

Thank you for Onassis Prize (Mary R. Brooks)

In life, we often don't end up on the path we begin. In the 1970s, I spent 6 years working in the soul-destroying world of healthcare. Even moving up to administration did not diminish my disappointment with the industry. My husband was incredibly supportive, and I went back to school for a change of direction, completing an MBA in international business and finance.

Yet, I still had not found my sea legs. On graduation, I could not find a position with the international operations of any Canadian bank or investment house. Sir Graham Day, one of my university professors, saw promise in me, and took me under his wing. He convinced me that the world of shipping was infinitely more fascinating than banking and, in a project for the Canadian government, hired me to code the contents of containers calling Montreal, Halifax and Saint John. Who knew that the biggest import of the time was French wine for thirsty Quebecers? I was hooked.

For Graham's faith in me, and the incredible support of my husband, I am truly thankful.

A second great mentor was Richard Goss, a former winner of this prize and my PhD supervisor. He was quite willing to let me try to prove that, for cargo owners, it wasn't just about the price of moving a box. Rumour was it had something to do with a bottle of scotch at Christmas. More likely, I found, is that it is about the ability of sales staff to solve problems in an industry that is often out of sight and therefore, for cargo owners, risky.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to my children Emma and Nathan; mom wasn't always there for you. Now you are self-sufficient and I am so proud.

In investigating competition policy in shipping, port strategic management and coastal shipping, I have had the support and the intellectual stimulation of co-authors and industry experts; Thanos Pallis, Ken Button, Tony Schellinck, Kevin Cullinane, Jim Frost and Graham Fraser, who is here tonight, all deserve special mention. It is they who have earned this award as much as I have.

I also thank Anthony Papadimitriou, President of the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, the Prize Committee, and Professors Marianne Lewis and Costas Grammenos for their faith in me.

So what will happen to the money is always the question that interested Canadians ask? I share with you that it will support entrance scholarships and travel awards for Dalhousie undergraduates looking to find their path in life, and that path may not be the one they start on either. Just as the Onassis Foundation has supported so many Greeks through scholarships, I am proud to support not just Canadians but new immigrants to Canada as well, and hope that the Foundation will agree I have used this honour and the Onassis legacy wisely.