

**Anargyros (Roger) Antonopoulos:
Freedom Fighter, Restaurateur, Family Man**

An Essay

Presented to

The California Pioneers

Of Santa Clara County

by

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Introduction

In 1952, Anargyros Antonopoulos, a tall, dark, green-eyed, thirty-one-year-old man moved to the City of San Jose, California with his wife and children. Except for the fact that he had just purchased a restaurant on First Street prior to relocating his family to San Jose, he knew little about the town. In the years that followed, he became a well-known and popular restaurateur, culminating with his last restaurant known as Roger's of Santa Clara. Not only was Antonopoulos the owner of a number of restaurants in Santa Clara County, but he also contributed to the welfare of those living in the local area, whether it was by feeding the needy or translating for Greek immigrants in cases before the county court system. His business sense and community leadership would make Antonopoulos an integral part in the history of the City of San Jose and the County of Santa Clara. Little did he know in 1952 that this California city and county would fill him with happiness, community spirit, and a good place to raise his young family after the turbulent early years of his childhood and young manhood. The writer of this paper is the sixth out of his thirteen grandchildren.

Birth

August 1, 1921, was like any other in the port city of Pireaus, Greece, which is located on the outskirts of the capital city of Athens. Sweating profusely in the hot and humid Mediterranean sun, Grecian sea merchants were loading their fleets while in the Agora (marketplace) the sounds of bartering filled the air. In a large house in the Kokkinia district of Pireaus, Stavroula Antonopoulos gave birth to her second child, Anargyros Nicholas Antonopoulos, while her husband Nicholas waited anxiously outside. Antonopoulos was soon to be considered by his parents to be the oldest child of the family because of the childhood death of his older brother Petros.

Schooling days

As a young boy, Antonopoulos loved school. The various school subjects of history, geography, and mathematics intrigued him. He continuously strove to learn as much as he could each day that he went to school. Word puzzles fascinated him. (In fact, he continued to solve Jumbles in the San Jose Mercury News up until the day he died.) He further loved the power that knowledge gave him when he spoke with his friends and family members. In spite of his passion for learning, Antonopoulos had to quit school following the sixth grade year to help support his family financially. The reasons caused Antonopoulos to quit school at such an early age began before he was even born. His father Nicholas had immigrated to the United States, worked hard, saved up money, and returned to Greece to be with his wife and young family. Upon returning

to Greece, Nicholas discovered that the money that he had earned and saved while in the United States had elevated him into the small middle class of his country. Not content with his new financial and class status, and believing that his hard-earned money would increase, he invested nearly all of the family's money in a dairy factory. Unfortunately, due to the increasing economic pressures within Greece and Europe during the late 1920s, as well as poor management of the dairy factory, the company went bankrupt, and Antonopoulos's family lost all of their money.

Adoption

Since Antonopoulos loved school so much, his uncle Michael Antonopoulos, the brother of Antonopoulos's father, offered him the opportunity to continue his education. Uncle Michael was a career officer in the Greek Army and rather wealthy. However, the offer came with a price. Although his Uncle Michael was married, he and his wife did not have any children. Antonopoulos's uncle thus offered him the chance for an education if he would leave his family and live with them and become their son through adoption. Antonopoulos declined this offer, and resented his uncle for thinking that he, even though only eleven-years-old, would desert his family in their time of need.

Message

On October 28, 1940, the Italian ambassador to Greece demanded that Greece accept rule by the Fascist Italian regime. The Greek prime minister made his famous one

word answer “Ohi!” (No!), and with this Greece was drawn into World War II. The Greek Army was able to fight off the Italians and pushed them back into Albania. Although Antonopoulos was a young man of nineteen, he was not needed at that time to fight in the Greek Army. However, with the failure of the Italians to take over Greece, the Germans declared war on Greece, and now with this new danger, Antonopoulos felt that it was his duty to fight and defend his country. He received a message from his Uncle Michael, the uncle who wanted to adopt him years before, that he needed to speak with him. Antonopoulos still resented his uncle for the “offer of an education for a price”, but he reluctantly visited him. His uncle, now a general of the Greek Army, told him that although the Greek Army was able to fight off the Italians, Greece had few weapons, limited manpower, was very poor, and would be no match against the German Army. Although Antonopoulos did not want to listen to his uncle, Michael advised him that if he remained in Greece and fought, the likelihood of his being captured and sent off to a German prisoner-of-war camp until the end of the war could easily happen, and this would not help his family. Michael told him to leave Greece immediately if he wanted to help his country, his family, and himself. At the same time, another uncle of Antonopoulos, who was a member of the Greek prime minister’s inner circle, told him the same thing. With a heavy heart, Antonopoulos took their advice, and within two days left his family and homeland.

