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# Trumbeta Shqiptare

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**Volume 106**

**December 2021**

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The Official Publication of the Albanian-American National Organization, Inc.



*“We, American citizens and Canadian citizens, of Albanian descent and others interested in Albanian-Americans, desiring to form and perpetuate a federation and promote its objectives and principles; to effect a perfect and harmonious understanding between ourselves and others, to promote the cause of good citizenship in the country in which we live; to stimulate the spirit of good fellowship and good cooperation; do hereby establish and ordain these By-Laws.”*

***Please visit us at: [www.AANO.org](http://www.AANO.org)***



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*Published Two Times A Year By*  
**The Albanian-American National Organization, Inc.**  
*Website: [AANO.org](http://AANO.org)*

**2021-2022**  
**NATIONAL OFFICERS & BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

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**Albanian-American**  
*National Organization*

**December 2021**

## IN MEMORIAM

**John Lulgjuraj**

**AUGUST 13, 1951 – AUGUST 11, 2021**



John was born on August 13, 1951 in Llofka, Montenegro. His father's name was Zef Prela Lulgjuraj and his mother's name was Lena Gjona Gjelij. His family was very well known in the region for their integrity, honesty, and patriotic values. In his early age, John received these values that he carried on all his life. When John turned 13, he moved to Brach, Croatia to pursue his high school education in a Catholic boarding school. John became one of the most successful students in the school. He excelled in art, philosophy, history, and religion. After he graduated from the boarding school, in 1969 he came to America, where he joined his entire family. John was able to attend the University of Michigan and graduated in 1973 with his Masters in History of Art and Archeology. During this time, he also started a radio program in Michigan which focused on the history and culture of Albania. This radio program influenced the Albanian community in Detroit to get involved in celebrating the culture and traditions of the Albanian heritage. He represented the community in different government bodies, such as American Congress, to fight for human rights in Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro. He was the current President of the oldest Albanian-American National Organization, which provides financial support to

young Albanian-Americans who are pursuing a college education. John was a man of many talents. He was a musician, soccer player, golfer, and above all he loved the people that surrounded him. John was well respected from his family, friends, and colleagues. He will be remembered as a strong, intelligent, gentle, respectful, well-spoken, thoughtful, and selfless person. He set a great example for his children, Leo, Jennifer, and Jessica to carry on his legacy.

## AANO Memorial Message



While no words can help to ease our loss, our words can express how we felt about our past President, John Lulgjuraj, and the relationships formed over the years. We hope our outpouring will be a comfort to all in the coming days.

On behalf of our National Officers, Chapter Board of Governors, National Committee Chairpeople, and Chapter Members, I would like to express our heartfelt condolences to Shpresa, Leo, Jennifer and Jessica, and to all of the extended Lulgjuraj Family. We are honored to share in the keeping of John's memory through his service to the Albanian American National Organization, Inc., and he will be truly missed.

What more can we say about a man who had purpose, passion, character, and an allegiance to his heritage. He had a presence of caring, kindness, generosity, and leadership which was ever so present. He periodically educated us with his knowledge of Albanian history and geography knowing that many of us on the National Board were born in America.

May his memory be eternal and a torch for all that met him through the Albanian American National Organization, Inc. Our pledge is to follow his strength and purpose with continued values to be set forth by his example and his devotion to the AANO, Inc. We, therefore, dedicate the 2022 Convention year to John Lulgjuraj.

## *President's Message* *Mesazhi i Presidentit*



It is that time of the year again! Time for family, friends, and of course, holiday wishes. May your holidays be filled with joy. Wishing we could be together, again, soon—celebrating our Conventions. Missing all of you more at this time of the year because of Covid.

We, as an Organization, have had quite a setback because of the loss of our past President, John Lulgjuraj. However, because he lead by example, with such passion we are moving forward and carrying on in his behalf.

This year, we were able to award 5 scholarships to a group out of 13 amazing applicants. We were not happy we had to cancel our 2020 and 2021 Annual National Conventions because of Covid. The Organization realized it was many of the state mandates that guided our decision. It was necessary to adhere to the safety guidelines and not jeopardize the health of our convention attendees. I am hopeful that a 2022 is in the making and will be announced and publicized soon.

The AANO is so thankful to all of our Convention followers for your continued support—past and present! Now, more than ever, because of Covid these past two years, we have realized that we have lost touch and opportunities to maintain our Albanian traditions and heritage that we gain through our yearly contact during the Conventions. Without this constant contact and with the American way of life, the young will assimilate and the future of maintaining the Albanian language, culture, and history will be lost.

We invite all young adults to join our social media—the AANO.org website, the AANO Facebook, and the Trumbeta, which is on the website. You can become further involved by applying for a scholarship and attending our Conventions.

In this Trumbeta issue, try a traditional recipe, find out who the top 10 Albanians are, read poems by Ismail Kadare and Elpiniqi Q. Frasheri, and visit one of the top 10 tourist places in Albania today.

Bye for now,

**Eftalea (Lea) Bitta**

**National President**

**Albanian-American National Organization, Inc.**



Again, the very best to everyone this holiday season from the AANO, Inc. and may the New Year be filled with family, love, peace and happiness!



*The National Board wishes  
all of our members and  
friends ...  
a Happy Holiday Season !*



**Albanian-American  
National Organization**

## **CHAPTER ACTIVITIES**



### **Chicago**

We are proud to announce that our chapter was awarded three AANO Scholarships. We got together in August to celebrate the great achievements of these three young Albanian-Americans. The Scholarship winners are Isabella Kostallari, Daniel Shkempi, and David Taullahu. The AANO received 13 scholarship applications this year and five were chosen, three were given to students in the Chicago area, one to a student from New York and one to a student from Detroit. We are so proud of all these students. To celebrate these students, we went Cantigny Park in Wheaton, Illinois. This great outside venue was hosting a live concert that day. We brought blankets, lawn chairs, snacks and drinks. Most of all, it gave us a chance to meet and be together and we all had a good time.







AANO Queen Klea Gjoni, George Teli, Eva Teli, Olga Titos, and Daniel Shkembali



Erla Teli, George Teli, Klea Gjoni



## ***Attention Past Scholarship Winners***



We would love to know what you're doing

Please send your information to Gayle Orlow ([gayleorlow56@gmail.com](mailto:gayleorlow56@gmail.com)) and list the year that you won your scholarship, where you attended school, your major, and what has transpired since. If you like, attach a photo.

We enjoy keeping up to date on our Scholarship recipients.

*If you would like to make a donation to the AANO Scholarship Fund, please send your contribution to:*

### **AANO SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

**c/o Nancy Capstick  
15 Ellis Drive  
Worcester, MA 01609**

**[nancy@gmail.com](mailto:nancy@gmail.com)**



*Donations to the Scholarship Fund are  
Tax Deductible*

**2020 AANO Scholarship Recipients****KYLE BRAMSON**

KEY BISCAVNE, FLORIDA  
ATTENDING FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY OR  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
MAJORING IN FINANCE  
MINORING IN JAZZ STUDIES

**TOGAY ATMACA**

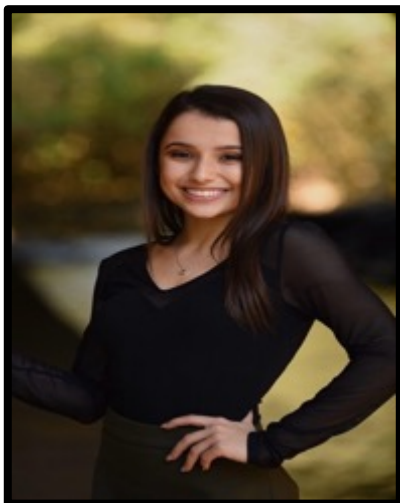
MIDDLE VILLAGE, NEW YORK  
ATTENDING UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
MAJORING IN ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL  
SCIENCE

**CAROLINE RUMANI**

ELMWOOD PARK, ILLINOIS  
ATTENDING UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, CHICAGO  
MAJORING IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

**VANESSA SHEHU**

MEADOWBROOK, PENNSYLVANIA  
ATTENDING BRYN MAWR COLLEGE  
MAJORING IN BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR  
BIOLOGY



**ELIZA ALUSHI**  
LIVONIA, MICHIGAN  
ATTENDING UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
MAJORING IN BIOPSYCHOLOGY,  
NEUROSCIENCE  
MINORING IN BUSINESS



**KLEA AHMET**  
BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN  
ATTENDING MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY LYMAN BRIGGS COLLEGE  
MAJORING IN NEUROSCIENCE AND MINORING  
IN SOCIOLOGY OR NUTRITION

***2021 AANO Scholarship Recipients***

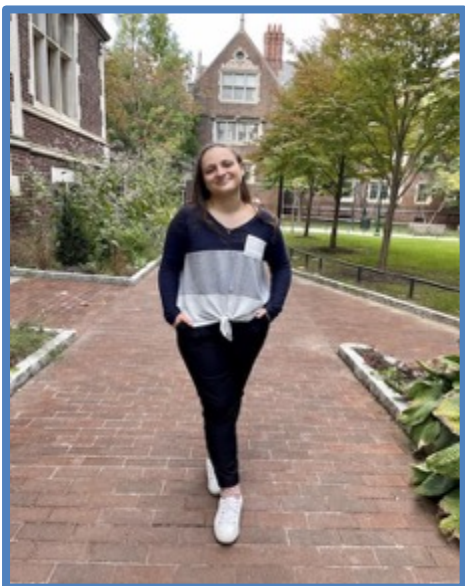


**ISABELLA KOSTALLARI**  
PEARL CITY, ILLINOIS  
ATTENDING IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
FALL 2021  
MAJOR BACHELOR OF SCIENCE;  
VETERINARY MEDICINE



