

A Greek Priest's Family in Mid-20th Century Mid-America

PHILIA GEOTES HAYES

Greek immigrants began drifting into Sioux City, Iowa shortly after the turn of the century. By the beginning of World War I, three hundred citizens of Sioux City claimed Greek heritage. One hundred and ten of them joined the US armed forces, an experience that a parish history notes "inspired them to plan their future in the US and in Sioux City." In 1918 Paikos K. Pappaphilippopoulos, who called himself Peter Nelson, challenged his countrymen to organize and support a "decent church, school and cemetery of our own for our community." They bought three lots on the corner of Sixth and Jennings Streets and hired a priest. In the fall of 1925 they dedicated the church that cost them one hundred thousand dollars. More than twenty years later, on June 6, 1946 Athenagoras, Archbishop of North and South America, assigned my father to the Church of the Holy Trinity in Sioux City, Iowa. "Halfway across America," my uncle John said.

We traveled by train across more miles than twice the length of Greece. We raced past hills more wooded, intensely greener than any Mama had ever seen, plowed land stretching flat to the horizon and darker than any she could have imagined, and single fields that seemed as large as Anafi was wide. We slowed and stopped in dark, sooty cities nothing like the Athens we'd left behind. We crossed streams and rushing rivers and glided past lakes, but saw no ocean after our taxi pulled away from New York's harbor.

Mama cradled her travel-weary, sleeping daughters in her

arms and watched the endless land fly past her window for two days and one night, only half hearing the conversations of her husband and his brother who sat across from her. When John said that Iowa was halfway across America he must have been wrong, she thought. It can't be that America is this large.

Finally, Sioux City. Men of the church board who wore suits and ties in spite of the heat met us. They bowed to kiss the right hand of their new priest, shook hands with their new *presvytera* and Uncle John, and tousled Anna's dark curls and mine. Mama seemed relieved to hear, in Greek, "What pretty little daughters you have, *presvytera*." Our luggage went into two cars and we rode in another. The welcoming caravan drove through the city and up a long hill to the steps of a large, brown-brick church with a red-tiled, domed roof. The city spread below.

My father and the president of the community climbed the steps and entered the Byzantine-style church through high white doors flanked by columns. Mama followed with a daughter on each hand. We all lit candles in the narthex before entering the nave filled with pews for everyone, not only the old and sick. We stared admiringly at the stained glass windows and the iconostas adorned with gilded grapes and icons that separated the nave from the altar. Baba's new parish is bigger than the one in Nea Erithrea, I thought. I concluded that the Greeks here must be both rich and faithful.

The parish has no parsonage, the church leaders explained as they drove us the two short blocks from the church to a rented, dark, frame duplex on Virginia Street. It was sparsely furnished with parishioners' hand-me-downs; everything from partial and mismatched sets of dishes neatly stacked in cupboards to bedroom furniture. It was roomier than the house in Nea Erithrea though not as large as the Theseion or the Anafi houses. My parents seemed satisfied.

Uncle John stayed with us for several months. He taught Mama to cook in an American kitchen, to operate a washing machine and a wringer, to order ice from the iceman and milk from the milkman, to ride a bus, to figure dollars and to shop. He spoke English to his nieces and walked us to Washington Irving Elementary School so that I would know my way in September. On hot, sticky nights the brothers talked on the front porch swing long after the rest of us had gone to bed. Years later, in conversations with Uncle John and his wife, our Aunt Helen, I gleaned the advice that the older brother who had been in America for nearly three decades gave his newly arrived, younger brother.

"Niko, I tell you these things so that you will know what is ahead. We Greeks in America love our priests sentimentally because they remind us of our home, all we've lost, our innocent childhood. But we dislike and fear them, too, because it is our nature to resist the authority that they try to exert over us. Carefully weigh the battles you wage. Stay out of controversy. Do not favor one parishioner over another. Stick to spiritual advice."

My uncle knew my father well from letters and from intuition and he knew that he might as well tell his brother to quit breathing. Baba waded into conflict, thrived on it. But Uncle John felt an obligation to warn his younger brother so he persisted: "Politics and factions in these transplanted villages can ruin a priest, Niko. Take no sides and never forget that the parishioners pay you here, not the Greek Ministry of Religion. So each believes that you work for him. They are like customers in a restaurant who return only if they like the cooking. Be careful what you feed them, Niko. Without their dollars there is no Greek church here in America."

