
Trumbeta Shqiptare

Volume 91


June 2013

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

Happy  Summer!

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**2012-2013
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Albanian-American
National Organization

June 2013

President's Message

Përshëndetje!

Season's Greetings!

2012 has been a busy year for the AANO. The National Board has been working diligently on growing our chapters and its membership, and developing new ways to grow our Scholarship Fund, becoming digital, and going social in today's social media environment. Times have changed and so has the AANO. I want to thank the Board for its work and wish it continued success as it moves forward.

A very special thanks to the Chicago Chapter for stepping up to the plate and hosting this year's convention. The convention was a tremendous success! Thanks to everyone who came to Chicago and supported the AANO once more. It is because of you that we continue to be our student's financial support as they continue their studies.

2012 also marked an important milestone in our homeland's history. One hundred years ago, Ismail Qemali and dozens more proclaimed Albania Free and Independent from Ottoman Rule. So much has happened since then ... but there is more to be done! We all

Mesazhi i Presidentit

have a part to play in Albania's future. Gëzuar Shqipëri!

Making higher education a reality is one of the AANO's core missions. The more educated Albanians there are, the brighter the future for Albania and Albanians. For this reason, please consider donating to the Scholarship Fund.

I am looking forward to welcoming you all to New York and Manhattan for the 67th AANO Convention, August 2nd, 3rd & 4th! Manhattan will play a great venue to all as there is much to do and see in "the city that never sleeps." You can find complete information at www.aano.org. Please join us!

Ju mirëpresim së shpejti!

Ferit E Nazarko
National President
Albanian-American National Organization, Inc.





Albanian-American
National Organization

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

The Albany Chapter

The Boston Chapter

The Boston Chapter held elections and the following are the newly elected officers:

Dhimitraq Demiri – President
Franklin Zdruli – Vice President
Shpresa Theodhosi – Secretary
Monda Demiri – Treasurer
James Michael, Jr. – Board of Governor

Congratulations and best of luck!

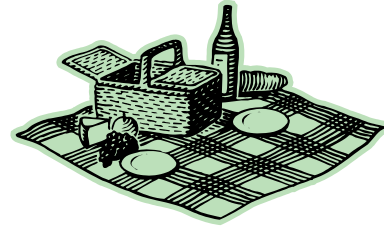
The Detroit Chapter

The Detroit Chapter hosted a bowling night for its members on the National Board as they were in town for the annual marathon scholarship meeting at the beginning of June. All ages, and definitely all levels of bowlers, were present (about 40 people in all). It was definitely nice to see a lot of old and new AANO faces together having fun. We extend our congratulations to Donald Demiri for having the highest score of the night and a lifetime high of 190. Alexandra Black Wilson came in a close second with her lifetime high score of 187.

We are hoping to have a Queen candidate or two and a nice blend of the old and new faces at the upcoming New York Convention.

Also, Detroit would like to welcome new members Donald Demiri and Marlind Belegu to the Chapter. We also wish them the best of luck as they begin their graduate studies.

The National Board wishes
each and every one of
our members a safe and
happy summer !!



Attention Past Scholarship Winners



We would love to know what you're doing !!

Please send your information to janafundos@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 Nevrus Muftari
6531 Hubbard Street
Garden City, MI 48135

nmuftari@hotmail.com



Donations to the Scholarship Fund are Tax Deductible

**67th AANO Convention
&
23rd Queen Pageant**



August 2-4, 2013

**The Roosevelt Hotel
New York City**



Friday, August 2, 2013

Convention Registration
23rd Queen Pageant, Music & Dancing
in the Terrace Ballroom
Late Night Hospitality Room

Saturday, August 3, 2013

Convention Registration Continues
Explore NYC with Native New Yorkers
(or head out on your own adventure)
Dinner Dance in the Grand Ballroom
Scholarship Awards Presentation
Late Night Hospitality Room

Sunday, August 4, 2013

National AANO Meeting (Open to all)
Selection of 2014 Convention Site
"Kafe dhe Embelsire"
Sunday Night in the City

Weekend Ticket Includes:

Friday Night Queen Pageant and Dance
Saturday Night Dinner Dance
Late Night Hospitality

Queen Pageant



The NY Chapter of The Albanian-American National Organization will host the 23rd Queen Pageant in New York City at The Roosevelt Hotel on August 2, 2013. This event is usually held every three years and has become an important part of the organizations long tradition and history. The Queen's term continues until the next Queen is selected. We invite all women who qualify under the rules below to enter.

Duties of the Reigning Queen

To attend all National functions such as conventions, basketball tournaments (on a complimentary basis); to serve as the Official Hostess of the Albanian-American National Organization, Inc; to be involved with the Cultural/Scholarship events.

Rules and Regulations

1. Only members in good standing of the A.A.N.O., Inc. Chapters or Members at Large are eligible. Ages 17 through 27, unmarried, and able to travel.
2. All applications must be accompanied by a recent 5x7

photograph and a certificate of membership to the A.A.N.O., Inc. signed by the Chapter Secretary or Chapter President.

3. Dress is formal wear, long evening dress.

4. All contestants will be interviewed on Friday, August 2, 2013. The interview time of each contestant with the judges will be emailed in advance.

5. The Queen and the 1st Runner-Up will be selected by 3 non-Albanian judges.

6. The contestants will be interviewed on personality, poise, character, appearance, and ability to speak effectively.

7. All contestants are expected to attend the Friday and Saturday Night Events.

8. Applications and all attachments should included.

9. Deadline for applications and all attachments is July 11, 2013.

TICKET INFORMATION

RSVP BEFORE June 1, 2012

AANO Members	\$ 200.00
Non-AANO Members	\$ 225.00
Children 12 & Under	\$ 90.00
Table of 10	\$2,000.00

DEADLINE DATE: BY JULY 25, 2012

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Please PRINT All Full Names included in your reservation:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

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AD JOURNAL ADVERTISEMENT



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JULY 1, 2012**

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AANO Chicago Chapter**

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**2005 S. Finley Road, #1009
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lvasilAANO2012@hotmail.com

Please print your ad in the space provided or
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Thank you for your support!



