

EMMANUEL (MANIOS) KELAKIOS AND HIS FAMILY

Emmanuel (Manios) Kelakios migrated to Australia in 1956. Manios was better known as “Santouris” because since the age of 8 he was already well acclaimed for his musical skill on the santouri - a much loved musical instrument of the people of the Dodecanesse. His wife Maria and their children Tsambika and Mihalis joined him in 1959.

This is their story. And in many ways the story of thousands of migrants including the Malonites of Adelaide.

BACKGROUND -

Manios is of Rhodian - Simian heritage. His father Mihali, grandfather Philimona, and great grandfather Mihalio who were born on Simi were also well known santouri players as well as ship builders with their own ship building yard in the port of Simi. The Italian occupation and the influenza of 1917 wiped out a large percentage of the Simian population and the once wealthy and influential island began to decline. Simians left their island in droves and migrated overseas, to mainland Greece and to other Greek islands. So it was with Manio's father Mihali who came to Rhodos as a twenty two year old with his two year old son Philimona whose Simian mother died in the 1917 epidemic. Mihalis settled in Malona where he met and married Chrisafina Traka . They had four children; Manoli (Manios), Giorgo, Anthi, and Panagioti. Anthi died tragically at the age of six. Her hair caught fire and she was burned alive. The mother, Chrisafina, also died at the young age of forty two leaving Mihali a young widower for the second time. Three years later he married Haristi Kastrenou and they had two children; Tsambika and Evangelo. Each of Mihali's children, except for his only daughter Tsambika, played a musical instrument and they were known across Rhodos for their musical talents. Mihalis also adopted his wife Chrisafina's sister's son Giorgo Traka Manolouko and passed on to him the “Santoureiko” love for music. Giorgos taught accordion to students in the Musical Academy of Rhodes for many years.

Manios married Maria Giannelis when he was 20 and Maria 17 years old. By that time he was already well known as a musician but also as a merchant. He bought oil, olives, citrus fruit and sultanas from the people of Rhodos, and especially Malonites Masarenous and Arhangelites and traded this local produce to other Greek islands as well as to mainland Greece. Manios did not have a liking for the life of the “Greek agroti” and music and trade were his preferred choices of livelihood. Manios and Maria had 3 children. Their first Mihalis died in infancy. Their surviving children are Tsambika and Mihalis.

Manios had no intention to migrate. He was making a comfortable living from his music and trade. However, a large consignment of oil and fruit that was being transported by ship to Pirea was lost at sea when the ship sank in 1954. There was no marine insurance in post war Greece and the “agrotis” had no other recourse but to ask Manios to pay them for the lost consignment. This amounted to a large sum of money the payment of which drained him financially.

It is worth noting that Manios was under no legal obligation to pay the “agrotēs” whose produce he was transporting given that the cargo was lost at sea through no fault of his own. However, Manios was a man of moral character who understood that if he did not pay there would be many families going hungry that year because they largely depended for their livelihood on the money they would receive from him for their produce. Manios did the honourable thing and used all of his savings to pay for the lost cargo. It was then, in 1954, after this unfortunate venture, that migration entered his mind and he followed in the footsteps of hundreds of other Rhodians who left the island to seek their fortunes in far-away places. For Manio the Siren that beckoned was Australia. Adelaide was the favoured destination of the Malonites who were migrating in the fifties and sixties. A “second Malona” was springing up in Adelaide, South Australia’s capital city where an increasing number of Malonites were arriving and establishing themselves in their new home.

Manio’s intention was to work for 3-4 years, replenish his finances in “the land of plenty” and return to his beloved family and to the Malona he loved.

(This was the dream of many migrants. For a few, especially those whose families did not join them in Adelaide, it turned into reality and they were repatriated within a few years. Not because they made their fortune, but rather because they were extremely home-sick and could not cope with the life of a migrant. For others, it remained “a dream” and they grew roots in the new country. So it was with Manios. The much awaited “homecoming” lay many years ahead to the year 1980 when he was repatriated after 25 years in Australia. Like Odysseus he had to go through many adventures before returning to his own “Ithaca”.)

In 1955 Manios set sail for Australia on the ship Kirinia. He left behind his wife Maria and children Tsambika and Mihali promising to be back within a short time. It was a time of heartbreak for the young family. A heartache experienced by many other families in Malona as many of the men were boarding ships in those years to make their fortunes in other lands. They were known as “xenitemeni”. When Manios left Rhodes he held a suit case in one hand and his much loved santouri tucked away in its case in the other. There was no way he was going to leave his santouri behind!! And as he stood on the ship that was to take him away he made a vow. “*I promise that I will come back to this land no matter how long it will take and here I will leave my last breath*”.

