

Chapter 3: the Anna-Maria Foundation

My Family and I decided to end a difficult chapter in our dealings with the then Greek government on a positive note. A long-winded court case in the European Court of Human Rights, regarding ownership of my family properties in Greece resulted in a bitter victory, when I was vindicated but was paid compensation instead of my family house being returned.

The money given, quickly materialized into the Anna-Maria Foundation, whose purpose is to help communities in Greece suffering from the effects of natural disasters, of which, sadly, there are still too many. I have thus been able to re-discover Greece and its people through the work we do and the various projects we undertake around the country.

More importantly, we have been given the chance to witness the devastating effects that our living habits and practices have had on nature. In all the discourses that have taken place, in all the research carried out, one does not truly grasp the abnormality of what we have all brought about, until it presents itself in the form of a dried river where water was once abundant, a flooded plain in the middle of summer, or indeed, snow on the Parthenon.

Alas, in our first steps as a charitable Foundation, we could only doctor some of the wounds as there were –and are - so many. There was no time or resources to prevent, -only to plaster and hope. Now, I only hope that people everywhere feel this desperation; it is only then that one realizes that the remedy is in our hands. Not just our collective embrace, but in each moment, in every action, in our hands.

To be able to put our efforts to use in our own country has been a gratifying opportunity for my Family and myself. In fact, the past five years, have been, -and continue to be-, an incredible journey for us. After thirty-six years, with just a few hours visit for my Mother's funeral in 1981 and a short, interrupted summer visit in 1993, we have at least and at last been able to show our children their country, to visit our most beloved spots, as well as the most remote little villages, to blend with the people with whom we share a passion for our homeland and treasure every moment.