The Roosevelt Hotel

**45 East 45th Street
New York City, NY 10017**

*Located at the corner of
Madison Avenue & 45th Street*



www.theroosevelthotel.com

AANO RATE: \$199 per night

Reservations must be made by July 11, 2013.

*Use the link below to make reservations using
the group code:*

[Click Here for AANO Hotel Reservations](#)

Or call Reservations 877.257.7191
Mention the AANO for the reduced rate.



www.AANO.ORG

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



SOCIAL NEWS

Weddings & Engagements



Albany

Detroit

Congratulations to former National President and current Detroit Board of Governor Julia Black on her engagement late this past winter to Tadd Harburn. They have a July wedding planned.

Congratulations to our National website designer Nevrus Muftari on his recent engagement to Albana Arslani of New Jersey. Congratulations to them and their families.

Të trashëgojeni dhe jetë të lumtur!

New Babies

Chicago

Mila Elena Pero was born on April 11, 2013 to Arthur and Lauren Pero (and big sister Ava). Mila was 7 pounds, 6 ounces. Her middle name honors her late great-grandmother, Eleni Pero of Worcester, MA. Her proud grandparents are Perry and Diane Pero and Scott and Kathy Erickson.

Detroit

Congratulations to Zamira Aliko Aliu and Nebi Aliu on the birth of their first child, a beautiful daughter at the beginning of June. We wish them all good fortune as they embark on this new chapter of their lives together.

New York

May God bless all our new little ones with a long and healthy life. Për shumë vjet!

Anniversaries

New York

Academic & Class Notes



Boston

Spiro Alexander Theodhosi graduated from Brown University on May 26, 2013 from the School of Economics. We all wish him well and much success in career and life, and know that his grandfather Spiro was present in spirit and very proud of his grandson's success.



**Spiro Alexander Theodhosi with his parents,
Marie and Harilla Theodhosi**



Spiro and his proud grandmother, Sofka Theodhosi

Chicago

Elizabeth Montgomery, daughter of Fred and Michele (Bitta) Montgomery graduated on May 24, 2013 from Holy Cross College in Worcester, MA with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Congratulations Elizabeth from the Chicago Chapter, and we wish you great success in the future.

Detroit

New York

Worcester

William Christo has been enrolled and accepted to the Carroll School of Management at Boston College to further his studies in achieving his Master's in Business Administration. William has been working at the Mellon/Bank of New York for just over one year as an Investment Accountant. William is the son of Tom and Joan Christo. Sister Kathryn and the entire family wish him continued success in all his professional endeavors and would like to say they are very proud of him.

Career Moves

Chicago

Congratulations to Steve Chacho on his new position as Director of Business Development at OPNET Technologies, Inc. in Fort Collins, Colorado. We wish him continued success.

Loren Marcinkowski, daughter of Rick and Cindy Nicholas Marcinkowski, was recruited by Matrix and has accepted the position of Marketing Representative. Congratulations!

Detroit

New Home

Worcester



Get Well Wishes

Worcester

Sports

Obituaries

Albany

Boston

Dorothy L. (Matthews) Adams passed away at the age of 75 on April 22, 2013. She is survived by her husband of 57 years, Lambi "Al" Adams, daughters Eleanor, Carole Doody, and Lisa, sons Christopher and Richard and their families, as well as sister Diane Minelli, brothers Chester and Thomas Matthews, and sister Nancy Chomo and their families. Funeral services were held at St. George Albanian Orthodox Cathedral where she served as church administrator for many years and was often the first voice on the phone and the first to greet at the door. Dorothy will be greatly missed by all.

Detroit

New York

Worcester



Demetre J. Steffon passed away on April 26th at the age of 91. His wife Claire died in 2002. He is survived by a sister, Violet Dyer of NH and many nephews and nieces, including past AANO Scholarship Award recipient and AANO Lifetime Member Angela Ropi-Pisari, and Elaine Ropi, former AANO National Secretary and Boston Chapter officer.

Demetre served in the United States [Army](#) and worked for the Veterans Administration for 36 years. He volunteered for many organizations, including The Albanian Hour at WCUW Radio for 30 years. He received the first Medal of Distinction given by Albanian President Alfred Moisiu for his service in assisting Albanian immigrants settling in the area and for his time with WCUW Radio. He used his radio show as an opportunity to keep the local Albanian community connected to their heritage. He also was a recipient of a Key to City of Worcester. Demetre belonged to the Worcester County Light Opera Company, the Boston Opera Company, the Huntington Theatre Company, the former Albanian Worcester Mens Chorus, and the Sons of Saint Mary. He volunteered his time with the New England Albanian Relief Organization and also as a translator at local hospitals for people needing assistance with the Albanian language.

* * *



Resha (Kerxhalli) Chekani passed away on May 15, 2013. Born in Pogradec, Albania, she came to the U.S. as a toddler with her parents, Thanas and Olga (Laska) Kerxhalli, and a baby brother, Mentor. In the U.S. she

acquired three more brothers, Duke, Steve, and George.

She was a president of the Gruja Shqiptare, a church-affiliated organization her mother had founded. When Albania began its difficult journey out of communism, she and her husband George put together boxes of food, clothing, and other crucial supplies, as part of NEARO's relief effort. After his death, she redirected her caregiving skills to volunteering at Grafton Street School's Literacy Center as an Albanian translator

She leaves behind daughters Loretta Chekani and her husband Walter Henritze, Cynthia and Robert Drelinger, Vivian and Charles Buduski, and her devoted caregiver Kathy Chekani; grandchildren Matthew and Ashley Buduski, and David Drelinger; great-granddaughter Scarlett Rae Buduski; brothers Duke and Helen Kerxhalli, Steve Kerxhalli, and George-caregiver and protector-and Teuta Kerxhalli, and many nieces and nephews.

Great-grandchild Irelynn Nevaeh Buduski, brother Mentor, sister-in-law Vera Kerxhalli, and many other loved ones predeceased her.