Merchant Marines

Antonopoulos knew that the best way to get out of Greece was to join the Greek Merchant Marines, and in early 1941, he left on one of the last merchant ships leaving Piraeus, Greece. This was his only chance of getting out of Greece quickly and safely before the country fell to the Germans. Antonopoulos became an engineer in the boiler room of the ship, and sailed to ports in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Although far from home, he was making money and saving it so he could help support his family. The work was tiring, but the seamen were supposedly safe, although there was an occasion when a submarine had torpedoed and hit the ship. The damage was minor, and the ship made it to port safely. However, the safety of the merchant ship ended one fateful day while sailing in the Caribbean Sea as it was hauling supplies to the northern ports of South America. It was August 1, 1942, Antonopoulos's twenty-first birthday. The cook on board the ship had asked Antonopoulos if he had ever had a birthday cake with which to celebrate his birthday. Antonopoulos replied that he had not as the custom in Greece was to celebrate one's name day or saint's day and not one's birthday. (A name day or saint's day is the day the church celebrates an event in Jesus's life or the life of a saint of the Orthodox Christian Church.) The cook said that he would make Antonopoulos's first birthday cake, and they would cut it after their meal.

As the cook started bringing down the birthday cake, Antonopoulos started to get up when an enormous "BOOM" occurred. A torpedo from an Italian ship had just torn a hole in the hull of the ship. Most of the men who were sitting were killed instantly as their bodies were thrown up towards the ceiling, but since Antonopoulos was in a

“getting up” motion, his body was at an angle, and the blast threw him sideways. Although many died instantly after the blast, a number of the ship’s crew was still alive. Many of those that survived, unfortunately, thought that it would be the best idea to jump off the ship and swim away from it before it blew apart. These men did not know, however, that they were jumping into shark-infested waters, and they would soon be eaten alive by the sharks. Antonopoulos did not know how to swim, which is ironic because almost every child in Greece knows how to swim. Not only did he not know how to swim, but he was also severely injured, and jumping overboard would have been certain death. Instead, he made his way to the lifeboats. He finally found one, and along with the others, who also had remained on the ship and made their way to the lifeboats, survived. These men were the only survivors of the vessel. The other crewmen died from the huge blast of the torpedo, drowned, or were eaten by sharks. Antonopoulos’s twenty-first birthday became one of the most horrific events of his life, and he never liked to talk about it. To see so many of his close friends die in such a gruesome way was one thing he did not want to discuss.

Saved by the British

Antonopoulos was on the lifeboat drifting on the sea for about two days. It was approximately August 3, 1942, when a British ship sailed by and finally found them. They were immediately taken aboard on the ship and fed. The few Greek survivors had one meal with the British, and they thought that that one meal was enough. They did not like the way the British cooked. They loved Greek cuisine, and thought that British food

did not compare with their wonderful Greek food. One might think, why are these men complaining about the food, at least they are alive! Antonopoulos and his friends sent their cook, who was still miraculously alive, to the ship's kitchen. He cooked one hearty meal and everyone loved the food except for the captain of the ship. He was so angry that these Greek men tried to make a mockery of him and his ship, so he demanded that the Greeks stop cooking in his ship's galley. Everyone, including the British seamen and officers, said they loved the Greek food so much that they wanted the Greek cook to continue preparing the food. Finally, the captain tried it, and though he did not like to admit it, the Greek food was indeed delicious and superior to what he had previously eaten. During this whole fiasco, the British ship was heading towards the United States. The British would eventually leave these Greek survivors at an American hospital for treatment of their injuries. When the ship arrived in the United States, Antonopoulos, along with the other Greek survivors, was transferred to a hospital in Baltimore, Maryland where he was treated for three broken ribs, severe cuts and scrapes.

