy my age ran across the main road through the gate and was run over by a car. We all raced and poked our noses through the wire while the driver got out and teachers ran to the scene. I never forgot the boy's older sister screaming when she realized it was her little brother who had been run over. I felt sad, even though I did not know the boy.

**Car Accident.** Not long afterward, Mother sent Phillip and me to buy milk from the dairy across the road from us. Mother gave me the money, and together we went to buy the milk. As we were crossing the street, I closed my eyes and happily twirled around without a care in the world, going around in circles. I did not hear Phillip call out to me to look out. The car that struck me was a light green Holden. After being hit, run over, and dragged, the car came to a stop centimetres from crushing my skull. The car had broken my left leg below the knee in two, and I had lapsed into unconsciousness. It was not the driver's fault but my own carelessness. My brother raced inside and told Mother, who rushed outside to see me under the car. I remember waking up and seeing Mother there next to me, and all I can remember is saying "Ma" before lapsing into unconsciousness again. I woke up again to find myself in an ambulance with my mother beside me, going to the hospital. Who looked after my brothers and sister, I never found out. Sadly, many years later, my brother Phillip witnessed a similar car accident that saw the death of his best mate. Whatever affected Phillip when he saw me hit must have been doubly hard when he saw his best mate die many years later.

I spent three weeks in the children's hospital and five weeks at the hospital on Victoria Street, closer to home. While being ferried from one hospital to another, I looked out the ambulance window and saw my Uncle Jim Kamberris. I frantically called out to him in Greek, "Uncle, Uncle," and became hysterical because he could not hear me. I worried that they were taking me somewhere my parents could not find me. I became so distressed that I wet my pants and the ambulance stretcher I was lying on. After that, I lay down and whimpered to myself until we reached our destination. That was the very first conscious time I can remember wetting myself, and bed-wetting continued until I was at least 14 years old.



My leg was in plaster for a total of six months. While I was in the hospital, Mother would leave the twins under the care of my young brother, who was five, and walk to the hospital to visit me. The stress on Mother was enormous, with three children at home, one in the hospital, not speaking the language, and trying to make ends meet. However, after two months in the hospital, I was allowed to come home and be looked after by Mother. My mother later took me back to be measured for crutches, which the hospital supplied, but when they asked me to try them on, I began to cry and clutched my mother. I could hear the hospital staff laughing at me in a good-natured way. Vasili Adamis (Father) had found himself a job at the Mimosa Wool Fabrics factory in Footscray. He travelled to work daily by bus and was employed at the same job for about five years.

**Windsor.** In March 1957, Father found a home for rent at 98 Union Street, Windsor. The move to Windsor was completed with the help of friends. We rented the home for approximately two years before Father bought it from the Italian landlord, Tony. As we faced our home, the neighbour to our left was an old Italian couple with a young daughter, while on our right was another young Italian couple. The husband's name was Nick, and his brother-in-law was Michael, who ended up being our family barber at reduced costs and lifelong family friends. The home to the right of Nick's was occupied by Australians of Scottish ancestry. The husband's name was Carl, and his wife was Rita. These two couples left a lasting impression on me regarding the Scottish race. I loved them, and they were great friends of the family. The old Italian couple did not stay long and sold their home soon after their daughter married. The home was purchased by another Greek family, two brothers who became great friends of ours.



**98 Union Street Windsor. 1957 – 1971**

**Our First Home.** Our home was the third from the corner of Upton Road, sharing a common wall with our neighbours at 100 Union Street. The roof was slate to keep the rain off.

The building was a solid two-bedroom brick home with a small yard at the rear, which led to a lane. Father painted all the bricks red with white mortar, creating a very psychedelic house that stood out on the street.

A tiny garden in the front grew flowers, with a green-leafed hedge acting as a fence. Father eventually tore it down and built a wooden fence.

As you approached the front door, an old doorbell handle would ring in the roof when pulled, alerting those inside. Eventually, I replaced this with a buzzer when I was an apprentice electrician. To the right of the house was a small right of way or lane separating the two homes. As you entered the front door, you had to turn left down the hall, where on your right was the second bedroom and on your left was the main bedroom. The main bedroom was at the front, where Mother and Father slept with the twins.

This room had a double bed, bassinets for the twins, an old cupboard, and a window leading out to the street. The second bedroom contained a double bed, which Phillip and I shared. In the winter, we were cold, but sleeping with my brother kept us both warm. The bathroom was located down the hall on the right. It had a bath and an overhead shower. The hot water was supplied by an old gas hot water service that had to be lit manually each time it was used, and you had to ensure that others were not using the cold water simultaneously, as it would affect the hot water service.

The next room was the lounge room, with two windows and a small cloakroom/storage room adjacent to it. The dining room was extremely small but sufficient to meet our needs. It had another door leading to the rear yard and a window. It had a small table and wooden chairs around it. The following room was the kitchen and laundry, all in one. This room had a window and a door leading to the rear yard. On one wall was a tiny gas stove; in the next corner was a copper basin for washing clothes, and a refrigerator that ran on ice. Ice was delivered once or twice a week to meet our needs.

The door leading outside also led to the toilet, located next to the kitchen laundry. Father bought Mother a hand wringer to assist her with the clothes after they had been boiled. Father worked with the Carlton Brewery at this stage and managed to save for a deposit on the home. However, while working at the brewery one day, a pulley on a machine hit him, thrusting him against the wall and breaking several ribs. Father was off work, recovering at home for approximately nine months and living off his savings. I am not sure how the family survived this crisis. As the years went by, Father decided to redesign the whole house on a grand scale. First, he tore down the chimneys in the two bedrooms, lounge room, dining room, and kitchen. This took time, but with help from relatives, it was achieved, creating more living space. Father then tore down the bathroom and cloakroom, making it another room.

He then blocked off the lounge room, making it a four-bedroom home. In the dining room, he boarded the door leading to the rear yard. He then knocked down the copper basin and furnace beneath it. He removed the toilet entirely. He brought in a plumber who installed a new sink, and Father bought a new refrigerator. When he completed all the renovations, he repainted the whole house. In most rooms, he used a stencil with flowers or symbols to give the impression of wallpaper. By our standards, the home was a palace compared to what we had been used to in the past, and most importantly, we owned it.

Father built a wing to the house in the backyard, which first led to the bathroom and shower, followed by the toilet. A separate laundry with two new stone wash basins and a new washing machine with an electric wringer on top of it was also added. Last but not least, he built a small shed where he stored everything. This wing had a solid concrete roof, which Father used to store wood and other materials on top. However, going to the toilet, laundry, or bathroom in the wintertime was sometimes frightening because of the cold and drafts.

There was a small space in the backyard where Father grew tomatoes and other vegetables while Mother grew her flowers in old olive oil containers. The fence separating the two neighbours was made of wood, which neither occupant bothered to replace. I ended up planting an apricot tree from a seed in the middle of the yard. This apricot tree grew rather large and provided shade to the backyard in the summertime. The backyard led to a laneway that serviced the homes of Henry Street, Upton Road, and Union Street. This lane ended at the sawmill, which was located next to the railway yards.

**Family Arrivals.** Father had promised his father before leaving Greece that he would look after his sisters. Father kept his promise and wrote to his father to send his two sisters over to Australia. He assured his father that he would take care of them, that they would live together, and that employment was available. His two sisters, Christine, aged 30, and Harikleia, aged 21, were willing to migrate; however, Anna, aged 23, was reluctant to go. Grandfather Peter consented, believing it was his daughters' only chance for advancement. As he could not provide a dowry, he saw better opportunities for them in Australia. Greek males outnumbered Greek females in Australia at the time, creating a demand for single females.

It was not long after we settled in Windsor that Father was able to bring his two sisters over from Greece, relieving the burden on his father. Auntie Harikleia arrived in Australia on October 22, 1957, on an Italian ship called the *Flaminia*, along with a thousand other single girls, and Auntie Christine arrived in December 1957. Auntie Harikleia struggled to find employment for approximately four months until she found a job with A.J.C. in South Yarra. Auntie Christine was unemployed for six months and was fortunate to find a job with her sister at A.J.C. While Auntie Harikleia was working at A.J.C., she came into contact with Maria Demiri, who introduced her to her future husband, Kon Tsotsios.

At that time, the inner suburbs of Prahran, Richmond, Collingwood, and Fitzroy were home to migrants from all over Europe, with the predominant groups being Greeks and Italians. Most migrants felt comfortable living in familiar environments. At the time, there was prejudice and a negative attitude from some Australians regarding southern Europeans, which contributed to migrants living in those environments. The new Australians worked hard to improve their status until they learned the language and customs of their adopted land before moving on to bigger and better things. Australia was, and still is, predominantly Anglo-Saxon/Celtic, and most immigrants were of British stock or from Northern Europe, who looked like Anglo-Saxon/Celtic. The large influx of migrants from Southern Europe stunned some Australians and disturbed them to hear other languages than English being spoken. However, there was a great need for unskilled workers, and the new Australians were tolerated. However, in times of unemployment, attitudes would change, and new Australians were again viewed as taking jobs from Australian-born citizens.



**Prahran State Primary School**

**School and Accidents.** In 1958, I resumed primary school at Windsor State School, and it was not long afterward that I fell off a slide and broke both my arms. When I picked myself up off the ground, a dog began to growl at me, and I became scared and ran home crying. When I reached home, my mother checked me with my two aunts and found I could not move one of my arms. Once again, Mother took me to the hospital. When the hospital staff X-rayed my arm and plastered it, they attempted to put my jacket on the other arm, and when I couldn't put it in the jacket, I was whisked back into the X-ray room for another X-ray. This time, I had both arms in plaster, as I had broken both of them.

Once again, I would spend considerable time in plaster. I loved it as I went to school, bonking the kids on the head, and they would write on my plaster. I felt great as I became the center of attention. In the months of February and March, there was a slump in the fruit processing business, and employees were being laid off. Aunties Christine and Harikleia were laid off, with Auntie Christine unemployed for twelve months until she found work in a custard factory. Auntie Harikleia married her fiancé, Kon Tsotsios, on April 24, 1958. Auntie Harikleia and her husband Kon remained with my parents for a short period until they rented a room with another Greek family in Richmond, where they remained for four years.



**Family Expansions and Transitions.** On March 10, 1959, a baby girl named Joanna (Anna) was born to Auntie Harikleia and Uncle Kon Tsotsios. Auntie Christine married Andrew Triantafilou on December 6, 1959. They also rented a room with a Greek family in Richmond. Twelve months later, they purchased a two-bedroom weatherboard house on Gibdon Street in Burnley, where they remained until 1975. Christine worked in several factories and maintained the home. Andrew bought himself a truck and hired out his services as a truck driver until 1970 when he began having back trouble. Andrew and Christine saved their money and were owners of three homes, two in Burnley and one on Drummond Street in Chadstone.

In 1960, a baby boy named Jim was born to Auntie Harikleia and Uncle Kon Tsotsios on June 26, and a baby boy named Vasili was born to Christine and Andrew Triantafilou on November 28. Peter and Phillip Adamis attended Greek school at St. Constantine and Hellen's Church in Prahran. A Greek priest taught both boys as there was no Greek teacher available. However, after internal conflicts between the church elders, the community, and the church, the elderly priest returned to Greece. This elderly priest was a hit with the young children, and we were sorry to see him leave. The elderly priest, however, returned some years later for a brief period.

The church authorities in Greece sent out another priest, whom Peter did not like as he smoked and had different ideas from the first priest. Peter Adamis was an altar boy at the church and took his responsibilities seriously. The teaching of the Greek language and history was taken over by several less-qualified individuals, but it filled the vacuum. One such person who stood in for a short period was Argiri Katsabanis from Kalamata in Greece. I never forgot the slap he gave me across the face when he taught us Greek.

Many years later, he would ring me seeking support for his son, who was going for preselection as a Liberal candidate. I gave it grudgingly, but I had never forgotten the slap. "The aim of Greek schools was to teach children Greek in the hope of helping communication between parents and children, helping children understand their origin, religion, and culture, and to help inculcate into children the values of Greek civilization. Instruction has always been in the Greek language, given by teachers, few of whom were certified teachers from Greece or had any experience in the Australian educational system. In the absence of teachers, Greek priests have performed the duties of instructors

**Discipline, Resilience, and the Ties That Bind.** Growing up in Windsor during the 1950s and 60s was a formidable test of resilience and endurance. It was an era marked by strict discipline, cultural integration, and the harsh realities of life that demanded one to be tough yet adaptable. My experiences during these formative years were shaped by a mixture of discipline at home, cultural education, and the camaraderie found among friends, all set against the backdrop of a society grappling with post-war changes.

**Discipline in a Youngster's Life (1954 - 1969).** In our household, discipline was more than a parental duty; it was a way of life, intricately woven into the fabric of our daily existence. My father was a staunch advocate of strict discipline, believing firmly in the corrective power of the belt. His approach to parenting was unwavering, and punishment was swift and decisive, even for the slightest infraction. My school years were marked by bullying and ridicule from some of the other children. In the classroom, I was often reprimanded with the strap by teachers for misbehaving or simply daydreaming.

Upon returning home, I would face further reprimands for acting out or committing minor misdemeanours. Three times a week, I attended Greek school, where the priest or teacher would not hesitate to administer a swish of the cane for any shortcomings in my learning. Returning home from these lessons, I would again face my father's wrath for not mastering the Greek language as expected. Weekends offered little reprieve, as I found myself targeted by other kids who sought to bully me. ([See Appendix 4](#))

Amidst these challenges, I was unknowingly developing resilience, willpower, and the strength to overcome adversity. For a time, I harboured resentment towards the world—towards school, my father, and those who bullied me. However, my perspective began to shift around the age of twelve, following a pivotal scrap with another boy. This time, I emerged victorious, and with that victory, my fears of others began to dissipate. Yet, the lingering fear of being bullied, threatened, or intimidated remained. It instilled in me a fierce determination to defend myself when confronted, ensuring that those who dared to tangle with me would regret it. This newfound attitude became my armour, helping me navigate the streets and the trials of adolescence.

While my early experiences were far from ideal and fraught with challenges, they forged within me a resilience that would serve me well as I developed into a young adult. It was not the most promising start, but it was the only path available to me given the circumstances and environment I lived in. Through it all, I learned to persevere, adapt, and ultimately thrive. As the years passed and wisdom grew, my relationship with my father transformed profoundly. It was only with time that I came to truly understand the depth of his character. Beneath his stern exterior lay a kind, caring, and compassionate individual who chose to conceal his emotions, ensuring that his good nature wasn't exploited by others.

This revelation allowed me to appreciate the complexity of his personality and the love he had always harboured for us, even if it was shown in ways I hadn't recognized earlier. My mother, on the other hand, constantly reminded me of the dangers posed by strangers and old men, instilling in me a cautious approach to the world outside. Cultural rigor was equally imposed, with Greek school attending three times a week after regular school hours. The expectation to excel in reciting the Greek alphabet and mastering the language was high, and failure often met with my father's stern hand. This environment of strict discipline not only instilled a deep-seated respect for authority but also a sense of fear that was often mistaken for learning.

**Windsor 1961: A Flashback.** The year 1961 was a pivotal time in my childhood adventures. At 11 years old, my friends and I turned the local wood mill into our playground. This mill, conveniently located near our home, doubled as a storage depot for coal and briquettes, essential for the fireplaces that warmed many homes of that era. The woodpile was our fortress, a headquarters for our gang—a place where imagination knew no bounds. One ordinary day, a routine escapade turned into an unexpected lesson in vulnerability. As we played among the woodpiles, an older man, whom we often saw splitting logs, confronted me. Dragging me into an old caravan, he then pulled my pants down and he began to masturbate himself in front of me. I was petrified and he reprimanded me for trespassing and threatened to tell my parents.

Fearful of the repercussions at home, I was momentarily paralysed. But I may have been young, but certainly no fool, for I knew that I was in a very dangerous predicament. When he was not looking, I opened the door and quickly ran out pulling up my pants as I ran. I could never have anticipated, that this negative experience would teach me a harsh lesson about the unpredictability of seemingly safe environments. Ever since then, I always fought back against any assailant and never let anyone get the better of me, such was the fear instilled in me by this incident.

**Reflections on a Harsh Upbringing.** Windsor in my youth was a place where resilience was born out of necessity. Discipline was dispensed with a heavy hand, and respect for authority was non-negotiable. The incident with the man in the caravan underscored the lurking dangers in places we considered safe. Yet, it also highlighted the unspoken bonds of friendship that provided strength in adversity. The camaraderie among my peers became a cornerstone of my survival, a testament to the power of unity in times of hardship.

**Windsor and the Lessons of Survival.** Following a car accident and a lengthy recovery, my family relocated to Windsor—a suburb built for veterans post-WWI. Our neighbours, Carl and Rita, an Australian couple with Scottish roots, introduced me to the rich tapestry of Scottish culture. Their frequent visits, filled with bagpipe music and traditional dances, sparked a lifelong appreciation for cultural diversity. Growing up in Windsor was an education in survival. While our parents worked, I took on the responsibility of caring for my siblings. This role demanded discipline and vigilance, shaping my ability to navigate the challenges of youth. Our days were filled with sports, building treehouses, and engaging in youthful mischief. Yet, these carefree moments were interspersed with encounters with swaggies and drunks, whose lives bore the marks of their past struggles.

**Confronting Violence and Finding Resilience.** At Prahran Primary, the effects of domestic violence and poverty were visible in my peers—bruises and welts told stories of hardship. I, too, bore the physical reminders of discipline, whether at the hands of my father, school authorities, or peers. These experiences, though harsh, taught me resilience, transforming me into a street fighter unafraid of confrontation. Tasks such as collecting bottles and selling newspapers became essential contributions to my family's income, each job imparting lessons in business acumen and human nature.

At Prahran Primary School, a small community of Greek children formed a bond that transcended language barriers and cultural differences. Among us were Peter, Anna, Loula, Peter and Chris Lambis, Tasos and John Sotiriadis, Eleni, Vasili, Kaliviotis, Phillip, Kostas and Eleni Adamis, Vasili Vasiliadis, Emmanuel Hadzidanou, and Hariklia. Initially placed in the same classroom, we naturally gravitated toward one another, united by our shared language and heritage.

As we navigated the challenges of learning English, our friendship became a vital support system. Despite our camaraderie, we often faced bullying—not only from classmates at our school but also from students at nearby St. Joseph's Catholic School. The experience was daunting, with taunts and teasing serving as daily hurdles. However, adversity forged resilience in us. Over time, we learned to stand up for one another, developing a sense of solidarity that empowered us to defend ourselves. Our shared struggles and triumphs strengthened our bonds, and gradually, we began to integrate more fully with our peers, forming friendships that extended beyond our initial circle. The journey was not without its trials, but it taught us the importance of unity and the strength that comes from standing together against adversity.

**The Bright Spot: Sunday School and Mentorship.** Amidst the challenges, Sunday School offered a beacon of hope. Stan Edwards, our Baptist gospel teacher, instilled within me the notion of becoming an encourager. His teachings emphasized kindness and understanding, providing a moral compass in a world often lacking both. This principle of encouragement remained a guiding light throughout life's trials, shaping my interactions and outlook. In 1962, my father's brother Theophilos (Theo) Adamis migrated to Australia and lived with us in Windsor. He worked in several factories in the Melbourne area but was young and restless to make it on his own. It is believed he became romantically involved with a woman in Melbourne but decided to go to Sydney before settling down.

**Kon and Harikleia Tsotsios.** The landlord of Kon and Harikleia Tsotsios was not too keen on hearing screaming babies in his household, prompting Uncle Kon and Auntie Harikleia to purchase their own home. In 1962, they bought a home at 86 Peel Street, Windsor, around the corner from our home. Harikleia worked in several factories to complement the family and also maintained the family home. Uncle Kon worked as a labourer in the building trade for several different companies until there was a slump in the building business in the seventies.

**Theo and Elefteria Adamis.** In 1964, Theo and Elefteria Adamis were married in Sydney. His wife did not like Melbourne's climate, and she felt that business opportunities in Sydney were far greater. Her brothers lived in Sydney, which was also a factor in not relocating to Melbourne, which was alien to her. Theo was fortunate to go into business with his brother-in-law, selling oysters to Sydney restaurants and fish and chip shops. Theo and Elefteria bought a home in Marrickville and settled down to raise a family. They had three daughters: Eleni, Panagiota (Patty), and Matoula. Eleni married Joe and had a daughter named Josephine, who has travelled the world, is well-educated, and is doing well. Patty married a Slav Macedonian and has one son. Matoula lives alone in a flat in the Sydney suburbs. Uncle Theo and his wife Elefteria moved out of the Sydney suburbs and closer to the seashore.



#### **Prahran Technical – Mechanics Institute.**

Uncle Thanasis Rassias, my mother's elder brother, came to Australia to find work. He remained for two years, worked hard, and took money back to Greece for his family. Uncle Thanasis's wife never forgave my parents and blamed them for Uncle Thanasis being away from his family for so long. In 1966, Uncle Thanasis returned to Greece, never to return.

A boy named Phillip was born to Jim and Fotina Rassias in 1966. Aunt Anna, at the age of thirty-two, had seen her two brothers and two sisters migrate to Australia, marry, and settle down.

She alone, with her younger brother Demetrios, remained in Greece, caring for their parents. In 1966, a Greek widower named Peter Kavathas from Canada visited the village of Pellana looking for a wife. Anna decided to accept Peter's offer of marriage and returned to Toronto, Canada, to live. Peter and Anna lived with their daughter Irene in a flat for twelve years, and in 1978, they had saved enough money to buy their own home.



**Back yard BBQ**

**Our Migration Experience in Australia.** In the early 1960s, a wave of Greek migrants arrived on Australian shores, seeking new opportunities and a better life. Among them were families from the North Laconian villages, which experienced an almost overnight depopulation as residents left in search of prosperity in this distant land. For those who remained in Greece, the exodus meant fewer mouths to feed, but for the newcomers in Australia, it marked the beginning of a journey filled with challenges, resilience, and community building.

I remember vividly our parents' home becoming a hub of activity, a welcoming sanctuary for relatives, friends, and neighbours from the northern Greek villages. Our family was at the heart of this burgeoning community, offering support and assistance to those who sought a foothold in their new country. Our parents' hospitality was legendary; the house was often filled with laughter, music, and the aroma of traditional Greek cuisine. Parties stretched into the early hours of the morning, a testament to the vibrant social life they had left behind in Greece.

Our neighbours, however, were not accustomed to such lively celebrations and often complained to the local constabulary about the noise. Yet, what began as routine police investigations quickly turned into friendships. The officers, many of whom were veterans who had served in Greece during World War II, understood the essence of Greek hospitality. Their frequent visits became opportunities to share meals and stories, leaving with a few bottles of beer tucked under their arms.

Over time, even our neighbours joined the festivities, becoming friends who appreciated the warmth and generosity of our gatherings. Our home was more than a place for celebration; it was a temporary sanctuary for new arrivals. Many Greek settlers stayed with us briefly until they secured accommodation and employment. This arrangement meant we four siblings shared a room, while our new friends occupied the spare room. Times were tough, but work was available, and our parents instilled in us the values of hard work and perseverance. For us youngsters, Gladstone Park across the road was a playground where we climbed trees, explored construction sites, and played games. It was also where we learned to stand up to local bullies, facing racial vilification with resilience and eventually fighting back.



