

# NATIONAL HELLENIC FREE PRESS

## GREEK AMERICAN NEWSPAPER

VOL. 31

NO. 325

CHICAGO, IL.

FEBRUARY, 2013

## SERGEANT ARISTOS

Illustrious Men's Tomb Can Be  
Any Place on Earth.Thukidides"

By Dr. Jordan A. Tsolakides

*It was around February 1935, I do not remember the precise time after fifty years, only that these were the times of military coups. Almost every government ought to have the support of the military at least their acceptance, otherwise it could not govern. These were other times and a different understanding about people's rights and public will. There were elections and the Populist Party called "Laikon", won which means the royalist will become the government, while the "Venizelist", that is the Liberal Democratic Party were out. Immediately the defeated party moved with its own military sympathizers to establish "public order", etc. The leader of the coup, general Plastiras, and to divert the public attention, they declared partial mobilization. Among the regiments called was the First Infantry Regiment of Athens where I belonged. All of us of the 1932 conscript class presented ourselves at the designated places, excited, getting together again with old comrades and a lot of hugging and greetings. Among the old comrades was a sergeant we had before, whom we called Aristo. I do not remember his last name now. He used to call me rector because I was a university student, and we called him Thukidides because he, as our instructor, always was using Thukidides pronouncements. He was beginning every lecture saying "our highest and first duty is to defend our fatherland" and ending with a quote from Thukidides as is inscribed on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, ILLUSTRIOUS MEN'S TOMB ANY PLACE ON EARTH, pronouncing it pompously. And to think that the entire company consisted of late conscripted soldiers, all university graduates granted postponement for being students. Among them lawyers, doctors, professors, pharmacists, etc. Now, we have him again as our sergeant; we joked, laughed, and back to our duties. The coup is taking place mainly in Northern Greece. Here we are on alert, patrolling around the barracks, on Kifissias Street, on Alexandras Street, the telecommunica-*

*tion center and other government buildings. Sergeant Aristo again on his element!*

*One night I was on guard duty 12-2 after midnight at the main gate of our camp. Strict supervision and screening of everything was the order of the day. Aristos talking again "we are the royalist, the white; the rebels are black, they are enemies of our political establishment" and similar rhetoric, all in a high pitch voice. He is suspicious of everybody walking on the streets searching carefully all around. One night while patrolling he looked like he wanted something; he is in pain in his tummy and his belly's demands are urgent. Next to him was a new structure being erected, he places a guard in front of it and enters the building to relieve himself. Well, this is the moment we should recall the name of the old Roman Emperor Vespasian and ask him why he did not have a bathroom in every street corner.*

*Aristos enters the building running and he tumbles over and falls on a lime pothole, deep up to his chest. He calls for help yelling loudly and the patrol rescues him with some difficulty, he is white all the way to his chest. They pull him out somehow and move him to the camp gate where I am the guard on duty. I call for a stop and ask for the code, typical questions and by now surprised at his condition allow him to precede, all white, as he used to say about his political orientation.*

*As he was passing, I count not resist the temptation and I whistle on low voice sarcastically; Sergeant Aristo "Illustrious men's tomb is every lime pot hole" He angrily responded "you horny Tsolakidis, you are a hopeless "Black Venizelist, unrepentant". If he is still alive, I wish him well. Really how fast the years go by!!*

*Excerpted from the book, K. A. Tsolakidis, A Chronicle of A Life, Athens, 2005.*

## SWEET POISON...A MUST READ TO THE END!

In October of 2001, my sister started getting very sick. She had stomach spasms and she was having a hard time getting around. Walking was a major chore. It took everything she had just to get out of bed; she was in so much pain. By March 2002, she had undergone several tissue and muscle biopsies and was on 24 various prescription medications.

The doctors could not determine what was wrong with her. She was in so much pain, and so sick she just knew she was dying. She put her house, bank accounts, life insurance, etc., in her oldest daughter's name, and made sure that her younger children were to be taken care of.

She also wanted her last hooray, so she planned a trip to Florida (basically in a wheelchair) for March 22nd. On March 19, I called her to ask how her most recent tests went, and she said they didn't find anything on the test, but they believe she had MS.

I recalled an article a friend of mine e-mailed to me and I asked my sister if she drank diet soda? She told me that she did. As a matter of fact, she was getting ready to crack one open that moment. I told her not to open it, and to stop drinking the diet soda! I e-mailed her an article my friend, a lawyer, had sent. My sister called me within 32 hours after our phone conversation and told me she had stopped drinking the diet soda AND she could walk! The muscle spasms went away. She said she didn't feel 100% but she sure felt a lot better.

