

# BOOKS

## Arlington Heights author pens beautiful memoir of Greece and the simple village life

BY DIANE ADAM

It is summer in Greece and that usually means images of sand, sea, and sun. However, this summer the news is centered around the financial troubles that has erupted in our beloved homeland. Luckily, I came across a delightful book that brings back the wonderful images we all hold dear in our hearts about Greece. "Seasons of Sun" by Paula Renee Burzawa is a beautiful portrayal of Greece and the simple village life. The book is a pleasant read and is sure to enchant many.

Synopsis: When a shy American teenager travels with her mother to the mountain village of Vassara, Greece, after the death of a family member, she is overcome with grief. By discovering her heritage, she stumbles upon a gateway to a new life.

What starts out as a holiday abroad quickly turns into the discovery of a magical place, where love and friendship endure through time and where traditions of an ancient world survive modern change to bring about an inexplicable miracle.

Summer after summer she cannot resist returning to her



Paula Renee Burzawa

mother's homeland and the enchanting village that enraptures both her heart and soul. As she matures from a girl to a woman, she falls in love for the first time and faces a difficult choice between the familiarity of home and the enticement of an uncertain future.

The book is a tender coming-of-age tale that opens the heart to discovering life and love in unexpected places.

Burzawa writes with ease and without exaggeration. Born of Greek heritage, Burzawa spent ten summers visiting the ancient village of Vassara, Greece before turning 21. Traveling to her ancestral land has been the basis of her writing.

"This book was a story I've wanted to write since my young adulthood. As the story is based on my personal experiences traveling to Greece, I felt compelled

to tell this story of miracles and self-discovery," said Burzawa.

The book is highly recommended. In fact Barnes and Noble added "Seasons of Sun" to its Rising Star Special Collection boutique at bn.com. The book is also the winner of the Editor's Choice Award and Rising Star Award.

Burzawa, who lives in Arlington Heights, IL with her husband and two children, is proud of her debut novel and the experience it has given her.

"Since September of 2010, I've been on a book tour, and the experience has been phenomenal. Everyone is so warmly receptive of my novel. I think there is a lot of need in the Greek community for stories that not only relate to our background, but stories that are spiritually uplifting and pure," she said. Burzawa also takes pride in the fact that this is a great read for young adults as well as their parents.

"This is a rated-G story—anyone can read it. I wanted to write a novel that young people as well as adults could enjoy while at the same time, reinforcing our Orthodox faith," she said.

Reviews for "Seasons of Sun" have been positive and overwhelming. "Paula Burzawa poignantly captures the emotional response of a young girl visiting her family's village in Greece. As she describes the girl coming to an acceptance of the death of a beloved aunt, she brings the eternal Greek landscape and its indomitable people vividly to life, as well."—Harry Mark Petrakis.

For anyone needing a book for your summer vacation. Pick up a copy of "Seasons of Sun." You will not be disappointed.

To order log on to www.SeasonsofSun.com or at Barnesandnoble.com as well as Amazon.com readers can find copies:

*Below is an excerpt from "Seasons of Sun"*

Eventually, all of the young men went back to the line of fires that night. There were shifts throughout the evening, but for Americans like Rania and I, we had little to do but wait and pray. Sleeping was out of the question, but by 2:30 AM, exhaustion took its toll, and we left the tavern. When we reached our houses, Rania suggested we sit up atop her balcony together. She brought blankets out to the terrace, and we sat with our feet up on two white plastic chairs. I needed to be with my cousin that night, and she needed to be with me. We anxiously waited for sunrise. But as the final moments of the

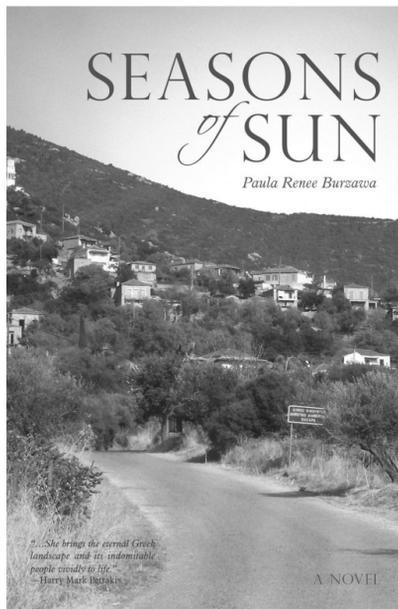
Virgin Mary's feast day elapsed, smoke in the evening's air permeated our senses, and we fell asleep.

