
Trumbeta Shqiptare

Volume 107

June 2022

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



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2021-2022
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Albanian-American
National Organization

President's Message

Stepping into the office of Presidency in August has been a difficult experience. With the passing of John Lulgjuraj, our elected President, and the passing of my Chicago Chapter President, Perry Pero, and the loss to our organization of Al Foundos, I can honestly say this has been beyond a profound depressing experience for me. I wish to thank all three families for their enduring support over the many years to the organization and the years of their service. These three men have been vital in moving this organization forward in their own respective ways.

I wish to thank the National Board for stepping up and I acknowledge their hard work this first year in moving ahead with a Vice President who moved into the Office of Presidency due to unusual circumstances, and forging ahead with a National Convention in Philadelphia that was postponed in 2020 because of Covid-19.

My message to all the Albanian communities in America and Canada is direct and simple -- what you need to do is get involved in the Albanian- American National Organization that has existed for 76 years, and that is longer than any other Albanian organization here in America and Canada. And what you need to know is this organization has succeeded because we are not politically affiliated and we are non-religious. We are strictly an Albanian organization solely interested in perpetuating the Albanian language, the Albanian customs and traditions, the Albanian heritage and our long-time Scholarship Fund which has helped students to realize

Mesazhi i Presidentit

their dreams and hopes through education at the college level.

The Albanian communities in America and Canada will continue to flourish because of our organization's mission. We look to the new generations to come that all the young Albanian Americans can accept the challenge, to promote and further this organization's presence, and provide the link necessary to continue its growth by increasing chapters in cities that have a large Albanian population.

I challenge all of you, now, today, to continue on this the path of growth, togetherness, and unity within this organization and to maintain the goals set forth 76 years ago.

Thank you, and I look forward and hope to see you in Philadelphia! (See the flyer for the complete Convention Schedule of Events.)

Eftalea (Lea) Bitta

Eftalea (Lea) Bitta

National President

Albanian-American National Organization, Inc..



In Memory of John Lulgjuraj

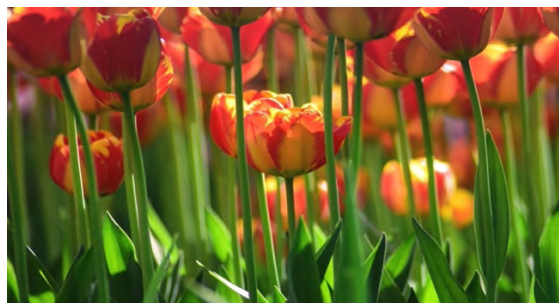


As National President of the Albanian- American National Organization, Inc., I do hereby officially dedicate this, our 74th Annual National Convention in Philadelphia, PA at the Philadelphia Hilton Second Avenue Hotel on August 5, and 6, 2022 to our Past President, John Lulgjuraj in memoriam for his long-term presidency, dedication, leadership and love of this Organization. He is missed and respected and an Albanian patriot of this Organization.

Albanian American National Organization, Inc.
National President
2013 - 2015
2017 - 2021

Forever in the heart of the Organization

*The National Board wishes
all of our members ...
a Healthy, Safe and Happy Summer !!*



Albanian-American
National Organization

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



Chicago Chapter Holiday Party

A great time was had by all !!





*Wait, is that Worcester's Shirley Pero in front ...
indeed it is and she had a great time !!*

Washington, DC Chapter

This year, the AANO is hosting the Annual Convention in Philadelphia (August 5-7) after 2 years of COVID-19. The first AANO, Inc. convention took place in 1947 and where some of the forefathers created the organization. For more information in participating and booking your tickets, please visit aano.org.

We can't wait to celebrate together!
God Bless You All!



On May 7, 2022, the Albanian Embassy in DC celebrated 100 years of the USA Diplomatic relations where Albanian Ambassador, Floreta Luli-Faber offered "A Once in a Lifetime" drawing to win a ten-day trip to Albania. It was a great success where the Albanian American Community helped to make this event the most memorable (*see photos on next page*).



Attention Past Scholarship Winners



We would love to know what you're doing

Please send your information to Gayle Orlow (gorlow@comcast.net) 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

ncapstick@hotmail.com



*Donations to the Scholarship Fund are
Tax Deductible*



Albanian-American
National Organization

Presents

74th AANO Convention

August 5-7, 2022

Philadelphia Hilton
Philadelphia City Avenue

Come Join Us!



www.AANO.org

Event Information

Celebration of John Lulgjuraj's life on Saturday evening

Thursday, August 4, 2022

- Early Arrivals Welcome
- Casual evening get together

Friday, August 5, 2022

- AM Board Meeting
- Cultural Room Display
- Dancing and Live Music

Saturday, August 6, 2022

- City Tours
- Afternoon at the Pool
- Welcome by AANO Queen
- Cocktails starting at 6:00 pm
- Cultural Room Display
- Scholarship Fund 50/50 Raffle
- 2022 Scholarship Winners
- Banquet Dinner and Dance
(Semi-Formal Attire is required)
- Music by Local Entertainment