She told me she was going to her doctor with this article and would call me when she got home. Well, she called me, and said her doctor was amazed! He is going to call all of his MS patients to find out if they consumed artificial sweeteners of any kind.

In a nutshell, she was being poisoned by the Aspartame in the diet soda. And literally dying a slow and miserable death. When she got to Florida March 22, all she had to take was one pill, and that was a pill for the Aspartame poisoning! She is well on her way to a complete recovery. And she is walking! No wheelchair! This article saved her life.

If it says 'SUGAR FREE' on the label, DO NOT EVEN THINK ABOUT IT! I have spent several days lecturing at the WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE on 'ASPARTAME,' marketed as 'Nutra Sweet,' 'Equal,' and 'Spoonful.' In the keynote address by the EPA, it was announced that in the United States in 2001 there is an epidemic of multiple sclerosis and systemic lupus. It was difficult to determine exactly what toxin was causing this to be rampant. I stood up and said that I was there to lecture on exactly that subject. I will explain why Aspartame is so dangerous: When the temperature of this sweetener exceeds 86 degrees F, the wood alcohol in ASPARTAME converts to formaldehyde and then to formic acid, which in turn causes metabolic acidosis. Formic acid is the poison found in the sting of fire ants.

The methanol toxicity mimics, among other conditions, multiple sclerosis and systemic lupus. Many people were being diagnosed in error. Although multiple sclerosis is not a death sentence, Methanol toxicity is! Systemic lupus has become almost as rampant as multiple sclerosis, especially with Diet Coke and Diet Pepsi drinkers. The victim usually does not know that the Aspartame is the culprit. He or she continues its use; irritating the lupus to such a degree that it may become a life-threatening condition. We have seen patients with systemic lupus become asymptotic, once taken off diet sodas. In cases of those diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, most of the symptoms disappear. We've seen many cases where vision loss returned and hearing loss improved markedly. This also applies to cases of tinnitus and fibromyalgia.

During a lecture, I said, 'If you are using ASPARTAME (Nutra Sweet, Equal, Spoonful, etc.) and you suffer from fibromyalgia symptoms, spasms, shooting pains, numbness in your legs, Cramps, Vertigo, Dizziness, Headaches, Tinnitus, Joint pain, Unexplainable depression, anxiety attacks, slurred speech, blurred vision, or memory loss you probably have ASPARTAME poisoning!' People were jumping up during the lecture saying, 'I have some of these symptoms. Is it reversible?' Yes! Yes! Yes!

STOP drinking diet sodas and be alert for Aspartame on food labels! Many products are fortified with it! This is a serious problem. Dr. Espart (one of my speakers) remarked that so many people seem to be symptomatic for MS and during his recent visit to a hospice; a nurse stated that six of her friends, who were heavy Diet Coke addicts, had all been diagnosed with MS. This is beyond coincidence! Diet soda is NOT a diet product! It is a chemically altered, multiple SODIUM (salt) and ASPARTAME containing product that actually makes you crave carbohydrates. It is far more likely to make you GAIN weight! These products also contain formaldehyde, which stores in the fat cells, particularly in the hips and thighs. Formaldehyde is an absolute toxin and is used primarily to preserve 'tissue specimens.' Many products we use every day contain this chemical but we SHOULD NOT store it IN our body! Dr. H. J. Roberts stated in his lectures that once free of the 'diet products' and with no significant increase in exercise;

(Continued p. 2)

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PUBLISHER  
SOTIRIS REKOUMIS  
EDITOR  
DENISE REKOUMIS  
LAYOUTS  
JOHN REKOUMIS  
CONTRIBUTORS

DR. STAVROS BASSEAS, JOHN REKOUMIS,  
DENISE REKOUMIS, DR JORDAN TSOLAKIDIS,  
CHRIS MERENTITIS, CHARLES MOURATIDES

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## LAW OFFICE OF MARIYANNA SPYROPOULOS



**180 N. LASALLE ST.  
SUITE 1801  
CHICAGO, IL. 60611  
PHONE: (312)456-8005  
FAX:456-8006**

## SWEET POISON...A MUST READ TO THE END!

his patients lost an average of 19 pounds over a trial period. Aspartame is especially dangerous for diabetics. We found that some physicians, who believed that they had a patient with retinopathy, in fact, had symptoms caused by Aspartame.

The Aspartame drives the blood sugar out of control. Thus diabetics may suffer acute memory loss due to the fact that aspartic acid and phenylalanine are NEUROTOXIC when taken without the other amino acids necessary for a good balance.

Treating diabetes is all about BALANCE. Especially with diabetics, the Aspartame passes the blood/brain barrier and it then deteriorates the neurons of the brain; causing various levels of brain damage, Seizures, Depression, Manic depression, Panic attacks, Uncontrollable anger and rage. Consumption of Aspartame causes these same symptoms in non-diabetics as well.