**The Clans.** The families that came by our home in Windsor and later in Chadstone were from the following clans: Morfis, Rassias, Sigalos, Glekas, Bakis, Vergados, Papastatis, Adamis, Tsotsios, Kamberris, Triantafilou, Paikopoulos, Kalavitrinos, Sasinsky, Mihalopoulos, Papazatiropoulos, Roumbos, Pandazelos, Deros, Valassis, Fountas, Karagiannis, Smirnios, Roumeliotis, Rizos, Maliaros, Skrepetis, Sotiropoulos, Gomatos, Alexopoulos, Amanatidis, Arvanitis, Patsilivas, Dakis, Doumas, Grogoryiadis, Grigopoulos, Koulogiannis, Kategiannis, Kandros, Marinis, Outsikas, Panagaki, Soldatos, Rigeri, Stavridis, Stylianos, Thanasos, Theodoropoulos, Vlahopoulos, Zouzoulas, Giannakopoulos, Kondos, Schouleris and Tsipouras, Tournas, Giannaris, Kostakannelis, Mihalohrista, Rentoulis, Skiadis, Skroubelos, Garoufalas, Katsavos, Liberopoulos, Skalvis, Spanos, Spiliopoulos, Tsagaris, Georgaklis, Kiriakopoulos, Kaliviotis, Koutsogeorges, Kremifdes, Paladios, Zitis, Verzini, Zitis, Zavras, Katsirouvas, Arhondis, Dimakis, Politis, Alexopoulos.



Most of the above clans came from the villages north of Sparta and each family arrived they would seek out those who arrived before them. The Adamis clan as a family were the first to venture outside of the village of Pellana. Panagiotis (Peter) Morfis had arrived in the twenties alone and sponsored his two nephews Nick and Thanasis post WW2 and together they opened up the Seven Creeks Cafe on the Hume Highway at Euroa, Victoria. Australia in those early years was a fascinating place for the new arrivals and it did not take them long to find employment and raise their families. For the serious researcher, the [National Archives of Australia](https://www.naa.gov.au/) holds the names of all the passenger arrivals to Australia.

As the Greek community in Australia grew, many North Laconian villagers settled in areas like Carlton, Fitzroy, Brunswick, and Northcote, which offered a sense of familiarity and community. Our family was frequently invited to their homes, where we experienced the joy of connecting with others who shared our heritage. These gatherings were opportunities for us children to interact with peers, though we were always mindful of our behaviour, wary of the silent signals from our parents that dictated decorum. New Year's Eve was a particularly memorable tradition, marked by long hours of celebration and card games that stretched until dawn. We children were expected to remain patient and well-behaved, waiting for the nod of approval to join in the festivities.

Our father's acquisition of a vehicle elevated our family's status, allowing us to travel more freely and reinforcing our sense of belonging in the community. Our mother, equally industrious, found work as a seamstress and later at the Victoria Market and an elderly home for the Masonic Lodge. She became a pioneering union organizer, advocating for migrant women's rights and empowering others to follow in her footsteps. Her efforts were a testament to the strength and determination of Greek women, who played a vital role in shaping the migrant experience.



By this time, I had completed two years of secondary education at Toorak Secondary School, followed by another four years at Prahran Technical School, which has since evolved into a college. My academic performance at Toorak Secondary was less than stellar, showing only slight improvement upon my transfer to the technical school. While I enjoyed subjects like social studies, history, and technical trades, my mind was often preoccupied with surviving the challenges of the streets. The ever-present fear of bullying and physical attacks cast a long shadow over my school years. After a few scrapes with the local toughs at school, I quickly learned to fend for myself. These encounters taught me to stand up to the bullies who tried to intimidate me in the streets. Life was undeniably challenging for someone who wasn't born in Australia. In those days, you had three options: run away, submit to your aggressor, or fight back. I chose the latter, and it became a defining aspect of my survival.

As I grew into my teenage years, I developed a technique that served me well for many years to come. I learned to strike swiftly, defend myself when attacked, and disable my aggressor until the danger had passed. More often than not, this approach was enough to deter bullies or assailants. In more severe cases, additional assertiveness on my part was necessary. This ingrained fear of bullies lingered with me well into my seventies, fuelling a deep-seated aversion to bullying in any form. It's a passion born from years of standing up against adversity, a testament to the resilience forged in those formative years.



Our parents' involvement in the North Laconian Greek club, "Lycurgus," was another significant aspect of their integration into Australian society. The club, a microcosm of Greek culture and tradition, eventually merged into the Panlaconian Brotherhood. For those on the committee, serving was a matter of pride and status, a way to preserve our heritage while adapting to a new environment. The elders managed the club with a blend of tradition and practicality, using the "Fakelo" (envelope) system to address challenges—a method some might view as controversial today, but which ensured the effective management of limited resources. As the wheels of change turned, the Greek migrant experience in Australia evolved. A shift in government policy opened doors that were once closed, providing access to education, employment opportunities, and a higher standard of living. University education became attainable, skills were recognized, and the community thrived. The spectre of the Vietnam War loomed over many, prompting some to return to Greece to avoid conscription, while others served with distinction, earning admiration and pride within their communities.

Those early years were fraught with challenges, but the Greek migrants who settled in Australia demonstrated remarkable courage and resilience. They forged a vibrant community, blending the traditions of their homeland with the opportunities of their new home. Their legacy is a tapestry of perseverance, cultural preservation, and integration—a testament to the enduring spirit of those who dared to dream of a better life and succeeded in creating it. The Greek migrant experience in Australia was not merely about adapting to a new land but about weaving a rich cultural tapestry that continues to enrich the broader Australian society.

The early settlers from North Laconia, like our family, played a pivotal role in this cultural fusion, leaving a lasting impact that resonates through generations. As the Greek community solidified its presence in Australia, it became a cornerstone of multiculturalism, showcasing the vibrancy and diversity of Greek culture. The community's influence extended beyond social gatherings and familial bonds. Greek festivals, language schools, and cultural organizations began to flourish, offering Australians a glimpse into the traditions and heritage that Greeks held dear. These events became annual highlights, drawing crowds eager to partake in the music, dance, and culinary delights of Greece.

Education played a crucial role in the integration and success of Greek migrants and their descendants. Access to university education not only uplifted individuals but also empowered entire families, facilitating upward mobility and professional success. Greek Australians found themselves in various fields—medicine, law, engineering, and the arts—contributing significantly to Australia's development. Their achievements became a source of pride, not just within the Greek community but for the nation as a whole.

The resilience and adaptability of Greek migrants were particularly evident during times of economic and social change. The 1970s and 1980s saw periods of economic upheaval, yet the Greek community's resourcefulness ensured its survival and prosperity. Family-run businesses, ranging from cafés to construction companies, became fixtures in Australian cities, embodying the entrepreneurial spirit that Greeks are renowned for. These enterprises provided livelihoods not only for Greek families but also for a diverse workforce, further embedding the community within the fabric of Australian life.

Social issues, such as racial discrimination and integration, posed challenges, but they also fostered a sense of solidarity and activism within the Greek community. Organizations dedicated to civil rights and migrant welfare emerged, advocating for equality and justice. Greek Australians joined forces with other ethnic groups, forming coalitions that championed the rights of all migrants, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society. The personal stories of Greek migrants, like those of my family, are interwoven with the broader narrative of Australia's growth as a multicultural nation.

Growing up in the 1950s and 1960s in Australia, I faced the sting of derogatory names like "dago," "wog," "spag," and "greaser," common during a time of significant multicultural shifts. As Australia embraced a large influx of European immigrants, societal tensions surfaced, and I often heard, "go back where you came from." Each insult felt like a wasp's sting, affecting my self-confidence, increasing my anxiety, and lowering my self-esteem. Hesitant to play outside with peers, I found solace in work.

During this transformative era, Australia saw rapid urbanization and technological advancements. I earned money by selling newspapers and collecting bottles on Windsor and St Kilda's bustling streets, bustling with new cars and infrastructure improvements. In local pubs, veterans from World War II, a recent memory for many, generously bought us shandies (beer mixed with lemonade), reflecting the community spirit of the time. My small treat was a box of ice cream, savoured on my way home before contributing my earnings to my family's finances.

Selling trinkets at football matches taught me the harsh realities of life, instilling a sense of duty to help ease household burdens. Despite my struggles with self-confidence, I developed resilience; what others saw as stubbornness was my unwavering determination and belief in a better future. Social gatherings often centred around local milk bars like Wadden's, where I played cards in the backyard, echoing the leisure culture of the period. At the Ziebell's home, memories linger of playing cards, a cherished pastime. My best friend Alan, a national serviceman who tragically died in a car accident after marrying Anne, embodied the ANZAC spirit that pervaded the era. His brother Barrie and my friend Con Mercuri remain close friends, reflecting the enduring bonds formed in those formative years.

I embarked on a new chapter as an apprentice electrician during the vibrant 1950s and 1960s, a time when Australia was rapidly evolving with technological advancements and a booming post-war economy. While I enjoyed the intricacies of electrical work, my first boss often assigned me babysitting duties, and his subpar workmanship left much to be desired. His management style was disappointing, but as a young man eager to contribute to my family's well-being, I persevered in my role.

Despite my good intentions, I wasn't always the ideal son. I had a fiery temperament, leading to a physical altercation with my father. In a moment of defiance, I sought refuge with my friends, the Ziebells, for a week, reflecting the rebellious spirit of youth that was common in that era of rock 'n' roll and cultural shifts. It wasn't until later in life that I regretted these actions, realizing the impact of my youthful bravado and wish that I was a better son.

Navigating the social landscape of the time, my friends and I encountered situations that tested our moral compass. While we tried our best to steer clear of trouble, the era's challenges sometimes found us, risking our reputations within the community. However, we managed to avoid crossing societal boundaries, ensuring that the police never darkened our doorstep. This was a testament to the underlying values instilled in us, despite the occasional youthful misstep.

Our parents, with their unyielding determination and unwavering love for both their homeland and adopted country, exemplified the dual identity that many Greek Australians embrace. They instilled in us a deep appreciation for our heritage and a commitment to contribute positively to the society that welcomed us. As time marches on, the legacy of those early Greek migrants endures. Their stories are passed down through generations, inspiring new waves of migrants and reminding us of the sacrifices and triumphs that paved the way for our present and future. The Greek community in Australia continues to thrive, evolving while maintaining its cultural roots. It stands as a testament to the power of migration, the strength of community, and the enduring bonds that connect us across oceans and continents.

On reflection, this journey, one cannot help but feel a profound sense of gratitude and pride. The struggles and successes of our forebears have laid a foundation upon which we continue to build—a foundation of hope, resilience, and unity. As we look to the future, we carry forward the lessons of the past, ensuring that the spirit of those early migrants remains alive in our hearts and actions, guiding us toward a brighter and more inclusive tomorrow. The story of Greek migration to Australia is a narrative of transformation, resilience, and cultural enrichment that continues to evolve with each passing generation. As the descendants of those early migrants, we inherit not only the legacy of their struggles and triumphs but also the responsibility to preserve and perpetuate their cultural heritage. In recent years, the Greek community in Australia has witnessed a resurgence of interest in its roots. Younger generations are increasingly seeking to reconnect with their ancestral homeland, exploring their heritage through travel, language, and cultural education. Greek language schools, traditional dance classes, and cultural workshops have become popular among youth eager to understand and celebrate their origins. These initiatives serve as a bridge between past and present, fostering a renewed sense of identity and pride.

The role of technology and social media has further amplified the cultural exchange between Greece and the Greek diaspora in Australia. Virtual platforms have made it easier to stay connected with relatives abroad, participate in cultural events, and access Greek media and entertainment. This digital connectivity has strengthened the bonds between communities, allowing for a dynamic exchange of ideas and experiences that enrich both Greek and Australian societies. Culinary traditions, too, have played a significant role in maintaining the cultural link between Greece and Australia. Greek cuisine, with its emphasis on fresh ingredients and communal dining, has found a beloved place in the Australian culinary landscape. Family recipes passed down through generations are cherished, and Greek restaurants and delis have become staples in cities and towns across the country. The flavours of Greece—olive oil, feta cheese, oregano, and lemon—are not just ingredients but symbols of a shared cultural heritage that transcends borders.

The enduring legacy of Greek migration is also reflected in the contributions of Greek Australians to the arts, politics, and public life. Writers, musicians, filmmakers, and artists of Greek descent have enriched Australia's cultural scene with their unique perspectives and talents. In politics, Greek Australians have served in various capacities, advocating for policies that promote multiculturalism and social justice. Their voices have helped shape a more inclusive Australian identity, one that celebrates diversity as a strength rather than a challenge.

As we look to the future, the Greek community in Australia faces new opportunities and challenges. The task of preserving cultural heritage while embracing modernity and innovation is an ongoing balancing act. However, the lessons of resilience and adaptability learned from previous generations provide a solid foundation for navigating these complexities. Community organizations, cultural festivals, and educational programs continue to play a vital role in sustaining the vibrant tapestry of Greek Australian life. They offer spaces for dialogue, celebration, and reflection, ensuring that the rich traditions of Greece remain a living part of Australia's multicultural mosaic. The journey of Greek migrants to Australia is a testament to the transformative power of migration and the enduring bonds of culture and community. It is a story of people who, despite the challenges of distance and displacement, have enriched their adopted homeland with their traditions, values, and spirit.

## CHAPTER 6 THE TURBULENT TEENAGE YEARS

**The Hus Boys. Brotherhood and Loyalty.** Growing up in the vibrant and diverse suburbs of Melbourne, I was immersed in a community where cultural identities intertwined, creating a unique tapestry of resilience and camaraderie. From Yarraville, Sunshine to Moonee Ponds, and across the bustling streets of South Melbourne and Richmond, we were a motley crew of Greeks, Australians, Italians, Hungarians, Jews, Poles, and more. Bound together by the shared rhythms of rock and roll, we forged alliances across Windsor, Prahran, and Bentleigh, standing united against the common challenges of our youth.



**HUS Boys & Girls and Associate members**

As a youngster, I, along with other selected lads were sent every few weeks to a special gymnastic school where we were instructed in the arts of a gymnast. Why they selected me is beyond my understanding, but the interruption from studies was a welcome one. We learnt back flips, the rings, vaulting the double bars, the ropes, breathing techniques, exercises and a whole lot of other items related to becoming a gymnast.

Later as a young teenager, I took up boxing and was a reasonable boxer, but nothing like some of my mates that went on to box in tournaments. It appeared that my forte was street fighting. Don't why I was good at it but it saved me from being savagely mauled by bullies a number of times. Mind you, I never went looking for a fight, I just merely defended myself on all occasions. I look back on those days and wish I had the knowledge I have now to just walk away.

The streets were our battlegrounds, where we faced off against skinheads and mods, wielding makeshift weapons like cricket bats and steel rods, but never knives. Despite the chaos and the scars—both physical and emotional—what set us apart was our refusal to succumb to crime or incarceration. We fought to protect our turf, yet maintained a code of honour that kept us from stealing or landing behind bars. In hindsight, fear and survival instincts drove many of our actions, but it was ultimately the discipline and structure embedded within me that steered me away from a path that could have led to jail. Though the past is fraught with memories of street battles and territorial skirmishes, it's the unbreakable bonds and the lessons learned that linger, reminding me of a time when unity was our greatest strength.

We all had nicknames such as: Bunny, Boss, Trees, Big Al, Toids, Pig, Runt, Rosco, and other names that were supposed to identify us. If we spoke to another we would say, *"I saw the pig with big Al the other day, they were heading towards Roscos joint but they went past Toids house and collected the Boss"*. Anybody listening would not have a clue what we were talking about. In fact, having a nickname saved members from being identified and harmed by rival gang members. There were on occasions when we were called out to help a gang that was associate with us and we would rally to their call. Some of which had negative outcomes for both sides. We as a group never went out looking for fights but merely to have a good time. We had our favourite pubs (hotels) and dances that we would attend and at times rival gangs would also be at the same location. Fights broke out over women, being drunk, horse playing and/or being involved because you had to.

In the mid-1960s, during the Rock and Roll era, I found camaraderie among the Hus Boys—a gang of friends bound by loyalty and shared experiences. Together, we navigated the perils of youth, forming alliances with other local groups. Football (Aussie Rules), hockey, basketball, cricket and playing cards were our past times. I have lost count how many times I lost in card games and being broke every pay day. We would also play billiards and watch the illegal games being played in the local cafes and of course the illegal SP Bookie who was always on hand to take a bet on the horses. Winning from the card games and the races were shared by an agreement with the owner of the premises. Every illegal gaming shop that I went to play billiards always had a "cockatoo" on the door ready to turn on a hidden switch which gave the players enough time to stop, hide their games and pretend they were playing innocent games of cards or billiards while others had their coffee. There was of course the odd "copper" who took a piece of the action and every one was "Honky Dorey" and no questions asked.

It was in this environment that friendships taught me the value of loyalty and the importance of standing together against adversity. The Hus Boys, a mix of Greek, Italian, and Australian lads, exemplified multicultural unity long before it became a societal ideal. Our gang The HUS Boys was named after Henry, Union and Stewart Streets and we made a formidable group that attracted others wishing to be part of us as far out as Bentleigh where the Bateman clan lived. The Batemans were cousins of our mates the Ziebell's. I do not believe that we were a bad gang, for the word its self has negative connotations. I prefer to believe that we were just a close group of friends.

Of the Bateman clan, Peter Bateman and I became blood brothers by cutting our arms and both ending up in hospital because we had cut far too deep and Peter had cut a main artery in his wrist. We then made them associate members. We both loved Rock and Roll and considered ourselves Rock and Rollers. We wore clothes of the era, our hair slicked back as much as it could, and a studded belt around our waist and of course pointed suede shoes. To us it was all good fun, along with the underlying loyalties that came with it when called upon. You were expected to be there to support your mates when they were in trouble and vice versa. This value would hold me in good stead when I enlisted into the Australian Regular Army, but those stories of our youth are not for publication but spoken only amongst mates who shared the same hardships of life.

The lessons of my youth culminated in a fierce determination to survive. By age 17, I had learned to rely on my fists and wits, driven more by fear than confidence in confronting challenges. The police, tasked with curbing gang violence, often clashed with groups like ours, branding us as troublemakers. Yet, these encounters only reinforced our resolve to stand our ground and protect our turf. Looking back, the challenges of my upbringing were instrumental in shaping who I am today. They instilled a resilience, a toughness and a strong will to survive. I was extremely over protective of my siblings and that at the age of 14, I almost killed another lad for belting and bullying my brother Philip. Luckily someone came along and stopped me from smashing the lad's skull against the pavement. Those battles may have served me well in life's many battles, but they also left hidden scars that remind me of the innocence lost along the way.

The memories of Windsor, both fond and painful, remain etched in my mind, a testament to a time when life lessons were learned through experiences that, while difficult, were undeniably formative. Reflecting on those formative years in Windsor, I realize that they were more than just a series of challenges—they were the building blocks of resilience and character. The discipline, the friendships, and the experiences, both good and bad, taught me invaluable lessons about survival, loyalty, and the human spirit's capacity for endurance. As I move forward in life, these memories serve as a reminder of where I came from and the strength that lies within, forged in the crucible of a childhood in Windsor.



In 1967, I began working with DWD Electronics, remaining for three months before taking up an electrical apprenticeship with a Greek electrician who lived in Richmond. The Adamis family became Australian citizens. In 1968, Kalliope Adamis (Mother) visited Greece for the first time since leaving the village in 1954. She said that she had a wonderful time and brought back many movies on tape for the relatives in Australia. In 1969, a girl named Stamata was born to Theo and Elefteria Adamis. Uncle Thanasis Rassias visited Australia and remained for twelve months before returning to Greece.

Brother Phillip and I enlisted in the Citizens Military Forces (CMF) on being introduced to the CMF by my old mate Tasos Sotiriadis. In 1970, Peter and Phillip Adamis both sought discharge from the Citizens Military Forces (CMF) to pursue other adventures. I on the other hand had enlisted in preparation for the Australian Regular Army of which I had kept my dream only to myself. In 1971, Father sold the home in Windsor and rented another home in Malvern for a short while. Leaving the family in Australia, Father travelled to Greece in December 1971 to visit his parents and relatives, returning in February 1972. The teenage years were troublesome years where one learned to survive in the concrete jungles of Windsor and its surrounding suburbs of Prahran, St Kilda, South Melbourne and Richmond. To survive one either learned to fight like a street fighter, joined a gang, made alliances with other turf gangs or you remained neutral and subject to bullying and intimidation. I chose all of the former as I would never have survived the streets as a neutral member in those days.

**The influence of Church and Changing Landscape of the Australian Greek Community.** As Greek migrants began to improve their English language skills, they started to venture out from the relative safety of the established Greek enclaves that had sprung up across Melbourne. These communities, often situated alongside their Italian counterparts, had provided a sense of familiarity and security for new arrivals. However, as the Greek migrants became more comfortable in their new environment, they began to diversify their employment and business ventures. Some opened their own milk bars, taxi companies, fish and chip shops, and retail stores, while others found work in the public sector as tram drivers or local government employees. This newfound economic prosperity allowed many Greek-Australians to provide their children with educational opportunities that would enable the next generation to contribute to the overall prosperity of Australia.

Yet, I also note that there were some Greek migrants who, after accumulating sufficient wealth, made the decision to return to their homeland, often to the dismay of their children who had become accustomed to the Australian way of life. This decision was not always an easy one, and in some cases, it caused significant upheaval within families. My personal observations highlight the nuanced and complex relationship between the Greek Orthodox Church, the Greek-Australian community, and the broader Australian society. While the church played a vital role in maintaining cultural and religious identity, its actions were not always viewed favourably by the community it sought to serve. Similarly, the economic and social integration of Greek migrants into Australian society was a gradual and sometimes challenging process, with both successes and tensions along the way.

As I reflect on these experiences, it becomes clear that the story of the Greek-Australian community is one of resilience, adaptation, and the delicate balance between preserving cultural heritage and embracing the opportunities of a new homeland. My insights provide a valuable perspective on the evolving nature of the Greek-Australian experience and the role of the Greek Orthodox Church within this dynamic landscape.

**Controversies and Contradictions.** The Greek Orthodox Church has long been a central pillar of the Greek community in Australia, playing a vital role in maintaining the cultural and religious identity of Greek migrants and their descendants. As the Greek population in Australia grew, the church sought to become involved in various aspects of community life, ensuring that the Orthodox faith remained a core part of the Greek-Australian experience. According to my father, the involvement of the Greek Orthodox Church was not without its controversies. One particularly notable issue was the church's interactions with former communists who had become active members of the congregation.

While my father was not concerned with what these individuals did in their personal time, he was irked by the fact that some had managed to accumulate significant wealth, often at the expense of their own people. The church's actions were also called into question in instances where Greek communities had built their own churches, only to later lose control of them to the archdiocese. I acknowledge that there are valid arguments on both sides of this issue, but ultimately believe that the church has a responsibility to its flock and should behave in a manner that does not alienate the very people who support it.

I have witnessed firsthand instances where the clergy have acted in a tyrannical, dictatorial, and selfish manner – the antithesis of what a good clergyman should embody. While I recognize that there are pious clergy who go about their work quietly and dutifully, the actions of the few have, at times, given the archdiocese a bad reputation. *A Soldier's Journey: Embracing the Opportunities of a New Homeland*. As the Greek community in Australia evolved, my own personal journey provides a glimpse into the changing landscape. Prior to completing my apprenticeship, I decided to enlist in the Australian Army, much to the horror of my mother, who had experienced the horrors of the Greek Civil War.

I acknowledge that I could have been more tactful in breaking the news to my mother, but I felt a strong desire to do my part for my adopted country. For example, my decision to join the army coincided with a broader wave of change within the Greek-Australian community. My insights into the relationship between the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek-Australian community provide a nuanced and thought-provoking perspective on the evolving nature of this dynamic. My personal experiences and observations serve as a valuable contribution to our understanding of the complex interplay between religion, culture, and the immigrant experience in Australia.

The delicate balance between preserving cultural heritage and embracing the opportunities of a new homeland is a challenge faced by many immigrant communities, and the Greek-Australian experience is no exception. As I reflect on the tensions and successes that have shaped this community, I am struck by the resilience, adaptability, and the deeply personal nature of the immigrant experience. Through my own journey and the observations of my family, I have witnessed the Greek Orthodox Church's complex role in maintaining cultural identity, as well as the tensions that have arisen when the church's actions have been perceived as at odds with the needs and aspirations of the community it serves. Similarly, the economic and social integration of Greek migrants into Australian society has been a gradual and multifaceted process, marked by both triumph and challenge.