Sunday, August 7, 2022

- Closed morning Board Meeting
- Open General Session and
Election of Officers
- 2023 Convention City Bids
- Coffee and Albanian Pastries
- Closing Ceremony

Sunday Night Event To be announced

www.AANO.org

For additional information regarding the event

Convention Ticket Information

AANO Members # _____ \$175.00
 Non-AANO Members # _____ \$200.00
 Children 16 & Under # _____ \$100.00

DEADLINE DATE July 15, 2022

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

List ALL names included in your reservation:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

Email(s): _____

Reserve your tickets: www.AANO.org

or mail check to: Iris Maluka

42835 Pilgrim Square, S. Riding, VA 20152

E-Mail: AANODC@gmail.com

Make check payable to: AANO Inc.

Hotel Reservation

Hilton Philadelphia City Avenue
 4200 City Ave Philadelphia, PA 19131
 215-879-4000

Check online link for hotel at AANO.org
 \$149/night single or double

**Ad Journal Prices
Commemorative Booklet**

_____ Gold Page	\$500.00
_____ Silver Page	\$300.00
_____ Inside Covers	\$200.00
_____ Full Page	\$125.00
_____ Half Page	\$ 75.00
_____ Quarter Page	\$ 50.00
_____ Booster Page	\$ 30.00
* To add photo	\$ 25.00

**Ad Journal Deadline:
July 15, 2022**



Ad and payment to: Olga Titos

**362 Sundance Drive
 Bartlett, IL 60103
 E-mail: olga1214@sbcglobal.net**

**Check made payable to:
 AANO Inc.**

The AANO, Inc. has been perpetuating Albanian ethnicity since 1946 in the United States and Canada.

We are a non-religious and non-political organization.

Our goals are to maintain Albanian traditions, language, culture, education and social activities.

**Come enjoy Albania
in Philadelphia!**



Raffle Tickets

The AANO Is holding a 50/50 raffle fundraiser at the upcoming National Convention. You do not need to be present to buy a ticket, but we welcome and encourage you to do so. The drawing will be at the Saturday night event but you can buy a ticket online. Go to aano.org and look for the appropriate link. Tickets are only \$10 for one or \$20 for three and we will email you your ticket numbers upon receipt of the funds.

Get to Know Your National Board **Meet Gayle Orlow**



Hello everyone. My name is Gayle Orlow and I serve as your **National Secretary of the Albanian-American National Organization**. I was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan where my parents, Gus and Alfreda Gorguze, were very active in the organization primarily in the Detroit Chapter. I remember attending conventions since I was 14 years old.

My grandparents were from Korçe and I was fortunate enough to travel to Albania when the National hosted the two conventions and met cousins that I only knew through correspondence.

I also met Albanians throughout the United States and Canada. I serve as Scholarship Applications Chair where I compile the lists of applicants for scoring and help our Board of Governors in selecting the scholarship recipients each year.

I am married to my husband William of 44 years, who has a law practice in the metro Detroit area. We have 4 children; 2 adopted and 2 biological. Our younger two adult children will be attending the convention in Philadelphia this year and look forward to meeting fellow Albanians and making lasting friendships.

We encourage all undergraduate students of Albanian descent to apply for our scholarships. The application is posted each year in January on our website, aano.org. Deadline is usually in April. Recipients are acknowledged at our convention. Due to Covid, we have not had a convention in two years. We will acknowledge scholarship recipients for 2020, 2021, and of course, 2022.

I look forward to our convention in Philadelphia this year and to meeting you.

Get to Know Your National Board **Meet Rich Rafail**



I initially got involved in the organization in 1975 after moving to New York City. I attended my first convention in Philadelphia in 1976. This turned out to be the Legionnaire disease convention. After a brief time in the New York Chapter, I was elected as Board of Governor from New York. I served in that capacity until 1981 when I was elected Vice President of the A.A.N.O. In 1983, I was elected President and served 3 years until 1986. After a little break raising my family, I returned to the role of Board of Governor from New York until I once again served as Vice President from 2000 until 2004. In 2013, I took over as **Treasurer of the A.A.N.O.**

I co-chaired my first convention with Al Foundos in 1981 in White Plains, NY. Over the course of the years, I had the opportunity to run multiple Basketball Tournaments and Conventions through 2020 in multiple cities such as New York, Stamford, Washington D.C., White Plains, Las Vegas, Naples, FL, Dallas and Tirana.



SOCIAL NEWS

Class Notes

Chicago



Georgya Borova

This past May I graduated from Concordia University Chicago, Summa Cum Laude, with a Bachelor's Degree in Healthcare Management. In July, I'll have started the MHA program at Claremont Lincoln University, in California. I am excited to see what the future has in store for me and finding the numerous opportunities to give back to the Albanian-American community.

