"MY HERO"

Prologue

There are people who live the unimaginable, but find the mental fortitude to resist either anger or resignation and rise above the small issues, objectives, and difficulties. There are people who do not fatalistically accept the failures and mistakes of our societies and insist on wanting to find solutions. They are people whose example should lead us, because they are the authentic leaders. Eleni Karydi is such a person. A true leader. Unwittingly, and completely unfairly, she went to a place where no one wants to be, she lived the worst thing a parent can experience, but from that place she came back neither a misanthrope nor a nihilist. Eleni Karydi lost her Dimitris because of an unscrupulous driver, but she did not turn her unspeakable pain into poison or indifference. She made him an act and a creation. She made him a social contribution. She naturally took the situation into her own hands so that no one else would find themselves in her position and became an activist by founding the EFTHITA - OBSERVATORY OF ROAD SAFETY OF RHODES. She saw all this tragedy that torments us collectively, our irresponsibility, our unwillingness to obey the rules of the road, the fatalism and so much more, as her own responsibility. She didn't let someone else do it. She did not follow the trend of complacency. She knew she was right. Think if we had more people like her in the world what would happen. People who lift society higher with their example. Eleni Karydi is – a heroine of mine. She is a mother, who teaches that love for your child, true love, is love for the children of the whole world. This book is another nugget of her legacy, a small treasure, without exaggeration. The terrible experience highlights the need to solve a problem that kills and leaves thousands of people disabled, not only in Greece, but all over the world. This book captures a human's fight, a fight that should be a fight of all of us. It is a narrative with a clear goal: to get rid of road accidents. When a message is formulated so clearly, by such a reliable person, it has a huge power. This book is a humble reminder that leaders are born in difficulties, but also a resounder warning: not to stay in words. Eleni Karydi does everything for us to hear her, so you never need to find another in her place again. I think this book is needed by all because it gets us out of our comfort zone. It needs to be read by everyone who really cares for their fellow human, because it feels like in our streets is taking place a real genocide -road accidents do not discriminate. It is great the price and pleasure to know Eleni Karydi and other road safety activists. They all give me strength and courage. They make me be optimistic. I have unlimited admiration for Eleni Karydis and I feel that we all owe her a lot. Let us express our gratitude to her in practice by becoming what her example calls for: more responsible citizens.

Manolis Andriotakis

Back cover: Sunday January 20, 2002

A TRAGIC LANDMARK

On this day, an unconscious driver will take the life of a 19-year-old child, full of dreams and ambitions, plunging his family into lifelong mourning.

But the pain of the unjust loss of her son turns into a driving force for the tragic mother, Eleni Karydi, who dedicates her life to the search for the causes that lead to similar tragedies and sets a life goal that there will never be any more innocent victims on the asphalt.

She is not alone in this mission. By her side she always has the exact memory of her hero, Dimitris, who gives her courage, motivates her, guides her and directs her so that she can become our own heroine. She who with motherly care warns of all dangers that lurk on the roads, that informs about the rules concerning road safety, creating a shield of protection so that we can all, young and old, return safely to our homes, to our friends, to our family.

The book is a reminder that we can all, with our responsible behavior, save human lives, eliminate road traffic deaths and injuries. She hopes for a world full of joy with peace in the streets, without pain and tears.

GOAL "ZERO DEATHS" on the roads.

All of us are potential road safety heroes

At the book launch on February 22, 2022, Mrs. Donna Irva Price and Mr. Fillipo Randi prefaced with a message.

Relevant excerpts from the presentation

Eleni Karydis does not write to move us, but to wake us up. And what she achieves through the pages of her book is to "step into her shoes" and with the guidance of Dimitris, who returns to Rhodes as a teacher, to guide us become better users of the road. To learn about the causes of road traffic collisions, the importance of obeying the Road Traffic Code, the principles of sustainable development and mobility, but also the consequences of road accidents and victims' rights, and how the criminal courts' extremely low sentences for road traffic offenses intensify road negligence and irresponsibility.

She channeled her grief, the tragic loss of her son into strength, in hopes of reducing road accidents and human suffering so that other mothers don't suffer. Thinking that nothing is higher than human life. No one has the right to remove or destroy it.

The development of strong political will, road literacy and road safety education is the demand of both authorities and stakeholders as well as the population as a whole. The bet of the next day, of the next decade 2021-2030 is big.

Road traffic deaths and injuries are an unnatural cause of death and injury, which are largely preventable because they are due to a lack of road safety education and training. Traffic accidents are predictable and can be eliminated. Without vision all human beings decay, without hope all human beings perish. We all have responsibility for a safe and secure traffic.

It is an upliftment of the soul and a voice of respect for the author's lost son.

A memory journey of the mother Eleni between reality and dream, between life and paradise. The experiential experience of the mother Eleni opens the book and closes it with a series of prompts and concerns for the "tomorrow" of road safety in the country. A hymn book to memories and responsibility.

