
Trumbeta Shqiptare

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“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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**2015-2016
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Albanian-American
National Organization

December 2015

President's Message

Greetings to everyone,

Here I am, back many years later for another term as National President. It has been quite a while but we have a very busy year and I agreed to play my part and take another term as National President of our beloved organization which I have been a part of for so long. I believe my first convention was at the age of seven or eight and my sister and I have loved coming ever since. Being President takes a lot of time but at least it gives me a chance to work with a lot of great people and hear from and reach out to a lot of you. This is the Organization's 70th year so it is my goal, as well as the goal of the National Board, to make it very memorable, eventful, and successful in every way.

It was great to see so many of you at the 69th Convention that was held in Boston on August 7, 8, and 9, 2015. It was at a wonderful venue at the Westin Copley Place and the attendees got to spend a lot of time with each other, as well as have a good opportunity for sightseeing in such a great city. Also, the event itself was a musical extravaganza with multiple bands, a disc jockey, the Prifti Brothers from Albania, an opera singer, an amazing violinist, and a dance group. The cultural aspects of the event were very well fulfilled and people seemed so happy to be back in that great city where many of them had wonderful memories from conventions years' past. The Silent Auction was also a great success and money was raised for the Scholarship Fund, which has now grown significantly past the quarter million dollar mark. The scholarship recipients that were present all expressed their gratitude for our contributions, which always makes the hard work more worthwhile.

Mesazhi i Presidentit

For those of you who don't know yet, we voted to go back a decade later from the first trip, and have our 70th Annual Convention in Tirane, Albania. We are really excited about it and the National Organization is hosting the event this year. So much has already been done by our convention committee and some of the local chapters to ensure that it is going to be another terrific event! If you went 10 years ago, you will know you don't want to miss it and if you didn't attend, you probably have heard by now how you missed out and you'll want to come with your family and friends. We have already secured the Rogner Hotel in the heart of Tirane for the event. Mark your calendar's now and start your planning. You can find information in this issue, as well as on our website at www.aano.org. Continue to watch the website for more updates as well. Who would've ever thought we would've seen the day where we would be going as an organization to Albania and we could even opt to do an add-on rafting trip down a river while we are there! Times are changing but the organization is still going strong and we are trying to adapt to the times. Please join us in this very exciting journey.

I really look forward to an exciting year and am grateful to be working with a very talented National Board that wants to make sure it is a success. I hope you all contribute in some way this year. We welcome all of the help we can get, and so do the students that we continue to assist in furthering their higher education and reaching their goals and aspirations. Also, thank you all for your past support. Without you, we never would have made it almost 70 years and to be the oldest Albanian American Organization in North America.

On another note, I wish you and your families the happiest and healthiest of holiday seasons, full of good cheer and a new year just the same. Gëzuar Vitin e Ri 2016! I look forward to celebrating our 70th Anniversary with all of you in grand style in the capital city of our homeland!

Të fala të gjithëve!



Julia L. Black
National President
Albanian-American National Organization, Inc.



**Albanian-American
National Organization**

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

The Albany Chapter

On December 6th, the Albany Chapter held its annual Christmas Party. Always a good time with friends enjoying holiday cheer and lots of laughs.

The Boston Chapter



Kudos to the Boston Chapter for hosting a wonderful 69th AANO Convention this past August. Your hard work certainly paid off and everyone had a great time. Thank you Boston !! (*Be sure to check out the Convention photos posted in this issue.*)

The Chicago Chapter

The Chicago Chapter hosted their Holiday Party on December 11th with dinner at the Greek Islands Restaurant. Wish you all could have joined us for some good food, good fun, and convention memories ... everyone had a great time !!



Happy Holidays from the Chicago Chapter Members



(Photos courtesy of Nicole Poni)

The Detroit Chapter

The Detroit Chapter welcomes new member Kristina Lucaj, a happily married Detroit area realtor and mother of three, to the Chapter and we look forward to getting to know her.

The Detroit Chapter Tigers baseball game excursion in July was a great success with over 75 people in attendance, from ages 4 to 75. It was a really good chance for a lot of the youth to get reacquainted. Although the Tiger's lost the game, a good time was had by all and there was a lot of conversation, hotdogs and pretzels for sure! The entire section that we occupied, Kaline's corner, did the wave in the seventh inning when the AANO got recognized on the big screen. We kept ticket prices low but all of the money that we raised was donated to the National Scholarship Fund. Most of the attendees indicated they want to make this an annual event and the Chicago Chapter indicated that if we played Chicago next year they just might have to join in!



