

Tony Rothfield

Amos cupparias wi efuce
chin Aijwa

Aegina
16 Dec '97

My dear *KLW & PAVOS!*

As usual, faced with the daunting task of trying to put the past year's events into a couple of pages, I dream of the great let-out of Xmas postcards, knowing full-well it wouldn't do at all if I'm to keep our cherished link alive. But how to put the year in perspective? And what is amusing or important to report? Sad to say, gaps left by the Great Reaper in lives of friends and precious relatives - Inge's sister unhappily occurring just two weeks ago - have been extremely noticeable this year. With a bit of a shiver, one wonders: Who is going to be next? Healthwise both of us cant complain. Do hope the same is true of you too. Nonetheless, not only in health matters, in so many things, living on the edge of a dangerous precipice (holding your breath, thinking whatever is going to happen next!) is awfully characteristic of Greek life. At this very moment, furious Turks, refused entry into the EU, are threatening grim retaliation on us here. Will they suddenly grab an island or two - Imia, for example - and then sit pretty, daring anyone to try dislodge them? Planes invade our airspace - provocatively. If Cyprus takes delivery of Russian aircraft then they say it will mean war. Is it just bluster? Who knows? Seems silly with these nasty prospects hovering over us to go about as if they didn't exist, but you do. On this island, a cheerful kind of democratic anarchy prevails; everyone does happily what they like, shouting their heads off when others get in the way, but somehow, usually -but not always- avoiding disasters. Do your own thing regardless if you can. Well, we do exactly that. Inge made a new movie this year: a delightful addition to her Arts and Crafts album; about a Greek lady who makes extremely intriguing little boats from flotsam lying round on beaches and under water. (At an exhibition held during the summer, the lady sold the entire exhibition, proving that Inge's nose for talent was very accurate. By the bye, deterioration of Inge's eyesight, so her doctor reports, has slowed down significantly this year, thank goodness.) As for myself, I carried on with the busy-as-a-bee writing activity I reported to you last year, completing my autobiography, Vol.1. in April. What do people think of it? My Aussie professor mentor who inspired the project thought it 'fascinating' (which can mean anything) deploring too much personal 'trivia'. So much for my funny misadventures! A Scots publisher, however, not being able 'to take aboard another autobiography since they are not selling well', considered it 'a most wonderful memoir, beautifully written, flowing so effortlessly along'! So there you are - it seems to depend which side of the world you are living on whether you like it or not. Encouraged by an American publisher, I put my Smithsonian lectures (Understanding Tragedy and Comedy, etc.) into book form - all 320 pages of notes having to be retyped - what a chore! So you see, I got two books ready for marketing - of that dreary and soul-destroying activity later. What else? Greatly exciting for us is a new island law. As a result of Greek

membership of the European Union, European foreigners resident here will have the right to vote in Aegina's Local Council elections. Incredible, after 30 years of moaning and groaning about everything we see amiss (and nobody in authority caring a damn what an ignorant foreigner thinks since he cant vote him out of office), we have the chance, if we band together, of raising hell in the Demos meetings - How dare builders ruin our lovely island by dumping their rubbish, disfiguring the mountainside? Cant we have large potholes on the road along the river-bed (that make my makes my daily trip on it by Vespa a life-threatening nightmare) fixed? And what about the police? Why do they sit playing backgammon, sunning themselves, sipping coffee, instead of dealing with traffic jams in the port- every motorist does what he wants, screws up traffic stoping to gossip to pals coming in the opposite direction, glaring at you if you dare to utter a word in protest! And why, why, why are tourists, not especially on this island, subjected so often to ripoffs? A story in the newspaper the other day told of a Japanese traveller who got stung \$400 for a beer in an Athenian taverna! I like to think we treat our visitors most kindly. This year we had our eldest here twice whilst on his dizzy circuits around the world for the World Bank. My very dear pals Allen and Mildred Hart from New York came for a few wonderful days in October, and my sister-in-law Rae from Melbourne snatched a day or two in between cruising the islands. Lovely they were; but what are we to say about a breezy young Aussie feminine filmmaker, who blew in on a project to make a movie in a matter of a couple of days, who knew nothing of the language nor of what subject to tackle, to whom we gave our ideas and hospitality, which she enjoyed - but of whom, despite all her profuse promises, nothing has been heard of since? C'est la Vie, hu? Excuse me - a fantastic smell is coming from the kitchen where Inge is deep in Xmas baking. Must go and see. Until, hopefully, next year, all the best ever.

With best wishes
Inge & Tom

Your last year's letter was splendid & I had been awfully dumb at not making a better attempt to keep up with it - but I plead work, hard work so hard in all my life! But finding husbands is the very devil when you are so cut off - almost completely - on this delightful island. Any chance of seeing you BOTH?