The New Land

Manios was sponsored to Australia by Maria Karamanis (nick name Katsouri) and her husband Phillip Stampton (Stamatiou). Phillip had migrated from Gennadi as a 14 year old and arrived in Australia in the early thirties. He was of great help to the post war Malonites and Gennadian migrants because of his English language proficiency.

Manios lived with the Stampton family in their home in Kent Town where other Malonites also lived. They included Manolis Karamanis and his wife Nifico (Katsouri’s parents) her brother Yianni Karamani with his wife Sevasti and their 3 boys Menio Panteli and Antoni, her uncle Stergo Karamani and his daughter Annoula and Manio’s brother-in-law Tsambiko Gianneli who had migrated to Australia in 1954 and returned to Rhodes in 1957. All of these people in a three bedroom home in Kent Town! Manios in his letters to his family in Rhodes described it as “a small Malona”. It was difficult. *But this was the norm in those early years of migration. Migrants stuck together, not only*

for financial concerns, but also for that sense of security and belonging they felt by sharing a home with people they knew back in their homeland.

A week after his arrival to Adelaide Manios started work at the South Australian Rubber Mills. He worked hard. Much harder, in fact, than he had worked in Rhodes. Life was lonely and difficult. The factory was a long way from where he lived and it took him one and a half hours on public transport to get to and from work leaving home before sunrise and returning late at night. The work place was not a “safe and pleasant haven”. There were fumes to contend with, shifts to adhere to, language barriers and the monotony of factory work to cope with. Not to mention the sense of “closure” which was such an antithesis to the open spaces that were his “work place” in Greece. But the dream of “making a fortune” and returning to his family drove him on. Manios soon realised that he could not make a living working as a musician in the new land. The Panigiria and celebrations of Malona were a world away. He was so tired from working seven days a week twelve hours a day that he lacked the energy to play the Santouri in the little spare time he had. But he stole moments occasionally and with his fingers caressing the santouri chords he created the melancholy sweet sounds of the nightingale which spoke of his loneliness and of his yearning for a homeland and family that were so far away. This, he often said, was his only comfort and joy in what essentially was a very difficult life. It made him feel that he was back home in Malona. A home that was so far away but so close to his heart.

Manios proved to be a very astute and industrious worker at S.A Rubber Mills. Within two years he was promoted to Supervisor and many Malonites worked under him. He also helped a number of newly arrived Malonites to get work at the factory. In the mid fifties and early sixties there were more than 20 Malonites both men and women working at S.A. Rubber Mills. Manios began to see that Australia was not “paved with gold” as he and other migrants thought and that fortunes were not going to be built in two to three years. But he also realised that Australia was a land of opportunity and with this in mind he decided that it was time for his family to join him in Australia.

Maria and the children did not relish the prospect of migrating. They longed to be reunited with Manios but not through them moving to Australia. They wanted him to return to Rhodes as he had promised to do when he sailed to far-away Australia. But Manios was adamant that his wife and children would join him because he believed that the family’s best prospects lay in the new land. “I make this decision for the sake of our children. They will have a better future here” he wrote to Maria. And his wife had no option but to abide by her husband’s decision despite her misgivings and the sadness she felt at leaving her home, her parents and loved ones and the only way of life that had been familiar to her since her birth. And in her heart lurked the fear of the “unknown”. The children had their own doubts, sadness and insecurities to deal with as the prospect of migration was in a way “an adventure” but in reality the thought of being separated from grandparents, relatives, friends and their home was intimidating.

Sydney Harris the English novelist once wrote:

*Our dilemma is that we hate change
And love it at the same time:
What we really want is for things
To remain the same but get better*

How true this was of Maria and her children. And no doubt of many other migrants.

Manios always remembered a letter Tsambika wrote to him which almost made him change his mind about uprooting the family. He sensed her despair as his young daughter poured onto a sheet of paper the pain of her heart at leaving the life she knew and loved to come to a strange and distant land.

“My dear father” she wrote. “I love you and miss you so much and I desperately want to feel your arms envelop me as they did before you left us. But I saw and felt the pain your departure brought to my grandparents and to us and to all who loved you. And I don’t want to see them go through that pain again with our parting. And father, I want to wake up in the morning and see the green hills of Platsa, feel the breeze blowing from Haraki, smell the fragrance of the orange and mandarin trees that surround our village, and the jasmine and vasiliko in our garden. Please don’t deprive me of my friends and my grandparents and the only home I know and love. Change your mind and come back to us here in Malona where we can be together again in the land we know and love with the people we cherish”.

