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# Trumbeta Shqiptare

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Volume 102

December 2018

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



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

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



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**2018-2019**  
**NATIONAL OFFICERS & BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

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**Albanian-American**  
*National Organization*

**December 2018**

### *President's Message*

Greetings to All,

On behalf of the AANO National Board, we wish all of you peace, good health and happiness for the Holiday Season.

As we close the year 2018 and complete 72 years of serving the Albanian-American community, I would like to extend my sincere Thank You to the elected and appointed members of the National Board, Board of Governors, all the Chapters, and all the AANO members for your dedication, commitment and hard work to keeping the AANO moving forward.

The 2018 Annual Convention, held in Washington DC, on August 3-5, was a successful, three-day, all-Albanian gathering of members from the Albanian-American community of Washington, DC and Albanian-American communities from different parts of the country who came to celebrate with us our 72nd anniversary and together to commemorate the 550<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of our legendary hero, Gergj-Kastrioti Skenderbeg. We thank all of you who made the sacrifice to attend the convention and trust that you had a great time.

We congratulate the 2018 scholarship winners, wishing them much success in their pursuit of academic endeavors.

### *Mesazhi i Presidentit*

We also congratulate the recipients of our 2018 annual awards. **Col. Christopher P. Costa, (USA-Retired)** was the recipient of the **"2018 Lifetime Achievement Award."**



Mr. Costa served as the Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Counter-terrorism on the National Security Council (NSC). His military awards and decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, and two Bronze Stars.

Most recently, Mr. Costa joined the International Spy Museum as the Executive Director. Mr. Costa is the son of the late Paul N. Costa, past president of the AANO, and Marge Costa.

We had two worthy recipients of the **"2018 Community Service Awards."** First, **Dr. Artur Elezi**,

Professor of Mathematics at American University in Washington, DC who is also the President of Albanian-American Academy (AAA).

Dr. Elezi is the co-founder and Chief Editor of Albanian Journal of Mathematics and the founder and Director of the Graduate School at the University of Vlora.





The second **“2018 Community Service Award”** winner was **Mr. Alban Pruthi**. Mr. Pruthi was born in Gjakova, Kosova and moved to Washington, DC in 2006 to complete his Masters Degree at the School of Advanced International

Studies (SAIS) of Johns Hopkins University. Since late 2000, Alban has played an instrumental role in laying down and strengthening the foundations of the Albanian-American Community in the Washington, DC area by establishing an informal yet innovative virtual network called Albanian Professionals in DC.

These are special people who deserve to be recognized for their unselfish contributions that they make, each and every day, to our communities.

During the 2018 Convention, we were happy to recognize Ms. Elena Busciacco, representing the Arbreshe Community. Ms. Busciacco is the spokesperson for “Bilte e Firmozes” (The Sons of Firmoza), an Arbreshe Folklore Group, famous for spreading their message of peace, love, and unity between the Arbreshe and Albanian communities all over Europe and abroad.

Attending our convention was Her Excellency, Floreta Faber, Albanian Ambassador to the US. Ambassador Faber and her staff organized a fantastic reception for the AANO members on Sunday, August 5, at the Albanian Embassy in Washington DC.

The Westin Hotel City Center was the place to be during our convention, with great fun dancing to Albanian songs and music till early hours of the morning, visiting the State Capital, the Albanian Embassy, while many participants visited other interesting places in the DC area.

I want to thank the National Board, Board of Governors, and all the Chapters for their invaluable contributions to making the 2018 Convention a great success.

Onward we go to August 2-4, 2019. Our next Annual Convention will be hosted by the Chicago Chapter. The hotel is reserved and the awesome Chicago Chapter is hard at work to organize a memorable convention. I hope all of you will mark your calendars and reserve August 2, 3, and 4, 2019 to join us for three days of “All Albanian” celebration and fun, as we celebrate our ethnic heritage and culture, honor our past, celebrate our present, and look forward to our future. For all the convention information, please visit our web-page [www.aano.org](http://www.aano.org).

On behalf of the AANO, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the AANO’s Chicago Chapter on their 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Congratulations and thank you to all the members of this model Chapter for their selfless commitment to making a positive difference to the many Albanian-American students and to the Albanian-American Community. We wish you many happy returns in good health and prosperity for all.

