

## Golf in The Kingdom: A Walk Not Spoiled

Executive Producer G. Stephanopoulos & More than a Game

By Constantine S. Sirigos  
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – What does it mean when a movie begins with the declaration: We must make golf a matter of life and death? The ambitious independent film *Golf in the Kingdom* is not a sports movie. Its Executive Producer is George Stephanopoulos – the entertainment lawyer, not the host of *Good Morning America* who is his cousin. Producer Stephanopoulos is the son and grandson of Greek Orthodox priest and the magnificent scenes framed by cinematographer Arturo Smith and the sublime music by Evelyn Glennie are the first hints this picture is not about sports, but life. Based on the 1971 book of the same title by writer Michael Murphy, it is the fictional story of an earnest but impatient young American seeking enlightenment. Played by Mason Gamble, he is on his way to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in India and being a golf enthusiast he decided to play at the famous Burning-bush course during a layover. “Any chance I can get a golf lesson” he asked the quirky pro Shivas Irons, played by David O’Hara. “It’s a serious matter,” you just can’t be sure,” he told the perplexed American in a “You can’t get there from here” tone. Over a 24-hour period, however, Shiva teaches Michael about golf, and more.

The slightly arrogant and stuck up Murphy doesn’t take Shivas too seriously. He borders on condescension when he expresses surprise that Sivas knew of Aurobindo. That’s just as well

Continued on page 4

## George Zouroudis’ Many Lives

By Steve Frangos

All across the United States Greek Americans are making every effort to preserve the histories of their immigrant ancestors. Through stories they share among themselves, old photographs they pass around over coffee and conversation, to short accounts they compose expressly for their families and close friends more of Greek American history is being recorded in this manner than by any other means or agency. What follows is an ac-

Continued on page 5

For subscription:  
718.784.5255

subscriptions@thenationalherald.com



## Papandreou Tells EU to Send the Check, Some Germans Balk



AP/THANASSIS STAVRAKIS

### Her Ship Isn’t Coming In

An elderly woman holds an umbrella at the southern Athens seaside suburb of Paleo Faliro to protect herself from a heatwave and – just as Greece is sweating out the dog days of August – wondering what September will bring for the economically-battered country.

### Big September Looms for Greece as the Pressure Builds to Push Reforms Faster

ATHENS – After the unprecedented downgrading of the American economy and reeling markets in Europe, Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou has reached out to European Union leaders, asking them to accelerate the timetable for sending life-saving loans to Greece, scheduled for next month and beyond that. Papandreou, who had a telephone conversation with European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, also spoke to European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and Luxembourg’s Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, who heads the 17-nation Eurozone of countries using the euro as a currency which has been under siege because of Greece’s fiscal morass. The Athens newspaper *Kathimerini*, citing unnamed sources, said the discussions focused on three key areas: the reforms being carried out by the government, further measures that the Eurozone can take to bolster the single currency, and the current market volatility threatening the euro, which prompted the European Central Bank to declare it would buy Italian bonds.

Papandreou reportedly proposed that the Eurozone adopt more convincing measures to

calm markets. He suggested that the region should move more quickly to issue Eurobonds, to impose a financial transaction tax and to strengthen the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) fund to prop up weak economies in Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Italy. Papandreou also urged the European leaders to ensure that there would be no complications in Greece receiving its next loan installment, which will amount to \$11.3 billion due in September, and without which Greece cannot pay its bills. It is likely that Athens will not receive this loan with the improved terms agreed in Brussels on July 21, which provided lower interest rates and a longer repayment period, up to 15 years. Papandreou’s plea was backed by his Finance Minister Evangelos Venizelos who said the Eurozone must swiftly implement a July deal to boost its rescue fund in order to show it will do all it can to support the euro and stem a growing global crisis. Eurozone leaders agreed in July to give the EFSF rescue fund power to buy sovereign bonds on the secondary market and to extend to Greece a new multi-billion euro

Continued on page 7

## Peter Vallone’s Astoria: No Changes Here Please

By Constantine S. Sirigos  
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – New York City Councilman Peter F. Vallone, Jr. was casually dressed as he invited *The National Herald* into his offices in the heart of Astoria on the first day of August. Though his attire was dictated by the sweltering heat outside, it also reflected the comfort felt by the Third Generation public servant and his constituents alike when they meet. Vallone’s father, Peter Sr. served on the City Council for 27 years – in-

cluding a run as its Speaker, and his grandfather Charles was a judge. His urge to serve his community is strong and has deep roots, but evidence abounds of other commitments. First, the family. Press interviews are important to politicians, but he made it clear that the time was limited by his need to be on time for lunch with his parents and dinner later in the day with youngest daughter. There are more photos of children, nieces and nephews parents, grand and great grandparents than of celebrities or politicians in his

office.