Documentation and observation also reveal that thousands of children diagnosed with ADD and ADHD have had complete turnarounds in their behavior when these chemicals have been removed from their diet. So called 'behavior modification prescription drugs' (Ritalin and others) are no longer needed. Truth be told, they were never NEEDED in the first place! Most of these children were being 'poisoned' on a daily basis with the very foods that were 'better for them than sugar.' It is also suspected that the Aspartame in thousands of pallets of diet Coke and diet Pepsi consumed by men and women fighting in the Gulf War, may be partially to blame for the well-known Gulf War Syndrome. Dr. Roberts warns that it can cause birth defects, i.e. mental retardation, if taken at the time of conception and during early pregnancy. Children are especially at risk for neurological disorders and should NEVER be given artificial sweeteners. There are many different case histories to relate of children suffering grand mal seizures and other neurological disturbances talking about a plague of neurological diseases directly caused by the use of this deadly poison. Herein lies the problem:

There were Congressional Hearings when Aspartame was included in 100 different products and strong objection was made concerning its use. Since this initial hearing, there have been two subsequent hearings, and still nothing has been done. The drug and chemical lobbies have very deep pockets. Sadly, MONSANTO'S patent on Aspartame has EXPIRED! There are now over 5,000 products on the market that contain this deadly chemical and there will be thousands more introduced. Everybody wants a 'piece of the Aspartame pie.' I assure you that MONSANTO, the creator of Aspartame, knows how deadly it is. And isn't it ironic that MONSANTO funds, among others, the American Diabetes Association, the American Dietetic Association and the Conference of the American College of Physicians? This has been recently exposed in the New York Times. These [organizations] cannot criticize any additives or convey their link to MONSANTO because they take money from the food industry and are required to endorse their products.

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<b>Art showing:</b>	<b>Friday, February 22</b> 4-9 p.m.	<b>Saturday February 23</b> 4-9 p.m.
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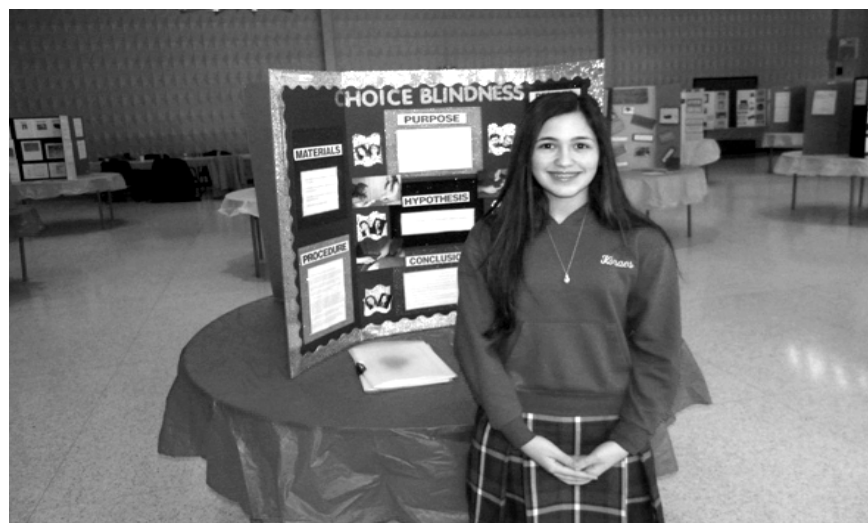
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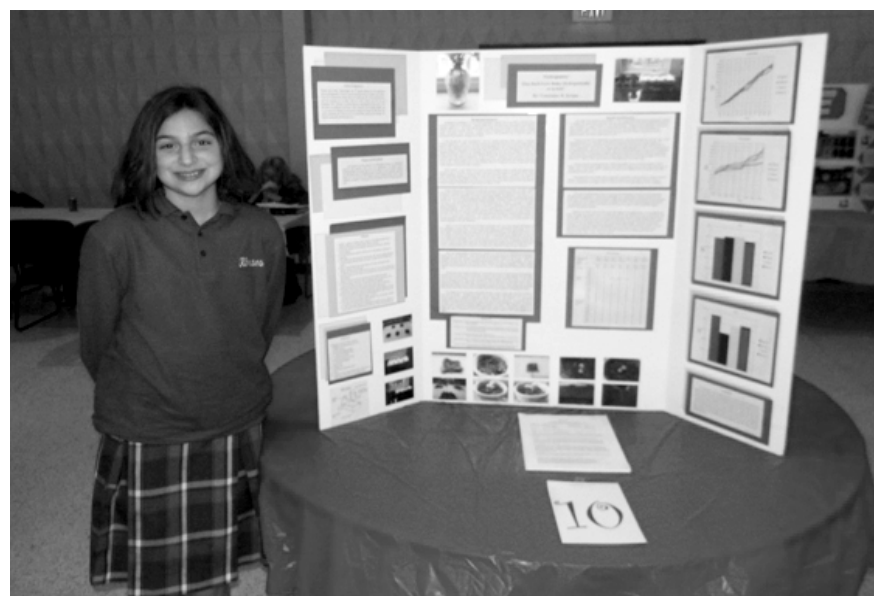
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## *Koraes Elementary School Participates in Annual Science Fair Competition*

