

## **CUZ, COUSIN, COUSINS**

**(Central High School was the common denominator)**  
by Gus Dick Andros '44

I was the first Andros to return to the village where my father, Constantine (Gus), was born. Waiting at Passport Control after my arrival at the Athen's Airport, I noticed a group of ten men on the other side of the partition. A stocky white-haired gentleman with a white bushy moustache was obviously the patriarch. His open face and understanding eyes were a carbon copy of my brother Dee. I knew at once this group was there to meet me. The affection shown to me was an experience I will never forget. I was embraced, kissed and hugged with tears flowing freely without shame. As I was growing up, I saw my father express these same emotions.

I didn't speak Greek and they didn't speak English, but by the time we reached the village Yelenactica in the hills of the Peloponese, I knew who was who and how I was related to them. We did this communication mostly with sign language and eye contact. I wasn't used to being called by my Greek name Kostas (KUH-stas), and they called "Dee" Demosthenes (De-mos-TAN-is) and Plato, my older brother, was pronounced "PLAH-to." Plato always said "With a name like Plato, you had to be tough." Dee and I didn't have that problem.

As my Greek relatives talked, it took me awhile just to understand who they were talking about. They wanted to know about George Pete and Athena my Greek cousins who lived in Haileyville, Oklahoma, -- cousins who I hadn't seen in over 30 years. My relatives in Greece found it difficult to understand that we were not as close to our families as they were to theirs. I knew that they could not imagine to enormity of the United States, and that we had become scattered after World War II.

A week with my Greek family I saw a great similarity to my mother's relatives from the hills of the Ozarks, whom I had visited many years before. I decided that "hillbillies" were the same the world over. The Ozarks side of my family didn't express feelings of love toward one another, although the love was there. The Greeks felt the need to touch, hug and kiss to let you know they loved you. Laughter was a constant in both families, as was a love for the art of story telling. Both families loved to laugh at themselves. In the early days of radio Bob Burns, the bazooka player, made jokes about his family from the Ozarks. Aunt Oma would laugh until tears were running down her cheeks saying, "He's talking about us." While I was visiting my uncles and aunts in the Ozarks they would sit around the table exchanging stories -- one trying to out do the others. Mother was telling them that the church across from the motel where we were staying, was a group of "Holy Rollers," and their praying was so loud she couldn't sleep. Uncle Joe looked over his glasses and said without a smile, "Hattie, you're talking about the church I attend." Silence filled the room and mother's face turned bright red when a burst of laughter replaced the silence.

I was immediately struck by the beauty of Greece, the sugar cube homes that from the front porch and patio you could look across the Bay of Corinth to Delphi. I was there in July and the sun shined brightly and the water was bluer than blue. Their ability to kid each other and their closeness made me wonder why my father would leave this beautiful family and country. I was told that at the time my father left Greece, never to return again, there was great poverty and not enough food to sustain the families. Many of the villagers, my father, his brothers and cousins braved the unknown to come to what my father called "the new world"; he referred to Greece as the "the old country."

After they arrived at Ellis Island, The Andros clan got jobs building the railroad across the United States. By the time they reached Oklahoma City they had saved enough money to go into business. Daddy opened a store with his brothers at Fourth and Robinson called The Post Office Candy Kitchen. Although others from the village also settled in Oklahoma City, the Andros family stayed together. Once settled, Daddy sent for his youngest brother Nick and his nephew Jimmy Antonio, known to many in Oklahoma City as "Jimmy the Greek."

As a child I always wondered why Jimmy's last name was "Antonio" and ours was "Andros." According to the story, Jimmy's father was Daddy's older brother; he married outside the village and into a family that did not have a male child to carry on their family name. So my uncle adopted his wife's family name which was "Antoniou." I think it was a tradition in Greece at the time. Many immigrants' names were Americanized when they entered America through Ellis Island. "Andreacopolus" became "Andros" and "Antoniou" became "Antonio."

When I went to my fiftieth class reunion, a group of my high school buddies told me a story about "Jimmy the Greek." It seemed that four of the boys went to his restaurant, The Lafayette Cafe, and three ordered chicken fried steak and one ordered a veal cutlet, but when they were served each plate looked alike. "Hey! Jimmy, what's the difference between chicken fried steak and veal cutlet?" they asked. Without a blink of the eye Jimmy said, "Ten cents."

Many of my friends wonder why I think of myself as Greek, when my mother wasn't. I tell them, "If your father is Greek then there is never a question that you are Greek." I am sure I speak for the offspring of my father and "Jimmy the Greek." When I lived in Israel, I learned that in the Jewish faith you are not considered Jewish unless your mother is Jewish.