Detroit members enjoying the baseball game !!



www.AANO.org



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 Lea Bitta
616 North Thistle Lane
Prospect Heights, IL 60070**

e.bitta@att.net



**Donations to the Scholarship Fund are
Tax Deductible**

SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT



My name is Laura Michael Coughlin. I received an AANO Scholarship in 1979. I was an officer in the Bridgeport Chapter AANO for many years. I went to Boston College and graduated Summa Cum Laude with a BA in Psychology. From there, I began a career in the Human Resources field and obtained a Master's Degree from Central Connecticut State University. While working in HR, I did a lot of training and decided to pursue a full-time career in Education. I obtained my teaching certification from Wesleyan University and started teaching elementary school in my hometown of Trumbull, CT.

I took some time off to raise my two children, Kelly and TJ, and then re-entered the teaching field in Trumbull as a teacher of the gifted for 5 years. I transitioned to the role of Elementary Math Specialist and have been working in that capacity for the past 8 years. I was honored to be selected the school's "Teacher of the Year" in 2012.

I am grateful for the Scholarship the AANO provided to help get me started on my life's journey. I will be attending the Convention in Boston and look forward to meeting old and new friends.



The Coughlin Family

AANO



Congratulations and best wishes to the recipients of this year's 2015 AANO Scholarship Fund Awards.

Let's meet our winners:



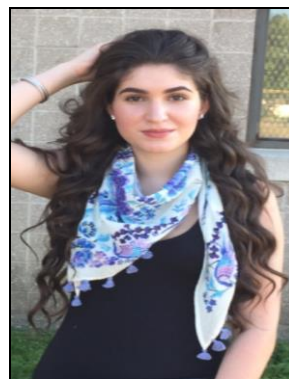
Eneida Ziraj, Livonia, MI

Attending Eastern Michigan University, Fall 2015
Majoring in Accounting and Finance



Margarita Sumbulla, Addison, IL

Attending University of Illinois,
Urbana-Champaign, Fall 2015
Majoring in Accounting and Finance



Diana Djurasevic, Purchase, NY

Attending Pace University, Fall 2015
Majoring in Biology

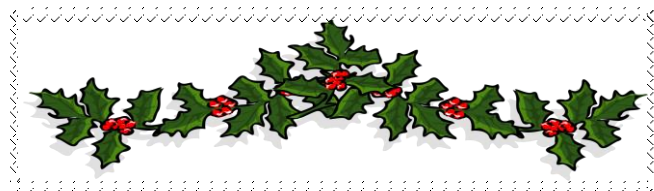


Anxhela Mile, Chestnut Hill, MA

Attending Boston College
College of Arts and Sciences
Majoring in Environmental Geoscience
and International Studies



Membership to the A.A.N.O. is valid for only one year. If you would like more information about becoming a member, contact your local chapter or look on our web site for a chapter near you.



69TH AANO Convention

August 7, 8, 9, 2015

The Westin Copley Place
Boston, Massachusetts



Guests from all over North America came to celebrate the 69th AANO Convention as they did at the 1st AANO Convention in Philadelphia in 1947.



There were many things to explore in Boston from Friday, August 7th ... dancing with American Rock 'n Roll Band "Madhouse" to Sunday, August 9th on the Duck Boat tour though Boston and the Charles River. The central attraction was the Saturday Dinner Gala, Awards and Dancing to the Prifti Brothers with Alba Band and DJ Andrea.



The Invocation and the Benediction were given by Archbishop Nikon and Father Tuda

On the left is Master of Ceremonies and Co President of the Boston Chapter Dhimitraq Demiri, and on the right AANO National President John Lulgjuraj and Mrs. Shpresa Lulgjuraj



Convention Co-Chairs, Ms. Ruth Karchenes and Mr. Vaske Pogri opened the Gala Dinner





**Boston Chapter Board of Governor,
Ms. Shpresa Theodhosi-Michael,
welcomed everyone and introduced the Head Table**



AANO National President, John Luljuraj



Dinner with view of the Head Table



**Scholarship Applications Chairperson,
Ms. Gayle Orlow, presenting the scholarships
to the 2015 winners:
Eneida Ziraj, Margrita Sumbulla, Diana Djurasevic
and Anxhela Mile**