Students from Koraes Elementary School, affiliated with SS Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Palos Hills, participated on Thursday January 17, 2013 in the school's annual science fair competition. Our Kindergarten through fourth grade presented class projects and the fifth through eighth grade students presented their projects for judging. Alexandra



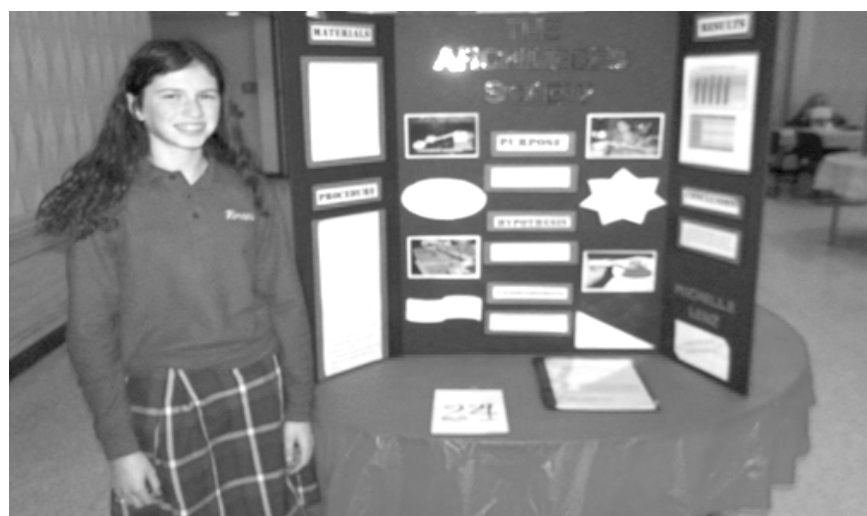
*Alexandra Tsiakopoulos 8th grade first place.*



*Connie Krupa 5th grade first place.*



*Georgia Lattas 6th grade first place*



*Michelle Lenz 7th grade first place.*



## Copmetitors climbnets during the Tough Guy event in Central England, to raise cash in charity challenges



The first soldier to survive after losing all four limbs in the Iraq war has received a double-arm transplant. Brendan Marrocco had the operation on Dec. 18 at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, his father said Monday. The 26-year-old Marrocco, who is from New York City, was injured by a roadside bomb in 2009.