Second, heritage. The Vallones revere their roots and are proud of the achievements and contributions of Italian Americans. Among the photos in the office are two from a recent trip to Sicily. He and his cousin Anthony visited Palermo with a law enforcement delegation that met with Sicilian organized crime prosecutors. He slipped away to visit nearby Agrigento, the land of three of his grandparents.

Third, but certainly not least, Astoria, where Vallone has spent

virtually every day of his life. He calls it the greatest neighborhood in the world. Even when he was working in the Manhattan District Attorney’s office he lived there and when he lived in other parts of Queens he worked there. “It’s a model for the entire world. The Irish, Italians and then the Greeks came in, who now make up about half the population ... the other half come from the entire world and it’s a great melting pot – everybody gets along

Continued on page 4

## Australian Girl in Tragic N.Y. Death

By Demetrios Tsakas  
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – A wave of grief passed through the Greek American community of New York and New Jersey in the wake of the passing of 10-year-old Sabrina Mangos, an Australian of Greek descent, who was killed Aug. 7 in a tragic car crash in Astoria at the intersection of 34th Avenue and 31st Street at 6:35 p.m. Authorities said a 2001 Nissan Sentra that Richard Portnoy was driving collided with a GMC minivan that was being driven by Mangos family friend Demetrius Moutafis. His wife Stavroula was in the van along with her first cousin Valerie (Stavroula) Mangos and her husband Michael and their three children, Sam, 13, Nicholas, 11, and Sabrina. The Mangos family was visiting from Australia and live in Tennyson, a suburb of Adelaide.

The minivan flipped over in the violent crash and *The Wall Street Journal* reported that young Sabrina, who was “on her way to an Astoria, Queens, pastry shop after attending a Broadway show with her parents, brothers and cousins - was ejected from the minivan in the Sunday crash ... She was pronounced dead at Mount Sinai Hospital of Queens,” despite reports ambulances arrived on the scene very quickly. The *Journal* noted that the car was being “driven by an on-duty New York City public-housing supervisor broadsided the minivan,” and added that the 55 year-old “Mr. Portnoy was driving his personal car.” According to officials,

Continued on page 3



TNH/COSTAS BEJ

Titan Foods is well known in Astoria and owner Kostas Mastoras (L) here with Katerina Sachinidou (C) and Angela Theodoratos at his store is an example of how Greek Americans have thrived, and he had some words of advice on how Greece can get out of its economic dilemma as well.

## Lessons for Greece from Astoria’s Own

By Vangelis Katsikiotis  
Special to The National Herald

ASTORIA, N.Y. - When the people of Greece try to grasp the problems their country faces, it’s easy for them to get lost in the daunting challenges: an unemployment rate of 16.1%, a national debt approaching \$500 billion, a political system unable to cope with the crisis, a state bloated by bureaucracy and corruption, and a shocking disrespect for the rule of law among their fellow citizens. If they were to turn their glance across the sea they might find a basis for optimism. It seems that relatively few Greeks realize that the members of the Diaspora living all over the world are among the most successful and prominent members of their communities. They run successful busi-

Continued on page 3

Equal Opportunity Lender

## Strength, Stability & Service.

# ATLANTIC BANK

A Division of New York Commercial Bank • Member FDIC  
**Your partner for success**

For additional information contact: 1.800.535.2269 • [www.abny.com](http://www.abny.com)

Bank is not responsible for typographical errors. Pictured: Joseph R. Ficalora (right) President & CEO of New York Community Bancorp, Inc. (Parent of New York Community Bank and New York Commercial Bank) and Spiros J. Voutsinas (left) President & CEO, Atlantic Bank, division of New York Commercial Bank, New York Community Bank – Member FDIC.

# Stephanopoulos' Zen Golf Film is a Walk Not Spoiled, and Life Revealed

Continued from page 1

because Shivas does not purport to be the source of the wisdom he is conveying. He is only sharing the ideas of the great and semi-mythical figure Shamus McDuff, who Michael wants to meet, but he only encounters his mystical presence caves, ravines and wave-drench rocky seashores during a moonlit night and a magnificent rosy-fingered dawn. Murphy was nearly driven to distraction by the emphasis on the rules, a reflection of the impatience of youth in general, and the modern mind's refusal to examine the deeper dimensions of ritual, but Shivas is just the guide. Shamus is the sage, the one made the life and death statement - the thought coming to him after learning of the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima and triggering fears of the impending extinction of mankind. The production team made the felicitous decision to portray events not chronologically, as the book does, but through flashbacks, reinforcing the ideas presented and the emotional messages. As director Susan Streitfeld said after the opening night screening at New York's Times Square on July 29: "We don't experience life linearly. It may be Tuesday but we are still thinking about Monday."