Ultimately, the story of the Greek-Australian community is one that resonates far beyond the confines of this particular group. It is a testament to the human capacity for growth, the power of community, and the delicate dance between preserving the past and embracing the future. As I continue to reflect on these experiences, I am reminded of the enduring importance of understanding and empathy – qualities that are essential not only for navigating the complexities of the immigrant experience, but for fostering a more inclusive and harmonious society as a whole.

## CHAPTER 7 WESTGATE BRIDGE DISASTER



**The Aftermath and recovery**

In the early 1970s, as a 20-year-old apprentice electrician, I worked for J PARK Electrics, a firm based in Brighton. My foreman, John Baker, and I frequently visited the Westgate Bridge to conduct maintenance and repairs on the lift that transported workers to the summit. This routine task would forever etch the events of the Westgate Bridge disaster into my memory. Our journey to the bridge involved driving to the eastern side of the Yarra River and taking a boat across to the western side. There, a noticeable ripple, about four centimetres high, stretched across the width of the bridge. The rumblings and jerks we often heard and felt were laughed off by the tough men working on the bridge, who considered it part of the job. However, these seemingly minor indicators of structural problems were ominous signs of the impending disaster.

**The Preceding Weeks.** Two weeks before the disaster, I visited the bridge for lift maintenance, as per our work schedule. After completing the task, I sought a work docket signature from a young engineer named Bill Stacey. I inquired about the ripple and the reason for the concrete blocks on the bridge. Bill explained that the blocks were intended to remove the ripple. We joked about the bridge collapsing around his ears, not realizing the prophetic nature of my remark. Sadly, Bill died a few weeks later from massive internal injuries. He was a genuinely good person.

**The Day of the Disaster.** On October 15, 1970, John Baker and I were scheduled to work on the bridge. However, John decided to change our shift to maintenance on the city construction lifts instead. While on the top floor of Marlin House in Bourke Street at noon, we learned of the Westgate Bridge disaster. Using a surveyor's theodolite, we looked towards Williamstown and saw that one of the pillars supporting the western end of the bridge was missing, along with the span.

John Baker's decision that day saved both our lives. My brother, who worked at a nearby bank, rushed over to see if I was among the casualties and was relieved to see that I was not amongst the bodies. Another chap who raced to assist the recovery teams was Alan Sparks who ended up in the Regular Army with me in 6 RAR. Alan was the Signal Officer and I found out later that he had been awarded the medal of courage for his work during the recovery stages of the Westgate bridge.

John travelled to the crash site the very next day to ensure that the lift was still in working order and that it did not pose a danger to the recovery teams that were still finding bodies amongst the twisted metal. Our employer Steve on the other hand would not allow me to accompany John as he felt that the disaster may adversely affect me. In hindsight, I can only imagine the horror the recovery teams faced when recovering their mates amidst the wreckage.

**Visiting the Site.** A few days later, on Saturday, John and I visited the site to check the stability of the lift and ensure it remained in good working order. How the lift did not collapse with the bridge is a testament to those who installed it. While at the site, we navigated through the wreckage, seeking signs of life or body parts. Armed with my camera, I filmed certain sections of the bridge and walked inside the cavernous structure, slowly making my way through the tangled enclosure. Rescuers had cut open sections of the bridge's bottom using oxyacetylene torches to search for human remains. Many victims had been in the huts below the bridge during lunch when they were crushed instantly by the collapse, without time to escape. In one area, where the wreckage lurched to one side, I found a pool of brownish-red water. When I touched it, I realized it was blood. The wreckage resembled twisted brown metal embedded in the dark, oily mud of the pool adjacent to the Yarra River, which flowed into the bay.

**Stories of Survival and Tragedy.** Stories of bravery, lucky escapes, and tragedy emerged from that day. One fortunate man was under the bridge but not in the path of the iron and steel cascading down. The bridge's downward draught blew him away from danger, saving his life. Another man fell off the bridge but landed between the cyclone wires installed between the railway lines, bouncing as if on a trampoline while the wreckage crashed around him. Yet another man was retrieved from the muddy, oily surroundings after falling or jumping from the bridge. He was injured and battered but survived.

Tragically, one man who survived the initial collapse was crushed by a concrete boulder that rolled off the bridge. These stories, carried within me for 47 years, are not found elsewhere. The disaster left us in shock, and although my family was relieved that I was safe, I often wondered what life had in store for me had I been there. Over the years, I faced various challenges, overcoming them all, but the Westgate Bridge disaster remained with me. Occasionally, I met individuals who had relatives or friends on the bridge.

**Reflections and Memories.** Once, at a friend's place, I mentioned my experience and that I still had a Super 8 film of the wreckage. The person I spoke to became emotional and asked for a copy, as they knew some of the victims and survivors. One survivor became a prominent and active member of the Trade Union in Victoria. His experiences on the Westgate Bridge bolstered his credentials to lead the crusade for safety, though he has since passed away. Some speculate that the disaster contributed to his illness.

The Royal Commission conducted its investigation and made its findings. As an ordinary person, I cannot provide an engineer's perspective, but I share what I observed and heard while the bridge was intact. The Westgate Bridge disaster resulted from errors in judgment, and the loss of life was tragic and unnecessary. Life is what it is, and we must ensure our decisions are the right ones. I don't have all the answers, but I believe in being a good person, using the cards dealt wisely, and doing right by others. No one has a monopoly on longevity. Regarding the Westgate Bridge, I believe that removing so many bolts and redrilling each hole separately, rather than all at once, may have prevented the collapse.

As I reflect on the Westgate Bridge disaster, it serves as a poignant reminder of the fragility of life and the importance of safety in construction and engineering. The disaster led to significant changes in engineering practices and safety regulations, improving standards and ensuring that such a tragedy would not happen again. The bridge, now a vital piece of infrastructure in Melbourne, stands as a testament to resilience and the lessons learned from past mistakes. May those who have passed find peace. The Westgate Bridge was a testament to human error, but it also represents the enduring spirit of those who rebuild and learn from tragedy. As always, I apologize to purists for any grammatical errors or misuse of the English language. I hope this account does not cause confusion for those who read it.

## CHAPTER 8 MILITARY CAREER



### Duty First

**A Journey of Mateship and Service.** During my time as a member of the Royal Australian Regiment, many mates helped shape and reshape me as a person, teaching me survival and instilling in me the true meaning of mateship. This journey began with Tasos Sotiriadis at 3 Base Workshop Battalion Victoria (CMF) in 1969 and concluded with Ron Hill, my last commanding officer at the Army Personnel Agency, in 1998. The years in between are filled with memories of loyalty, joy, laughter, hardship, endurance, and, above all, true mateship. In this memoir, I pay my respects and acknowledge those mates who were members of the Royal Australian Infantry Regiment, and other combat arms. I salute those who helped shape my career in non-combat-related roles for their support throughout my military journey. This article began with my desire to realize a dream I had while still serving, but as it gathered strength, I realized it was more about my mates and those who trained and managed me over the years. The article has taken on a life of its own and will become a living document; I ask for your forgiveness for any repetitions or digressions throughout.

As a young Australian of Hellenic heritage, whose father and grandfather had witnessed the horrors of war, I felt that freedom was something not to be taken lightly or scoffed at. My great-grandfather was a "Klephte" (freedom fighter against the Turks, although the term also means bandit or rustler). My grandfather was an infantryman during the ill-fated war against the Turks in 1922 and faced the atrocities that humanity can inflict upon itself. My father served with the irregulars during the Greek Civil War, followed by a few years in the Hellenic Army as an infantryman. He instilled in his sons and daughter the importance of never giving up in the face of adversity. With a history of military service in the family, I had much to live up to. As a three-year-old, my father would hoist me up into the olive tree near the peasant hut where we lived and forced me to hold onto the bough.

In later years, he would tell me that he wanted me to grow up strong and overcome any pain I might experience. During the ship's journey to our adopted country (Australia), he held me over the side of the ship as we navigated the ocean and waves rolled over the sides. Again, he would assure me that it was for my own good and to toughen me up for anything I would encounter in life. I endured many hardships in my formative years and learned to control my pain, regardless of how much thrashing I received. Life was tough for me, yet I still loved my old man. Life was challenging in the fifties, so it was not surprising that I found myself in fights almost every week at school and afterward. We learned to street fight, stand up for ourselves, and engage in the good fight. We learned never to kick a bloke when he was down, to look after our mates, and to be there for them when they needed us. I was bullied at school, sexually assaulted by an adult, beaten in the street by thugs, kicked out of home, and lived a life in constant fear of violence.

Despite all this, I found that these encounters toughened me to the extent that I became capable of taking care of myself by fighting back and becoming a street fighter and brawler. It was my way of surviving in that world. As for my recollections of home, I learned much from the stories shared by my relatives and my father about their lives in the old country. Although I did not fully comprehend what my father said about his military career as an irregular during the Greek Civil War and his experiences in the regular army, I was always captivated by his stories. Little did he know that he was influencing me toward a military career—one he wished to spare me from, knowing the horrors of war.



My dream of joining the army began while I was a member of the Citizens Military Forces (CMF) in 1969. I was drawn to reading about Australia's involvement in Vietnam. The Vietnam War may have been controversial to many Australians, but I always supported the government of the day without questioning the reasons for our involvement. I was disappointed to hear that some Australians of Hellenic background was going to Greece to escape the draft. In fact, I was so disappointed that when I eventually joined, I felt a sense of belonging and a certain pride in doing my bit for Australia. After leaving the CMF in 1970 and completing my apprenticeship in August 1971, I enlisted in the Australian Regular Army with the hope of proving to my father that I could do just as well as he and my ancestors had done before me.

Corporal John Best was my platoon section head at Kapooka and was the first person to influence me. I will never forget his management of my mates and me while we were undergoing basic training. He was a Vietnam veteran and excelled at his job. He knew each of us well and had us all eating out of his hand in no time. I never saw him again, but I learned years later that he was living in South Australia. At Ingleburn, the home of the infantryman, I worked hard but also got into trouble for fighting civilians and other soldiers during our barrack and platoon rivalries. Whilst serving at the Infantry Centre, I learnt from my bothers back in Melbourne that the Police had visited our home enquiring of my whereabouts. When asked why they were searching for their brother, the Police said that he had evaded his national service call up and they were there to pick me up. My siblings advised them that I had already enlisted in the Army as a regular soldier and was not aware that I had been called up. Now whether the story I was given was true is another matter, what made me chuckle how slowly the wheels of fate were turning.

I found myself involved in some serious scuffles that landed me in the local Infantry lockup for about ten days. When I was released, I met by chance the famous Warrant Officer Reg Bandy, who asked me what was wrong. Being a young digger, I blurted out everything to him and expressed my worries about my fighting in the barracks and my lack of discipline, fearing I might not make the grade and would let my mates down. In my mind, Reg Bandy was already famous; I had heard a little about him from senior soldiers and our trainers. To me, he appeared to be a kindly and understanding bloke whom you could talk to. After a short chat, he encouraged me to keep working and not to give up. A few days later, I had to confront the Wing Sergeant Major (WSM) regarding my unruly and undisciplined behaviour.

This was just a couple of days before completing our tests, and I had come first in the platoon when the results were announced. At that time, I had also applied for SAS and hoped that the powers that be would overlook my many misdemeanours. Suffice it to say, I was marched in, and the Wing Sergeant Major looked at me out of the corner of his eye. He said, "I have reviewed your request for SAS, and I must inform you that it has been declined." My heart sank, and I felt a quiet sob within me as my dream was shattered. The WSM then softened his demeanour and said, "Look, you have performed well in your tests, and there is no doubt you will excel, but it is felt that you would best serve yourself by spending some time with an infantry battalion. If you are still interested after your time with an infantry battalion, then apply again." I walked out of the WSM's office with a somewhat less dejected outlook on my army career, having something to look forward to. It was not long after that I was advised that I was posted to the First Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR).

Lt Peter Phillips, Sgt Grabowski, and Sgt John Guest were also instrumental in shaping my formative training, and it was here that I was introduced to the Infantry motto of "Duty First." This motto has assisted me during the difficult periods of my life, both in military and personal aspects. Some may have perceived my view of life as simplistic, naïve, and short-sighted; some would even typecast me as a brainwashed young man who would believe everything he was told. Little did they know that I was learning and absorbing a broad array of experiences beyond those I had been exposed to in my youth.

1 RAR was a family battalion, and while I was a member, I learned what it was like to be part of a team. I gained valuable insights from the soldiers who had served in WWII, Borneo, Sarawak, Malaya, Korea, Singapore, and Vietnam. It was these fine soldiers who provided the grounding, the discipline, the real meaning of mateship, and the attributes necessary to survive in a warlike situation if needed.

I can remember Major Barry French, my Officer Commanding when I was in A Company, 1 RAR (that's another story), as well as Wayne Aitkenhead and Barry Tolly, my CSMs. My RSM, Jack Currie, could read us all like a book, no matter how long we were in the battalion; how he knew our names, I could never tell. Short of having Superman's x-ray vision, I was always perplexed about how our RSM, WO1 Jack Currie, knew that I had my back pocket undone when he was on the other side of the parade ground. I am rather sad to say that most of these great men have since gone to that heavenly patrol.

Jack Currie instilled in me the true meaning of "Duty First." He demonstrated this through his personal example and management of us young diggers, during CO hour, on the roads and parade perimeters, during inspections, on guard duty, and even when he made us paint the stupid white rocks around the battalion parade ground. I have one photograph of him from a boxing match between myself and the battalion Physical Training Instructor, Corporal Jock Waiter. Although I had boxed as a youth, this was something different; I was also a street fighter and resorted to my street fighting skills when the going got tough. In this particular boxing match, Jock was throwing a few too many good punches that connected, and I did not appreciate being on the receiving end. So, what did I do? I started kicking Jock in the legs and threw a flurry of punches in areas that were considered illegal. This went on for a while until Jack Currie stopped the fight and declared both of us a draw. I don't know why it was a draw since I fought dirty that day. Maybe it was my tenacity not to avoid getting a hiding; who knows? The last I heard of Jock Waiter; he was living in Victoria somewhere.

LtCol Hodgkinson was our Commanding Officer, and it was he who took us over to Papua New Guinea for a six-week training exercise. He was a tough bloke and, like the RSM, managed us well during our time in 1 RAR. Then we had Jock, our section commander, who looked after us like a mother hen, followed by two other corporals whose names escape me at the moment. Barry Tolley my Company Sergeant Major (CSM) further ingrained in me, Duty First and what resilience meant to an infantry man. Barry French was instrumental in demonstrating leadership and compassion which made want to follow him anywhere. Glen Barlow was another tough bloke who drove us hard in the bush, and we learned much from his jungle training experience, even though we came to blows a number of times in the barracks as he was a martinet, and life was not easy;

In fact, it was so tough that it was not unusual for diggers to have a punch-up with our section commanders now and then. In those days, it was either stand up for yourself or take a hiding. Despite the harsh discipline and conditions of the service, we all managed to survive. During my stint with 1 RAR and throughout numerous training exercises, my best mate was Jock (Eddie) Bryson. Jock was originally from Scotland and had joined for a three-year stint. He introduced me to "a pint and a half," taught me to sing "I Belong to Glasgow," and at times tried to keep me out of fights (but that's another story). It was here that I first met Warrie George Mansford. When I reflect back on those early days, I must admit that "Warrie" did not fit what I thought was the profile of an officer. The way he wore his military uniform probably gave the RSM a heart attack. His clothes somehow did not fit right, and it appeared that he had slept in them. No matter what company we were in or whatever tasks we were doing at the time, he always had a smile on his face and took a keen interest in what we were doing. This personal, one-on-one approach and his great understanding of us young diggers left a lasting impression on us. Little did we know at that time that Warrie George himself was once a young digger like us. Warrie George soon disappeared from the battalion after Exercise Treble Change, and we did not see him again until we were posted to 6 RAR in Singapore and Malaya the following year.

I must confess that during my time in the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR), I always wanted to be a SAS trooper. What I mean is that I always aspired to be part of the Australian Army's elite. Alas, it was not to be. At the age of 60 (in 2010), I feel confident to confess that my dream of becoming an SAS trooper did not materialize. As a young digger, I was further exposed to the exploits of the SAS trooper and the Training Team while undergoing recruit training at 1 RTB in Wagga Wagga, NSW. During recruit training, we would hear stories of operations from others who had friends or had previously served before us. This fuelled my imagination that SAS was for me, and as a result, I chose the Infantry as my Corps preference as a means of getting to SAS. My dream of joining SAS was not forgotten, but it was shelved while I enjoyed the adventurous life of an Infantryman on exercises, sub-postings, and short-term postings throughout Australia. I fell in love with the jungle immediately, like a duck to water. In fact, my love for the jungle has stuck with me long after I left the Regular Army. If friends happen to visit my little home in Watsonia, Victoria, they will find themselves surrounded by vines, ferns, plants of all sorts, trees, waterfalls, stag horns, and hanging plants, giving the impression of a mini jungle. It is my sanctuary.

On our return from our deployment to New Guinea for a "training Exercise", we were so highly trained that the battalion could take on any challenge. However, all our aspirations of going to Vietnam were dashed when on the 4 December 1972, my dream was shattered and the Labor Government came to power. Overnight the battalion was depleted of its national servicemen with many just packing up their bongos and went home. I thought this was unheard of. How could these blokes just pack up and leave? I thought what they were doing was desertion or going Absent Without Leave (AWOL), to say the least.



Although disappointed, some of us who had been targeted to be posted were soon compensated by being reposted yet again, this time to 6 RAR, which was currently serving in Malaya/Singapore and a stint at Penang (Butterworth). I remember Bloxome, Jock Bryson, Bill Davern, and myself being on the posting order. Ron Lovelock (now living in Melbourne) and Carl Wecker (now living in Europe) were the only ones from our platoon at Ingleburn to get a spot in Vietnam. We had trained so hard to get there, and it was not taken lightly when Whitlam and the Labor party came to power in December 1972.

A couple of my other mates also applied to go to SAS, and if my memory serves me correctly, my mate Andy Pring was one of them. Andy Pring remained and left SAS to become a Police Officer in the West Australian Police Force. Andy is still serving in Western Australia and is now involved with the motorcycle branch of the West Australian Police Department.

As for the rest of us who were supposed to have gone to Vietnam, we were advised that we were going as reinforcements to 6 RAR to replace the soldiers who were being sent home for being caught partaking in drugs, and the Australian military presence in 6 RAR was concerned that the Singaporean government, with its new anti-drug laws, may have a case against the young Australian soldiers. The penalty at that time in Singapore and Malaya was death by hanging (but that's another story). While serving with 6 RAR in Malaya and Singapore, I was fortunate to be part of a great group of young blokes from all parts of Australia, and some of us have kept in touch to this day.

Mick Driscoll, Mick Hardless, Doug Luik, Mick Armstrong, Ross Seath, John Cech, Jock Bryson, Bonny Wasiu (deceased), Noel Iszlaub, Terry Bell, Wayne Whitrod, Percy Meredith, Tom Crummy (deceased), and many others I have written about elsewhere. I also reconnected with Warrie George Mansford while undergoing the obstacle course under the watchful eye of our CSM, WO2 Lance Larkin (deceased), and the OC, Major Panagiotis (Peter) Langford. Warrie George was also there talking with the OC when he looked up and saw us. Warrie George looked again and gave us that grin of recognition. I thought to myself, "This bloke knew who we were and where we had come from before we had even been in the country long."

A special mention goes to my mate Mick Hardless. Mick was a big bloke respected by everyone. He was a great soldier in and out of the field, a talented sportsman, and an overall gentleman. We had our little disagreements at one stage or another but made up when we both tangled with the British Military Police (but that's another story). Mick had applied for SASR on our return from overseas, and the next time I saw him was when he came to 6 RAR seeking recruits for SASR and selected me as a potential candidate, asking whether I would like to try out for SASR. It felt like a dream come true. Here I was at the peak of my performance, fit as a Mallee bull, ready to seek more adventure. I remember speaking with my wife Christine at the time, and she encouraged me to go for it. I then spoke to another friend and mentor, Sergeant Paddy Bacsikai. Paddy was also from SASR and had been posted to 6 RAR for a short time. Paddy was instrumental in changing my life and assisting me in knowing more about myself as a person. He also trained me and others whilst on a training exercise to England to learn urban warfare and anti-terrorist training. It was Paddy that was instrumental in training us about anti-terrorist training while the Welsh fusiliers trained us in urban warfare.



There was one time when Paddy took me aside and asked a few questions to ascertain my reasons for wanting to go SASR. I said a few of my mates had gone there and I knew that if they could do the course, so could I. I was very fit in those days and I felt I could do anything. I asked Paddy how long I could expect to be away from my family as an SAS member. Paddy said about nine months of the year. This shattered me, as I had only been married for about twelve months, and I was unsure whether my wife and I had sufficient time to create a strong marriage, despite the love and the birth of our first son, David. It was not an easy decision to make, but I prioritized my family and set aside my personal goals and aspirations for their sake. I came to have some regrets over that decision, but family was family and, in the years to come, family meant everything to me.

Lieutenant Colonel "Tony the Hat" Hammet left a lasting impression on me. He was a great bloke and, like his friend Warrie George Mansford, knew how to bring out the best in us as young soldiers (I have written about Lt Col Hammet elsewhere). Under Ltcol Hammett we became parachute qualified, assisted in the clean-up of the Brisbane floods, fought fires to save married quarters, assisted those who had fled Darwin with essentials and accommodation before they moved on and later the Battalion was deployed to Darwin to clean up and secure Darwin. When I was posted to Central army Records Office, Brigadier Tony Hammett would stop and speak to me and asked how I was enjoying my new role away from the infantry Battalion. I confess that Tony Hammett was the best Regular Army Commanding Officer I had ever met and have written about him elsewhere.

Speaking of Warrie George Mansford, he was back in Enoggera with us again, making his presence felt in more ways than one. If it wasn't in the barracks, he certainly made his presence felt in the jungles of Queensland. Warrie George took over the battalion for a short period after LtCol Hammet was reposted, ensuring that the policies and objectives of LtCol Hammet were being pursued. (Warrie George now lives near Gordonvale, near Yarrambat in far North Queensland, still loved by all who had the pleasure of meeting him.) Burt Franks had a positive influence upon me along with Roy King, Barry Fitton, Rick Brittain and many others. They were the good years where you belonged. In fact, I don't believe any one has conducted a study on the effects being reposted, separated and/or deployed from one's mates has on a close-knit group of diggers.

When the new CO, LtCol Peter Stokes, arrived on the scene, we found that he had brought his own ideas about what an infantryman was all about. Man, was he a tough CO in the jungle! I remember him making us stand outside our hootchies and gun pits while it poured rain, all in the name of toughening us up. Pete) Stokes now lives in Melbourne, Victoria. I was just a young bloke trying to find his way. It would not surprise those who know me that I sacrificed my personal aspirations over the next 30 years for the sake of my family. I spoke with Mick Hardless and declined the offer to attempt the SASR Cadre course and for the remainder of my life, I became a frustrated Infantryman in an administrative capacity. In fact, I had also spoken with Andy Pring at the time, as we had kept in touch since his posting to SASR. He said, "Pete, if I can do it, then I know that you can too."

As a side note, I'd like to share my personal journey of fitting in during those early years. Adapting to a group of seasoned and hardened diggers was undoubtedly challenging, yet it was not impossible. Initially, they viewed me with scepticism, but eventually, they recognized that I was simply another digger seeking my place among them. In my first four years, I found myself often embroiled in fights, winning my fair share while also experiencing losses. However, through these experiences, I earned the respect of those I faced, regardless of the outcome. My determination never wavered; I refused to back down. I guess that came from my early years of being a stubborn strong-willed bastard.

Looking back, I realize that this relentless spirit stemmed from an aversion to feeling threatened, bullied, or being coerced into actions I believed were wrong. I can confidently say that I emerged victorious in all my encounters with bullies and those who sought to intimidate me—challenges we inevitably encounter in life. This tenacity not only shaped my character but also forged lasting connections with those around me.



