

ANDREAS MENTZELOPOULOS

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Andreas Mentzelopoulos was born in Patras in 1915.

His father Alexios was born in Arfara, a village in the Prefecture of Achaia, today called Chryssabela. He was a pioneer in the hotel business, and the owner of the “Hotel Sessil”, one of the best at that time. He was a very smart and progressive man who, despite the limitations of his education, wished his children to receive higher education and, especially, to learn foreign languages. Thus, Andreas Mentzelopoulos, as well as his brother and two sisters were taught French, German and English since their youth.

Andreas Mentzelopoulos graduated from the 3rd High School for Boys in Patras. Then, his father sent him to France to study hotel business, which he did. He also obtained a B.A. in Philosophy. Upon finishing his studies he came back to Greece and organized the “Hotel Sessil”, applying his knowledge he acquired in Dijon.

A restless spirit, Andreas could not be satisfied by his limited activities as a hotel owner. Thus, he left for India in 1938. During the first years of his stay there, he worked close to his sister Aglaia, who was already there married to Vic Shipman, a Colonel of the British Army. Soon Andreas became a representative of the Australian company “Boungi”. After the War, he expanded his business by sending large quantities of grain to Europe. Thus his career started and eventually he became an internationally recognized entrepreneur.

In 1951 he married the French Beauty Armante Montaner from France who gave birth to two children, Corina – Chryssoula and Phillip. This was the reason why he came back to Europe and settled in Paris, where he developed “Felix Pobin”, a chain of 1600 food stores in the area of Paris, as well as other enterprises, in parallel with his business in Pakistan. The purchase of Chateau Margaux and its vineyards was added to his financial activities. In recognition of his services to the economy of France, the French government honored him with the Medal of the Legion of Honor.

In India he was acquainted with Gandhi, whom he admired and influenced by his wisdom. Later on he became a friend of the President of Pakistan Butto, with whom he was connected with personal and family friendship for many years.

He was highly esteemed by Konstantinos Karamanlis, a friend of his, whom he admired, meeting him often during his residence in Paris.

The Patriarch of Constantinople named him “Grand Archon”.

Andreas Mentzelopoulos was proud of his Hellenic ancestry and despite the fact that all his business was abroad, he maintained his Hellenic citizenship until his sudden death in 1980, deeply wounded by the loss of his 18-year-old son Phillip.

He had maintained his connections with Greece along with his brother Theodore and his sister Julia, and every year he was visiting his birthplace, spending a month in his house in Egira.

His financial contribution to the two villages Chryssabela (Arfara) and Egira, has been substantial. For example:

- The establishment of scholarships for higher education studies for poor students of Chryssabela and Egira.
- The financing of the construction of water tanks for water supply to the village and the irrigation of the cultivated fields in the area.
- The financing of the municipal council in Egira for the purchase of a lot and the building of a school in order for the pupils not to travel to Akrata to attend school, as it was the case until then.
- The financing of a project for the construction of the squares in Arfara and Egira respectively.

In 1980, a little while before his death, he offered 120.000.000 Drachmas for the purchase of the most advanced equipment for the foundation of a fully equipped Cancer Centre in the “Saint Andrew” Hospital in Patras. Executors of the above were members of his family in Patras.

Today, his daughter Corina – Chryssoula as well as her three children keeps the family name “Mentzelopoulos” and, apart from the French citizenship, they keep their Greek citizenship as well. Like her father she visits Greece very often.

The Institution “ANDREAS MENTZELOPOULOS” founded by Corina – Chryssoula to honor the memory of her father, established annual scholarships for graduates of the University of Patras.