

Vassilis (Bill) Zambaras lives in Greece and writes poetry

By LaRAYNE WATTS

Vassilis (Bill) Zambaras was born in Revmatia, Messenias, a very small mountain village in southwest corner of Greece. He says, "My father Anastasios lived in Raymond during the early years of the past century. He returned to Greece in 1936 where he married my mother Efthimia, but was unable to return to the U.S. because of the outbreak of World War II and the occupation of Greece by the Germans."

His father, along with his older brother Chris, finally made it back to Raymond in 1948. Bill, age 4, and his mother followed in 1948.

Bill recalled, "We lived in a cramped, two-room apartment above the Zambas Tavern on First Street from 1948 to 1955, when we came up in the world and bought our own house at 545 Second Street." His father owned and operated Tom's Shoeshine Parlor on Duryea Street between First and Second from 1948 to 1959 as well as being a night watchman for Weyerhaeuser.

Bill says he was initially a member of the Class of '61 at Raymond High School, but "I spent an enjoyable eye opening year in Greece (1959-60) and upon my return became a member of the Class of 62." He says that he believes that must have been one of the smallest classes ever-about 39 'very intrepid very vociferous souls.'

He remembers one night in particular. He says, "That night after a dance during my senior year, I left Willapa Hotel Restaurant and stopped to browse the paperbacks in the lobby and happened to come across *The Last Temptation of Christ* by Nikos Kazantzakis. How was it possible that a contemporary Greek author was available in an English translation? I bought the book, read it in two days and asked Curtis Janhunnen, then a freshman at the UW, to buy all the available titles by Kazantzakis that were in the UW bookstore. An apocalyptic moment for young Greek American who up until then had thought Greece and everything Greek to be mere ancient history."

He says that his favorite teachers were "Beulah Mae Melberg because of writing well; the charismatic and iconoclastic Kris Scheufele because he gave me a copy of Henry Miller's *Tropic of cancer* and told me to read it: and my incredibly beautiful and sensitive 8th grade chorus teacher Mavis Rosence because I had one of those mad hopeless teen age crushes on her."

Bill participated in a wide range of activities at RHS; basketball, golf, Honor Society, Thespians and student government to name a few. He says, "working as co-editor of the *Seagull* under the watchful eye of Beulah Mae pointed me towards a love of writing, at least it was instrumental in my enrolling in UW's School of Journalism, no matter that I changed my major to English later on."

After graduation, Bill went to the University of Washington, but dropped out after what he termed as a restless freshmen year. He spent 1963-64 traveling in Europe and in Greece and then went to Munich, Germany where he studied German and worked full time in a brush factory. In May of 1965 he drafted into the U.S. Army. Most of his duty was spent in Albuquerque New Mexico.

After his discharge he completed his sophomore year at Grays Harbor Collage, then transferred to UW where he received a Master's Degree in English in 1972. While attending UW (in 1970) he joined with with two other poets to found the literary magazine *Madrona*. He also spent eight months working as Project Manager for Seattle Housing and Authority's neighborhood House Tutoring program. In 1972, he decided once more to return to Greece. He has lived in Greece ever since, except for one brief stint as night desk clerk at Morrison Hotel in Seattle in 1975-76 and short visits in the summer of 1993 and 1999. Since 1977, Bill has been teaching English as a second Language in the language school which he founded in Meligalas (pop. 2,500) small inland town about ten miles from his home village of Revmatia.

He has been writing poetry for the past thirty years. His poems have been published in various literary magazines such as *Chiron Review* Edge (New Zealand) *Kater Murr's press* (UK) *Longhouse* and several others. A number of his poems were also included in *Anthology*. How the net is Grippled a selection of contemporary American poetry (stride, UK 1992). He has published two collections of poetry sentences (*Querencia* books, 1976) and *Aural* (singing horse press 1984) and has recently finished a third collection.

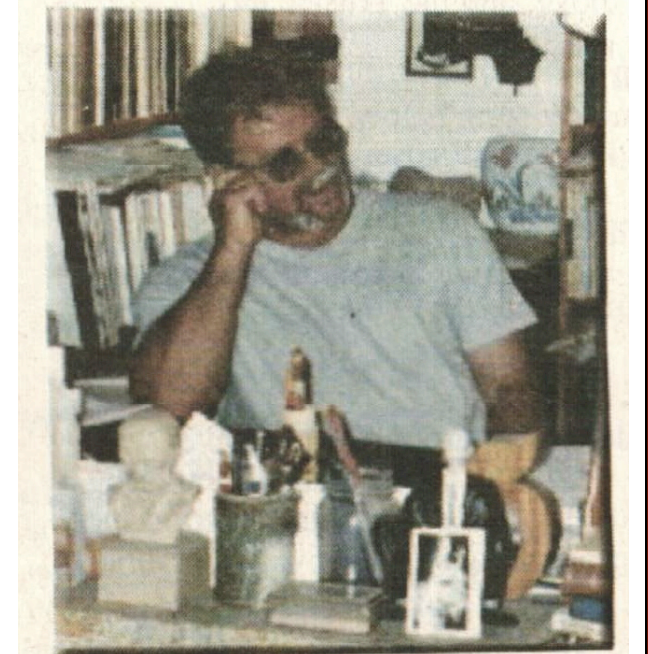
Bill married Eleni, who is also from his village. Revmatia in 1980. They have a daughter Efinki, 21 who teaches ESL at Bill's school during the week and sings professionally at the state capital of Kalamta on weekends and a son Anastasios 19, who is a sophomore majoring in tourism and studied at the Patras Institute of Technology.

Bill says, "most of my traveling has been between the United States and Greece with frequent visits to other European counties. Even though I've made a point of visiting Raymond every time I've returned to the states. I have not followed who has been taking place in the area very closely only through friends various mail and the too rare visits we have from friends from Pacific North west."

When asked what advice he would give to this years seniors, Bill replied he would offer them this not-so-heartless, wry little poem:

WHY SOCRATES DRANK THE CONUM

One thing only I know,
And that is that
I know nothing.
Say you do not know,
You know.
Say you know
You do not know
You know?



RHS Alumnus Vassilis (Bill)
Zambaras, 1962