Bob Law was a mate I first met while serving in the Central Army Records Office (CARO). Bob and I became instant friends and have kept in touch over the years. In fact, Bob and I were discharged on the same day from the Regular Army. Bob is currently working as an Occupational Health and Safety officer with the Victorian Justice Department. Captain Chris Taylor, Major Jim Black, Bonnie Wasu, (Norm) Ned Kelly, and Noel Greaves, who were godfathers to my boys, cannot go unnoticed. I also want to acknowledge Mick Strong, who was a tower of strength during a difficult period, and who now lives in South Australia.



**Maurice Barwick & Author.** Posted to 11 Independent Rifle Company, West Australian Regiment, I enjoyed the posting very much after a slow start. I met so many wonderful blokes of whom I became very close with. Noel Greaves went on to become a Godfather to my youngest son Mark, and the other was Barrie Daniels who in his civilian capacity was a chairman of an organisation that covered three quarters of Australia. It was from him in fact where I learnt the art of management. We are very close friends to this day. I also met with and I am still mates with is my old CSM, Peter "Blue" Roberts. I have been ringing Blue every January since 1984 just to make sure that the Crocs of the north have not eaten him.

On our return back to Melbourne my career was at all time high and I was very ambitious and competitive, but unfortunately our marriage broke down in 1984. Twelve months later, I was fortunate enough to be posted to Deakin University Company in Geelong, where I met two wonderful men who helped shape my character. The first was Captain Ron Lunt, and the second was Major Maurice Barwick, who became a family friend and is now considered an honorary uncle by my family. To Ron Lunt, I owe my life. He brought me back from the brink of despair. Ron was a member of SASR and had served for several years with the Regiment before being posted to Geelong. He took me under his wing and slowly helped me rebuild myself from scratch.



**Survival Instructor 1986.** I had lost a lot of weight and was on the verge of breaking down completely. For twelve months, Ron would take me for runs around Geelong, up and down the hills and for long runs around the outskirts of Glastonbury, which was once the Glastonbury Orphanage. At one point, I returned from family court after losing my third custody battle and was filled with anger towards the system.

I entered Ron's office and when he asked how I felt, I responded by punching the metal desk drawers with my fist, caving it in out of sheer frustration and emotional pain. Ron stood up, came over to me, and put his arm around me, saying that everything would be alright. In that moment, I felt a rush of relief wash over me. It was only later that I realized that no one had ever given me the face-to-face support I desperately needed. To me, Ron was a special bloke whom I will never forget, and I can never repay his kindness.

Ron also encouraged me to pursue a university degree—something I started and completed one year of study. My results were promising, and he urged me to persevere with my studies. Peter Hatherley was posted to replace Ron Lunt and over time he became a cherished friend as both of us advanced in our Army careers. Many years later, Peter would visit me in Greece while I was recuperating from cancer. He often speaks fondly of his time in Greece and hopes to return one day. It was at Deakin University Company that I met my mentor, cobbler, digger mate and beloved friend of the family, Maurice G. Barwick. As the Officer Commander, Maurice encouraged all the cadre staff to reach for the stars and to operate outside the box. I heeded his advice and created the Rifle shooting and survival team which was always dear to my heart. I was always interested in irregular warfare which is now politely being referred to as asymmetric warfare.





**Rifle shooting and Survival Training Team 1986**

Following my promotion from Deakin University Company, I embarked on a rewarding three-year journey with the 2 Royal Victoria Regiment, which later evolved into the 8th/7th Battalion, The Royal Victoria Regiment. First, under LtCol Skardon and subsequently under the exceptional leadership of LtCol Douglas Ball, our unit thrived in numerous challenges, earning commendations for exemplary actions in Northern Australia. I particularly admired Douglas Ball for his humility upon receiving a medal in recognition of his outstanding leadership. In a private address to the Regular Army Cadre staff, he graciously acknowledged that the medal was as much theirs as his, emphasizing that their support was integral to his achievement.

His leadership style resonated deeply with me, and as Chief Clerk, I was privy to many behind-the-scenes decisions he made that positively impacted soldiers and their families. Among senior Army Reserve Officers, he stood out for being as committed and present as the Regular Army staff. The bonds I formed with fellow soldiers like Mark Stephens, Bill Akell, Warren Payne, Geoff Hallam, Dave Lowe, David Leuin, and Paul Prickett have endured and remain strong to this day.

During this period, I also took on the significant responsibility of gaining custody of my four sons, embarking on the challenging yet rewarding journey of raising them while fulfilling my Army duties. The unwavering support of the Commanding Officer and the Regular Army Cadre and Army Reserve staff was crucial; without them, balancing these responsibilities would have been impossible. On weekends spent at the barracks, my sons would accompany me, playing football and other games in the spacious hall. As I moved on to my next posting, I departed with pride, knowing the 8/7 RVR was in capable hands. My time with the Army Reserve Units has been immensely fulfilling, as I have continually learned from Reservists who expertly balanced their significant professional roles with their military responsibilities.

In 1990, I took on the demanding role of assisting with Army Recruiting in Melbourne, a position that eventually evolved into the Australian Defence Force Recruiting Unit. This posting was fraught with challenges, a very toxic environment and huge egos. I was given my Terms of reference by the Director of Army Recruiting to investigate and report on why Non-Anglo Australians were not pursuing military careers. I anticipated support from my unit and the Officer Commanding, which unfortunately was not forthcoming. Within five months, I found myself detached to the Army History Unit. I was certainly not a happy chappie and came close to having my military career destroyed by individuals who will remain nameless.

While at the army History Unit, I authored a critical report entitled "Recruiting Australians from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds Towards a Defence Force Career Beyond 2000." This report emphasized the crucial importance of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) embracing the rich diversity within Australian society. It highlighted the strategic imperative of recruiting Australians from diverse cultural backgrounds (ADC) to enhance the operational effectiveness and cohesion of the Defence Force.

The report provided actionable recommendations to improve recruitment practices by promoting cultural sensitivity, engaging with community leaders, and addressing misconceptions about military service. Upon completing the report and sending it to Canberra, I quietly worked to redress the wrongs perpetrated by senior staff, yet the damage to my career had already been done.



**Dinner at home – Guest of Honour Jim Hammett**

In later years, I had the pleasure of connecting with Jim Hammett, the son of Brigadier Tony Hammett. I invited Jim to our home in Watsonia for a dinner gathering, bringing together several notable Australians of Greek heritage. The aim was to support Jim's research into ethnic communities in Melbourne and Victoria—a field of study close to my heart. Jim, much like his father, was a delightful and engaging individual, making conversations both easy and enjoyable. The evening was filled with stimulating discussions and vibrant exchanges, as our guests shared insights and experiences that enriched Jim's understanding of the diverse cultural tapestry within our region.

After the guests had departed, a few of us lingered—Maurice Barwick, Jim, and myself. We indulged in some "light sherbets and refreshments," savouring the camaraderie as we "chewed the fat" and let the conversation flow into the early hours of the morning. Those late-night musings, filled with laughter and shared stories, are tales best saved for another time, yet they remain fondly etched in my memory as a testament to the enduring bonds of friendship and shared curiosity.

After completing my recruiting role, I returned to my previous position with the 5th/6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment. This posting was both enjoyable and challenging, testing my ability to manage complex situations effectively. Among the hurdles I faced were managing staff members dealing with domestic issues and navigating the difficulties posed by a civilian typist who seemed intent on complicating my professional life. Despite these challenges, I successfully overcame them by leveraging my extensive networks and maintaining a steadfast commitment to professionalism.

The camaraderie among my fellow Cadre staff was a source of great joy and support. I often took the initiative to organize long marathons to the ocean or around the suburbs, which not only strengthened our bonds but also contributed to our physical readiness. Additionally, I played a role in assisting with Survival Training, an experience that honed my leadership skills and reinforced our team's cohesion. In retrospect, I can honestly say that my four sons weathered my absences during the day as I would often come home late from work and despite being tired, I spent as much quality time that I could with them.

One of my proudest achievements during this time was earning a commendation for implementing an information system that significantly enhanced the unit's operations. This initiative improved efficiency and communication, ultimately benefiting the entire battalion. As Chief Clerk, I often found humour in the small moments of recognition, such as when Brigadier Douglass Ball would visit the battalion. His familiar wink in my direction was a subtle yet gratifying acknowledgment of my efforts and contributions. These experiences, with their blend of challenges and triumphs, enriched my time with the battalion and left an indelible mark on my professional journey.

When the Infantry Career Advisors offered me a position back with a Regular Battalion, I made the conscious choice to decline. At the time, I was 43 years old and a single father to four sons whose education and stability were my top priorities. Accepting the post would have meant uprooting them, potentially complicating and disrupting their schooling and lives far more than necessary. I chose instead to remain close to family during those crucial years, prioritizing their well-being over career advancement.

This decision was made with the understanding that it would cap my military career at its current rank, with any future postings limited to the Melbourne region. However, the importance of being present for my sons far outweighed the allure of climbing the ranks or chasing professional accolades. Family held a significance that transcended career ambitions, and I have no regrets about the path I chose. To this day, I haven't encountered anyone who believes I made the wrong decision. My choice was rooted in love and responsibility, and it has allowed me to be there for my sons during their formative years, providing them with the support and guidance they needed.

My final posting was with the Army Personnel Agency in Melbourne under the esteemed leadership of Brigadier Douglas Ball, my former Commanding Officer from the 8th/7th Battalion. Initial debates arose among the Infantry advisers at Soldier Career Management regarding my posting, but my strong performance at 8/7 RVR under Brigadier Ball's guidance secured my position until I received a redundancy package. Having known Brigadier Ball for quite some time, I deeply admired his thoughtful leadership style. His decisions were not spontaneous but rather the result of careful consultation and deep consideration. Many were unaware of his behind-the-scenes efforts to support officers and soldiers, enabling them to achieve greater heights in their careers. Despite the challenges inherent in the role, I thoroughly enjoyed serving under the good Brigadier once more.

When the time came for Brigadier Ball to move on, I was saddened by his departure, as he had elevated the unit to remarkable heights during his tenure. His legacy, however, was aptly continued by Brigadier Peter Alkemade, another excellent leader who built upon his predecessor's achievements. I owe a great deal of gratitude to LtCol Ron Hill, who was instrumental in advocating for my redundancy package, recognizing the pressures I faced as a single parent raising my sons. LtCol Hill was one of those rare individuals capable of extracting the best from everyone, thereby enhancing the working environment significantly. His support was invaluable during my transition from the Regular Army.

In June 1998, I transitioned to the Army Reserves and volunteered for deployment during the East Timor conflict. However, I was deemed too old for deployment—a decision that, in hindsight, was a blessing, as my sons were in their teenage years. I remained in the Reserves for a few years, occasionally stepping in when needed, before eventually transferring to the Standby Reserve and retiring at the age of sixty-seven. On the day I signed my separation documents and transitioned to the Army Reserve, a profound weight of responsibility was lifted from my shoulders. In the Australian Regular Army, the role of a Warrant Officer is that of a critical reservoir of knowledge and expertise. The longer a Warrant Officer serves in this capacity, the heavier the burden of responsibility they must shoulder.



Young soldiers and Non-Commissioned Officers consistently sought the guidance and advice of Warrant Officers, while officers and senior-ranking personnel often turned to them for their invaluable wisdom. The stakes were incredibly high: a single instance of poor or misguided counsel from a Warrant Officer could lead to significant consequences, making it imperative for them to uphold their credibility. The pressure they faced daily was immense, as the expectations placed upon them were not just about leadership, but also about safeguarding the well-being of their comrades.

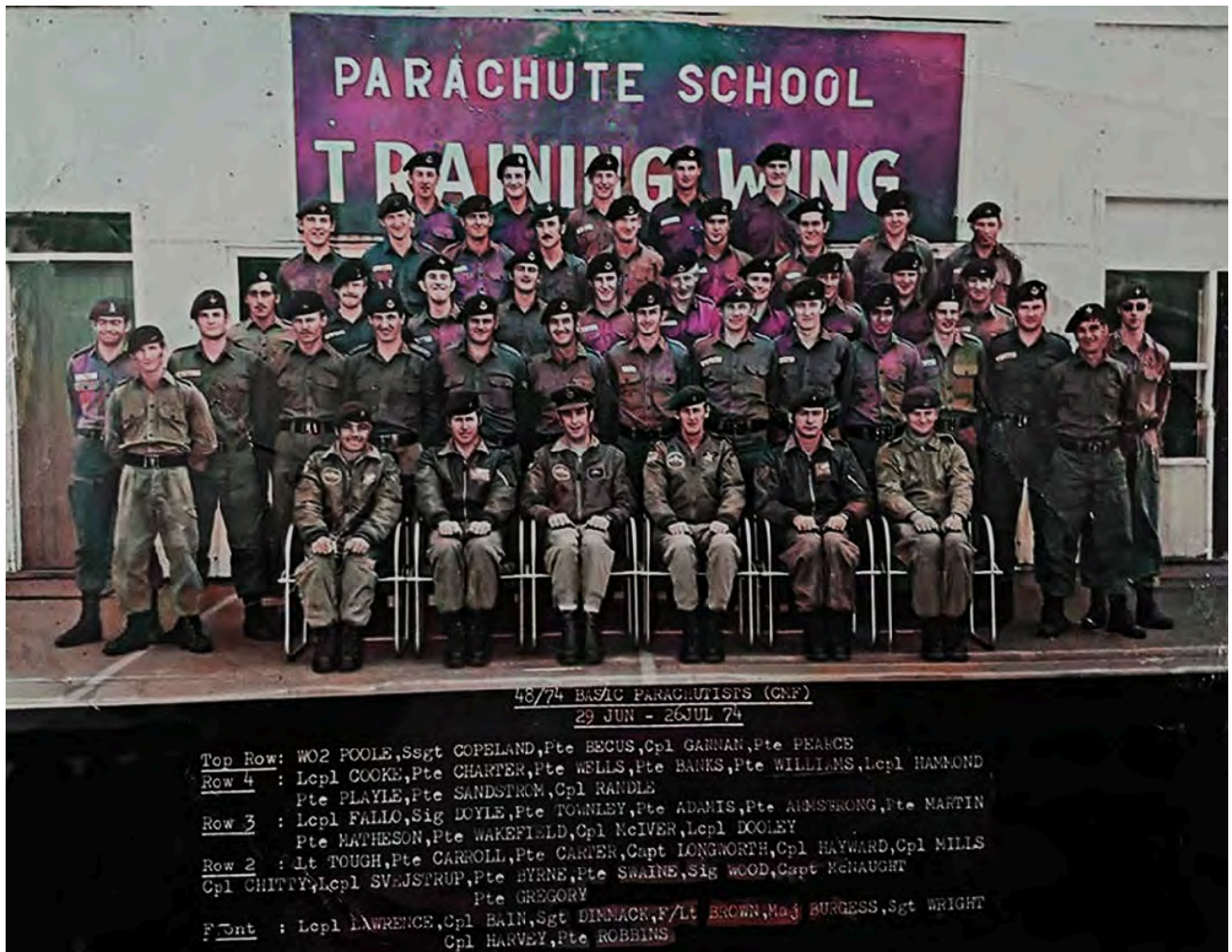
Warrant Officers like Reg Bandy, Jack Currie, Lofty Eiby, Jim Husband, Warren Payne, Burt Franks, Barry Tolley, Peter "Blue" Roberts, Danny Wright, Paddy Bacskai, Mark Stephens, Michael Blaxland, Michael Strong, and many others—whose names may escape me—exemplified this essential role with grace and integrity. Their wealth of experience and profound insights shaped the very fabric of our military community, leaving an indelible mark on those fortunate enough to serve alongside them. Their legacy continues to resonate, reminding us of the critical importance of leadership, mentorship, and the unwavering commitment to excellence within our ranks.

**A Journey of Reflection: Duty, Family, and Gratitude.** As I stand at the crossroads of reflection, peering back into the tapestry of my life, I find myself enveloped in a profound sense of contentment. The journey I embarked upon, guided by the steadfast motto of the Royal Australian Regiment, "Duty First," has been one of resilience, growth, and unwavering commitment. It is a journey that has shaped my character, fortified my values, and left an indelible mark on my heart. In those early years, I often wondered about the "what ifs" and the paths not taken. But with the clarity of hindsight, I realize that every decision, every challenge, and every triumph was a thread woven into the fabric of my life, creating a rich tapestry of experiences that I wouldn't trade for anything. The echoes of "Duty First" have been a constant reminder of the importance of dedication, service, and integrity—principles that continue to resonate deeply within me.

An unexpected joy of my life has been the friendships and connections forged during my military service. Reuniting with Warrie George Mansford in Far North Queensland for a cup of tea in 2011 was a reminder of the enduring bonds formed within the Regiment. Warrie, like so many others, played a vital role in my story, and it is the collective influence of such individuals that has guided and supported me throughout my journey. The camaraderie and support of my fellow veterans have been a cornerstone of my post-military life. Regular reunions, shared memories, and the mutual support we offer each other provide comfort and a sense of belonging. These connections remind me of the strength of mateship and the shared values that bind us together, transcending time and distance.

My friendship Maurice Barwick and his wife Thelma continued even more so after Thelma passed away on my birthday. Maurice also lost his young brother after Thelma and my wife and I ensured that we maintained contact and had his stay with us occasionally. I was very pleased to hear that Maurice's niece on Thelma's side decided to live with Maurice and keep him company. Evelyn, her partner Paul and their children are wonderful company for Maurice. During our time together, either in Australia and/or Greece, we had long discussions of which two books have been written as a result of those discussions.





### Parachuting course

On a personal note, I must express my deepest gratitude to my four sons—David, Paul, Matthew, and Mark. Raising them as a single parent was a journey filled with challenges, yet it was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Despite the difficulties we faced, our family remained resilient, and my sons grew into responsible, caring individuals who embody the principles of integrity and strength. Their journey to adulthood fills me with pride, and as a grandfather, I am committed to passing on the stories and values that have shaped our family legacy. Reflecting on my past, I am acutely aware of the sacrifices made and the struggles endured.

Many of my own people may not have fully understood the complexities of being a single parent of four sons, but my mates in the Defence Force were always there, offering unwavering support and understanding. Their loyalty and camaraderie have been a source of strength, and for that, I am eternally grateful. To name but a few dear friends, mentors and mates alike, such as Eddie and Lisa Black, Ron Lunt, Maurice and Thelma Barwick, Barrie Daniels, Barry French, Ron Lunt, Warren Payne, Barry Tolly, Mark Stephens, Ron Hill, Douglas Ball, Paddy Bacskai, and many, many others, your support has been invaluable, and your friendship cherished.

Nestled in the heart of Watsonia is my personal sanctuary—my home, a true reflection of my love for nature and the lush jungle environments I cherished during my service. It stands as a serene oasis, offering solace amid the chaos of life. Here, I find peace and a constant reminder of the journey that has shaped me into who I am today. As I actively engage with the veteran community, I remain dedicated to supporting those who have served and advocating for their needs. I recreated a jungle setting with vines, bush foliage, a pond with a plastic croc floating in it called: Blue after Peter "Blue" Roberts, as well as gold fish that have been in the pond for at least 15 years.





Sharing my experiences with younger generations not only enriches their understanding of the sacrifices made by service members and their families but also reinforces the importance of honouring our shared legacy. It is a privilege to pass on the lessons I've learned and to pay homage to the commitment and sacrifices that define our service.

Reflecting on my journey, I feel a profound sense of satisfaction with the path I have chosen and the decisions I have made along the way. The unwavering support and love from my family, friends, and fellow veterans have been the bedrock of my journey.

The values of mateship, duty, and perseverance have guided me, leaving an indelible mark on my identity. To all who have been a part of my story, thank you for the meaningful role you have played in my life.

Your influence has been profound, and I am eternally grateful. As I move forward, I carry each of you with me, honouring the bonds we forged and the values we cherished together. While the journey continues, the lessons learned and the connections made will forever remain etched in my heart—testaments to a life well-lived and a future embraced with hope and gratitude.

**Myths, Fibs, tall tales.** Myths, Fibs, tall tales but true are in appendix 12 and not for public reading. They are there as a record of my youthful escapades. Some of the are so silly that I have wondered why I have included them. Still, they will remain within the appendix as a matter of record and only to be read by my four sons. After all this memoir has been compiled for their eyes only as I doubt it would be of any interest to others.

## CHAPTER 9 CHALLENGES OF A SINGLE PARENT

Reflecting on my journey as a single parent, I am reminded of the profound experiences that have shaped both my life and the lives of my children. Although my story is unique, the challenges and triumphs I have encountered resonate with many who raise their children alone. This journey is not simply about the obstacles I have faced; it is a testament to the immense joy and fulfillment that single parenting has brought me. The love I share with my children is immeasurable, a pure and unconditional bond that they recognize and cherish with their innocent hearts.



**Beech Forest - Victoria**

For a single parent, the responsibilities extend beyond regular work hours. The mental blueprint of home is ever-present, guiding every decision and action to ensure my children's well-being. Sometimes, working extra hours is not just an option but a necessity, a way to provide the stability my family needs. Financial burdens can be overwhelming, with expenses often exceeding resources. Yet, my resilience and determination guide me through, as I find ways to stretch every dollar, repair clothing, and communicate openly with service providers to find solutions. The stress and anxiety of single parenthood linger, but the unwavering love for my children propels me forward, one step at a time.

The challenges of single parenthood are not determined by the number of children but by the ability to manage time and provide affection. My children have often sought comfort from others, feeling the absence of emotional support during their formative years. As their sole caregiver, it is crucial that I ensure they feel safe, loved, and cared for, regardless of our circumstances. Their resilience and ability to adapt never cease to amaze me. They have learned to adjust to the reality of their lives, and as their parent, I strive to model the positive values and ethics that will shape their development. In my journey with my four sons, we have faced numerous challenges and missteps. The eldest son bore a heavy burden, while the second eldest felt the strain and, at one point, ran away from home. My absence during the day, necessary to provide for the family, had an impact on my eldest sons, who struggled to maintain discipline and control over their younger siblings.

For those navigating the complexities of single parenthood, I want to remind you that you are not alone. Our stories, woven together, provide a sense of solidarity and inspiration, offering hope even in the darkest moments. One of the most significant aspects of my experience is the impact of my absence on my sons. This absence, driven by the need to provide for my family, left a void that my children struggled to fill. The responsibility of maintaining discipline and caring for their siblings weighed heavily on them. This realization, and my subsequent regret, highlights the complex trade-offs that single parents must navigate. The decision to reintroduce my children to their mother, who had previously distanced herself from their lives, further complicated our emotional landscape. Despite the past, I wanted to foster a relationship between my sons and their mother. However, this decision opened a Pandora's box of emotional turmoil, leading my boys down dark paths and causing us immense anguish and emotional fatigue.



**Matthew, David, Yovanna, Mark and Paul**

Through these trials, my love and determination to guide my children remained steadfast. I have learned from my regrets and mistakes, recognizing that single parenthood is not without its challenges. Yet, it is a testament to the power of love, resilience, and the extraordinary capacity of the human spirit to overcome adversity. Seeking assistance, communicating openly with service providers, and finding creative solutions to financial burdens are crucial elements in navigating the complexities of single parenthood. These actions not only demonstrate resourcefulness but also highlight the importance of community support and shared experiences.

Moreover, my children's resilience and coping mechanisms remind me that they are not merely passive recipients of their circumstances. They have adapted to fit their reality, and it is my duty to empower them by modelling positive paradigms, values, ethics, and guidelines that will shape their development. As I reflect on my journey, I acknowledge the growth and self-awareness I have gained. The path of single parenthood is not without its missteps, but the power of love and resilience can guide us through even the darkest of times. For those currently navigating the complexities of single parenthood, my story offers a tapestry of experiences, a sense of solidarity, and the knowledge that you are not alone in your struggles. The stories shared here are a testament to the extraordinary strength and resilience within each single parent, reminding us that even in adversity, the light of hope can shine through. As we continue to support one another and learn from our collective experiences, I believe we can create a brighter future for ourselves and our children.