**DANIEL SHKEMBI**  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS  
ATTENDING PURDUE UNIVERSITY, FALL 2021  
MAJORING IN ENGINEERING





**VANESSA SHEHU**  
MEADOWBROOK, PA  
ATTENDING BRYN MAWR COLLEGE, FALL 2021  
BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR  
BIOLOGY MAJOR



**SONOLA BURRJA**  
MAMARONECK, NEW YORK  
ATTENDING FORDHAM UNIVERSITY, FALL 2021  
MAJOR BIOLOGY; MINOR GERMAN



**DAVID TAULLAHU**  
WHEATON, IL  
ATTENDING DEPAUL UNIVERSITY, FALL 2021  
BACHELOR OF ARTS MAJOR



**JOSEPH DA SILVA**  
BEVERLY HILLS, MI  
ATTENDING MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY,  
FALL 2021  
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION MAJOR





## 74<sup>th</sup> Annual AANO Convention Update



Due to the Coronavirus that has affected the entire world in 2020, the 74<sup>th</sup> Annual AANO Convention, scheduled to be held at the Hilton Philadelphia City Avenue Hotel from July 31 through August 2, 2020, was postponed and will take place at the same location hopefully in 2022. Please see letter sent out to our members with regards to convention information.

We hope all of our members are staying healthy and safe as  
**"we are all in this together!"**

**GET CONNECTED !!!**

VISIT THE  
A.A.N.O. HOME PAGE



**[www.AANO.ORG](http://www.AANO.ORG)**

If you have information for the Home Page,  
Contact David Sosnowski  
[dsoz@microthunder.com](mailto:dsoz@microthunder.com)



**Albanian-American**  
National Organization



**May 2020 (Posted prior to the cancellation of the 2021 Convention)**

Greetings to All,

We hope this communication finds you and your family well.

With the current situation caused by COVID-19, the AANO has decided to cancel our 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, which was scheduled to take place in Philadelphia, July 31 through August 2, 2020.

This was not an easy decision for us, as this is the only time in the 74 year history of the AANO, that an Annual Convention has been cancelled. However, being faced with many uncertainties on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the next few months, we believe that this is the right decision.

The good news is that we will keep our promise to the Albanian-American community of Philadelphia and hold our next Annual Convention, scheduled for August 6, 7, and 8, 2021, in Philadelphia. The 2021 Convention will be held at Hilton Philadelphia City Avenue Hotel, the same hotel that we were going to have this year's Convention.

We will keep you informed on all the details as we get closer to the 2021 event, however, **we do encourage you to save the dates.**

Although we are cancelling this year's Convention, this year, as every year in the past, we will continue to provide financial assistance to a number of Albanian-American students through our Scholarship Awards Program.

As you may be aware, the AANO's scholarship and operational budget is raised from three sources, (1) generous contributions from the Albanian-American community, (2) our Annual Convention and (3) interest earned from invested funds. With the

cancellation of the Annual Convention and the recent Stock Market losses, we are faced with some immediate challenges to meet our financial goals for the remainder of this year and for our scholarship contributions for 2021. The only resource we currently have is contributions from our members and friends.

**To make your tax exempt contribution to the AANO's Scholarship Fund please visit [www.aano.org](http://www.aano.org). On the scholarship page you will see the "Donation" link. We know that these are challenging times for all of us, however, any contribution that you can make will be greatly appreciated.**

The AANO is run by a dedicated group of volunteers, therefore, every dollar donated will be used to help Albanian-American students in pursuit of their higher education.

We are grateful for all the support we continue to receive from all of you for all these years, wishing you, your families and loved ones good health, prosperity and happiness, and we look forward to seeing you during our 2021 Annual Convention, which will be held on August 6, 7, and 8, 2021, in Philadelphia.

Best wishes,

National Officers and Chapter Board of Governors

**[www.AANO.ORG](http://www.AANO.ORG)**

**Like us on Facebook  
Albanian-American National Organization, Inc.**



## Season's Greetings from AANO!

May all our AANO members and their families have a very happy holiday season and a peaceful and prosperous New Year! We might be separated today, but we are still raising a glass to good health and happiness from afar.

Keep strong, stay safe, and take care of yourselves. I am looking forward to seeing you all at our next National Convention!

*Klea Gjonaj, 2019 AANO Queen*





## ***SOCIAL NEWS***

### ***Wedding/Engagement***



#### **Albany**

Angelica Greco, daughter of Paul and Vera Apostol, cancelled her wedding to Sean Trestick twice due to Covid-19 before downsizing to a less than 50 wedding on July 18, 2020. The guests were limited to close friends and family and the event took place at Sean and Angelica's rural residence in Rotterdam, NY. Angelica's son Christian served as ring bearer. A great time was had by all and wishes for a happy and healthy future for the new family were extended to them by all present.



In addition, they are all happily awaiting the arrival of Christian's baby brother at the end of June 2021. Paul and Vera can't wait to meet their second grandson!

#### **Detroit**

Ferit and Rapo Nazarko and Bujar and Selfo Mance and both of their families, as well as some of the Semsedini and Muftari families, all travelled to Cancun, Mexico for at the end of September for the wedding of Majlinda Shemsedini and Fitim Sulejmani. Everyone had

an amazing time. Congratulations to the newlyweds and their families.



#### **Worcester**

Congratulations to Jennifer Rouvina and Jacob Hereford who were married on October 29, 2021 at the beautiful Boston Public Library. Michael Rouvina, brother of the bride, performed the ceremony. They honeymooned in Madrid, Spain. Proud parents are Tom and Jan Rouvina and Mellie and Henry Hereford. We wish them a lifetime of happiness, joy and good health.





## *Wedding Anniversary*



### Worcester



Congratulations to Tom and Janet Rouvina who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on November 7, 2021. They sponsored the coffee hour at St. Mary's Albanian Orthodox Church on November 14th, thanking God for blessing them all these years. Wishing them many, many more!

## *Birthday*

### Detroit

Happy Birthday wishes to Butch Ramolli who celebrated his 50th birthday this past summer 2021 with his family and friends outside in his backyard with a wonderful get together that even had a few valles.



Butch is surrounded by his beautiful family, wife Zena, and children Sofia, Ali, and Savannah

## *Babies*

### Albany

This handsome young smiley lad is Cooper Reeves Trestick, second grandson to Paul and Vera Apostol, born on June 25, 2021. Proud parents are Angelica and Sean Trestick.



**New York**

*Alexandra and Michael Kehoe with their beautiful children ... Aidan, Liam, Anna, and their newest addition, Lucas. Also pictured are grandparents Jim and Christina Liolin and Aunt Elizabeth Liolin.*



**Lucas James  
Nicholas Liolin**

**Born: September 18,  
2020**

**Baptized: May 22,  
2021**

**Worcester**

Julian Michael Bell was born exactly at noon time on October 8, 2020 (on the birthday of his grandmother, Roberta Alera) at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston. Who could ask for a better present! Julian weighed 7 lbs., 12 oz. and was 20.5 inches long. Proud grandparents are Roberta and Keith Alera and Linda and Arnold Bell. He was baptized at St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church on June 1, 2021 and his Godparents are Susan and Chuck Stevens. Kristin and Michael are living in Charlestown, MA and we wish the Bell Family much happiness on their new arrival.

**Class Notes****Detroit**

Congratulations to Claudia Nardi on her graduation from Allen Park High School. Claudia is the daughter of Evi Nardi and stepdaughter of Rapo Nazarko. She is attending Henry Ford College and we wish her much success and a bright future!



**Claudia Nardi**

Congratulations to Kile Wilson on her graduation from elementary school this past June 2021. Pictured is 10-year-old Kile with her beloved Nënë, Rose Black.



**Philadelphia**

Congratulations to Caroline Pandora Fiss who graduated from Kennett High School in June. She is attending Penn State University Main Campus, Majoring in Math Education with a Minor in Deaf Studies. Caroline is the daughter of Robert & Alexandra Fiss.

Congratulations to Madeline Helen Bendo who graduated from Padua Academy in June. She is attending the University of Delaware, Majoring in Special Education. Madeline is the Daughter of Marc & Christi Bendo.

Proud grandparents of both Caroline and Madeline are Jim & Paula Bendo.

***Travel*****Albany**

Paul and Vera Apostol spent time in Daytona Beach during February and March 2020 before the pandemic. Their daughter, Angelica Greco, her 8-year-old son Christian, and her fiancé Sean Trestick joined them for a short vacation that included a hectic 4-park hopper day at Disney World (Paul spent the day at the beach instead). Good choice Paul !!

**Detroit**

The Nazarko; Mance; Semsedini; and some other AANO families /supporters all travelled to Cancun in September 2021 for a destination wedding reception and had a marvelous time all being together for fun, sun, and celebration!