As a side note, Georgya attended Shkolla Shqipe, was a member of Grupi Arbëria, and is a former AANO National Queen.

Her brother Jason Borova also attended Shkolla and was a member of Grupi Arberia. He is going to college and we are sure he is also on the same great path as the others.

**Ardit Brenznica**

I graduated from DePaul University with a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Cyber Security and a Minor in Computer Science in March 2022. Currently I work for S-Net Communications as a field network engineer as well as going to graduate school to pursue a Master's Degree in Cyber Security with a networking and infrastructure concentration.

As a side note, Ardit attended Shkolla Shqipe, was a member of Grupi Arbëria, the Shkolla Shqipe dance group, and he was an AANO Scholarship winner.

The Chicago Chapter is so honored to have these wonderful young adults!

Detroit

Arton Riza

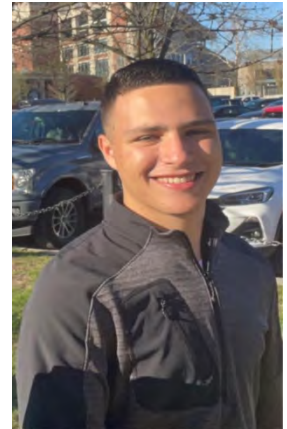
Congratulations to Arton Riza who graduated with his Bachelor's Degree from Michigan State University in three years this May and is headed to law school in the Fall.

The entire Riza clan and the extended family are all so proud of him and his accomplishments and can't wait to see what happens for him next. He continues to make everyone very proud.



Edmond Riza

Congratulations to Edmond Riza who graduated from Livonia Stevenson High School in June. Edmond graduated with honors and is headed to the University of Michigan Dearborn to pursue engineering in the Fall. Ray and Luiza Riza and the Zeneli and Riza Families are so proud of both of their boys! We wish Edmond the best of luck. Go blue!



Allonja Wilson



Congratulations to Allonja Wilson who graduated from Clarkston High School in Clarkston, Michigan with honors this May. Allonja was not only a very talented student but also a very talented artist in high school. She is contemplating art education and attending the Honors College at Oakland University in the Fall.

The Wilson, Black, Selfo Families are so proud of her and so excited to see what her future holds!



Accomplishments/Career

Detroit

High school senior Allonja Wilson displayed and sold her artwork at two different local events in Michigan in April and June and had amazing positive feedback and a lot of sales! Look for one of her beautiful pieces to be auctioned off at the upcoming national convention!

Congratulations to past vice-president Nerita Veliu on the opening of her new business. She just started this may making her filo pies and pastries at the Birmingham farmer's market. She is rolling dough until her fingers fall off! You can follow her on Instagram at filofam1. We wish her much success !!

Birthdays

Detroit

Congratulations to Bukuri Adam who had a big birthday celebration in Michigan and then again with her immediate family in Mexico this year. This is truly fitting because Bukuri always livens up at every party! We wish her many, many more years and decades of good health and fun!

GET CONNECTED !!!

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



www.AANO.ORG

**If you have information for the Home Page,
Contact David Sosnowski
(630) 618-9111 or
dsoz@microthunder.com**

Obituaries

Chicago/Worcester



Perry R. Pero, 82, fell asleep in our Lord on May 19, 2022. Beloved husband of Diane Pero nee Peters. Loving father of Alexis Pero (fiancé Austin Burroughs and his daughter Audrey Burroughs) and Arthur (Lauren) Pero. Proud grandfather of Ava and Mila Pero. Dear brother of Shirley Pero and the late Louis (survived by Barbara) Pero. Devoted son of the late Steven and Eleni Pero. Dear uncle, cousin, godfather, business associate, and friend to many who will miss him.

In 1939, Perry was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, to Steve and Eleni Pero, immigrants from Korçë, Albania. In this household, his first language was Albanian, and he was immersed in the Albanian culture. As a result of his father's influence and stressing the importance of education, Perry always started his day reading the New York Times. Perry sang in the St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church choir and attended Albanian language school where he learned to read and write Albanian.

Starting at age 12 until he graduated from Classical high school, Perry worked part-time delivering approximately 200 newspapers, seven days a week, after developing one of the largest paper routes in Worcester. After high school, Perry attended Clark University in Worcester. His newspaper earnings and his part-time job as a drug store clerk paid entirely for his college education. He excelled at Clark, and in 1961 he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and graduated Cum Laude with High Honors in Economics. In 1989, Clark University invited him to serve on the Board of Trustees where he served for 21 years (1989-2010).