**Scholarship winners, Eneida Ziraj at the podium and
Anxhela Mile, also our AANO National Queen**



**Dr. Mark Kosmo, recipient of the "Community Service
Award" presented by Ms. Erina Dallvo-Pepi,
Boston Chapter Treasurer**



Mr. James Michael, Co-President of the Boston Chapter, presented the "Albanian of the Year" Award



Mr. Athanas singing "Lule Bore" accompanied by his daughter on the piano Ms. Mirela Athanas



The Honorable Robert N. Tochka, recipient of the "Albanian of the Year" Award



The 2015 "Lifetime Achievement Award" was presented by Ms. Shpresa Theodhosi to Mr. Xhoni Athanas, Albanian-American Opera Tenor
Mr. Athanas with his wife Ms. Sekine Sharofi, classical ballerina of Albania, and their daughter Ms. Edlira Athanas-Joseph



Ms. Polikseni Manxhari Miss Massachusetts USA 2015 awarding the raffle prize of Turkish airlines tickets



Extraordinary Violinist Ms. Kristine Danga



The Prifti Brothers from Albania with the Alba Band from NY



Entertaining the guests are the dancers of "Vallet Tona 2015" under the direction of choreographer Mr. Dhimitraq Demiri



Dancing until 2:00 a.m.



The Gala had the Albanian Cultural Display and Silent Auction of which the proceeds go towards the AANO Scholarship Fund. Many thanks to Nancy Capstick from the Worcester Chapter for helping with this display.



Alexandra Wilson’s daughter, Kile Wilson, proudly displaying the costume that she won at the Silent Auction with Aunt Julia and Tadd Harburn



Mr. Klodjan Pepi, Boston Chapter Vice President and promoter for the Boston Convention, with boards of the past and present Honorees and Scholarship Winners



Friday night entertainment and dancing with American Rock ‘n Roll Band “Madhouse” and DJ Andrea with young Albanian-Americans joining in on the fun



VOAL-Voice of Albanians

Në Boston, Masaçusets AANO (Albanian-American National Organization), organizoi konventën vjetore.

By Ardian Murraj

Kjo ishte e 69-a e zhilluar që prej formimit të saj në vitin 1946 dhe që e bejnë atë një nga organizatat më të hershme të bashkëatdhetarëve në emigracion me platformë trashigiminë kulturore dhe ndihmesën në mbështetjen financiare të studentëve me origjinë shqiptare që jetojnë në SHBA.

Takimet treditore 7, 8 dhe 9 Gusht përveç mbarëvajtjes organizative kulmuan me festën e ditës së Shtunë ku rreth 350 pjesëmarrës mësuan tre vlerësimet e reja për arritjet e veprimtarëve që kanë punuar dhe kanë arritje në mes bashkëatdhetarëve. Darka festive u bekua nga Shkëlqesia e Tij, Kryepeshkopi Nikon, Peshkopi i Kishave Ortodokse Shqiptare të Amerikës të Bostonit dhe New England.

Kështu çmimi i mirënjohjes 2015, për “Arritjet Gjatë Jetës” ju dha z. Xhoni Athanas, “Shqiptari i Vitit” për z. Robert Tochka dhe “ Shërbimet për Bashkësinë” për z Mark Kosmo.

Mbi punën dhe veprimtarinë e AANO-s që ka degë në disa shtete të SH B A-së dhe në Kanada foli kryetari John Lulgjuraj. Përshendetje dhe fjalime të shkurtëra u mbajtën nga organizatorët e degës së Bostonit zj. Ruth Karchenes, zj. Shpresa Theodhosi, z. Vaskë Progri, Jim Michael.

Lea Bitta dhe Gayle Orlow folën mbi mbledhjen e fondeve dhe aplikimet për bursat studentëve ku katër studentet përfituese ishin Anxhela Mile, Margarita Sumbulla, Diana Djukaseviç Eneida Ziraj dhe drejtuan falenderimet dhe mirënjohjen për ndihmën e marrë nga AANO-ja.

Një përshendetje të veçantë drejtoi për të pranishmit dhe mbajtsja e kurorës së Miss Masaçusets 2015

Polikseni Manxhari dhe ndër 51 pjesëmarrëset në Miss USA Pageant-Baton Rouge, korrikun e kaluar.