Three Choices

Antonopoulos, along with the other survivors, were given three choices by the Americans. The first was to go back to Greece, which was now under the control of the Germans; the second was to go to jail as a prisoner-of-war; and the third choice was to join the American Army. He decided that there was no use in going back to Greece which now was ruled by the Germans. He also had no idea how long this war was going to last, so he did not want to become a prisoner-of-war for an uncertain amount of time. The

third choice was the most appealing to Antonopoulos, and on December 27, 1942, he enlisted in the United States Army.

Fort Carson

Antonopoulos was inducted into the United States Army on January 4, 1943, and was immediately sent to Fort Carson, Colorado, for basic training. When he arrived at Fort Carson, he was assigned to the Greek Battalion. It was while in Colorado that Antonopoulos became an American citizen. Usually it takes at the very least three years if not the normal five years to take the test for American citizenship. In Antonopoulos's case, however, the Americans needed all the manpower available to them to fight in the war, so he tested for his American citizenship by the end of basic training. Antonopoulos was nervous about the citizenship test, because he knew little if any English, let alone anything about the American system of government or United States history. A lieutenant at Fort Carson, who just happened to be of Greek descent and who had graduated from West Point, told Antonopoulos and the other Greek inductees not to worry too much about the test. Come test day the lieutenant, Antonopoulos, and the other Greek citizens took the test "together." Antonopoulos was told to answer every question in Greek even if he was relaying his mother's recipe for spanakopita (spinach pie), and the lieutenant would translate the response not only into English but also into the correct answer. Antonopoulos, as well as the other Greek men, passed the test with flying colors. On August 11, 1943, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Antonopoulos became an American citizen. In that month, he completed basic training, and volunteered to join the newly

formed Office of Strategic Services (the O.S.S.), the precursor of the Central Intelligence Agency.

In Fort Carson there was one more thing that Antonopoulos received besides his American citizenship; it was a new “American” name. Sgt. Gates, who was from the state of Georgia, could not pronounce Antonopoulos’s first name and was trying to decide what he could call him. Sgt. Gates realized that in the name Anargyros there were two Rs, an O, and a G. He played around with the letters, and came up with “Roger.” It was perfect, American enough, and easier to pronounce than Anargyros. From that time on, most people referred to Antonopoulos as Roger.

Palestine

Antonopoulos was sent overseas in December 1943 and by February 1944 had arrived in Haifa, Palestine, for training as a paratrooper in the O.S.S. The British Commandoes trained them before these American soldiers were finally sent out for their missions during World War II. During one of the paratrooper training sessions, Antonopoulos and other men had to practice jumping out of an aircraft. They were in the Palestine desert at that time, and one of Antonopoulos’s friends had his turn to jump out of the plane. He did so, but when he landed it happened to be on one of the few cactus bushes in this desert. He had splinters up and down his rear, and it took a long time for the nurses to take out the thorns one at a time. This was one of Antonopoulos’s fondest memories about the war, because it was nothing gruesome; it was just very funny.

Antonopoulos's training in Palestine was finally over, and he was dropped behind enemy lines in northern Greece on May 21, 1944, where he joined the Fifth Group of the O.S.S. He and his group were part of the guerrilla warfare in Greece and helped to destroy railroad lines and bridges. Antonopoulos and his group worked so well against the Germans that Hitler issued an order to summarily execute members of this underground guerilla warfare unit.(1) Antonopoulos, like many other war veterans, did not like to talk much about his time fighting in the war. It was something that he did not want to remember.

Go West, Young Man

After the war ended, Antonopoulos returned to the United States in December 1945, and on January 3, 1946 he was honorably discharged. Greece had been destroyed by the war and the Civil War thereafter, and Antonopoulos knew that his home would forever be the United States. He visited his mother's brother who lived in New York City. Although his uncle was wealthy, Antonopoulos realized that this was not the place for him to make his new life in America primarily because he disliked the weather, and hoped that there was another place in this "land of dreams" country to make a living. One day in May 1946, he called Nick Cominos, an American of Greek descent, who also was one of his fellow soldiers in the Greek battalion. Cominos was born and raised in Salinas, California, and during their conversation they discussed the weather. Antonopoulos complained about the snow and cold of New York, and asked about Salinas's weather. Cominos said that it was a beautiful day and the temperature was

about seventy degrees. He also told Antonopoulos that the weather of California was very much like that of Greece. After this telephone conversation, Antonopoulos packed his bags, said goodbye to his uncle, and moved to California. Upon arriving, he got a job as a bartender at the Cominos Hotel, the nicest hotel in Salinas, which was owned by his good friend's family. Antonopoulos had been in Salinas for several months, but decided it was too small of a town for him and gave notice to the hotel that he was leaving Salinas. Antonopoulos loved the climate of California, but he wanted to live in a bigger town, so he decided to give Santa Barbara a try, and planned to leave Salinas in August 1946.

