

**Resolution on the Retirement of
George J. Marcopoulos**

Adopted by the Faculty of Arts, Sciences and Engineering
May 2006

In the fall of 1961, a newly discharged army first lieutenant started teaching European history at Tufts University, and for the next forty-five years George J. Marcopoulos made Tufts his academic home and his colleagues his professional family.

George Marcopoulos was born in Salem, Massachusetts, in June 1931, the only child of Greek immigrants. He grew up in Salem, where his family owned a restaurant, and enjoyed summers in Maine. George's father died when George was a young boy, and he grew up with uncles and cousins in a strong extended family. After graduation from Salem High School, George enrolled at Bowdoin College in Maine, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1953.

Upon leaving Bowdoin, George earned a masters of arts in International Affairs at Harvard and then entered its Ph. D. program in History. A teaching assistant to the eminent professor of European diplomatic history, William L. Langer, George embarked on research in European diplomatic history under Robert Lee Wolff. In the middle of his graduate studies in the late 1950s, he was called to active duty in the army and stationed at Fort Eustis, Virginia. Returning home, George began his career at Tufts in 1961, in an era when one could get hired before completion of the doctoral degree. Still, his appointment represented an important step forward: at a time when the Tufts faculty was largely composed of white Protestant men, George was proud to be the first Greek Orthodox member of the History Department.

In 1966, George completed his dissertation, "The Role of the Monarchy in Greek Foreign Affairs During the Reign of King George the First, 1863-1913." He typed it himself on the manual Underwood typewriter that he kept in his office well into the 1990s. Focusing his scholarship on European royalty and foreign affairs, he authored articles in European diplomatic history that appeared in *Balkans Studies* and co-authored a pioneering essay in 1986 on "Women and World History" in *The History Teacher*. From 1966 to 2001, he wrote articles each year on Greece and Cyprus that appeared in *The Americana Annual*. He was an invited lecturer on Greek and Byzantium history, at conferences sponsored by the United Nations, the Fletcher School, and the Greek Institute in Cambridge. Even in retirement, he continues to speak on European monarchies at his current home, the Brookhaven retirement community in Lexington. And as a member of the Brookhaven program committee, he has invited several of us to speak there as well. No one ever says no to George!

As a teacher, George is a legend at Tufts. When he first arrived, George taught Russian history and was an assistant instructor to Professor Albert Imlah for the

survey in western civilization. When Professor Imlah retired, George inherited the western civilization course and made it his own, turning it into a two-semester survey that looked beyond western Europe to include southeast Europe and Eurasia. Year after year, he presided in the classroom as a maestro, ultimately sharing his love of European history with thousands of students. In course evaluations since the 1970s, students have virtually spoken in one voice, eagerly praising him and his courses. Not only did they appreciate his “sense of humor “ and his ability to enliven his classes with amusing historical anecdotes, but as one student explained: “He made every class enjoyable and human. I always wanted to attend because he made history come alive.” Simply put, George was beloved by generations of students. It is no surprise that he is a two-time recipient of the Seymour O. Simches Award for Distinguished Teaching and Advising.

While focusing largely on undergraduate students, George was a mentor to the teaching assistants for his classes, many of whom are now professors. He directed several History theses and dissertations, and because of his spoken and written knowledge of French, German, modern Greek, ancient Greek, Latin, and Serbian/Croatian, he served as an outside reader on numerous undergraduate and graduate theses. Indeed, he was a second reader for the Fletcher dissertation completed by Kostas A. Karamanlis in 1982. George helped to prepare him well; he is now the Prime Minister of Greece.

To George teaching and service were inextricably linked. He was a popular, indeed beloved, advisor for incoming freshmen as well as for majors in History and International Relations. When my own daughter first entered Tufts, I knew she was in good hands when I learned that she was assigned to George as her freshman advisor. They became fast friends.

In many ways, George’s service to Tufts embodies a history of the college over the last forty years. He was a member of the Committee on Innovation and Experiment, which drafted plans for the establishment of the Experimental College in the 1963/64 academic year. He chaired the Committee on Committees in the early 1970s. For a decade, George was a member of the Pre-Legal Committee. He served on the Academic Awards Committee, the Educational Policy Committee, the Committee on Curricular, and the Committee on Foreign Language and Culture Requirements. Intermittently, from 1963 to the present, he has served on the executive board of the delta chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, including service as president from 1979 to 1981. He is a member of the executive committee of the Fares Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies. In addition, he has served on the board of directors of the Gerondelis Foundation, which grants fellowships to Greek and Greek-American graduate students, and he continues to oversee the David Foundation, which provides support for Tufts undergraduates to spend a semester in Greece.

In his own unique way George has brought his family into Tufts for posterity. In the last decade, George arranged for the acquisition of the papers and films of

his family members—such as Constantine Moustakis, a dispatcher for *The New York Times* in the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars and later a Republican party activist with correspondence with Presidents Harding and Coolidge. He is currently arranging for Tufts to acquire the papers of Christy Moustakis, the son of Constantine Moustakis, who served with Leon Trotsky in Mexico in the 1930s.

George reminds us of the best of an era gone by. For over forty years, he was a faculty member who was on campus four to five days each week. And back in the days when the faculty had a fully functioning dining room, with real menus, George developed his own version of mentoring. It was his custom to invite newly hired faculty in the History Department to join him for lunch. Not only were new members regaled with stories from senior faculty around campus, they sat with George at “the round table,” the one strategically located right smack in the front of the room when you first walked in. Other times, George happily drove new faculty members around the neighborhoods of Boston.

Not surprisingly, younger faculty often sought George out for advice and counsel; he was always a voice of reason and respect. Indeed, George epitomized generosity of time and spirit. One colleague remarked that “in an atmosphere where we are all caught up in a rush to achieve and the constant overload of information, George was a haven of quiet reason, and someone who was able and willing to remember the funny and light-hearted.” While a model of decorum and tact, George always had a smile, a joke, or an anecdote, often about European monarchy. Yet, while George studied royalty, his personal actions were devoid of any sense of hierarchy. He treated everyone—colleagues, students and staff—the same, with full respect and consideration. Indeed, George took great pride in the wonderful gifts he volunteered to buy staff members in the History office each year at the holiday season.

A fount of information, a delightful colleague, and source of good cheer, George always had a twinkle in his eye. He loved recalling the days when the Jackson students were not allowed to drink Coke in their dorms. We will miss him deeply, but we wish him well in retirement. His new friends at Brookhaven, which include several retired Tufts faculty and administrators, are the fortunate inheritors of his wit, good cheer, and warm friendship.

On behalf of the History Department, I move that this resolution on the retirement of George J. Marcopoulos be spread on the permanent record of this faculty and that a copy of it be sent to our very special colleague and dearest friend.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia G. Drachman
Chair
May 17, 2006

Gerald Gill
Deputy Chair