* * *



Dorothy (Lambe) George, 91, passed away on May 20, 2013. She is predeceased by her husband, John George who died in January 2012 and brother, James who died this past January. Mrs. George leaves behind two sons, Tommie and his wife Linda, and Gary and his wife

Michelle; seven grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; two sisters, Catherine John and Beverly Barrell. Dorothy was born in Korce, Albania, daughter of Angelo and Froska Lambe, and emigrated to the U.S. in 1936. Dottie worked side by side with her husband at the Spanish Grille Restaurant they owned. Mrs. George was an accomplished cook known for her expertise and ease

in the kitchen. They were both familiar faces at the Albanian festivals. Dottie was known to volunteer many hours baking and cooking the specialties served there. She was a member of the Daughter's of St. Mary's and the Women's Guild.

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



REMINDER ...

If you have any news, or newsworthy articles, you would like to see included in Trumbeta Shqiptare, please forward the information to the editor.

Thank you for your continued support!

'Drew's Dream'

Fundraiser at playground will honor Shrewsbury boy who loved firetrucks



By Elaine Thompson (May 14, 2013)
WORCESTER TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

SHREWSBURY, MA — Like most little boys, Andrew “Drew” Paul Stevens loved firefighters and their big red trucks. He loved looking up to the sky and swinging high on the school playground. But probably most of all Drew liked other children, and they were crazy about him.

“This is a child, who at 3 years old the teachers were amazed at how socially adept he was. They tell the story of two boys arguing because they wanted to sit with Drew. Drew tells them, ‘That’s OK. I’ll sit between you.’ And he put a chair in between the two boys and sat there, and everybody was happy,” his mother, Susan, recalled.

That’s when life was good. From the time he was born May 15, 2007, Drew developed normally. He was a happy child with an infectious smile and a vivacious personality. About 5 a.m. March 18, 2011, after dealing with one of those bugs that children get, Drew woke up having a massive seizure. Ms. Stevens said she and her husband, Charles, called 911 and their son was taken to UMass Memorial Medical Center in Worcester, where CT scans and other tests were run, but doctors were unable to determine the cause. Physicians at Children’s Hospital in Boston were also baffled.

Nearly every day, Drew seized and vomited, and local paramedics were called 15 to 20 times in less than a year. He lost weight, and he finally stopped talking and could barely walk. He was on different cocktails of medication. Doctors even tried to treat him with steroids, but that didn’t help much.

On Jan. 17, 2012, he underwent a brain biopsy to rule out

some very rare types of diseases. Doctors did find that Drew had a mild form of cortical dysplasia, a common cause of pediatric epilepsy, but it was not severe enough to cause the symptoms that he was having. But, for some unexplained reason, the seizures stopped after the biopsy. “Really, it was a head scratcher,” said Mrs. Stevens. “Premier pediatric neurologists all over the country were involved in his case and looking at his files. Based on all the tests, they really could not understand what was happening.”

Drew was started on an intravenous immunoglobulin treatment given to seizure patients that cleans out the immune system and gives it a boost. Within two weeks, he began walking and talking again and he was able to go back to school and start playing soccer with the Shrewsbury Youth Soccer league. “Miraculously, to everyone’s amazement, Drew was coming back. He put back on weight. It was truly amazing. We all thought he had turned a corner,” Mrs. Stevens said.

With their only child beginning to make significant improvements, Mr. and Mrs. Stevens decided to go on a much-needed three-day getaway to Bermuda. Mr. Stevens’ mother and his cousin, a nursing student, agreed to stay with Drew. While his parents were away, Drew died in his sleep on April 27, 2012. Mrs. Stevens said doctors believe Drew died from SUDEP, or sudden unexplained death in epilepsy, but they really aren’t sure.

The experience, Mrs. Stevens said, is truly a parent’s worst fear. “I always said you watch TV and you see things on TV, and you never think you’ll be that family,” she said, beginning to cry. “What’s crazy about the whole thing is they still don’t know what to attribute it to.”

The Stevens and members of the community including staff at Parker Road Preschool have established “*Drew’s Dream*,” a fundraiser to restore the playground at Parker Road Pre-School and make it accessible to children with special needs and mobility issues. The first phase will be to purchase and install a firetruck play structure. The fundraiser is part of the annual “Kids Equipment Day,” a free, family-oriented event at which children are able to ride in a dump truck and climb on municipal vehicles and equipment. The event was held on May 18th in Shrewsbury. Donations can also be made at www.drewslifelegacy.com or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/drewsdreampage.

Maria Grimshaw, the speech-language pathologist who worked with Drew at Parker Road Preschool, said Drew still brings a smile to her face. “He was a child, whether

you met him for a minute or spent a lot of time with him, he changed your life. He was just that kind of little boy, and every time I think of him, I smile,” she said.



Monday, February 18, 2013
The Associated Press

Rob Belushi takes on family business with TV show



In this Feb. 5, 2013 photo, actor Rob Belushi poses for a photo in Chicago. Belushi, the son of actor Jim Belushi and nephew of the late John Belushi, is currently starring in "The Joe Schmo Show" on Spike TV. The show requires Belushi to use improv skills he learned at Chicago's Second City _ where his dad and uncle got their starts. Belushi grew up in Chicago and moved to Los Angeles to go to high school. At first he was more interested in behind-the-camera work. (AP Photo/M. Spencer Green)



In this Feb. 5, 2013 photo, actor Rob Belushi is photographed during an interview in Chicago. Belushi, the son of actor Jim Belushi and nephew of the late John Belushi, is currently starring in "The Joe Schmo Show" on Spike TV. The show requires Belushi to use improv skills he learned at Chicago's Second City _ where his dad and uncle got their starts. Belushi grew up in Chicago and moved to Los Angeles to go to high school. At first he was more interested in behind-the-camera work. (AP Photo/M. Spencer Green)

CHICAGO — The name on Hollywood audition lists and casting sheets must be unmistakably eye-catching: Rob Belushi.

The 32-year-old actor and comedian is from yes, that Belushi family. He's the son of Jim Belushi and the nephew of the late John Belushi and for the past decade or so an aspiring actor in his own right.

