



Kouloulis, George Alexander

MAY 15, 1935 - MAR 27, 2026



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FUNERAL HOME, MEMORIAL PARK & CREMATORY

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George Kouloulis, cherished father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and respected pillar of the San Francisco Greek community passed away at the age of 91 on March 27, 2026. While he spent most of his life in San Francisco, George was born and raised on the island of Ikaria, Greece, surrounded by the Aegean Sea an area known as a “Blue Zone,” where people are known for their longevity and relaxed way of life.

George began working at the age of five during the difficult post World War II years. His youth was marked by the deprivations and tragedies. George’s ambitions fueled his dreams of a better life. He saved enough money to buy a donkey and used it to deliver wood to nearby villages to help support his family where his entrepreneurial spirit began. He later served as a merchant marine aboard a cargo ship, traveling the world, and in 1958, at the age of 23, chose San Francisco, California, as the place to build a better life. Arriving without speaking English but with a strong work ethic, he built a remarkable life and lasting legacy.

In 1959, he married Gloria Mills, and together they had four daughters. He is survived by Alexandria Hatzistratis (Fotis), Lavendar Kratsas (Zacharias), Tina Kouloulis, Janice Gallonakis, and Jason Mills. Although George and Gloria divorced in 1967, his commitment and love of family remained strong. Beginning in 1988, he shared a 35-year partnership with Cheryl Pappin, who passed away in January 2026. He is survived by his sister Toula and was predeceased by his siblings Aspasia, Stellios, and Kostas. He created a large, warm, and loving family, whose traditions live on through his children, 13 grandchildren, and 17 great-grandchildren. He was an extraordinary example of sacrifice, unending lessons of determination and hard work to create a legacy for his future generations.

George was known throughout the Greek community as “Vourtsas,” meaning “paintbrush” in Greek. A serial business owner, he founded Venus and Liberty Painting, where he employed and mentored many newly arrived young Greek men in San Francisco. Even into his 80s, he was often seen on ladders, still working though by then it was more for projects than work.



Obituary

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In 1972, he opened Haystack Pizza Restaurant, a beloved Noe Valley favorite, where he introduced locals to some of the best pizza and Italian cuisine in the city. Though proudly Greek, George chose Italian food because it was more popular and he was an entrepreneur. The restaurant was often full every night, with his daughters and many of his grandchildren working there from a young age for many years.

George loved Western movies and created a Western-themed restaurant. He especially enjoyed celebrating Halloween at The Haystack, where he could be found dressed as a cowboy, handing out apples he grew and picked from "The Land." In the early 1980s, he opened Zorba, a lively neighborhood bar on 24th Street. He also remained deeply connected to his Ikarian roots and was a founding member of the Northern California Pan Icarian Brotherhood, Chapter Lychnos #11. He also loved live Greek music and was often seen dancing Zeibekiko well after midnight. He celebrated his 80th birthday in epic fashion at The Land, surrounded by friends and family, with unforgettable moments on the dance floor, and later a very special 90th birthday surrounded by his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and friends where he even danced Zeibekiko with his signature spins and shoe slaps.

In 1976, he purchased 180 acres in Mendocino County, filled with wildlife, oak trees, and beautiful views, known as "The Land." It became a special retreat where he spent more time over the years, gathering with family and friends around the fire, sharing traditional Greek meals, hunting, and escaping the busy city life.

With the help of friends and family, he built a home, fruit orchard, and pond on the property, creating a place for generations to gather and enjoy. George was always finding a project, keeping himself and others busy fixing and improving things. He especially loved cooking traditional Greek meals for family and friends. At night, he often slept on the couch with a shotgun and flashlight nearby just in case a bear came by.

He will be remembered as the end of an era, a true legend who came to America at a young age and built an extraordinary life through hard work and determination. Known for his tireless work ethic, generosity, and sense of humor, he left a lasting impact through his family and businesses. He showed his love not in words, but through his actions through kindness, generosity, and always being there for the people he loved. His legacy lives on in the family he built, the traditions he carried forward, and the countless lives he touched.



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May His Memory Be Eternal



Tribute Wall

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Anonymous sent a Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet to the Kouloulis family.



March 31 at 5:51 AM



Veona Madsen posted:

I remember going to visit with Gloria and George in California. George was always very welcoming and friendly. He would take us places to share his culture and share new experiences with us. He was a great host and always made sure we enjoyed ourselves and had a great time. We loved talking to him and getting to know him better with each visit. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this difficult time. Sending love and hugs your way. Veona Madsen and Family

March 30 at 9:35 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring George by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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