

Philip “Pike” Sarris Diploma Dedication—AHEPA, May 19, 2016

Greetings and “Kalispera” to all of you, especially the Sarris Family—Pike, Lilian, Tommy, George, Xenii, and the Sarris grandchildren.

I am here to represent the Dean of the College of Engineering at Georgia Tech, and bring much- and long-deserved closure to an important event that should have been concluded 64 years ago, back in 1952. You may know, and will hear again from our Choir just in case, that when you come to Georgia Tech you officially become a hell of an engineer; but did you know that you also earn a special place in Georgia Tech’s hearts and minds for a hell of a long time?

First, I would like to convey the apologies of Dr. Gary May, Dean of our College of Engineering, who very much wished to be here today but had to attend an unexpected family affair. He sends warm greetings, congratulations, and wishes.

1952 seems so long ago, that one can barely imagine how the world was like back then. So, I thought I take us on a quick tour down memory lane to get a glimpse of what was happening 64 years ago.

- 1952 started with Harry Truman as US President, and ended with General Dwight Eisenhower winning the Republican nomination and being elected 34th US President. Right after his election, Eisenhower went to the Korean Peninsula (Nov 29) to try and end the Korean War. The War finally ended by the Armistice Agreement of 27 July, 1953. It claimed nearly 3000 American and 200 Greek lives.
- Feb 6: Queen Elizabeth II succeeds King George VI to the British throne. She turned out to be the longest reigning monarch of the British throne. She recently surpassed Queen Victoria who reigned for 63 years in the 1800’s.
- Feb 26: Winston Churchill (in his second term as Prime Minister) announces that Britain has its own atomic bomb. The age of the Cold War had arrived.
- May 7: The concept of the integrated circuit, the basis of all modern computers, is published by Geoffrey Dummer, a British electronics engineer.
- May 28: Greek women receive the right to vote for the first time. They also maintained the right to inherit property, even after being married. Can you even imagine? Despite the glorious roles that women played in our 3000-year old history, it was not until 1952 that they could vote in parliamentary elections!
- Jul 26: Eva Peron, Argentina’s First Lady, the Lady of Hope as she became to be known, dies at age 33. After her death, President Juan Peron loses popular

support and eventually the Presidency to a military coup (in 1955). Argentina was about to enter a long, dark chapter in its history.

- Sep 8: Ernest Hemingway publishes his famed short fictional novel “The Old Man and the Sea.” It was Hemingway’s last major work published during his lifetime. In 1953, “The Old Man and the Sea” was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and it contributed to the Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Hemingway in 1954. Hemingway died in 1961, but his works are considered classics and had a strong influence on American literature.
- Oct 7: Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, is born in Leningrad. I do not wish to say more about him, only that the jury is still out.
- Nov 14: General Alexanthros Papayos wins parliamentary elections and becomes Greek Prime Minister. One of his appointments was a young and energetic Minister of Public works—Constantine Karamanlis—who was destined to dominate Greece’s political history for several decades.

1952 and Georgia Tech

- GT President was Professor Blake Van Leer, an Electrical Engineer.
- Georgia Tech officially allows women to enroll in its day-time programs.
- Sep 1: Bud Peterson, current Georgia Tech President, is born in Palo Alto, CA.

These were a few of the many important events that took place in 1952 and, much like Mr. Sarris’ life, shaped the world we live in today.

But let’s return to the story of the Sarris family who in the early 1900s were immigrating from the little island of Symi to the US. AHEPA was actually being formed right about the same time and made it its mission to promote the Greek ideals of education, philanthropy, civic responsibility, and family and individual excellence. The AHEPA mission is remarkably similar to Georgia Tech’s, which calls for a lifelong commitment to the advancement of knowledge, individual excellence, and societal service. Watching Symi fading in the background of the Aegaeon Sea, I wonder if the Sarris family could imagine that their first son would come to epitomize such lofty ideals.

Pike was indeed that son, born in the Sarris’ new home in Florida, who grew up to become a hell of an engineer, served honorably in Korea, worked with distinction for nearly 40 years at Norfolk Southern, and became the patriarch of the wonderful Sarris family that so lovingly surrounds him today.

Mr. Sarris, we are here to recognize and celebrate your extraordinary life and career. On behalf of Georgia Tech, it is my honor and privilege to confer on you the Georgia Tech Civil Engineering Bachelor’s Diploma, and to recognize your career-long and exceptional

service to the Civil Engineering profession. Georgia Tech, together with your family, your children, and your grand-children, is very proud of your career accomplishments. Yours is a truly inspiring legacy, and this diploma is honored by your life's work as much as it honors you. Congratulations.