Uncle John also told his proud Athenian brother, who had believed throughout his thirty-eight years that a sedentary life was the prerogative of educated intellectuals, that in America all work, no matter how menial, was honorable.

"That is why even the most illiterate of our *patriote* make a decent living here. From the time they set foot in New York they work hard at whatever they find; building railroads, washing dishes like I did, selling vegetables, mining, shining shoes; and they watch their pennies. You will be surprised to learn how much some of these villagers have accumulated quickly. Often everyone in the family works so they get ahead faster. Here you will always have a job and a livable wage but you will only be able to save money if Maria also works. She is a good seamstress. We could find her a job. She'd learn English, too.

Baba said, "The wife of a priest serves his community also and my wife has small children to care for. In Greece she would never leave her home to work. And why does she need English? We will always live among Greeks." But the seed was planted so when one of the Greek women who worked in the alterations department of a department store said that there were jobs, my father changed his mind. Mama was happy. Her family was secure, warm and well fed, she was earning and spending her own money, she liked the women she worked with and she enjoyed life among the helpful and sociable parishioners.

A number of families from Crete lived on the bluffs of the Big Sioux River, on the western outskirts of the city. They planted gardens and fruit trees and grape arbors. My mother recalled the rocks and sand in which the *Anafiote* sowed their seeds and she marveled at Iowa's rich, dark soil and the large vegetables and fruits that it produced. From the high bluffs she could see the always-flowing Big Sioux and Missouri rivers and the far-reaching valley that stayed green until late summer. All this was far different than Anafi, and yet this vista of a distant horizon, the small and terraced gardens and the closeness of these people kindled old, happy memories. She liked visiting the *Kritiki*, people of Crete. Their children took Anna and me to the bluffs to run and climb and pick

wildflowers. We played tag and hide-and-seek behind the rocks and trees and in the tall grasses where the boys threatened us with garter snakes.

While we played the women told stories in their soft, island dialect. My mother heard about opportunity and prosperity, about families left behind and parents who died alone and homes to which they would never return. They told funny stories on themselves, too, and Mama laughed to tears when she heard about the man who made his fortune in America and returned to his village in Crete to find a young wife. Beautiful girls with raven-black braids saw his graying head and his spreading middle and were disdainful, but their fathers and brothers saw his dollar-stuffed wallet instead and welcomed him. They all listened when he told about life in America.

"The streets are paved with dollars and there are so many conveniences that my new wife will barely have to lift a finger to run the house that I have already furnished. In America we have dishes that you use and throw away if you don't want to stand at the kitchen sink," he said. He found a not-so-young but still virtuous woman willing to return to Iowa with him. They married in Crete in the presence of her proud family. When they settled in Sioux City she saw that he had not lied. Their home was furnished with everything, more than she needed. She had everyday dishes, moderately good dishes and China enough to serve a banquet. She prepared aromatic, delicious meals for her husband and his friends. One day she said that she needed more dishes.

"Why, my little wife? Are you tired of those we have?"

"We have no more, husband. I used them and threw them away, as you said we do here."

Still chuckling, Mama repeated the story to us while she stood at the sink washing our hand-me-down dishes. My father saw no reason to buy new ones and she would not use the good dishes she had brought from Greece, which she

saved for special occasions and for her daughters.

Soon the mid-summer heat hung heavy over the valley and its stockyards. We were unaccustomed to the humidity and the putrid odor that came from the yards and settled shroud-like over the town. For relief, my father took us to Sioux Falls, in South Dakota, on the western bluffs of the Big Sioux. We rode the train and visited parishioners there. Father Nick, as the Greeks here called their priest, was responsible not only for Orthodox souls in Sioux City. He and priests in other far-flung American towns also ministered to their faithful in surrounding towns and villages that had no parish. Sioux Falls Greeks paid the Sioux City community one hundred dollars each month to share their priest, who traveled there to perform a monthly liturgy in a rented hall and to baptize, marry and bury parishioners.

Early in November during our first Iowa winter more snow fell in one afternoon than Mama had seen in her thirty-eight years. But we were prepared. Uncle John had taken us shopping for boots, mittens and snowsuits before he left for North Carolina. We posed for snapshots in the snow as if to capture an event that would not reoccur and so that our family in Greece might share the wonder.

