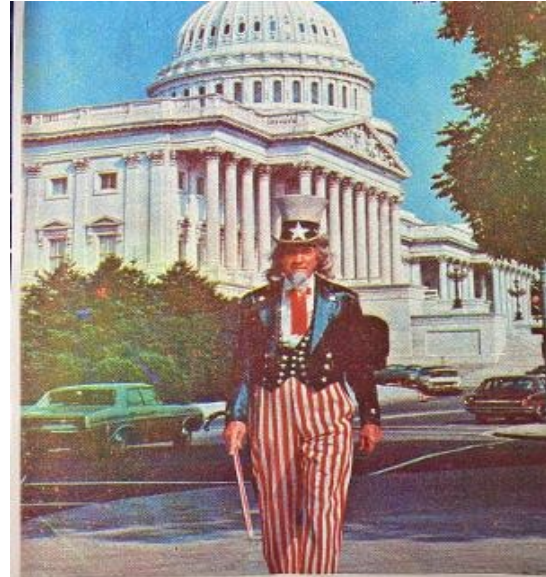


THE UNCLE SAM (Claim No. K96878).

To me “Uncle Sam” was not a fictional character.

He became another milestone in my life when I met John Weldon Rusk.



When I was growing up in the remote mountains of The Providence of Arcadia Greece, I must have been a very unusual kid.

I was one of those young kids who was never satisfied with an answer.

I used to drive people crazy with my follow up questions of why, how, what for, when, show me, prove it. And then I would get in to trouble for trying to see if I could prove whatever I was told to be true. Good thing I had a very patient and understanding mother and even though sometimes she would get frustrated with me, I could tell she was proud of me. But a great many of the village’s inhabitants did not feel comfortable with my behavior and curiosities, including the young leftist Village schoolteacher. I was labeled as “The Devil Kid.”

The obstacles of the isolated mountain life, followed by the Great Depression, World War II along with the Greek Civil War, brought the split of our young family trying to improve its’ chance for survival.

My Father being an American citizen, was able to bring my older brothers at a very young age to United States with him. My Mother and I and baby sister were trapped in a primitive isolated mountain top.

On top of all that, along with my curiosities it started to make me question my confidence in my future.

On my 15th birthday, I had the opportunity for the first time to see an ocean and come to the United States to leave with the other half of the family, without knowing a word of English. My curiosities caught on fire, and my discoveries of the many possible opportunities erupted at the land of opportunity of thought and accomplishments.

In 1975, came another opportunity of accomplishment. I got chance to meet a person named **John Weldon Rusk**.

The Image of Uncle Sam. But he was not an image. He was real.

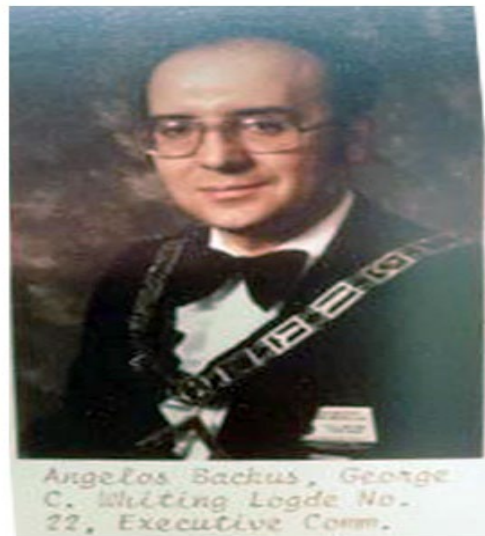
He was 6 feet 6 inches tall. Dressed in his high hat, his long gray hair and goatee, his star-spangled blue satin jacket and vest, and his red and white striped pants, he was a symbol of America, standing tall.

His was the image of the famous face on the World War I Army recruiting poster with a forefinger aimed straight ahead and the legend: "I Want You." In real life, he was John W. Rusk. His official copyright was (Claim No. K96878) "**Uncle Sam**".

(As Eugene L. Meyer has written: Since 1947, he regularly has appeared in uniform in parades and pageants throughout the Washington area, from Labor Day in Takoma Park to St. Patrick's Day in Alexandria to Veterans' Day at Arlington National Cemetery. He has been in three presidential inaugurations, stood tall with Bob Hope at the last one. It is not easy being Uncle Sam. It used to take him 25 minutes to suit up, although he claimed, "I have done it in 15, and I can get out of it in about five.")



John Weldon Rusk, Washington Centennial Lodge No. 14



Angelos Sachus, George C. Whiting Lodge No. 22, Executive Comm.



I met him when I became a Mason. During the year that I was the Master of my Lodge and chaired the "Day of Thrills" function in Washington D.C, he was one of the main attractions as the famous "Uncle Sam". I had the great pleasure to receive from him a registered United States Flag, that was flown over the Capitol of the United States of America. He was a great a 33rd degree fellow Mason.



He owned his own tile, marble, mosaic, and terrazzo business. During World War II, he laid the concrete foundations of the barracks at Fort Belvoir

His career as Uncle Sam began in earnest in 1947 (when I was born) with an invitation to join the uniformed unit at the Shriners' Almas Temple. He rejected the role of Lincoln. "I'm liable to get shot down South," he remembers saying. "I said, 'I'll be Uncle Sam.' "

Only during the 1960s did he encounter anti-Uncle Sam sentiment. "Those hippies," he recalled, "a bunch of them were hollering to me, 'Hey, Uncle Sam, you need a haircut,' with their hair hanging all the way to their shoulders."

In addition to posing and parading, he also liked to hand out red, white, and blue suit-pocket handkerchiefs inscribed "Compliments of 'Uncle Sam.'" with his signature. I am a recipient of many of them, and I wear them proudly as they are always part of my attire.

He was a great patriotic giant of a gentlemen. Being Uncle Sam I could sense that John saw it as a great honor.

It is quoted that he said: I have one uniform that will go with me in the coffin when I die. I'm going to wear it, yes sir."