## CHAPTER 10 CIVILIAN LIFE & MARRIAGE

**A Veteran's Odyssey from Military Life to Civilian Challenges.** The transition from military service to civilian life is often perceived as a relief, a shedding of the responsibilities and rigors of duty. However, for many veterans, this shift is fraught with unexpected hurdles and profound changes. My journey was no exception, as I embarked on an odyssey filled with trials, triumphs, resilience, and transformation. Upon returning to civilian life, my immediate concern was establishing a stable environment for my children. Their education was of paramount importance, and finding a suitable home became the first challenge. Fortunately, my military service afforded me benefits that enabled me to secure a home loan. Negotiating with the bank, I managed to purchase a house strategically located near essential amenities, just two kilometers from the military quarters I once called home.

Securing employment in a civilian world posed its own set of challenges. Initially, I was fortunate to join a traffic engineering firm led by a Reserve officer. My role as a traffic coordinator involved deploying and retrieving traffic counters, analysing data, and understanding traffic flow patterns. Although this job was physically taxing and monotonous, it was a stepping stone in my post-military career. However, the toll on my body became too great, and I had to leave due to physical injuries. Seeking more fulfilling work, I transitioned to a role as a training manager for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia's welfare division. Under the dynamic leadership of Peter Jasonides, the organization thrived, empowering the underprivileged with essential skills. This role reignited my passion for community service and development.

My next venture was with a prominent organization focused on government programs for the unemployed. Despite initial success, internal conflicts led the CEO to resign, prompting me to follow suit as the organization's direction shifted away from our initial mission. In a leap of faith, my wife and I embarked on an entrepreneurial journey, establishing Abalinx and Associates with the support of my mentor, Maurice G. Barwick. Our company aimed to train and mentor individuals to reach their full potential. As government policies shifted, we adapted by becoming a not-for-profit organization, dedicated to offering support and mentorship without financial gain. Our global network flourished, renowned for its benevolence and commitment to uplifting others.

The most challenging chapter of my civilian career came when I was headhunted for a multifaceted role overseeing a college, church, preschool, rental properties, and more. Despite the vast responsibilities, the rewards were not financial but, in the impact, and achievements we made. However, changes in the Committee of Management brought about a toxic environment, characterized by micromanagement and hostility. The stress was overwhelming, leading to health issues, including heart attacks and severe depression. Battles ensued, but with the guidance of my friend Guiseppe de Simone, we reached a settlement. Despite the personal victory, the toll on my health was irreversible, culminating in a cancer diagnosis. The psychological scars lingered, making full-time employment untenable. Writing became my refuge, a therapeutic outlet that kept my mind engaged and my spirit alive.



### **Embracing Love Again: A Journey of Rediscovery and Resilience.**

In May of the year 2000, I found myself in a reflective state, sitting alone in my backyard, gazing up at the vast expanse of sky. I was immersed in a silent conversation with an old friend who had long since passed away. It was during this introspective moment that I made a heartfelt plea:

I asked for guidance in finding someone with whom I could share the remaining days of my life. I promised myself that if no such person appeared by the end of the year, I would sell my home, divide the proceeds among my four sons, and return to Greece to live out my days in solitude. As the months unfolded, my search for companionship continued, albeit with little success. I ventured out on a few dates, each one leaving me with a sense of unfulfilled anticipation. A friend who had been kind to both me and my sons seemed like a potential partner, but even that relationship eventually faded away, leaving me feeling adrift once more.

However, as September approached, an unexpected email arrived, altering the course of my life in ways I could never have imagined. It was as though the message had been sent directly from the heavens, and it didn't take long for me to realize that this was the person I had been seeking since my divorce. My four sons were grown and independent, capable of navigating the world on their own. It was time for me to focus on my own happiness without severing the emotional ties that bound us together. With hope in my heart, I decided to take the plunge into a new chapter of life.

After a few months of corresponding and nurturing our connection, I flew to Canada to meet my lifelong partner. The experience was everything I had hoped for and more. Meeting my future wife's mother, I respectfully sought her blessing to marry her daughter, and soon after, we were officially engaged. I returned to Australia, eagerly awaiting Yovanna's arrival, both of us longing to build a shared life together. Our plan was clear: to unite our lives and eventually bring Yovanna's mother to Australia. Unfortunately, unforeseen circumstances, including a tragic accident, made relocating her mother impossible. Within a week of Yovanna's arrival in Australia, we faced an enormous challenge that tested the very foundation of our relationship. It was an ordeal so severe that even now, reflecting upon it is difficult. Yet, despite the gravity of the situation, we emerged with a positive outcome. Throughout the years, we encountered numerous trials, moments of discord, and reconciliations. At times, the weight of our struggles seemed insurmountable, and we came perilously close to ending our relationship. However, just as we were about to fall into the abyss of despair, we both stepped back and realized that we did not want to be apart.



In those pivotal moments, we came to understand that our bond was more profound than any obstacle we faced. Our commitment to one another was unwavering, and we knew that, no matter what, we were meant to be together until the end. Our love had been tested, but it had also been strengthened, forged in the fires of adversity. As we built our life together, we discovered that marriage is a continuous journey of growth, understanding, and compromise. We learned to communicate openly, to embrace each other's differences, and to find joy in the simple moments that define a shared life.

Our relationship became a testament to resilience and the enduring power of love. Looking back on my decision to seek companionship once more, I am filled with gratitude for the path that led me to Yovanna. The journey was not without its challenges, but it was one that brought me immeasurable joy and fulfillment. Together, we have created a life rich in love and laughter, a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the boundless possibilities of the heart.

With the unwavering support of my wife, Yovanna, I embarked on a transformative journey back to university. Despite my initial lack of academic confidence, I persevered and successfully earned a Bachelor of Adult Learning and Development. This achievement was merely the beginning, as I went on to complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Environmental Health and Safety, along with several Diplomas in Training and Administration. Armed with this newfound knowledge and expertise, I returned to my passion for writing, dedicating myself almost full-time to the craft, and doing so without seeking financial compensation. This period of intellectual and personal growth allowed me to refine my skills and evolve as a writer over time. My goal is to leave behind a legacy that inspires others to take heart and follow a similar path. I want to demonstrate that seizing opportunities, fighting the good fight, and maintaining resilience are keys to a fulfilling life. By sharing my journey, I hope to encourage others to embrace their potential, pursue their passions, and never give up on their dreams.

As I continue to walk this path with Yovanna by my side, I am reminded that love is a journey, not a destination. It is a journey marked by moments of triumph and tribulation, a journey that requires patience, understanding, and unwavering commitment. In choosing to embrace love a second time, I discovered not only a partner but also a renewed sense of purpose and a deeper appreciation for the beauty of companionship.



Our love story, though unique, is a reflection of the universal desire for connection and the enduring hope that springs eternal in the human heart. This journey from military service to civilian life has been marked by trials and triumphs, resilience, and transformation. It underscores the profound challenges veterans face in adapting to civilian roles and the critical need for comprehensive support systems. As we navigate these turbulent seas, the lessons learned and the connections forged remind us that even in adversity, we can find strength and purpose.

As I continue to share my story, I hope to inspire others facing similar transitions, offering a beacon of hope and a testament to the enduring spirit of those who have served. The journey of transitioning from military to civilian life is often a winding road, filled with unexpected turns and challenges that test one's resilience and adaptability. My own path has been no different, serving as a reminder that the skills honed in service can be both a foundation and a beacon in navigating the complexities of civilian life.



The establishment of Abalinx and Associates was more than just a business venture; it was a manifestation of a commitment to helping others find their footing in a world that can often feel unforgiving. Our organization's shift to a not-for-profit model was driven by a genuine desire to effect change without the constraints of financial motivations. This decision not only allowed us to weather changes in government policies but also cemented our reputation as a compassionate force for good, providing mentorship and support to individuals across the globe.

The role for which I was headhunted, encompassing responsibilities that spanned education, housing, and community services, was both a challenge and an opportunity. It provided a platform to leverage my leadership skills and make a tangible impact on the community. However, the subsequent shift in management culture introduced a toxic environment that ultimately jeopardized my health. The experience underscored the importance of supportive leadership and the detrimental effects that poor management practices can have on individuals and organizations alike.

Throughout this period, I was certainly kept busy and very active within the community. I had the opportunity to join a political party and chose the Liberal party as being closer to my beliefs regarding family, defence and economic security as well as my disdain for communism. I was more than happy to join the Returned Services League and be seconded by Bruce Ruxton to make the Constitutional transition for the Hellenic RSL to that of the Australian RSL version. I was head hunted and became a founding member for the Australian Hellenic War Memorial located in Domain Gardens in Melbourne near the shrine of Remembrance. Became a member of the Northern Laconian Club called Lycurgus and a member and President of the Panlaconian Brotherhood of Melbourne and Victoria.



I also was unfortunately entertained by the battles that followed. They were a gruelling chapter in my life, but they were also a testament to the importance of standing up for one's rights and well-being. With the support of Giuseppe de Simone, we navigated the complexities of the system, ultimately reaching a settlement that, while not erasing the toll on my health, provided a sense of closure and justice.

In the aftermath, writing emerged as a sanctuary, a means to process and articulate the myriad emotions and experiences that had shaped my journey. Through articles and short stories, I found a way to share insights, connect with others, and contribute to a broader dialogue about the challenges faced by veterans and the resilience required to overcome them.

As I reflect on this odyssey, I am acutely aware of the broader implications for others navigating similar transitions. The need for comprehensive support systems, both within and outside the military, cannot be overstated. Programs that facilitate career transitions, provide mental health support, and foster community connections are crucial in helping veterans build fulfilling civilian lives.

Moreover, the role of storytelling and shared experiences in building understanding and empathy is invaluable. By sharing our narratives, we not only validate our own experiences but also create a tapestry of support and solidarity that can uplift others facing similar challenges. As I continue to reflect on the profound journey from military service to civilian life, I am reminded of the powerful role community plays in shaping our experiences and supporting our growth. The connections we forge, both within and outside of our immediate circles, have the potential to transform our lives in significant ways. Throughout my journey, I have been fortunate to encounter individuals who have offered guidance, mentorship, and friendship at critical junctures. These relationships have not only provided me with practical support but have also enriched my understanding of the diverse paths that others navigate. In turn, I have sought to reciprocate this support, recognizing that our collective strength lies in our ability to uplift one another.

The transition from military to civilian life often entails redefining one's identity and purpose. For many veterans, the structured environment of the military provides a clear sense of mission and belonging. As we step into the civilian world, the absence of this structure can be disorienting, leading to feelings of uncertainty and isolation. It is in these moments that community becomes a lifeline, offering a sense of belonging and purpose that transcends individual challenges. In the broader context, there is a pressing need for society to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by veterans as they reintegrate into civilian life.

This involves not only providing access to resources and support but also fostering a culture of understanding and appreciation for the skills and experiences that veterans bring to the table. By valuing their contributions and creating inclusive spaces for dialogue and collaboration, we can ensure that veterans are empowered to thrive in all aspects of their lives. As we look to the future, there is an opportunity to harness the power of technology and innovation to enhance support systems for veterans. Online platforms and digital communities can serve as valuable tools for connecting individuals across geographical boundaries, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and resources, and amplifying the voices of those who may otherwise go unheard.

In my own journey, writing has been a transformative tool, allowing me to process my experiences and share insights with a wider audience. Through storytelling, we have the power to build bridges of understanding, challenge preconceived notions, and inspire meaningful change. As more veterans share their stories, we create a rich tapestry of experiences that illuminate the diverse realities of life after military service. Ultimately, the journey from military to civilian life is not just a personal transformation but a collective endeavour. It requires the concerted efforts of individuals, communities, and institutions to create environments where veterans can flourish. By fostering a culture of empathy, collaboration, and innovation, we can ensure that every veteran has the opportunity to lead a fulfilling and purposeful life.



As I continue to chart my course, I am filled with hope for the future and gratitude for the lessons learned along the way. The path may be challenging, but it is also filled with opportunities to connect, contribute, and create lasting impact.

Together, we can build a world where every veteran is empowered to navigate the seas of civilian life with confidence and resilience. The journey from military service to civilian life is a complex tapestry of experiences, marked by both trials and triumphs.

It is a reminder that while the path may be fraught with obstacles, it is also rich with opportunities for growth, connection, and contribution. As we continue to support one another and learn from our collective experiences, we can create a brighter future for ourselves and for those who walk this path after us, ensuring that no one is left to navigate these turbulent seas alone.

## CHAPTER 11 - NAVIGATING THE POLITICAL SEAS

*"Peter Adamis has never asked anything of the Liberal Party, and the Liberal Party gave him nothing." - Michael Kroger*



**A Journey into Advocacy and Activism.** Embarking on the path of a political advocate was a decision not taken lightly. It was a journey framed by boundaries and principles that I strove to uphold throughout my career. A political advocate, as I understood, is someone deeply committed to supporting and promoting specific causes, policies, or groups within the political sphere.

Over the past 35 years, my primary aim has been to influence decision-makers, shape public opinion, and drive legislative and social change in alignment with my values and objectives. Despite the challenges and the changing tides of political fortunes, I never wavered, regrouping and pressing on with renewed vigour.

From the outset, my role as a political advocate encompassed a broad spectrum of activities. Some might label my efforts as those of a political activist rather than an advocate, but to me, these are merely semantics. Central to my advocacy was the ability to communicate persuasively, conduct thorough research, and collaborate with like-minded individuals, organizations, and interest groups.

Organizing events, hosting town hall meetings, and engaging in public forums were crucial to our efforts, as was the necessity to lobby effectively. Mobilizing grassroots support through community involvement, protests, rallies, and the strategic use of social media became vital tools in our arsenal. All of these efforts required a deep commitment to our causes, a passion for making a difference, adaptability to changing circumstances, and a steadfast adherence to ethical standards.

**The Foundation of Advocacy.** The journey of advocacy began with a personal story rooted in the values imparted by my father. His life was a testament to civic duty and the responsibilities of citizenship; values he instilled in me from a young age. Growing up in an environment that emphasized the importance of being informed, engaged, and proactive, I was inspired to contribute to the society in which I lived, especially considering that Australia was not my country of birth. These teachings laid the foundation for my political journey, transforming me from a passive observer into an active participant in the political arena. The early 1990s marked a transformative period in my life. With four sons to educate and a career in the defence force, I found myself at a crossroads, compelled to evaluate my beliefs and align them with a political ideology. This introspection led me to the Liberal Party, whose platform resonated with my views on social issues, defence, family, and individual rights. The party's emphasis on personal responsibility and limited government intervention mirrored my ideals for both personal and national prosperity.

**The Thrill of Political Engagement.** Entering the realm of political activism was an exhilarating experience, filled with new encounters and opportunities for growth. As a newcomer eager to learn and contribute, I met mentors and guides who would shape my understanding of political dynamics. Figures like Frank Hangan, Harold Eather, Vi Hurley, Michael Kroger, Eva Nagy, Rae Kennet, Wayne Phillips, Jan Kronberg, Andrew Peacock, Karen Synon, Terry Kirby, Giuseppe De Simone, Kevin Andrews, Peter Nugent, Andrew Peacock, Wellington Lee, Margaret Colliver, Jim Wood, Peter Vlahos, Sandra Mercer Moore, Peter McClennan, and many others played pivotal roles in my journey, imparting wisdom and insights that enabled me to navigate the complexities of political life.

I admired the following directors—Petro Georgiou, Peter Poggioli, Brian Loughnane, Julian Sheezel, Simon Frost, and Nick Demiris—for their leadership, mannerisms, management, direction, advice, and support whenever it was required. Mind you, I did not always agree with them and at times found myself locking horns with them until a reasonable solution was found. In my mind in the early days, I was under the impression that those at Liberal Party Headquarters were there to support us at the grassroots level. Later, I was to find out that there was much more to the responsibilities of being a director. They were also mentors and provided guidance to the Administrative Committee, a committee that held its meetings behind closed doors, and we at the grassroots level only saw the tail end of their decisions. Jeff Kennett, David Kemp, and others changed much of the political landscape, which in my view alienated many of the grassroots.

I am also reminded of Peter McLennan, the member for Frankston, a Vietnam veteran, a man who called a spade a spade and was not afraid of Jeff Kennett and his political agents. Peter confided in me that he could not work with Jeff Kennett and that he was leaving the Liberal Party to become an independent. Peter went on to say that he would still support the Liberal Party but not be dictated to. History has shown that on the eve of the State election, Peter had a heart attack and left this world. The Labor Party seized the opportunity and spent huge amounts of funds convincing the people of Frankston to vote Labor. In this, they succeeded, and Jeff Kennett is alleged to have stated later that he should have stepped down earlier and allowed the next generation to take the leadership. These and other legendary stories are yet to be told.

**Navigating a Tumultuous Political Landscape.** During those days, the political scene in Victoria was both vibrant and tumultuous. The fracturing of the party due to the split between Peter Costello and Michael Kroger created an environment of intense political manoeuvring. Aligning with Kroger's faction, I found my associations with Costello's supporters diminishing. This period, characterized by Jeff Kennett's considerable influence, tested my resolve and commitment to my political ideals. As the political landscape grew increasingly divided, I became disillusioned with the incessant political cannibalism and character assassinations. In response, a group of like-minded individuals and I formed a clandestine collective, united by a shared vision free from the shackles of infighting and divisive rhetoric. Each member brought unique skills, knowledge, and networks, allowing us to collaborate on projects that served broader interests. Our successes, though often achieved quietly, were a testament to our unity and shared purpose, despite facing challenges that tested our resolve. Operating anonymously enabled us to act without the burden of external interference, crafting initiatives that transcended personal gain and sought the greater good.

**Grassroots Activism and Political Growth.** In the early days of my political activism, I honed my skills through grassroots efforts. Handing out cards, engaging in debates at polling booths, and learning the ropes of political campaigning were all part of my initiation. I was involved in storing and distributing leaflets, crafting campaign slogans, and strategically placing political posters for candidates. Attending meetings, supporting local representatives, and participating in political fundraisers became second nature, with each experience adding to my growing repertoire of political skills.

The knowledge I gained paved the way for deeper involvement. I became a member of policy committees, participated in preselection processes, and conducted candidate courses. My role expanded to include training individuals seeking candidacy or those eager to understand the intricacies of the political process. What I cherished most was being part of a select group tasked with crafting political outcomes that favoured the Liberal National Coalition. These projects allowed me to employ my skills behind the scenes, advising and assisting those poised to represent the majority.

There were moments when I was called upon to step out of retirement to manage a floundering campaign or assist with a project veering off course. These experiences reaffirmed my political forte in operating behind the scenes, where I could contribute most effectively. Not every political endeavour was devoid of negativity, however. Instances of misinformation and deceit threatened to derail our efforts, but we acted swiftly to deprive these issues of political oxygen, ensuring they were ostracized and contained.





Jim Wood. One of my earliest and most treasured memories in the realm of political advocacy was working alongside distinguished figures such as Peter Nugent, Andrew Peacock, Peter Vlahos, and Jim Wood on the Defence and Foreign Affairs Policy Committee. Being elected as Secretary was a moment of pride for me, and I embraced the responsibilities with unwavering gusto and enthusiasm, determined to make a meaningful impact.

It is of interest to note that Jim was also a Colonel in the Army Reserve and through his lobbying was able to preserve much the Royal Victoria Regiment. Jim was an author and wrote articles for the Army magazine, some of which I have in my possession as a memento.

With the steadfast support of Jim Wood and guidance from Peter Nugent, I was able to fulfill my duties successfully. Jim Wood, in particular, was a calming and steady influence, providing invaluable advice that helped me navigate the complex political landscape of the time. His mentorship was instrumental in building my confidence and understanding of the intricate dynamics at play. I was sad to hear of his passing and I remember well his letters to me during and after I left the Regular Army. In my opinion Jim was an exceptional human being.

Within the Policy Committee, our work was both varied and engaging. We had the unique opportunity to meet and engage with Ambassadors, offering insights and exchanging perspectives on critical issues. Our travels to military installations enriched our understanding of the operational aspects of defence, and briefings from key political figures provided us with a broader context for our discussions. Our primary task was to provide feedback to relevant Ministers on our findings, and report our insights to the Policy Assembly. This responsibility required a meticulous approach, as our recommendations could influence policy direction and decision-making at the highest levels of government. It was a role that demanded both precision and strategic thinking, qualities I was eager to develop and refine.

During this period, I was still actively serving in the Defence Force, a role that I cherished deeply. I had already informed my Commanding Officer about my involvement with a political party, ensuring transparency and clarity regarding my commitments. I assured him that my political activities would never interfere with my military duties, as I was committed to upholding the values and responsibilities of both roles. Those early experiences on the Defence and Foreign Affairs Policy Committee were formative, shaping my approach to political advocacy and public service. They taught me the importance of collaboration, the value of diverse perspectives, and the impact of informed, evidence-based policy-making. These lessons became the foundation upon which I built my career, guiding my endeavours in both the political and military spheres.

Another individual who has been grossly underestimated by the Liberal party is Giuseppe De Simone. In my opinion, Giuseppe is one of the very few whose knowledge of politics and of the machinations, deals, factions, campaign strategies and constitutional knowledge has been either overlooked or they are not aware of his skills and strengths in the political arena. I have seen firsthand him taking on others in debates, in the street handing out how to vote cards, talking to the opposition, and within preselection hearings. His extensive knowledge of information technology to obtain the results and outcomes required is nothing short of amazing.

**A New Chapter: Writing and Reflection.** Today, my involvement in politics has taken on a different form. I channel my passion into writing about political issues close to my heart. However, even in this space, caution is paramount. The litigious nature of contemporary Australia means that one must tread carefully, lest they become embroiled in disputes. It's a sobering reality that those seeking public office must grapple with the balance between freedom of speech and the scrutiny that accompanies it. As I continue to navigate these political waters, I am constantly reminded of the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of politics. The lessons I've learned, both in the trenches of grassroots activism and in the strategic halls of political influence, have equipped me with a unique perspective—one that values both the power of collective action and the necessity of individual conviction. One moment you are politically aligned with one group only to find later that you are diametrically opposed. The Liberal Party, with its fractured factions, became a labyrinth of despair for many of us, and only by remaining steadfast to our ideals did we manage to navigate our way through the political labyrinth.



During the very dark times, I would often receive abusive phone calls, threats, intimidation, and be subject to character assassinations. Those were the days when one had to take a stand and confront the political bullies and sycophants head-on. It was a war of words, and words can create an environment where only the strong can survive. I have always been a huge advocate of a new generation and abhor the games played by those seeking influence and control over the younger generation. My advice to the younger generation members that came to me was: "never trust anyone in politics," that is until they have been tested and are completely loyal.

That advice still stands today, and I must add, I am surrounded by such good people whom I am very fond of and will be there for them when the time comes. Loyalty, in my book, is the cornerstone of a political advocate. Lose your credibility and integrity, then you might as well leave the Liberal Party and put your energies into something else. The clandestine group I was part of remains a significant chapter in my political journey. It was a sanctuary from the public fray, a place where ideas could be exchanged freely and strategies crafted without the fear of betrayal or political sabotage. In that space, we were architects of our destiny, crafting initiatives that transcended personal gain and sought the greater good. Our anonymity allowed us to act with a freedom seldom available in the overt political arena, and our successes, though quietly celebrated, were deeply fulfilling.

**The Challenges and Opportunities of the Digital Age.** Yet, the political landscape is ever-evolving, and with it, the challenges and opportunities that arise. The rise of digital media and the proliferation of information have transformed the way political activism is conducted. The speed at which news travels and narratives shift demands that political actors adapt swiftly, leveraging technology to communicate and strategize. This digital age offers new avenues for engagement, but it also brings with it the perils of misinformation and the amplification of divisive rhetoric.

Political campaigns are complex indeed, and conducting or managing a state or federal electorate campaign is a full-time unpaid role. Not only do you have the overall responsibility, but you are also expected to manage whatever assets you may have at your disposal, as well as manage the numerous personalities who would come from a number of communities, all seeking to assist where they can. Countless hours are involved in training, preparing and conducting interviews, selecting the best leaders among them to become section leaders, to manning polling booths, to handing out cards or planting posters at homes that align themselves with the Liberal Party. This goes on day and night, and the campaign director needs to have a cool head and demonstrate leadership even when surrounded by chaos.

