

My personal interest in the events surrounding Greece's role in the Second World War and the majority of the items I have collected that form this exhibition evolved from a folded, tattered document that my father used to treasure amongst his most prized documents in a metallic, fireproof strongbox that included old photos from the 1940s and 1950s, original boat tickets from my parents' immigration to this country in the early 1960s and a host of naturalization forms and other "important" documents.

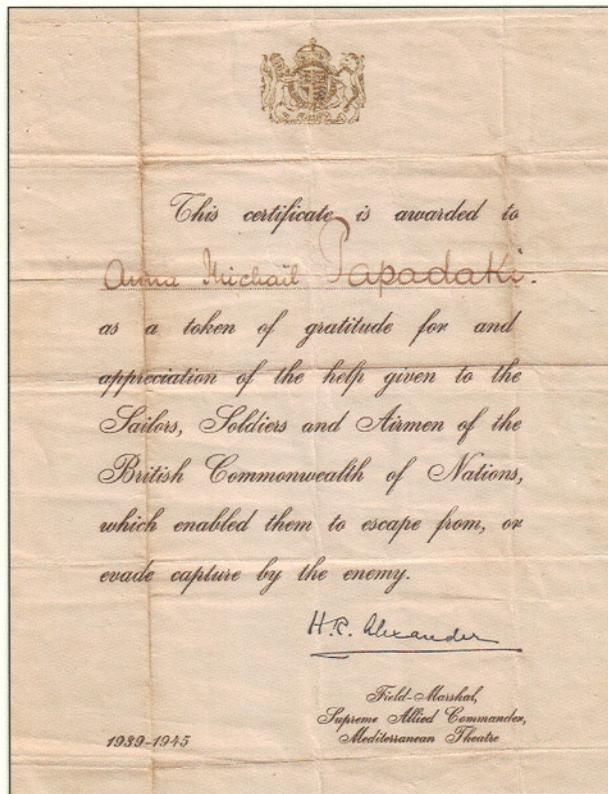
It was a letter of acknowledgement to my grandmother signed by H. R. Alexander, the British Allied Field Commander on the Island of Crete whose forces defended the island from the Nazi invasion in May 1941. This particular letter was given to civilians like my grandmother who had gone above and beyond their call of duty to defend the forces of freedom and protect the allied soldiers.

As the years passed, I learned about the history of my family and their exploits during the war. These stories included the harboring of British soldiers in safe-houses and the hiding of two Cretan Jews who ultimately survived because my grandfather refused to cooperate with the Nazi occupiers.

At thirteen, my father survived a Nazi firing squad, which took the lives of many of his own family members when a twist of fate caused an explosion in the olive groves behind the shooters and enabled the young ones (including my father) to run for their lives.

Such stories were common dinner conversation and as I grew older, I started matching them with what was happening simultaneously in the United States.

What has evolved from my family's involvement is this collection of items that tell the story of the United States re-



sponse to the valiant role that tiny, defenseless Greece played during the Second World War, when sixty five years ago Greece was the shining example of courage and dignity to this country, when ideals stood first before political interests and the world's largest democracy—the United States, came to the rescue of the world's oldest democracy, Greece.

Gregory C. Pappas
Collector

April 1941:

After pushing the Italians back into full retreat, Adolph Hitler must send the Nazi army to take control of the situation in Greece— or as newspaper reports noted at the time stated: “to clean up Mussolini’s mess.” The Nazis invade Greece in April 1941 and impose heavy measures against the freedom-loving Greeks. Europe’s first organized resistance movement against the Nazis takes root in Greece. The Greek population pays dearly for their freedom-loving tendencies. Entire villages are burned and reprisals against the civilian population are widespread. Famine and disease spreads like wildfire through the country. In the end, Greece will lose one eighth of its population during the war and the immediate aftermath.



Propaganda Poster "Greece Fights On"
Posters like this one, published by the Greek Office of Information in Washington DC were distributed to enlist support for the resisting Greeks 1942. Artist: E. McKnight Kauffer



The male population of Kondomari, near Hania, on the island of Crete is executed by Nazi troops in an olive grove.

*Photo credit: Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni
Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu
Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial
Museum Photo archives*

Original ACME wire image photograph (1942)

Dead bodies being picked up from the streets of Athens from famine. Images like this one were distributed to dozens of newspapers throughout the United States that helped rally the average American behind the cause of relief to the starving people of Greece.