In the Fall of 1961, Perry entered Harvard Business School and graduated in 1963 with an MBA. While at Harvard, he was hired by Northern Trust Corporation in Chicago. Prior to arriving in Chicago, he entered the United States Army Reserves, completed a six-month Active Duty, and served the next six years in the Army Reserves (1963-1969). Finally, in January

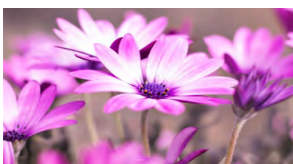
1964, Perry began his career with the Northern, serving in a wide variety of roles for more than four decades from 1964-2005. His career spanned a remarkable progression from assistant cashier to Chief Financial Officer for the corporation for sixteen years from 1988-2004. He retired in 2005 as Vice Chairman and Head of Corporate Risk Management, while also Chairman of the Corporate Asset and Liability Committee.

Although officially retired, Perry continued to actively serve on five major Chicago not-for-profit boards, including Rush University Medical Center, Glenwood Academy, Local Initiative Support Corporation, the CORE Foundation, and as Chairman of Masonic Family Health Foundation.

Above all else, family was Perry's primary focus. Fortunately, Chicago Albanian Americans had chartered an ANNO chapter in 1963. At the 1964 Chicago AANO Convention, he met his future wife, Diane Peters. In 1968, they were married at St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church in Worcester and then returned to live in Chicago and Oak Park where their children Alexis and Arthur were born. His children and grandchildren were his greatest joy.

If you wish to remember Perry, donations may be made to the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) Program Category UKRAINE (online); St. Nicholas Albanian Orthodox Church on web site StNicholasalbanianchicago.org; or St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church, 535 Salisbury Street, Worcester 01609; or AANO scholarship fund, www.aano.org.

The Detroit Chapter sends its deepest sympathy to the Chicago Chapter and Worcester Chapter, and especially Diane Pero, their children, and the rest of the Pero Family on the death of Perry Pero in May. Perry was beloved and treasured by so many and will be deeply missed. His calming presence, kindness, and wisdom will never be forgotten in AANO meetings. We know his memory will be eternal.



Message of Sympathy

As President of the Albanian-American National Organization, Inc., and Vice-President of the Chicago Chapter, it is more than with a heavy heart that I share with you that our beloved Perry Pero passed away at 3:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 19, 2022. Let our memories of Perry comfort us and serve as a guide to the caring and the kind of man he was. Perry had such a strong and vital presence in the Albanian- American National Organization, Inc. and it will be extremely hard to cope with his loss at the National level, but more so at the Chicago Chapter level.

It will be difficult because Perry served as the President of the Chicago Chapter from 1975 until the present. Though you can now understand our loss to be great, we will remember how well he lived in his family life, church life, and AANO life. Perry came to us by way of the Worcester AANO Chapter. It was definitely a loss for Worcester, but they were certainly fortunate to have Perry's brother, Lou Pero, and his sister, Shirley Pero. We, on the other hand, were so lucky to have Perry. He definitely led by example and was a vessel in holding the Chicago Chapter together and the Chapter flourished under his many years of presidency.

We extend our thoughts of love and prayers to his wife, Diane, of many years, his beloved daughter, Alexis, and son, Arthur and their spouses and grandchildren Ava, Mila and Audrey. May the entire Pero family take comfort from the Chicago Chapter and all members of the AANO and the church communities of Chicago and Worcester. We will continue to love and respect Perry. "May his memory be eternal!"

***Submitted by Eftalea (Lea) Bitta
AANO National President and
Chicago Chapter Vice-President***



Washington, DC

Dr. Gjon Leke Bucaj, a tireless and a visionary activist for Albanian causes, passed away on Saturday, May 14, 2022 in Leesburg, Virginia. He was 88 years old.

Beloved husband of 48 years to Nikoleta. Loving father of

Eduard Bucaj and his wife Dana of Sterling, Virginia, Lek Buçaj and his wife Frances of Alexandria, Virginia, and Teuta (Buçaj) Pici and her husband Marketin Pici of Baltimore, Maryland, Nora (Buçaj) Daub and her husband Timothy Daub of Baltimore, Maryland. Proud grandfather of seven (7) grandchildren (Besa, Leka, Shpresa, Delena, Iliriana, Gjozefina, and Gjoni); beloved brother of Mrika Dedaj of Monroe, New York and Drande Berisha of White Plains, New York. He was predeceased by his father Lek Zogu, mother Sute (Lula) Pjetra, and brother Gjini Leka.