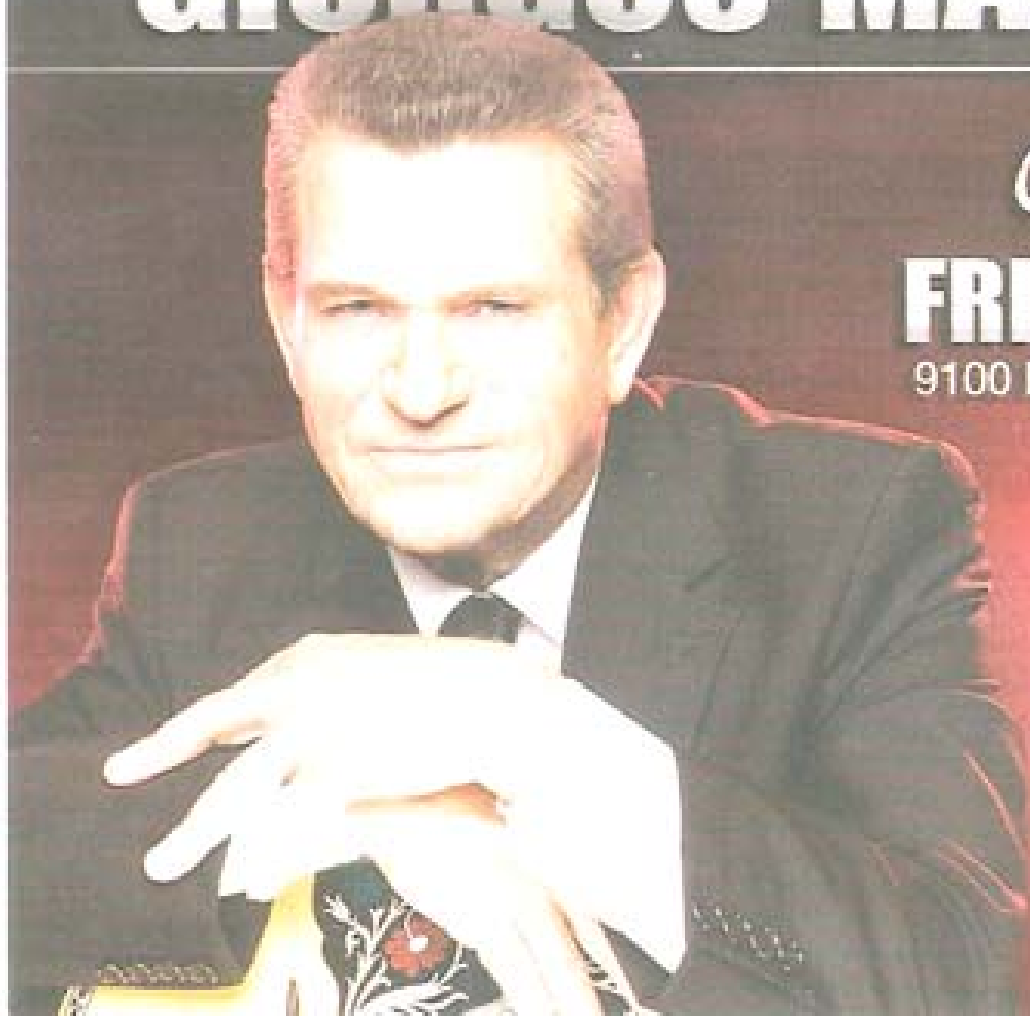
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# Even Moderate Drinking Linked to Increased Cancer Risk

Heart healthy? Maybe, but it also increases your risk of cancer, a new study shows. Though people have long believed that a glass or two of wine can be good for your heart, the new study, conducted in conjunction with researchers in the U.S., Canada, and France, shows that the cancer risks far outweigh any heart-healthy benefits.

"Alcohol has long been known and recognized as a human carcinogen, so even some alcohol consumption raises your risks," Dr. Timothy Naimi, an alcohol researcher at Boston University's School of Public Health and a physician at the Boston University Medical Center who helped design and direct the study, told Yahoo! Shine in an interview. "On the balance of all people who begin drinking, many more people are killed by alcohol than helped by it."

"No public health body or clinical body recommends that people start drinking to improve their health," he added.

The research, published recently in the American Journal of Public Health, relied on existing data about cancer deaths, alcohol consumption, and risk estimates from other scientific studies. It marks the first time that researchers have examined alcohol-related cancer rates in 30 years.

They found that alcohol could be blamed for about 20,000 cancer deaths each year, or 1 out of every 30 cancer deaths in the United States, which was about what they expected. But while heavy drinkers faced the highest risks, about a third of those deaths were among people who drank only small amounts of alcohol—1.5 alcoholic drinks or fewer per day. And it didn't matter what type of drink was consumed; standard servings of beer (12 ounces), wine (5 ounces), and hard liquor (1.5 ounces) all contain the same amount of alcohol. The people who drink small amounts of alcohol needn't be duly concerned about this, he said. But it is important to recognize that when it comes to cancer, there's no free lunch.

While more men die from alcohol-related cancers than women (men do tend to drink more), women have more adverse consequences from drinking, not only because they tend to have less body mass than men, but because they also metabolize alcohol less efficiently.

The study found that about 6,000 female breast cancer deaths each year—or 15 percent—could be attributed to alcohol consumption; for men, cancers of the mouth, throat, and esophagus were the most common types of alcohol-related cancer. Alcohol is also linked to cancer of the liver, colon, and rectum.

The study also eliminated the common misconception that Europeans, especially in France and Germany, are healthier than Americans even though they drink plenty of alcohol. If Europeans are healthier, Naimi said, it's not likely because of their drinking habits: The number of cancer deaths attributable to alcohol in Europe was higher than in the United States.

Researcher acknowledge that people are unlikely to give up alcohol altogether. "In general, drinking less is better than drinking more, and for people who drink excessively it's something to think about," Naimi said. "Alcohol is a big preventable cancer risk factor that has been hiding in plain sight."

# Does Exercise Make You Eat More?

When most people finish a workout, they want a reward: a sandwich, maybe, or some chocolate. Sure, humans are a goal-oriented species, but if you just burned a ton of calories, it makes sense you'd be a little peckish—right? Not quite. Moderate-intensity aerobic training can actually decrease your appetite, a their overall calorie consumption (and thwarting their weight loss efforts). So what to do?