**MORE THAN FORE!**  
The technique made for entertaining moments as some of the scenes were from a dinner party-symposium to which Shivas invites Michael the night of his arrival. A number of characters and couples with varying kinds of attachment to golf share their love and frustration with the sport, and its meaning. Philosophy and marriage are among the topics in the discussions, along with science and eroticism. The audience is pleased to discover that the golf frustrations of Peter McNaughton were more than offset by the sensuality of his marriage with Agatha, who shared numerous insights about golf and life. Among the themes of Murphy's mystic education is the need for harmony, especially of the exterior with the interior aspects of life, expressed as a critique of modern. Shamus, who



Michael Murphy (Mason Gamble-R) learns from Shivas Irons (David O'Hara-L) one doesn't have to go to the other side of the world to find treasure or wisdom. Below: A mystic threesome.

Shivas said seeks "a better fix on this world of ours," has developed a theory called "true gravity" which presumably illuminates spiritual transcendence and the flight of golf balls. In a beautiful night scene, Murphy is practicing his swing with as Shivas tells him to "feel your inner body." The novice doesn't get it yet. "Is all this talk of inner bodies and subtle energies a device for increasing concentration?" Shivas kept his cool. One can almost hear Obiwan saying, "You must feel the force around you Luke," from Star Wars, suggesting another harmony. The thinly-veiled asceticism brings to mind the historic tension between the active life and the contemplative. Perhaps, when they are not in harmony, the one is dangerously exaggerated, as with our current technological hyperactivity, and the other creates a certain passiveness in the face of oncoming trouble found in certain Orthodox countries. The Vita contemplativa as developed in the Orthodox East is a spiritual treasure that was transferred to western Christianity, but further East, there seems to be a greater place for the body,



beyond the breathing techniques of monks, in mystical practice. Although Orthodoxy teaches a beautiful unity of body and soul, it also tends to denigrate the former. The movie suggests activities like golf or motorcycle maintenance are also necessary.

Americans who might be put off by golf's slow pace and the time gap between the "action" - the shots are informed by Shivas that "it's enough to walk and enjoy the rest of the time, when you are in between, which is most on the time in life." During the dinner, Joanne Whalley as the brainy and erotic Agatha

McNaughton says she likes golf for the chance to take in "the mystic splendor of the world in every step you take." Such words of wisdom are heard as we watch Murphy, who fancies himself quite the golfer, stumble in his play and sees his score skyrocket after he boasts: "Match me up with the best of them." It's maddening to hear Shivas say it's not the shot or the score that matters, adding, "I learned to walk from a Yogi from India." He asks Murphy if he was paying attention to the walk. Murphy replies, "I'm paying attention to my next shot."

"Too bad," Shivas says. He alternates mundane advice such as, "You think too much; you try too hard," with "let the nothingness into your shot" as they play among sand dunes in the midst of trees reaching up into the infinite sky.

After failing to find Shamus, Shivas suggests a round of night golf. The themes of fear and anxiety are examined through their concern that they lost the magic ball Shamus entrusted to Shivas after he struck it into the darkness with the sage's magic club. The movie, which hints at magical realism but always just pulls back, then produces its first miracle: The lost ball was not lost, it was nestled in the magic hole, a mystical hole in one that teacher/student revel in. Club, ball, hole are symbols of another harmony the world requires or longs for, the masculine and feminine, with perhaps nature standing for the unseen mother and the sought for beloved. Imagination, or great cinematography, paints in what need not be spoken, the movie striking a delightful balance between words and images.

## IT'S NOT MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE

When they return to Shivas' home, he plops down in his overstuffed "meditation chair." Here the movie both raises the stakes and fudges the conditions (SPOILER ALERT!) Is Shivas traversing the astral plane, or is this the mundane sleep of all the other residents of this humble place? Time goes by, and Murphy becomes concerned. He checks and finds no pulse, not at Shivas' wrist or his neck. The storm and stress of the day take its toll as he runs screaming across the meadow, unable to find help. They had established a deep friendship in one day and golf had become a matter of life and death. In the next to last scene, the text is flashed: "The game was invented a billion years ago. Don't your remember?" The final scene follows immediately: Someone, it is not clear who, walks across the beach during, a golden, fiery sunset - maybe sunrise - identical to an infinity of scenes over billions of years, and yet different.

