



## Feature

### DID YOU KNOW?

Sun-worshipping Aztecs celebrated the inauguration of Ahuitzotl in 1486 by offering the hearts of 80,000 prisoners, presumably to show that their new king could sacrifice more than any of his predecessors.

# The Kytherian Association of Australia turns 80!

Arriving in Australia from the later years of the nineteenth century onwards, Kytherians settled predominantly throughout both the city and country regions of NSW and Queensland. Eventually they were to found three associations: the Kytherian Brotherhood (now Association) of Australia, the Kytherian Association of Queensland and the Kytherian Brotherhood of Canberra. The first of these, The Kytherian Association of Australia, is celebrating its 80th anniversary. The following is a brief history of the founder, Cosmas Cassimatis, and the Association's beginnings.

On 12 May 1921, Cosmas Jacob Cassimatis floated the idea of a Kytherian brotherhood with Theo Crithary at Theo's Marathon Cafe, Sydney. One year later, on 14 May, 1922, Cosmas drew up a letter of intent, encapsulating his basic idea. With that document, the Kytherian Brotherhood came into existence, and it formed the first page of the first Minute Book of the Brotherhood.

On 20 August, 1922, all Kytherians were invited and the first Committee was formed as follows,

Cosmas J. Cassimatis	President
Peter Minoukos	Vice President
Bill Feros	Secretary
Nick Marcello	Treasurer
Cosmas Andronicus	
Theo Crithary	
Bretos Margetis	
John Psaltis	

The Constitution was further developed, and incorporated Cosmas' ideas. In 1936 the Brotherhood was formed into a company, and the original Constitution formed part of the Articles of Association. To this day, very little of this Constitution has been altered.

From the beginning, Cosmas felt that the

Brotherhood should honour the two Patron Saints of Kythera, Theodore and Panagia Myrtidiotissa, and the Martyr, Saint Elesa. This forms a major part of the Constitution.

Throughout his life, Cosmas, the son of a priest, and someone who had wanted also to study theology, was a major influence on the Greek Orthodox Community, then centred on Agia Triada in the inner city suburb of Surry Hills. He served for a short time as President of the Greek Community and this, combined with his position as President of the Kytherian Brotherhood of Australia, meant that he was seen as a father figure by many of the young arrivals, even to the extent of them asking for his permission to marry.

His business judgement was highly respected. (In later years, son Emmanuel and his wife Robyn were also to serve as executive committee members of the Brotherhood.)

Cosmas was born in Kato Livadi, Kythera (Cerigo), in 1889, and first came to Australia in 1908. He returned to Greece briefly, served in the Balkan Wars, and returned in 1914. After several business ventures he purchased a cafe, the Canberra Cafe in Oxford Street, Taylor Square, with cousin Nick Cassimatis and four other partners - Nick Travasaros, Stamati Marcello, Stratis Tzannes and John Megalonomos. Cousin Nick was to later sell out and open a store in Park Street, but the descendants of all the others continue to hold the property in partnership to this day, making it one of the



Cosmas Cassimatis, 1889-1949

longest partnerships in Australian Greek history.

This Canberra Cafe in Oxford Street became the meeting place for the newly formed Kytherian Brotherhood of Australia. It was decided that a meeting would be held once a year, and Kytherians would travel from all the country towns to meet in Sydney on the proposed date. Although picnic days were also held, it was not until larger numbers of women arrived from Kythera that more social functions were organised.

Cosmas, who was naturalised in 1925 (although he had originally intended to stay in Australia for only a few years) returned to Kythera only once more, and this time it was to marry. In 1929, on the advice of his father, he married Marika Lazerreti, of Lazerretianiki (Kato Livadi). This marriage, which was an extremely happy one, produced three children, Katina, Jack and Emmanuel.

Marika, born in 1904, had served as the Secretary of the Kytherian Community. In this role Marika, being a literate woman (having completed her schooling which was unusual for her time), was often called upon to read letters arriving from Australia or other countries to which Kytherians had emigrated, and also to write letters for those on the island. Marika returned to Kythera for a visit with son Jack in 1969 and was met at the docks with banners saying 'Welcome back, Marika'. It took about four hours to walk 100 metres, such was the

excitement from the people who remembered her with much deep affection.

In Australia, Marika, a very devout woman, proved to be a mother figure for many of the young women, cut off from their mothers and grandmothers whom they had left behind in Greece. She gave advice on cooking, on how to get on in Australia, and on many other matters. Their house, in Kensington, hosted many wedding receptions for Kytherians. Marika supported Cosmas in his role as a leader amongst his fellow Greeks, one of the roles which meant being called upon to accompany Prince Phillip, then a prince of Greece, on his tour of Australia.

In the early days, Greeks believed that Australians had much to teach them, and they aimed to assimilate, while at the same time holding on to what they felt was worthwhile in their own culture. According to son Emmanuel, these early Kytherians 'had a very high moral code and their principles were second to none, and their good name was of paramount importance'.

These ideas, of not forgetting that they are guests, and that they should never give anyone reason to say anything bad about them, have influenced all the subsequent generations of Kytherians born in Australia (although they are no longer 'guests'). Eighty years on, the Kytherian Association of Australia (formerly the Brotherhood) can rightly feel proud of its roots, and the man, Cosmas Jacob Cassimatis, who was the force behind the Association's formation.

*By Ann Coward, from information supplied by Emmanuel Cassimatis, Committee member of the Kytherian Association of Australia and son of Cosmas.*

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Canberra Cafe, Oxford Street, Taylor Square, Sydney (with Ladies' Dining Room upstairs)



An early meeting of the Kytherian Brotherhood at the Canberra Cafe.