He was Born in Arst, Pukë, Albania on February 14, 1934. When the communist authorities took over Albania, thousands of families were rounded up and sent to concentration camps and hundreds of intellectuals were executed. Dr. Buçaj and his family escaped from Albania in 1951, crossing the border into the former Yugoslavia. He studied in Gjakova, Prishtina, and in Shkup (Macedonia). During his stay in the former Yugoslavia, he connected with Albanian freedom fighters who had settled in Italy at the end WWII. The UDBA (Yugoslav State Security Service) informants monitored his activities and considered him to be dangerous. He managed to go to Italy in 1963. While in Rome, Dr. Buçaj studied medicine and helped thousands of Albanian immigrants who were living in refugee camps. He joined Bloku Kombtar Independent (BKI), an Albanian political party in exile, whose political platform was based on two core goals: "to utilize all measures to free Albania from communism and to pursue every opportunity to enable the Albanian people to acquire the independence necessary to freely choose their own future." As a member of BKI, he worked closely with Prof. Ernest Koliqi, who is considered as the founder of modern Albanian prose. In 1974, Dr. Buçaj moved to the United States, where

he continued his activities in alignment with BKI's goals. He joined the Pan-Albanian Federation of America, Vatra, serving as Vice-President for nearly two decades which was a critical moment for the Albanian nation. During this time, the communist system in Albania collapsed and Kosova gained its independence. Dr. Buçaj was active in organizing seminars and protests in defense of the Albanians in Kosova, Chamëria, Montenegro, and Macedonia. He served as Vatra's President from 2010-2017.

Prepared by Eduard Bucaj

Rest in Peace, Dr Gjon.
You will be always remembered.

Maluka Family, AANO DC Chapter

Worcester

Gloria B. "Glozie" (Treska) Simo, passed away on February 14, 2022. Gloria was born on August 26, 1935, in Worcester to Albanian immigrants Arthur and Vanjeli (Rafail) Treska.

Gloria loved her church, St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church. As a life-long member of the church, Glozie was a member and former secretary and treasurer of the Daughters of St. Mary; a member of its Bells of St. Mary, a member of its Women's Guild serving as nominating chairperson for many years; a member of its choir; a Sunday School teacher, and a member of its Senior Organization. She was also a coordinator of the Albanian Cookbook. Additionally, Gloria was chairperson of pastry for the Albanian festivities for many years, was a member of the Albanian Women's Organization of America, the Albanian-American National Organization, a liaison and volunteer at the Holy Trinity Eastern Orthodox Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Worcester, a member of the Worcester Mineral Club, Inc., and a member of the Nanof Perestier Post American Legion, where she served as President of its Women's Auxiliary for several years.

She leaves her husband of 67 years, Norman Simo; 2 daughters, Denise Latino, who was her care taker for

many years, and Barbara Pate and her husband, Alan; 2 grandsons, Andrew and Paul Latino, and a granddaughter, Hannah Krueger and her husband, Nick; a sister-in-law, Angelina Treska, wife of George and several cousins, nieces, and nephews. A brother, George Treska and a sister Eleanor Saro predeceased her.



Our deepest sympathy to the families of our recently departed former members and friends of the AANO.

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

Remember ... the 74th AANO National Convention in Philadelphia ("the city of brotherly love") promises to be a weekend filled with activities and fun. You won't want to miss it so make your reservations now !!



FREDERIK NDOCI



Music expresses emotion, feelings, and language of culture. Frederik Ndoci, is one of the top songwriters and singers that through his songs he delivers pure Albanian culture and traditions.

Frederik Ndoci is a songwriter, singer, poet, writer and actor. Frederik was nominated 15 times in 2007 on the Grammy awards, has been finalist in IMA competition!

Mr. Ndoci, represented his county of Albania at the Eurovision Song Contest in 2007 with "Hear my Plea" song. He used to sing in stages all over the world, private parties, restaurants, disco, concerts, and European Festivals around the world, the USA California, Italy, Spain.... and more ! Mr. Ndoci can sing in English, Spanish, Italian, French and Albanian!

He lives with his wonderful wife, Alisa Baraku and their two children in Clearwater, Florida.



<https://www.facebook.com/frederik.ndoci/videos/10207768675491080/>

Phone: 914-450-9418,

Email: foshnje@gmail.com

HE Mr. Albin Kurti welcomed at DePaul University by the Hidai “Eddie” Bregu Program in Albanian Studies



(Photo courtesy of Kiersten Riedford)

On May 14, 2022, the Hidai “Eddie” Bregu Program in Albanian Studies at DePaul University hosted a public lecture by HE Mr. Albin Kurti, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosova. It was the first time since our program was inaugurated three years ago that an Albanian politician of the highest level expressed his desire to visit the Albanian Program at DePaul. For us it meant an immense recognition, as well as a great opportunity to invite our community of faculties and students at DePaul, and the Albanian-American community in Chicago to listen to Mr. Kurti’s lecture.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has ended brutally the post-Cold War era in Europe and the Western Balkans are Europe’s most volatile and “softest” spot because of the increasing influence of Russia and China in the region. Mr. Albin Kurti articulated a clear message in his public lecture firmly condemning the Russian aggression against Ukraine as an attack against the democratic world and the values of freedom and democracy that the Europeans stand for. Mr. Kurti emphasized that the Republic of Kosova stands with Ukraine, the United States, the European Union, and the democratic world in this fight of freedom against tyranny and democracy against autocracy. *“The United States of America is Kosovo’s partner and closest friend. Not only is our*