Festa e 69-të vjetorit ishte konceptuar me mjaft argëtim në të tre ditët ku mund të përmendet përkushtimi i z. Dhimitraq Demiri, grupi “Vallet Tona”, Vëllezrit Prifti dhe Grupi “Alba”, Kristina Daka, DJ Andrea dhe “Mad House” të cilët zbavitën dhe mbajtën gjallë atmosferën e veprimtarisë. Herë pas here AANO mundëson zhvillimin e konventave vjetore edhe në Shqipëri dhe ka gjasa që përgatitjet për 70 vjetorin të drejtohen atje.

Editors Note: In addition to the above article in Albanian regarding the 69th AANO Convention, the photos used were also taken by Mr. Murraj and permission granted to us for publication.



The National Board wishes
each and every one of
our members a Happy Holiday Season !!



SOCIAL NEWS

Engagement/Wedding



Chicago

Cathy Nicholas Balinski, past AANO Queen's son Brian is engaged to Jennifer Font. A 2016 Fall wedding is in the planning for the Balinski, Nicholas and Bitta families. We want to send our best wishes to the happy couple.

New York



While on a two-week vacation in California, traveling the coast from San Francisco to San Diego with her fiancée, Stephanie Rafail got married to William Angarano on the beach in San Diego on September 10th. The reception for family and friends was held November 20th back in New York.

Birthday

Detroit

Happy 1st Birthday to Sophia Ramolli, daughter of Butch and Zena Ramolli, whose parents gave her a Mickey and Minnie Mouse birthday dinner party, with a disc jockey fit for a princess because they are so happy about their firstborn. They are already expecting their second child next year.

New York



On Saturday, July 18, 2015, Prof. Dr. Sami Repishti was honored on the occasion of his 90th birthday at a Symposium held at The International House in New York City. The event, titled, "*The Life and Work of the Albanian-American Humanist*," showcased the educator, author, principled democrat, non-conformist intellectual, and activist for human rights.

This memorable event was sponsored by the following: The Albanian American group - "*Friends of Sami Repishti*," the National Albanian-American Council, the Pan-Albanian Institute "Alb. Shkenca," the Albanian Roots" Association, and the Albanian-American Forum for Democracy.

"...Per mendimin tim, prof.dr. Sami Repishti qendron ne krye te intelektualeve te diaspores shqiptaro-amerikane. Ai eshte pasardhes i denje i Rilindasve, sepse ka zbatuar me besnikeri idealet e tyre te larta." (Peter R.Prifti, autor dhe historian)

"...In my opinion, Prof. Dr. Sami Repishti stands at the top of the list of the Albanian-American intellectuals. He is a worthy disciple of the Albanian Renaissance, as he has faithfully pursued their lofty ideal." (Peter R. Prifti, author and historian)

We congratulate Prof. Dr. Sami Repishti on his life's accomplishments and wish him many more years ... *Për Shumë Vjet !!*



Career

Chicago

Cindy Nicholas Marcinkowski, past AANO Queen's daughter Loren, signed a contract as Business Development Manager at Encore Repair Services LLC Global. Congratulations !!

Detroit

Congratulations to Tadd Harburn on his career change in October from many years of auditing non-for-profits in public accounting to being the CFO of Mott Children's Health Center in Michigan. He loves it!

New Home

Detroit



Congratulations to former National Queen and Detroit Chapter member Zamira Aliko and her husband Nebi Aliu on the purchase of their first home together, along with their two-year-old daughter Ariella in Toronto. We hope they have many happy years there together.

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!

Business News

Lauren Foundos on Forbes website with new venture



Lauren Foundos does not cease to amaze us! Fitness has always been a part of her life; then it became a dream; and now she's working on launching a fitness app which streams boutique fitness studios.

Please click on the site below & then click "continue to site" for Lauren's video. We are very proud of her drive, focus & accomplishments and wish her much success.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewweinreich/2015/08/21/forte-roadmap-video/>

Website: www.forte.fit Founder: Lauren Foundos

Pitch: Forte is developing a social and interactive platform that allows users to stream live and on-demand fitness classes from coveted boutique fitness studios featuring top trainers coaching a myriad of workouts while tracking their performance in real time so users can compare and compete.