Tsambika’s pleas touched Manio’s heart but did not change his mind. He kept her letter for many years and together they read it time and time again in the new land. And at times they cried together as they read it. Just as Tsambika had cried when she had written it in Malona. Just as Manios had sobbed when he first read it on a dreary winter night in Adelaide.

Maria, Tsambika and Mihalis were re-united with Manio in 1959. They sailed in the ship General Langfoot and disembarked in Melbourne and travelled by train to Adelaide where a number of Malonites, including Maria’s brothers Tsambikos and Philippis Gianellis, were waiting to greet them. Manios took his family to the house in Kent Town where they lived for three years with Katsouri’s family. Also sharing the home were Stergos Karamanis and his family and Kiriakos Svingos who Manios and Maria looked after as their own. Kostas and Panagiotis Lelos lived in the neighbourhood with an Italian family. Nearby there were also a number of families from Gennadi with whom Manios and his family became good friends.

(Most Malonites lived in the western suburbs whereas the Gennadians lived in the eastern. So in many ways, Manio’s family were more closely connected to the Gennadian families of Norwood because they were their neighbours and subsequently they interacted with them more frequently. But they cherished the visits to their Malonites friends and relatives and the picnics and other social events they shared with them. Name days were times of getting together and having a wonderful time. As were weddings, christenings, feast days and the dances the Panrhodian and St George Malona Association organised at the Olympic and Collosus Halls. Communication with loved ones in Rhodes was mostly by letter. And how welcomed those letters were! Telephone calls were a definite “luxury” and ofcourse information technology was nothing like it is now.

In the Adelaide of the fifties and sixties the Rhodian migrant community, including the Malonites, were a very closely knit group. They shared each other’s joys and sorrows. They struggled to establish themselves and were confronted with the same difficulties that this entailed. They shared the same dreams hopes and aspirations. And in each other they found a piece of the homeland they left behind. How very precious was the mutual support and love they shared in those early difficult days!!!)

In 1961 Manios and his family finally moved into their own home in Eastry St Norwood and he bought his first car. A green vanguard!!!! The family rejoiced ! Privacy at last and a means of transport. To pay for the car Manios did the unthinkable!! He sold his santouri to a man named Vasilis an immigrant from Lemnos. Manios cried on that day. He cried in a way that his wife and children had not seen him cry since the day of his departure from Rhod0s. And they cried with him. Losing the santouri was like losing a member of their family. Manio knew that he had to be practical rather than sentimental. Careful fiscal management was essential in helping him to achieve the best options for himself and his young family and necessity had to override sentimentality. The car would be far more useful to them all than the santouri which he played only for his and his family's recreation, and occasionally, at different celebrations in the homes of Malonites. It was a hard decision but Manios believed it to be the most practical though painful.

Tsambika and Mihalis attended Norwood Primary School and went onto Norwood High. Tsambika, in particular, was a brilliant student and was awarded two Commonwealth Scholarships to enable her to complete her 4th year High and her Matriculation. She had a special talent for writing and excelled in literature. Her dream was to become a journalist and she was awarded a third Commonwealth scholarship at the end of her Matriculation Year to enable her to enrol at the N.S.W. School of Journalism and Literary Studies. But she was a girl. And girls of the fifties and sixties were destined to be mothers and wives not professional women. Manios and Maria would not allow their daughter to go against the customs and cultural norms they brought with them from Malona. The career opportunities would be for their son. Tsambika's role would be that of a housewife and mother not of a professional career woman and there was no compromise on the matter. Yes, this was a new Land and it did offer many opportunities! But the cultural dictates and norms of the old country were zealously guarded by the migrants including Manios and Maria and continued to guide their lives and many of their decisions. Life was especially difficult for young migrant girls who were exposed to a new culture they wanted to embrace but had to comply with the Greek culture which their parents preserved with an almost holy reverence. Tsambika, had no choice but to obey the wishes of her parents. So her dream for a tertiary education in her chosen field was aborted despite her protests, her tears and pleas. But in an unprecedented act of defiance, she confronted her parents on the day they told her that she could not accept the Commonwealth Scholarship for Journalism which had been offered her and that they were planning her marriage instead. In a trembling voice broken by the sobs that shook her body, she told them: *“One day I will fulfil my dreams; and I won't just reach for the stars - I will reach for the sun. That's why we were uprooted from our island home to come to this new land; so that we would avail ourselves of the opportunities Australia offers. Opportunities that we could not have in Malona. We came here so that we can enrich our lives and have equal opportunities. Was all the pain for nothing? Was what father told us nothing but lies? And should parents stand between their daughters and their opportunity to succeed and realise their goals just because they are girls? (Unfortunately in that era parents could and did stand in the way of their daughters' wishes and choices including their education options. Gender roles were very clearly and culturally defined. And girls did not have the same level of choice and opportunity as boys.)*