The rewards are few, but recognition for a job well done is what matters. There was one time when I had stepped back from my roles in the electorate as I was struggling with cancer, and no one was found to carry out the duties of campaign director. Seeing that there was no one, I took on the role and quickly attracted a group of individuals to assist with the campaign. After a few trials of anguish and grief, the campaign was in full swing. On polling day, I was at the electorate campaign headquarters and was found collapsed in the office. If that was not bad enough, I would receive some very ugly emails and social media threats and vile statements that had no substance. Yet when I made complaints against these two individuals, nothing was done. All that I can say is that I have been advised that these individuals are no longer with the Liberal Party. The wheels of justice take time.

**A Steadfast Commitment to Advocacy.** Despite these challenges, my commitment to political engagement remains steadfast. Writing has become a powerful tool for me to express my views and advocate for the issues I am passionate about. It provides a platform to critique, analyse, and propose solutions while reaching a wider audience than traditional activism might allow. Through my writings, I aim to challenge readers to think critically, question assumptions, and engage in meaningful discourse. In this pursuit, I strive to maintain a balance between candid expression and the constraints of societal expectations. The litigious environment in which we operate necessitates a careful consideration of words, ensuring they are impactful and respectful. This balance is delicate but essential, as it preserves the integrity of discourse while safeguarding against unnecessary conflict.

As I reflect on my journey, I am grateful for the mentors and allies who have shaped my path. Their guidance and support have been invaluable, and I am committed to paying it forward by mentoring the next generation of political activists. In them, I see the potential for fresh ideas and transformative change, and I am eager to contribute to their development as they embark on their journeys.

Ultimately, my political odyssey is a testament to the enduring power of civic engagement. It is a reminder that while the path may be fraught with obstacles and setbacks, it is also rich with opportunities for growth, connection, and impact. As I continue to navigate these turbulent seas, I am guided by the principles instilled in me by my father and the experiences that have shaped my journey. Together, they form a compass that directs me toward a future where political activism is not just a pursuit, but a calling to improve the world around us.

**A Vision for the Future.** As a political advocate, I have endeavoured to view politics as a collaboration of stakeholders, working together to achieve what is best for Australians, regardless of political ideology. Nevertheless, I remain steadfast in my opposition to communism, informed by the historical realities of its impact in other nations, and I believe it has no place in Australia's political landscape. Australian history has demonstrated the presence of extremist elements whose views are irreconcilable with mainstream society. As citizens, we bear the responsibility for the welfare of this nation we call home, and we must actively engage with Australia's economic and security strategies to ensure our longevity in an increasingly unstable world. I believe we have the opportunity to stand alone in the Pacific region and become a regional power in collaboration with our neighbours.

In the end, political activism is not merely a pursuit; it is a lifelong commitment to the ideals of justice, equality, and civic responsibility. It is a journey marked by perseverance, adaptability, and a steadfast belief in the power of collective action to bring about meaningful change. As I look to the future, I am guided by the principles that have defined my path and the vision of a world where every voice is heard, every individual is valued, and every community is empowered to thrive.



In closing, my journey as a political activist has taught me invaluable lessons. The political arena is one where truth is often a malleable concept, subject to manipulation and distortion.

Trust is a rare commodity, and navigating this landscape requires a discerning eye and a steadfast commitment to one's principles. My father's influence set me on this path, and it is his legacy of civic duty and resilience that continues to guide me as I navigate the ever-changing political seas.

I have no regrets regarding my involvement with the Liberal party for I was able to meet notable Australians who made a great impression on me. I also pay tribute to all the staff and volunteers within the Liberal party who have worked tirelessly in the background to ensure campaigns are supported, they are the forgotten heroes.

We are fortunate to live in a country abundant with opportunities, offering something for every individual within our diverse society. This land of plenty welcomes everyone to thrive and prosper. It is the responsibility of every Australian to choose their leaders wisely, recognizing the impact these decisions have on our collective future. I firmly believe that all Australians should engage with societal matters, participating in various ways to contribute to the long-term economic health and well-being of our nation.

Without active participation, those who choose not to contribute still enjoy the freedoms and privileges that others have diligently fought to secure and uphold. This is the essence of democracy—where the rights and liberties of the individual coexist with the collective responsibility to foster a better society for all.

## CHAPTER 12 DEPRESSION, HEART ATTACKS & CANCER



**OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN CANCER WARDS**

**A Journey of Resilience:** Life is a complex tapestry, intricately woven from a myriad of experiences, with each thread representing a moment, a challenge, a triumph, or a connection. As I take a moment to reflect on my journey, I feel compelled to share the stories and lessons that have shaped my path—stories of resilience, hope, and the profound impact of human connection. Over time, stress, anxiety, and severe depression took a significant toll on my well-being, ultimately manifesting in three heart attacks that necessitated the insertion of stents. The weight of the stress was overwhelming, and the heart attacks cast a shadow over my life, initially placing me in the daunting realm of chemotherapy. However, my cardiologist offered words of encouragement that ignited a spark of hope within me, prompting me to embark on the chemotherapy journey.

In addition to the medical treatments, I attended a survivor's course that spanned several months, complemented by psychological therapy to help me navigate the changes I was experiencing. This process was transformative, allowing me to gain a deeper understanding of my body and mind as I adjusted to the new realities of my life. What I did not anticipate, however, was the emergence of my next major hurdle: cancer. This unexpected challenge would test my resilience in ways I had never imagined.

**Embracing the Battle Against Cancer.** The journey through cancer treatment is fraught with uncertainty and fear. Twelve months ago, I was given a second chance at life, thanks to the expertise and dedication of the medical professionals at the Austin Hospital. The process of undergoing RCHOP and HCVAD chemotherapy, followed by a stem cell transplant, was gruelling, yet it instilled in me a profound appreciation for the resilience of the human body. Throughout this journey, I was surrounded by a network of support—from skilled oncologists and nurses to my family and friends. Their unwavering encouragement and care have been instrumental in my recovery. As I reflect on this experience, I am reminded of the importance of remaining positive, taking an active role in one's own health, and never giving up hope.

**The Role of Faith and Family.** In the face of adversity, faith and family have been my guiding lights. My wife, Yovanna, has been my rock, providing unwavering support and love throughout my battle with cancer. Her presence by my side has been a source of strength, enabling me to confront the challenges of treatment with courage and determination. My children, too, have played a pivotal role in my journey. Their resilience and love have inspired me to persevere, even in the most trying of times. The bonds of family have been a constant source of comfort, reminding me of the power of love to heal and uplift.

**A Life of Purpose and Contribution.** Reflecting on my life, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunities I have had to make a difference. My years of service in the Australian military, my involvement in political activism, and my contributions as a writer and consultant have all been driven by a desire to give back to my community and country. Stepping back from political and community commitments has afforded me the time to pursue my passions, such as gardening and writing. These pursuits have provided me with a sense of fulfillment and joy, allowing me to focus on what truly matters.

**Olivia Newton-John Cancer Ward: A Testament to Humanity.** In the midst of my battle with cancer, I encountered truly remarkable individuals at the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Wellness Centre at the Austin Hospital. Dr. He, Fleur, Dr. Karthik, Fay, and many others left an indelible mark on my soul with their kindness and humility. Despite their impressive academic credentials, they approached their roles with a profound sense of empathy and compassion.

Our paths crossed during one of my chemotherapy sessions. The staff would enter the room quietly, bringing an immediate sense of calm. Over time, they began to share my story with my wife, Yovanna, and me, revealing a journey marked by resilience and strength. Their simple acts of kindness, from bringing me sandwiches to offering a comforting word, exemplified the profound impact of empathy and connection. Their presence was a testament to the power of humanity, reminding me that regardless of our station in life, we all possess the capacity to make a difference.

**Overcoming Challenges and Looking Ahead.** Life is replete with challenges, and how we respond to them defines our character. Throughout my journey, I have faced numerous trials, from health battles to personal setbacks. Yet, each challenge has been an opportunity for growth and self-discovery. In moments of despair, I have found solace in the support of my friends, mentors, and loved ones. Their encouragement has been a source of strength, enabling me to rise above adversity and continue moving forward. As I look to the future, I do so with hope and optimism. The journey ahead may be uncertain, but I am fortified by the knowledge that I am not alone. My faith, family, and the lessons learned from my experiences serve as my compass, guiding me toward new horizons.

**Embracing the Future with Hope.** As I pen these reflections, I'm reminded of the importance of resilience in the face of life's unpredictability. Life, much like the journey through cancer, is filled with unknowns, yet it is within these uncertainties that we find opportunities for growth and self-discovery. Throughout my journey, the support from my community has been invaluable. Whether through the warm embrace of a friend, the kind word from a stranger, or the collective strength of those who have walked a similar path, I have found solace in the connections that bind us. These relationships have taught me the importance of empathy and compassion, reminding me that we are all interconnected in this vast tapestry of life. Engaging with the veteran community, political circles, and social media networks has allowed me to share my experiences and learn from others. These interactions have enriched my understanding of the world and deepened my appreciation for the diverse perspectives that shape our society.

**The Power of Positivity and Personal Growth.** The challenges I have faced have also prompted a period of introspection and personal growth. I have learned to embrace vulnerability, acknowledging that it is through our struggles that we find strength. This journey has taught me the importance of self-compassion and the need to be gentle with oneself in the face of adversity. Moreover, I have come to appreciate the value of mindfulness and living in the present moment. By focusing on the here and now, I have been able to cultivate a sense of peace and contentment, finding joy in the simple pleasures of life. A positive outlook has been a cornerstone of my recovery and overall well-being. By maintaining a hopeful and optimistic mindset, I have been able to navigate the challenges of treatment and embrace the opportunities for healing and transformation. This attitude has not only bolstered my physical health but has also enriched my emotional and spiritual journey.

**Finding Purpose and Joy in Everyday Life.** As I continue to navigate the complexities of life, I remain committed to pursuing my passions and contributing to the communities that have supported me. Whether through writing, advocacy, or simply lending a listening ear, I am dedicated to making a positive impact and leaving a legacy of hope and resilience. The path ahead may be uncertain, but I am emboldened by the knowledge that I am equipped with the tools and support needed to face whatever challenges may arise. My journey has taught me that life is a precious gift, and I am determined to make the most of each day, embracing the beauty and wonder that surrounds us.

Nature has always been a source of solace and inspiration for me. The vibrant colours of a garden in bloom or the gentle rustle of leaves in the breeze provide a quiet sanctuary where I can reflect and recharge. Gardening, in particular, has become a therapeutic activity, offering a sense of connection to the earth and a reminder of life's cyclical nature. By tending to the plants and witnessing their growth, I am reminded of the resilience inherent in all living things. This connection to nature has not only nurtured my soul but has also reinforced my commitment to living sustainably and appreciating the natural world.

Writing has long been an essential outlet for my thoughts and emotions. It allows me to articulate my experiences and share my journey with others, fostering a sense of connection and understanding. Through writing, I have explored the depths of my emotions, confronted my fears, and celebrated my triumphs. By sharing my story, I hope to offer a sense of solidarity to those facing similar challenges. Writing has also provided me with a platform to advocate for issues close to my heart, from veteran support to community engagement, amplifying voices that might otherwise go unheard.

**Building a Legacy of Hope.** As I reflect on my life's journey, I am motivated by the desire to leave a positive legacy—a testament to the power of perseverance, love, and community. Whether through my writing, advocacy, or personal interactions, I aim to inspire others to live with intention and purpose. This sense of legacy extends beyond my immediate circle to encompass broader societal contributions. I am committed to supporting initiatives that promote understanding, inclusivity, and positive change, recognizing that our actions today shape the world of tomorrow. The journey of life is one of continuous growth and learning. As I embrace the future, I remain open to new opportunities and experiences that challenge me to expand my horizons. Whether it's exploring new creative pursuits, engaging with diverse communities, or deepening my understanding of the world, I am eager to embrace the richness and complexity of life. This spirit of exploration is fuelled by curiosity and a desire to contribute meaningfully to the world around me. By approaching each day with a sense of wonder and gratitude, I am reminded of the limitless possibilities that life holds.

**A Life of Fulfillment.** In conclusion, my journey has been one of resilience, discovery, and hope. Through the challenges and triumphs, I have come to understand the profound interconnectedness of all things and the importance of living a life aligned with one's values. As I continue this journey, I do so with a heart full of gratitude and a commitment to making a positive impact. My story is but one of many, and I am inspired by the countless individuals who have shown me that, even in the face of adversity, life is a precious gift worth cherishing. To those who walk alongside me, I offer my deepest thanks. Together, we have the power to create a better world—one filled with compassion, understanding, and hope for the future. To those who find themselves on a similar path, I offer this simple message: Never give up. Life is a precious gift, and each day is an opportunity to make a difference. Embrace the moments of joy, cherish the bonds of love, and find solace in the knowledge that you are not alone.



## CHAPTER 13 GREECE



**The Acropolis - Athens**

**A Timeless Connection and Journey of the Heart.** Greece, a land steeped in history, adorned with breathtaking landscapes, and enriched by a vibrant culture, has always beckoned with an irresistible charm. For those who feel its pull, Greece is more than a mere destination; it is a profound journey into the heart of heritage and identity. This connection was deeply personal for me, as my travels to Greece were not just voyages across seas but explorations into the very essence of my roots and identity.

In September 1973, while on leave from my deployment with the Australian Army in Singapore and Malaysia, I embarked on a journey that would deepen my bond with this enchanting land. What began as a six-week respite unfolded into a profound exploration of culture, family, and self. It was during this time that I immersed myself in the traditions and customs that had long intrigued me, engaging with locals whose warmth and hospitality turned strangers into friends.

This journey was enriched by the presence of family; my mother and sister were in Greece at the same time, adding personal joy to my travels. Staying with my grandfather Phillip in the village, I experienced simple pleasures and profound connections that ignited an enduring longing to return. Years passed, yet Greece's call remained strong. In 1991, as part of Telamon Force, I returned to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Greece and Crete. A brief visit to my birthplace reaffirmed the ties that bound me to this land. Subsequent journeys with my wife Yovanna deepened our shared love for Greece, weaving our personal stories with the rich tapestry of Greek culture and history.

Our travels were not without challenges, but each visit brought healing, reflection, and growth. From the renovations of our family cottage to navigating life's inevitable sorrows, Greece offered solace and renewal. It became a sanctuary where the past met the present, a place where our family's legacy thrived.

As we look to the future, Greece remains an integral part of our lives. Its allure is a testament to the timeless bond forged through decades of exploration, love, and connection. Whether contemplating retirement or new adventures, the lessons and memories from Greece guide us, reminding us that home is not just a place but a journey of the heart.

**A Timeless Connection and Journey of the Heart.** Greece has always held a special place in my heart, a connection that was profoundly deepened during my trip in September 1973. At the time, I was on a six-week leave from my deployment with the Australian Army in Singapore and Malaysia. This visit was not merely a vacation but a profound exploration of my roots, a chance to immerse myself in the culture and customs that had always intrigued me from afar. During this trip, I conducted a thorough survey of the land and its people. I observed, listened, and engaged with the locals, who welcomed me with open arms and warm hearts.

Their hospitality was unparalleled, and their eagerness to share their world with me made my visit an enlightening experience. My mother and sister happened to be in Greece at the same time, and seeing them was a joy that added a personal touch to my journey. I stayed with my grandfather Phillip, for my other grandfather, Peter, had passed away the previous year. My time in the village was filled with moments of simple pleasure and profound connection—an experience that ignited a fire within me, a longing to return that has lingered ever since.

Years passed, but the desire to return to Greece never waned. It wasn't until 1991 that the opportunity presented itself again. As a member of Telamon Force, I was deployed to Greece to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Greece and Crete. Graced with a brief 24-hour leave, I seized the chance to visit my birthplace. My cousin Kaliopi's husband, Petros, kindly drove me to the village of Pellana. Though my visit was brief, the hours spent with my relatives were precious, and leaving was bittersweet. I promised them, and myself, that I would return soon.

In 2004, three years after marrying my wife Yovanna, we embarked on a journey back to Greece for a few months of holiday. This trip was a shared adventure, and together we explored many places of interest, deepening our bond with each other and with the land. Over the years, our trips to Greece became more frequent. Whether traveling alone, as a couple, or with friends, our stays at the cottage became cherished moments of respite and discovery. On some occasions, my father was there, and we relished the opportunity to keep him company, sharing stories and creating new memories.

In 2015, after battling cancer, and following my rehabilitation in 2016, I returned to Greece alone. It was a time for reflection and healing. The familiar surroundings offered solace and a chance to gather my thoughts. Later that year, my good friend Maurice Barwick joined me. Maurice, who had faced his own losses with the passing of his wife Thelma and younger brother Bill, provided companionship during a time of mutual healing. My father's passing in April 2017 added to the weight of loss, making Maurice's presence even more meaningful.

I continued to return to Greece in the years that followed—2018, 2019, 2020, and beyond. Each visit was a renewal of my connection to the land and an opportunity to invest in the future. With the financial support of my brother Phillip, we undertook renovations to modernize the cottage, transforming it into a comfortable retreat that honoured our family's legacy. In 2021, the loss of our dear mother in my arms was a heartbreak that sent me spiralling. Returning to Greece in 2023 to finalize matters regarding our parents' assets was both a necessity and a cathartic return to the place where their spirits lingered.

In 2023, Yovanna joined me for a few months, and in 2024, she returned for seven months during her long service leave. Together, we navigated challenges and celebrated victories, all while revelling in the beauty that Greece has to offer. We came tantalizingly close to purchasing a home in Nauplio, but fate led us to explore properties near the sea in the suburbs of Athens instead. Each step of our journey was guided by the allure of Greece, a place that continued to captivate and inspire us.

As we returned to Australia in January 2025, we were greeted with new challenges, yet to be resolved. These challenges, however, are but temporary obstacles in our greater plan. Once resolved, and with Yovanna considering retirement, we intend to downsize, settle any outstanding debts, and perhaps purchase another home—setting the stage for our eventual return to Greece. The lure and seduction of Greece are undeniable, a testament to the timeless bond that has been forged over decades of connection, exploration, and love.

Greece, with its rich history, breathtaking landscapes, and vibrant culture, continues to call to us—a siren's song that resonates deeply within our souls. It is more than a destination; it is a part of who we are, a testament to the enduring power of roots and the unbreakable ties of family and heritage. As we look to the future, our hearts remain open to the possibilities that Greece holds, knowing that each return is a homecoming, a journey back to a place where past, present, and future converge in harmony. Our experiences in Greece have been a tapestry of memories—woven with threads of joy, sorrow, adventure, and discovery. Each visit deepened our connection not only to the land but to the family and friends who have become integral to our lives. The cottage, nestled in the heart of the village, stands as a symbol of resilience and continuity, a place where the past meets the present and where our family's legacy thrives.

The renovations we undertook with my brother Phillip have transformed the cottage into a sanctuary. Modern updates have breathed new life into its walls, yet it retains the charm and character that make it unique. It is a place where stories of old mingle with new beginnings, where the laughter of grandchildren echoes alongside memories of ancestors. This transformation was not merely about physical changes; it was about preserving a heritage, ensuring that future generations would have a place to connect with their roots.

Throughout our travels, Yovanna and I immersed ourselves in the vibrant tapestry of Greek culture. From the bustling streets of Athens to the serene shores of the Peloponnese, every corner of Greece offered something new and enchanting. We explored ancient ruins, marvelled at the artistry of Greek architecture, and indulged in the culinary delights that are a hallmark of Greek hospitality. These experiences were not just about seeing the sights; they were about feeling the heartbeat of a nation, understanding its history, and embracing its spirit.

Our journey was not without its challenges. Navigating the complexities of societal matters and familial obligations required patience and perseverance. The loss of our mother was a poignant reminder of the fragility of life, yet it also reaffirmed the importance of cherishing the time we have with loved ones. In those moments of grief, Greece offered solace—a place where we could honour our parents' memories and find comfort in the familiar embrace of the land they cherished.

Yovanna's extended stay in Greece during her long service leave was a period of reflection and growth for both of us. We faced decisions about our future, contemplating the possibility of making Greece a more permanent part of our lives. The prospect of purchasing a home near the sea in Athens was a thrilling one, yet it also required careful consideration. Ultimately, we realized that while the allure of Greece was strong, our roots in Australia remained an integral part of our identity.

As we returned to Australia, we were met with new challenges, yet our resolve remained unshaken. These obstacles are part of the journey, opportunities for growth and learning that will prepare us for the next chapter. With Yovanna contemplating retirement, we are poised to make decisions that will shape our future. Downsizing our home, settling debts, and possibly purchasing another property are steps that will enable us to embrace the next stage of our lives.

Throughout this journey, the lure of Greece has been a constant—a reminder of the enduring ties that bind us to our heritage. It is a connection that transcends time and distance, a bond that is as much about the people and experiences as it is about the place itself. Greece is more than a destination; it is a part of our narrative, a testament to the power of roots and the resilience of the human spirit.

As we look to the future, we do so with hope and anticipation, ready to embrace the adventures that await. Whether in Australia or Greece, we carry with us the lessons and memories of our travels, knowing that each step forward is a continuation of a journey that began long ago. Greece will always be in our hearts—a timeless connection that enriches our lives and inspires us to explore, discover, and dream.



## CHAPTER 14 HANZAC MEMORIAL



**A Tribute to Sacrifice and Unity.** In the serene landscape of Pellana, Lakonia, Greece, the Hellenic Australian New Zealand Army Corps (HANZAC) Memorial stands as a symbol of profound sacrifice and unity. This memorial transcends its physical form, embodying the enduring bonds forged through shared struggles for freedom during some of history's most challenging times. More than a mere structure, it serves as a bridge between cultures, honouring the brave soldiers from Greece, Australia, and New Zealand who stood together during war.



**Kostas Sgourdas (Master Stone Mason) and Maurice Barwick 2017 - Laying of the Rock of Ode**

The HANZAC Memorial's creation is rooted in a rich historical context, particularly the events of World War II when the Axis powers invaded Greece in 1941. In response, Australian and New Zealand (ANZAC) troops joined Greek forces in intense battles, demonstrating valour and international cooperation.

This memorial not only commemorates their courage but also serves as an educational tool, emphasizing resilience and the invaluable lessons of history to future generations. Intertwined with the region's ancient past, the memorial draws parallels between the ancient Greek warriors and the modern ANZAC spirit.



Pellana, once the capital of ancient Laconia and the legendary home of figures such as Menelaus and Helen of Troy, offers a profound historical backdrop. This connection enriches the memorial's narrative, linking ancient valour with modern sacrifice. The story of the HANZAC Memorial is also a tale of community and collaboration. Central to its realization is Peter Adamis, a retired Australian Army Warrant Officer, whose personal journey inspired the vision for the memorial. With support from community leaders and local artisans, and backed by generous donors, the project came to life, showcasing the collective desire to honour shared history.



#### **Author and Warren Payne in Greece.**

Beyond its commemorative role, the HANZAC Memorial serves as a vibrant cultural hub, hosting significant events that foster community spirit, pride, and historical awareness. It stands as a testament to international unity, reminding us of the power of collective resolve and the shared commitment to preserving peace and justice.

Through ongoing educational and cultural initiatives, the memorial ensures that the sacrifices of the past continue to inspire future generations, promoting a legacy of remembrance, resilience, and unity.

**A Tribute to Sacrifice and Unity: The HANZAC Memorial.** Nestled in the tranquil landscape of Pellana, Lakonia, Greece, the Hellenic Australian New Zealand Army Corps (HANZAC) Memorial stands as a profound testament to the sacrifices made by soldiers from Greece, Australia, and New Zealand during times of war. More than a mere physical structure, this memorial embodies the enduring bonds forged through shared struggles for freedom and serves as a bridge between diverse cultures. This essay explores the reasons behind the memorial's creation, the individuals involved, the phases of its construction, and its cultural significance, offering a comprehensive understanding of this unique tribute.