In the long winter months the Sioux City Greeks held parties they called *horous*, dances in the large hall of the church. The women prepared and served bountiful Greek meals. Young and old danced to the traditional music of their far-away villages on the polished wood floor late into the night. From the stage we Greek School students recited poems during community celebrations of each Greek religious and national holiday. The women packed Care packages here and held raffles to raise money for our impoverished homeland and the church. As Mama worked alongside her new friends she recalled the years in Erithrea, the curfews and sirens and bombs, the shortages, the Communists' threats to my father and the fear that lurked beneath the surface of even good days there.

My father received his weekly Greek newspaper. He was distressed by news of the ongoing civil strife and rode the bus to the Coney Island restaurant downtown where, at a back table seemingly reserved for Greeks, he shared the news with his friends. It confirmed the wisdom of his decision to bring his family to America where his daughters played outside fearlessly from daybreak to sundown and danced the village circle dances late into the night.

To Speak Greek is to be Greek

Sioux City was the training ground for the intense war my father would wage until he ran out of stamina and will. In this first American parish he saw the threats to everything Greek that he held sacred. Here he identified his mission in America: to let nothing Greek go lest it be lost. Here he began his ill-fated campaign to transplant intact to American Greeks not only the religion of their *patriitha*, but also its language, values and traditions. And to maintain them. Forever.

It was not that he did not like his new life in the United States. In fact he loved it. He was a super and sentimental patriot. Until the end of his life the flags of his native and adopted homes hung crossed, sword-like, over the portraits of his parents and his diploma from the Theological School of the University of Athens. He was a card-carrying, contributing, conservative Republican. He confessed to two political exceptions. He admired Democrat Harry Truman because his Doctrine saved Greece from Communism, he said, and he cast the last vote of his life in the presidential primary of 1988 for Democrat Michael Dukakis, not because he shared Dukakis' political views but because "*Ine Ellenas, He is an Hellene.*"

At the same time my father insisted that it was possible to live on an island of Greek culture in the vast sea of America. He believed that it was desirable—more than desirable, it

was essential—for Greeks to live their personal lives far from the edge of the melting pot so as to not slip in. Only such control would insure that pure Greek blood continued to flow in Greek veins. Beginning in Sioux City, he preached zealously against the loss of Greek identity, starting with the *mitriki ghlossa*, the mother tongue.

"You are the language you speak," he'd admonish from the pulpit, in Greek School and at our supper table. "As long as we speak Greek, we are Greek." He would cheer his daughters' improving English "*exo apo to spiti mas*. . . outside of our house. But in our house and together we speak only our Hellenic tongue." And we did when he was within earshot. When he was not or when we wanted to have a long conversation in English, which soon became more natural for us, my sister and I would go into the bathroom and shut the door, protecting him for a time from his first inevitable defeat.

Anna, three years old when we arrived in Sioux City, learned English faster than all of us; outside, from the neighborhood children. I was six but could not enter the first grade like other six-year-olds because I spoke little English when my father registered me for school. I was enrolled in kindergarten instead. My teacher, a cheerful tall blond woman, immediately taught me my address. "If you get lost you must say 'I live at 606 Virginia Street and my telephone number is 8-1492.' You cannot forget that number, Philia. Columbus came to America in 1492." I did not understand her every word but I recognized the address and telephone number that Uncle John had also taught me and I surmised the words between. Because we were so young, Anna and I learned our new language fast, without apprehension or inhibition and without an accent. Mama began to learn English at her job in the alterations department at Younkers Department Store. Her learning ended when the job did.

Baba, who took three years of English in his Greek

gymnasion, now read newspapers and books to gain comfort in the language that before had been only an intellectual exercise. It did not take him long to understand all he read, but he struggled to speak the language that he thought he would need only outside his parish. He never felt totally at ease with English and he always spoke it with a heavy accent.

Language forced Baba from his first parish. Even though the Archdiocese encouraged Greek both in the church and the community at the time, some influential Sioux City Greeks decided that they wanted a priest who could and would deliver his sermons in both languages. They had good reason to want this. Nearly one third of the early immigrants had married non-Greek women. Most of these wives and their children spoke no Greek. Such arguments did not faze Baba, who insisted that these men were obliged by their heritage to teach their families the Greek language.