And so, Tsambika completed High School but was not allowed to continue the tertiary education she longed for. University was a lost dream as were her hopes of becoming a Journalist. Mihalis did not share his sister's thirst and passion for learning. He left school after completing third year High and started work as a salesperson in the manchester Department of the Myer Emporium. Mihali was also encouraged by his father to go to music classes. He learnt to play the guitar and joined a band called "Men at Work". They disbanded 5 years after they formed the group. Later, through his father's business, Mihali was able to familiarise himself with the food industry in which he has successfully been employed for many years in managerial positions.

In 1966 two months after completing her High School studies, Tsambika married Tsambikos Kallios who is a migrant from Gennadi. Tsambikos and Tsambika (Sabina by this time) lived in Norwood. Their first son John was born in 1967 and their second child Emmanuel Nehtarios in 1972. They then moved to Athelstone where their boys grew up and attended Stradbroke Primary and Norwood High Schools.

In 1968 Manios's love for "trade" resurfaced and with his daughter Tsambika's encouragement he purchaed a Deli at Norwood and later expanded it to a Take-Away selling yiros, hamburgers and fish and chips. He was the first Maloniti to establish this type of business in the sixties.

Mihali was married in 1971 to Stavroula Tsalavoutas who had migrated with her family from Kastania near Sparta. Their children Manuel and Marie were born in 1972 and 1974.

Tsambika harboured the same nostalgia and yearning for Malona as her father. Her first "homecoming" to Malona was in 1975. Tsambika her husband and two young children returned to the land she loved. The joy of return was intoxicating. And yet, things were so different. So much had changed since her departure from Rhodos. The changes brought about by Time and Tourism were evident. The joy of the return was eclipsed by the absence of the loved grandparents left behind. They were no longer there to greet her and to shower her children with the kisses she remembered from all those years ago. And paradoxically, she was overwhelmed by a sense of displacement for she knew that her love and loyalty were now divided between two countries. Surprisingly, Australia felt more like "home" although her love for the land of her birth had not diminished in any way. Nonetheless, the whole family enjoyed the trip so much that they would return many times in the years that followed. Emmanuel and John grew to love Rhodes and especially Malona, with the same passion as their mother and grandfather Manios. Each return to the island over the years filled them with great excitement and increased their love for the place where their roots lay.

In 1979, after 4 trips back to Rhodos, Manios decided that he and Maria would be repatriated. The yearning he felt in his heart for Malona was so powerful, that no amount of arguments put forward by his wife, children and young grandchildren could dissuade him. He sold his business and home and returned to the Siren that beckoned - Malona. In the following 20 years Manios and Maria made several trips back to Adelaide to visit their children and grandchildren. Likewise, their family visited them in Greece a number of times. They saw each other frequently and so the parting was

not so hard to bear. Ironically when Manios was in Malona he pined for Adelaide. When in Adelaide he pined for Malona. It was inevitable that he would come and go from both places. After all, just like most migrants, his heart was torn between his homeland and his adopted country. He found a measure of peace and contentment, by at intervals, living in both.

THE FAMILY LEFT BEHIND IN ADELAIDE and Tsambika's "Breaking-out" of the cultural cocoon

After Manio's and Maria's return to Greece, Tsambika's yearning for a tertiary education resurfaced. The dream demanded to be realised. She returned to study at age 35 and was in the same class as her older son John. This was quite novel as it is rare for a mother and son to sit together at the same desk and study the same subjects. John was very proud of his mother when at the end of the school year she topped the State in the SACE exams. Tsambika then enrolled as a law student at the University of Adelaide and graduated four years later. Tsambika worked in the legal profession until her return to University in 1993 to complete a post graduate degree in Social Policy Administration majoring in policy development. Following the completion of her post graduate degree Sabina worked as policy adviser in Canberra and she was subsequently appointed Chief Executive Officer of Multicultural Aged Care Australia. She is the first and only Rhodian woman in South Australia to date, to attain such a position. Sabina was instrumental in assisting ethnic communities to set up ethno-specific residential care facilities (hostels and nursing homes) and home services for their ageing population. Her work with the smaller ethnic groups in particular is well recognised and documented in a number of journals and research papers. Tsambika's services to the multicultural community were acknowledged with an Australia Day Award. She was awarded a second Australia Day Award for Services to Youth. Between 1996 and 1999 Tsambika worked in the Northern Territory, Tasmania and Canberra in the policy and legal fields before returning to Adelaide. Tsambika also completed a diploma in social work. She is still employed in the Department of Human Services and has managed to forge a successful career.

