



CHRIS SOUKAS

Chris Soukas was born in 1919 in the village of Orinon in the state of Loaning, Greece.

He spent his first thirteen years in the country that was the birthplace of the Olympics. Moving to the United States in 1932, he began a wrestling career that would span over 35 years and became a wrestling legend. As a teenager, he joined the Greek/American Hermes Club and from 1934 to 1966, Chris wrestled the best the world had to offer, winning more than sixty championships.

He was America's National AAU Champion in 1941. Chris Soukas was selected as outstanding wrestler despite the fact that there were many great American wrestlers in that tournament including such greats as Joe McDaniels, three times a national college champion and the Syracuse University wrestling coach. Also participating was Lehigh's great coach and Olympian Gerry Lehman, in addition to the great Henry Wittenberg, the multiple National AAU Champion and America's greatest Olympian in wrestling for the first half of the twentieth century.

During WWII Chris enlisted in the United States Army and served in Europe from 1942-1946. He was honorably discharged and returned to his Greek/ American club where he was appointed the wrestling coach while he continued to compete as a wrestler. During the next ten years, Chris won 16 more championships at weights of 145, 150, 155, and 165. He trained hard and wrestled hard, enjoying every competitor. During this time he worked with many young athletes who continued their wrestling careers. Chris's final

competitive match took place at the McBurney YMCA 1966 in the YMCA Wrestling Championships, winning the championship at heavyweight although he weighed only 170 LBS.

In addition to wrestling, Chris was an avid supporter of amateur athletics. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the New York Greek American Club and was recognized for his outstanding service to soccer. He also served as a board member of the German American Junior League soccer association.

Chris was instrumental in bringing numerous families and family members from Greece to this country to achieve "The American Dream". He helped them find employment, and assisted them to become self sufficient members of American society. The subsequent generation who Chris assisted in adapting and receiving the appropriate education in America today are bank executives, attorneys, accountants, research scientists, doctors, educators, business men and engineers. In addition, Chris was a devoted family man who enjoyed time spent with his wife and family.

He was also proud about a relationship with a man who he wrestled in a championship in New York, Donald Rumsfeld, a hardnosed wrestler from Princeton, who later became the Secretary of Defense during the George W. Bush administration.

Christopher's story is a journey of a young man coming to America and becoming a champion on and off the mat.