One of the primary goals and focus for 2018 will be to increase the AANO membership. Please help us attract more people to our organization by asking your family members, friends, and your Albanian neighbors to become members. They can become members of a local chapter by contacting the Chapter Board of Governor in your area. You can find their information by visiting <http://www.aano.org/about-us.html>. They can also become members-at-large by visiting [www.aano.org/membership.html](http://www.aano.org/membership.html). The annual membership cost is only \$25.00, tax deductible. The AANO members do get a discount pricing on all AANO events.

And please, never forget to share with your family and friends, **who we are!** The Albanian-American National Organization is a non-religious and non-political organization established in 1946 to perpetuate and celebrate those special things, which come with our Albanian heritage. Among our priorities is to support the academic endeavors of Albanian-American college students through annual scholarships. Each year, the organization gives out thousands of dollars in scholarships, and through the years, hundreds of students have received assistance through the A.A.N.O. Generous contributions to

this fund have been made over the years by the Albanian-American Community.

To successfully carry on the above stated purpose for 72 years, it takes hard work and commitment from many volunteers, some of them we get to see at the annual conventions every year, but some of them, because of their busy schedules, we don't get the opportunity to see them often, yet, their commitment and hard work is very important to move our organization forward. One such tireless and selfless volunteer is Ms. Linda George, who, for many years, continues to be the person responsible for editing and publishing our beloved Trumbeta publication, published twice per year. The amount of work it takes to gather the information, edit each article, put the final touches on each line, each picture and each page, and then finalize the finished product, is enormous, yet she is always there for the AANO. On behalf of the entire AANO Organization, I thank Linda, from the bottom of my heart, for her commitment and hard work she continues to dedicate to the organization. We are grateful for all she has done and continue to do for the AANO and wish her all the best that life has to offer.

We look forward to seeing all of you at our 2019 Convention in Chicago. *Gëzuar Festat!*



**John K. Lulgjuraj**

National President

Albanian-American National Organization, Inc.

**From all of us to all of you,**



**Albanian-American**  
*National Organization*

## **CHAPTER ACTIVITIES**

Angelica (Apostol) Greco brought her son, future member Christian Greco (age 6), to the Washington Convention where he renewed his friendship with Kila Wilson from the Detroit Chapter

On December 12, 2018, **The Albany Chapter** will once again host their chapter meeting before their annual holiday dinner/party at Athos restaurant and hopefully Santa Claus will make an appearance just like he did last year.

Happy holidays and a happy and healthy New Year to all from the Albany Chapter!

**The Chicago Chapter** is busy planning next year's Convention. The hotel is located near a discount clothing mall and casino, along with shuttle service to both, as well as service from the airport. The train station is half a block away which can take people downtown. Committees are formed and the younger people are getting involved. It's going to be a great time and you won't want to miss it.

*See Convention information further in this issue.*



It has been a busy and exciting few months in Chicago! Keep reading to find out what we've been up to.

We're on Facebook! Like "AANO Chicago Chapter" to stay up to date on our Chapter and be the first to hear any Convention announcements!





Congratulations to Chicago Chapter member, Lea Bitta, for her newly elected position of Vice President of the AANO! Lea has previously served as Secretary, Board of Governor, and Scholarship Chairperson. Thank you for your continued contribution to the organization, Lea!

David Sosnowski, from Chicago, has been elected as the new National AANO Webmaster. Thank you for your hard work and urime, David!



What an incredible honor and privilege for our chapter to receive this award from the National Organization. An enormous thank you to all our past and current Chicago Chapter members who have made incredible contributions to the AANO the past 55 years! We celebrated the anniversary on

October 7th. The night was filled with laughter and memories. If you couldn't make it, enjoy the pictures on this page!

**Happy 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Chicago Chapter**

**Gëzuar 55 Vjetorin e Krijimit të  
AANO Çikago**





**The Clearwater Chapter** has been very active in recent months. Each year, the City of St. Petersburg hosts a three-day International Festival. This year the International Festival was held from October 25-28, 2018. Participating in this festival are close to three dozen different ethnic groups from different communities living in the Tampa Bay area. The festival features different cultural exhibits, which include special customs, artefacts, and a variety of food specialties. In addition, the festival featured continued entertainment for the three days with music, song, and dances of the many different ethnic cultures represented in the festival.

The Albanian-American Community of the Tampa Bay area, numbering at close to 10,000 strong, is one of the participating communities, sponsored and organized by a few local organizations, among them is the AANO's Clearwater Chapter.



