Recently Published…

CYA is pleased to announce the publication of *College Year in Athens: the First 45 Years*, a commemorative volume of text and images highlighting all aspects of CYA’s history and development. Conceived as a celebration of CYA’s 45th anniversary in 2007, the volume spans more than 200 pages of narrative, photographs, and reproductions of documents, mementos and other ephemera of historic importance to the school.

According to CYA President Alexis Phylactopoulos, the inspiration to create such a unique and lasting testimonial was threefold: to honor the institution, to gratify and entertain CYA’s alumni, friends, supporters, and employees as well as to organize and catalog the organization’s historical papers. The role of researcher, documentarian and writer was offered to former Director of Studies Kimon Giocarinis, who had served CYA loyally for thirty years, from its early days of offices over the bakery on Deinocratous Street to its permanent home at Plateia Stadiou 5. As Phylactopoulos remarks in the preface, “Kimon had the institutional memory, knew most of the past and present players well, and had the time to dedicate to the project, having recently retired from his position as Director of Studies, which he had held with great distinction.”

Dr. Giocarinis took on the task cheerfully and performed it with loving care, despite the fact that the project, vastly more ambitious than originally anticipated, required more research, tracing and dating of documents, and time than the original deadline would allow. The final product, which came off the presses mid-summer, is a rich blend of interpretation, images and historical detail.

Readers will enjoy, for example, first-hand reminiscences of seminal moments in CYA’s history, such as George Phylactopoulos’ memorable recollection of his wife Ismene’s resolve to begin a school in Greece for American college students:

...It was in the spring of 1962. One day my wife said to me: “Phyl, please don’t go to your office this afternoon. The sunsets are so lovely these days. Let’s drive to Vouliagmeni and have dinner out.” It developed during that occasion that what was uppermost in her restless mind just then was not so much the beauty of the setting sun as an idea to start a program for American college students.

...I listened to her argument patiently but my reaction was definitely and categorically negative. I told her that I was clearly, definitely, and strongly opposed to introducing another headache into our lives. I was head over heels in my work at Athens College, she was teaching at both Athens College and Pierce College, and I counted on her to help me with the social aspects of my job. There just wasn’t room for anything else, you see, and I had always been under the impression that as a good Greek husband I was to have the last word in everything. And I did have the last word with the difference that the last word was always, “Yes, darling.”

The volume also showcases a collection of noteworthy early documents, most of which would otherwise remain unknown to the CYA community. The volume features reproductions of the first printed announcement that a program of Greek studies for English-speaking students would operate in Greece in 1962-63, as well as early program catalogs, incorporation papers, letters, and courses of instruction. These documents, in addition to a striking compilation of photographs from all stages of CYA’s development, are important pieces of history in their own right, but also serve to underscore the growth and change that the institution has experienced over the decades as well as the continuity in its mission and educational aims.

Mrs. Phyl’s telegram to members of the 1964-65 class sailing to Greece: “Passenger Sarah Weems S/S Queen Frederica Aristiain Radio Best wishes for calm seas pleasant voyage to you, Peter Allen, Harry Bailey, Joan Caragatini, Ann Dexter, Nicholas Friendly, David Tirrell, and other CYAs onboard. Meeting to welcome you all September 24.

Dr. Giocarinis’ narrative proceeds thematically rather than chronologically—with chapters on the program’s historical context, governance, administration, facilities, curriculum, faculty, students, study-travel, and more—a scheme well-suited to the writer’s philosophical approach and style. Regarding the historical moment during which the program was launched, Giocarinis reminds us:

...The moment was propitious. The 1950s had been a period of reconstruction and recovery associated in Greek history with the name of Constantinos Karamanlis, Minister of Public Works in the earlier 1950s and head of government between 1955 and 1963. The ghastly ravages of World War II and of the Greek Civil War, which, like a tragic epilogue followed the liberation of Athens in 1944, had been repaired. Greece was experiencing an uplift, a period of economic and demographic growth, and rising prosperity. It was a creative period and one that fostered a hopeful view of things—a time when the country was reaching out as well as looking forward. And...as important was the
journey was a welcoming whiff of pine-scented air coming across the sea from the coast of Attica.

Indeed, it would seem that the challenge of telling CYA’s story would be how to strike a balance between nostalgia for the past and an acknowledgment that institutional evolution and growth are an inevitable outcome of success. Anyone who has had the pleasure of conversing with Dr. Giocaranis will recognize his characteristic light touch and charm, here put to the task of explaining the difficulties surrounding CYA’s (still quite recent) troubling lack of permanent academic and administrative space:

…blazing a new path as a program of studies in Greek civilization and Greece itself, (CYA) made its mark in the field, gathered academic laurels and counted hundreds and hundreds as alumni, before it could call a single classroom its own or set up a bookcase on floor space that belonged to itself. In this respect it resembled more the Sorbonne in 12th century Paris than Harvard in the 18th!

The enormous effort of gathering CYA’s historical papers, dating and ordering them, and then publishing them for the benefit of the CYA community is, ultimately, a fitting tribute to College Year in Athens’ first forty-five years of serving English speaking students in Greece. In the words of Alexis Phylactopoulos, the album “…tries to explain, to praise, to look at the positive mostly, turning its gaze away from the dark or unsuccessful moments which every organization has at some point or another. One can hardly blame the author for this. He was asked to write a narrative that would essentially relate a success story, for this is, after all, what CYA is.”

CYA’s Incorporation Document

While supplies last, donors of $100 or more may ask to receive a copy of this special commemorative album as a thank you gift.

Fair Market Value = $30.00