

# Judge Harriet George: Virtue is its Own Reward, But it Has Bonuses, too

TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – Listening to Judge Harriet Pavles George talk about how her life's path was laid out by her mother before kindergarten, one might conclude that she is a very talented but somewhat docile person. That would be one's first mistake regarding the pioneering and courageous woman.

It would be an equally great mistake to underestimate her love and appreciation for the woman she was not permitted to speak to until she was three, but who told her before kindergarten that she would become a lawyer and a judge.

"Growing up Greek-American was a challenge." Her mother, Nelia Sommese Pavles, is an American of Italian descent. Her father, Philip Pavles, was from Cyprus. "He didn't let anybody speak to me for three years after I was born unless they spoke Greek, which left my

mother out," but she caught up and became her biggest inspiration.

"She made me feel I could do anything...but my father was also supportive...He believed that women should have every opportunity, offering to pay for me to go to Harvard Law School, but at that time women were not accepted."

"Another inspiration was my husband," she said. "He was so supportive. I met him in college. I was 18 and I could see we were getting serious so I told him one day 'you know, I'm going to law school because I'm going to be a lawyer,' and it didn't faze him a bit. After we were married he said 'I'll go, too.'"

Both attended Fordham and both became judges.

Harriet Pavles George was born and raised in Queens. She is a multitasking person. Her fine voice won her a medal from the Music Education League and she later sang opera in the

Carnegie Recital Hall. Her mother did not encourage her to pursue music, and Judge George said that was another example of how well she guided her eldest daughter.

She attended public school and finished Hofstra University in two and a half years. After Fordham, she was in private practice for two decades and is proud to have served as a Judge of the Housing Part of Civil Court for 20 years.

The court was established in 1973 to deal with social impact of the terrible deterioration of the state's housing stock.

"First it was the arsonists, and then came the people looking for quick money," she said. Landlords would let conditions become so bad that when housing inspectors came they easily obtained "vacate orders," from judges. "They would empty the buildings and the people would be out on the street."

The judge immediately tried

to change things and was thwarted, but after a year she successfully challenged the practice. "A lot of these violations can be fixed," she would say. "If they are not getting heat, the landlords should fix it...if they don't, the city should fix it and put a lien on the property."

She wrote the landmark decision in *Xavier Miller vs. Notre Dame Hotel*, ordering owners to fix the violations.

She was also the first judge to jail a slumlord who disobeyed her orders. "That made all the papers. When my son saw the news coverage he wondered 'what did my mother do?'"

What she did was effect change that made a positive difference in people's lives, and that does not always win ap-

plause.

She feels rewarded in other ways. People who work for the Dept. of Housing recently told her "They don't really have a department handling vacate orders now because there's no longer a need."

The list of Greek and other organizations she belonged to is long, but their family was the Georges' pride and joy: They have six children, three daughters, three sons and 13 grandchildren.

Her advice to women who want a career and a family is to be sure that's what they want, and to be careful about the decision. "Be flexible and always watch for the unexpected," she added.

Regarding careers she said

"whatever you do, go out; meet people; join clubs. Sometimes you will hear advice or a hint from someone you just met at an event."

The biggest thing is to develop character ethics and trust.

"I always felt that my husband and I got peoples' trust. Sometimes you will make choices that anger people, but it's better to be honest and do the right thing, because you must look at yourself in the mirror tomorrow."

Judge George added that sometimes – it happened to her husband, and it led to his becoming a judge – you do the right thing but put your career at risk, only to find your integrity is rewarded and you reach even greater heights.

## AGAPW's Women Leaders Conversation

By Constantine S. Sirigos

TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – New Yorkers know that when the Association of Greek American Professional Women (AGAPW) invites a speaker or presents a musical program it will be a special night.

When AGAPW honored retired Judge Harriet George with its Distinguished Life Achievement Award on November 5, the people who packed the Greek Press Office in Manhattan were not only treated to a delightful discussion between Judge George and the moderator, attorney Maria Markou, but they were also inspired.