GET CONNECTED !!!

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



www.AANO.ORG

If you have information for the Home Page, contact Erjon Metohu:
(508) 981-1897 or info@eridesign.com

Sports



Albania Qualifies for Euro 2016!

By Robert Kalaj (Dallas, TX)

The Albanian national soccer team qualified for the UEFA European Championships in 2016. This is the first time Albania has qualified for a major international tournament since the team's inception in 1946. The Eagles finished 2nd in qualifying Group I (consisting of Portugal, Denmark, Serbia and Armenia) which included a stunning win against group favorite Portugal.

The team was met by fans and Prime Minister Edi Rama at Tirana's Mother Teresa Airport as they returned home from their 3-0 victory over Armenia, clinching a place in the tournament. They were awarded the Honor of National Order by President Bujar Nishani. Fans celebrated with singing and dancing at Mother Teresa Square. Needless to say...Albanians everywhere are proud of their soccer team!

It's been a long time coming. Kuq e Zintjë had their lowest FIFA ranking of 124th in August 1997, and the Albanian football federation was even suspended for 46 days from international football in 2008. Things changed for the better with the appointment of Italian Gianni De Biasi as the national team coach in 2011. Many ethnic Albanians who had played for other countries were lured to the Albanian national team by the prospect of playing for De Biasi. (In 2014 alone, ethnic Albanians played for seven different national teams).

Euro 2016 France takes place June 10 – July 10. Don't forget to tune in and cheer Shqiponjat on to victory!

Detroit

Congratulations to Isabella Karamuco who just successfully completed her first season of college soccer in Ohio.

Travel

New York

My family just came back from our first visit to Albania (August 6-17). Seven of us set out to explore the land of my mother and father. My husband Daniel and I, my son Gregory, my grandchildren Oscar and Faye, my sister Pauline and friend Sandra visited Tirana and Korça and Voskopoja (where my parents were born and grew up) and then toured Gjirokastra, Saranda, Butrint, Himara, Llogoraja Pass, Vlora and back to Tirana. We drove so many mountain roads on our journey. We asked, "how many more mountains to Tirana," instead of miles! The scenery along the way was breathtaking.

Especially loved Korça and Voskopoja. Korça with its beautiful pedestrian mall, Shën Gjergj with the Cathedral at one end. Cafes along the way to take a break. It seems that many old houses are being restored. Voskopoja churches also being restored. We saw the faded, beautiful frescos of Shën Koli and lit candles for my mother and father and other relatives. The priest told us that on August 15th, Feast of the Assumption, about 300 people would come to the church of Shën Marisë to celebrate. We visited on August 14th and missed the celebration.

We did not drive but booked our transportation and tour through Tours Albania. They were wonderful, taking us where we wanted to go and stopping along the way for lunch. Our driver was excellent in handling the sharp turns and bends of the mountain roads and our English-speaking tour guide was helpful in translating menus for us.

Most importantly, we met our cousins, many we did not know we had. The Samsuri and Gedeshi Families who knew my mother's sister and could tell us about family history. My mother's uncle Llazar (Zai) Gedeshi came to the US about 1908. My sister and I knew him. I am now trying to find out more about his life in New York since his family in Korça want to know what happened to him in the US.

The trip was wonderful and more than we expected. So friendly and helpful. And, so many cars everywhere. Rush hour in Tirana reminded me of the same on the Long Island Expressway. We all definitely want to go back.

News about my granddaughter Theresa, who was not on the trip because she has joined the Peace Corps and is now in Benin, Africa as an Economic advisor to small

businesses there. Mostly run by women in the villages. They make and will learn how to market Shea Butter.

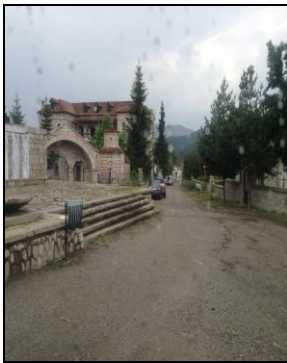
About my youngest cousin, Nino Gedeshi, age 17, was just awarded a US Student Visa to study at MCPHS University in Boston. He is the first Albanian student to be accepted to the Pre-Medical and Health Studies Program at the University. He arrives for classes on August 26th and we hope that the Boston Albanian community gives him a warm welcome.

