

OLYMPICS 2004 ATHENS



SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS' JOHN ZANT REPORTS FROM ATHENS

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Local Greeks bring flavor of Athens to Santa Barbara

Daddona, Stathis throw an Opening Ceremonies bash unlike any other

By LEAH ETLING
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

A plate of dolmas in one hand, an ivy crown on her head, Cynthia Daddona brought the Greekness of the 2004 Athens Olympics to the guests at her opening ceremonies party Friday night.

And what better occasion than the the ancient athletic competition first held in 776 B.C. to throw a party of Bacchian proportions.

Ms. Daddona (author of "Diary of a Modern Day Goddess") and her boyfriend James Stathis, a dentist by day and Greek documentarian by night, pulled out all the stops for their opening ceremonies bash.

There were ivy crowns for the guests, live feed of the athletes marching into the stadium via Greek satellite TV, and of course, lots of olives, feta, and lamb.

"This is a big fat Olympic opening ceremonies party," said Stathis, a Greek citizen, who spent part of Friday getting a cable line split in his living room so guests could watch Greek and U.S. coverage of the event at the same time.

He also screened some of his own work, which included clips of the Olympic torch relay in Los Angeles and Greek footage of Peter Clentzos, the oldest living Greek Olympian, receiving a special medal in Athens this week.



MIKE ELIASON / NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS
James Stathis, front left, and Cynthia Daddona, front right, celebrate the opening of the Olympics with a large group of friends.



JOHN ZANT is covering his seventh Olympics for the News-Press.

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The party featured both the American flag and the Greek flag, as both waved in the breeze outside the party.

His niece, Terry Clentzos-Keramaris, was one of nearly a dozen Greek guests at the party.

"It's personal because of its return to Greece," Clentzos-Keramaris said of this year's games. Her uncle has been attending events in Athens all week. "Our family is there through him."

Stathis and Daddona were dressed in Greek costumes and glowing with excitement.

"To me the Olympics are extra special because they are returning to their birthplace of Greece, a country teeming with gods and goddesses. Whenever I read about the Greek gods and goddesses and their lives, or an everyday hero, or watch any athlete go for the gold, I am always inspired by their focus, courage, vision and inner strength to go after their goals and dreams," said Daddona, a writer, actress, and inspirational speaker.

She offered tips on how everyday Americans can treat themselves like Greek gods and goddesses during the Olympics and improve their quality of life.

A sampling:

"Have an Olympic viewing party — with the Olympics returning to their birthplace this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for us all to watch it in Greece. Wear a crown of ivy on your head while watching... It's guaranteed to make you and others feel good.

Think about the athletes going for their dreams. Think about something special you've always wanted to pursue and take action. Do you want to run a marathon or play a musical instrument? Take a step during the Olympics and sign up for a class or jog around the block.

Make up your own Olympic category and give yourself or someone you love, or your child a gold medal. Give your mom a gold medal for best cooking, husband for best hugs, child for best all around kid."

She and Stathis were going for the "best party" medal Friday night.

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