"I want to save the children of other mothers," writes the mother Eleni expressing her reflection on the destructive continuation of this gangrene of accidents that has taken over our streets as another form of terrorism.

But Dimitris also comes like a bird in the book, like a gust of wind to instruct us with a message: "Zero fatal on the Roads".

As a successful teacher he delivers lessons in responsibility and educates his friends and classmates by challenging them into a creative relationship of planning and dealing with this modern "curse". Education and courage in the act of success.

The book harmoniously marries emotion with realism, love with revulsion, anxiety with strategic planning, dream with action, the "why" with answers. Essentially it is a manual for dealing with the "crimes of the asphalt" and how we will be educated to react to the constant brutality not with hoods but with the speed of the terror counter.

"I'm here to stop the war on the road... Don't let this asphalt war destroy other families" (p. 297), exclaims Dimitris before flying back to his own space, to his own heavenly nest. And before Dimitris travels, he appoints dear mother Eleni as an ambassador to convey his message with persuasiveness and heroism. But Dimitris does not forget his consuls: his beloved father and his two beloved sisters: Maria and Ioanna.

Dimitris from the sky. "I have returned to my heaven" (p. 307) The route of my return is long. I was very tired, I kept thinking of all those memories that gave me strength and will keep me company for many, many years. My journey on earth had a destination. To speak, to meet my students, the institutions, to transfer my knowledge, to study hard the scientific reports that were completely unknown to me. I asked for the help of the scientists to give my personal testimony, and the most important thing I succeeded in doing was establishing the EFTHITA - ROAD SAFETY OBSERVATORY OF RHODES in my beloved city. Its people will convey through actions and interventions the value of human life, it will be like I think of a roaring lion and it will prove that it has the power to achieve its goal. It's not just my wish, it's the answer to all my worries and concerns...

Whatever my achievements were, they all started with my dreams, the plans I made when I was still a child, how I planned them and how I would conquer them.

I was unique and besides, as my mom used to say, I had a gift called "leadership".

But all my uniqueness and leadership... ah! my mom, it stopped when I was 19. I didn't want it, nor did I plan it...

For days, whole years I sat at my computer, writing, drawing all the things that were supposed to remind me of what I had to do... But I didn't finish them. They were left on the computer locked with passwords that only I knew. I took it all with me as I embarked on my long journey of no return on February 12, 2002 from criminal driver behavior.

I feel frustrated for the pain my loved ones are experiencing. But on the other hand, I feel shocked because I managed to tell the story of my life with passion as I felt it, believing that it will help my fellow human beings to drive responsibly on the roads of the whole world. My hidden but very real goal is to make others learn what I want. To learn and realize the value of life.

On page 297 it is written indicatively: "Only those who are forgotten die..." and I add: "but how can people be forgotten whose love is fragrant even now"... "Because love does not grow old, does not dry up, but is declared". And this love is spread everywhere by Dimitris's Mom and Dad for their star who shines like a ray of sunshine in their home and is not forgotten. He shines because "he" wants it and this feeling in a magical way and with the motherly potion of Eleni, he distributes abundantly to all of us as a holy psalm.

The book "My Hero" graces the libraries of the 110 schools of Rhodes following a decision by the Board of Directors of the Primary & Secondary School Committee of the Municipality of Rhodes. The goal is to adorn the libraries of all schools in the South Aegean Region

All the proceeds from the sales of the book will be allocated to the purposes - goals of EFTHITA - ROAD SAFETY OBSERVATORY OF RHODES.

EFTHITA (Traffic Accident Victim Support Society)-ROAD SAFETY OBSERVATORY OF RHODES is a Non-Profit, Non-Governmental Organization, in the field of Road Safety.

It is the first NGO founded in Greece by the mother of a traffic accident victim.

EFTHITA - Road Safety Observatory of RHODES, was founded on June 6, 2004 by a group of sensitized citizens, such as scientists from various areas, victims and relatives of traffic accidents, but also simply interested people, following the initiative of the President Karydi Eleni, after the tragic loss of her son.

Dimitris Karydis is a first-year computer science student in Athens. On January 20, 2002, he was fatally injured by an unscrupulous drunk driver. He is a pedestrian on the sidewalk behind the railings at the height of the Fix. It ends on February 12, 2002. He is only 19 years old.

His death was the reason for the establishment of the EFTHITA - Road Safety Observatory of RHODES.

1) Best in Rhodes 2022 for "Society" - Eleni Karydi, President of EFTHITA Rhodes, Person of the Year

2) Best in Rhodes – Reader's Choice Awards 2022: The best and top choice for 2022 with the most important project is EFTHITA RHODES - Road Safety Observatory with awards: in the organization of civil society, for the event Global Road Traffic Remembrance Day 2021 "Light on hope" in youth education, culture and the environment.

The book "My Hero" is preparing its third edition

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