Rob Belushi has guest starred on TV shows like his dad's "According to Jim" and "The Defenders." He's appeared in made-for-TV movies and graced the stand-up stage. Now he's starring on the Spike TV reality program "The Joe Schmo Show" that airs on Tuesday nights.

He calls his famous last name a "double-edged sword."

"I would say people are very interested in seeing me or checking out what I have to offer," Belushi said in an interview in the lobby of a fancy downtown Chicago hotel. "I also think that they have their own expectations of what that will be and I am not my uncle or my father. That is pretty clear to see upon meeting me."

The Spike TV show requires Belushi to act off-the-cuff, using skills he learned in Chicago's improv scene _ where his father and uncle got their starts, too. Belushi grew up in Chicago and moved to Los Angeles to go to high school, but the family business didn't interest him at first. He was more interested in behind-the-camera work.

"My dad was actor and my mom was an actor and my uncle was an actor," Belushi said. "It seemed like maybe we hit our quota."

But a few small roles in college and influence from a teacher at Wesleyan University in Connecticut steered him in front of the lens. After college he headed back to Chicago.

"I moved to Chicago so that I could do it well and not just be some jerk with an unearned last name," Belushi said.

He spent time not only at Chicago's famous Second City, but at other improv comedy and theater schools. He also earned experience with dramatic stage performances and alongside actors like John Mahoney.

"When I first came to Chicago I really thought I had to be really special because I started in a town where my family is beloved," Belushi said. He describes working as a nanny and waiter to make money.

"My first job was as a host at Second City, where I essentially shushed drunk tourists and cleaned up throw-up in the bathroom with kitty litter," Belushi said. "But I also got to watch the show seven nights a week."

And while his famous father's mark is definitely on his career, Belushi says Jim Belushi "has had probably no influence and all the influence in the world." Jim Belushi didn't push his son

toward acting, but offered support when needed like practicing for auditions, Belushi said.

Jim Belushi describes his son as funny, talented and good looking _ "the smartest Belushi you've got." Not a surprise for a father talking about his son. The pair owns a comedy club, The Comedy Bar, together in Chicago.

"I've given him a lot of advice," Jim Belushi said in an interview. "My main advice to him is just do what's right in front of you. It's basically stay in the moment."

Rob Belushi was a baby when his famous uncle, John, died of a drug overdose at age 33 in March 1982.

"I've always felt like John was out there somewhere looking down on me and hopefully smiling or frowning but as every actor wants, paying attention in some way," Belushi said. "We have a lot in common in a lot of ways, some are good, some are bad. So I would say, as with my dad, I feel very honored to carry on the tradition that comes from Chicago."

St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church Blessing of new Bell Tower June 9, 2013



The architect of the Bell Tower, James B. Michael Jr., from Theodhosi + Michael stands in front of the tower after the blessing by Bishop Nikon. The Bell Tower is situated in an existing brick planter two feet lower than the main entry of the church, thus

giving a terracing effect and blending proportionally with the existing church. It stands alone exhibiting the strength of its steel frame construction as the strength of the Albanian people. The copper dome and Orthodox cross echo the major dome of St. Mary's Byzantine architecture with modern flair. To identify it as the Albanian Orthodox Church, the Albanian eagle filigree is prominent.



William Johns and Perry Pero (Chicago Chapter)
 Mr. Johns worked diligently for the realization of the
 Bell Tower



Bishop Nikon blessed the Bell Tower
 From left: Frankli Zdruli, Bishop Nikon, Mark Johns and
 Shpresa Theodhosi.



Mark and Bill Johns with friends.



AANO Worcester BOG Nancy Capstick and Boston BOG
 James Michael.

Albanian tradition, American home



by Lynne Hedvig
(Excerpted from *Worcester Magazine*)

June 5, 2013

A simple drive through Worcester on a warm summer day, when the streets from Highland to Main, Plantation to Shrewsbury are filled with residents angling for a spot in the sun, is sufficient to get a sense of the city's diversity. Nestled amongst the variety of ethnicities represented in the businesses and faces are a growing collection of those with Albanian descent; whether a member of the nearly 20,000 Albanians living in Worcester or an Albanian-owned business, the community is thriving as a whole and reflecting its heritage back onto the city, its now home.

Sprung up around St. Mary's Albanian Orthodox Church, Worcester's Albanian community has served its own expansion

through the strength of its bonds, and continuing to practice cultural traditions. It is with the help of their predecessors in Worcester that many Albanians fleeing the country in which they had been imprisoned for nearly 50 years, were able to transition to the United States, then prosper. Gregory Steffon, co-organizer of Worcester's Albanian Festival, says, "We kind of kept the culture for the last hundred years, our families, now we have all these new families that are here...and now we're passing the baton onto them." They are living a shared heritage with divergent origin stories tempered by the ramifications of political shifts over time.

Members of the Albanian community describe themselves as falling into one of two categories, either of the new Albanian Americans, who have come to the United States in the past 15 years, or a member of the "old guard," the foundation of the ethnic Albanian community who immigrated to the US prior to the Communist takeover.

Some settled here have never even been to Albania, but they have been treated with a rich cultural experience on behalf of all the parents before them yearning to preserve their roots. Others spent most of their lives in a subdued, sterile Albania robbed of the freedom of cultural identity by a devious and restrictive government, but are now, in Worcester relishing in its possibilities and contributing to its prosperity.

COMMUNISM TAKES HOLD

After the second World War, Communism took hold in Albania. Once the war was over, Enver Hoxha, founder of the Albanian Communist Party, triumphed over his opponents within the party as well as the Anti-Communist movement, elevating himself to Prime Minister of Albania. Hoxha was driven by a desire to industrialize and reinvigorate the economy of Albania, as well as to strengthen Albania's self-reliance, but the results he achieved came at a great cost: the individual freedoms of the Albanian people and the identity, of the nation. He instituted strict Stalinist measures, including widespread and unjust executions and imprisonment, of anyone deemed oppositional or in the way of his Communist goals and tyrannical perspective of power. These ranged from those he deemed threatening



to his dictatorial rule — landowners, religious leaders, and rural clan leader — to those who challenged his governmental system itself, including outspoken intellectuals, resisting peasants, and disloyal government officials. His brutalization of free thought did not merely target individuals but institutions as well, with the effective eradication of religion in the country through the closing of all religious institutions and silencing of their teachings, and the reappropriation of all intellectual, social, and educational efforts for the benefit and advancement of his Communist state.