Those who disagreed with my father quietly sent a teacher from the Greek School, an aspirant priest married to an English woman, to Greece to be ordained. His supporters planned that he would replace my father. But the Archdiocese of the Americas decreed that the man's ordination was anti-canonical and would not recognize him or any parish that he served. Nevertheless, the damage was done and the community was now badly divided. I do not know whether my father resigned or was forced out. He was assigned to Des Moines and a newly ordained priest trained at the seminary in Brookline, Massachusetts, replaced him in Sioux City.

In spite of all that, childhood joy fills my memories. My parents, who were happy with the American move, were affectionate to each other and devoted to their daughters. I think now that this was as content a three-year period as they ever had together, perhaps would ever have. I remember the bluffs where the *Kritiki* lived, summers in Sioux Falls, picnics and church dances and our coal-dust-coated basement

with its dirt floor and huge belching furnace. Mama did not understand why Anna and I carried our dolls there to play and now, neither do I, unless it was to show that even in such an unfriendly, dark place there was nothing to fear.

Among Sioux City Greeks Anna and I were the refugee children who had been exposed to the horror of war. They seemed to want to make it up to us. We were precocious. They spoiled us, called us *kouklitses*, little dolls and *papathopoules*, little girls of the priest. Many of the other parish children spoke Greek as their second language or not at all and we delighted the adults from Greece with our perfect Greek chatter. When my sister and I cried because we did not win a prize at a raffle in the church hall, a teddy bear as large as Anna appeared from behind the stage curtain for us. When a Greek *Sandi Klos* crashed through the doors of the hall to distribute Christmas toys, Anna and I received more than our share.

I came to love the Sioux City church and its yard where we played as my father worked. In late summer we dipped candles there. I helped gather and carry the partially burned ones to a heated vat the size of a large bathtub. When the wax melted and the spent wicks settled to the bottom of the vat I watched the adults dip new racks of wicks into it. They dipped and re-dipped until orange candles enough for winter worship were boxed and stored. I loved the paraffin smell and the order of it all and wished to be older so that I, too, could dip.

It all ended sooner than it might have. My father did not heed Uncle John's warning. Instead of avoiding conflict, he helped create it. Instead of compromising with those who sought faster Americanization, he dug in his heels and did battle. Although he had supporters who understood and agreed with his intellectual arguments or would not question his authority, here in Sioux City he lost the first of many battles.

Baba told Mama not to worry. A better parish would be found. Years later she said, "*Itane kali anthropi sto Sou Seetee*. . . They were good people in Sioux City. We were happy until two rich brothers decided that your father did not speak enough English to suit them. What did they know about English? They barely spoke Greek." Many of the men from poor, remote Greek villages who had arrived in the US early in the century learned English on the job or from their American wives. With little or no formal education in either language, they spoke neither well, blending them and bastardizing both.

One day an American divinity student came to our door and offered to pay for Greek lessons. My father would have taught him for free for the pleasure of interacting with someone with his intellectual curiosity and for his fellowship, he once said. I remember the young man and the late-night lessons and I know now that, beginning in Sioux City, my father often isolated himself behind a barrier of intellectual superiority, pride and self-righteousness. Though loved by his family and respected by his parishioners, he could be quite alone and lofty in a crowd. It was a demeanor that even his least perceptive parishioners—and his wife—could not help but resent.

Sioux City was our first classroom in American living and Greek-American parish survival. My father responded to his defeat there with even greater self-assurance, cerebral authority, and distance. He remained cheerful, friendly, and hard-working, and Mama's smile did not fade and her kindness continued, but they both became more wary, less trusting. They shielded their daughters more, kept us close. But we were young so when we left Sioux City we were unaware of this change, our fragile security and the battles that began there and would, in the end, defeat my father.

Des Moines, the Second Parish

Fewer than twenty thousand Greeks had legally immigrated to the US through 1900. By 1920 that number had reached two hundred thousand. In that year the US Census recorded that two hundred and thirty citizens of Des Moines, Iowa identified themselves as Greek natives. The first Greek business in Des Moines, a confectionery, had opened thirty-five years earlier, in 1895. Most of the first Greeks to arrive were men from the Peloponnesus, the mountainous peninsula of southern Greece. Many came to work on the railroads.