Below are some photos taken on our journey to the Motherland, Albania.

Athina Leka Aston (New York Chapter)



With my wonderful cousin Evis Samsuri



Voskopoja
A village with lots of memories. Churches being restored.



Gjirokaštër



Cathedral of St. George in Korça.



Korça from the top of The Tower.



The Gedeshi family meeting for the first time – three generations (Regency Hotel, Korça)



Enjoying an espresso with Director of Cultural Affair in Korça. Responsible for its beautiful development.



Celebrating my wonderful cousin's 70th birthday. Pauline and Athina with Zana Samsuri Pano

Obituaries

Detroit



Deepest condolences to the family of Lirika "Lily" (Mestani) Abi-Khalil. Lily was a beautiful person who was a devoted mother, wife, daughter, sister, and friend who was full of energy and spirit with a wonderful personality. She was the beloved wife of Eli for 13/2 years and mother to her son Marcus. She also leaves her parents Mestan and Belka Mestani, her sisters Benita (Sabri) Sulejmani, Nora (Rezart) Morina and Alberta (Steven) Griecci and her in-laws Rafic & Anna Abi-Khalil.

Lily was the first AANO National Queen from the Detroit Chapter who was from Ontario, Canada, right across the border. She served as AANO Queen in the same manner as she did everything else ... with a zest and a smile that will be forgotten by no one who knew her. Unfortunately, although she fought until the end, she lost her long battle with cancer at the very young age of 39 on December 3, 2015.

The Detroit Chapter and the entire National Board expresses their deepest sympathy to her family. We know the loss of Lily will be felt by many, including her AANO family, many of which are her relatives. We know the memory of Lily will be eternal.

*Julia Black, National President, and
acting Detroit Board of Governor*

A tree will be planted as a living memorial to
Lirika Abi-Khalil.



Worcester



Piro Spiro passed away at the age of 94 on July 20, 2015. He leaves his wife Elizabeth (Costa) Spiro; three children, Nicholas Spiro and his wife, Patricia Swenson, Susan and her husband Kevin DeCaire, and Robert and his wife Lisa Spiro, as well as two grandchildren, nieces and nephews. He was born in Worcester, son of Nicholas and Xanthipi (Keleshi) Spiro.

Gloria Tasho passed away peacefully at the age of 95 surrounded by her loving family on July 16, 2015. She was predeceased by her husband, Ernest Tasho, who also passed at the age of 95. She leaves two sons, Richard Tasho and James Tasho, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nephews and nieces.



Marilyn (Ontso) Jezerski passed away on August 13, 2015 at the age of 77. She leaves her husband of 54 years, Anthony Jezerski and a son Michael Jezerski, and granddaughter Chelsea Jezerski, as well as her sister Athena and her husband Zorab Simonian, and sister in law, Margaret Ontso, several nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by brothers, Louis and Michael Ontso, and a sister Elektra Gregory.



Leon Lonstein, 90, passed away on October 21, 2015. His wife, Mary Sahagen Lonstein died in 2011. As a humanitarian, Leon was the founder and president of the New England Albanian Relief Organization, Inc.

Nikola (Nick) Dimitri, 97, passed away on November 27, 2015. He is survived by his wife, Dhimitra (Dee) Dimitri, his son, Dr. Dennis Dimitri, a daughter, Sandra Bisceglia and her husband, Matt; grandsons, Adam and Nicholas Bisceglia; his sister, Loretta



Gregory and her husband, Theodore; as well as many nieces and nephews. In 1951, Nick was married to Dee whom he had met at an *Albanian American National Organization* dance. They celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary this year.

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

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

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Komuniteti Shqiptar ne Tampa Bay Aria po shtohet c'do dit e c'do vit. Qe nga muai Shtator filluan pregatitjet e Dites te pamvarsis, duke pare se ne Clearwater nuk mund te gjesh nje sall aq te madhe per te gjith. Me inisjativen e dikujt u vendos qe: Te tri organizatat te kishin nje takim dhe: te vendosnin se c'far duhesh ber. Kryetari i Vares Zoti Tasim Ruko, Drejtori i organizates SPIFS ne St. Petersburg i cili drejton programin per 4 dit rrjesht, me ushqime Shqiptare, me keng e valle,i, pregatitur nga vet Drejtori Ardian Kraja. Kjo eshte Vjetore dhe quhet Festivali Internacional.