Hoxha removed the Albanian people from interaction with the world at large by breaking ties with the rest of the world powers in an attempt to make Albania a stand-alone representation of his governing ideals. Hoxha grew more paranoid and radical as time went on, refusing to allow Albanian nationals to leave the country during his rule. Under his leadership, the country saw increased industrialization, improved public health, and a more egalitarian distribution of wealth, but also a systematic tamping down of the Albanian culture and an imprisonment of its peoples, their goals, and their passions.

PRESERVING TRADITION

For the newer generation of Albanian families here in Worcester, and all over the United States, coming together with the older generation of families who settled here before Albania's Communist era was like stumbling upon a time capsule of Albanian culture placed long before the World Wars and subsequent political strife remodeled their country. As Franklin Zdruli, coorganizer of the Albanian Festival in Worcester, describes the phenomenon, "For 30 years—from 1967—they destroyed churches, they destroyed the fundamentals of being a human being, the belief. Coming from a country that had closed borders for 50 years and oppressive belief for 30-something years, coming to a free world, a free country like the US, I'll tell you one thing, what we have learned through the church, and what I have found here in the community, is that borders divide people, traditions that we found here, bring people together. We found traditions that have been preserved here in a way that you cannot believe. Traditions that have been lost in Albania."

PHOTO: City Councilor and former mayor Konnie Lukes. File Photo/Brittany Durgin

At the heart of this revival for newer Albanian families in Worcester is the church, St. Mary's Albanian Orthodox Church

on Salisbury Street, where the 30th Albanian Festival was held this past weekend. Because of the exclusion of religion from Albanian life throughout the Communist era, the church has been significant to the "new guard" of Albanian families in a faithful sense, but it has been secularly important as well. Acting as a base for the community, the church is a center of the vast network that has allowed so many to return to their culture in a new land. Councilor and former mayor Konnie Lukes, herself, is a source of pride for the Albanian community as well as a symbol for women, having been both the first Albanian mayor in Worcester and the first popularly-elected female mayor in the city's history. Lukes talks of the difference between the



community's population now and when she was a child, saying, "When we were growing up, we really didn't know who we were. Now there are 20,000 of us, we're the second largest minority group in the city."

It has been in the past 15 years that these roughly 20,000 new Albanians have come to Worcester, most because they had relatives or friends here who provided a starting point and a location for them to begin new lives. Zdruli, whose grandfather was an American citizen who lived his whole life here, describes his own decision to move to Worcester after the fall of Communism: "I came to Worcester just for the simple fact that I was going to find a lot of support, because of the church and a well-built community. That's why we came here, and we want to make this community grow and interact with the outer community at large in Worcester, because now we're part of it."

CARRYING ON TRADITION

St. Mary's church has played a valuable role in preserving Albanian culture. Zdruli credits the church with his own sense of ethnic identity, "This community here, the community of the

church, I believe it just passed the 100-year mark, and this is actually not only the basis of the Worcester community, but also this community has played a very huge role in keeping the Albanian identity alive for Albanians – if it wasn't for this community, and if it wasn't for the church, I don't believe we would have had an Albanian identity today." Local filmmaker Andrea Ajemian, herself an Albanian who can trace her American roots back to her great-grandfather Kosta Pano, who helped establish St. Mary's, says the church has given her a link to her own ethnic traditions. "The food and dancing and church events are what have kept me connected to my heritage over the years, as well as my amazing Albanian relatives. Baklava and Kadaif and Petulla will not fade from your memory once you've tried them. To me, when I'm at a family wedding or a festival and I see my mom do those Albanian dances, and see how great she is at them, it reminds me that dancing, and music, and food, and customs are what help to keep any community unique, and I'm proud to be part of the Albanian community here in Worcester."

Ajemian also makes mention of her Albanian cookbook, published by the Women's Guild of St. Mary's Orthodox Church in Worcester in 1977, which is pages of Albanian history and customs before delving into authentic Albanian cuisine. For Albanians, much of their custom is related to food, and that is ever apparent listening to descriptions of the festival's menu told by festival head chef Mark Johns of Holden and owner of the Aegean Restaurant in Framingham, items prepared by Aegean Restaurant's head chef Romeo Kote, which include 1700 pounds of lambs and chickens, 20 trays of mousaka for 500 orders, spinach and leek pies, petulla and vanilla ice cream, baklava. These are the scents of the freshly cooked foods clung heavily to the air, beckoning, at the festival. Because the chefs wanted to make everything fresh and provide festival-goers with the finest dining experience, it took an entire week, cooking late into each evening, to prepare the food for this year's Albanian Festival, with an attendance of approximately 20,000 over three days. People come from Chicago, New York City, even Toronto to the festival, which celebrates Albanian culture with traditional music, food, and dancing, and this year featured three Albanian celebrities: Tony Dovolani of Dancing with the Stars, stand-up comedian Elvis Pupa, and USA Olympic Volleyball team player Donald Suxho. It is an opportunity for Worcester's Albanian community not just to gather together and embrace their shared traditions, but to open the experience up to the rest of Worcester as well,

fastening their culture always more firmly onto the already diverse collection that makes up Worcester's identity.

For all of the cultural preservation on behalf of the old guard of Albanian Americans, there is an equal gift the newer families have brought with them for the old: The Albanian language. Both Steffon and Ajemian, progeny of families long rooted in the US, speaks of not being fluent in Albanian. Ajemian describes how the influx of new families has changed that trend: "Now Worcester has a huge Albanian population, and it's just awesome. As it tends to be in America when people move here from other countries, with each generation after, the language gets lost a little...that's why it's great to have so many recent immigrants from Albania here. I don't speak Albanian, but I'd love to learn."

