

EAST MEETS WEST: GREEK NIGHT CELEBRATES THE ART OF MINA PAPATHEODOROU-VALYRAKI

In celebrating thirty years of excellence in sports education, the USSA also celebrated a legacy of international cultural achievement during graduation week. Mina Papatheodorou-Valyraki, Sport Artist of the Year 2002 and a national treasure in her own country of Greece, was featured in a magnificently staged art show in conjunction with the Hellenic Community Center, adjacent to the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church of Mobile.

Three hundred people were present for the sit down dinner, reception and art show at the Mobile Hellenic Center on July 25. The show included Greek cultural programs featuring dancers in traditional costume.



The City of Mobile honored the Academy's International guests with keys to the city during the Greek Night Celebration. From left to right: Sport Artist of the Year, Mina Papatheodorou-Valyraki, Academy President Dr. Thomas P. Rosandich, former Minister of Public Order for Greece, Joseph J. Valyraki and Dr. Zhenlaing He, chairman of the IOC Cultural and Olympic Education Commission.



Greek Youth entertain honorees at the Hellenic Community Center of Mobile, AL.

Artist of the Year Mina Papatheodorou-Valyraki: A Legacy of Artistic Triumph from a Greek Daphne to An American One

The Greek mythological Daphne was a mountain nymph loved by Apollo. The mortal Leucippus also loved her and disguised himself as a nymph to win her affection. When the nymphs discovered his deceit, they killed him. Apollo continued to pursue Daphne, but her father, the river god Peneus, turned her into a laurel tree. Apollo promised "Since you cannot be my wife, you shall assuredly be my tree. I will wear you for my crown. I will decorate you with my harp and quiver; and when the great Roman conquerors lead up the triumphal pomp to the Capitol, you shall be woven into wreaths for their brows. And, as eternal youth is mine, you also shall be always green, and your leaf

know no decay." The nymph, now changed into a laurel tree, bowed her head in grateful acknowledgment. Henceforth all politicians, writers, poets, athletes and artists would receive leaves from the tree in the form of championship wreaths.

The leaves of Daphne's tree, woven into the crowns of champions, have come to signify excellence in athletics and cultural achievement. Daphne is also the home city of the United States Sports Academy. Mina Papatheodorou-Valyraki's painting "Daphne and Apollo" is on display at Academy in Daphne, AL.

"Daphne and Apollo" represents Daphne's place in mythology and sports excellence as well as her significance to the Academy's home city of Daphne,