Dhe nga une, **Metat Idrizi**, BOG for AANO, ne nje takim qe berem vendosem nje zeri qe ne te tri organizatat te bashkohemi, dhe kjo dolli me sukses,, duke marr pjes 500 e ca veta. Qe nje dit me von beheshe nje fest Koncert / Flamur ku moren pjes gati 300 vet me kengetaren e njohur Eli Fara. Kurse ne kishim Kengetarin David Xherahu dhe Ermal Mamaqiu.

Tani per tani 2-3 vende do festojn Vitin e Ri. Me sa duket Petrit Lulo Bilbili i jugut do vin ne St. Petersburg. *Per te gjith, te mos harrojm se vitin e ardhshem AANO do ta festoj 70 vjetorin ne SHQIPERI.*



*Make your reservations
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Convention to be held in
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Albania 
A New Mediterranean Love

Peter Lucas: To Illyria and back, but I've never climbed Bunker Hill

By Peter Lucas (10/13/2015)



The ancient Illyrian Tombs in Albania

Tirana, Albania -- The small talk aboard the shared van to Boston's Logan Airport that night was about how awful the past winter was.

The woman beside me, heading to Africa, mentioned how it never snowed in her home country, Tanzania, which she was going to visit.

"How about Mount Kilimanjaro?" I said. "It snows there."

"You've been to my country?" she asked, surprised.

"No," I said. "I've been to a lot of places but not Africa. I read about Tanzania and Mount Kilimanjaro. Ernest Hemingway wrote about Mount Kilimanjaro."

"I've lived in Tanzania most of my life, but I have not been to Mount Kilimanjaro. Nor have I ever seen a lion or an elephant. People come from all over to see elephants and tigers in my country, but I have never seen any. And I have not been to Mount Kilimanjaro."

"I suppose it's the same here," I said. "People come from all over to see things in the United States that I have not seen. Strange, isn't it?"

I thought about that conversation when my companions and I approached a steep hill in a remote region in southeast Albania, hard by the Macedonian border. On the top of the hill, guarded by trees and hidden from view, is the site of the rarely visited ancient Royal Illyrian Tombs of Selca.

These are tombs where the ancient kings of the Illyrian, forbears of the Albanians, were buried from around the

5th to the 2nd century B.C., a long time ago. It was a period of war with the Macedonians and Philip of Macedonia, not the friendliest neighbor.

Albanians do not visit the site, nor do many foreigners. It is not very accessible, for one thing. The unpaved road leading to the site is long, winding and narrow. When you arrive, dusty and hot, there are no amenities, not even a guide. And you still have to climb up a steep hill. So it is understandable why so few people come to the tombs.

But the view at the top is astonishing. From there, in between the flowing Shkumbini and Devol rivers, the Illyrians could look north into Greece and east into Macedonia to see if any enemy armies were on the march.

With the African lady in mind, I thought about the irony involved. Although I am Boston born and bred, I have never visited nearby Bunker Hill, and here I was on a hill in southeastern Albania thinking about battles fought more than two thousand years ago.

The following day there was another excursion. This time it was to the 14th century Eastern Orthodox Church of Saint Mary, located in a deep cave on the mysterious and uninhabited island of Maligrad, on the Albanian side of Lake Prespa. The rest of the lake is shared with Greece and Macedonia.

The church was built by Kesar Novak, a Serbian nobleman, in 1369. Frescoes of Novak and his Greek wife, Kalia, are still visible on the outer wall of the church. Like the site of the Illyrian tombs, climbing up to the cave is a challenge, but well worth the effort.

As a matter of fact, getting to the island is also challenging. We did it by hiring a pair of fishermen from the lakefront fishing village of Ligenas. Thankfully their rowboat had a small outboard motor.

Of course the rowboat had to be bailed out of a substantial amount of water that had accumulated during their morning fishing run. Nor did it inspire much confidence when the men talked about how many people drowned over the years making the trip to the Maligrad.

So it is also no wonder that so few people go to Maligrad. The drowning usually happened in bad weather, they said, and were due to people who made mistakes by not respecting the difficulty involved in getting to the island.

But on this day the weather was spectacular, clear and bright, and the water was a fisherman's delight, soft and calm.