In our house, Daddy was the power, and a positive power he was. As long as daddy was alive we ate dinner together, Sundays and Holidays were spent with the whole family, at a different home each week. Daddy had a respect for authority and taught his boys to honor those who were older. We were never allowed to call anyone older by their first name -- it was Mr., Mrs. or Uncle. I know I called men Uncle who were not kin to me. I remember one night, in the fall, the three Andros boys spread autumn leaves over

our neighbor's yard after they had spent the day raking. As a punishment Daddy held a flash light while we picked up every leaf one at a time by hand.

Mother and her sisters, Aunt Oma and Aunt Vivan, were the first feminists in the world. We grew up knowing that women were every bit as smart and powerful as men. Daddy and Uncle Mac's egos never felt threatened by the women that surrounded them. The children of the Mc Donalds and the Androses were encouraged and helped by Aunt Oma and Aunt Vivan. I know without the Roberts women I would have amounted to nothing. When Aunt Vivan said to do something you did it without question. Aunt Oma was softer in her approach, but her wisdom always won. We were not given a choice to be anything but successful; they didn't care in what field we decided to work as long as it was honest and helpful to society.

Although Jimmy and his children were not related to the Roberts women, they all called them Aunt Hattie, Aunt Oma, and Aunt Vivan. Being from Oklahoma I think Aunt was pronounced "Aint."

It was at the Post Office Candy Kitchen that Daddy met Harriett Roberts. Harriett, better know to all as Hattie, had come to Oklahoma City to seek her fame and fortune. Hattie's sisters Oma and Vivan eventually settled in Oklahoma City. Oma, my mother's older sister, married Argus Hooper and Vivan married Isaac P. Mc Donald. The three sisters had three brothers: Russell, Clark and John who stayed in the hills of the Ozarks. Soon the family was growing, Aunt Vivan and Uncle Mac had three children: Donald class of '34, Evelyn '38 and Kathryn Jane '41, who everyone called Katie. Daddy and mother added Plato '40, Demostenes (Dee) '43, and Constantine Jr. (Gus) '44. "Jimmy the Greek" met Lucille Wright '24 and they gave us Theocrartes (Theo) '43, Demetrios (James) '49, and Elias (Lou) '51.

The children of the Mc Donalds, the Androses, and the Antonios all attended Central High School.

Donald married his high school sweetheart Frances Moomey '36 and moved to Los Angeles. They added Norman, Vianne, and David to the family. Evelyn married Kenneth Paul, a non Centralite. Kenneth was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force and from this union Mack and Kip were born as "army brats," and now live in the Oklahoma City area. Katie '41 and Ellis "Cot" Deal '40 met at Central and dated until they were joined in happy matrimony. Randy, Elyse and Donald entered the roster as Deals. The Deals, themselves has a Dynasty of their own. Cot and Katie still reside in Oklahoma City. Offspring of Plato and Florence Goodall were Linda and Vincent. Dee met Luella Thomas at the University of Oklahoma and married her. Their lovely daughter Jeanna still lives near her parents in Oregon. After serving in the army, I married my career and have worked in the field of ballet for over fifty years in New York City.

The Antonios did their share to enlarge the family when Theo married Louise Geer from Seminole, Oklahoma and they had two girls, Connie and Kathy. James

married Hildy Brooks and they work as actors on the stage, TV, and in movies. Lou Antonio and Lane Bradbury met while working as featured players on Broadway and they also had two daughters, Elkin and Angelique. Elkin and Angelique have returned to the name Antoniou. Lou Antonio has been nominated three times for an Emmy Award. Lucille Antonio, her sons and grandchildren all live on the West Coast. The Antonios and I affectionately call each other "Cuz."

Daddy, "Jimmy The Greek" and Isaac P. Mc Donald can be proud that all of their offspring have been more than successful in the careers they chose whether it was sports, theater, dance or business. The list of grandchildren is endless.

I think I can speak for all of us when I say that our time at Central High School played a large part in our lives -- past, present, and future. Because of Plato's athletic ability he was referred to as the "Greek God." this helped being Greek easier. Katie was elected Football Queen and was escorted by her cousin, Plato, who was captain of the football team at her coronation. I know my teachers at Central are the ones who made me feel important in school when I wasn't an athlete. Although we all made our mark at Central very few knew that we were related and a very close-knit family. Oklahoma City is very sport oriented, but the City can be proud of us who have found success in many other professions.