Tsambika is very involved in a number of committees and continues to work with passion in a volunteering capacity for the preservation of the Greek culture. She is the President of the St George Malona Association having previously served as the Association's secretary. Tsambika is a member of the South Australian Council for the Greek Cultural Month and is the Panrhodian Association's representative on the Festival Hellenica Committee. She began presenting her Radio Program "Ligo Apo Ola me tin Sabina" in 2005. The program is broadcast on Greek Radio Ena and has become very popular with listeners in Adelaide, Sydney and in other parts of the world who access it via the Internet.

Tsambika is a prolific writer in both Greek and English. The poetry and articles she writes about Rhodos and Greek related themes have touched many Rhodians and others in the Greek/Australian Community of South Australia. And she was successful in locating Manio's santouri which had been sold to the Lemnio Vasili in 1962 and lost to the Kelakios family for many years. In 2005 Vasili accepted Tsambika's invitation and brought the much cherished instrument to the Malona Association St George Day celebrations where its sweet cords took Tsambika, her family, and many Malonites who

attended the function back to Rhodes and to an era long gone. Tsambika's offer to buy her father's santouri from Vasili was declined because he has willed it to the Migration Museum of South Australia after his death. A fitting resting place and a fine tribute for the much cherished musical instrument which migrated to Australia with the man who loved it since he was a child.

Tsambika is currently co-ordinating a Project promoting the Rhodian history and culture. It will be one of Festival Hellenica's major events for the Politistico Mina of South Australia 2012. Her great love for literature and for the land of her birth has found artistic expression through her poetry, her short stories and now through the planning and presentation of her Project, "Journey to the Island of the Sun" which celebrates the glory and culture of Rhodes and aims to encourage younger generation Rhodians, (the descendants of the Rhodian migrants of previous generations) to re-discover their roots and heritage and to preserve the culture brought to Australia by their forefathers. She successfully manages to balance her career with volunteering initiatives, literary pursuits and family life. A busy but very fulfilling and useful life. Manios saw that Australia was the land of opportunities for his children. And he was right.

So the words of a fifteen year old defiant girl to the parents who would not allow her to continue her studies were not empty words after all. *"I will fulfil my dreams and reach not for the stars but for the sun and no-one can stop me "* she said with passion. And she did. Against all odds including cultural barriers and parental objections.

Tsambika says with pride that her greatest achievement are her two sons John and Emmanuel.

John is the proud father of Natasha and Jordan. Natasha inherited her grandmother's passion for journalism and is completing her degree in Media Studies at the University of South Australia. Natasha has excelled throughout her studies in the literary subjects. Jordan is a brilliant soccer player and has been awarded many awards. He hopes to establish a career in soccer and this is looking very likely given his skill and passion for the game and the recognition he has already received.

Emmanuel married Paula Kardassis whose mother is of Gennadian heritage and her father's roots lie on the island of Imvros. Both of Paula's parents were born in Australia so this makes her a second generation Greek/Australian.

John and Emmanuel are partners in their business, **Marathon Couriers**. Yes, a Greek name! just another reflection of their pride in their Greek heritage.

Tsambika feels blessed in her children. They are all that she ever dreamed her children could be and are a source of joy to her. Their love for Rhodos, for Malona and the Greek culture matches her own and their grandfather's. "And so the Wheel of Life turns and Odysseus is lured back to the Ithaka that he loves"

John and Emmanuel are now men and have their own stories to tell; Tsambika has told hers and her parents' and her sons will tell theirs.....

MANIO'S DEATH

Manios died in Malona after a short illness in September 2000. He was 78 years old. His children and his grandson Emmanuel Kallios flew to Rhodes for his funeral. He

died and was buried where he wanted to be - in his beloved Malona. And so the words of the young migrant, uttered on the ship that was taking him to a new land 55 years before became a fulfilled prophecy - *“I will come back to this land no matter how long it takes and here I will take my last breath”*

His dying wish to be buried under the olive tree in the cemetery of Agios Georgios in Malona was respected by his family. Manios still rests in the shadow of that tree with a full view of the distant blue sea of Haraki and the scented pines of Platsa as his companions. Just as he wanted it.

Following Manio’s death, Maria returned to Australia where she still lives with her children Tsambika and Mihali. Maria finds comfort and joy in the love and support of her children, her four grandchildren and her six great grandchildren. She is happy to be reunited with her family in the land that she learned to love as a migrant. But the other half of her heart lies with Manios, underneath an olive tree in the cemetery of Malona.

Tsambika (Sabina) Kelakios
September 2011