For three days, the Albanian customs, artefacts, variety of food specialties, as well as Albanian music and dance were on a full display. The stars of the event were the dancers of the Albanian Dance Ensemble from Clearwater. As in prior years, they entertained thousands of people visiting the festival, with beautiful customs representing different regions of Albania and beautiful dances representing all the Albanian regions from Kosova to Çamëria.





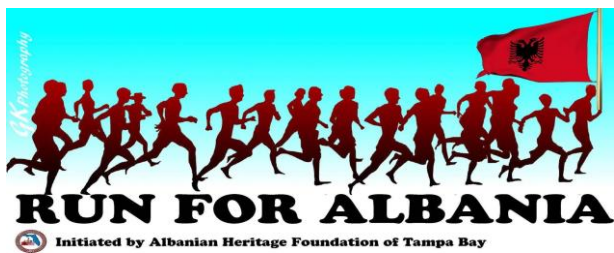


*Above are a few photos from the event, the introduction of the Dance Ensemble, stage photo after one of their performances, as well as photos of the Albanian Booth, beautifully decorated with Albanian symbols and artefacts along with some of the people responsible for organizing the event.*



**Thank you Metat Idrizi for the articles and beautiful photos!**

Each November, the Albanian-American Community of Tampa Bay organizes the Albanian Independence Day, as well as the **“Run for Albania”** event, which this year was held on November 25<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 am until 12:00 noon. Every year, many members of the AANO Clearwater Chapter, in cooperation with the Albanian Heritage Foundation of Tampa Bay, organize and participate in these important events.



Metat Idrizi, National Board of Governor  
Clearwater Chapter



The Detroit Chapter in June 2018 at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual “Shqipos at the Tigers” game. There were 78 people in attendance from ages 1 to 79 as well as members of the National Board and their families. There was a two-hour rain delay and then multiple extra innings. The Tigers won after we were at the ballpark for 6 1/2 hours! We were a little wet and a lot hungry but the diehard stayed until the end and a really good time was had by all! Some of us even rode the carousel and the ferris wheel. We got a Tiger victory and a lot of camaraderie! Can’t wait until next year!







*Members of the National Board having dinner at an Albanian-owned restaurant in Detroit at midnight after the National Meeting in June and the 12-inning Tiger game!*

[www.AANO.org](http://www.AANO.org)

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- Business Card (\$50)

*For more information, please contact:*

**Richard Rafail, National Treasurer  
(914) 843-7629**

[rrafail@yahoo.com](mailto:rrafail@yahoo.com)



The Detroit Chapter hosted a Halloween Party on October 28, 2018 at the St. Thomas Orthodox Church. There were 23 children and 23 adults in attendance. A good time was had by all. There was pizza, games, trick or treating, and prizes.



*8-year-old Kile Wilson (scary or just too cute !!)*



*Thank you Julia Black for the wonderful photos!*

## *Attention Past Scholarship Winners*



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

Please send your information to Gayle Orlow ([gorlow@comcast.net](mailto: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](mailto:ncapstick@hotmail.com)



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



**Albanian-American  
National Organization**



## *72nd Annual Convention August 3-5, 2018 Washington D.C.*

**By Rich Rafail**

Albanians from across the United States descended on Washington D.C. for the 72nd Annual A.A.N.O. Convention. The site was the Westin City Center Hotel. This was our first return to Washington since 2011. The weekend was arranged with multiple activities for the attendees. The convention was dedicated in the memory of our national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu, who died 550 years ago this year. Of course, by being in the nation's capital, we were honored with the presence of the Albanian Ambassador. The D.C. area also has a plethora of venues to visit.

Since the capital is a great draw, many of the attendees came in early, many of them on Thursday evening. The early arrivals gathered in the lobby area and got caught up in what has happened in their lives since they last met.

The National Board went to work on Friday morning handling issues of the organization. Meanwhile more attendees started checking in for the weekend event. Friday evening opened with a buffet in the foyer of the National Ballroom and rolled inside to dancing through the evening with Emira Babaliu and band. The dancing went on until 1:00 in the morning.

