

## Barbara Abelson (MA, 1974) and Dennis Abelson (BA, 1973)

In mid-May of this year, Dennis and I had the opportunity to travel with a Wash U alumni group to Greece. You may be thinking, “oh, yeah, that sounds nice”, but for us, it was the realization of years of thinking “wouldn’t it be great if...” We did not want to sit on beaches, collect shells and pick up postcards of gorgeous vistas. Rather, we yearned to be within the confines of temples, see the Aegean (would it really be wine dark?) and imagine the ancient tragedies performed, while sitting on the stone seats of an actual theatron. And that was exactly what this wonderful trip allowed us to do, under the ever watchful eye of our guide, Sophia, and accompanied by the chair of our Classics department, Tim Moore.

The Acropolis, Delphi, Corinth, Mycenae, Epidaurus, Hydra—these ancient names woven into our studies were made real by our visit. I may have been a touch disappointed that we could not go down into the Pythia’s chamber at Delphi and see the crevice from which she delivered the oracles, but that was offset by our view of a particular crossroads as our tour bus passed by Thebes. Was that the very spot where Sophocles scripted that Oedipus was on the fateful day he unknowingly killed his father? Chills.

One of the highlights of the trip was the visit to the Palace at Knossos. For me there was a powerful energy there that could not be masked by the day’s drizzle or the crowds. It is a massive site, allowing one both the mental and physical space to imagine the scope of the pageantry of their worship as well as the life that was carried on within the walls of the labyrinth-like building. These thoughts were fed by the onsite reproductions of frescoes depicting processions of maidens carrying intricately woven cloth and young men bearing baskets of fish or exotic flowers. What god were they honoring when they jumped across the backs of those fearsome bulls? How many were housed and employed within the walls, fed by the huge storerooms that are still visible? All that is unknown surrounding Knossos adds to the allure for me.

Not only did we have congenial company with whom to travel safely and comfortably and share delicious food, but we also had the opportunity to hear two lectures from Professor Moore. Despite our immersion in Classics as undergrads and then my time as a graduate student, Dennis and I had never been introduced to the idea of music as an integral part of Greek theater. Not only was it breathtaking to think of the ancient dramatists as writers, directors and choreographers, but now to consider that they scored their plays! Amazing. Tim, thank you for this revelation and for encouraging the entire group to sing a melody, the musical notation for which was carved into a column in Asia Minor.

I doubt that any of us will ever forget that, or our time together in Greece.

*--Barbara Abelson*



Our intrepid tour group takes a hiking break at Knossos. Barbara and Dennis are second from the left. In the back row, Professor Moore is grinning ear to ear.