Marriage

Tom Georgalos, an American of Greek descent, was also a native of Salinas, California, and another of Antonopoulos's friends. When he heard that Antonopoulos was leaving for Santa Barbara on the Friday before his wedding, he told him, "Attend my wedding, and leave on Monday." Antonopoulos attended the wedding. His plans changed forever at the wedding reception when he noticed a young, slender, and very beautiful woman. She was medium height, had long brown hair, and big brown eyes. Her name was Patricia Eliopoulos. He asked her to dance, but while they were dancing he stepped on her new, long, sea green dress. Patricia was upset because she had worked and saved her money to purchase the gown for the wedding. Antonopoulos was embarrassed, but he had fallen in love with her, and the idea of moving to Santa Barbara was no longer a part of his future. He now had a really good reason to stay in California:

not only was the weather like Greece, but also more importantly he had found his future wife. On August 24, 1947, Antonopoulos married Patricia. Shortly after they were married, Antonopoulos confessed to his young bride that he did not accidentally step on her new sea green gown at the Georgalos wedding. He stepped on her dress for a reason; he wanted to see if she had nice-looking legs.

Back to School?

Antonopoulos got a job as a salesman for the Jewel T Company, and worked there until he moved to San Jose, California. Although he made a fairly good salary, he felt that he should return to school, especially since veterans were being given money to further their education through the G.I. Bill. Although Antonopoulos had no more than a sixth grade education, he was given the opportunity to challenge the entrance requirements of San Jose State College. He took the entrance exam, and he passed. He was accepted by the college as a student, and was ready to go back to school, something that he wished he could do for so many years. Soon after he received his acceptance notice, his wife found out that she was pregnant with their first child, so again Antonopoulos was faced with a choice he needed to make. He could go to school and let his wife work to support the family, or he would not return to school. The decision was easy for Antonopoulos. He did not want his wife to support him, even if he was a student, and therefore, did not accept entrance to San Jose State College. This decision ended any hopes of continuing his formal education. Although he never went back to school, he made sure his four children would have an education and saw to it that they

attended San Jose State College and graduate from there. He also thought it was his responsibility to instill a love of education in his grandchildren as well.

Restaurants

Angelo Lygizos, another member of the O.S.S. and a war buddy of Antonopoulos, told him of a great opportunity in the town of San Jose. A Greek in the town was selling a small restaurant, and this was their chance of going into business. Lygizos lived in San Jose and worked as a driver for a bread company. Antonopoulos had just been promoted at the Jewel T Company and was to be transferred to Bakersfield, California, which was in the middle of the Mojave Desert. Antonopoulos's new job was as a manager, and the money was good. The only drawback was that they were going to Bakersfield, which was extremely hot, and air conditioning was a luxury at best. If Antonopoulos was to join with Lygizos in this business venture, they could live in a far better town with a more comfortable climate. The drawback was that neither Lygizos nor Antonopoulos knew how to cook! Just because they did not know how to cook did not mean that they could not learn how to cook. Athan Eliopoulos, Patricia's father, had been a chef in many restaurants, as well as having had his own, and he told the two young men that he would assist and teach them the fundamentals of the restaurant business, including cooking.

The next hurdle the two men faced was finding the money to purchase the restaurant. Lygizos had no money. Antonopoulos had some money from his service in the American army, but it was not enough to make the down payment. Patricia, Antonopoulos's wife, came to the rescue. During the war years and up to her marriage,

she had worked in a civil service job at Fort Ord, California, and had saved the money she had earned, so she gave the money to her husband for the down payment on the restaurant. Antonopoulos felt uncomfortable about taking money from his wife, and promised her that he would repay her. With the money Antonopoulos had from the service and the money he had borrowed from his wife, Lygizos and Antonopoulos purchased their first restaurant in 1952. It was renamed the Old Colony Steak House, and it was located on the corner of First and San Antonio Streets in San Jose, California. With the help of Patricia's father, the two young businessmen began their restaurant careers. A year or two later, another restaurant was up for sale on First Street, and the two partners bought the Alpine Restaurant. Now, they owned two businesses in downtown San Jose. By 1959, the two partners owned four restaurants in San Jose: The Old Colony Steak House and the Alpine Restaurant, both located on First Street, Angelo's Steak House, at 72 East Santa Clara Street, and the Steer House, which was located on the corner of Race and the Alameda. These restaurants became very popular during the 1950s and 1960s because of their good food, friendly service, and fair prices. People of all walks of life became customers of these restaurants.