ELLI PEONIDOU
~~P.O. BOX 544~~
LIMASSOL, CYPRUS

of. Trafidy 14 ^{BE}

YOUR LAST YEAR'S CARD - A THEATRE ONE - WAS SUPERB.
WHEN ARE YOU COMING THIS WAY AGAIN?

Oikia Inge
Levki
Aegina.
17 Dec '96

Do
TRY!
My dear ELLI:

Every year at this time I go through my hoops - who wants to read my doings of the past twelvemonth I wail to Inge? Whereupon I am told to go down to our local newspaper shop and buy Xmas cards, which I try to do, only to be confronted, as always, by the ghastliest assortment of kitchy stuff, utterly repellent, which I can't insult you with. So here goes once more. What to tell you? Not that there hasn't been endless incidents, enough to fill a couple of books, taking place on our island which we find intriguing and personally affecting, but the question is - will you? Inescapably - and I'm sure it's the same with you all - that the longer we don't see each other, more new people and new interests come our way which don't mean a thing in the telling. For example: last Xmas Inge and I spent two thrilling days in Venice on our way back to Greece; cold and often up to the ankles in water, wading through St. Mark's Square in Wellington boots, and climbing steps, seeing museums and galleries, with umbrellas over us; enjoying every minute of it. Inge made a video movie; spent much time getting it in shape. Now is that interesting to you? Again - typical of life here - the Electric Authority workmen on the island, suddenly made their appearance one day at our verandah front stairs under our wonderful almond tree, declaring loudly they were going to erect there, at that very moment, a high column to carry a cable to a neighbouring house! Can you imagine the protests, screaming and yelling, that I hurled at them (Inge doing her best as well) before we got them removed and the column and the cable put elsewhere? Such things never happen to you I am sure, so why should it amuse you or interest you? Yet another example: years ago, almost thirty, in fact, when I first brought the property on which our house was subsequently built, I planted two olive trees, tiny things, but had to be dug into a deep hole; as years went by, when we got a little money, we planted others; now we have twenty-eight, with eight wild olive trees as well. It has been an uphill task nourishing them; so often we couldn't get water (imperative to give them regular waterings when young), and there were arguments, rows, bitter words with a farmer who made life a misery before he'd pump water to us. Finally, we got a regular supply from a priest who has the best well on the island, six or seven years ago, and the problem was solved. For the first time ever, this year our trees gave a bountiful crop - other years we've had dribs and drabs, just enough to pickle, but not enough to boast about. Thirty odd kilos was the result; six to seven litres when the olives were crushed; sufficient for a year. To us, it's a crowning achievement. But why should you be intrigued by it? After all, you can go to your supermarket, buy oil on the spot, and bring it home without any of the nonsense we've endured to get our olive oil into our kitchen! So you see the problem of giving you an annual report from our island? Not only that, I venture to say that most of the national topics in Greece, which rock the country to its roots - for example, getting its economy in shape to comply with European Union 1999 require-

ments, and fierce disputes with Turkey (one of which over the island of Imia brought us to the brink of War here) are items of news which you probably didn't even hear about. To illustrate the first: Inge was in Germany during the autumn for her regular visit - medical check-ups for health, eyes, and so on. (Her eyesight is sadly deteriorating; she does not wish to drive any more in Germany; will drive on the island for as long as she can, although I must say driving here is far more difficult and dangerous, I think, than anywhere else on earth. I go out on my motorbike every morning to the port, believing it could be the last day of my life. Truly.) Anyhow, getting back to Greece just happened to coincide with Greek farmers' strike over the aforesaid Greek Government attempt to implement an austerity budget that farmers wont accept. Farmers blocked all roads. At the port of Patras, where Inge's boat was due to arrive, every road out of town was sealed; watching this scene on t.v. I had a nightmare of anxiety seeing Inge stuck there indefinitely. As luck would have it, Inge was not alone; a good friend of ours, a young Greek actor was helping me out by driving Inge back from Germany; and he had the daring to sneak through gates and barricades, and to persuade those manning barricades that an innocent German lady ought to be allowed to go through - which Inge did; driving all the way to Athens on a totally deserted autobahn! Now dont tell me this kind of nonsense takes place in your neck of the wood.

Apart from such diversions, my year has been a nose to the writing grindstone; getting down at long last to my autobiography, a task I put off as long as possible; even thought I'd not be able to do. I had many many false starts; then in March I got going, and, determinedly I've kept at it ever since, now at page 264, a youngster in Melbourne, aged 17, working as a clerk in a huge factory office, about to be overwhelmed by a theatre obsession, writing my first play - taken by me to London, getting it staged there just before the War. But it's not really only my story; I call it Tales of my family. It is a family chronicle, in fact. An amusing and affectionate story that begins in the 1870s when grandfathers came to Scotland and England; then traces their fortunes (and ours) through World War 1, immigration to Australia, going farming in Gippsland, back to Melbourne, a Depression at its height, and how willy-nilly we came through it.