"Exercise can definitely suppress hunger," says Barry Braun, PhD, director of the Energy Metabolism Laboratory at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, who has



co-authored multiple studies on the subject. How, why, and for how long afterward is something researchers are still working out. They do know that workouts trigger changes in the hunger hormone, acylated ghrelin, and the satiety hormones, PYY and GLP-1—though research has yet to establish the exact relationship. (Starving all the time? Here's Why You're Still Hungry—Even If You Just Ate.)

But if sweat sessions make you want to eat less, then why aren't exercisers everywhere losing weight like crazy? "In most studies, there is a poor correspondence between appetite and actual food intake," says Braun. In other words, just because you may not feel as hungry as normal, it doesn't prevent you from eating too much after a workout anyway.

"I'm pretty certain the average person greatly overestimates the number of calories burned during physical activity," adds Braun. "Running 40 minutes at a 9 min/mile pace burns about 450 calories, and there are 500 calories in a Starbucks Venti Mocha Frappuccino (with whole milk and whipped cream). So it's incredibly easy to negate the weight loss effects of exercise."

So what should you do? 1. Nix food rewards altogether. This one's simple: You don't want to train your brain to expect a treat every time you burn some calories. Also, be sure to check out our list of Fitness Foods That Make You Fat. 2. Keep a log. For one week, write down everything you eat. Studies show that simply logging your meals can make you eat less. And remember: That energy bar, that handful of peanuts or square of chocolate counts, too. 3. Don't skip the gym. "Exercise gives you benefits that dieting alone cannot, such as increased fitness, decreased stress, and increased muscle mass, which helps you burn more calories and fat at rest," says Kym Guelfi, associate professor at The University of Western Australia, and co-author of the Metabolism study.

# Top City for Bedbugs Named



Bedbugs are on the rise again in the U.S., which means business is booming for pest control companies like Orkin.

With increased travel, both internationally and domestically, and higher bedbug resistance to existing pesticides, Orkin has seen an almost 33 percent boost in bedbug business compared to 2011.

The company has just released its rankings of U.S. cities in order of the number of bedbug treatments from January to December 2012. The "Windy City" of Chicago tops the list, followed by Detroit, Los Angeles, Denver and Cincinnati.

"This list shows that bedbugs continue to be a problem throughout the U.S.," Ron Harrison, Ph.D., Orkin entomologist and Technical Services Director said in a statement. "Based on the diversity of cities on the list, we all need to be very cautious when we travel - whether it is business or pleasure, or to visit family, friends or vacation."

Bedbugs are about the size and color of a flat apple seed, and are found not only on mattresses and upholstery, but in suitcases, boxes, shoes, wallpaper and headboards.

Harrison stresses that it's important to be vigilant and take proper precautions wherever you are. It's a common misconception that sanitation is a factor in developing the tiny pests, Orkin says.



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NEWS FROM GREECE

Tsipras seeks to build on benefits of USA trip

SYRIZA leader's next task is to convince party officials about 'realistic switch'

SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras resumes his duties in Athens next week after completing his trip to the USA, with the first test of his decision to hold talks in Berlin and Washington due on the weekend, when the leftist party's central committee meets.

Tsipras's decision to meet with the likes of German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble and the IMF's deputy chief David Lipton is seen as part of an effort to take SYRIZA in a more pragmatic direction, a "realistic switch," as some commentators have labeled it.

Recently, SYRIZA MP Dimitris Papadimoulis, from the party's moderate wing, explained that in order to convince more people who are unhappy with the government to support the leftists, they would need to "provide an alternative plan for governing and a quick and effective transformation of SYRIZA into a single party, without dissenting voices."

Tsipras's visit to the USA, during which he distanced himself from claims he would tear up Greece's loan agreement, seems to have helped establish his and the party's credentials as a realistic alternative to the coalition government "Initially, there was

managing director of the Brookings Institution in Washington, where Tsipras spoke, told Sunday's Kathimerini. "Anyone who leads a party called Coalition of the Radical Left provokes skepticism here. Most people who heard him speak found him to be a smooth politician, less radical than they expected."

Toward a United States of Cyprus, fueled by natural gas

Cyprus could emerge from its financial troubles by selling some of its confirmed natural gas reserves in advance, and reunite not on the basis of a bizonal, bicomunal federation, but as a federation of several states similar to the systems of the USA, Germany or Australia, presidential candidate Yorgos Lillikas said in an interview during his visit to Athens.

