

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE5393

Liangis, Sotiria

(1941 -)

Born 19410101, Keratea, Attica Greece

Occupation Developer, Philanthropist

Summary

Sotiria Liangis is the developer behind a number of commercial properties in Canberra. She was the first Telstra ACT Business Woman of the Year in 1995. In 1996 she was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for 'for service to the Greek community, particularly the aged and through St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, Canberra'. She received the Centenary Medal in 2001, also for service to the Greek community.

With her husband and son, Sotiria Liangis had received a Real Estate Institute of the ACT award in 1994.

Details

Sotiria Liangis arrived in Canberra from Greece with her new husband Angelo (previously Evangelos) in 1961. They could not speak English and said that they had no money. Angelo had first migrated to Australia and Canberra in 1954. He returned to his hometown, Keratea, in 1960 to marry Sotiria.

Sotiria worked as a sales assistant in a fruit shop for £8 per week. Her husband, a trained and experienced shoemaker, worked in his trade for £18 per week. They spent £2 or £3 each week on their needs and saved the rest. After 18 months, they opened their first business, Angelo's Shoe Repairs in Narrabundah. Their son was born on the same day.

A second shoe store was opened in 1965. While her husband operated the shoe stores, Sotiria started Liangis Investments in 1967. The first project for the company was a warehouse, completed on time, within budget and tenanted immediately. This gave Sotiria satisfaction and the confidence to continue in construction and finance.

She has been quoted as saying, 'It was harder back then, because at first there were people around who were against a woman "on site" or who thought I should be at home with my son, but I just ignored them.'

One builder with whom she worked recalls the way she was always picking up the tools on site. She would make the workers straighten three-inch nails to use again.

Projects which Sotiria and her company developed include an indoor recreation facility in the Kippax Centre, Woden Churches Centre, the Capitol Theatre in Manuka and Kingston Plaza.

Despite the 'shepherd's daughter' description headlining one 2014 Canberra Times article about her, she grew up in a wealthy family in Greece. None of the family's money came to Australia with her when she married her shoemaker. Her mother had said to her: 'You marry, I am your neighbour. And don't ever come back here to complain about what kind of life you have, that you don't have money or you are working hard.'

Organisations supported financially by the Liangis family include Hartley Lifecare, the Open Family Foundation and the construction of Canberra's St Nicholas Home for the Aged. The family also built and donated the St John the Baptist Church for the Greek Orthodox community of Batemans Bay, New South Wales.

She and her son John became Founding Benefactors of the National Portrait Gallery of Australia prior to its relocation to its current dedicated building on the shore of Lake Burley Griffin. In recognition of their generous gift, two Gallery spaces were named: the Liangis Theatre and the A & S Liangis Gallery. The Gallery name also commemorates Angelo Liangis.

In 2013, Sotiria and John Liangis committed to support The Canberra Hospital and its Centenary Hospital for Women and Children to the level of \$1 million over five years through the Canberra Hospital Foundation.

In 2015, their generosity enabled the National Portrait Gallery to buy the Portrait of William Bligh, in Master's Uniform, painted by John Webber around 1776. This portrait of the younger Governor Bligh will hang besides another Webber Portrait of Captain James Cook RN in the Gallery's Canberra building.

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Newspaper Article

REI honours Liangis as successful investors, Clack, Peter, 1994,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article118139832>

Canberra Hospital artworks have feel-good factor, Cousins, Kerry-Anne, 2014,
<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/canberra-hospital-artworks-have-feelgood-factor-20140528-zrml>

The Liangis build a family tradition, Gaind, Rama, 1994,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article118265858>

Recreation site for \$26,000, 1977,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page12376170>

From shepherd's daughter to queen of her castle, Thistleton, John, 2014,
<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/sotiria-liangis-from-shepherds-daughter-to-queen-of-her-castle-20140110-30mxu.htm>

Gang-gang: Portrait Gallery's Perfect Purchase, Warden, Ian, 2015,
<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/canberra-life/ganggang-portrait-gallerys-perfect-purchase-20150331-1mblrx.html>

Capital developer a woman of substance, 1995,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article128287873>

Resource Section

Local philanthropist gives \$1 million to Canberra Hospital, Maher, Louise,
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/11/18/3893310.htm>

Site Exhibition

From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/lclk>

Archival resources

National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra

[LIANGIS Evangios born 28 February 1929 - Greek - travelled per KLM flight departing in 1954](#)

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection

[Sotiria Liangis interviewed by Marg Carroll in the Centenary of Canberra oral history project](#)

Author Details

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Digital resources



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