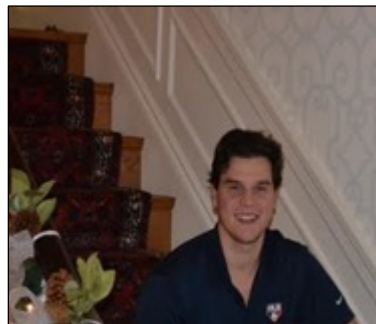
***Get Well Wishes*****Detroit**

Gayle Orlow recently had knee surgery in November 2021 and we wish her a speedy recovery.

**Worcester**

We wish Nancy Capstick a speedy recovery after having undergone recent surgery.

Also, we extend our best wishes to Valerie Kerxhalli and hope she is doing well.

***Congratulations*****Boston/Worcester**

Michael Vasil, 21, of Boston, a right-handed pitcher, was drafted by the **New York Mets** in the **2021 Major League Baseball**

**Draft.** Michael is likely the first 100% Albanian-American to be drafted by the Mets.

As he starts his journey to the Major Leagues, he hopes that someday he will be able to make an impact in the Albanian Community in the Greater New York City area.

Michael is the son of Gregory and Kathy Vasil, brother to sister Kristina, and grandson of Peter and the late Pauline Vasil of Worcester and Liria and the late Michael Kolas of Worcester. We wish Michael much success and look forward to a great career with the Mets.

Virginia's Mike Vasil with Crazy Sword Strikeout! - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hO2Y2ENsL8>



## Celebration



**June 26, 2021**

On the occasion of Fr. Arthur E. Liolin's **50th Anniversary** as a parish priest and Chancellor of the Albanian Archdiocese, St. George Albanian Orthodox Cathedral in South Boston held a special celebration in his honor. There were many priests and parishioners on hand, as well as Metropolitan Tikhon, and family members and friends. At that time, two official portraits were unveiled in his honor that will be displayed in the Cathedral. There were many guest speakers, including his son Evans, and at the request of Fr. Arthur, Tenor Bashkim Paçuku performed *Ave Maria* to the delight of Priftëresha Margaret. We wish him all the best and may God bless the Liolin Family.

*Për shumë vjet!*



*Priftëresha Margaret and Fr. Liolin with his brother and sister-in-law, Jim and Christina Liolin*

**Gazmend Kapllani**

**August 4, 2020 at 11:45 AM**

*Taken from Gazmend Kapllani's Facebook Page*

One year ago exactly: the wonderful and touching recognition by AANO - one of the oldest Albanian American cultural organizations. After a year I feel so lucky to have landed in Chicago and at DePaul.

This year we'll launch the Minor in Albanian Studies (running a few months late because of the pandemic). We are launching already 5 new elective content and Flac Albanian language courses (starting with "Food, History, Identity in the Balkans" this Fall), an already thriving Student Organization (AACA) which is working on innovative projects like SPEAK MEMORY (oral personal stories of the Albanian American community, creating so the first memory archive of our community), public events and conferences that we'll be soon announced and our Study Abroad program in Albania and Southern Italy (still a work-in-progress), the creation of the Hidai Bregu Albanian Studies Archive at DePaul Library, the creation of a Scholarship Fund for Albanian American students and distinguished researchers in Albanian Studies, the creation of an online Magazine for Albanian and Southeastern European Studies and many other initiatives already accomplished or ongoing.

Heartfelt thanks to all those new and old friends who are supporting us in our challenging and exciting work of promoting the noble mission of the Hidai Eddie Bregu Program of Albanian Studies at DePaul University.







My name is Nazo Islamaj. I am a first generation Albanian American. My parents are immigrants from Saranda, Albania. As a sophomore at DePaul University, I am majoring in Political Science with plans to attend law school. I am the Vice

President of DePaul's Albanian American Cultural Association. I am also Albanian Professor Gazmend Kapllani's assistant. In these positions, I organize Albanian themed events at DePaul University and spread awareness of Albanian culture in Chicago.

### ***Albanian Get Together Detroit, September 2021***

Due to the fact that the Detroit community had not gotten together much at all due to precautions for Covid in 2020 and 2021, a bunch of the older generation of long-time AANO supporters and a few of their daughters, daughters-in-law and a few sons got together for an outdoor gathering of Albanian food, conversation, fun, and music in Julia Black's backyard. It was the last week of September 2021 and the weather cooperated fully.

It would be hard to imagine an event that had more syrup. In true Albanian style, the women didn't listen and they brought desserts and the dessert table morphed from one table to four and probably no one had more fun at the end of the night than the bees who thankfully waited to discover how much Albanian women love to use syrup in their desserts!

Ermira Babaliu was a guest and graciously entertained the ladies by leading a few impromptu songs from the luncheon tables. It was so nice to share memories with dear old friends.



Pictured here are Julia Black, Alex Wilson, Lisa Riza (long-time Detroit Chapter member), and Meriem Kadi, long-time supporter who brought her mother, Nina Kadi, who turned 89 years young the week of the party.



Pictured here are renowned singer Ermira Babaliou, who has sung at various AANO Conventions, with Bukuri Adam, long-time AANO member who assisted her husband Fatmir in organizing many AANO Detroit basketball teams.



These seven women show how many people and generations the AANO has touched! They are from left to right: Kadrije Ramolli, mother of Butch Ramolli who was long-time captain of Detroit's AANO basketball team; Jorgica Nikollari, grandmother of 2020 AANO scholarship winner Eliza Alushi, who is also an AANO Detroit Chapter member; Rose Black, Detroit Chapter treasurer; Sally Negip, long-time AANO supporter who turned 93 in November and the older sister of Frances Selfo and Rose Black; Lume Riza, long-time AANO supporter who is the mother of Lisa Riza, one of Detroit Chapter secretaries when chapter was reinstated around 1990; Nake Premtaj, also a long-time AANO supporter, whose grandson Cole Premtaj did a poem in costume at the Tirana Convention and won an AANO scholarship in 2019, and Frances Trix, winner of the AANO Lifetime Achievement Award! God bless these ladies who are the foundations of their families and future generations!

## Albanian Friends Reunion June 17, 2021



June 17, 2020 at the home of Janet and Tom Rouvina. From left: Linda (George) Paçuku, Mary Ann Erickson, Janet Rouvina, Shirley Pero, Cynthia George, Barbara Pero, Lorraine Haddad, and Natalie Bedgio.



***Happy Birthday Shirley!  
and Retirement !!***

Thank you Janet and Tom for your warm hospitality and a lovely day with "old friends!"

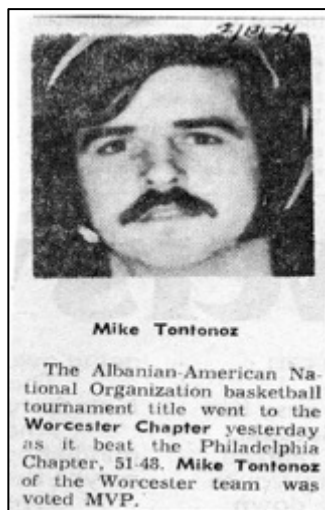


## Sports



### A Blast from the Past

... Remember when the AANO used to host its annual Basketball Tournaments in February ?? Well, my brother, Tom George, found a few photos that just might remind us of the “good old days!” These of course feature the Worcester Chapter, but we would be happy to hear from other chapters with their photos as well. And, don’t forget the rivalry between the New York and Worcester Chapters ... those were some of the best games ever played !! Also, who can forget the famous chant from the stands: “Mish me lakër, baklava, we want a basket, rah, rah, rah!”



As a reminder, Nicholas Leacu and John Anas both served as National President of the AANO.

Just found a couple of more Basketball Tourney photos ... hope you enjoy them as we go down Memory Lane !



Former AANO Queen Alexandra Liolin with Ray Kerim (Albany's Phil Christo shares a laugh)



Excited Fans

(Hey, isn't that basketball great Peter Vasil sitting next to Shirley Pero and Rich Rafail !!)



*Free Throw Time*



*MVP Trophy presented by then  
AANO Queen Alexandra Liolin*



*The Coveted Trophy*

## Oldies but Goodies !!

*(Thank you Harry Mertzy for the photos)*



**Convention Fun with Mark Papalexis and  
Frances Selfo**



**Standing are Paul Apostol and Shirley Pero  
Seated are Linda George, Jim Liolin, and Jean George**



**Dude Ranch (New York)**

**First row: Christine Prudente, Steve Chomo, Jean  
George, Shirley Pero**

**Back row: Helen Tomaso, Harry Mertzy, Margarita  
Dempsey, Nancy Capstick, Nancy Leacu, Lou Boyatzi**



## *Meet Dr. Ardian Kraja*



**Dr. Ardian Kraja** lives in Clearwater, Florida, married to Tatjana Kraja, with two children, daughter Gearta and Denis. He was born in city of Puka, Albania in 1968.

Dr. Kraja graduated from the medical school at the University of Tirana in 1992. From 1992 till 1996

he worked as a physician in the city of Shkodra. From 1996 to 2000 he specialized in Orthopedics at the Military Hospital in Tirana, followed by additional studies in Germany, Switzerland, Greece and Italy.