The 1952 Hamburger Poll

1952 not only saw the opening of the Old Colony Steak House, but it would also become the inaugural year of the hamburger poll. The 1952 presidential Election Day was nearing. Adlai Stevenson, a Democrat, was running against Dwight D. Eisenhower, a Republican, for the presidency of the United States. Many politicians, attorneys, and

judges ate at the Old Colony for breakfast and lunch, and it became a hub for political discussions in downtown San Jose. Common wisdom had that Adlai Stevenson would win the election. Antonopoulos loved to discuss politics with his patrons, and he questioned their predictions regarding the outcome of the election. Although Antonopoulos was a Democrat, he believed that Eisenhower would win because he had been the commander of the European theater during World War II, and he would get the veterans' votes. Antonopoulos's better-educated patrons tried to convince him that he was incorrect and that Adlai Stevenson would win. Antonopoulos felt there was no point in debating them as this was of no use, and therefore set out to prove his point. He told his patrons that The Old Colony was the kind of restaurant that people of diverse classes ate at, and it would be a perfect place to set up an informal presidential poll. A week or so before Election Day, Antonopoulos told all the familiar faces who came into the restaurant that there would be a poll to see who the general public would pick to be the next president of the United States. As patrons came in and ordered their food, they were given a ballot to vote for president. The balloting took place on several days at the breakfast, lunch, and dinner rush hours. In order that the polling was fair, Antonopoulos told his patrons that they were on the honor system, and if they had voted, they were not to vote again. As far as anyone knows, the patrons followed the rules. When the polling was over, the votes were counted, and Eisenhower had won. At the time the San Jose Mercury News was located downtown, and reporters heard of the informal poll, and reported it in the newspaper. It became known as the Hamburger Poll. On Election Day, when the real votes were counted, Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected president of the United States. The Hamburger Poll had thus been correct. Every four years thereafter,

Antonopoulos would put out the Hamburger Poll. Each and every Hamburger Poll from Eisenhower against Stevenson, up until the final poll (Dukakis versus Bush) accurately predicted the outcome of the presidential election. In fact, the final Hamburger Poll in 1988 was a media event. It not only was covered by the San Jose Mercury News, but also was on television stations throughout the Bay Area.(2) The Hamburger Polls were 10-0 in their predictions.

Roger's of Santa Clara

In the early 1960s, Antonopoulos and Lygizos viewed their restaurant businesses from different perspectives. Lygizos wanted them to open a fancy, elite dinner house, while Antonopoulos considered that the people of San Jose still preferred to go to San Francisco restaurants for nights on the town. The two partners agreed that it was time to end their partnership and sold the Alpine and The Old Colony restaurants. Lygizos kept the Steer House and renamed it Angelo's. Antonopoulos retained Angelo's on Santa Clara Street until the end of the 1960s when downtown San Jose entered a deep decline. Antonopoulos saw that the future for him as a restaurateur was to leave San Jose after seventeen years as a fixture in the downtown district.

In the meantime, a developer from southern California had heard of Antonopoulos and asked him to open a new restaurant on De La Cruz Boulevard in Santa Clara near the San Jose Municipal Airport. This was risky because the only companies in that area were FMC Corporation and some small machine shops. Little did anyone know that these empty fields would eventually become the center of Silicon Valley. The developer knew

that he needed a good restaurant in this area in order to entice other companies to relocate to De La Cruz Boulevard, and after hearing from others about Antonopoulos's restaurant ability, offered this opportunity to him. Antonopoulos stated that he would accept the risk of building a restaurant out in the middle of nowhere if he could be given complete design control and cooperation by the development team in the building of the restaurant. The developer agreed, and the design of Roger's of Santa Clara began. Roger's, as it became known, was designed with the latest restaurant equipment and detail of the day. When it opened, it was greeted with great fanfare from the City of Santa Clara. Roger's continued the policy of being a good place to meet, good food, fair prices, and the now famous Hamburger Poll. From 1970 until Antonopoulos retired in 1989, Roger's of Santa Clara was the meeting place of entrepreneurs in the burgeoning industries in and around the City of Santa Clara.