history intertwined in times of liberation and need, but we are bound by the common values of freedom and democracy, and by the deep conviction that all people are created equal and should have an equal right to seek happiness, freedom, and autonomy to pursue truth. These are the values we share. They are also the values that are now being defended in Ukraine. For this reason, the United States, Europe, and the entire free world are rallying for the Ukrainians and supporting their struggle for liberation” Kurti said in his public lecture. He drew parallels between Putin’s aggression against Ukraine and Milosevic’s aggression against the Albanians in Kosovo adding that both aggressions were stirred by colonialist genocidal ideologies and by autocratic and violent regimes. Mr. Kurti said that despite Serbia’s aggressive behavior the Republic of Kosova is today a thriving democracy. *“Kosovo is the story of the democratic success of the region and therefore should be supported to become a member of NATO, the European Union, and other international and regional organizations without any further delay. Make no mistake: undoing our progress in Kosovo would be the only major victory that Vladimir Putin would like. This is the reason for his unreasonable obsession with our country,”* Mr. Kurti said. In the Western Balkans, Russia can operate with its own proxy, he added, referring to Serbia.



(Photo courtesy of Mr. Kurti’s staff)

During the discussion with the audience after his public lecture, Mr. Kurti emphasized his determination to reinforce the rule of law in the Republic of Kosova, fighting corruption on all levels of the state administration and making Kosova an attractive country for investments from local and foreign businesses. *“We must keep our young people in our homeland, create job opportunities and give*

them a vision for the future,” Kurti said. He added that his government is working hard to forge strong ties with the Albanian diaspora worldwide, especially in the US.



For our new Albanian Studies Program at DePaul University, it was an immense honor and privilege to welcome the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosova, Mr. Albin Kurti. Our generous donor and

founder Hidai “Eddie” Bregu – whose name our Program proudly carries – would have been profoundly delighted. He was wholeheartedly committed to the long struggle and relentless efforts of the people of Kosova for independence, freedom and emancipation. Hidai “Eddie” Bregu was an exceptional individual, one of the most brilliant minds and souls of our Albanian-American community. He deeply believed in the emancipatory power of education and knowledge, and I am honored and humbled to serve his vision. *(Photo courtesy of Bregu Family)*

The main goal of the DePaul Albanian Studies, as the first of its kind in the history of US Academia, is to advance the multidisciplinary research and stimulate creative expressions and thoughts in and about modern Albania and Kosova, the Albanian Diaspora, Southeastern Europe and Eastern Mediterranean. We want to explore and reveal the richness and connections of our “minor” culture – as we say in the academia – which has always grown in the big crossroads of the tumultuous European and Southeastern European history.



(Photo courtesy of Ilir Zenku)

We are guided in our philosophical approach to the Albanian Studies by the words of Sir Noel Malcolm, one of the contemporary leading scholars in Albanian Studies, that *“because of half-century under Communism, as well as its little-known language, Albanian studies have suffered from neglect and a sense of isolation [...] That’s why Albanian history may seem, to the casual observer, a rather inward-looking affair. But the truth is the opposite: Albanian history radiates outwards in all kinds of directions.”*



(Photo courtesy of Kiersten Riedford)

In less than three years at DePaul, despite the dystopic circumstances we faced because of the most disruptive pandemic in modern history, we have already established our first multidisciplinary undergraduate Certificate Program in Albanian and Southeastern European Studies - offering classes from language, to creative writing, to history, to migration studies and political science. Students from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds are enrolled in our classes. We are going to enrich the curriculum of our classes and teaching with distinguished scholars from DePaul University and especially Albanian-American scholars who can offer classes in Albanian Studies which can attract students from all backgrounds. This year we offered our three first Hidai “Eddie” Bregu scholarships in Albanian and Southeastern European Studies at the amount of \$5500. Our goal is to offer at least five scholarships a year to Albanian-American students at DePaul who are committed to complete the Certificate Program in Albanian and Southeastern European Studies.

At the same time, this academic year we inaugurated The Hidai “Eddie” Bregu Lectures in Albanian Studies where we invited some of the most innovative

scholars, writers, translators, and researchers to share with us their wealth of knowledge, their research on different aspects of the Albanian culture, history and language, and their precious insights. We will continue the series of lectures the upcoming academic year and we would like to invite all those interested about Albanians and the Albanian Studies to follow and support our events and projects.



(Photo courtesy of Kiersten Riedford)

Albin Kurti's public lecture and discussion at DePaul University was also followed by DePaul professors and students. Among many DePaul Albanian-American students, I also met a student of Serbian origin who was enrolled in one of our classes. One of the American professors who attended the lecture and the discussions with the audience texted me after the event sharing his impressions: "He is impressive! I am heartened that the future of Kosova is bright."