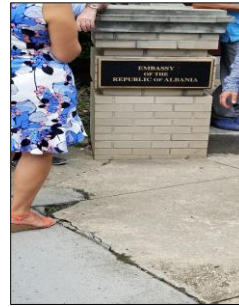




Saturday was originally set as the day for a White House tour but due to events at the White House, the tour was cancelled. In its place, a special Capital tour was substituted. So individuals that were cleared for the White House were able to attend. The word back from people who made this tour was that it was extremely informative and well worth the trip. Other people took the on-off buses to do a tour of the city. The city is home to the Smithsonian Museum, Washington Monument, White House, Jefferson Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, World War II Memorial, Vietnam Memorial and countless other sites. Due to the proximity of the hotel to these monuments, many people could walk to those venues. By virtue of one of our honorees being affiliated with the International Spy Museum, discounted tickets were available.



**EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA**







Saturday night opened with the singing of the National Anthems of the United States, Canada and Albania. Welcome remarks were made by the Chairman Richard Rafail. John Lulgjuraj, National President, followed with his address. The A.A.N.O. Queen, Georgya Borova, made her welcoming remarks. These speeches were followed by comments from the Scholarship Fund Raising Chairwoman, Nancy Capstick. This year's Scholarship awards were announced by Gayle Orlow, Scholarship Fund Applications Chairwoman.



The next part of the program was the award presentation. This year's Lifetime Achievement Award was given to Colonel Christopher Costa. Colonel Costa had a long and illustrious career serving the United States. There were two other awards presented to members of the Albanian community of Washington D. C. Community Service Awards were presented to Artur Elezi and Alban Pruthi for their work in the D.C. area with other Albanians.



Finally, addresses were made by the Albanian Ambassador to the United States, her Excellency Floreta Faber. She had many kind words about the organization and the relations between the United States and Albania. Unfortunately, last minute changes to the Kosova Ambassador's schedule did not allow Her Excellency Vlora Çitaku to attend but she sent warm regards. The last speaker was Elena Busciacco-Farah - Bilde e Firmozes of the Arberesh Community. She had stories from the days when she grew up and current day happenings in the Arberesh Community.



The rest of the night consisted of dancing to the early hours again to the music lead by Emira Babaliu and band. After the attendees finished in the Ballroom, they went up to the hospitality suite where the party continued with pizza and drinks.



Sunday wrapped up with the conclusion of Board meetings and the open meeting where attendees were able to ask questions and elections were held for the national offices of President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. All current officers retained their positions and will serve another year: John Lulgjuraj, President; Clodian Pepi, Vice President; Richard Rafail, Treasurer; and Gayle Orlow, Secretary. The site of the next convention was chosen where the A.A.N.O. will gather next year in Chicago. After the official close of the convention, everyone gathered for pastries and coffee.

For people who stayed Sunday night, there was an evening of buffet food and music provided by a DJ which went on until 11:00 p.m. This was held in a smaller ballroom on premises.

*Thank you John Lulgjuraj, Rich Rafail, and Iris Maluka for all the Convention photos!*

**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](mailto:dsoz@microthunder.com)



**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.**





**Meet our 2018 AANO  
Scholarship Recipients**



**ALBION ZOGAJ**  
**SAN ANTONIO, TX**  
Attending University of  
Texas at Austin  
*Studying Marketing and  
Entrepreneurship*



**ALBANA GLLAREVA**  
**DALLAS, TX**  
Attending University of  
Texas at Austin  
*Major in Public Health;  
Minor Korean/Japanese*



**KEVIN FISS**  
**AVONDALE, PA**  
Attending Temple  
University  
*Studying Urban  
Planning/Pre-Law*



**VANESSA SHEHU**  
**MEADOWBROOK, PA**  
Plans to Attend Wellesley  
College  
*Major in Neuroscience;  
Minor in Economics*



**MATTHEW MRNACAJ**  
**PALM COAST, FL**  
Attending University of  
Florida  
*Major in Economics;  
Minor in Pre-Professional  
Track/Pre-Med*

*The Washington, DC Chapter hosted the 72nd Convention in DC. It was such a great success and especially to see all the AANO members from the US & Canada celebrating together in the heart of our Nation's Capital. Thank you for coming, and your presence made the event the best it could be. Way to go AANO!*



**August 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019**  
**Hilton Rosemont/Chicago O'Hare**  
**5550 North River Road**  
**Rosemont, IL 60018**

It has been 7 years since the AANO Convention has been to Chicago. While some things have stayed the same, many have changed, and we are very excited to invite you all to the 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual AANO Convention! While you may have been to the "Windy City" once or twice, we can guarantee you haven't seen it all! The Chicago Chapter has selected a special new venue and activities that have not been a part of previous conventions. We hope to see you all there!