St. George's Greek community was assigned its first priest by the Archdiocese in 1929. In 1930 the parish moved into a Greek Revival style church built by Presbyterians in 1906. It was the fourth Greek parish in Iowa after Sioux City, Waterloo and Mason City, and the third largest. On June 25, 1949, Father George Evrotas, the ninth priest to serve the community in twenty years, died after a short illness. Three days later, Baba was one of four priests from neighboring parishes to conduct the funeral of Father Evrotas.

A Des Moines parishioner who had previously heard and admired the liturgy sung by my father in Sioux City approached him after the funeral. "We need a priest, *Pater*, and rumor has it that you are looking for a parish." Baba stayed on after the funeral to meet the men of the church board and to take a closer look at the church on 35th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue that was smaller and less traditional than the one in Sioux City. The president of the community and members of the church board took him through the house next to the church owned by the parish. A Greek widow lived there with her daughter and two sons. She cleaned the church in exchange for rent, but she soon would be moving to a house of her own.

My father told the leaders of the community about himself, his training and his philosophy. "I not only will guide Hellenic

souls here, I will teach your children their heritage and their mother tongue. In return I ask for your support for the Greek language in our church, a livable wage for my family and some repairs to the church's house so that we can live there where I will always be available to my parishioners. But we do not need such a big house so I suggest that half of the second story be converted to a Greek School classroom."

Early in July, as the parsonage was being renovated, Baba took a room in the nearby boarding house of a parishioner, *Kiria Olga*, a widow with four sons. Mama, Anna and I stayed in Sioux City and waited for the repairs to be completed. Baba took the train to see us when he could. When it became clear that the parsonage would not be ready for the start of the school year in September, he brought me to Des Moines, to the rooming house.

Baba and I were there when a wire arrived from Greece telling us that my eighty-seven-year-old grandfather had died quietly of old age on August 11th. We crossed Thirty-fifth Street to the church where Baba slipped his black *rasa* over his head and lit the incense in his *thimiato* and sang a *trisagion*, a trilogy service for the dead. Only after the short service did he hold me and cry. I did too because I thought that I should. But I did not remember the dignified man with the white hair and the beak-like nose in the photograph in the small gold frame on my father's church-office desk so I did not grieve for my grandfather as Baba grieved for his father.

School started. *Kyria Olga* braided my heavy chestnut hair every morning, fixed my breakfast, packed my lunch and ordered her reluctant youngest son to walk me to Elmwood Elementary School on 31st and University. At first this sturdy, mannish woman, who prepared large pans of *pastichio* and *baklava* for church dinners and was so unlike my mother, intimidated me. But I came to admire her and from her I learned to return with humor and confidence the aggravation

that males dished out, to laugh, not whine. Toughened by adversity, this woman who still braided her graying hair and wound it village-style around her head, both loved and stood up to her wild, joyous sons.

In the fall the Geotes family was reunited in our new home at 1118 Thirty-fifth Street. Doric columns built of wood and spanned by dark screens enclosed the porch of the white house. Great sliding, pocket doors separated the spacious living and dining rooms. The house had three small bedrooms, a summer eating porch off the kitchen and a new, outside staircase on the church side to the second floor classroom. We had not lived in such a nice house since Athens, in the Theseion, Mama said. We had Greek neighbors whose church was also their social center. The women visited the new *presvytera* who was proud to receive them, especially after her husband bought new furniture for their front rooms.

Contrasts

Even now when I think of Des Moines it is with both joy and pain. So I record both the sweetness and the bitterness even though my mother would wisely advise, "*kalitera na katapinoume tin pikra*, it is best to swallow the bitterness," and my father would say, "*me ipomoni I kakia pernai*, with patience ugliness passes."

I was nine when we arrived in my father's second parish in 1949 and almost nineteen when I left, a decade of great personal change. My parents lived there from their forty-first through their fifty-second years. For many families this is a time of turbulence, uncertainty, rebellious children, aging parents, loss of youth and, sometimes, loss of love. How, then, were we different from our neighbors who endured similar transitions? Because from Friday afternoon through Sunday night we lived on a Greek island washed all around by an American sea. Even on that island that we shared with

a hundred other Greek families, we were different. Because of our sameness we gained an extended family and a community. But my father's position and all the ambivalence it represented and our Athenian roots made us different.

