

Report of the Supreme Vice President Dr. James F. Dimitriou

"Mighty indeed are the
marks and monuments of
our Empire . . . Future
ages will wonder at us, as
the present age wonders
at us now."

---Thucydides---

Brothers and Delegates to the 80th Annual Ahepa Supreme Convention, it has been a great honor and privilege to continue to serve the Order of Ahepa on the Supreme Lodge, this past year. From the time of my election to a second term as Supreme Vice President, I have dutifully discharged by responsibilities to the Supreme Lodge in a most responsible fashion, fulfilling the charge of my office.

This last year has been a most critical time for the Order of Ahepa as we have stood on the crossroads of change and self-analysis. This year, as Supreme Vice President I have been diligent to continue to execute my duties in a fashion to maintain the sacred trust vested in my office by my fellow Brothers at the Supreme Convention. As your Supreme Vice President, I believe these same challenges have been opportunities for the Order of Ahepa to rise to the occasion and fulfill our Hellenic Destiny in the 21st Century.

As your Supreme Vice President, I have had the opportunity to demonstrate the commitment to the Supreme Lodge and the Order of Ahepa to provide both service and responsibility to our membership goals. Fully aware of the keen sense of service expected of the Lodge at this time, it is paramount that the Supreme Lodge Officers continue an effort to provide credibility and diligence along with the spirit of renewal in executing all of our current policies and programs.

It is incumbent on our Officers to undertake a Herculean task to restore the credibility and authority vested in the Supreme Lodge to work toward both serving our members and expanding our membership. We must continue to work in a responsible fashion, committed to new membership programs and a vision for the future of the Order of Ahepa. Former political alliances, personalities, and intrigues have no place in the future of Ahepa. Leadership must provide a commitment to a vision and to programs, thus avoiding at all costs the potential decline into the abyss of the smoke filled room with allegiances and promotion to office based solely on loyalty rather than service, accomplishment and dedication.

Ancient Athenians held public service in the highest regard. This must be restored to the Ahepa. As Demosthenes spoke on the Pnyx, on the responsibility of democracy:

"There is a class of people in Athens, gentlemen, who excel at voicing the rights of others in this assembly. To them my recommendation would be simply this: They should make it their aim to do justice to Athens when speaking to others. They then will begin by doing their own duty."

Serving the membership should be the primary goal of the Supreme Lodge and the Supreme Vice President without political concern or intrigue. All efforts must be focused on maintaining our current membership, serving their needs and provide for their potential contributions to the Order. We should institute a permanent delinquent membership program without concern of who is the officer in charge, rather than the goal to restore our membership potential. In that regard, through the help of our Executive Director, Demo Kolaras, over 4000 letters were sent to targeted delinquent Ahepa members in an effort to restore our ranks. This project was undertaken in May, and the results of the effort will be available at the Supreme Convention. We must continue to bring these members back to the Order. Follow up letters, calls and personal contact with their respective Districts and Chapters will be provided.

“Know Thyself,” The National Ahepa Membership Survey was undertaken for the first time in the Ahepa’s history. The first part of the Survey was sent to both members of the Ahepa and Daughters of Penelope. Members responded to the first task by listing spouses and children that were members of the Ahepa Family and identifying those that will be targeted for future membership. While the survey was instituted quite late in the membership year, we still have nearly 750 responses mailed in. From these questionnaires, we will follow-up with those that may become new members of each respective Order. I do want to personally thank the Daughters of Penelope for their cooperation and support of this project.

Part II of the National Ahepa Membership Survey was a comprehensive questionnaire for all Ahepa members. This was developed through careful study of similar instruments used by a variety of national organizations. The effort was made to identify what our members know about the Order of Ahepa, the Supreme Lodge, the Board, Headquarters, our programs, goals and policies. The effort is simply to identify what our members are thinking and how they respond to the programs currently in use. From the findings of this questionnaire, the Supreme Lodge and the Board will have a very valuable instrument for progress, change and vision. At this early date over 600 members have completed and mailed the questionnaire from virtually every Ahepa District! The Findings of the Survey will be tabulated and made available to the Supreme Lodge and the membership at the time of the Supreme Convention in New York City. It is my firm recommendation to continue this analytical process to promote the involvement of our members in all of our programs, activities and policies. Again, I believe that this should be undertaken on a routine basis so we can truly know what our chapters and members are thinking and turn their concerns into positive action! By no means was the survey expected to be complete, but only a guideline for the work at the Supreme Convention and the new Supreme Lodge.

Communication is the key to a program of progress, growth and reform! In addition to our Membership Questionnaire, the “Ahepan” and the Ahepa Web Page have witnessed a much needed improvement that has fostered a new level of communication, information and involvement. Through the miracle of the Internet, interaction and involvement must continue! We must continue to focus greater efforts to promote the Ahepa Web Page and encourage Districts and Chapters to link on and find more areas for our members to participate and communicate! Our future is here! All future chapter and district secretaries must have e-mail addresses, faxes and participate on-line. So many administrative issues could be resolved much more efficiently. The Educational Foundation provides our students with applications that can be downloaded. Membership Services provide applications and copies of the Membership Questionnaire. Now we must provide for these applications to become fully interactive with membership and scholarship application fees accepted through credit cards and expanded e-commerce. Further, the work of the Ahepa Cyprus and

Hellenic Affairs Committee could continue to expand its grass-roots system in this most efficient fashion.

As we approach the 80th Anniversary of the Order of Ahepa, we must assume the purpose and direction given to us by our pioneers. Let us all look with confidence and certainty that our Hellenic Heritage as it is cast in the American Dream has made our Fraternity secure in its future. Our gratitude must go out to those that work for the Order at the District level. For it is here, on the line of fire, that the work of Ahepa is vital in service to our members. We must continue to seek ways to support and promote our District Governors to be given the tools of serving their District and Chapter needs. The recommendations of the National Membership Survey will help provide some of the answers as well as help to define a direction for the Ahepa to grow. Now the future is in the hands of the delegates of the Supreme Convention. May we all deliberate wisely.

As I complete my 10th year of service at the national level, I must thank all the Brothers that I have had the honor of serving throughout the Ahepa Domain. I especially want to thank the Brothers of my Liaisons Districts "out West." As we convene in New York, I must recount to the delegates, the Ahepa is in fine hands in the West and our future must take particular note of the needs and accomplishments of the Ahepa in the Western regions. I have had the privilege of meeting many of our District Governors in their workshops, conferences, conventions and communications to their Districts. They all must be commended and encouraged for their tireless work.

The commitment of our pioneer Ahepans was to the preservation of the Spirit of Hellenism and the ideal of democracy while opening the door to the American Dream for future generations. That commitment has fostered a proud history of many successful programs.

For Hellenism and the Order of Ahepa to survive in the next century, we must now all work together in the true spirit of unity. Let us commit ourselves for a successful convention. Let the guiding lamp of the "Greek Fire" of ancient Hellas once again serve as the Beacon of the Order of Ahepa in the 21st Century.

"Despite of every yoke she bears,
That land is glory's still and theirs!
"Tis still a watchword to the earth:
When man would do a deed of worth
he points to Greece, and turns to tread,
So sanctioned, on the tyrant's head:
he looks to her , and rushes on
Where life is lost or freedom won.

---The Siege of Corinth, 1916

Fraternally,

Dr. James F. Dimitriou
Supreme Vice President.

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