



Obituary

Born: Sunday, December 27, 1931

Died: Sunday, March 7, 2021

ONASIS, THEODORE

On March 7, 2021, Theodoros (Theodore) Christos Serdenes Onasis, age 89, beloved husband of Toulitsa Georgas, successful businessman and prominent member of the Greek community, died peacefully at his home in the Greektown neighborhood of Highlandtown in Baltimore, MD, from a heart ailment. He was born June 12, 1931, in Paliámbeia, Vónitsa, Greece, the son of the late Christos Theodoros Serdenes and the late Maria Tsavalas. Theodore lost his father when he was 3 years old, and, like many families in the Western mountains of Greece, he struggled to survive. As a little barefoot boy, he led a donkey loaded with bags of wheat on its back on a 15-mile roundtrip over the mountains to the mill in a neighboring village where the wheat was ground into flour to help feed his family. During World War 2, Theodore was 11 when the Germans invaded and occupied Greece. At 16, he left his mother, two brothers, and sister and took a job on a fishing trawler that took him away to the coast of West Africa. When he was 17 years old, he worked as an able-bodied seaman and carpenter onboard a cargo ship that would take him to the western United States seaboard, transiting the Panama Canal twice, The Philippines, Brazil, and Japan, where he witnessed the aftermath of the wartime horrors inflicted on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Theodore's life at sea ended at Pier 6 in Baltimore Harbor on November 12, 1955, where he arrived with \$500 in his pocket and dreams of a better life. The best chapter in his life began when he saw the love of his life Toulitsa, a young widow with two small boys in church. Shortly thereafter, they met at a dance at the Steelworkers Hall on Dundalk Avenue and approximately 1 and ½ months later they married at Saint Nicholas church. The young couple settled in Greektown where they have lived together for 65 years. Theodore and Toula proudly gained U.S. citizenship, and soon thereafter, their sons Christos and Antonios were born. To support his growing family, Theodore saved enough money to buy a bar and restaurant on Pulaski Highway and invited his late brother-in-law Sam Georgas as a partner. This was the first of 17 successful businesses that Theodore would operate, including bars, restaurants, carry-outs, movie theaters, pool halls, coffee houses, construction companies, and industrial painting companies. He also became involved in – and extremely successful at – renting commercial buildings in Baltimore City.

Theodore shared his good fortune with his relatives in Greece, helping them start new lives in America. He sponsored 42 individuals and families gain United States citizenship and personally financed their transition from

Service Summary

Visitation

3:00 PM to 5:00 PM, Thu Mar 11, 2021

7:00 PM to 9:00 PM, Thu Mar 11, 2021

Bradley-Ashton-Kehl Funeral Home

2134 Willow Spring Road
Dundalk, MD 21222

Funeral Service

11:00 AM Fri Mar 12, 2021

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church

520 S. Ponca Street
Baltimore, MD 21224

Greece to America. Through his generosity, these hard-working families became productive members of the Greek-American community, as did their children, who became successful doctors, lawyers, and businessmen and women. The validation of Theodore's compassion was demonstrated by the accomplishments of these individuals. Theodore had a strong interest in Baltimore City politics, which led to interactions with mayors, U.S. Senators, Presidential candidates, and Presidents of the United States of America, the land that he so loved. When asked if he would ever return to Greece to live, Theodore responded that he could never consider leaving the greatest country in the world. Theodore never forgot where he came from. In memory of his parents and siblings, Theodore constructed five marble fountains in his village, which allowed access to fresh, clean drinking water. He also financially supported schools and churches in Greece, donating school supplies and raising funds for building construction to help the next generation.

Theodore's road in life was not easy. From a very young age, his life was filled with many struggles and hurdles he had to overcome. He had a "never give up" attitude and a tireless work ethic that drove him forward. Looking back, everything that he did was for the benefit of his family. Theodore was a devoted and beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother-in-law, uncle, and friend. He is survived by his beloved wife of 65 years, Toulitsa, his loving sons John (Charlotte) Konstantinou of Belcamp, George Konstantinou and Christos Serdenes of Baltimore City; and Tony (Kelly) Serdenes, of Bel Air; loving grandson Dr. Ryan Serdenes of Philadelphia; loving sister-in-law Maria Kalambihis of Baltimore City; loving brother-in-law Andoni Georgas of Malona, Rhodes, Greece; many nieces and nephews in the U.S. and in Greece; and a host of dear business associates and friends. In addition to his parents, Theodore was predeceased by his brothers Theofanis Serdenes and Athanase Serdenes, and his sister Konstantoula Bakoulas, as well as his brother-in-law Sam Georgas and sister-in-law Sevasti Diros.

The family will receive friends on Thursday, March 11, 2021 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Bradley-Ashton Funeral Home, 2134 Willow Spring Road, Dundalk, MD 21222, where a Trisagion Service will be held at 7 p.m. Funeral Services will be celebrated on Friday, March 12, 2021 at 11 a.m. at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, 520 S. Ponca Street, Baltimore, MD 21224. Interment in Oak Lawn Cemetery. COVID-19 pandemic guidance regarding social distancing is requested.