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

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





## SOCIAL NEWS

### Engagement/Wedding



#### Chicago



Loren Marcinkowski, the daughter of Rick and Cindy Nicholas Marcinkowski, past AANO Chicago Queen, became engaged to Jeff Newman, son of Larry and Debbie Newman, on July 6, 2018. Wedding plans are set for September 7, 2019. Best wishes to the couple and congratulations to their families.

### Anniversary

#### Chicago



Congratulations to Perry and Diane Pero who celebrated 50 years of marriage in May! To celebrate, Perry, Diane, Alexis, Arthur, Lauren, and

their children Ava and Mila, as well as Perry's sister, Shirley, all took a trip of a lifetime to Maui in June. The special occasion was commemorated at Mama's Fish House, a longtime favorite restaurant of the family with spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean. They stayed at the Honua Kai Resort and enjoyed many activities among the group, including snorkeling, parasailing, horseback riding, the Maui Ocean Center, zip-lining, and a favorite of the grandchildren ... the water slides at the pool and, of course, the beach. Wishing them many more years of happiness!

### Happy Birthday



#### Detroit

Happy Birthday to long-time AANO supporter, Sally Negip, the older sister of Frances Selfo (who was a lifetime AANO member and former Vice-President), and Rose Black. Sally turned 90 on November 1st and had a birthday party with so many past AANO attendees that a lot of the conversation centered around past conventions and trips and great memories! A great time was had by all and Sally is already planning her outfit for her 100th in 2028! We wish her many, many more happy and healthy birthdays surrounded by her loved ones!



*P.S. Every single person in this picture has been to a minimum of three AANO Conventions between 1974 to date!*

**Babies**



**Detroit**

Congratulations to Butch and Zena Ramolli on the birth of their third child, Savannah, who was born healthy and happy on November 1st at 7 lbs., 11 oz. and 22 inches long. This is their third child in four years so we are excited for their growing family.

**Travel**

**Albany**



Paul and Vera Apostol are planning to spend two weeks in Florida in February of 2019. Bet it will be a little warmer than Albany that time of year !!

**Obituaries**



**Worcester**



Jean George passed away peacefully at the age of 78 on Monday, July 30, 2018.

Jean is survived by her brother, Gust George of Worcester; two sisters, Cleo George and Sophie George of Worcester; nieces and nephews, Eileen, Nancy, Karen, Steven, Mark, Andrea, Lynn,

Chris, Peter, Lisa, John, and Thomas; God children,

Taylor and Hannah; many great nieces and great nephews. She was predeceased by six sisters, Anna Pillary, Elaine Dionis, Mary George, Catherine Costa, Alexandria Bardho, and Naomi Veshi; and by a nephew, Michael Costa. Jean was born in Bradford, PA, daughter of the late, Peter and Angeline (John) George.

Jean worked for over forty years in the insurance business, retiring in 2004 from Allmerica Financial. She was a member of Saint Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church and the Albanian American National Organization.

She was always fun to be around and loved a good time, especially at AANO conventions, traveling to Albania, working the Albanian Festival, or simply enjoying a night out for dinner with dear friends. Jean will be truly missed by so many and we extend our deepest condolences to her family.

\* \* \* \* \*



George Vangel passed away on Friday, August 17, 2018 at the age of 101.

He was born in Worcester in 1916, the son of Victoria (Soter) and Ligor Vangel and married Elsie Theodore in 1946. George was a US Army veteran, proud member of the Becker College Athletic Hall of Fame in Basketball and Baseball, and member of St. Mary's Albanian Orthodox Church Sons of St. Mary's. Both he and Elsie enjoyed attending AANO events over the years and were strong supporters.

George will be missed by his wife of 71 years, Elsie Vangel; his children, Kenneth and Cynthia; his grandchildren, Michael, Courtney and Alexandra; his great grandchildren, Tyler and Samantha; many nieces, nephews and extended family. He was predeceased by his son, Richard and six siblings, A. James, Nora, Jimmy, Katherine, Thomas and Dorothy.

\* \* \* \* \*



George M. Laska, 91, passed away on Monday, November 5, 2018. He was the son of the late Michael and Eftherpia (Kotnani) Laska, and a graduate of Commerce High School and received a Master's Degree in Education from

Clark University.