Kreuzia Disho, who moved here after the fall of Communism when she was 22 and now owns her own business, Dippin' Donuts, believes she and other newer immigrants play an important role in the continuation of the Albanian language here on American soil. "We try to keep it alive for the kids as well; we are trying to open the Albanian schools. We had one functioning for a little time but we ran into some difficulties, but we're planning to open something next year and we have a daycare here also for the Albanian kids. It will be a place they can learn the Albanian language and pass it onto the next generation."

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Disho's business, along with that of Eda Stefani's, Stefani Studio, are sponsors of the Albanian Festival. The two women are representative of the drive of newer Albanian American citizens, having both come here with nothing and risen to autonomous success in a short period of time. For Stefani, the American dream is, an achievable reality. "This is what I experienced: Life is hard, you have to work really hard to get somewhere, but if you work hard, you get somewhere. This is the American ideal. This is what the Albanians know by now: If you go to school, get good grades, you'll get a good job, you work hard, you'll get somewhere. And we kind of know this by now, so we go by that. If you do the right things, you get the right things back." Disho describes how her experience living in a fundamentally-repressive society inspired her to take advantage of the possibilities in America: "Where we lived, we worked hard but everything was owned by the government. We weren't allowed to have a house, we weren't allowed to have a

car, we weren't allowed to have a business, but we still had to work very hard to make a living for our families. Here it was like a bird getting free of the cage, you know, and we have so many opportunities here, so people are working harder to achieve what they were missing in their life."

CHANGES IN ALBANIA

When Hoxha died in April of 1985, he was officially succeeded by Ramiz Alia, whom he had chosen based on a shared dedication to Communism and a seclusion-bred self-reliance for Albania. By this time, the discontent of the masses had become impossible to ignore, with internal unrest matched by international criticism. Alia began tentatively loosening restrictions, starting with the allowance of social discourse over the state of the nation and the issues plaguing it, which ultimately led to decreased enforcement of more oppressive restrictions and a strengthening of relations with other countries. Soon, the borders were made just slightly more permeable with the relaxation of travel restrictions, and by 1991 the exodus had begun, with Albanians, particularly the younger generations, taking their first opportunity to escape the confinement that had stifled their nation for nearly 50 years. The choice was a challenge, but a necessity for many, like Zdruli who explains that "all of us here, maybe I am mistaken, but I don't believe so, 90 percent of all the Albanians that have come to this country after the fall of Communism have come to this country only with two bags in their hands and maybe with money that they borrowed from other people."

It was from this point, and more so after the eventual success of the Democratic Party of Albania and the founding of the Republic of Albania in 1992, that the new guard of Albanians began to emerge all around the US, expanding the pre-existing populations of families who had come long before. Families and individuals were granted asylum in the US, and they flocked to areas where Albanian communities already existed.

CREATING COMMUNITY

Worcester, already a stronghold for the Albanian diaspora from prior generations, had the added appeal of having been a generous host city for Albanian refugees during the war in Kosovo. St. Mary's church has provided the root system for these newer Albanians, but their relationship with Worcester has grown well beyond the church community itself. Disho notes that "the beginning is just a transition, and then you're settled here, you live here, your family, your friends are here, and

Worcester becomes a very important part of your life. You live in this community and you care about the community because it's not that we only get involved in doing Albanian things, we get involved in doing other stuff too, like the school where our kids go, their sports, our work, so it's a very important part of our life." Zdruli also feels a strong bond to Worcester beyond just the Albanian community here. "The Albanians of Worcester, in the coming years, will be a driving force not only for keeping alive our traditions and culture but also to be a driving force for the city, because ... we not only came here and tried to make the best for ourselves, but also we are contributing towards the economy of Worcester—raising children, buying homes, opening businesses, employing people."

Despite the success many recent Albanian immigrants have experienced in the US, they have not forgotten their homeland. Effie Qeleshi, another new arrival, says, "the best thing for our tradition is we have support for our families. It is the best Albanian tradition." The country has undergone a series of tribulations in the years since shaking free of the shackles of Communism. Many of these, including economic distress, an armed revolt in 1997, and the Kosovo War in 1999, have brought new waves of emigres from the nation. But even as their resolve has been tested, Albanians have found refuge in their deepest tradition: Community. Disho remembers being on the other side of the relationship between fresh immigrants to the United States and settled families, and like the rest who make up the network, she pays it back in kind, "Most of our community is very family-oriented. We support each other and we are friendly too, so if we see that somebody just comes from Albania, we try to help them. No matter what, because we have had those experiences—like I had support in my cousins."

AT HOME

And for those who have chosen to remain in Albania, the support network is equally relevant. Qeleshi laughs, but is serious and proud as she tells of relatives back in Albania, that "are also lucky because we are always sending the money there. We always take care of them." No doubt this continued interconnectivity of lives and a maintained responsibility on behalf of flourishing Albanians for those who are still wading through challenges has allowed the country the traction and its citizens the safeguard needed to move from the dark days of Communism into a brighter Democratic future. Albania's economy is still lagging, making the rough transition from a closed, centralized economy to a more open-market one in a

time when the entire world and the European Union in particular are struggling through the economic downturn we have been all too aware of since 2008. As Stefani notes, “The country has changed dramatically from when we left 10, 12 years ago, for the better. The infrastructure is much better. A lot of things are like here now, you know you’ll have the iPhones and you’ll have the Internet. Like when I left, you had like, the modem. And now they have the same speed and the same technology...but when it comes to export, import, all those things like industry and producing things in the country, it is still behind.” Still, she says, “people are not leaving the country like they used to. The country opened the borders and they are part of an agreement with the European Union now so they can travel without visas and go somewhere for three months. But they are not going and staying there, they are not emigrating like they used to. Which means people, in a sense, are OK where they are.”

Likewise, those who have come to Worcester are happy where they are. Many Albanians in the area identify themselves as American, and readily relay their love for the country and their appreciation for what coming here has offered them. Beyond that, they identify themselves as a part of Worcester, a home they found that shared an attention to family that was so ingrained in their own culture. For Disho, the choice to stay here was an obvious one. “When I first came here, I was looking toward New York and Boston, but when I experienced Worcester, it’s more family oriented. It’s the perfect place to raise your children; its quiet, low crime, and like everything, whatever you needed in the big city, here you have everything.”