**Reasons for Creation.** The HANZAC Memorial was conceived to honour the bravery and sacrifices of soldiers who fought alongside each other, particularly during World War II. In 1941, when the Axis powers invaded Greece, Australian and New Zealand (ANZAC) troops were dispatched to support Greek forces, leading to intense and challenging battles in the mountainous terrains. This memorial serves as a reminder of their valour and as an educational tool for future generations, emphasizing the importance of international cooperation, resilience, and the lessons learned from history. Intertwined with the region's ancient past, the memorial draws parallels between the valour of ancient Greek warriors and the modern ANZAC spirit. Pellana, once the capital of ancient Laconia and believed to be the home of legendary figures like Menelaus and Helen of Troy, provides a profound historical backdrop, linking sacrifices of the past with those made in more recent conflicts.

**Key Figures and Community Involvement.** Central to the HANZAC Memorial project is Peter Adamis, a retired Australian Army Warrant Officer whose personal journey significantly shaped the vision for the memorial. Peter's determination, fuelled by overcoming personal battles such as raising four sons as a single parent and surviving a life-threatening illness, instilled a deep appreciation for the resilience of the human spirit and the importance of preserving the legacies of those who served. With support from community leaders like retired Australian Army Major Maurice Barwick, Barrie Daniel, and the late Donald Norman, Peter's dream of establishing the HANZAC Memorial began to take shape. The project also benefited from local artisans and craftsmen who provided skills and materials, enhancing the memorial's authenticity. Their involvement fostered pride among residents, while regional schools participated through art competitions and historical research, allowing students to connect with their heritage and creatively contribute to the project.

**Donors and In-Kind Support.** The creation of the HANZAC Memorial was made possible by generous contributions from individuals and organizations. Many Australians provided financial support and essential materials, while local businesses contributed labour and in-kind support, demonstrating a collective desire to honour shared history. Fundraising efforts by Peter Adamis in both Australia and Greece not only raised funds but also strengthened community bonds between nations. Though many donors prefer anonymity, the names of all contributors are etched onto the marble stele surrounding the memorial as a symbol of respect.

**Phases of Creation.** The development of the HANZAC Memorial unfolded over several crucial phases, each marked by emotional milestones and community engagement. Fundraising efforts began in 2017, relying on donations and community support. Detailed design work focused on the memorial's layout and symbolic elements, incorporating community input to reflect diverse voices. Construction commenced in 2017 with a groundbreaking ceremony attended by local leaders and veterans, symbolizing hope and resilience. The memorial was officially opened by Maria Vamvakinou, the Australian Federal member for Calwell, marking a significant milestone in international cooperation.

**Materials Used and Symbolic Meaning.** Constructed with materials that symbolize its purpose, the HANZAC Memorial features marble stele representing strength and permanence, inscribed with the names of ANZAC soldiers and Hellenic warriors as a lasting tribute to their bravery. Local stone used for walls and pathways connects the memorial to Greece's ancient landscape, reinforcing local heritage. Red poppies symbolize remembrance and sacrifice, while olive trees represent peace, enhancing the memorial's tranquil environment.

**Events and Important Dates.** The HANZAC Memorial hosts key commemorative events, such as Greek Independence Day (March 25), ANZAC Day (April 25), OXI Day (October 28), and Remembrance Day (November 11). These events feature wreath-laying, readings of the Ode, and cultural performances, fostering reflection and community spirit. The memorial serves as a focal point for these celebrations, emphasizing cultural pride and historical awareness among Greek and ANZAC communities.

**Weather Conditions and Community Resilience.** Weather conditions significantly impacted the construction of the memorial, with heavy rains and winds causing delays. However, the resilience of the community ensured that work resumed as soon as conditions improved. Organizers adapted to varying weather during events, setting up tents for rain or planning for seasonal changes to maintain attendance. Narratives highlight the community's determination and cooperation, illustrating their collective effort to honour fallen soldiers despite adverse weather challenges.

**Future Vision and Maintenance.** The future vision for the HANZAC Memorial includes expanding educational programs and cultural exchange initiatives. Plans focus on developing resources for local schools to enhance understanding of the ANZAC campaign and Greek soldiers' contributions. Future initiatives aim to foster relationships between Greece, Australia, and New Zealand, promoting mutual respect. Additionally, plans to enhance visitor facilities and incorporate modern technology, such as virtual reality experiences, are underway to engage visitors interactively.

**Regular maintenance is crucial for preserving the HANZAC Memorial.** A permanent community member lives nearby to maintain the memorial during the high tourist season, while a local guardian ensures its protection. The HANZAC Memorial is monitored by local police using security cameras. Engaging residents through Community Volunteer Days fosters a sense of ownership and pride, ensuring the site's welcoming atmosphere. Implementing eco-friendly landscaping practices enhances the memorial's beauty while minimizing environmental impact. Highlighting volunteer stories promotes a sense of belonging among residents. Establishing a sustainable maintenance plan, supported by community events and fundraising efforts, is essential for the memorial's long-term sustainability.

**Relationship to the Ancient World of Greece.** The HANZAC Memorial is located in Pellana, a region steeped in ancient history and mythology, believed to be the home of King Menelaus and Helen of Troy. This connection enriches the memorial's narrative, bridging ancient and modern contexts. Pellana's association with historical figures enhances the cultural significance of the site, linking it to ancient traditions and providing a deeper understanding of modern sacrifices within this historical framework.

**Relationship to the ANZACs.** The memorial honours ANZAC soldiers who fought in Greece during World War II, symbolizing the enduring bond between Greece and Australia. Each etched name serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made and the importance of camaraderie among soldiers. It provides a dedicated space to reflect on shared narratives of solidarity during conflict. Personal stories from descendants highlight the memorial's significance in preserving family histories and emphasize the bonds formed among soldiers and their sacrifices.

**Importance and Relationship to the Village.** The HANZAC Memorial is central to village life in Pellana, fostering pride and community. It serves as a gathering place for remembrance, cultural events, and educational activities, reinforcing community ties and celebrating shared history. The memorial has transformed the village into a cultural hub, attracting visitors and promoting local traditions while encouraging a strong sense of community pride.

**The Guardians of the Memorial,** the guardians of the HANZAC Memorial, led by Kostas Mihalopoulos, are responsible for its maintenance and community engagement. Peter Adamis, along with local community support, organizes events and educational initiatives to ensure the memorial remains relevant and meaningful for future generations. Thanasis Davakis, member of Greek parliament is the Greek Patron, Jim Hammett is the Australian Patron and we have yet to identify a New Zealand Patron. Their ongoing commitment fosters community leadership, promoting vibrancy and preserving the spirit of the memorial.

**Symbolic Elements and Cultural Significance.** Every element of the HANZAC Memorial carries deep symbolic meaning. The Iron Bar represents the unbreakable bond between nations, while the Pond symbolizes life and remembrance. Olive trees signify peace and the roots of Hellenic culture, serving as living tributes to resilience. Additionally, the annual blooming of poppies reminds visitors of sacrifices made and the hope for peace. An in-depth analysis highlights the significance of these elements, enriching the understanding of the memorial's importance.

**Personal Stories and Community Engagement.** The HANZAC Memorial evokes profound emotional resonance among visitors, who often share personal connections and reflections. Many travel from afar, such as those from Canada, America, New Zealand, Australia, and European nations, to honour those who paid the ultimate sacrifice, highlighting the memorial's significance in connecting with their heritage. Visitors recount stories of ancestors who fought in the ANZAC campaign, using the memorial as a space to honour and remember them. These anecdotes illustrate the memorial's emotional impact and its role in helping families connect with their loved ones' histories.

**Community Engagement.** Community engagement is crucial for the maintenance and growth of the HANZAC Memorial. Local volunteers participate in regular maintenance days to clean and beautify the site. Fundraising initiatives, including HANZAC charity runs and cultural festivals, help raise funds for the memorial and foster community spirit. Additionally, educational workshops and community events promote understanding of the ANZAC campaign and encourage active participation among residents, schools, and cultural organizations, creating a vibrant atmosphere around the memorial.

**Architectural Features and Design.** The HANZAC Memorial's design features reflect its cultural significance and purpose. The marble stele symbolizes permanence and strength, serving as a focal point inscribed with names and messages of remembrance. Surrounding olive trees represent peace and resilience. Overall, the architectural design harmonizes Hellenic and ANZAC influences, creating a unique tribute to both cultures.

**HANZAC Cultural Hub.** The HANZAC Memorial serves as a cultural hub for Pellana, hosting various festivals that celebrate Greek, Australian, and New Zealand traditions. These cultural celebrations foster community connections and understanding, showcasing the shared heritage of the three nations through music, dance, and art. Visitors to the HANZAC Memorial frequently share emotional experiences, finding solace and healing through remembrance. The memorial serves as a space for personal reflection, allowing individuals to honour their loved ones and providing comfort to both veterans and families who have lost service members.

The HANZAC Memorial is a living testament to the sacrifices of soldiers from Greece, Australia, and New Zealand. It embodies the values of remembrance, resilience, and unity, enriched by personal stories and community engagement. The memorial serves as a site for reflection and cultural exchange, promoting understanding among diverse cultures. Through educational initiatives and emotional connections, it fosters community pride and identity while emphasizing the importance of peace and cooperation. As it inspires future generations, the HANZAC Memorial ensures that the legacy of those who served is honoured and remembered for years to come. There are so many individuals who have contributed to making this memorial a reality and thanking them just does not seem enough. Yet their names will live on long after we are all gone as they are etched onto the marble.

## CHAPTER 15 FREELANCE JOURNALIST - AUTHOR



**The Unyielding Path of a Freelance Journalist.** The journey of a freelance journalist is often a challenging one, marked by a series of trials and tribulations that can test even the most resolute spirit. My experience in this noble pursuit of uncovering truths and providing insightful commentary on political matters has been no exception. Engaging with the complexities of the world around me, I have faced battles that have not only tested my resolve but also deeply impacted my well-being and confidence. What began as a passionate endeavour has evolved into a relentless fight for the principles I hold dear—the right to free speech and the duty to inform the public.

In the twenty-one years since I embarked on this intellectual odyssey, I have penned over 2,000 articles spanning a diverse array of subjects, each reflecting my curiosity and commitment to challenge the status quo. This prolific body of work is more than just a collection of thoughts; it represents a tapestry woven from personal insights, reflections, and a continuous dialogue with society. I have not shied away from controversy; rather, I have embraced it, recognizing that the most meaningful conversations often arise from difficult and contentious subjects.

The notoriety that some of my writings have garnered has inevitably attracted attention from mainstream media. On numerous occasions, articles have been published about my work—or even misrepresentations of my actions—without proper verification of their sources. While this lack of journalistic rigor could be frustrating, I have chosen to see it through a different lens. Each piece of publicity, whether favourable or not, has acted as a beacon, illuminating not just my work but also the vibrant community of friends and collaborators who contribute to the platforms I manage.

This complex relationship with the media has underscored the importance of independent voices in shaping public discourse. In a landscape dominated by large media conglomerates, it is crucial to have diverse perspectives that challenge prevailing narratives and offer alternative viewpoints. The media's portrayal of my work, irrespective of its accuracy, has inadvertently amplified the reach and influence of my platforms. It has sparked conversations, driven traffic to my sites, and opened doors to new readers and potential allies. In this way, the controversies surrounding my writing have acted as catalysts for growth, expanding our audience and deepening the impact of our collective efforts.

Despite these challenges, I remain steadfast in my commitment to the principles of journalism. The right to protect my sources is not merely a professional obligation; it is a cornerstone of journalistic integrity. The sources who have entrusted me with sensitive information are vital to the articles I publish. Revealing their identities would not only betray their trust but also undermine the very foundation of a free press—an institution that upholds the public's right to be informed and holds those in power accountable.

Standing firm in protecting my sources has placed me at the center of a storm, with opponents leveraging every possible avenue to compel me to disclose confidential information. The pressure is immense, and the stakes are high. Yet, I find strength in the knowledge that the battle for free speech is a fight worth fighting—not just for myself, but for every journalist who dares to speak truth to power and for every citizen who values the free flow of information.

Through this tumultuous journey, I have come to understand the profound impact that journalism can have on the world. At its core, journalism seeks to illuminate the dark corners of society, challenge the status quo, and empower individuals with knowledge. Despite the personal cost of my struggles, the pursuit of these ideals remains a driving force in my life—a beacon that guides me through the storm.



As I navigate these challenges, I am reminded of the broader implications of my fight. It is a reflection of the ongoing tension between the freedom of expression and the forces that seek to curtail it. My experience underscores the need for robust protections for journalists and highlights the vital role that a free press plays in upholding democracy. The stories I have covered—ranging from local political intrigues to global human rights issues—have often placed me at the intersection of power and accountability. In each instance, I have strived to uncover the truth, believing that informed citizens are the backbone of a healthy democracy.

However, my battles have illuminated a grim reality: the very act of seeking truth can place one in the crosshairs of those who wish to conceal it. Every article I write is not merely a piece of content; it embodies the struggles, hopes, and aspirations of the individuals and communities I represent. I delve into the nuances of political discourse, examining not just the events themselves but also the underlying narratives that shape public perception. My work emphasizes the importance of context, encouraging readers to engage critically with the information presented to them.

As I reflect on my journey, I recognize the dual nature of journalism: it is both a privilege and a burden. There is a weight that accompanies the responsibility of informing the public, a burden that intensifies when faced with challenges. Yet, it is within this tension that I find my purpose. The act of writing is both cathartic and empowering—a means of processing my experiences while advocating for change.

In recent years, the landscape of journalism has undergone a significant transformation. The rise of digital media has democratized information dissemination, allowing independent voices to emerge alongside traditional outlets. However, this shift has also led to a proliferation of misinformation, complicating the journalist's role in ensuring the public has access to credible information. In this environment, the importance of ethical journalism cannot be overstated.

As I navigate the complexities of modern journalism, I remain committed to upholding the highest standards of integrity. This commitment is especially crucial during times of crisis, when misinformation can spread rapidly and undermine public trust. Each article I write is a testament to my dedication to accuracy, fairness, and transparency. It is a pledge to my readers that I will strive to provide them with the truth, even when faced with adversity.

The battles I am engaged in serve as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by many journalists today. The tension between free speech and the forces that seek to silence dissent is palpable, and it is a struggle that extends beyond my personal experience. It is a collective fight for the future of journalism, one that requires solidarity among journalists, advocates, and the public.

In reflecting on the road ahead, I remain hopeful that the principles of free speech and journalistic integrity will prevail. I draw inspiration from the resilience of those who have come before me, whose courage in the face of adversity has paved the way for future generations of journalists. Their stories remind me that the pursuit of truth is a timeless endeavour—one that transcends individual struggles and speaks to the collective quest for understanding.

As I continue my work, I am acutely aware of the stakes involved. The challenges I face are not merely personal; they are emblematic of a larger struggle for freedom of expression and the right to seek truth. In this fight, I am determined to persevere, drawing strength from the knowledge that my voice, and the voices of my collaborators, contribute to a vital and ongoing conversation about the world we inhabit.

As an Australian military veteran, I have taken it upon myself to write extensively about the lives of veterans, their military careers, the struggles they have faced, and the families who have supported them during deployments. I am deeply concerned about the attitude of governments that neglect the interests of veterans after they have separated from the Australian Defence Force. There is overwhelming evidence of veterans suffering needlessly at a time when their service should be honoured, and they should receive adequate care as they age.

In reflecting on this issue, I recognize that I may have a biased perspective regarding the plight of veterans. However, this bias is one I wear as a badge of honour, as it stems from my commitment to advocating for those who have served.

When it comes to the issue of bullies in today's world, my disdain for them runs deep, regardless of their form. Those in positions of power should be grateful for their roles and should not abuse their authority. Bullies, sycophants, and those unwilling to stand up and fight for what is right—especially in the face of adversity—often rely on systems that protect them. This mindset is particularly troubling in the context of veterans, who have already borne the burdens of service and deserve compassion and respect.

I am particularly averse to all forms of bullying, domestic violence, and aggressive behaviours toward others. I use my pen as effectively as I can to shed light on these un-Australian activities, drawing attention to the need for empathy and justice in our society. It is my hope that through my writing, I can contribute to a culture that values integrity and supports those who have bravely served our nation.

In closing, my journey as a freelance journalist has been one of profound challenges and transformative growth. It has been a path marked by resilience, a commitment to truth, and an unwavering belief in the power of words. As I look to the future, I am empowered by the knowledge that my work has the potential to inspire, educate, and provoke thought. This is the essence of journalism—a noble pursuit that, despite its trials, remains a cornerstone of democracy and a catalyst for change. I will continue to walk this path, armed with my pen and a steadfast resolve to illuminate the truth, one article at a time.

# CHAPTER 16 REFLECTIONS

## MY CHRONICLE: A JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE AND CULTURAL BRIDGE-BUILDING

**Early Years: Foundations of Identity (1950s-1960s)** My life journey began in a Greek family, marked by a dramatic transition at age four when we immigrated to Australia. These formative years challenged me with cultural adaptation and personal survival. Despite facing bullying and cultural isolation, I developed an extraordinary resilience that would define my character throughout life. My struggle to maintain Greek heritage while adapting to Australian culture shaped my unique perspective on cultural identity.

**Military Service: A Legacy of Leadership (1970s-2000)** My 30-year career in the Australian Regular Army stands as a testament to my dedication and leadership capabilities. As I rose through the ranks, I demonstrated exceptional commitment to service while maintaining my cultural identity. In 1990, I conducted a groundbreaking investigation into ethnic recruitment methodologies within the Australian Defence Force, revealing systemic barriers and proposing innovative solutions for greater inclusivity. This work marked my significant contribution to military reform.

**Family and Personal Triumphs (1980s-1990s)** While serving in the military, I faced the challenging role of single parenthood, raising my four sons with unwavering dedication. This period tested my resilience but showcased my ability to balance professional duties with family responsibilities. My experiences with divorce, remarriage, and supporting my sons through challenges demonstrated my unshakeable commitment to family values despite personal hardships.

**Professional Evolution and Academic Achievement (2000-2015)** Post-military life brought new challenges and opportunities. I transitioned through various roles, including Traffic Coordinator and management positions, while pursuing higher education. Earning two degrees and a diploma during this period reflected my commitment to continuous learning and self-improvement, despite facing significant health challenges.

**Health Battles and Resilience (2010-2020)** Later years brought severe health challenges, including heart attacks, cancer, and mental health struggles. These experiences, while testing, led to my deeper appreciation for life and inspired my advocacy for veteran health issues and mental health awareness. My recovery journey became intertwined with my writing career, using journalism as a tool for healing and advocacy.

**Cultural Bridge-Building and Community Leadership (2015-Present)** My unique position as a Greek-Australian has enabled me to serve as a vital cultural bridge-builder. Through my work as a freelance journalist and political activist, I've consistently advocated for conservative values while promoting multicultural understanding. My writings address the delicate balance between traditional values and modern Australian society.

## LEGACY AND FUTURE VISION (2020-2025)

**Looking toward 2025 and beyond.** I envision a future where cultural diversity strengthens rather than divides communities. My continued commitment to maintaining connections with both Australia and Greece through property ownership and regular travel reflects my dedication to preserving cultural ties while embracing new opportunities. This vision is driven by the belief that a harmonious blend of cultural identities can enrich our society.

**Throughout my journey.** I've maintained a consistent philosophy centred on:

- Unwavering resilience in the face of adversity
- A deep commitment to family and cultural heritage
- Dedication to community service and social responsibility
- A belief in continuous learning and personal growth
- Advocacy for multicultural understanding while preserving traditional values

## ONGOING PROJECTS AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS (2025 AND BEYOND)

**Documentation of Greek-Australian Military Heritage** I am deeply engaged in documenting the untold stories of Greek-Australian veterans. This comprehensive project aims to:

- Record firsthand accounts of Greek-Australian military service
- Preserve crucial historical narratives for future generations
- Highlight the significant contributions of multicultural servicemen and women
- Create an accessible archive for researchers and historians

**Literary and Journalistic Endeavours** My current writing projects focus on several key areas:

- A memoir detailing my personal journey of cultural adaptation
- Regular columns addressing contemporary multicultural issues
- Articles exploring veteran affairs and mental health advocacy
- Documentation of changing Australian society from a Greek-Australian perspective

**Community Development Initiatives** Ongoing community projects include:

- Mentoring programs for young Greek-Australians
- Veterans' support networks
- Cross-cultural dialogue forums
- Advocacy for elderly care within multicultural communities

**Educational Legacy** My commitment to education continues through:

- Guest speaking at universities on multicultural issues
- Development of educational resources about Greek-Australian history
- Support for scholarship programs for disadvantaged students
- Workshops on cultural integration and identity

**Cultural Preservation Projects** Efforts to maintain cultural connections include:

- Development of digital archives of Greek-Australian history
- Organization of cultural exchange programs
- Support for Greek language programs in Australian schools
- Documentation of first-generation immigrant experiences

**Health and Wellness Advocacy** Future plans for health advocacy focus on:

- Expanding mental health support for veterans
- Developing culturally sensitive health care programs
- Creating resources for families dealing with health challenges
- Promoting holistic approaches to well-being

**Property and Cultural Heritage** Long-term plans include:

- Establishing cultural centres in both Australia and Greece
- Creating spaces for community gatherings and events
- Developing sustainable models for maintaining cross-cultural connections
- Preserving family heritage through physical spaces



**Vision for Multicultural Australia** My aspirations for Australia's multicultural future include:

- Promoting deeper understanding between different cultural groups
- Advocating for policies that protect both diversity and unity
- Supporting initiatives that celebrate cultural heritage
- Fostering intergenerational cultural transmission

**Personal Development Goals** Ongoing personal objectives include:

- Continuing education in new areas of interest
- Expanding writing and publishing endeavours
- Strengthening family and community bonds
- Maintaining active engagement in social issues

**Legacy Building** Future-focused initiatives aim to:

- Create lasting resources for future generations
- Establish foundations for ongoing cultural exchange
- Develop sustainable community support systems
- Build bridges between traditional values and modern society

**Technological Integration** Plans for embracing modern technology include:

- Digital archiving of historical documents and stories
- Online platforms for community engagement
- Virtual cultural exchange programs
- Social media presence for broader reach

**International Connections** Future aspirations for international engagement include:

- Strengthening ties between Australian and Greek communities
- Facilitating cultural exchange programs
- Supporting international education initiatives
- Promoting cross-cultural understanding globally

**Future Outlook** My ongoing projects and future aspirations reflect my continued commitment to:

- Building stronger, more inclusive communities
- Preserving cultural heritage while embracing change
- Supporting future generations in their cultural journey
- Contributing to positive social transformation

**Navigating Life's Path: Embracing Challenges with Resilience.** Life is a rich tapestry of experiences, woven together by moments of triumph, challenge, and transformation. My journey, deeply intertwined with military service, has been shaped by the friendships forged in its crucible and the enduring lessons learned along the way. As I reflect on this path, I am grateful for the mentors and comrades who have guided me, the trials that have tested my spirit, and the resilience that has carried me forward.

**The Mentors Who Mapped My Path.** Throughout my military career, I was privileged to be guided by exceptional leaders and mentors—individuals ranging from fellow digger mates to Major Generals. They provided the moral fibre and strength that saw me through difficult times. Among them were Ron Lovelock, John Best, Major Barry French, and Brigadier "Harry the Hat" Hammet.

Each played a pivotal role in shaping my character, offering wisdom and guidance that helped me navigate the complexities of military life and beyond. Their teachings extended beyond tactics and strategy; they were lessons in resilience, leadership, and humanity. They taught me to face adversity with courage, to lead with integrity, and to cherish the bonds of camaraderie that make the military brotherhood unique. These lessons have remained with me, guiding me even as I transitioned from military service to civilian life.