Today we are living in times of radical uncertainty after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The new frontlines are already here: they are not false but real, based on different political values and perceptions of neighbors, democracy, Europe and the world. That's when in life and especially in politics, essence becomes much more crucially important than appearance. We feel really honored to have welcomed HE Mr. Albin Kurti, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosova, a politician who has always prioritized essence over appearance and façade.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude publicly to all those who contributed for such a successful and impactful event. The event coordinators of DePaul University, our DePaul community of faculty and students, our student assistant Nazo Islamaj, the

Uskana Association and the entire Albanian-American community of Chicago who honored us with their presence.

Mirupafshim në evente të tjera!

Submitted by:

Gazmend Kapllani, Ph.D.

Visiting Chair, Hidai (Eddie) Bregu Program of Albanian Studies

Director, Albanian and Southeastern European Studies Undergraduate Certificate

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Links:

The DePaul University newspaper THE DEPAULIA dedicated a whole page to Mr. Kurti's visit and public lecture at DePaul University.

<https://depauliaonline.com/58269/news/albanian-studies-program-hosts-public-lecture-with-prime-minister-of-kosovo/>

Watch Mr. Kurti's whole speech and discussion with the audience at the FB page of the Hidai "Eddie" Breug Program in Albanian Studies

<https://www.facebook.com/AlbanianStudiesDePaul/>

Transcript from PM Kurti public lecture at DePaul University:

<https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/prime-minister-kurti-delivered-an-open-lecture-at-depaul-university-in-chicago/?fbclid=IwAR3U1C07Ts25uIYEu-GJjB9-svYVFeoW11ASLOu-DULlcZ95EyhACvrQp3Y>

Get informed about events, projects and scholarships organized and offered by the Hidai "Eddie" Bregu Program in Albanian Studies:

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**Lake Kamani—A ferry ride through
the World's Most Beautiful Lake
as reported May, 2021.**



Lake Kamani in the north of Albanian and is home to one of the most beautiful ferry rides in the world. On a recent trip, through the South Balkans through the countries of Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo, Lake Komani was reported by a stunned a writer as being one of the most beautiful mountain ranges in the north of Albania.

The 2 ½ hour ferry ride is through the Albanian fjords. And viewing the many photos, you'll not want to miss this on your list the next visit to **Albania**.

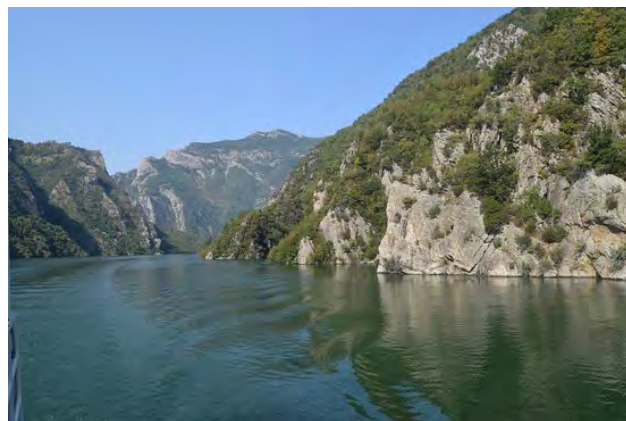
The Lake Kamani ferry is a daily ferry between the towns of Koman and Fierza in the North of Albania. It's located in the Albanian Alps and is one of the most beautiful ferry rides you'll ever witness. It's operated by the company called **Berisha**.

The boat is not luxurious, but it carries both passengers and cars. The ferry route opened decades ago before tourism. While this ferry ride is not created for tourism, it has become one of the most popular tourist attractions in Albania—**therefore a probable must for A.A.N.O. members not to miss while visiting Albania!**

The ferry runs on Lake Komani 2 times a day. In the morning from Koman to Fierza and again in the afternoon from Fierza back to Komai. In the summer, there are additional ferries with other times available. Check for updates on the schedule, but the 2021 schedule was the following:

9:00 – Kamani to Fierza

2:00 –Fierza to Koman



Gjirokastër, the pearl of Albania, is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful and enchanting towns on the Balkan Peninsula. The city has plenty of gorgeous places to visit and can be easily seen in a weekend.

The Old Bazaar

The Old Bazaar is among the most charming areas in Gjirokastër and should be on every visitors must-do list while in town. The recently restored area offers many boutiques where travelers can buy souvenirs, as well as visit traditional cafés, *byrek* shops, and some of the most beautiful Ottoman-era houses on the [Balkan Peninsula](#).



The colorful old bazar of Gjirokastër

The Shopping

Another great reason to visit Gjirokastër is the shopping. As mentioned, the stores in the old bazaar are interesting places to buy souvenirs and traditional furniture. Gjirokastër is also the right town for beautiful carpets, called *qilim*, which are handmade by local artisans, as are many of the colored bags and instruments found here.



