

## PRESS RELEASE

### ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS HONOR THE HARRIS DINER IN RECOGNITION OF OVER 55 YEARS OF BUSINESS



The Harris Diner is honored by the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Pictured above are: (Left to Right) Deborah Nicholas-Boyle, Mary Nicholas, William Nicholas, Catherine Principe, Freeholder Patricia Sebold and Deputy Mayor Alfred Anthony. Mayor Michael Silverman (Rear Left) and Freeholder Leonard Luciano (Rear Right). PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

(Livingston, NJ) – During its Wednesday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, meeting held at the Livingston Town Hall, the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders honored the Harris Diner in recognition of over 55 years in business. The Harris Diner was owned and operated by the Marmaras and Nicholas Families for over 55 years and provided East Orange and surrounding towns with dedicated service in a friendly atmosphere until a fire destroyed the building in March. The Board’s Commendation was sponsored and presented by Freeholder Patricia Sebold of Livingston.

In her opening statement, Freeholder Sebold noted the honor of making the presentation as “bittersweet”; because it marked the end of a chapter in a most memorable Essex County establishment, yet, countless memories, relationships and meetings took place there. “Bitter” because of the sudden loss, however, “sweet” because the story reads like a romantic novel; depicting many relationships that began at the diner. She told of the bond of two families who worked together virtually a lifetime to accomplish the American Dream.

William Nicholas and his wife Mary, residents of Livingston, were present to accept the Board’s commendation. The two met each other in the diner many years ago and even at their mature age continued to work in the restaurant until its last day. Also, representing the Marmaras’ branch of the family was Catherine Principe, the daughter of Basil and Elizabeth Marmara, who continued to run the business with her uncle and aunt, William and Mary each and every day.

The Harris Diner, which operated in East Orange, was one of the last classic styled diners built by the Jerry O'Mahony Company of Elizabeth, New Jersey of which only about 20 of the 2,000 built still exist. The restaurant, with its classic 1950's diner look, was a location for numerous commercials, television shows, ad campaigns, photo shoots, and even a movie. It has further been featured in various books and articles about New Jersey diners.

Basil Marmaras was born in Greece in 1926 and served in the Greek Navy and merchant marines before coming to America in 1951. After working in various food service jobs, he married his wife Elizabeth and purchased the Harris Diner in 1958 along with his father-in-law (Athanasios Karayianis) and a cousin. Basil and Elizabeth both recently passed away and are survived by their daughter Catherine, son-in-law Robert and grandchildren Konstantine and Christina. Catherine is the current owner of Basil's share of the diner.

William Nicholas was born in 1934 and also came to America from Greece in 1951 when he began working in various food service jobs, in addition to serving in the United States Army. He met his wife Mary (Elizabeth Marmaras's sister) in the Harris Diner, eventually buying into the business when one of the partners left. William and Mary have a daughter, Deborah, a son-in-law Tom, and grandchildren Emily and Jack.

The Harris Diner was a family run business and William and Basil, along with their wives, all proudly served the East Orange community and surrounding towns for nearly all their lives. William and Basil dedicated their time and energy to the diner, taking pride in their business, and viewing their employees and customers as part of an extended family. They loved going to work and took great pleasure in serving good food in a friendly atmosphere. Basil Marmaras and William Nicholas, along with their families, were honored to have served the community for as long as they did.

Introducing the honorees, Freeholder Sebold shared her experience with the Harris Diner which began while a student attending UPSALA College in East Orange, she had the pleasure of working at the diner as a waitress. Catherine Principe spoke on behalf of both families and thanked the Board of Chosen Freeholders, especially Freeholder Patricia Sebold for the honor and recognition. She stated it has been their pleasure to serve the community and they have countless wonderful memories of the many years at the diner. She further noted, "We will never forget the many people who touched our lives. The customers and employees will always be part of our extended family. Thank you so much."

The presentation was also attended by Freeholder Leonard Luciano of West Caldwell, Mayor Michael M. Silverman and Deputy Mayor Alfred M. Anthony both of Livingston.

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