That's when the miracle happened. I suppose it only makes sense that the Mother of God's blessing took place during the early morning hours as the countryside held itself in a moment of solace. There, in that instant, and certainly not for the first time, the Virgin Mary saved her people. Out of nowhere, the fervent winds shifted, and the flames from the wildfires that ravaged the landscape all night, destroying hundreds of olive groves throughout the Paronias hills, were stopped cold in their tracks. The flames reached no closer than the front gate of the monastery, with its large, golden icon of the Virgin Mary. Perhaps the quiet, little nun, Ourania, having obeyed the vision from her dreams to build these churches less than a decade earlier, was the greatest firefighter of all.

Some say the evening breeze caused the flames to change direction. Others credit the men and boys who fought the flames throughout the night. Surely their efforts don't go unnoticed, but most of the people who where there that night believe it was the Virgin Mary that kept the fires from burning village homes down to the ground.

Even as the night unfolded, I was certain the experience would live on in my memory for the rest of my life. As I look back years

later, I am astonished at the miraculous event we experienced. How blessed we were to have been saved, along with our town. "What is it about this place that makes Vassara so blessed by God and so endeared by the Virgin Mary to be saved?" I ask myself repeatedly, although I know the answer is far beyond any human comprehension. Is Vassara's survival because of its ability to change the people who go there? Perhaps so. Whether our burden is due to war or death or famine or fire, this village manages to calm, love, and heal the pain. Over again through time like the Virgin Mary herself, Vassara accepts our suffering and ingests our afflictions into its loving heart. What is given back to us in return is a healing peace, that we might reenter the world outside the boundaries of Paronias and share our joy to enlighten others. This is what I've come to understand and believe about my village.



The Earthy Report

BY JOHN VLAHAKIS

One of the most common spices in Greek households may hold the key to warding off Alzheimer's degenerative brain disorder.

Researchers at the University of Tel Aviv have discovered that cinnamon could hold the key to Alzheimer's prevention. An extract found within cinnamon bark, called CEppt, contains proteins that can inhibit the development of Alzheimer's disease. Cinnamon has been known to provide a range of health benefits that

range from boosting cognitive function and memory, treating rheumatism, helping digestion, and relieving menstrual disorders. In addition, it also makes for a natural food preservative. Even the National Institute of Health recommends chewing on cinnamon sticks to curb the use of tobacco while trying to quit smoking.

To test their theory that cinnamon could have an impact on Alzheimer's, researchers isolated CEppt by grinding cinnamon and extracting the substance into an aqueous buffer solution. They then introduced this solution into the drinking water of mice that had been genetically altered to develop an aggressive form of Alzheimer's disease, and fruit flies that had been mutated with a human gene that also stimulated Alzheimer's disease and shortened their lifespan. After four months, the researchers discovered that development of the disease had slowed remarkably and the animals' activity levels and longevity were comparable to that of their healthy counterparts. CEppt may not just fight against the development of the disease, but may help cure it even after the Alzheimer molecules have formed according to the study. Unfortunately, you need 10 grams of raw cinnamon a day to reap the therapeutic benefits – an extremely high level of toxicity for humans. Researchers are hopeful they will be able to isolate the CEppt and remove the toxic elements for human use. In the mean time, keep adding cinnamon to your morning tea or coffee, besides any Alzheimer prevention impact it may have, it can also help prevent viral infections. This is one spice to buy in bulk.



Photo Credit: danish-schnapps-recipes.com

*Editor's note: John Vlahakis has maintained a keen interest in our environment and the human experience. He is the founder of Earth Friendly Products, a green household products brand, and a daily blogger at earthyreport.com. He has always had an interest in protecting the environment. John is an avid entrepreneur, author, photographer, father, husband, and not necessarily in that order. He is a graduate of Northwestern University Kellogg Graduate School of Management. John can be followed at earthyreport.com and his photography can be viewed at johnvlahakis.com.*

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