After completing studies, in 2003, Dr. Kraja served with the Albanian Peacekeeping Forces in Iraq, serving in the capacity of medical doctor of the Special Forces.

After returning from the Iraq mission, his dream came true as he was selected, through the lotto-drawing, to emigrate to the U.S. In 2005, along with his family, immigrated to United States.

Arriving in the U.S. was an exciting journey, but also very challenging. His immediate goals were to see if he can pursue his profession. After a few years of heart work, affording much energy and family sacrifice, he succeeded at passing all the required tests in flying colors, hence, achieving the goals of being able to practice medicine.

While working and studying every day, Dr. Kraja always found time to get involved and make invaluable contributions to the Albanian-American Community in Clearwater, Florida. In 2009, he volunteered to co-host, and occasionally host, the Albanian radio hour, providing the listening audience with invaluable medical and health information.

In 2012, with the help of a few friends, Dr. Kraja founded the Albanian Heritage Foundation of Tampa

Bay, for non-profit foundation, where he served as the President. The main objectives of the organizations are to help preserve the Albanian culture, language and the special traditional values and virtues, which are a part of our rich heritage, to insure the safeguarding of these values for future generations.

Since his arrival to the U.S., Dr. Kraja has played an instrumental role at bringing the community together through a variety of activities, such as organizing Albanian musical events, New Year's party event, Mother's Day gatherings, and other festive occasions where the Albanian music, culture and environment were the prime objectives.

In 2013, Albanian Heritage Foundation of Tampa-Bay created the Albanian dance group "Shqiponjat" (The Eagles). The group has represented the Albanian-American community of Tampa Bay in several international events, such as the International Festival held in St. Petersburg each year. This dynamic dance group, dressed up in colorful traditional costumes representing all the regions of Albania, and dancing the beautiful dances from all the regions of Albania, which was an immediate hit with the audiences in every event. The group also performed in Naples, Jacksonville, and Sarasota. Currently, the group is still expanding with new members, practicing and learning new dances each week.

It is an honor for the girls performing the beautiful Albanian dances wearing the traditional costumes, but also they represent the hard work that all the volunteers and foundation works for. Their hard work is paid off with the energy and joy they bring to the community and the emotions they feel when performing.

The Albanian Heritage Foundation of Tampa-Bay opened the Albanian Language School "Illyria", where the Albanian-American youth was able to attend the class each week, to learn the Albanian Language. After 3 years, the school closed but the group dances still continue.

As a board member of Albanian Heritage of Tampa Bay, Dr. Kraja has organized the Spring Festival with dancers from Canada, Boston, New York and the "The Eagles". This was one of the biggest festivities where it included traditional costumes and dances from North to South of Albania performed by girls and guys. Lili Cingu whom she's known as one of the Albanian icons "Nderi Kombit" was one of the guests of honor for this event.

Although he organized events for the community, Dr. Kraja never stopped working toward his goal of becoming and working as a Doctor in United States. To say that it was difficult would be an understatement, but he never gave up. Through all this, he has had the support of his family and friends. However, it was his courage and determination to keep pushing even when it got tough.

In 2017, he started a residency in Puerto Rico and after getting certified to work as a doctor in the United States, he got a job at a clinic. Later, he started to work at "American Care" where he is also now a director for the area. He can finally say that his dream to become a doctor in United States has come true. He still has continued to help the community whenever he can. During Covid, he has interviewed in the USA and Albania where he has spoken for preventing and treating from Covid.

He enjoys living an active lifestyle and has many hobbies such as playing tennis, ping pong, racketball and loves spending time with family and friends.

Through all the challenges that Dr. Kraja and his family have encountered adjusting to life in the United States, he has managed to become a true leader of the community and a doctor as well.

*Submitted by Metat Idrizi  
with the assistance of Gearta Kraja*



## Obituaries

### Clearwater



**John Lulgjuraj**

Our sincerest condolences to Shpresa and John's children. Leo, Jennifer, and Jessica, on his passing. He will be truly missed, not only by this Organization, but by the many lives he touched in his lifetime.

### New York

**Georgianne Marie Kasuli (née Curtis)** passed away on January 17, 2020 from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. She is survived by her loving husband of 51 years, Richard Alexander Kasuli, their daughter Erica, son-in-law Nicholas Skeadas and her grandchildren Genevieve and Julian. She is also survived by her brother Walter Curtis his wife Rosie and her two nephews Walter and Andrew. Our sincerest condolences to Richard and their families.

### **Barbara Papalexis**

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Barbara Papalexis in January of 2021 after a long illness. Our sincerest condolences to her husband Mark and their families.



**Albert Foundos**

May 23, 1935 - April 23, 2021

Albert Periklis Foundos emigrated from Albania via Greece to the US with his family in 1948 at the young age of 13. Here, he grew up with his family in the Bronx. He was often working in some part-time capacity in his father's dry cleaners, or the local vegetable store, grocery or the

ice cream shop. He went on to study Chemical Engineering, earned his MBA from the City College of New York, and served as a Captain in the US Army. Al was a notorious serial entrepreneur. He was a partner in George Birchall Associates, he founded Fluid Data, Inc. in 1972 serving as Chairman and CEO across operations in New York, London, and Houston, and in his retirement, he was involved in the startup of Humicon which sold the first electronic humidor system. He then founded Cigar Oasis, Inc. which has been passed down to his family and is still operating to this day. Among his other ventures were working with Bendix Corp. and Lamsia. Lamsia Corp was founded with his brother Lou to give back to Albania as communism fell. With unemployment rampant, the brothers felt any investments they made would be vital to their home community. By investing in a clothing factory, building a hotel on family property, opening the first Cinema in Korca and other smaller ventures they honored the place of their birth.

Over the years, Al was a dedicated member of a myriad of organizations. Among the places he dedicated his time, energy, and money were: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, International Orthodox Christian Charities, National Albanian American Council, ***Albanian American National Organization***, St. Catherine's Greek Orthodox Church of Naples, FL, and St. Nicholas Albanian Orthodox Church in Jamaica Estates, NY where he has been a devoted lifelong member. During Al's retirement in Naples, FL he was involved in numerous clubs and the rest of his time was spent on the golf course. Al had a kind and generous spirit which touched countless lives. He went out of his way to help anyone in his community, foremost as an advisor and role model. Even in his final days, Al didn't let an email go without a response. The kindness he showed others will echo for generations to come.

In 1959, Al married Joan Malasko and they were blessed with a beautiful marriage. He is survived by his brother Louis Ilia Foundos (m. Linda); his son, Phillip Foundos (m. Johanna), and his four kids Matthew, Christina, Andrew, and Nicholas; his daughter Donna Oswald (m. James), and her three kids Kimberly, Daniel, and Alex; his daughter Christine Beno (m. Thoma), and her two kids James and Daniela, among countless other loved nieces,

nephews, godchildren, and lives he touched around the globe. He now joins his wife Joan, who passed in 2007; his sister Viola, who passed in 2019; and his parents Llambi & Orthodoxia. May their memories be eternal. All those who knew Al were truly blessed by his loving spirit and selflessness.

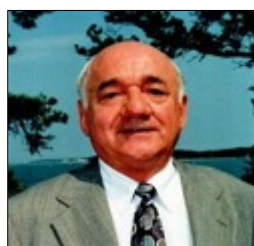
### Worcester



**Dorothy (Kiritsy) Prifti** passed away on June 8, 2020 at the age of 84. She was the daughter of John and Nora (Pano) Kiritsy. Her husband of 62 years, James Prifti, died in 2019.

She will be remembered and missed by her daughter, Sandra Barolli and her husband Martin; her son, Michael Prifti and his wife Marina; and six grandchildren, Amanda and Lucas Prifti, Alexandra and Rebecca Barolli and Danielle and Peter Prifti. She also leaves a sister, Marion Giantris and brother Thomas Kiritsy. She was predeceased by her sons, Peter and David Prifti.

Dorothy was proud of her Albanian heritage and was an active member at St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church in Worcester. She was a past president of the Women's Guild and served as chairwoman of the Albanian Cook Book Committee.



**William N. Johns** passed away on June 11, 2020 at the age of 88. Born in Korce, Albania, Bill was a son of the late Nickolas and Olimbia (Floqui) Johns.

Bill's love beyond his family, was for his church, St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church in Worcester. He was a life-long member of St. Mary's; serving as the President and Chairman of its Board of Directors (now Parish Council) for 4 terms. Additionally, Bill was Chairman for fund Raising for St. Mary's, Chairman of the Land and Building Committee, and also served as Chairman of the following committees at St. Mary's – its Bell Tower Committee, its Sunday school extension committee, its Icon Committee, and Chairman of the Albanian Festival on 3 occasions and

co-chairman of the Albanian Festival 6. He also served as Chairman for the fund drive for the building of the Illyrian Gardens, a residence for the elderly located directly behind the Church. *He also received a Life-Time Achievement Award from the Albanian-American National Organization.*

Bill received from the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America its most prestigious KNIGHT OF ST. GEORGE Medal from Archbishop Theodosius for his devotion and commitment to St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church and his Albanian Heritage and was the recipient of the Anthony Athanas Albanian American Community Award for outstanding service to the Albanian-American Community of Massachusetts.