Running neck and neck with left-wing government candidate Stavros Malas for the second spot, former Foreign Minister Lillikas is hoping to enter a runoff with poll front-runner Nikos Anastasiadis, head of the right-wing Democratic Rally, by of-

fering alternative proposals both on the economy and on the issue of the island's partition.

Opinion polls in Cyprus suggest Anastasiadis will easily top the first round on February 17 but won't manage to get near the 50 percent share of the votes needed to enable him to be elected the new president of Cyprus and replace left-wing Dimitris Christofias for the next five years.

Lillikas, who started out as a first-time presidential candidate without any party support but has now secured the backing of the EDEK Social Democrats, aspires to make the second round by playing the patriotic card and banking on the Cypriot tradition that sees the candidate who finishes second in the first round end up winning the runoff.

"I do not rule out the solution of a federation at all. The United States of America is a federal state. So is Germany. The problem is not in the federation itself, but in the bizonality, which is nowhere to be found in international constitutional law. A federal state that would be viable would have to comprise many mini-states, based on geography, with the six regions of Cyprus turning into six federal states, for instance. Based on the US system, they would enjoy a significant degree of autonomy as far as local administration is concerned, but remember that the

US remains one country, with one central administration, one economy etc. European Union law should apply to all states, which is essential for a member country anyway, although the bizonal system would not have complied with it."

Asked why he would opt for the multiple federal system, especially for a country as small as Cyprus, Lillikas explains that "it is based on a key principle: In the Parliament the states are represented in proportion to their population, while in the Senate each state must have the same number of senators. If we were to have just two states, then the Senate would be split 50-50 and that might entail problems in decision-making. The existence of more states would allow for the formation of majorities."

"What I do not want is separation based on ethnicity, we should not revert to systems that are reminiscent of apartheid, which humanity has already rejected." And what about the settlers from Turkey, who have filled the occupied north of the Mediterranean island? "All settlers would have to leave. Their arrival on Cyprus was a war crime. You see, in Cyprus we tend to forget that the situation is the outcome of an invasion and occupation. War and violence do not draft laws. In isolated cases we would have to look into the situation of certain settlers or their children applying to stay in Cyprus as immigrants."

The minimum amount of 7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas confirmed to the south of the island has a central role in Lillikas's thinking. He believes that these reserves are also the answer to the country's fiscal problems, as he is clearly not happy with the government resorting to the eurozone and the International Monetary Fund for bailout loans.

"My pledge is that within 2013 I will have Cyprus disengaged from the memorandum with the creditors, which we have not yet seen anyway. The idea is to sell natural gas in advance to countries willing to acquire it in order to ensure they will have the quantities they require in the future. We have already seen some interest from China and Japan and recently we have also heard from India. This is common practice," he says, adding that this could also apply to Greece once it has its hydrocarbon reserves confirmed as well: "After all, I believe that the future of Hellenism is common."

He has already been given the anti-bailout tag, but he rejects that. "We have not yet been given the terms of a bailout, so how can I be against it? We do not yet know its amount or its interest rate. Other candidates are prepared to offer a blank check, by saying yes to everything. My worry, however, is that the second tranche of the bailout will be on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, with the proposal for a painful solution to the Cypriot problem as one of its indispensable conditions."

The Paphos-born politician refuses to attribute the economic crisis in Cyprus to Greek businesspeople, as the Christofias government has done, but says rather that the crisis in Greece indeed played its part, but in the context of the international crisis. "Cyprus should have shielded itself from the impact of the global problems, and we had warned the government about that. It took no measures to protect the economy, but instead allowed Cypriot banks to issue loans beyond any control and beyond their means. This is something I intend to have a special prosecutor investigate," says Lillikas.

Speaking a few minutes before visiting Prime Minister Antonis Samaras at the Maximos Mansion in Athens, Lillikas did not think twice before responding to a question on the progress of the Greek government. "I fully support Samaras's efforts. His role is similar to that of Tassos Papadopoulos in 2003, when he inherited the Annan Plan and tried to help Cyprus avoid the worst of its effects. Similarly, Samaras inherited the bailout conditions, he has already made a great effort and has restored Greece's credibility abroad."



