



# The Dictator Next Door

Mix a lifetime dream with a little Disney inspiration, add generous helpings of satire and irony, and you have Nevada's closest international neighbors ... sort of. Meet His Excellency, The President of The Republic of Molossia.

By Cathy Gillespie



"I may be a dictator, but I'm a nice dictator,"

- His Excellency, Kevin Baugh, President of Molossia

Situated on a 1.35-acre parcel of land near the eastern end of Dayton, NV, not far from the Virginia City foothills, you'll find The Republic of Molossia: a self-proclaimed sovereign nation little known to most Nevadans ... but perhaps not for long.

Molossia (pronounced moe-LAAHSS-eeyah) is what is known as a micronation, which, according to Wikipedia, "is an entity that claims to be an independent nation or state but is not officially recognized by world governments or major international organizations."

Be that as it may, Molossia is a very real place, with a rich and colorful history, and a very real and dedicated leader, His Excellency, President Kevin Baugh.

A self-proclaimed "nice Dictator," the President runs the day-to-day operations of Molossia and oversees and protects the Molossian people (ie: his wife, kids and their dogs).

Molossia was a childhood idea for Baugh that just kept going. "How many dreams do we have as a kid that we never follow through on?" says Baugh. "Think of it like a kid who builds a tree house and makes his own flag ... and then just doesn't stop."

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN

When Kevin was a young teen, he and a friend became inspired by the 1959 Peter Sellers Film, *The Mouse that Roared*, a zany cold-war based comedy about a tiny, impoverished, backward nation that declares a war on the U.S. hoping to lose so they could collect the massive foreign aid the U.S. usually sends. Things don't go according to plans and all sorts of hilarity ensues.

The film ignited the boys' imaginations and creativity and on May 26, 1977, the Grand Republic of Vuldstein was born - Molossia's earliest incarnation. Baugh was named Prime Minister; his friend was crowned King James. While mostly a nation on paper, Vuldstein had a flag, a map, official currency, and even a national anthem - the closing theme to STAR WARS.

As the story goes, the Grand Republic became inactive later that year because the King moved to a different school. Dutifully, the Prime Minister carried it on through the next 21 years, and several other incarnations, before Vuldstein was reborn as Molossia in May 1998, right about the time Kevin bought his first home in Dayton, NV.

"Molossia was all on paper until the internet came to being"



Clockwise from Left: Molossia welcome sign; Molossian 5 Valor bill; at the border welcoming the Prince of Venus, a fellow micronationalist who, while on earth, resides in Gardnerville, NV



Molossia's Red Square features a post office, bank, Molossia Trading Company (with real souvenirs for sale), the Office of the President, the Tiki Hut Bar & Grill, an elaborate water wheel, the peace pole, and directional signs pointing to other well known micronations of the world.

adds Baugh. "Then, once I had land, I took things to the next level to make Molossia someplace real and tangible where people could visit."

Things started off small at first. Their home became "Government House", its back patio "Norton Park". Next up was deciding on a flag.

"I chose the Sierra Leone flag turned upside down partly for its simple design," says Baugh. "And the blue on top represents our numerous blue sky days, white for the winter snow covered mountains, and green for our springtime and the sage. Pragmatically, since it's

a commercially available design, it's more affordable to replace than a custom flag, which is key since so many of our flags get shredded by our strong winds."

Baugh jokes, "The weather in Molossia is perfect, always calm with 70-degree days year round, however due to our proximity to the U.S., their bad weather spills over onto us all the time."

In 2009 the President began hosting tours but adds, "we didn't have much to see, just Norton Park, so we



His Excellency at his desk doing official Presidential "stuff"

started to amp up from there."

Over the last few years they've added more out buildings and features to their land, along with stuffed characters to man them, creating a Disney-like atmosphere. Along with that growth, each year Molossia has become more publicized, which in turn has brought more tourists.

The President and First Lady now host three-hour tours once or twice a month, April 15 through October 15, but only on scheduled dates. Those who are interested in visiting should look to the

Molossia website and facebook page for tour dates.

"Sometimes tourists walk into the yard at unexpected times," adds First Lady, Adrienne Baugh. "Once three vans of Asian tourists just showed up unannounced. We weren't prepared for them and had to send them away."

The President takes pride in being one of only a handful of micronations in existence that actually has something to see. "Most micronations don't have land," adds President Baugh, "many are just a concept. Some



Some of Molossia's more colorful resident workers: Herman the banker ready to exchange official Molossian currency, Trader Tom mans the Trading Company, and Ralph the postal guy (yes, there are even official Molossia postage stamps).

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(Continued)

kid has a computer, builds a website, and declares his room a sovereign nation so he doesn't have to pick up his socks. Usually, by the time he gets a girlfriend, the nation dissolves."

That's one of the things that makes Baugh's nation unique: he has stuck with it for 38 years and counting. Also, there's the "Functionality Project", their goal to try and make things as real and functional as possible in Molossia.

Today, the Republic of Molossia has its own navy, (multiple inflatable boats), space program (rocket launching), railroad (model train set), currency (five Valora are worth a tube of cookie dough), plus a postal service, bank, measurement system, phone system, tourist attractions, holidays, online movie theater, online radio station, and even its own time zone – 39 minutes ahead of Pacific time – just to be unique. "We're all about being unique and unusual here in Molossia," adds Baugh.

In lieu of the gold standard, the Molossian monetary system runs on the cookie dough standard because, "it actually has some value to us, you can eat it ... which we do ... on a regular basis," laughs Baugh.



The President says his nation's highest honor is being recognized. They've had a lot of media attention over the last year, including a recent feature on FoxNews.com, and visits from Yahoo, CNN, and their first celebrity visitor, actor Jack Black.

Baugh attributes the surge of interest to MircoCon, a conference for Micronationalists he founded and



Top: Norton Park with Government House in the background.



Right: Molossia Railroad

hosted near Disneyland last spring. "Reporters from all over the world were searching us out, wanting to know more about MicroCon, Molossia, and micronations in general," adds Baugh.

Jack Black's visit in July was with a pre-production crew doing research for a movie he'll be starring in called *Micronation*. Baugh knows little of the movie, other than it's loosely based on Molossia.

Aside from hoping for a script consult, and perhaps walking the red carpet at the film's premier, the First Family have little interest in fame and fortune from the attention given to their budding nation. "We're not in it for money, we're here to have fun," Baugh adds. They have even turned down numerous offers to build a reality show around their lives. "We just couldn't see where we'd have enough content to keep it interesting," says the First Lady. "Aside from dressing up from time to time and getting to wear a tiara, we just lead regular lives." Part of that regular life is raising their three youngest children. Their daughter Alexis even gets into the act. In her roll as Chief Constable of Molossia, she regularly assists the President and First Lady during most tours of the Republic.

"We have a good time. We like to laugh," adds the President. "Everything we do, we do as a family."

Watch for the First Family of Molossia in the Nevada Day Parade this year, and learn more about the Republic of Molossia, its history and customs, plus upcoming tour dates at Molossia.org. ~



Above/left: Official Molossia water bottles handed out during tours. Left: The First Lady Adrienne Baugh, Chief Constable Alexis Baugh, and President Kevin Baugh wave to the crowd during the 2014 Nevada Day Parade. This year marks Molossia's 9th straight appearance in the Parade.