Bill was the owner of several restaurants in Worcester; was a member of the South Worcester Kiwanis Club, and a member of the Democratic Committee of Holden. Bill was also recognized for his devotion and commitment to the organization in support of Christians and Jews.

Bill served his country as a member of the United States Army having served in Austria, after which he was a member of the VFW in Worcester. Bill's wife of 55 years, Loretta A (Steffon) Johns died in 2012. He leaves a son, Mark and his wife, Julie Johns; 2 daughters, Karen and her husband, Howard Dono, and Sandra and her husband, Mark Dionis; 4 grandsons, Koli and Torin Johns, Jason Dono and his fiancé, Christina Fitton, Zachary Dionis; and 5 granddaughters, Willow and Skyler Johns, Kristin and Natasha Dono, and Sydney Dionis; a brother, Andrew and his wife, Sandra Johns. A brother, Christy Johns predeceased him.



**Theodore R. Mertý** passed peacefully on July 8, 2020 at the age of 89. Ted is survived by his children Harry Mertý, Robin Ryan and Kimberly McCrohon and her husband Steven. He was predeceased by his loving wife Loretta (Dono) in 2018. They shared 65

years of marriage. He was also predeceased by his parents Harry and Catherine Mertý and an infant

brother, Terrance. As well, he is survived by two God Children, Melissa Giles and Dean Theodore and three brother in laws, Norman Dono, Danny Dono and his wife Doris and Arthur Dono and many nieces and nephews.

Ted was born in Natick, MA in 1930 and moved to Worcester in 1933 where he remained for the rest of his life. He enlisted in the Massachusetts National Guard (1951 through 1953) and the U.S. Air Force (1953-1957) where he was honorably discharged. He was a member of the Guiding Light Lodge of Masons and a very proud member of St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church where he loved being a part of it's Sons of St. Mary's and worked with loads of energy for it's biannual festivals.

In his youth, Ted excelled in sports playing basketball and baseball. His career encompassed many places of employment and he last worked for the Worcester Public Schools where he was most happy as a cherished custodian. During his custodial years at Doherty High School, the class of 1995 dedicated their yearbook to him. After his retirement Ted was honored by the mayor with a Key to the City of Worcester. These were two highlights of Ted's life.

Many people will remember Ted by the countless jokes he told or by his famous missing finger trick! Others will remember Ted as the "Helpless Homeowner's Helper." He always had his tool belt with him in case anyone needed a hand. He could fix anything.

Ted loved to help his wife with countless parties at their family home and always welcomed people to stay if needed, including many Albanian immigrants. To honor Ted please have a joke or two ready to tell anyone you greet. He found great joy in making people laugh.



**Louis R. Pero** passed away at the age of 75 on July 30, 2020, at Massachusetts General Hospital, surrounded by his wife and three children after battling heart disease. He was born in Worcester, MA on April 20, 1945, the



son of the late Steve and Eleni (Dine) Pero. He resided in Worcester for 57 years before moving to Auburn, MA in 2002.

His kindness, generosity, and deep love of family history will be missed dearly by his family and others who loved him. He is survived by Barbara (Christo), his devoted, loving wife and best friend of 50 years; three children, Michelle Vasil and her husband Paul, Stephanie Pero Fournier, Ph.D. and her husband John, Steven Pero, and four grandchildren, David and Matthew Fournier, Charlie and Sophia Vasil; his brother Perry Pero and wife Diane of Chicago, IL and sister Shirley Pero of Worcester, sister-in-law Roberta Alera and her husband Keith, and his nieces, nephews, and family members.

He was a graduate of Classical High School in 1962, and of Worcester State University with a Bachelor's (1967) and Master's (1971) Degrees of Education. He served in the U.S. National Guard from 1967-1973. He spent his career at Quinsigamond Elementary School, as a long time educator of math and science for 28 years and then as a Principal for ten years. After he retired from the Worcester Public School system in 2003, he continued his passion for teaching and advising in the capacity as an adjunct professor at Quinsigamond Community College and Worcester State University in the Education Department teaching math and psychology classes. He was a proud member of the following educational organizations; Education Association of Worcester, Massachusetts Teaching Association, and National Education Association.

Lou was a life-long member and historian of St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church in Worcester, MA. The Church was always a significant part of his life, and he volunteered tirelessly over the years. He was an active member of the Church community, and serving the needs of the church was one of the primary purposes of his life. He was a Sunday School teacher, a member of the choir, and a member of the Albanian Men's Chorale group, *Kor' I Ustërit*. The involvement in these activities led to holding many senior leadership positions within the Church, including President of the Church Council and President of the Sons of St. Mary's. He was a founding member of the Sons of St. Mary's in 1972, and served on its scholarship committee for many years. His contributions continued, and he was one of

the original members of the land & building committee that identified and helped secure the new location of the Church on Salisbury Street, where it exists today. He was the Chairman of the consecration of the new Church, along with his wife. He was involved with every Church Festival since 1983, to share the traditions and foods of our Albanian heritage. He served as Trustee of the Illyrian Garden Housing Complex and Trustee of St. Mary's Day Care and Nursery School.

Lou received multiple accolades in his life including, the most prestigious **KNIGHT OF ST. GEORGE** Medal from Archbishop Theodosius from the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America for his devotion and commitment to the Church. In addition, he received the *Albanian American National Organization (AANO) Lifetime Achievement Award* for dedication to the organization that provides scholarship and opportunity to meet other Albanian-Americans from cities across the United States at annual conventions and basketball tournaments. On the local and national level, Lou was a 50-year member of the AANO and served as National President and Board of Governor.

Lou unconditionally supported his children and grandchildren in their various endeavors over the years. He always enjoyed his time with family and friends, and his fondest memories were at Revere beach as a young boy, to summering in Hampton with his young family, then in Harwich Port with his grandchildren. He was able to escape the New England winters to Naples with his best friend and wife, Barbara, always by his side. Lou continuously loved traveling with his wife and family and took them across the U.S and Europe. He was fortunate to have the opportunity to make three trips to Albania and share the family history and origin with his wife and children.



**Norman G. Minka** passed away peacefully on August 20, 2020 at the age of 80. He is predeceased by his wife Dorothy, of 36 years and his older brother, Louis Minka. Norman is survived by his two daughters Anne McCarthy and her husband William, and Lisa

O'Neil. He is also survived by his four cherished

grandchildren, as well as many nieces, nephews and godchildren.

Norman was born in Worcester, MA son of the late Thomas and Theodora (Katro) Minka. He was a faithful Orthodox Christian and a life-long member of St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church in Worcester, MA. He devoted much of his life to the service of the church and intensive studies at Hellenic College - Holy Cross Theological Seminary in Brookline, MA earning a certificate in Religious Studies. He was proud of his time serving as President of the Board of Directors for the church, member of the choir and most recently for his role as a tonsured reader.



**Gust George** passed away on March 16, 2021, at the age of 86. His beloved wife of thirty-nine years, Alice V. (Athanas) George, predeceased him in 2000.

*Gust and Alice met in Chicago in 1959 at an AANO National*

*Convention* and it was true "love at first sight", they married a year later. They were inseparable and committed to one another and to their family; to this day, she remained his one and only love.

Gust and Alice had four children who survive him, Lynn Gonzales and her husband Richard, Peter George and his wife Amy, John George, and Lisa Maniatis and her husband George; two sisters, Cleo George and Sophie George, seven grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by seven sisters, Elaine Dionis, Jean George, Catherine Costa, Alexandria Bardho, Naomi Veshi, Anna Pillary, and Mary George. Gust was the son of the late Peter and Angeline (John) George. He served his nation proudly in the United States Army Reserves.

He was a member of Saint Mary's Albanian Assumption Orthodox Church and was very involved in the bi-annual church festival; he was also a founding member and first president of *The Sons of Saint Mary's* as well as being founder of its College Scholarship, for which he worked tirelessly to raise money.



**Louis Boyatzi** passed away on Wednesday, August 18, 2021 at the age of 72. Louie leaves his wife, Dorothy "Dottie" (Gallant); sister, Margarita (Dempsey) and his beloved nieces. Louie was a member of St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church serving

as an altar boy, attending Sunday School, Youth Group, AANO and working at all the church festivals. When he was needed, he never said no. Louie could always be found either in the kitchen or at the shish-ka-bab pit. He was hard-working, quick with a smile and had a huge heart.

Louie was born in Istanbul, Turkey, immigrated to the United States with his parents, Thomas and Anna (Mitrus) Boyatzi, and settled in Worcester, Massachusetts. He spent most of his career working in the food industry. He started working as a young teenager at the Broadway restaurant, then worked with his family at the Millbury Street Sandwich Shop and Boyatzi's at Holden Hills, Sofie Serves & Boyatzi Catering and finally at P & D Pizza.

Louie had a great passion for dogs. He owned championship Golden Retrievers and Brittany Spaniels and he fostered dogs as well. He was a member of the Yankee Golden Retriever Club and a longtime member of the Central New England Brittany Club. Louie was a certified hunt test judge and volunteered countless hours with the Brittany Club. Louie's great wit, wonderful laugh and compassionate soul will be sorely missed.



*Our deepest sympathy to the families of our recently departed former members and friends of the AANO. May their memories be eternal!*

**I Përjetshëm Kutimi i Tyre!  
May their Memories be Eternal!**

## Reflections of John Lulgjuraj

Some members of the National Board of the AANO would like to share their memories of our past National President, John Lulgjuraj.



