

Maresia, Fortunato, (85), Istanbul, Türkiye passed away on December 17,2023, due to ALS (Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis). Just like he dealt with experiences in life, Fortunato, fondly known as Nello, managed his illness with strength and grace, supported continuously by his wife and daughter. Nello has left a big gap in our community and will be sorely missed.



*Nello and his parents Andrea and Françoise*

*Nello and his sister Caterina*

He was born to parents Andrea and Françoise Maresia, on November 23,1938, in Istanbul. Nello attended St Pulcherie elementary school, St. Benoit High School, joined the scouts and studied at the University of Istanbul and spent an exchange semester in Bressanone. After the sudden loss of his father in 1956, he started his working life in order to help and support his mother and younger sister Caterina (Ketty). He married Paola, the love of his life, in 1965, who survives him. Nello is also survived by his daughter Renata and her husband Ted as well as his grandchildren Bianca, Luca and Jack. Nello was predeceased by his parents and sister Caterina Zakari.



*Nello and Paola on their wedding day*

*Nello, Paola and Renata*

Following his early work experience, together with a Levantine friend and two Turkish partners he joined Pabalk LTD, a company specializing in the import of raw chemicals. Together with one of his partners, they opened the first mushroom factory, Mansa, in Turkey, while simultaneously expanding the core chemical import business serving many sectors in the Turkish economy. Following a lengthy and rewarding career he dedicated his time to voluntary work, this included ESBE a non profit company connected to his highschool St.

Benoit. During this period he encouraged the younger generation of our community to create the Levantine Culture and Heritage Preservation Association, in Istanbul, and throughout his lengthy period of retirement he dedicated much of his time to supporting the work of the Catholic church in Istanbul. Of course Nello also found time to pursue personal interests: stamp collecting, fishing off the coast of Kinaliada, wild mushroom picking, extensive research into the family genealogy, along with writing and research for his literary interests were some of his favorite pursuits. Throughout his life however Nello always seemed to find time to support his local community, the church and despite the many demands on his time he wrote several books about the life and times of Beyoglu, his local neighborhood in Istanbul. He embodied a range of qualities; unconditional love, strength of spirit, and an unending generosity that could be seen in his dedication to his family, the church and the Levantine Community at large. Nello was continuously involved supporting the Catholic church in Istanbul along with many charitable organizations such as "Fakirlerin Dostu", St Vincent de Paul, Caritas, Beneficienza Italiana, Artigiana as well as organizations like Circolo Roma, CIIM and Comites.

One of his greatest passions was the hospice of Artigiana. He served as president of this hospice from 1996 until his death. He dedicated most of his retired life trying to improve and expand the facilities of Artigiana. Nello made significant efforts to improve the wellbeing of the residents and organized excursions to the city and regular celebratory meals for the residents in the communal dining hall. As it happened, he spent the last six months of his life in the intensive care section of Artigiana, where he received great loving care from each and every employee. Nello spent some memorable times with the carers and enjoyed many hours chatting, encountering new ideas, developing and caring for the garden. At the same time he managed to bring to fruition, with the help and sponsorship of his successor Stefano Kaslowski, one of his final projects at Artigiana which was to install solar panels serving the whole complex with a constant supply of electricity. Another one of his passions was the orphanage of Bebek. The Lazarist Father's and The Sisters of Charity owned extensive properties on the hills of Bebek. For years he fought to save these church owned properties, taking a legal case all the way to the European Court of Human Rights. Unfortunately, the case was unsuccessful and ownership of the orphanage and the properties was transferred to the Turkish government. It served as a cultural center point for many Levantine

families over many years and families spent their summers together at Bebek.



*Levantine families during a Sunday lunch in Bebek*

Nello had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. He was curious and his inquisitiveness and keen intellect drove all his pursuits. He often spent his spare time researching topics of interest or reading books. One of the fruits of this research was his book on the street of Pera, "Se Beyoglu mi fosse narrato" which has been published in Italian, Turkish, French and Greek and a soon to be published book on the orphanage of Bebek (in collaboration with some of the young girls who grew up in the orphanage). In addition, Nello wrote numerous articles in local journals, as well as a collection of short essays on the Levantine and on the history of the churches of Istanbul. Nello also contributed to many conferences on Levantine issues, he spoke regularly on the history of the Catholic church in Türkiye and he was a regular guest of honor at local schools in Istanbul.

It was because of this extensive involvement in his local community that Nello received recognition from both the Vatican and the Italian state. These awards came as a surprise but they were nonetheless a significant source of pride for Nello as he continued to support his community.

Commander of the Order of St Gregory the Great  
Knight of the Order of St Sylvester  
Officer of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Italy



His legacy will carry on over time reminding each of us the potential and the rewards that can be gained from serving the community with no gain in sight other than the desire to help his fellow man. No one can or ever fill the void that Nello left in our lives, not only in our community life but also in our hearts. Nello accepted everyone with an open heart, open arms, and his warm hearted smile remains embedded in our memories. Nello had immense passion for his family, his community and his spiritual work. In short, as some people described him, he was a Marco Pascha, but above all he was my beloved and most precious Papi.



*Paola and Nello*



Nello, Paola, Renata, Ted, Bianca, Luca and Jack

Renata Maresia-Buckley