Restaurant and Labor Relations

During all the years Antonopoulos owned his various restaurants, he was a member of the Santa Clara County Restaurant Association. In the 1970s, the Association voted Antonopoulos as their president. It was during this period that the Association was having difficulty with the restaurant labor union. The local union had been taken over by a national labor union, and its direction was now being controlled out of Chicago, Illinois. As unusual as it might seem, the union rank and file members were going to the Restaurant Association, who were the business owners, for help. The local union members thought that the national union was mishandling their membership fees.

Antonopoulos, as president of the Restaurant Association, listened to labors' concerns, but said that the Association really could not do anything as this was a union problem. However, these concerns would soon become a turning point for restaurants and union members in Santa Clara County and later to the State of California as a whole.

One day, the widow of a local union leader came to Roger's and spoke with Antonopoulos. She was sure that membership funds were being mishandled, and the union members needed to fight to save their money. It was her opinion that the only solution was for one restaurant to withdraw as a union house, and she pleaded to Antonopoulos for him to withdraw his restaurant. She knew Antonopoulos for many years, and although he and her late husband were on opposite sides during labor negotiations, she thought he could help the rank and file members of labor. Since he was the president of the Restaurant Association, she thought Antonopoulos's withdrawal of his restaurant, as a union house, would send a message to the national union. This was a very difficult decision for Antonopoulos because up until this time a restaurant was doomed to failure if it was not a union house, as people would never consider crossing the "line".⁽³⁾ Furthermore, Antonopoulos's restaurants had been union houses since he purchased the first one in 1952, and now after twenty-five plus years in the industry, he was being asked to withdraw to make a statement. At approximately the same time and unknown to Antonopoulos, the federal government was concerned that the local restaurant union had been taken over by criminal elements, and was starting its own investigation. Rank and file members continued complaining to Antonopoulos about the problems that they were seeing in the union and pleaded with him to make a needed statement. In approximately late 1979--early 1980, Roger's of Santa Clara was the first

restaurant to withdraw as a union house in the Santa Clara County Restaurant Association.(4) The Union put up pickets against the restaurant, but surprisingly only a few union members refused to cross the line, and the picket line had little if any effect on the restaurant. Soon thereafter, other restaurants began to withdraw, and although there were threats by the Union of putting up picket lines against restaurants that withdrew as union houses, additional restaurants kept withdrawing. The union not only lost member restaurants but rank and file members as well. The restaurant union in Santa Clara County weakened considerably, and from that time on, restaurants have no longer been affiliated as union houses in this county and later in the State of California as a whole. As for the investigation by the federal government, the government took the national union to court for mishandling of union funds, and although the Union was never found guilty, everyone, including the government, believed something was very wrong with the restaurant unions.(5)

Community Service

When Antonopoulos owned Angelo's on Santa Clara Street in downtown San Jose, many San Jose State College professors, coaches, and students would come in for a meal. One of his customers from San Jose State was Lloyd C. (Bud) Winter, the head coach of the then famous San Jose State track team. He and Winter were friends, and Antonopoulos volunteered that he would feed dinner to San Jose State's most needy student athlete on the track team for as long as he attended the school. From that point

forward, Angelo's on Santa Clara Street fed many San Jose State athletes during the years the restaurant remained opened.

This tradition of feeding athletes started up again when Antonopoulos retired. When Antonopoulos's grandsons played with the Willow Glen High School football team, he told Bob Parker, the team's head coach, that he would prepare a steak dinner for the varsity team, instead of the traditional hotdogs and hamburgers they normally got, if they won league and went on to play in a Central Coast Section (CCS) game. The players themselves did not believe they were going to get steaks, even if they did win league. The varsity football team won league and did go on to play in CCS games, and Antonopoulos did indeed prepare a steak dinner with all the trimmings for the student athletes. All over the locker rooms there were posters during football season saying, "Go for the Steaks!" Each year, when the football team won league, they always got their steak dinner, and Antonopoulos said this would continue even if his grandsons no longer attended Willow Glen.

