



STAVROPOULOS, Constantine (Con)
April 17, 1938 – April 14, 2022

On Palm Sunday in 1938, Con was born under a tree at the family garden known as Kassoula, in the small village of Kaltazia located in the mountains of the Peloponnese, Greece. A modest entry into the world for a man who died 84 years later in Edmonton Alberta, beaming with pride, accomplishment, satisfaction and love in his heart.

He was a remarkable man that lived a remarkable life. A one of a kind, unique individual.

He never knew his father, who fought in WWII when Con was an infant and never came home. He helped his mother and 4 sisters as best he could during difficult times, but his innate curiosity and independent spirit manifested itself into mischievous rebellion, preferring to explore and socialize while rejecting the notion of accepting a life of herding sheep. It was advice from a teacher and mentor in Kaltazia who recognized that spirit and told Con he had to leave the village, it was too small for him and that wherever he went, he would be fine.

Con left Kaltazia at age 11 for Athens, he worked as a shoeshine boy until he saved enough money to buy a ticket on a boat to Canada. He arrived in Halifax on June 2, 1953, alone, 15 years old, with \$2 in his pocket and unable to speak English. He remembered this as one of the happiest days of his life.

The next phase of his life was one of discovering his determination, work ethic and drive to succeed. He shined shoes in Toronto, became a soda jerk and waited tables, exploring and taking jobs all over Canada. He learned English and in every circumstance his speed, confidence and style gave him more opportunities.

He settled in Edmonton in the late 1950s and, through Greek social circles, met who were to become his most cherished lifelong friends, which precipitated his career as a waiter in Edmonton's classiest restaurants, including the Steak Loft, the Embers and the Penthouse on the Caravan, followed by owning his own restaurants in partnership, beginning with purchasing the Downstairs at the Citadel in 1968, then opening the Fireside #1 (on 101 street) and Fireside #2 (across the street from Northlands Coliseum) in 1972 and 1974, respectively, and a short duration partnership in Capital Pizza in the late 1970s.

The most enduring moment during this time was meeting his future wife, Alice, in February of 1961, he was 22 and she was 17. They were exceptionally compatible and married in 1966. The 1960s with Alice was a time of youthful exuberance, fun, excitement, travel and socializing, including getting firmly entrenched in what would become a significant activity for Con for the rest of his life – owning and breeding thoroughbred race horses.

Con's daily life revolved around the farm property west of Edmonton that he purchased in 1979 where he bred race horses, Northlands Park and Stampede Park where he raced those horses and the Fireside, Con's legacy business that he ran for 43 years – the Fireside location across the street from Northlands Coliseum that became a cultural institution in Edmonton on account of its proximity to events during the Coliseum's entire operational existence, but more due to the indelible presence of Con who greeted the throngs of people who entered its doors with that engaging, big personality.

Those years at the Fireside included the Oilers glory years, where Wayne Gretzky would stop in often to chat with Con and have a sandwich and tea. Although there were countless other experiences at the Fireside where Con would interact with the likes of Andre the Giant, Bobby Hull, Muhammad Ali, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson and generations of hockey players throughout the years that produced entertaining stories, it was the relationships with his regular customers, who became friends, that he valued so much.

Con sold the Fireside property in 2017 and retired, marking the final phase of his life where he realized his dream of creating Kaltazia Village on his farm property in Canada, complete with a small personalized home that looks like the Acropolis, finished with meaningful wood interior framing from the Fireside, a yard full of goats, sheep, horses and other animals, everything painted blue and white with the flags of Canada and Greece raised high, proudly displaying his profound pride in his Greek heritage but also acknowledging his love for Canada and the opportunities it provided to him.

The most fulfilling and cherished years of Con's life revolved around his family. His daughter Katherine was first born, followed by his son, John. He referred to Katherine as his beautiful daughter, so Greek in her appearance with those big brown eyes and dark hair, so proud of her accomplishments and having complete love and affection for her 3 daughters, his granddaughters Katelyn, Alyssa and Kirstin. Family connections always remained strong with traditions such as meeting for Sunday brunch, which became ritualized every Sunday for at least 25 years at the Fireside and elsewhere after retirement.

Con's relationship with his son John was exceptionally close. There was never a harsh word between them for John's entire life. John would call his Dad every single day without fail, for more than 30 years. They shared all of their interests together, but most importantly, spent time together. John's most precious moments in his life were just sitting with and talking to his Dad, spontaneous conversations about life, politics, world events, history, the stock market, anything Greek, his Dad's experiences and his perspectives, all delivered with humour and love.

Con was a bright light his whole life, even those who met him briefly were able to detect and appreciate the intrigue of his colourful character and interesting disposition. He was a man of insatiable spirit, fierce independence and unapologetic pride who reinvented himself numerous times over the course of his life with every adaptation being discharged with class, style and that indomitable wit and charm that made him so likable.

Con loved his life, he did it his way, and had no regrets.

Con is survived by his wife Alice, daughter Katherine (Robert), son John, granddaughters Katelyn, Alyssa and Kirstin, his sister Yanoula in Kaltazia and sister Georgina in Toronto. Con will be honoured at a private celebration of life.