**John Lulgjuraj being inducted as National President of the AANO at the Washington Convention in 2018**

*"John brought multiple generations of our Detroit Albanian community together leading a dance group and teaching traditional dances for our group to perform at various functions, i.e., for King Zog when he visited Detroit and at festivals, conventions and celebrations."*

**Gayle Orlow and Amy Gorguze daSilva**

*"My memories of John are many. He made me feel a sense of validation. He would appreciate my thoughts and ideas. We would talk on the phone a lot as I don't like texting. As a matter of fact I spoke with him shortly before he passed when he said to me. 'Nancy can you call me back in five days. I'm in an oxygen tent right now.' I was probably one of the last people to talk to him." Memory Eternal*

**Nancy Capstick**

*"My family and I were shocked and saddened to learn about John. He was thoughtful and generous, and his devotion to family, community, and the AANO was admirable. Whenever I needed help with an event, I knew I could always count on John. We will cherish the memories we have of John."*

**Iris and Eklant Maluka**

*"It has been my honor to be John Lulgjuraj's Vice President for as long as he had been President of the Albanian American National Organization, Inc. My memory of John is what he taught me by his way of being calm, just, forthright, industrious, truthful, giving, caring, prideful, generous, and a friend. I have great respect for this man who was a true Albanian patriot and helped to perpetuate his heritage through the AANO. To say the least, I will miss him on the same level as my brother, Andy Bitta, and my brother-in-law, Nick Nicholas, who were past AANO Chicago Presidents."*

**Lea Bitta**

*"I have known John since I was a young girl. He was the voice my grandparents listened to on Albanian radio in Detroit. He had so many talents. I have also worked with him on the AANO Board, for two decades, where he and I traded being National President on and off several times, of which he was currently serving as President. We took large groups to Albania twice and John flourished in that environment. I can't express enough my sympathy, my family's sympathy, and the sympathy of the Albanian American National Organization to Shpresa, Leo, Jessica and Jennifer; as well as John's siblings and other family members. This is a huge loss to the family and to the entire Albanian-American community. John was one of a kind and his memory will absolutely be eternal."*

**Julia Black**

*"Having worked with John over the years on our publication, Trumbeta Shqiptare, I have the outmost respect for his professionalism and willingness to help in any way to ensure that each issue was informative and up to date. He always responded quickly to my emails and made sure that news from our chapters was submitted in a timely manner. The AANO has lost a true leader and a good friend. John will be sorely missed by so many. Sincerest condolences to his family of whom he was so proud. May John's precious memory be eternal."*

**Linda (George) Paçuku**

**John Lulgjuraj at an AANO Convention with  
National Officers and friends  
(continued on next page)**





*The Detroit Chapter expresses its deepest sympathy and tremendous sense of loss at the passing of National President John Lulgjuraj. Detroit never considered John a Floridian, they considered John one of their own since he was in Detroit for many years and the voice of the Albanian radio station in Detroit. My sister and I both knew John as little girls before we ever met him because our grandparents religiously listened to the radio station during our childhood and we knew his voice. John is very well respected with his endeavors within the Albanian community in Michigan but also in Florida, and many other places including the Catholic Church, and other Albanian organizations as far reaching as Montenegro and Albania.*

*John was the true meaning of the word patriot and was always championing Albanian causes. He always instilled that in his family, as was evident in his children, Jennifer, Jessica and Leo; as well as his wife, Shpresa, who always carries herself with class and grace and seemed perfect for John.*

*I personally drew him into the fold at an AANO Convention and he immediately wanted to do more and become more involved and be on our National Board. He asked questions and wanted to learn more about it and dove right in. He and Al Foundos were definitely the two most instrumental people for our organization having two conventions in Albania. They had a vision and made it happen.*

*People like John Lulgjuraj are irreplaceable. The loss to many of us personally, as well as to our organization, is immeasurable, let alone the loss to his extended and immediate family. Not enough can be said about John in a few paragraphs to do him proper justice. To sum it up, we are shocked and saddened at the loss of this man who carried himself with poise, dignity, and class, worked tirelessly for our organization and "Albanianism" in general, was never fearful of taking risks he thought to be worthwhile, and he loved and was immeasurably proud of his family.*

*John has left a tremendous void in our organization and in many of our hearts. We are confident his memory will be eternal and we send many heartfelt condolences to Shpresa, Leo, Jennifer and Jessica. John, we feel your loss so much already!*

**Julia Black**

*"Mr. John Lulgjuraj spent most of his days dedicated to serving the Albanian American National Organization (AANO). I'm taking this opportunity to write about what a wonderful man he was, it was a great privilege for me and my family to know John.*

*I first got to know John and his beautiful family in 2011 when the AANO Washington DC Chapter first started rolling. John never stopped here, he even established an Albanian Radio Program called "The Voice of The Albanian Community in Clearwater". Also, John stood up in the US Congress for the Albanian Population in Montenegro. He deeply appreciated Albania and it was always in his heart. His love for Albania is an honor to be around.*

*John always had a positive approach to life, cheered up the mood and greeted us with a smile that warms all our hearts. He always put others before himself.*

*I feel gratitude toward him for all the amazing things he has done for the Albanian American Community.*

*Thank you, John, for all the good laughs and amazing times all of us shared with you.*

*You will forever be in our hearts, thank you for making AANO (Albanian American National Organization) a better place."*

**Iris Maluka**  
President  
AANO DC Chapter

**Marcie Maluka**  
AANO Youth Member



**John with his wonderful wife, Shpresa, and their son, Leo.**



**John testifying in the American Congress for the Human Rights of the Albanian Population in Montenegro**



**Radio Program, "The Voice of Albanian Community in Clearwater"**





AANO Convention, Tirana, Albania



AANO Convention, Las Vegas 2007

100 Years Celebration for the Malësia Madhe  
(Great Mountains)AANO Convention, Washington, DC 2018  
with Arbëreshë sister, Elena Busciacco

## And when my memory

*(A poem translated into English and  
written by Ismail Kadare).*

And when my fading memory,  
Like the after-midnight trams,  
Stops only at the main stations,  
I will not forget you.

I will remember  
That quiet evening, endless in your eyes,  
The stifled sob upon my shoulder,  
Like snow that cannot be brushed off.

The separation came  
And I departed, far from you.  
Nothing unusual,  
But some night  
Someone's fingers will weave themselves into  
your hair,  
My distant fingers, stretching across the miles.

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## POEMS IN ENGLISH

*(Written by Elpiniqi Q. Frasheri, born in Leusa,  
Albania, Educator, and involved in the New York  
Albanian Community).*

## THE ICICLES

It had been cold ... and frost was in the air  
And icicles hung from the roof ... stood there  
Like a neat fence – a strange inverted fence  
That made a lovely picture – though no sense  
While from the trees hung icicles so clear  
So crystal clear, as from a chandelier.

One morning the sun broke through ... and  
when  
It did caress the icy view ... 'twas then  
That drop by drop it dripped and dripped all day  
Till all that beauty just melted away.

---



## 10 Famous Albanians



### Mother Teresa

Born in Shkopje, Macedonia  
August 26, 1910 – September 5, 1997

### Robert DeNiro

Born in Greenwich Village, NY  
August 17, 1943 –  
At the 61<sup>st</sup> Italian Song Festival in San Remo on RAI TV, he stated his parents were of Sicilian & Albanian origin.

### Ismail Kadare

Born in Gjirokaster, Albania  
January 28, 1936 –  
World famous writer.

### Inva Mula

Born in Tirane, Albania  
June 27, 1963 –  
International renowned soprano.

### Anna Oxa (Hoxha)

Born in Bari, Italy  
April 28, 1961 –  
Italian singer, father born in Kruja

### Sandra Bullock

Born in Arlington, VA  
July 26, 1964 –  
USA actor, father is of Albanian descent.

### Jim Belushi

Born in Chicago, IL  
June 16, 1954 –  
USA actor, father born in Qyteze and mother's parents born in Korça, Albania.

### Fetid Murad

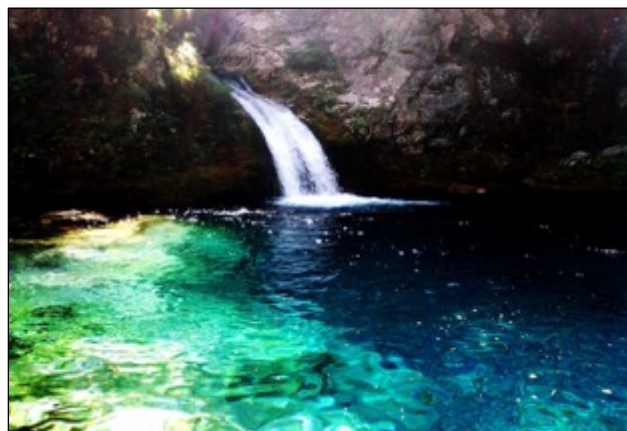
Born in Whiting, IN  
September 15, 1936 –  
Nobel Prize winner in Medicine, 1998  
Father Albanian and American mother.

### Angelin Preliocai

Born in France, 1957  
Paris ballet maestro has won numerous international awards.