The event which was part of the organizations Conversation with Women Leaders series began with greetings from Constantina Spatola, who served as Emcee, and AGAPW Founder and President Olga Alexakos, who declared: "we are honored to have this opportunity to honor the life and work of one of our great leaders in the community, and a great human be-

ing, a mother, a judge."

During her touching introduction, Alexakos spoke of her first meeting with Judge George. "From the beginning she, opened her heart to us, but our heart is not big enough to receive her inner beauty."

The award, a crystal in the shape of a flame, was presented by AGAPW's officers. Alexakos said it was inspired by the Olympic flame, which symbolizes excellence and told Judge George "It honors you for exceptional accomplishment as a lawyer, judge and philanthropist...an exemplary citizen, a trailblazer and role model."

Asked what her great strength was that enabled her to raise six children and have a distinguished career, Judge George said "patience," eliciting laughter.

"Everyone has strengths," she said, and added that "you have to be prepared for the unexpected and realize there are solutions to problems and not to despair."

"My biggest inspiration was

my mom," she said. Her mother told her before kindergarten that she would be a lawyer and later that she would become a judge. "And I accepted that. I never questioned it, I never doubted it...It became a part of my life as though it were a chip in my head like the movie 'The Manchurian Candidate.'"

Her father and husband were also very supportive.

Fr. Konstantinos Kalogridis, the pastor of St. Demetrios of Jamaica, offered the invocation and said it was a great joy and blessing to be part of the honoring a beloved parishioner.

Nick Papaconstantinou, the Director of the Press Office under whose auspices the event took place, who also welcomed the guests and congratulated AGAPW and Judge George. He acknowledged Georgia Koubarakis, who represented her husband, Manos, the Consul of Greece.

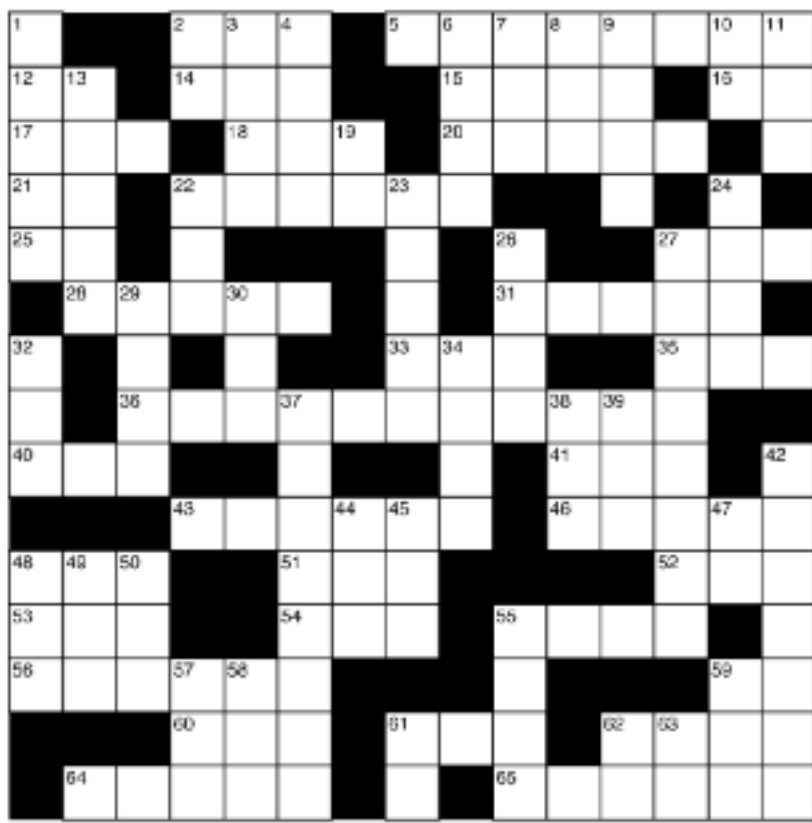
Alexakos thanked the Blue Olive Market for donating the Greek wine and Mediterranean appetizers for the reception.



Judge George and family. (L-R) Chris George, Ken George, Harriet Pavles George, Harry and Liz George. Harriet and the late Norman George had six children in 60 years of marriage.