Our sameness leaves joyful memories. At the start, the Des Moines Greeks took us in. All of the women of the community were like loving aunts, all their children dear cousins. We spent many holidays and evenings with them sharing magnificent Greek meals, listening to stories about the *patritha*, playing games, watching black and white television on small screens and sharing gossip. The men sat together in a blue haze of cigarette smoke discussing politics and business as they had done in their villages, in loud, animated conversations that a non-Greek would confuse with heated argument. They took little notice of their families that they loved sentimentally and absolutely but with little declaration and less camaraderie. They saw themselves as patriarchs, disciplinarians of last resort. If rebellion and resentment resulted from their sternness, so be it. Like their fathers they took for granted that ultimately their children would respect and love them.

They brought their families to the church hall for holiday dinner-dances, name day celebrations and weddings feasts. For the "*papathopoules*" the hall was an extension of our house. With all the other Greek children we recited poems from a corner platform on each Greek Independence Day. We learned the *Sirto* and the *Zembekiko*, the *Hasapiko*, the *Kritiko* and the *Kalamatiano* from the matronly women who danced in circles for hours as they had done as girls in their distant villages.

In the first years a small, weathered old man from Peloponnesus often played the clarinet or the violin. He had been a water boy on the Rock Island Line, had married an American, raised children, been widowed and become ancient and nearly blind. His self-taught music was hauntingly

eastern; the mournful melodies that he had heard lonely mountain shepherds play and carried in his head all those years. When he played the older men would rise from their chairs one by one, remove their coats and ties and form the line to dance the *Tsamiko* or the *Tsiftiteli*. Those with kitchen duty would abandon their chores, remove their white aprons and join the line. Younger men joined the line's end as they gained confidence. The lead position and a handkerchief would pass from one dancer to the next until the white cloth was damp and dingy and their white shirts translucent with perspiration. Occasionally one dancer would wipe the brow of another in mid-dance. Men who appeared neither particularly fit nor agile would jump high into the air, slap their heels, squat to smack the floor and twirl until they panted, crimson-cheeked. From pride, I think, they quit only when the musician packed away his instruments and records were stacked on the turntable. Then the women and girls returned to the dance floor for their equally joyful, though less improvised and acrobatic dances.

In the hall we also danced what Baba called European dances to Les Brown, Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey and Frank Sinatra. Late at night we taught each other the jitterbug as our ever present, proud mothers, their purses on their laps, watched from metal folding chairs that lined the knotty pine paneled walls.

"*Ineari, i nea yenea*...the young ones, the new generation" they called us. We fell in and out of love in the church hall. Usually that pleased parents. Greek love matches avoided the unhappiness and rebellion that attempted arranged marriages created, yet avoided "mixed marriages," the dread of immigrant and first generation Greek-American parents.

During those years my social life was Greek. I had good "American" friends in school, of course, and I saw them outside of school. But rarely did I give up a Greek event, a Greek dance or an invitation to a Greek home. It did not

occur to me that I might. I did not feel deprived. On the contrary, I felt special because I had this other life.

Deprivation was of another sort. I was not to date anyone who was not Greek. In truth, my father did not want me to date at all. In his eyes I was never old enough and, furthermore, none of the Des Moines Greeks met his standards for a son-in-law. In truth he was saving me, I'm sure, for a Greek in Greece or a student of Orthodox theology. Also my parents agreed that in Greece *kala koritsia*, good girls did not date until they were engaged, and then only with a chaperone. In the seventh or eighth grade I was smitten by a non-Greek boy. He walked me home one day and before we reached the churchyard to say our clumsy good-byes, our former boarding-house landlady, whose house we had passed moments earlier, was on the phone to my father. It was her obligation, any Greek's obligation, to protect the honor of the Greek girls of the community. I learned secrecy and did not openly rebel until I married Paul, an *Amerikano*.

But before that, loneliness bred unhappiness. In many ways, even among Greeks, my parents were alone. As early as Sioux City, Baba was lonely and bored. He had acquaintances, students, good friends, supporters and even blind followers among his parishioners. But he did not have the intellectual or social stimulation that he had enjoyed in Athens.

