

# Eve Condakes: A Hellene of the World

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Evanthia Condakes left a few days ago to journey to her beloved husband, Leo, with whom she lived a life centered on Orthodoxy, Hellenism and family and together with whom she left a lasting mark on the Greek Diaspora of America.

Eve was a woman of many gifts and talents who was characterized by her fineness, her courtesy and her diplomacy. She mastered both the English and Greek languages and had the ability to decorate her speech with the most elaborate words. A true aristocrat, Eve was able in eight and more decades of life to build a wonderful family and an outstanding career and to offer her incredible generosity to the Greek Orthodox Community of the United States.

A most important moment for Eve was when she was appointed president of the National Philoptochos. Tirelessly criss-crossing the country in her four years in office, Evanthia Condakes of Boston was able to breathe new life into the organization. Raising over \$4,000,000 during her tenure, she was able to allocate the vast majority of the sums to the various charities rallying around the Greek-American National Philoptochos.

Dynamic and charismatic and with a successful career at Avon behind her, Evanthia Condakes was called upon in 1998 by then Archbishop, Spyridon, to head the church's leading charitable organization. Subsequently re-appointed by his successor, Demetrius, to a second term, she would go on to embrace the voluntary role with love and passion and with a profound determination to leave her legacy on the Philoptochos and in the promotion of its admirable causes.

With Eve at its helm, the Philoptochos stood proudly and dynamically alongside the September 11 victims, offering not only monetary donations but also a physical presence after America's biggest tragedy. "It was an unexpected moment, not for America alone but for the whole of humanity. We tried, with all our might, to stand close to the victims of this atrocity which struck at the heart of the western world," Eve would say in an interview with me.

During her leadership, the National Philoptochos made its presence felt after the destruction caused by Hurricane Mitch in Honduras and after the devastating 1999 earthquake in Athens and in subsequent ones in Turkey, India and El Salvador. Under Eve's guidance, Greeks and non-Greeks and Christians and non-Christians enjoyed the generous assistance of the National Philoptochos of America.

Being a devoted mother and grandmother herself, she turned her gaze to the aid of the sick and weak children amongst us. "These are the most precious creatures in the world," she would often confide to me. As such, she was able to allocate more than one million dollars to children with cancer and various other diseases in order to provide some relief to them and their families.

Eve Condakes also focused her attention on a permanent and important project surrounding St.

Basil's Academy in Garrison, New York, which has been converted into a guesthouse for orphaned and non-privileged children. There, through various events during her tenure, she was able to raise \$1.5 million to provide services for many destitute Greek-American children.

True believers in the idea of a strong bond between the Archdiocese of America and the Patriarchate, Eve and Leo Condakes were generous supporters of the church's needs in Constantinople. A close friend of Patriarch Bartholomew, Eve became a fervent supporter of the reopening of the Theological School of Halki.

In her birthplace of Boston, Eve was a major contributor to the renovations of the Cathedral and an ongoing supporter of the camp of the Metropolis of Boston with whose Metropolitan, Methodios, she always maintained strong ties.

Evanthia Condakes was also able to reach beyond the boundaries of her community as, together with her beloved husband, Leo, they provided the funds for the Antiquities wing of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. When we would walk down the expansive corridors towards the "Eve and Leo Condakes Gallery," emotion would get the best of us and she would begin to tell her story.

"My father was the publisher of the first Greek newspaper in Boston," she would say. "He, along with my mother, taught us the Greek language and the obligation we had to our historical memory. I remember when we would visit the Museum when we were very young and he would show us the ancient Greek sculptures down in the basement. We would leave with a bitterness that our history was being housed in the basement of the museum. Thus, when the opportunity arose, my late husband, Leo, and I decided to offer a generous donation to build a wing that would properly display those ancient Greek artifacts. I am proud to see that our treasures have now become objects of intense admiration in one of the busiest museums in the United States."

Eve may have left for the heavens, but she will remain in the people's thoughts as a lady of the world who was able to perfectly balance her Greek and American identity. She was a symbol and she will always hold a special place in my heart. The Greek-American community was blessed to have a woman as radiant and strong as Evanthia Condakes.