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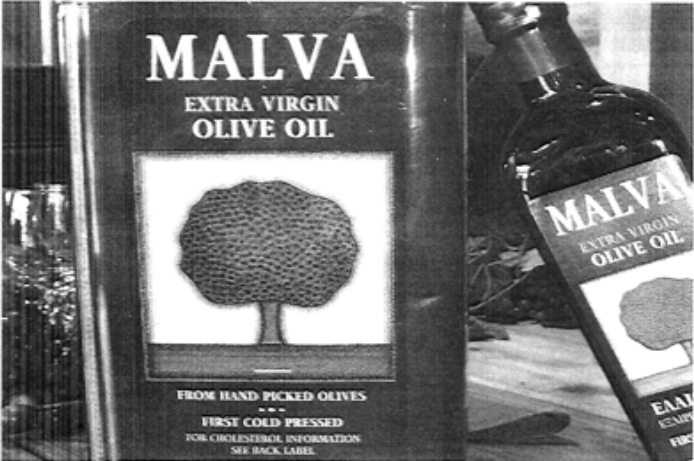
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## Six-month break from austerity



**Troika will not impose further measures over coming months but expects commitments to be met**

Representatives of Greece's international creditors – the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund, known collectively as the troika – have decided on a six-month moratorium during which they will not demand any new austerity measures while also insisting that the country stick to its promises, Kathimerini has learned.

The aim of the troika is to give the Greek government a chance to implement a raft of measures and structural reforms committed to in exchange for continued rescue funding, while also attempting to ensure that Greece and its debt problems do not become a pre-election issue in Germany, which is gearing up for polls in September, sources have indicated.

A high-ranking official at the Greek Finance Ministry who is in a position to know the substance of a meeting of troika officials that took place last week in Brussels told Kathimerini that foreign auditors are particularly concerned about lagging efforts to crack down on tax evasion and expect tax collection targets to be met before the approval of any further rescue funding. The ministry official said it was clear that the troika was displeased that authorities last year only conducted some 30 percent of tax inspections that they had agreed to.

It is hoped that imposing a moratorium on austerity will mean that the government can focus on implementing tax collection measures as well opening up closed professions without sparking further social unrest, and losing even more political capital, by introducing the new reforms.

The IMF, in a country report on Greece released on Friday, expressed concern that Greek authorities may face a backlash from austerity-weary citizens this year.

Ensuring that Greece does not become the focus of what is expected to be a hotly-contested election campaign in Germany is another fear. Germans, who have invested the most in Greece's bailout, will be reluctant to hear about fresh resistance to austerity in Greece even as speculation mounts about another haircut, sources suggest. In an interview with Sunday's Kathimerini, IMF chief Christine Lagarde said that creditors could approve another haircut for Greece if the country meets its commitments.

## Obama embraces progressive agenda in second inaugural address



**President Barack Obama delivered a forceful defense of the nation's safety net programs, and vowed to expand gay rights and tackle the problem of climate change in his second inaugural address Monday afternoon.**

The speech was a bolder and more specific defense of the president's liberal governing vision than the address he gave four years ago. For his first inaugural address, Obama stuck to a broader outline of his ideals and called on politicians to overcome partisan differences and work together in the face of economic crisis.

On national television and before a crowd of hundreds of thousands of spectators who descended on the Mall, Obama staunchly reiterated his belief that gay people should be allowed to marry.

"Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law—for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well," Obama said. He also mentioned the gay rights Stonewall Riots of the 1960s in the same breath as the Selma civil rights marches. In the same section of the speech, the president made oblique references to gun violence, equal pay for women and immigration reform. He called for "all our

children, from the streets of Detroit to the hills of Appalachia to the quiet lanes of Newtown" to be kept safe from harm.

Earlier in the speech, Obama said to avoid the problem of climate change would "betray our children and future generations," signaling he may also make that issue a key piece of his second-term agenda. He abandoned efforts during his first term to push for so-called "cap and trade" legislation to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

The president challenged critics who have argued that the government must reduce its spending and cut back on social welfare programs, including Obama's health care reform law. Obama said that the country must reduce its deficit, but that the nation must work to protect equality of opportunity, in what seemed to be a reference to his battles with congressional Republicans over taxing and spending.

"We are true to our creed when a little girl born into the bleakest poverty knows that she has the same chance to succeed as anybody else, because she is an American, she is free, and she is equal, not just in the eyes of God but also in our own," he said. Obama argued that the nation's entitlement programs make America stronger because they protect this chance at equality. "We recognize that no matter how responsibly we live our lives, any one of us, at any time, may face a job loss, or a sudden illness, or a home swept away in a terrible storm," Obama said. "The commitments we make to each other—through Medicare, and Medicaid, and Social Security—these things do not sap our initiative; they strengthen us. They do not make us a nation of takers; they free us to take the risks that make this country great."

The president also warned in the 2,095-word speech that the country cannot succeed if a "shrinking few" succeed economically while the middle class suffers.

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**Free Syrian Army fighters hold their weapons during heavy clashes with government forces in Aleppo, Syria, Sunday, Jan. 20, 2013. The revolt against President Bashar Assad began in March 2011 with peaceful protests but morphed into a civil war that has killed more than 60,000 people, according to a recent United Nations recent estimate. (AP Photo/Andoni Lubaki)**