

Didi Alvo's Birthday



This is a picture from Didi's birthday, taken on June 11, 1969.

We adopted Didi in 1964, thirteen years after we had gotten married. My brother, who had married around the same time, already had three children.

Mari was very upset because my brother with his wife had three children and we were not able to have any at all. We went to Israel and did some medical exams, because in Jerusalem there was a very good gynecologist, very well known. He was doing tests for artificial insemination, but it didn't work. We both wanted to have a child.

In fact we both wanted to have a girl. I wasn't very interested in the continuity of our name. I thought that a girl is closer to her parents.

So we decided to go for an adoption, even though adoption at that time was considered a taboo. I wanted to adopt two together, so we got over and done with it, but Mari didn't.

That's when Mari started getting involved with the foundling hospital, thinking that if we found a baby, we would be able to adopt it. There was also a committee of the Friends' of the Founding Hospital.

Mari was in it too and she went very often to help the nurses. They had many babies then, around 70-80 babies. All the staff loved her very much.

One day Mari comes back in the house and announces to me, "I have found our child". "How did you find a child?". "This morning", she replies, "at the incubator". "Today they left us a baby and as soon as I saw it, I lost my heart to her", she replies. "She is what suits us best". She looked a bit like me. In fact some had said that it was an arranged case.

We thought we would take the baby as a godfather family. But if the foundling hospital would want to have it back, you had to return it. We accepted those terms.

Later on, after we had the baby for a while we thought to proceed with the adoption. When we said that we would like to adopt the baby, normally the procedure was that they would send a social worker around the house to come and check out the family, the house where the baby would be raised, and the living conditions in general.

When she came around, after the second meeting they became very good friends Mari. She saw the environment that we lived in and she also saw the family, and we also had a very good name in the city. She reported back very quickly with the best comments about us. So then we decided to proceed with the adoption.

For the adoption to be absolutely legal, you had to get the approval of the court. At that time, there was a silly law, which later on was abolished, which said that in case any sexual relationships would develop, if you were younger than fifty years old, you could not adopt a child.

Since even the judges thought that it was a silly law, they didn't ask for your identification card in order to check your age, but instead they would ask you to present some witnesses. We had a professor at the Lycee, Pelopidas Papadopoulos was his name.

We were around the same age, and thus we became very good friends, not only with me but with the whole class. He would come around the shop after the war and have a coffee with us, as a friend. I therefore asked him, "can you come as a witness and say that I am over 50 years old?" "Of course I will come, and I will tell them that you were a student of mine".

When the first day of hearing took place I had put some face-powder on my hair to make them look whiter. Papadopoulos came too. There came also a social worker assigned from the Ministry. She would speak in the name of the baby.

The judge would ask "Do you consent?" and she had to reply "I consent". The social worker was from the Office of Welfare and hired by the foundling hospital. When they found out from the Office of Welfare that there would soon be a court decision, they instructed her to not agree, "you won't agree, because the Bishop of Mitilini does not agree".

There was an organization at that time called "The Christian Light", or something like that. "You won't agree because otherwise we will fire you" they told her. So she came and told us before the court "I am really sorry, but I cannot agree because I will loose my job".

So our lawyer says to us "since things are not going our way, maybe we should not appear in court". So while the hearing was just about to take place, it was cancelled.

When I realized that they were going to take the child back, I said to Mari, "I wasn't afraid to leave and hide from the Germans. I will take the child and let them come and find me". I had a very good friend and lawyer, Mr. Sakis Athanasiadis.

When he heard that -he had a very liberal mind- he was very angry. "You will see what I will do to them. I will sort them out". He was a very well known lawyer and a friend of the judges.

He goes to the manager of the District Attorney who was a friend of his and tells him what had happened. "Don't worry", he replies, "because the court has assigned this woman", this social worker. "I will stop her".

He gets an order out and turns her away, and puts in her place the assistant of my lawyer to say "I consent". The assistant was not in the Office of Welfare, but the head of the District Attorney had assigned him as a guardian for the child.

So the court eventually takes place. Professor Papadopoulos comes and says "I know him, he is an old student of mine, etc., and I know that this is his age". "Do you consent?" they ask the lawyer's assistant.

"I consent", he replies. The funny thing is that all the lawyers that were in court, were all gathered there waiting for their court cases to start. And they shouted all together "We all consent" All the lawyers together.

Because they understood that it was for the benefit of the child. And the verdict was positive and no one could bother us anymore.