The film was shot on location

at Bandon Dunes Golf Resort in Oregon. Streitfeld said filming there instead of Scotland "forces you to be creative." She said it was ancient Indian land, where three tribes came together for festivals, so it turned out to be more powerful spiritually and visually than Burningbush - a mythical place anyway - or any part of Scotland. Golf in the Kingdom is a beautiful example of how great writers and filmmakers can take any part of life and turn it into a metaphor for life as a whole, with universal messages. At the screening, Murphy praised Streitfeld, who also wrote the screenplay. Clint Eastwood took numerous cracks at a script but gave up. Not being a golfer, Streitfeld said the movie for her was about trees and nature. Murphy, a great admirer of Hellenism - Pythagoras comes up and the Shivas character has some Socratic elements - told The National Herald he had never visited Greece, "But I have been there a million times in my heart and mind." Stephanopoulos said he has loved golf since his father, the beloved Father Elias, taught him the game when he was nine. He said he has discovered in himself a knack and passion for making movies. He continues to work on the project closest to his heart, a film to be made in Greece called Swing Away about a woman golfer near the end of her career and a golf child prodigy. Although his film projects, including Golf in the Kingdom, were for him preparations for Swing Away he told TNH that "If I never make another movie," he would treasure the experience of bringing Murphy's book to life, which he said changed his life when he read it, and set him on the path to moviemaking. In these tumultuous times, the film seems to send the urgent message to be mindful of the great harmonies of life, to foster unity rather than the exacerbation of the opposites that are inherent in them, and to feed the inner life - or we are doomed. Asked whom he would urge to see the film, Murphy declared: "Congress."

sirigos@thenationalherald.com

# Peter Vallone's Astoria: No Changes Here Please, But NY Reform is Welcome

Continued from page 1

here." He delights in all the different nations and cultures which put down new roots in his neighborhood, but he and his family have strong bonds with the Greek community. His mother Catena, who just celebrated her 75th birthday, grew up with neighbors none other than the family of Allen Poulos, now known to all as Bishop Anthony of Phasiane. She learned a lot of Greek cooking from her friends. But Vallone knows the ties go deeper than the food that shared dinner table space with the pasta. He knows all about the history of Agrigento, which was founded in 6th Century BC as Acragas, and is famous for its Valley of the Temples filled with ancient Greek architecture. He told TNH it was one of the major cities of Magna Graecia and lasted as a Greek speaking region centuries after being taken over by Rome. "I legitimately have Greek blood," he said.

Make no mistake about it, however, this is a proud Italian family. His mother still makes the big Sunday meal He has two younger brothers and they all get together every weekend - it used to be every Sunday - and play volleyball at the beach - they were all lifeguards.

Next to the Grecian urns and photos of the Greek temples near Agrigento there is also a model of a motorcycle, a gift from a constituent who knows of his passion for bikes. He rides a Harley, but not just for pleasure. Vallone says his helmet

disguises him enough that he can get a real sense of what's going on in the neighborhood. "It's a great way to stay in touch with the neighborhood ... no one in the world has been up and down Ditmars Boulevard," one of Astoria's main drags, as much as he has, he said, on foot and bicycles as a child and in his hot rod car when he was in High school.

## CH-CH-CHANGES

His fear for Astoria is change, and he is a champion of protecting its character. He told TNH that Astoria's only problem is people wanting to move in who can't find a place. About six years ago he began to work on a rezoning of Astoria. He didn't have much help because many of the Irish, Italians and the Greeks thought it was time to cash in and move out, but he said he believes the reason so many people want to move there is its character, which suffered when 10-story buildings started popping up in the middle of bucolic little streets. The zoning he put in would allow for development on the commercial streets but leave the side streets alone, founded on the principle that any new buildings should respect the context of the community. His practical and aesthetics side are reflected in his successful campaign to fight the blight of graffiti by passing legislation to require business owners to have see-through, not solid metal gates on their stores.

In one of the photos Vallone is a rocker sporting a bandana as he performs his music. That is an indication of one his wide

ranging talents, and his knack for packing a lot of life into a tight public servant's schedule. He is an accomplished musician and athlete. Vallone was invited to play against the Chinese National Ping-Pong team on ABC's Wide World of Sports, plays as much volleyball as he can and performs professionally on four musical instruments. All those are accurate predictors of the achievements of his daughters. The eldest daughter Casey, short for Catherine, is preparing for college and scored perfect 800's on two of the three parts of the SATs, and may want to be a pediatrician. His youngest, Carolyn, is co-captain of the St. Francis Prep's "undefeated Volleyball team ... I could not be prouder of those two girls," he told TNH.

