

Going back to Ayios Amvrosios after 35 Years

I left Ayios Amvrosios in 1970 at the age of fourteen. To me it was like going on a short school trip, it had never crossed my mind that it was to be the last time I'd see my homeland as a free citizen.

The coup by military junta in 1974 and the invasion and occupation of the northern part of Cyprus by Turkey that followed meant that I haven't seen Ayios Amvrosios for 35 years.

When I was asked by Angelos Beshonges if I would like to be a member of the representative team from the U.K. and attend the 'Chrisomillia' ('Apricot') Dance in Nicosia and to also visit our village in the occupied territory I jumped at the chance.

On the morning of Sunday 26th June we set off for the town of Ayios Amvrosios, Kyrenia. At the cross point I had to produce my passport. As I stood and waited for my turn I said to myself "No, this cannot be right. Why should I have to show my passport in my own country to visit my village, my birthplace?"

With these thoughts we drove up the mountains until we reached Halefka Pass.

I began to get butterflies in my stomach. Ayios Amvrosios was so close. We then drove downhill along the winding road where we could smell the wonderful aroma of the pine forest. We stopped on a bend, got out of the car and looked at the village from a short distance and the sea beyond. That spectacular view was too much for me. I cried for minutes. With me was my youngest daughter, Christina. It was the first time she saw the village and she put her arms around me and said "Dad, it's so beautiful, so magical, exactly how you told me"

The first stop in the village was at the Secondary School where I was educated for two years before I left. I went up to the first floor and looked inside the classroom I attended. It was just as I remembered it. I stood there with a lump in my throat.

After leaving the school we drove through the village. Many houses were dreadfully dilapidated and in urgent need of restoration.

When we entered the church grounds I felt both joy and sorrow at the same time. Joy at being in the place I was christened

at and sorrow because it was not a church anymore. The cross high above the steeple was missing, the two bells boarded up, the ropes cut and the shrine with all the Icons was sectioned off. There was no sign of Christianity for it has been converted to a mosque.

I went to the north side of the church and looked at the spot where every Easter the Trizoira was erected, the symbol of Ayios Amvrosios. I could almost hear the sound it was making.

We finally arrived at the house where I was born and raised. Again I cried. There I was, standing in front of my house in the garden where I took my first steps and yet it was not mine any more.

Suddenly I wanted to leave. I felt hatred inside me. I began cursing those responsible for bringing destruction and devastation to so many lives.

The only thing I brought back with me is soil in a carrier bag. When I open the bag and touch the soil I think back at the good years I had of my village Ayios Amvrosios.

Kyriacos Hajitheodosi

"Ayios Amvrosios is the most beautiful village"...

Christina Theodosiou

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experience, however once again it was quite emotional; knowing that it was the school that my dad went to, and if the war had not have happened, that probably would have been my school and my village/home too!

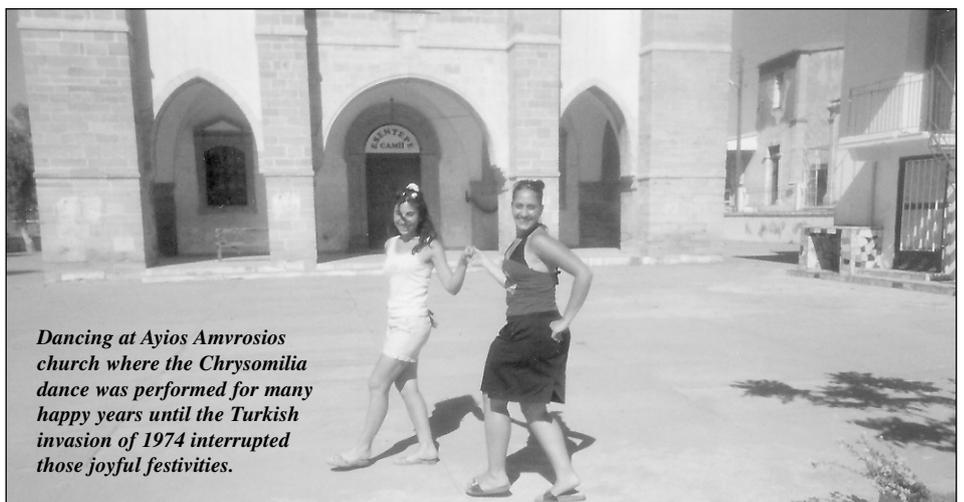
Ayios Amvrosios in my opinion is the most beautiful village of Kyrenia. The Greek Orthodox Church was beautiful too, however, knowing that it is a mosque now, is very upsetting; my dad told me what an amazing church it was! While looking inside Sophia, Barbara, Vasoulla, Chantel and I, thought it would be nice to dance the traditional Ayios Amvrosios dance on the grounds of the church, OUR church! By dancing there we all felt proud for reviving the 'Chrisomillia' dance on its rightful place!

Overall, the trip was AMAZING and will be an experience that I will never forget as there were a lot of laughs and memorable moments.

I would like to thank the Ayios Amvrosios Association for organising this wonderful trip for us all, as it was an amazing experience and I would love to go again!

Going Back to Ayios Amvrosios

An experience by five young girls from London returning to their roots



Dancing at Ayios Amvrosios church where the Chrysomillia dance was performed for many happy years until the Turkish invasion of 1974 interrupted those joyful festivities.

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interrupt them and forced them to abandon their dance), along with their desire to go through the feelings and emotions at that sacred place filled me with pride and moved me beyond description. It is an experience that will remain with me forever. It has given me the will and determination to

continue the struggle so that one day my daughter, her friends and all the youngsters from Ayios Amvrosios will be able to return and resume life in Ayios Amvrosios with freedom and security in the generations to come.

Angelos Beshonges
Chairman