## THE HERALD SQUARE

TNH's Crossword Challenge



### ACROSS

- 2 Feel ill
- 5 Saint honored on February 22
- 12 Greek diphthong
- 14 61, to Nero
- 15 US Army deserting (abbrev.)
- 16 Hartford's st.
- 17 "The Greatest"
- 18 Anger
- 20 \_\_\_\_\_ and the Professor (sitcom)
- 21 501, to Caesar
- 22 Actress Sirtis
- 25 U.S. beer named after famous colonist (init.)
- 27 Catch as catch \_\_\_\_\_
- 28 Maine's Olympia
- 31 "He throws \_\_\_\_\_ curveball" (2 words)
- 33 Inst. of Astronomy (abbrev.)
- 35 Honeymaker
- 36 Saint honored on May 21
- 40 Taxi
- 41 Great listener?
- 43 \_\_\_\_\_ Demas, original Sandy in Grease
- 46 A Beetle
- 48 Followed HST (init.)
- 51 Hiss
- 52 Large Australian bird
- 53 Sees it all?
- 54 Whichever
- 55 "Cat on \_\_\_\_\_ Tin Roof" (2 words)
- 56 Prominent Salem Family on Days of Our Lives
- 59 "\_\_\_\_\_ ease, soldier!"
- 60 Type of whiskey
- 61 Famous TV maker of old (abbrev.)
- 62 Norway's capital
- 64 Cooks at 212 degrees, Fahrenheit
- 65 Beantown

### DOWN

- 1 Oodles
- 2 Civil War pres. (init.)
- 3 Touristy Rhodes village
- 4 Mode of Transp. from Manhattan to Nassau
- 6 Jazzy Mouskouri
- 7 Defunct Int'l airline (abbrev.)
- 8 Hybrid Optical Netwrk. (abbrev.)
- 9 Orig. Line Number Screening (abbrev.)
- 10 Hilton Head Island's st. (abbrev.)

- 11 GED alternative college student (abbrev.)
- 13 Actor Koteas
- 19 Flankers of FGH
- 22 Chinese dictator
- 23 Gymnast Comaneci
- 24 A Fonda
- 26 Pitcher Jim "Kitty" \_\_\_\_\_
- 27 Type of red wine
- 29 Nat'l Assn. of College Broadcasters (abbrev.)
- 30 Did not lose
- 32 "\_\_\_\_\_ easy as 123"
- 34 Less than twice
- 37 Ex-Maryland Governor Paul
- 38 Inst. for Energy Research (abbrev.)
- 39 Oxi's opposite
- 42 City of shooting Rockets
- 44 Obj. Oriented Numerics (abbrev.)
- 45 Actress Myrna
- 47 U.S. auto maker (abbrev.)
- 48 Flanked by C and I, sans FG
- 49 Number following ena
- 50 Energy Effic. Ratio (abbrev.)
- 55 Moby Dick captain
- 57 Prefix meaning three
- 58 Olive \_\_\_\_\_, Popeye's sweetheart
- 59 Army Liaison Off. (abbrev.)
- 61 "Pretty Woman" sngr. (init.)
- 62 Plyd. Dr. Zhivago (init.)
- 63 Kath. Hepburn leading man (init.)

### Solution to last week's puzzle

A	M	H	A	B	C	D	S	A	C	E			
N	A	D	I	A	R	O	Y	S	D	I	O		
I	E	C	M	A	R	O	U	S	I	I	N		
A	N	N	A	A	A	D	E	S	L	I	I		
R	S	P	O	R	A	D	E	S	T	A	S	K	
I	E	C	O	O	L	R	I						
S	Y	L	O	X	I	I	E	I	G	H	T		
T	A	C	O	A	T	L	A	S	C	H	A	S	A
O	M	E	G	A	A	E							
T	O	Y	R	I	N	P							
L	O	Y	P	A	G	E	A	M	E	A	N		
E	S	A	U	I	H	R	C	A	E	D			
N	N	C	A	E	G	E	A	N					
A	N	A	R	G	Y	R	O	I	I	A	M	S	
C	A	I	R	O	D	A	R	N	C	A	S	A	



(L-R) Maria Markou, Judge Harriet George, Nicholas Tsoucalas, Judge Harriet George, Fr. Konstantinos Kalogridis, Olga Alexakos, Founder and President of AGAPW, and Constantina Spatola.