You may remember that my political comedy Daddy's All-Purpose had a Greek premiere on this island last year. A few weeks ago, to coincide with American presidential elections, Inge's video of the performance was shown on Greek t.v., a really remarkable tribute to her devoted and excellent filming. Isn't that a nice way to end this letter? - in full flood of work, both of us as busy as bees, doing our best to cope with advancing age, knowing how lucky we are to be living here on this island where people are so friendly and hospitable.

Much love

John Stage





ΕΛΛΙ ΡΕΩΝΙΔΟΥ

P. O. Box 544

LIMASSOL

CYPRUS

THANKS FOR THE FINEY TALE BOOK
RETURN — I LOVE THOSE STORIES, DON'T YOU?

TOM ROTHFIELD

P.O.Box 8
Aegina 18010
Greece.

Feb 1 '95

My dear Elli:

I should have replied to your heartwarming letter weeks ago. It was really very sweet of you to speak of my little book on Aegina with such discrimination and encouragement. And you make the venture towards Cyprus sound delightful and intriguing. My delay in replying is to be explained by theatrical events that are beyond my control. Is it ever any different in staging a production? Always one gets caught between rival currents of ambition and jealousy.

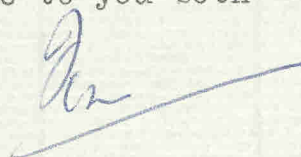
Here in Aegina I am trying to stage my comedy with a background of a division between the actors that has split them into rival factions. Our so-called manager has made a deal for the sake of peace which gives the competing group the use of the theatre - and we have to leave it for the time being, not knowing exactly when we return.

And so, when do we open? Who knows. Meantime the comedy has come to life in a marvellous way. It is far better than it was in America, in Florida at its premiere. How does one explain the fact that on a small Greek island, with amateur players, one can outmatch professionals - and some of them brought especially to Florida from New York - with years and years of experience? I am dumfounded and amazed at the spirit, zeal, wit, and panache that each actor tosses with effortless ease into the boiling pot of a crazy satire on politics.

In short, anyway, I cannot say with certainty that we can come during the last week of April - or any other time, if it comes to the point. We are suspended in mid-air. I am taking the group to a friend's empty house this evening to rehearse, but my heart is in my mouth as to the result. It is so easy to crush a butterfly on the wing. I shall write again soon.

Much love to you both

P.S. Hatto bombarded me with poetic guff, but my lack of response has at last ^{mercifully} produced silence.



GERMANY

SHELLINGSTR. 20
D - 80799 MÜNCHEN
TEL. 089/28 17 36

GREECE

P.O. BOX 8
GR - 18010 AEGINA
Ø TEL. 0030/297/22 8 44

ELLI LEONIDOU
P.O. Box 544
LIMASSOL

CYPRUS

ΒΟΥΛΗ ΤΩΝ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ 1844 - 1994
150 ΧΡΟΝΙΑ ΣΥΝΤΑΓΜΑΤΙΚΟΥ ΒΙΟΥ



ΕΛΛΑΣ
ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ 60



ALGON

17 JUL '55

DEAR FAMILY MEMBERS:

WHAT A CREATIVE & SUCCESSFUL YEAR OF WRITING & PUBLISHING YOU HAVE HAD? IT MAKES MY TINY CONTRIBUTION SEEM VERY INSIGNIFICANT INDEED. HOWEVER, IT HAS BEEN VERY EXHAUSTING — TWO LAUNCHING PARTIES, (WASHINGTON & MEXICO) — ENDLESS EFFORTS AT PROMOTING SALES, ETC. CLASSICAL COMEDY HAS SOLD OUT ITS 1ST EDITION (2ND PRINTING CAME OUT THIS WEEK) — ACCORDING TO MY PUBLISHER (UNIV. PRESS OF AMERICA) IT HAS BEEN "WARMLY RECEIVED BY AMERICAN ACADEMICS. SO THAT IS THAT. PERHAPS WE CAN TURN TO OTHER THINGS WITH RELIEF. IT'S BEEN A STRANGE YEAR ON THIS ISLAND: ALL OUR OLIVES GOT BLOWN OFF THE TREES IN THE FIERCE GALES OF LATE SUMMER, DESPITE THE FACT I HAD ABANDONED SPRAYING & WAS USING "BIOLOGICAL METHODS OF CONTROL" — SOUNDS VERY PRE-TENTIOUS, DOESN'T IT? INGE IS WELL. VERY BRAVE ABOUT HER MACULAR DEGENERATION

OF THE EYES WHICH MEANS SHE CAN NO
LONGER READ BUT RELIES ON AUDIO BOOKS
(WHAT A BLESSING!) FOR HER LITERATURE.

CURRENTLY I AM DIRECTING ARISTOPHANES
PLAYS ON THE ISLAND — THE FIRST TIME
EVER IT HAS BEEN STAGED ON ADELINA, &
IT'S A JOY TO DO SO.

KEEP IN TOUCH

KINDEST REGARDS

Inga o Tum

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