### Eliza Dushku

Born in Watertown, MA  
December 30, 1980 –  
USA actress, parents are from Korça, Albania



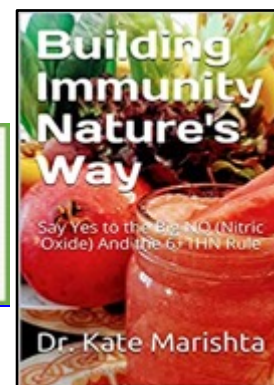
## Syri i Kaltër (Blue Eye)

Albania's famous Blue Eye (Syri i Kaltër) is a spring water and natural phenomenon. A popular tourist attraction. It's beautiful light turquoise river is stunned with beauty. Located near Muzinë—Vlore County. One is surely to be enchanted by the dense surrounding forest and the light blue river that flows through this natural paradise. Even though swimming is prohibited, it doesn't prevent tourists from jumping into the cold water.

The Blue Eye is more than 50 meters deep. It's mesmerizing how clear the water is. It is said that you are able to see straight to the bottom. Divers have tried to determine its depth but the fierce current forces their jump and returns them to the surface immediately. Therefore, the depth of the Blue Eye has not been calculated and it is mysteriously unclear why it can't be determined. The Blue Eye is just the starting point of a water path that extends all the way to the Ionian Sea. Also, the area around the Blue Eye is a national sight where there are beautiful oak and sycamore trees in its location of the forest surrounding it. The Blue Eye attraction is very close to Saranda and the UNESCO site of Butrint.



**Alketa (Kate) Marishta**  
*Member of the AANO*  
*Chicago Chapter*



### **How to Build Immunity Nature's Way Against Viral Respiratory Infections including Flu and Covid-19**

#### **What is a virus and how is transmitted in humans?**

A virus is a sub-microscopic infection agent. Examples of the common viruses that causes diseases in humans include Common Cold, Influenza, Chicken Pox, Cold Sores, and the most serious ones Rabies, Ebola, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Avian Influenza and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) -associated coronavirus virus.

#### **How respiratory viruses are transmitted?**

The most common respiratory viruses such as Common Cold, Influenza or Flu, SARS-associated coronavirus is transmitted through coughing, sneezing, or breathing of droplets. Droplets infection happens when small droplets stay in the air for a short period of time, and usually the contamination of other people occurs in the presence of the infected persons.

#### **Human immunity and defence from viral infections**

A person with a robust immune response clears the virus within a couple of weeks and the immune response creates the memory cells to prevent another infection. However, some viruses such as Common Cold and Influenza (Flu) have different serotypes and every year we get exposed. Individuals with weak immunity might get infected often.

#### **Brief primer of common of human viruses of our time: Human Influenza and SARS-CoV-2**

Influenza or Flu causes seasonal epidemics with 250,000 to 500,000 deaths annually worldwide.

The estimated deaths from the Influenzas pandemics:  
 Spanish Flu (1918-1920)-40-50 million deaths; Asian

Flu (1957-1958)-1-2 million deaths; Hong Kong Flu (1968-1970)-500,000-2 million deaths; Swine Flu (2009-2010)-up to 575,000 deaths.

There is a yearly Flu vaccine to prevent the severity of Influenza, but there is not always full protection. Centre Disease Control (CDC) data on effectiveness of the Flu vaccine shows near 50-60%. This means that by the time the Flu vaccine is delivered, some Influenza strain viruses might have changed their genetic material. The effectiveness of the Flu vaccine every year depends on the matching of the virus strains in the vaccine with circulating virus strains for that year. The ability of the Flu vaccine to prevent Flu illness depends on the age and the health condition of the person.

The COVID-19 pandemic also known as coronavirus pandemic is caused by severe respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARD-CoV-2). It has been an ongoing pandemic since first time identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. As of November 16, 2020, more than 54.5 million cases have been confirmed and more than 1.31 million deaths worldwide. There are some antiviral drugs under investigation for treatment for COVID-19. They have not yet shown high efficacy on mortality. Many pharmaceutical companies are working on the vaccine.

### **How to fight viruses? Why is building health immunity via natural means is vital?**

Infectious diseases remain a genuine threat. Many factors are implicated in the new challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Increases in economic development, urbanization, environmental degradation, animal mistreatment has changed the structure of society, on the rise of antimicrobial drug resistance to pathogens and the emergence of new pathogens. Many acute and chronic infections are destroying our immune system. To date there are no successful drugs to target the immune system.

A person with strong immunity, after an infection with the virus, will clear infection and create memory to remember the virus next time infected. But in some viral infections, the body overreacts to an infection called “cytokine storm”, which is described as body overreaction to an infection.

**As you can see that is not boosting the immunity but is balancing the immunity as a key in fighting**

### **viral infections. What are the causes of unbalanced immune function?**

As people get older, the immune system is becoming dysfunctional. A healthy immune system is the most important weapon against viral infections. The most crucial guidance is a well-balanced diet to minimize the essential vitamin and mineral deficiencies. Fat around the belly diminishes immune function and could contribute to inflammation and local injury from viral infections. Nearly 2 billion adults worldwide are overweight.

Supplementation is necessary during the stress time (physical stress, infection, overwhelming mental stress, environmental pollution).

### How to prevent the virus from entering the lungs:

Ø Hand hygiene, keeping distance and wearing a mask.

Ø Stop smoking and void exposure to polluted air with allergens.

Ø Airway nasal and respiratory tract mucus could be the first barrier. The antiviral action of “amyl meta cresol and dichlorobenzene alcohol” found in over the counter **Strepsils lozenges** have shown to inactivate the respiratory viruses such as Influenza A, and SARS-CoV virus. You can take a Strepsils lozenge after you have contact with a person.

Ø **Zinc lozenges** have been seen in many studies for reduction of 33% of duration of cold symptoms. Taking zinc lozenges will increase the daily zinc intake.

Ø Natural glycyrrhizin fights viral infections. Liquorice contains glycyrrhizin. One teacup of **liquorice tea** daily provides 35 mg of glycyrrhizin. Individuals with high blood pressure should be careful because glycyrrhizin might increase blood pressure. However, most liquorice teas are deglycyrrhized and contain less glycyrrhizin.

### List of vitamins and minerals that improve immunity and reduce oxidative stress.

Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 virus causes respiratory illness. Some individuals develop an excessive immune reaction which causes severe



illness and death. The studies have shown that Quercetin taken with Vitamin C and Zinc can be effective on treatment and prophylaxis of viral illness including SARS-like coronavirus infections. The following supplements have shown in many studies to protect against Influenzas and COVID.

- Vitamin C is an antioxidant and increases immunity. Humans cannot produce vitamin C from glucose. This is called “inborn metabolic error”. That means that humans must get vitamin C from the diet. Other mammals produce vitamin C for example, goats produce 200 mg/kg each day of vitamin C. Recommendation: Vitamin C 200 mg-500 mg per dose. Higher doses might not be fully absorbed. Repeat doses up to 1000-2000 mg a day as needed under supervision of a professional.
- Zinc is an essential mineral known as antiviral and antioxidant. Zinc is known to modulate immunity and regulate an immune response. Zinc is known for his benefit against cold viruses. Children with zinc deficiency have high risk of infectious diseases. Zinc supplementation decreases side effects of measles in zinc deficient children. Recommendation: Take 25-40 mg total zinc. Doses higher than 40 mg might depletes other minerals such as copper and iron.
- Quercetin is a flavonoid and is known for antiviral activity. Quercetin acts as Zinc ionophore, which means to transport Zinc inside the cells. Quercetin has been studied to fight Influenza and SARS-CoV-2. *Recent research published in Frontiers in Immunology on June 19, 2020, have shown the synergic effect of Quercetin and Vitamin C for the prevention and treatment of SARS-CoV-2.* Recommendation: Quercetin 250-500 mg a day or every other day. Higher doses should be advised with a professional.
- Vitamin D deficiency has been seen in people with severe viral infections. Vitamin D can lower viral replication rates and reduce proinflammatory cytokines (which lead to pneumonia). Influenza viruses usually tend to peak during the Northern Hemisphere in

winter. There have been suggestions that vitamin D is lower from reduced sunlight exposure. Vitamin D is a nutrient, but as well a hormone, which can be synthesized in the body by the sunlight exposure. It maintains robust bones and stimulates immunity. A blood level of vitamin D 25 (OH) normal values are 30-60 ng/ml and for those with chronic conditions and protection against viruses should be over 60 ng/ml. Recommendation: Take 1200 IU-2500 IU of vitamin D3 in combination with vitamin K2 to protect from over calcification of blood vessels and magnesium for absorption. Higher doses should be advised with a professional.

- Other vitamins and minerals that improve immunity and fight oxidative stress are vitamin A, B vitamins and selenium.
- There is a list of supplements that reinforce the immune system and large doses needs to be taken with the advice of professionals such as: N-acetyl cysteine, alfa lipoic acid, berberine, resveratrol, glutathione, curcumin.
- Astragalus, elderberry, echinacea and beta-glucans have shown antiviral and immune enhancing activity. They should be used carefully in the first phase of an infection. They should not be taken after a few days being sick or if shortness of breath/pneumonia develops. Individuals with autoimmune conditions should not use them without the advice of a professional.