Not only did Antonopoulos feed the local athletes, he also fed the poor. While he owned his restaurant on Santa Clara Street, especially during the 1960s when downtown San Jose was deteriorating, Antonopoulos saw more and more poor people asking him for a handout. When a person would come in asking for money, he told them he would give them some food to eat instead. If they refused and continued to ask for money, he knew that they would go spend it on liquor or other things, and would not help them. If they accepted the food, he told them if they ever needed something to eat the next time, to return to the restaurant but this time cleaned up. These were Antonopoulos's rules. He knew that money or the lack thereof was something that could happen to anyone, but

there was no excuse to not be clean. That was just self-respect, and he would not accept the excuse of lack of money for being unwashed. When his restaurant business moved to Roger's of Santa Clara, he continued feeding the poor through Thanksgiving dinners either at his restaurant or borrowed facilities in the Santa Clara area.

Church Involvement

Antonopoulos was a founding member of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, the largest Orthodox Christian church in the South Bay, and his name is among the handful of people that wrote the bylaws of the small church community. Over the years, he saw this small parish grow to a church of over 750 families. During its early years, he was a member of the parish council and served on two different occasions as the president of the church community. In the mid-1990s, his church community honored Antonopoulos by making him father of the year for his many years of service to the parish. His greatest dream for his church was to build a gymnasium for the youth of the church, and in the last two years, that dream is slowly coming true.

Santa Clara County Court System

One of the most important things in Antonopoulos's life was that of being an active citizen in his community. He had a deep love for the country he fought for, and felt that it was every citizen's responsibility to be involved. He had been honored with the presidency of the Santa Clara County Restaurant Association, but he was especially

proud of the fact that his name was submitted to become a member of the Santa Clara County Grand Jury. During his many years as a restaurateur, many of his patrons were judges and attorneys of the area, and it was one of these judges that submitted his name. In the early 1970s, Antonopoulos was appointed as a member of the Grand Jury and served a one-year term.

His involvement with the court system did not begin and end with the Grand Jury. One day during his early years in the San Jose downtown area, one of his customers worked as a manager for the local court system and asked Antonopoulos if he would consider becoming a court interpreter for Greek if there ever was a need. He agreed, but thought that the likelihood of his being needed was slight because San Jose did not have an overwhelming Greek population. Initially, he was rarely called to interpret, but as the Greek-speaking population grew in the County, his services were needed more often. He remained the only Greek interpreter for the Santa Clara County Court system until the day he died. In the year 2000, at the age of seventy-nine, he was appointed by the Santa Clara County Courts as a wedding commissioner duly authorized to marry people with little money. He was given an office in the Santa Clara County Superior Court Building and his robe as a marriage commissioner, but before he was able to perform his first marriage, he had one more battle that he needed to win.

Final Years

In 1999 Antonopoulos became seriously ill for the first time in his life. Several illnesses and surgeries took a real toll on his strength, and he told his grandchildren that

“growing old was not for sissies.” However, he maintained a good outlook about his illness and anticipated getting well in order to keep up with his active lifestyle. He promised his wife that when he started feeling like his old self again, they would go to Australia because though they had traveled to many countries during their long life together, they had never visited “down under,” but sadly Antonopoulos could not keep this promise. On October 26, 2001, he died suddenly from a heart attack in his home in Willow Glen, which he had purchased when the family first moved to San Jose.

On October 30, 2001, eighty-year-old Antonopoulos’s body was interred in the Mission City Memorial Park Cemetery, in Santa Clara, California. About 300 people were there to see their husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, uncle, godfather, and friend be put to rest. On the day of Antonopoulos’s funeral, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors adjourned their meeting in memoriam for his contributions to this County. A few days after the funeral, The California State Legislature prepared a resolution honoring him for his many contributions as a citizen of the State of California and presented it to Antonopoulos’s wife and family. Finally, after fifty-five years from the date of Antonopoulos’s discharge from the United States Army, his family will receive his awards and medals posthumously. As a member of the O.S.S, these soldiers could not receive them earlier because their missions were kept secret by the American government until very recently. Ultimately, however, he will truly be remembered best not as a freedom fighter, not as a restaurateur, but as a family man.

Notes

1. "In Memoriam," The O.S.S. Society, Inc. (Virginia: The O.S.S. Society Inc., (2002). p. 7
2. Patricia Antonopoulos.
3. Stacy Panayotopoulos.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid

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