"In those years there were probably not a handful of Greek parishes in America that would have appreciated or even understood your father's intellectual approach to religion and Greek heritage. Individuals perhaps, but not communities," said the wife of his Sioux City successor.

In Des Moines he preached emotional sermons and fought magnificent battles. He praised Hellenic glory and lamented its erosion. From the pulpit he raged against mixed marriage, all with an overwhelming intellect that threatened those who did not understand him and angered those who did not agree.

He expended incredible energy on his obsession to preserve everything Greek. In the end those who agreed with him were his friends. Those who did not became weary of his fiery scolding and his self-righteousness and when they grew in numbers he was defeated.

I now see these underlying battle lines clearly. When I was younger I believed that my father could have conceded and chosen another road. Now I know that he could not. Eventually he would compromise, even mellow. But not in Iowa. In Iowa he dared not. The children of his parish, especially his daughters, must remain Greek.

In many ways Mama's unhappiness began when she boarded the ship that carried her away from her culture and language and any independence she might have known. In Sioux City at least she had a job. In Des Moines she did not, so she had no income. Baba did the shopping. He gave her money for church candles and the contribution basket. She had no choice but to ask him for everything else and they rarely agreed on her needs or wants.

Without a job she had no opportunity to learn English. We dared not speak it at home. For a time she attended "Americanization" classes taught at the YWCA by Ida Miller, a matronly lady with a gray bun riding low on her neck who sometimes showed up at Greek celebrations and left the church \$1500 in her will. She taught many Greek women who were virtually illiterate in their native language to speak, to read and to write English. Mama enjoyed the lessons and was proud to have learned the words to "God Bless America." When she quit attending class, Miss Miller came to ask why.

"My wife will not be returning to your school because she does not need English," my father replied. "She lives in a Greek community and always will."

The teacher persisted. "Your wife will probably live in America all her life, Father. Your daughters will grow up and

leave home. What if you die first? How will she manage? She needs the language of this country."

Baba prevailed. Mama was angry but again had no choice. If she held her ground, angered her husband, where would she go for support? To his parishioners, who must not know about their fights? To her young daughters, who must not take sides? To her brother across the ocean? How? She had no money. She did as her husband said and she never became a US citizen. She learned words and phrases enough for simple shopping trips and, incredibly, she seemed to understand too much of confidential conversations between her daughters and their friends. But Greek was her only language in America.

If Mama contributed to her own isolation and resisted change it was from insecurity, not because she believed, as her husband did, that the Greek way was the only way. She recognized the old-world superstitions carried to Iowa and she knew what was expected of a *presvytera*, how to act, what to do and say among Greeks. Outside the walls of this community, however, she was entirely dependent.

But she was also different from the villagers who were her husband's parishioners and that set her apart from them and left her lonely. She was not intolerant or vain or artificially sophisticated nor did she act so, but she was obviously Athenian. She spoke demotic Greek elegantly, without hint of a dialect. Her mannerisms were delicate. She loved to garden and she worked hard, but she was not as sturdy as the village-toughened women were. She did not know their dances but she smiled and joined them, keeping time with her own little steps. She knew few age-old recipes. Even in their summer home in Anafi a hired woman had prepared her family's meals. She ministered to the old and the needy, baked church bread, worked alongside her friends at church events, visited the sick and took a gift to each new baby, as was expected of her. In Anafi she'd learned to respect and

appreciate women like those in her husband's parish and she had friends and admirers among them. But she was not one of them.

I recall a revealing argument between my parents after Mama's return from Greece, where she had gone to tend her dying mother. "These people were peasants before they bought their cars and their big houses here," she said. "What do we have in common with them? Nothing. We are Athenians. Why do we stay in America? What can we possibly find here that there are not three of in Athens? There is the enviable life, not here." In those years—and later, too—Athenians did not often emigrate.

Our family life slid precipitously downhill after Mama's return and everyone knew it. From the pulpit my father preached family peace and stability while he waged war in his home. My mother abandoned her hope to live in Greece again, to have voice in her life, to learn the language spoken around her. Her losses stripped her of her identity and she became a person she herself did not recognize. She resorted to tantrums and unbridled jealousy, publicly accusing parish women of luring away her husband. Before long the problems of the priest's family spread through the community like wildfire. In Athens we would have been lost in the masses. In our small Greek community in Des Moines, more insular than the islands of our ancestors, we had no place to hide and no loving, understanding, mediating family to run to. Here, where conformity was rewarded, we did not conform.