## AHEPA's Veterans: Profiles in Courage

Continued from page 1

Program. Following his two tours of duty in the Pentagon, one on the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the other as a Division Chief on the Chief of US Army's Staff, he was selected for Command of the 1st Armor Brigade at Ft. Knox, KY where he commanded over 7,000 soldiers in the Brigade.

Today, Colonel Vamvakias works for our nation providing his immeasurable talents to the protection of every American at the Defense Intelligence Agency. He is married to his loving wife, Carol, who also served as an Army Nurse during the Vietnam War, reaching the rank of Captain, before she retired to raise their two children. Their daughter Mary Kate Moran, and her husband Don Moran have three children. Their son is Lt. Colonel Praxitelis Nick Vamvakias, on active duty with the Army's

82nd Airborne (Paratrooper) Division, who with his wife Dr. Dana Vamvakias, have three children.

### AHEPA

Vamvakias served AHEPA, at the Peter Derzis Chapter 438, first as Chapter Secretary for two years, followed by being elected President for three years. As president, Vamvakias launched the very successful new initiative called the "one for one membership program," where each member throughout the year got one new member and each member carried a membership application with them at all times to enlist new members. Vamvakias also established an AHEPA Summer Camp, which was sponsored by the Chapter and in cooperation with the church, for the children of St. Katherine's Greek Orthodox Church. Since its inception seven years ago, this program has grown yearly, reaching over

70+ children.

Vamvakias was then elected to the District # 3 Lodge, first as the Warden, followed by being its District Governor. During his tenure, membership increased throughout the District. The following year Vamvakias was elected Supreme Governor of Region # 2, with responsibility for Districts 3 & 4, where he again increased membership traveling throughout both Districts.

These successes helped propel Colonel Vamvakias to his election as Supreme Treasurer of AHEPA, 2009-2011, where he has traveled extensively, promoting AHEPA, its programs and membership, throughout the United States, as well as to Greece, Cyprus, Jerusalem, and to Constantinople, where he participated in the creation of a new AHEPA Chapter. The Colonel is a real American hero and all of us in AHEPA are proud to call him our brother.

## Astoria Cove Project is Moving Forward

Continued from page 1

area families, issues that were brought up by Costa Constantinides, Astoria's City Council member, and which forced the developer back into negotiations on October 20.

Constantinides is happy with the results of the talks, however, and believes the deal would provide housing, good jobs and transportation for an isolated area.

"I am happy to have reached this historic agreement on Astoria Cove. For the first time in City history, this developer will be required by law to provide permanently affordable housing that is within the reach of Astorians. Twenty-seven percent of the entire development will be affordable at rates better than previously offered – 20 percent

of the development will be reserved for low-income households and monthly rents will be as low as \$800 per month. These rates make the agreement innovative, contextual, and inclusive of our community. The agreement will help transform Astoria for the better."

Constantinides added that the project will include "a unionized workforce, retail and a supermarket, a new school, a renovated local library, upgraded parks, and an upgraded senior center at the NYCHA Astoria Houses. The agreement also includes a fully-funded ferry dock."

"I am honored to have had a great partner in the de Blasio administration during this historic negotiation process. I am proud of this agreement and I thank Council Members Green-

field and Weprin for their leadership and guidance in this historic process, as well as my other colleagues in the Council," Constantinides said.

The talks were intense and went down to the wire.

"As of Tuesday evening, the parties remained at odds on crucial issues, namely affordable housing and labor, according to people familiar with the matter," the WSJ reported, but "At 8:22 p.m. housing advocates, unions and some elected officials put out an advisory for a news conference on Wednesday morning to call for a no vote on the project. A deal with the unions was struck late in the evening, and the news conference was called off. Negotiations continued until mid-afternoon Wednesday—well after the scheduled time for a vote."