While their ethnic pride and a love for their origins and culture are still strong, this has manifested in the maintenance of their cultural traditions here in the US, and a sharing of these traditions with our local community and the American community at large. Events like the Albanian Festival allow the group to showcase their heritage through things like traditional music and dancing, which, for Albanians, is a mode of oral history as well as celebration of their identity. For Zdruli, and many like him here in Worcester, these events and the continuation of the Albanian culture here is just another step in the long journey Albanians have traveled through history. “Albanian culture does not stop at 50 years. We have thousands of years of traditions; we are one of the oldest races in Europe which had the basis of freedom and Democracy. We called ourselves sons of eagles, and coming to a free country, we are

bringing the Albanian spirit to a new world. The spirit of the eagle.”

Levizja VETEVENDOSJE! Is a political movement founded in 2005, and ever since it has actively engaged in a struggle for self- determination bringing political power back to the people and introducing social well being, solidarity and equality. Currently Levizja VETEVENDOSJE! has emerged as the third largest political force in Kosova’s Parliament.

A delegation from Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE! Has been traveling on the movement’s first US tour in six cities, from May 24th to June 5th, 2013. The aim of this tour is to strengthen ties with the Albanian-American community in the US, to forge new partnerships with US government representatives and organizations, as well as to raise awareness on the current political and economic situation in Kosova through local and national media in the US.

The cities which are visited are: New York, Washington, Dallas, Chicago, Detroit, Boston and Worcester.

Part of this delegation are: Albin Kurti, Leader of Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE! and President of the Committee on Foreign Relations in the Kosovo Assembly; Shpend Ahmeti, first deputy leader of VETËVENDOSJE; Visar Ymeri, deputy and president of the Parliamentary Group of VETËVENDOSJE in the Kosovo Assembly; Florin Krasniqi, VETËVENDOSJE deputy; and Boiken Abazi, Secretariat Coordinator of VETËVENDOSJE.

From May 31st to June 2nd Boston and Worcester Levizja VETEVENDOSJE!

Friday May 31 VETEVENDOSJE! had a presentation at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University; on the current challenges in post-conflict Kosovo, with focus on the last agreement reached between Kosovo and Serbia.



Albin Kurti is the president of the movement for Self-Determination! He is a member of parliament of the Republic of Kosova and a chair of the committee on foreign affairs.

Saturday June 1, VETEVENDOSJE! Was at Worcester Public Liberty and had open public discussion headed by Resarta Reso on “Challenges in Post Conflict Kosovo” and the political Program of Levizja VETEVENDOSJE! They also enjoyed the hospitality of St Mary’s Festival and fine food; they visited the church and were highly impressed with the St. Mary’s Church specialty the interior iconography.



President-Albin Kurti, Vice President- Shpend Ahmeti; Visar Ymeri- head of the Group of MPs and Florin Krasniqi - MP.



Shpresa Theodhosi from Boston AANO and Albin Kurti.

Saturday night VETEVENDOSJE! Group was guest at the Kosovar Org. of Boston for dinner.

Sunday June 2, VETEVENDOSJE! Visited St. George Cathedral and in the evening had dinner at Vlora Restaurant co-sponsored and organized by MAAS-BESA.

Celebrating 30th Anniversary of the Albanian Festival
May 31 to June 2, 2013;

Saturday, June 1: Worcester St Mary's Albanian Festival was visited by a large contingent of guests from Waterbury Connecticut led by Tasim Tasimi. They enjoyed the festival and the history of the Albanian Church as much as the Albanians that came from Philadelphia.

June 7th to 9th will be the 8th Albanian Festival in Waterbury Connecticut, Dhimitraq Demiri and the "Valle Tona" Dance Group will be performing.

Sunday, June 2; Special guest at the Worcester Albanian Festival was Tony Dovolani



From left Franklin Zdruli, Gregory Steffon and Tony Dovolani giving a warm hand to the performance by "Valle Tona" Dance Group doing the Valle Kosovar in honor of Tony.



Dance Group "Valle Tona" led by Choreographer Dhimitraq Dimiri. On left side are the older dancers that have all graduated high school and will be going to college this fall and on the right are new younger dancers that are just starting with the dance group.





Tony Dovolani was totally impressed by “Valle Tona” Dance Group and congratulated their Choreographer and Director Dhimitraq Demiri. Dhimitraq is also the President of the Boston Chapter of the AANO.



Ms. Pranvera Cobo the Artistic Director of the “Ansambl Artistik – Kanga dhe Vallja Shqiptare “ introduced her young troupe performing Ball Room Dancing. They came from New York for the Worcester Festival.



The Young dancers performed wonderfully; when one of the young lady’s partner did not show up she performed with out one, it was so touching that Tony jumped from the stage and finished the dance with her. Lucy young lady, I am sure she will remember her knight in shining armor to be the one and only famed Tony Dovolani from Dancing with the Stars.



The young troupe from New York are: Silana Martinaj, Teddy Cobo, Clea Perolli, Livia Beliri, Julia Sheldia, Lorivert Cobo, Moriza Sheldia, Joel Sterkoj, Enessa Deolouca, Jame Deolouca. (not all the children are in this photo)



Demiri’s Dance Group “Valle Tona” had a wonderful surprise by dancing American Western dance.





Toni Dovolani with all the dancers making the sign of the Albanian Eagle.



The two dancers chosen by Tony as best performers of the day.



Mr. Mark Dionis and Dr. Georg Laska at the festival. AANO Boston and Worcester congratulate the Dionis family on Zach Dionis High School Graduation and wish him well in college.



Linda George, James Michael and Mary Ann at the festival

James Michael from Theodhosi+Michael was the designer/drafter for St. Mary's Ball Tower.



Worcester Albanian Festival was great success thanks to chair people and volunteers who helped to make the Albanian Festival a super successful: Mark Dionis, Mark Johns, Peter Thamel, Gary Peters, Robert Laska, Franklin Zdruli and Frank Summers.