Daily focus: Three important additional measures that support immunity

1. Lack of **sleep** decreases health immunity and increases Oxidative Stress. Try to sleep 7-8 hours every night. Take naps if your sleep schedule is not interrupted by work or other factors, to try to make up for the lost night sleep hours. Melatonin is a sleep supplement and hormone. Melatonin have antioxidant activity. Recommendation: Take 3-5 mg for sleep and 5-20 mg for viral infection protection.

Sleep support supplements that might help to regain a sense of calm and harmony are

magnesium, GABA, phosphatidylserine and L-theanine. **Recommendation:** Take magnesium 300-400 mg a day in divided doses; GABA helps with anxiety 250-500 mg a day; phosphatidylserine 100 mg-160 mg a day; L-theanine 100 mg a day. Other supplements that increase the neurotransmitters serotonin and melatonin in the brain might help with sleep such as Tryptophan and 5-HTP. Both supplements doses should be advised from a professional.

2. **Moderate exercise** such as 30 minutes brisk walking on a daily basis has shown to stimulate the immune system, improve antiviral activity of macrophages, enhance immunoglobulins and anti-inflammatory cytokines.
3. **Deep breathing** deactivates the sympathetic nerve system (fight and flight) and keeps the balance by activating a parasympathetic nerve system (rest and digest) which lowers the heart rate and blood pressure. There are two different breathing: 1) Mouth breathing can have detrimental effects on overall health from sleep apnea, high blood pressure, heart disease, asthma, and allergies. 2) Nasal breathing is beneficial because it increases nitric oxide (NO) production and helps in release of oxygen. Deep breathing through the nose reduces stress. **Recommendations:** The 4-4-8 breathing technique through the nose for 4 seconds inhaling, holding the breath for 4 seconds, and exhaling forcefully through the mouth for 8 seconds. Repeat many times in the morning and before sleep. The breathing technique has shown to reverse symptoms of sepsis.

**Dr. Alketa (Kate) Marishta MPH, Dip Nutrition** runs her Integrative Clinic in Dublin, Ireland and she sees international clients. Prior, until 2014 she was the Assistant Director of Communicable Diseases and Epidemiology in Kane County, Illinois, US, and also served as a co-chair of Northern Illinois Public Health Consortium Infectious Diseases Committee. She holds a Doctor of Medicine from the University of Tirana and a master's degree in Public Health from Northern Illinois University. Later she continued studies in the Natural Medicine field of DNA and Genetics. Based on her personal and clinical experience with her clients, she strongly believes in Natural Medicine and firmly builds on scientific

genetic research. This year, she published her book "Building Immunity Nature's Way. Say Yes to Nitric Oxide (NO) and 6+HN rule". Available in Amazon, Kindle.

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## Recipes

### Kulaç – Albanian Soda Bread

Courtesy of Sonila Zarate



**Prep Time:** 1 hour 10 minutes

**Cook Time:** 50 minutes

Servings 8 servings

Calories 270kcal

#### Ingredients

4 cups bread flour  
1 1/2 cups plain yogurt or Greek yogurt  
¼ - 1/2 cups warm water  
1 1/2 tsp. baking  
1 tbsp salt  
1/2 tsp. sugar  
1 tbsp. olive oil extra virgin

#### Instructions

Dissolve baking soda, salt and sugar into ¼ cup of warm water. Mix well. Then place 4 cups of bread flour into a wide dish. Create a well or crater in the middle and add the water/soda mix in the middle. Start mixing slowly. Then add the yogurt and continue mixing and folding the flour and yogurt forming dough. If needed add few more tbsp. of warm water. See video below for visualization.

Once dough is ready, drizzle olive oil over it and give it one more kneading, shape it into a ball. Dust the surface where you will bake the bread with flour, place the dough in it and let the dough rise on its own for an hour or so in a warm corner of your kitchen.

Pre-heat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit (about 200 degrees Celsius). Bake bread for about 40-50 minutes. Usually at about 30 minutes, when the outside of the bread is well into golden-brown, I cover the cast iron Dutch Oven with its lid.

Once baked, place bread on a cooling rack and cover with a towel. Let the bread cool for at least an hour before cutting it. Enjoy it for breakfast or snack. Usually it's served with butter and cheese. You can serve it as side dish too with Mediterranean Mezes like shown in my pictures. Enjoy:)

### Finique – Albanian Date Cookies



Recipe by  
GiddyUpGo

**READY IN:** 45 mins. **YIELD:** 3 dozen

#### Ingredients:

Pitted Dates  
1 cup oil  
½ cup orange juice  
1 ½ tsp. vanilla extract  
1 tbsp. baking powder  
½ tsp. baking soda  
1 tbsp. sugar  
3 cups flour  
½ cup ground walnuts

#### For the Syrup:

1 cup sugar  
2 cups water  
½ tsp. lemon juice

Put the orange juice, oil and vanilla extract into a large bowl. In a separate bowl, mix the dry ingredients, then add to the orange juice mixture until a soft dough forms.

Break off pieces of the dough and roll into 1 1/2 inch balls. Place on an ungreased cookie sheet, and press one date into the center of each cookie.

Bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool.

After the cookies have cooled, spread the crushed walnuts out on a plate. Mix together the water, sugar and lemon juice in a small saucepan and bring just to a boil over the stove.

Dip each cookie into the syrup, then press the bottom of the cookie into the walnuts. Repeat until all the cookies are done.



**Peshk të Pjekur – Baked Fish***Courtesy of the Chicago Albanian Community***Ingredients:**

3 lbs. striped bass, sea bass or halibut  
(preferably sliced)  
salt  
pepper  
oregano  
½ cup olive or salad oil  
2 or 3 fresh tomatoes, sliced  
2 or 3 green onions, chopped  
¾ cup chopped parsley  
1 clove garlic, finely minced  
½ cup finely ground salted crackers or bread  
crumbs  
2 medium yellow onions, thinly sliced  
Lemon slices  
¾ cup water

Salt and pepper fish and place in lightly oiled baking pan. Pour oil over fish. Sprinkle with oregano. Add tomato slices, green onions, garlic, and parsley. Top with crumbs, onion rings, and lemon slices. Add water last.

Bake about 45 minutes in 350 degree oven. Serves 6.

*If you have any recipes that you would like to share, please feel free to send them into the Editor. We love having new ideas and food to share. Happy Eating !!*

**Albanian Qofte – Baked Mint Meatballs***Courtesy of Mediterranean Latin Love Affair*

These baked mint meatballs with ground beef are a version of a traditional Albanian recipe called Qofte which is derivative of kafta. Serve qofte with salad, bread and a yogurt based dip.

Servings 6 servings

**Ingredients:**

- 1.5 lbs. ground beef
- 2 eggs
- 1 tbsp olive oil extra virgin
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 7-8 mint leaves
- 1 red onion
- 1/2 cup breadcrumbs or 1-2 slices of bread
- 5 garlic cloves if using minced garlic, use 1 tsp
- 1/2 tsp. salt adjust to taste
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper

**Instructions**

Mince garlic, chopped onion, chopped parsley, and mint. Mix thawed ground beef, eggs, olive oil, garlic, onion, breadcrumbs, salt, pepper, parsley and mint together. Mix thoroughly until you create a dough like substance. Cover bowl with plastic. Refrigerate for 1 hour to let the flavors really mix together.

Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Create small balls with your hands out of the dough. Line them up in a baking sheet. I prefer using parchment paper on the baking sheet. Bake for about 40 minutes. Let cool. Serve with salad and your side of choice. Garnish with additional mint leaves if desired.





## Kënga e gjyshës *Këngë Fëmish*



Tregon gjyshja nga herë  
Na ishte se na ishte  
Na ish një herë një djalë  
Si veten shokët kishte.

Dhe unë duke dëgjuar  
Shikoj me sytë e mi,  
Një trim duke luftuar  
Për fatet e lirise.

Refreni:

I ëmbël zëri gjyshes  
Kur ngjarjen më tregon  
E lehtë dorë e saja  
Mbi krye më ledhaton.  
(4x)

Tregon gjyshja nga herë  
Na ishte se na ishte  
Na ish një herë një djalë  
Si veten shokët kishte.

Dhe unë duke dëgjuar  
Shikoj me sytë e mi,  
Një trim duke luftuar  
Për fatet e lirise.

Refreni

*Courtesy of Mama Lisa's World*

## The Song of Grandma Children's Song



Grandma tells us of the time  
There was once,  
Before us, a boy  
Who like myself had friends.

And listening,  
I saw with my eyes,  
A brave struggle  
For the fate of freedom.

(Chorus)

The sweet voice of grandma,  
When she tells me the story  
Her gentle hand  
Caresses my head.  
(Repeat 4 Times)

Grandma tells us of the time  
There was once,  
Before us, a boy  
Who like myself had friends.

And listening,  
I saw with my eyes,  
A brave struggle  
For the fate of freedom.

(Chorus)

*International Music & Culture*



# Trumbeta Shqiptare



*The Official Publication of The Albanian-American National Organization, Inc.*



**A.A.N.O., Inc.**  
**Trumbeta Shqiptare Headquarters**  
**100 Piedmont Street**  
**Worcester, MA 01609**