Handmade carpets and rugs make great souvenirs

Gjirokastër Castle

[Gjirokastër Castle](#) is among the largest and most beautiful castles in [Albania](#). It also has a rich history: the prison in the castle was used by King Zog's regime, then by the Italian and German occupation forces during WWII, and then again during the communist regime, as well. Since the '70s, it has been home to a military museum, which features a U.S. Air Force plane that was captured near Tirana during WWII.



The castle of Gjirokastër is the largest of Albania

The Ethnographic Museum

The [Ethnographic Museum](#) is housed on the site of former dictator Enver Hoxha's home. Hoxha was born in Gjirokastër, and though his home burned in a fire, the museum building now found

here was built in the style of a traditional Gjirokastër home. With traditional folk costumes, furniture, cultural artifacts, and more it's a great example of life in the town during the 19th century. There is also a large room in the museum with beautiful traditional rugs and colored windows that makes for a great photo background.

The food

The food alone is a great reason to visit Albania, with fresh seasonal produce and traditional tasty dishes that are worth the trip. Gjirokastër is no exception: with *byrek*, traditional meatballs, rice dishes, and tasty pies, the town is a heaven for food lovers.



Byrek is one of the most famous Albanian dishes

The architecture

As one of the oldest settlements in the country, lovers of history and architecture should be sure to make the trip to Gjirokastër. The town features many outstandingly beautiful Ottoman-era houses, which were built in the 17th century. The old bazaar, an 18th century mosque, and two lovely churches are also must-visit sites.



The old traditional white house of Gjirokastër

The Zekate House

[Zekate House](#) is one of the most beautiful and fascinating buildings in [Gjirokastër](#). This traditional tower house is unlike others because it has twin towers and a double-arched façade. Entry only costs €1.50—a bargain to visit this architectural masterpiece, which dates back to 1811.

The Fustanella Festival

As one of the most important cultural towns in the country, Gjirokastër is an ideal location for the [Fustanella Festival](#), which takes place each July. Singers from around the world come to perform at the festival, and there is also a section entirely dedicated to traditional Albanian dances, songs, and costumes. This is a great way to become completely immersed in a typical Albanian experience.

Antigonea

Antigonea is just a 30-minute drive from Gjirokastër, and the Albanian Government fairly recently declared it a National Archaeological Park. Today, visitors will find only a few ruins of the old city, but the most impressive sites here are the walls and the Epirote House with its columns.

Adrianopolis

The archaeological site of Adrianopolis is in Sofratika, a village about 20 minutes south of Gjirokaštër. The Roman Emperor Hadrian built the settlement in the 2nd century AD. The area also features an impressive and well-preserved Roman theatre.

The day trips

Gjirokaštër offers visitors the opportunity to organize interesting day trips. In one or two hours driving (public transport is available, but it's advisable to rent a car) it's possible to reach locations such as Përmet (a hot spring known for its excellent warm water) or Syri i Kaltër, also known as the Blue Eye, a natural spring hidden in a forest on the road to [Saranda](#).



The çifteli (çiftelia, qifteli or qyfteli, Albanian: "doubled" or "double stringed") is a plucked string instrument, with only two strings, played mainly by the Gheg people of northern and central Albania, Southern Montenegro, parts of North Macedonia and Kosovo.



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Recipes

Hajde të Gatuajme



Eleni Bitta's Albanian Cookies

- 1 stick butter
- 4 eggs
- 1 T vanilla
- 1 T baking powder
- 1 c. sugar
- 3 1/4 c. flour (more may be needed for shaping consistency)
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1 egg, beaten (to brush tops of cookies before baking)

Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs and vanilla. Beat to combine.

Add baking powder, flour, and salt. Mix until well blended. At this point if dough is too sticky to shape, add a bit more flour and mix until correct consistency. Take 1 T dough into your hands and roll between your palms to form a "rope" about 8 inches long. It can be shaped into letter initials or twisted to form spirals or other shapes.

Place on greased cookie sheet and brush tops with egg. Bake at 350 10-15 minutes until bottom are golden brown and tops a pale yellow. Remove from pan while warm and cool on wire rack. Makes 3-4 dozen twists.

Submitted by granddaughter, Cathy Nicholas Balinski

Recipes

Eftalea (Lea) Bitta's Crustless Burek

- 1 pound of spinach fresh or frozen
- 1 pound of crumbled feta
- 1 cup of cottage cheese
- 1 package of boursin cheese
- 7 or 8 eggs
- 4 T butter
- 1/4 cup milk
- Salt to taste

If using fresh spinach, wash, drain thoroughly, and cut up the spinach (remove stems). Steam the spinach on low heat until tender. Remove and drain well. While cooling the spinach, combine all, cottage cheese, boursin cheese, eggs milk, butter, and salt. Mix well and then blend in the spinach.

Pour into a 8 x 10 stainless steel pan and bake at 350 for 35-45 minutes. When you see it is crusted at the edges and the middle is done, remove from the oven.

Oh, sooo delicious for those who are counting calories!! And you can substitute or add to your liking.

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