**Reflections on Service and Sacrifice.** As I have now reached the age of 75, I find myself reflecting on the journey that has brought me here. The military was not just a career; it was a calling—a way of life that instilled in me a deep sense of duty and responsibility. The motto "Duty First" resonated with me then and continues to guide me now. It serves as a reminder that service does not end when one leaves the military; it is a lifelong commitment to something greater than oneself. The years have not been without their challenges. I have faced anxiety, stress, depression, and the physical toll of a demanding career. I have grappled with the loss of comrades, the transition to civilian life, and the search for purpose beyond the uniform. Yet, through it all, I have learned to embrace resilience—to find strength in vulnerability and to keep moving forward despite the obstacles.

**The Pillars of Family and Support.** In times of adversity, my family has been my anchor. My wife, Yovanna, has been my rock, providing unwavering support during my darkest hours. Together with my four sons—David, Paul, Matthew, and Mark—they have been my source of strength and inspiration. Without them, I would have been adrift, lost in the jungles of the netherworld that claim so many veterans. Their support has been invaluable as I navigate the complexities of life post-military. They are the reason I continue to fight, to seek meaning and purpose in each day. Their love and understanding have been a balm for the wounds of the past, a reminder that I am not alone in this journey.

**Confronting the Shadows.** Transitioning from military to civilian life has not been easy. I have faced mental health challenges, struggled with feelings of worthlessness, and battled the ghosts of the past. Depression and anxiety have been constant companions, casting shadows over my days. Yet, I have learned to confront these shadows, to seek help, and to find ways to heal. Therapy and support from mental health professionals have been crucial in this journey. They have helped me unpack the burdens I carry, to understand the root of my struggles, and to find a path forward. Writing has also been therapeutic—a way to articulate my thoughts, to make sense of the chaos, and to share my experiences with others who may be facing similar battles.

**Finding Solace in Simplicity.** Amidst the turmoil, I have found solace in life's simple pleasures. Gardening has become a refuge—a place where I can reconnect with nature and find peace. Tending to my garden, watching things grow, and feeling the earth in my hands has been a reminder of life's cycles and the resilience inherent in all living things. These moments of tranquillity, whether in the garden or walking in the sun, have been vital to my well-being. They offer a respite from the noise of the world, a chance to breathe and to find clarity. They remind me that life, despite its challenges, is filled with beauty and wonder.

**Embracing the Future with Hope.** As I look to the future, I do so with a sense of hope and purpose. The journey has been long and fraught with challenges, but it has also been rich with lessons and growth. I am committed to using my experiences to help others, to advocate for veterans, and to raise awareness about the issues we face. I believe that governments and communities must do more to support those who have served. Goodwill gestures are not enough; we need comprehensive programs that address the unique challenges of transitioning from military to civilian life. We need to ensure that veterans are not forgotten, that their sacrifices are honoured, and that they have the resources they need to thrive.

**A Tribute to Comrades.** To my comrades who have gone before me, I offer my deepest respect and gratitude. I remember their words, their laughter, and their courage. I carry their memory with me, a reminder of the bonds we shared and the duty that binds us. To those who continue to serve and to those who have transitioned to civilian life, I extend a call to action. Let us work together to create a better world—one where veterans are valued, supported, and empowered. Let us use our experiences to advocate for change, to build bridges of understanding, and to ensure that no one is left behind.

**A Call to Action.** In conclusion, my journey is a testament to the power of resilience, hope, and community. It is a reminder that we are not alone, that together we can overcome even the most daunting challenges. It is a call to action for all of us to support and uplift one another, to create a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. To my fellow veterans, I offer my deepest respect and gratitude. Your strength, courage, and commitment are an inspiration to us all. To those who support veterans, thank you for your compassion and understanding. Together, we can build a future where veterans are valued, empowered, and celebrated. As I continue my journey, I do so with a heart full of gratitude and a commitment to making a positive impact. My story is but one of many, and I am inspired by the countless individuals who have shown me that, even in the face of adversity, life is a precious gift worth cherishing. Let us walk this path together, with hope in our hearts and a vision for a brighter tomorrow.

These initiatives represent my enduring dedication to creating lasting positive change, building on my life experiences to forge pathways for future generations. Through these various projects and aspirations, I aim to leave a legacy that extends beyond personal achievement to contribute meaningfully to Australia's multicultural fabric, ensuring that the lessons and values I've gained through my life journey continue to benefit future generations. My life narrative represents more than personal achievement; it embodies the successful integration of multiple cultural identities while maintaining personal integrity and contributing to societal progress. My journey from immigrant child to influential community figure demonstrates how individual resilience can create positive social change, serving as an inspiration for future generations navigating the complexities of cultural identity in modern Australia.

## EPILOGUE

As I reach the conclusion of this memoir, I find myself reflecting on the journey that has brought me to this point. The pages of this book have chronicled a life marked by challenges, triumphs, and the unyielding determination to rise above adversity. It is a journey that has been shaped by the people who have walked beside me, the values instilled in me, and the lessons learned along the way. In writing this memoir, I have endeavoured to share not only my story but also the wisdom gained from a life lived with purpose. It is my hope that my experiences will serve as a source of inspiration and encouragement to others who may find themselves facing similar struggles. For in the end, we are all "just blokes," navigating the complexities of life with whatever strength and resilience we can muster.

The process of revisiting the past has been both cathartic and illuminating. It has allowed me to acknowledge the hardships I have faced, celebrate the victories achieved, and honour the relationships that have sustained me. It has also reminded me of the enduring importance of gratitude, humility, and the unwavering belief in the potential for personal growth and transformation. As I look to the future, I do so with a sense of hope and optimism. The challenges that lie ahead are unknown, but I am comforted by the knowledge that I am not alone. My family, friends, and the memories of those who have gone before me continue to be my guiding light. Together, they have taught me that true strength lies not in avoiding life's difficulties but in confronting them with courage and grace.

In closing, I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to all who have taken the time to read this memoir. Your willingness to engage with my story is a testament to the shared human experience that binds us all. May we continue to support one another in our respective journeys, drawing strength from our collective resilience and the knowledge that we are never truly alone.

Thank you for accompanying me on this journey. May you find in these pages the inspiration to embrace your own life's path with courage and conviction.



## CONCLUSION

As I draw this memoir to a close, I find myself reflecting on the myriad experiences that have shaped my life—a life that began in a small village in Greece and led me across the world to Australia, where I forged a path of service, resilience, and unwavering dedication. This memoir serves as both a testament to the extraordinary journey I have undertaken and a tribute to the many individuals who have walked alongside me, providing support, guidance, and friendship.

In the pages of this memoir, I have endeavoured to capture the essence of my life's journey—a journey marked by challenges and triumphs, by moments of doubt and instances of profound clarity. From my early years grappling with the realities of growing up in a foreign land to my service in the Australian Army, and through the trials of civilian life, my story is one of perseverance and the enduring belief in the power of the human spirit to overcome adversity.

Throughout my life, I have been guided by the steadfast motto of the Royal Australian Regiment, "Duty First," which has served as a constant reminder of the values of commitment, integrity, and service to others. These values have not only shaped my military career but have also been the foundation upon which I have built my personal life, guiding my actions and decisions even in the face of life's uncertainties.

As I reflect on the path I have travelled, I am filled with gratitude for the relationships and connections that have enriched my life. The friendships forged during my military service, the unwavering support of my family, and the camaraderie of my fellow veterans have been a source of strength and comfort, providing a sense of belonging and purpose.

To my four sons—David, Paul, Matthew, and Mark—I extend my deepest gratitude. Raising you as a single parent was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, and I am immensely proud of the individuals you have become. Your resilience, integrity, and compassion are a testament to the enduring legacy of our family, and as a grandfather, I am committed to passing on the values that have guided us.

In sharing my story, I hope to offer a glimmer of hope to those who may find themselves facing similar struggles. My journey serves as a reminder that, no matter how ordinary we may seem, each of us has the capacity to lead an extraordinary life. It is a life defined not by the absence of challenges but by the courage and determination to confront them head-on.

As I look to the future, I do so with a renewed sense of purpose and a deeper appreciation for the fragility and preciousness of life. The challenges that lie ahead are unknown, but I am fortified by the knowledge that I am not alone. My family, friends, and the memories of those who have gone before me continue to be my guiding light, reminding me that true strength lies not in avoiding life's difficulties but in embracing them with courage and grace.

To those who have accompanied me on this journey, I offer my heartfelt thanks. Your willingness to engage with my story is a testament to the shared humanity that binds us all. May we continue to support one another, drawing strength from our collective experiences and the knowledge that we are never truly alone. And to you, the reader, I extend a simple invitation: Embrace your own life's path with the same unyielding spirit that has defined my journey. For in doing so, you too may discover the extraordinary within the ordinary, and the profound resilience that lies at the core of the human experience.

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## AUTHOR



**Peter Adamis: A Life of Service and Commitment.** Peter Adamis, a retired Australian serviceman, devoted three decades to military service before transitioning into a successful career in management. His expertise spans organisational, environmental, occupational, and training sectors, where he has thrived as a Business and Public Relations Manager, Administrator, Trainer, Advisor, and Environmental, Occupational Health, and Safety Consultant. His work has significantly impacted various community sectors, including welfare, business, and community engagement. Additionally, Peter has carved a niche for himself as an accredited freelance journalist and author, writing extensively on domestic and international issues.

Born on March 28, 1950, in the village of Pellana near Sparta, Greece, Peter's early life was shaped by his family's migration to Australia in 1954. The family settled in Fremantle, Western Australia, before moving to Melbourne in 1956. Peter is married to Yovanna and is a proud father to four sons from a previous marriage: David, Paul, Matthew, and Mark. His devotion to family is evident in the values of resilience and hard work he has instilled in his sons.

A passionate advocate for his birthplace, Peter actively promotes the ancient ruins of Pellana and their historical ties to figures such as King Tyndareus and Homer. His love of history extends beyond his homeland, focusing on the Mycenaeans, the Sea Peoples, and the diverse cultures within Australian society. As a lifelong member of the RSL and past president of the Panlaconian Brotherhood, he has made substantial contributions, including creating the Hellenic ANZAC (HANZAC) Memorial in Laconia, Greece, and serving as a Research Officer at the Australian Hellenic War Memorial in Melbourne. His military career includes two deployments to Malaysia during the Second Malay Emergency and Singapore as a Peacekeeper, deployed to the UK for introduction to urban warfare and anti-terrorist training, and finally participating in the TELAMON Force to Greece in 1991.

Peter has been a committed member of the Liberal Party for 35 years, holding core values as a "Traditional Right of Centre Conservative" with a belief in a "Fair Go" for everyone. While he hasn't been part of the Administrative Committee, he has embraced various roles within the party. His political skills were honed in Labor-dominated areas, where he had the opportunity to experiment with innovative campaign strategies not typically seen in Liberal strongholds. Interacting with people from diverse cultural backgrounds enriched his understanding of their needs, enhancing his campaigning abilities.

Peter is recognized for his readiness to critique policies or leadership platforms that stray from the Liberal Party's core values. A staunch anti-Communist, he has contributed to the election of some of Victoria's most promising political figures, both locally and in the Senate. He has a strong dislike for political bullying and sycophancy and champions those willing to stand up for their beliefs. Peter supports candidates of good character who are committed to Australia's best interests. He takes pride in knowing that his contributions to the Liberal Party are driven by genuine belief rather than personal gain. Although his passion for the party can sometimes lead to misunderstandings, his dedication is unwavering. Michael Kroger's remark that "*Peter has not asked anything of the Liberal Party, and the party has not given him anything*" underscores his selfless commitment.

Over the past twenty years, Peter has authored more than 2,000 articles, including periodicals and manuals, and published fifteen books such as [ADF Recruiting](#), [ACID – \(Asymmetric Cyber Intelligence Division\)](#), [Ramblings – \(Life of Maurice Barwick\)](#), [Klephtes](#), [OGOC – \(Oakleigh Greek community\)](#), [Australian Hellenic RSL](#), [Treble Change – '1 RAR'](#), ['Pellana: A Historical Resource Perspective'](#), [Pellana and Travellers in the Peloponnese](#), [Communist Insurgency in Malaysia 1968 – 1989 – 'Impact on RCB. Veterans](#), [An Old Blokes Myths](#), [Charting the future: \(A strategic roadmap for the Liberal Party Victorian Revival\)](#), [The Rise of AI – Its impact on Mankind](#), [Resilient Warriors – \(Transition from the military\)](#), [JAB – \(Just a Bloke\)](#), [Life loves the Curious – \(Nicholas Bantounas\)](#) (Not Published),

His current projects include HANZAC – The Hellenic ANZAC Memorial – (Dedication and tribute Hellenes and ANZACS), TELAMON Force – (50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for the Battle of Greece and Crete), A Political Instrument – (Life of a political Activist) and the History of Hellenic immigrants to Australia since World War II. His writings cover a broad range of topics from Terrorism, Welfare, Societal, Community issues, Military, political to Management Practises and Ancient History.

Peter's qualifications underscore his commitment to continuous learning and professional growth. He holds a Bachelor of Adult Learning and Development and a Postgraduate Degree in Environmental Occupational Health and Safety from Monash University, along with diplomas in Training and Assessment, Public Administration, Frontline Management, and a Certificate in Industrial Relations and Negotiation. His military career, culminating in the rank of Warrant Officer, reflects his dedication and exemplary service. He is the webmaster for [Abalinx and Associates](#), a 'not for profit' organisation whose website which supports others quietly without seeking publicity.



## APPENDIX 1: SATELLITE VIEW OF PELLANA









## APPENDIX 3

# POSTING - UNITS - DETACHMENTS & DEPLOYMENTS

The following is for children and Grand Children I have included the units and detachments throughout my military career. 1969 Enlisted in the Citizens Military Forces at 3 Base workshop Battalion - Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. I completed my Basic Training with 22 Royal Victorian Regiment. I discharged at my own request at the rank of Corporal. In 1971 I enlisted into the Australian Regular Army. I completed basic Training at Kapooka, New South Wales, followed my Initial Employment Training at Infantry Centre, in New South Wales.

Once both were over, I was posted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, located at Townsville in Far North Queensland, where I undertook Jungle training and a pioneer course with detachments to Infantry Centre, Tropical Trials Establishment, deployment to New Guinea and Secret Tank Trials in Far North Queensland, and Tank Trials at Puckapunyal.

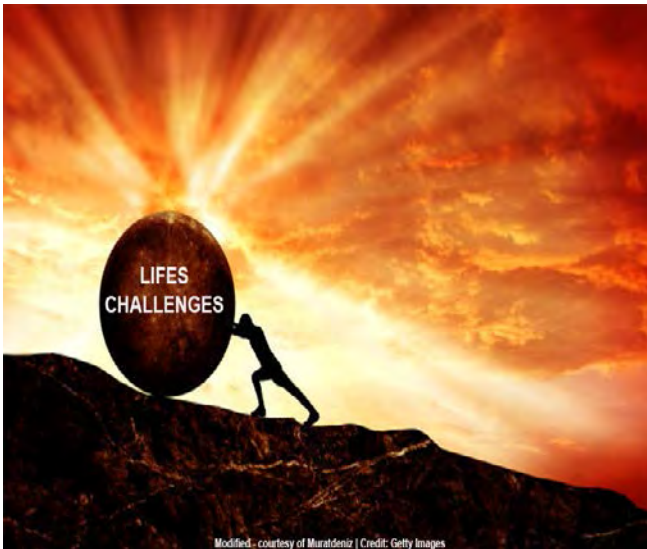
Deployed and posted to 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment in Singapore. Deployed for three months to Penang, Malaysia for Rifle Company Butterworth during the Second Malay Emergency, followed by Jungle training. Relocated to Enoggera, in Brisbane Australia where I was deployed to the United Kingdom for Urban Warfare and Introduction to Anti-Terrorist training and deployed to Penang, Malaysia for Rifle Company Butterworth for three months during the ongoing Second Malay Emergency. I then became parachute qualified and injured on my last jump during an exercise.

Married with two children. I undertook an Administrators course, followed by leadership courses. Downgrade from being fit and reposted to Central Army Records Officer where I regained my health and fitness status. Involved in Rifle shooting and came eight in the top Army Fifty Club, followed by stiff opposition the following years and came 48<sup>th</sup>. Attended Rifle shooting completion and won a category in the Queensland medal for shooting. Posted to 11 Independent Rifle Company, The Royal West Australian Regiment, Reposted to Central Army Records/Soldier career Management Agency.

Separated and divorced with four children. Six months long service leave and posted to Deakin University Company in Geelong as the Chief Administrator. I created and conducted training for an obstacle course, Rifle shooting team and survival training, Roping and Rappelling, followed by a leadership course at Canungra Queensland. Posted to the 2 Battalion the Royal Victoria Regiment which was renamed to the 8<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Royal Victorian Regiment, located at Ballarat.

Posted to 3 Army Recruiting Unit/Defence Force Recruiting Unit at Melbourne, Detached to Telamon Force that was deployed to Greece for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Greece and Crete. Detached to Army History Unit for six months, 3 Army Recruiting Unit/Australian Defence Force Recruiting Unit. Posted to 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Battalion the Royal Victorian Regiment located in Burwood, followed by a final posting to Army personnel Agency – Melbourne upon which I separated from the Regular Army and enlisted into the Australian Army Reserve, followed by a number of years on Standby Reserve until compulsory retirement age at 65.

## APPENDIX 4: UNRESOLVED ISSUES IN LIFE



This Appendix represents another significant chapter in one's life, offering lessons that I believe resonate with all of us. In life, each of us encounters unresolved issues, and how we confront these challenges ultimately defines who we are. At the age of 75, I find myself reflecting on my life's journey, pondering how I survived and identifying those defining moments that taught me the true meaning of resilience.

Throughout my military career and even more so after leaving the Regular Army, I spoke with many remarkable men and women, tougher than I, who shared their stories of unresolved issues with me. Together, we navigated the complexities of life, finding strength in shared experiences.

From the tender age of six to my current years, I have faced a myriad of adversities: sexual assault, bullying at school, physical punishment at home, threats of violence, intimidation, beatings, death threats, political bullying, aggressive behaviour directed at me, undermining, deceit, having my car torched and tires slashed, receiving negative phone calls, being misled, and even being irresponsibly and wrongly charged and arrested by the police. These are just some of the challenges I've endured, many of which I prefer not to mention. In the face of such adversity, I have managed to confront my fears, demons, and detractors, whose sole aim was to bring me down. My faith, my family, good mates, friends, and the great men and women I served with over a thirty-year period—within the Citizens Military Forces, Regular Army, and the Australian Army Reserve—were my pillars of support. Post-military, I was further supported by 35 years of political activism, where I met wonderful political mates and colleagues who encouraged me through difficult times.

**A Life of Challenges and Resilience.** In essence, my life has been a long journey filled with challenges that have embedded a "never give up" attitude within my soul. This resilience was instilled in me by my father, who subjected me to unconventional lessons, such as hanging me from a tree and instructing me not to let go, or hanging me overboard a ship on our way to Australia to teach me not to fear. He once even hung me up on a tree and lit a fire underneath to teach me strength. My Baptist Sunday School teacher Stan Edwards, also played a significant role, teaching me to be an encourager in life and to place my faith in God. Later, in the streets, I learned to be a street fighter, using whatever I could to survive battles. In the Army, I discovered the true meaning of mateship, learning to survive physical and mental challenges, never giving up, and always moving forward, regardless of the odds.

**Personal Battles and Custody Challenges.** During the latter part of my military career, I fought fiercely for the custody of my four sons, clawing through a series of victories and defeats until I finally gained custody and raised them alone. I did not do this unassisted; my parents, extended family, mates, and the Army stood by me. Upon leaving the military, I thought I was ready to embrace civilian life, but even then, I faced the dark side of life with its hidden corridors of intrigue, selfishness, greed, and aggressive behaviour—all reminders of my youth. Though I met many wonderful people, one person stands out—Paddy Basckai, an SAS soldier who taught me the art of positive thinking.

**Navigating Politics and Personal Integrity.** I longed for the safe environment of military life, knowing that good people would do the right thing. Involved in politics, I believed I could navigate the labyrinth of power, only to find that even here, the darker side of mankind prevailed. Throughout this period, unscrupulous characters and some who called me a friend attempted to undermine me and my reputation. To this day, none are aware that I know of their wrongdoings, and for my own sanity, I say nothing and bide my time.

**Health Struggles and the Fight for Survival.** I have suffered from anxiety, severe depression, three heart attacks, and, ultimately, cancer. I do not question how I survived, only to say that my faith, family, and close mates, particularly my dear friend Giuseppe De Simone, have been my salvation. The shadow of despair, the so-called "black dog," has loomed ominously, tempting me towards a darker path. Yet, something resilient within me refuses to surrender to that darkness. I recognize that at this stage in life, I should not have to endure such trials, but I am determined not to capitulate without a fight. Regardless of the outcome, I am resolved to rise once more and embrace whatever life I have left, fortified by the knowledge that I have faced adversity with courage and integrity.

**The Emotional Toll and the Call for Resolution.** As I recount these experiences, I am acutely aware of the psychological effects that unresolved issues have wrought upon me. Anxiety, stress, depression, and self-doubt have been constant companions. They have tested the limits of my endurance, yet they have also taught me invaluable lessons about resilience and the capacity of the human spirit to endure and overcome. In closing, I have listed the emotions I have experienced throughout life. In hindsight, I believe this is where resilience takes hold, urging us to put one foot forward after another until we overcome the challenges we face. These effects highlight the importance of addressing and resolving issues to improve mental health and overall well-being. To my mates and others, I advise seeking help before the dark demons devour our very soul.

1. **Anxiety:** Persistent worry and tension due to unresolved conflicts.
2. **Chronic Stress:** Continuous physiological and emotional stress response.
3. **Depression:** Feelings of hopelessness, sadness, and lack of interest in activities.
4. **Low Self-Esteem:** Negative self-image and reduced self-worth.
5. **Irritability:** Increased sensitivity and quickness to anger.
6. **Relationship Difficulties:** Challenges in forming or maintaining healthy relationships.
7. **Avoidance Behaviour:** Procrastination or withdrawal from situations that trigger unresolved issues.
8. **Substance Abuse:** Increased risk of turning to drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism.
9. **Sleep Disturbances:** Insomnia, nightmares, or restless sleep.
10. **Concentration Issues:** Difficulty focusing or making decisions.
11. **Emotional Instability:** Frequent mood swings or emotional outbursts.
12. **Physical Health Problems:** Headaches, fatigue, and other stress-related conditions.
13. **Isolation:** Withdrawal from social interactions and support networks.
14. **Perfectionism:** Overcompensating by striving for unattainable standards.
15. **Trust Issues:** Difficulty trusting others, leading to guarded behaviour.
16. **Resentment and Bitterness:** Lingering negative emotions toward others or oneself.
17. **Self-Sabotage:** Engaging in behaviours that undermine personal goals and achievements.
18. **Guilt and Shame:** Persistent feelings of guilt or shame related to unresolved issues.
19. **Overthinking:** Excessive analysis and rumination over past events.
20. **Burnout:** Mental and emotional exhaustion, particularly in work or caregiving roles.

Upon reflection, I find myself acknowledging four remarkable individuals who have profoundly influenced my journey by instilling in me the values of never giving up, faith, positive thinking, and well-being. First, there was my father, Vasilios Adamis, whose unconventional teachings laid the foundation for my resilience. Then, Stan Edwards, my Sunday School teacher, who nurtured my faith and instilled in me to become an encourager and uplifter in life. Paddy Basckai, my early military mentor, guided me through the rigors of service with wisdom and positivity.

Lastly, Giuseppe De Simone, a steadfast presence in my later years, offered unwavering support and friendship. Through the years, I've come to understand that life is a journey of constant evolution, moulded by the challenges we encounter and the lessons we extract from them. Unresolved issues are not mere obstacles; they are catalysts for growth, resilience, and transformation. As I continue my journey, I am committed to facing life's challenges with courage and grace, knowing that each step forward is a testament to the indomitable strength of the human spirit. I have since written some eleven books in the last two years of which 95percent has been from my notes, diaries, reflections and personal observations. This is my way of surviving the ravages of time.



*"Life is what it is - A journey"*