## POLITICAL ROOTS

The interview took place in the building that has housed the family law firm since 1932. It was established by his grandfather, Judge Charles Vallone, who came from Sicily when he was two years old for whom the elementary school down the street was named and who founded the Boys and Girls Club, another area mainstay. Peter's academic career began nearby at PS 122 and culminated in Fordham where he earned his law degree after graduating magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Fordham College. One of his grandparents was a barber, the other a pianist. One went to law school, one to medical school - the first in their families to do so. Peter's cousins in Italy are



The Greek flag in the background at a community event is a familiar sight to Peter Vallone Jr. and his father, Peter Sr.

mayors and council members. But it takes more than genes. "I learned public service at the foot of the master. My father served 27 years and is one of the few guys I know that nobody has anything bad to say about. He taught me that one man can make a difference and to give back to the community." Peter Jr. he didn't get into public service until he was about 35 years old, however. He was not pressured by his father and told TNH that today he goes to schools and people shout his name but when he was a student he didn't even know what kind of work his father did. His mother was a teacher at the school of the Immaculate Conception for 25 years - he believes more people have voted for him because of his mother than his dad.

He said he doesn't want to leave Astoria, but is beginning to explore his political options since terms limits will bring his City Council tenure to an end in two years. He is looking at offices that will allow him to serve greater Queens. District Attorney is an option: as a pros-

ecutor his record was 40 top-count convictions and one acquittal. Before he became an elected official he said he understood why so many people wanted term limits, how people felt about the state of politics and the "throw the bums out" attitude, but after gaining public service experience he said he's come to appreciate the value of continuity in a legislative body. He says eight years is just too short, not just as a learning curve but for accomplishments. "It takes five or six years to get through important capital projects" like the Astoria skate park he said he's proud of as it was voted the best such park in New York.

Vallone said he now believes term limits hurt long-term continuity and planning, which also has fiscal significance. He told TNH that he is conservative in some things and progressive in others - such as the environment. "I'm a Democrat, but I believe in fiscal responsibility."

He added: "I know what it's like to run a business. As a small business owner I know what it's like when taxes or the minimum

wage are increased." He built his liberal bona fides with his strong animal rights and environmental stands and admits he's all over the lot ideologically, but he says that reflects current realities - and Astoria. It's a reason why more "old fashioned" politicians like him and his father could survive the New York Democratic party's left-skewed primary processes.

Vallone told TNH he's looking at County of Queens-wide offices. Told that some of his constituents want him to run for mayor, he remembered his father's run for that office. "He did well but not well enough," he said. In New York, the most liberal democrat usually wins the primary, but that is not always the best candidate to contest the general election, though he noted that if the current negative trends continue with crime rising and fiscal pressures mounting, Democrats might rally behind more conservative candidates. Vallone insists fiscal realities must be taken into account by traditional Democrat supporters such as public service unions. He wrote an op-ed saying public pensions need to be reconsidered." He got a lot of grief, but he says pension reform is needed, applying fairness and common sense. "If we keep hurting the private sector there won't be pensions for anyone else. He said he supports pensions "but if we continue down this path, there won't be any money for them," he said.

When he was elected, the city's pension (and Medicaid) costs were a billion dollars a year. They are now \$10 billion, consuming one-fifth of the city's budget. He said unless there is reform, "All the tax money we take in will go to pensions, forcing cuts to libraries and fire service and police." Declaring "Nobody values the police and fire departments higher than I do. As Public Safety chairman I'm their biggest supporter. I still want them to get the best pensions of anybody because they have given the most to the city, but we have to sit down and find a way to make it doable so that the pensions survive." Citizens know where Vallone comes from, and if an Astorian has any issues with his positions, they can down the car window when stopped at a red light next to his Harley and let him know. He may tell you to keep your eyes on the road, but also invite you to his office for a discussion.

sirigos@thenationalherald.com

Stay informed all year round, anytime, anywhere  
Become an online subscriber of The National Herald and get...

ONLY\*  
**\$34.95**  
a Year!

- daily updates with news covering the community, Greece and Cyprus.
- immediate access to our previous editions.
- edification that every Greek American should have!

Visit us online at  
**www.thenationalherald.com**  
or call us: **718-784-5255 ext.108**

\*The price indicated above is for current subscribers. Regular price is \$45.95/year.  
Alternative for current subscribers is per 3 months \$14.95, per 6 months \$23.95

**ΕΘΝΙΚΟΣ ΚΗΡΥΞ**  
Από το 1915 για τον Έλληνα

**The National Herald**  
Bringing the news to generations of Greek Americans