

POULOS (VLASOPOULOS)

George, Dionysios (Dan), Mary, and Pete

Although George, Dan, Mary and Pete Poulos are first generation Greek Immigrants because they were born in Greece and immigrated to America alone at tender ages, their history must begin with Harilaos and Eleni (nee Fountas) Vlasopoulos who were their parents. Harilaos George Vlasopoulos had immigrated to America from Daphne (Damouza under the Turks), Nomos Ilias, Greece early in the twentieth century settling in Boston and becoming a United States citizen. At least as early as the era of the Metaxas regime in Greece, Harilaos returned to Greece and began working fields he bought with his American gained money. In America he had also obtained some economic sophistication, specifically in hedging, as well as English language proficiency. The family were living in the Damouza village (then 18-20 families) when the Germans invaded and occupied Greece in 1941. Harilios is remembered conversing with the occupiers in English. Harilaos had with his own hands erected a thick walled masonry granary using the plentiful native stones and rocks.

On July 17, 1943 the Germans were evacuating troops from Greece, including their Ilias troops, for use in defense of the German fatherland. No mortuary calendars were distributed from Greek Churches as in America. Rather the feast days of the saints and church holidays were the standards from which village time was reckoned. July 17 is the feast day of Saint Marina on which date, in 1943, immediately after the departure of the German troops, Greek Communist punks brandishing burp guns invaded the small defenseless village in broad daylight. Harilaos and Eleni were executed as they worked in the fields by bursts of Communist gunfire. Panagiota Grellas, then a six year old girl and now the spouse of George Poulos, lived in the same village and recalls hearing the shouts of her mother: "they have killed Harilaos and Eleni!". George, their eldest child was also six years old. He recalls watching as the bloody bodies of his parents were shifted from the bloody ground onto boards and carried away from the stained dirt for burial on the same day. Who but the idiotic gunmen will ever know whether the crime was ordered because of suspected German collaboration, because Harilaos had not taken up Communist provided food, drink, godless politics and wanton bloodshed as an avocation as had the cowards, or simply because armed theft was thrilling?

What Vlasopoulos grain they did not steal, the Communist murderers burned along with the granary save the stone walls. The fires lasted for days and when only ashes remained the villagers scooped up burned grain for sustenance. Families on both sides, Vlasopoulos and Fountas, vied for absorption of the now orphaned children into their own houses. The estate must have been one of the largest in the village. Greek law applied at the time favored the mother's side and the four children were taken in. The Fountas house at one time, including the Vlasopoulos orphans, included seventeen persons total (three families). The orphaned Vlasopoulos children would remain in the household until 1950 when George and Dan emigrated from Greece.

Some time before the assassinations, Harilaos had taken his six year old son to the granary. With his hand, he slapped specific large stones on the wall and admonished George to well remember but never to reveal before the death of Harilaos, a secret: behind the stones but within the wall was a cache which would provide a map to their salvation in the event of catastrophe. "Hedging" spoken of in the first paragraph above refers to arrangements made by Harilaos before leaving America for Greece the last time. A \$25,000 fund, a defense against financial loss, had been left in Boston by Harilaos. Whether paid into a trust or whether constructed into a different fiduciary form, or left in his name alone for later probate in Massachusetts has not been investigated. In any event, proof of American citizenship and indicia of rights to the funds was found in the cache behind the rocks. None of the records are presently known to exist. This endowment bottomed the means for rearing the four children in America. It was left to Theoni (Fountas) Mitchell, the Greek village born sister of Eleni Vlasopoulos who had consummated an arranged marriage to bar owner Jim Mitchell of Council Bluffs, Iowa, to bring the surviving four to America to live with the Mitchells in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Mary and Pete came to America 1952, two years after their siblings. All have married and reared children in the Greek Orthodox faith at St. John's.

. . . Insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, *Alcedama*, that is to say, the Field of Blood. 1 *Acts* 19

That *Alcedama* obtains today in the Greek village of Harilaos and Eleni and is yet under family care, principally by the eldest son.