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ALBANIAN RECIPES

Lakror Misri me Qepka dhe Djathë (Cornmeal Pie with Scallions and Feta Cheese)



Ingredients:

Unsalted butter, for greasing pan
 1 1/2 cups yellow cornmeal
 12 ounces small-curd cottage cheese
 4 eggs, lightly beaten
 1 bunch scallions, chopped (about 1 cup)
 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, melted
 3/4 tsp dried thyme
 1/4 tsp salt
 4 ounces feta cheese

Cooking Instructions:

Pre-heat oven to 400°. Butter a 9-inch pie plate.

In a medium bowl, stir together the cornmeal, cottage cheese, eggs, scallions, melted butter, thyme, and salt. Scrape into prepared pie plate and spread evenly. Sprinkle the feta over the top.

Bake in 400° oven until golden brown, set, and slightly puffed, about 45 minutes. Let stand 15 minutes, then serve warm.

Recipe courtesy of David Ricketts,
Home Cooking Around the World

ALBANIAN RECIPES

Tullumba (Fried Pastry with Syrup)



Ingredients:

2 tablespoons melted margarine
 1 cup flour
 3 tablespoons water
 4 eggs
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1 1/4 cups olive oil

Syrup:

2 cups sugar
 1 1/4 cups water
 1 teaspoon lemon juice

Cooking Instructions:

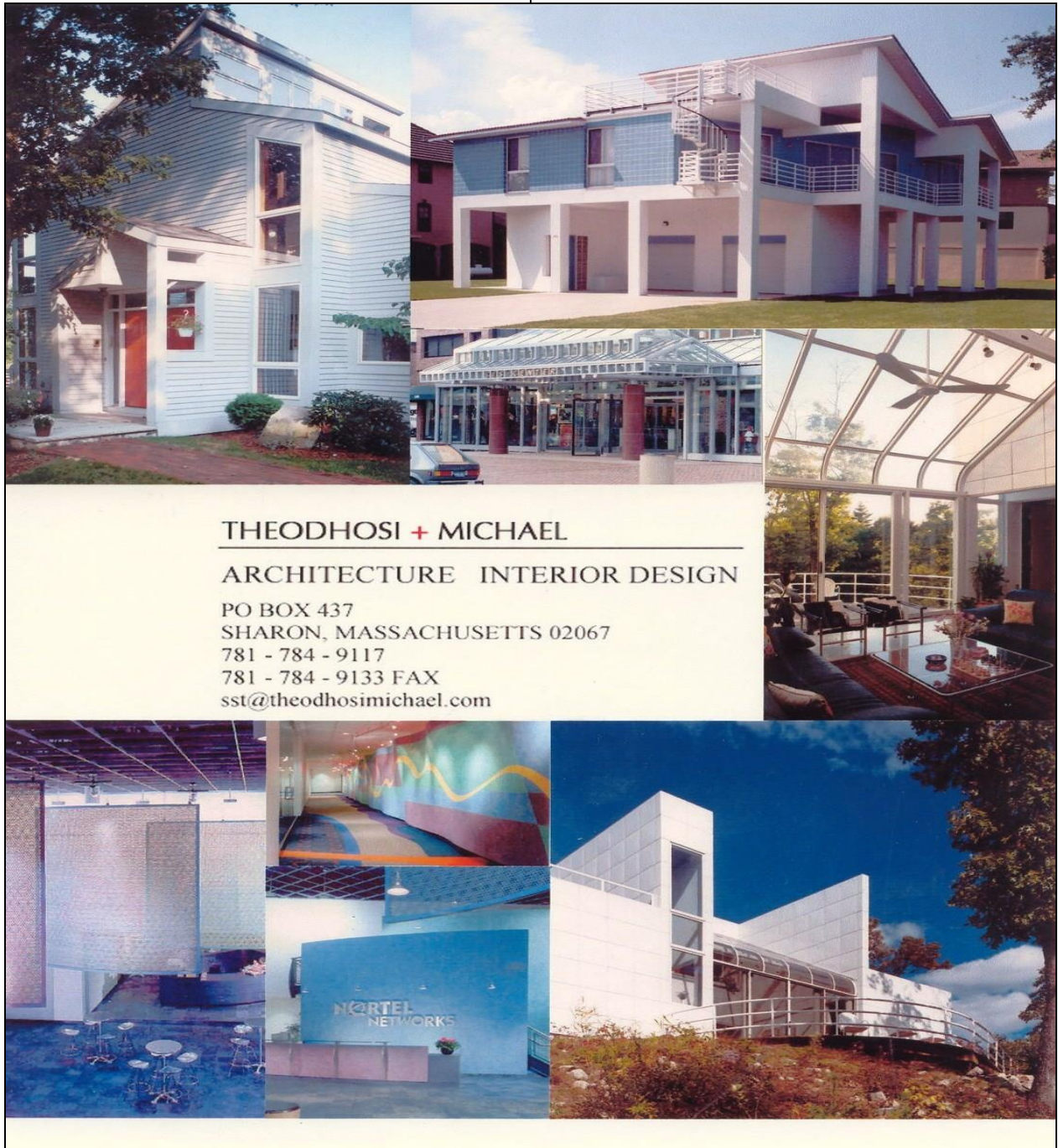
Pastry:

Heat the margarine in a saucepan, add the water and salt and bring to the boil. Reduce heat and add the flour at once. Stir the mixture constantly with a wooden spoon and continue until mixture leaves the sides of the pan and forms a ball. This should take 6 minutes, then remove pan from heat and set aside to cool. When cool, add the eggs and knead for approximately 10 minutes, using a pastry bag with a large nozzle, put 7-8 pastries in a pan containing the heated olive oil.

Syrup:

Put the sugar, water and lemon juice into a saucepan, and after melting the sugar by stirring, allow it to boil until moderately thick. Set aside to cool.

Recipe courtesy of Sotoyo Recipes (By Endrow)



***To all Albanian Communities,
Happy 100th Anniversary of Albanian Independence***

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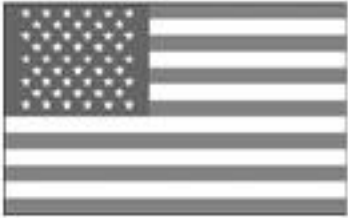
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