

MEET THE AUTHOR: HELEN ELECTRIE LINDSAY



What inspired you to do this project?

There was a tender love between my parents that lasted until the day my mother died. I feel that their lives would have been different had it not been for WWII and a civil war. I was born and raised among the ruins of these wars. Somehow, the lives of the people who influenced me the most ... urge me to keep their memory alive, to tell of their struggles. I wanted to bring to life the incredible contributions made by and the courage of the Greek people during WWII – a contribution that I feel has been underrated and forgotten by the rest of the world.

My father's diary revealed that contribution, and at the encouragement of a friend, I decided to complete my translation of the diary. For eight years I carried the Greek printed version I had had done earlier and my Mac with me during every trip and every vacation. People would ask me what I was working on. My answer was always: my father's diary from WWII in Greece. Many of my American friends were shocked that Greece was even involved in WWII.

A British woman who sat next to me during a flight from Minneapolis to Amsterdam was the last straw. She told me: "The Greeks had it pretty good during WWII since they were neutral!" I think that everyone on that flight knew about the Greek involvement in WWII by the time we arrived in Amsterdam. During that trip the idea of the book and my will to publish it took shape.

What was your process of putting the pieces of this book together?

I wanted to do it in a way that was not boring for people to read. I needed much more material to be historically correct. I needed to explain the Greek involvement and its significance and put the diary in the context of the overall Greek WWII experience.

I spent countless hours in war museums, ministries, arguing with functionaries, talking to generals, visiting various areas and reading many books ...

Then I tried to find a publisher. I wrote to publishers of historical books. I looked up publishers of books that have done similar books on Greece, who told me that there is no market for journals. They suggested I hire a "real writer" to do a novel based on the book. Another publisher suggested I change the story and have the character be Italian, because she thought that Americans are fascinated with Italy and Greece does not really have any appeal. Wanting to publish my father's words as they were, I decided to self-publish.

How, then, did you come about bringing the book to Scarletta Press?

Sue Corns with IGI Publishing encouraged me to get in touch with Ian Graham Leask, who invited me to his *Write On!* radio program. He asked me to consider republishing the book with Scarletta Press in hopes of widening the scope of potential readers. I was very reluctant; I have to admit that at the time I was more interested in the radio station than anything that was going to happen with my book. I checked out the Scarletta website and decided to take a chance with republishing, mostly because I felt that the story of the book needed to be heard by a wider audience.

What kind of impact did working with this diary have on you?

When I started reading the diary, I was amazed by my father's writing during his very difficult expedition ... As I read his pages, he revealed himself as a different person. He was not my idealized memory of him that I had as an eleven-year-old when he died. He became a man of passions and petty feelings and bourgeois habits, of tenderness for his loved ones, of compulsions for his medical equipment and his food, of enduring humanity and optimism and much more. Somehow, in learning about him, I saw much of my own characteristics. I saw that he passed down much of him to me either through his genes or his spirit.