

A GREEK FOR ALL SEASONS!

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He is 80 but looks and walks like man in his 50s. He is a WW II veteran serving as a Seabee in Philippines under the famous General McArthur and has 2 bronze battle stars to prove it. Went to college and graduated with high honors in 3 years, while working full time at a steel mill. He was the **first Greek-American/Orthodox** to be elected in the Ohio legislature, but today several Greeks, [*one of them, Trakas, is running for Secretary of State*], and many Eastern Orthodox are in the legislature. Hard working, Harry rose with phenomenal speed to the pinnacle of Ohio political hierarchy, serving in several leadership posts and 2 memorable years as **President of the Ohio Senate**. He has shaken hands with every President of the United States since Franklin Roosevelt; was a pal with several of them, especially with those of the Democratic persuasion *or of Greek decent* [*like fellow Cretan M Dukakis who run for President in 1988*]. He has been a pioneering champion of legislation to **advance public education**, to ease the employment and challenges **facing the handicapped**, to **protect consumers** from fraudulent sales practices, and managed to get support from both sides of the aisle for these **noble causes**. He has made more than 60 international trips to more than 20 countries [*20 to Greece*] and served 22 years in the Ohio legislature, 1971 to 1993. His list of honorary citations, awards, certificates of extraordinary service to Greek and American organizations and institutions runs into the hundreds, but he is one of the **most approachable** men I ever met. He is neither a medical doctor [*like his fellow Youngstown Cretan, Dr Tzagournis*], nor a PhD, but you can address him as "Doctor", because he has been awarded the honorary degree of Doctor from 3 universities.

He is Haralampos Michelakis in Greek, **HARRY MESHEL** in the local jargon, and to all **A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS!**

When he got to the podium to speak during the dedication of the Kleisthenis bust in the Ohio Capitol in March 2004, a project initiated by one of his Greek protégés, Aristotelis Hutras, I watched with amazement how everyone in the legislative chambers were listening to him with admiration. Harry is a suave speaker with an uncanny sense of humor. He is a **great orator** in the tradition of Demosthenes of ancient Athens or more like fellow Cretan Eleftherios Venizelos. Venizelos was the maverick politician during the first 3 decades of the 20th century, who Harry credits with bringing Greece into the western fold [*which resulted in the big schism, Vassiliki vs. Venizeliki, or in today's terminology, neo-conservatives vs. liberals*].



Harry's father and mother left for America in 1916, 3 years after Chania hometown Venizelos managed the union of Crete with Greece, and a day after their wedding. One of 6 children, Harry was an honor student in high school, served in the Navy during World War II, got a BS from Youngstown State University [*YSU, a school that Harry's friend Tressel brought into national prominence with 4 national football championships, the man that also coached OSU to a national championship*]. He got a master's degree from Columbia University.

As **Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee** from 1974 to 1980, Harry spent much time in Columbus [*his daughter lives here*] and helped financially not only his alma mater [*one of YSU buildings is called Meshel Hall in his honor*], but also OSU. Now I can see why the OSU president appointed me in 1974 in a committee to liaise with legislators, but I did not get to meet Harry, as I left to work for the UN in 1975. One of the projects he helped fund was the

*"For some of us it is impossible to remove our **Greek ethnicity!**
I always had a strong sense of **pride** for being Greek! The Greek language fascinated me. It became a **source of pride** as I discovered the many English words that originated from the Greek.
BEING GREEK HAS BEEN FUN!"*

Harry Meshel

world renown James center for cancer in the OSU medical hospital complex.