On Maligrad there is a stillness -- a happy aloneness -- to the church and the island that you cannot find on the mainland, or anywhere else, for that matter, and it makes you feel that you could be back in 1369, or even earlier.

It is understandable that people came here 700 years ago years ago to pray and to meditate. That is what they did. We don't do much of that these days.

And this is coming from a guy who has not only never been to Bunker Hill, but who hasn't even visited the church around the corner. Go figure.

***Best Wishes for a
Happy Holiday Season !***



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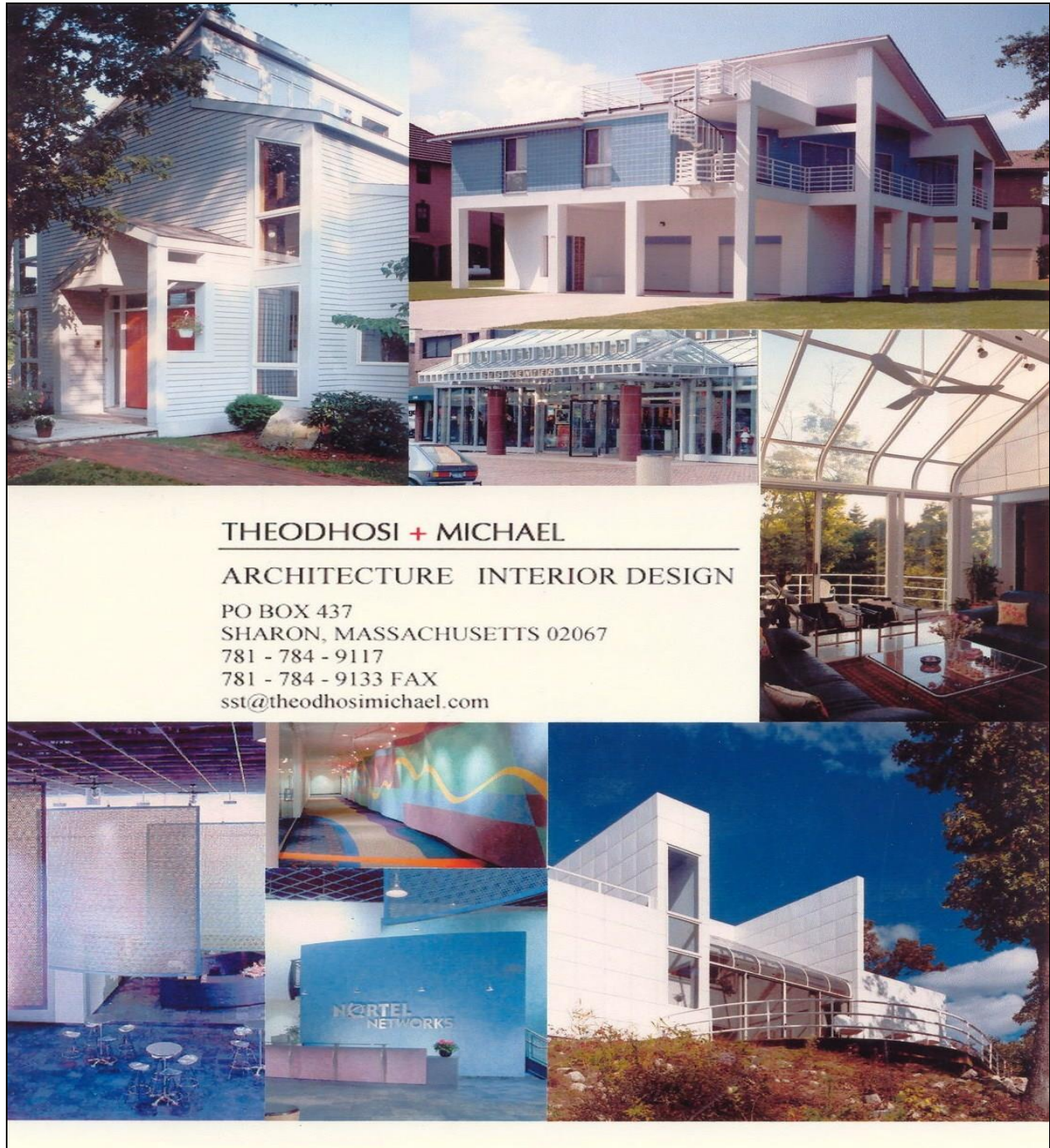
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