The warm, bright island shelter of my childhood, charming as a whitewashed mountain village nestled against blue sky and full of smiling grandmothers and chubby-cheeked children, vanished. In my high school years our home and our village became sullied. Had we changed? Had they changed? Were we as arrogant as they said we were? Were these petty women and treacherous men circling like vultures, eager to feed on our unhappiness? Of course real villages are

neither what they seem on travel posters nor are they dens of paranoia, envy and cruelty. The truth is that they are neither and both.

We lived in a fish bowl, on display and judged on our Greek-Iowa island. We brought on some of our misery because we were flawed, but the glass of our bowl magnified our defects. Some understood, others tolerated, but not enough. And others who also swam in soiled bowls inflicted some of our unhappiness. Even in those awful, dark days we had good and true friends in Des Moines. But there came a time when critics who fed on each morsel of gossip, each real and imagined indiscretion outnumbered them. We fought back in anger and in pain.

None of this deterred me from the goal that I had set with my father years earlier: to go to school in Athens after high school. Mama did not want me to leave, perhaps because she was more alone than ever now and needed the support of both daughters. Or perhaps, as she said, because Athens would "put ideas into Philia's head" as it had put ideas into hers. In spite of her objections, I boarded the SS Olympia in New York on April 10, 1959 and just as quickly the Des Moines troubles vanished.

But only for me, not for my parents or for Anna. Late one night in 1960 the church locks were changed. Baba was accused of things he did not do. They said that church money sent me to Greece. His salary was cut off and he could not make payments on his new car so it was repossessed. His outnumbered friends gave up. He asked the Archbishop for a transfer. As Uncle John had warned, the factions in our transplanted village had ruined its priest—a second time now. So had indiscretion and pride, his and his family's.

Even so, my father had served the Des Moines parish for more than eleven years, longer than any of his predecessors. Some of his best friendships took root there. Years later he would correspond with and consider friends many that had

not been for a time. He carried no grudges to his grave. But in 1960, just months after I returned from Greece, he departed angry and arrogant to serve a larger parish in Cleveland, Ohio. He was tired, too, and more hurt and vulnerable than he had ever been. He had fought with his parishioners, his wife, and his rebellious teenage daughters for the better part of a decade and now rumors followed him to Cleveland that I was dating non-Greeks. What would his parishioners think?

I returned to Des Moines knowing that my parents had been trying to keep alive in Iowa the Greek life they had known before World War II, a life that no longer existed in Americanized Athens. I saw, too, that their cosmopolitan perspectives had become diluted by those carried from rural Greece by their parishioners and that the Greeks in Athens were far more tolerant and far less afraid of change than the Iowa Greeks. I chose not to rejoin that or any other Greek-American community, to be Greek only in Greece. For a time my naive childhood affection for all that was Greek in the US was replaced by a bitterness rooted in the Greek American village that had become, for me, a confining, parochial island out of place in mid-America. Therein lies an irony. Many of my happiest memories are of this village.

Proposal for Peopling his Majesty's Southern Colonies on the Continent of America

ARCHIBALD MENZIES

The vast tracts of uncultivated land in *America*, which have been ceded to his Majesty by the late treaty of peace contain such a variety of soils, as, with proper culture, would supply us with all the materials for our manufactures, that are produced in hot climates; and even with many of our most expensive luxuries.

These materials are, at present, purchased in countries where we are constantly liable to have the price raised upon us by our rivals in trade.

A large extensive dominion, without inhabitants, must be an expence, in lieu of an advantage, to the mother-country; at the same time the utmost attention is necessary, not to nourish vipers in our bosom, by bringing in an improper kind of inhabitants.

As every scheme that may have a tendency to the good of this country, (however unknown the person may be who proposes it) will, I am convinced, be attended to by our present government, which appears to have nothing so much at heart as the public welfare; that consideration emboldens me humbly to offer one for the people of *Florida*, and the rest of his Majesty's Southern colonies on the continent of *America*, with inhabitants fit for the cultivating the natural produce of that country, whose religion will be a bar to their forming connections with the *French* or *Spaniards*; and who will readily intermarry, and mix with our own people settled there. The idea which I shall here suggest, occurred to me