George was a life-long member of St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church, having served as President and Chairman of its Board of Directors, as well as many committees and fundraising events. He received from the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America its most prestigious KNIGHT OF ST. GEORGE Medal for his devotion and commitment to his church and Albanian Heritage.

George's love of education and the educational challenges of Worcester's youth was the passion that he exemplified each day of his life as a teacher, Assistant Principal and Principal in the Worcester Public School System. He served his country as a member of the United States Army /Air Force, after which he was a member of the VFW in Worcester.

George leaves a brother, Andrew Laska; sister-in-law, Violet Laska; nephews, nieces, and cousins. Two brothers, Peter Laska and Paul Laska, predeceased him.

*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!**

### 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!*



## November 28, 1912 The Declaration of Albanian Independence

**By: Robert Elsie**

*As with many events of Albanian history, the declaration of independence of 1912 was somewhat of an impromptu affair. The Ottoman Empire collapsed in the first Balkan War that began in October 1912 and the Albanians found themselves in an extremely awkward position. Their leaders were more concerned about the coalition of neighboring Christian forces (Montenegro, Serbia and Greece) than they were about the weakened Ottoman military presence in their country. What they wanted was to preserve the territorial integrity of Albania. Within two months, Ottoman forces had all but capitulated, and it was only in Shkodra and Janina that Turkish garrisons were able to maintain position. The very existence of the country was threatened.*

*It was at this time that Ismail Qemal bey Vlora (1844-1919), also known in Albanian as Ismail Qemali, returned to Albania with Austro-Hungarian support and, at the head of a swiftly-convened national assembly, declared Albanian independence in the town of Vlora on 28 November 1912. The declaration was more theoretical than practical because Vlora was the only town in the whole country under the delegates' control—yet it proved to be effective in the vacuum of power. Though Albanian independence was recognized de facto on 17 December 1912 at the London Conference of Ambassadors, it was not until 29 July 1913, after the second Balkan War and the solving of the delicate problem of Shkodra, that the international community agreed to recognize Albania as a neutral, sovereign and hereditary principality.*

*Given below is a report, published in the Vlora newspaper "Përlindj' e Shqipniës," describing the events leading up to the Declaration of Independence in Vlora, and then the short text of the Declaration itself.*



The National Assembly, composed of delegates from all over Albania and convening here in Vlorë, opened today at four in the afternoon at the house of Xhemil bey.

Ismail Qemal bey, as the prime initiator of the gathering, took the floor and explained to the delegates the purpose of the assembly, that is, that they all must strive to do what is necessary to save Albania from the great perils it is now facing.

According to rules and customs, they began by checking the documents of the delegates, whose names are as follows:

**from Berat:** Elias bey Vrioni, Hajredin bey Cakrani, Xhelal bey Skrapari, Dut Karbunara, Taq Tutulani and Sami bey Vironi (the latter still awaited),

**from Dibra:** Mufti Vehbi Efendi,

**from Durrës:** Abas Efendi, Mustafa Agai and Jahja Efendi (still awaited), Dom Nikollë Kaçorri from the Archbishop of Durrës for all Albanian Catholics under his administration,

**from Elbasan:** Shefqet bey Daiu, Lef Nosi, Qemal bey and Mid'hat bey Frashëri,

**from Gjinokastr [Gjirokastra] by telegram:** Azis Efendi, Veli Efendi, Elmas Efendi,

**from Ipek [Peja]:** Rexhep Bey, Bedri Bey, Salih Gjuka and Mid'hat bey Frashëri; these gentlemen are the delegates of Gjakova, Plava and Gucia,

**from Kruja:** Abdi bey Toptani and Mustafa Asim Efendi,

**from Lushnja:** Kemal Bey, Ferid bey Vokopola and Nebi Efendi Sefa,

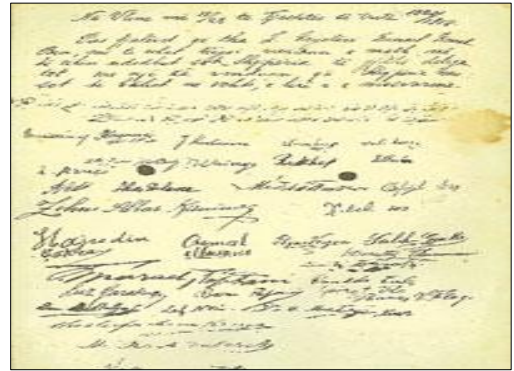
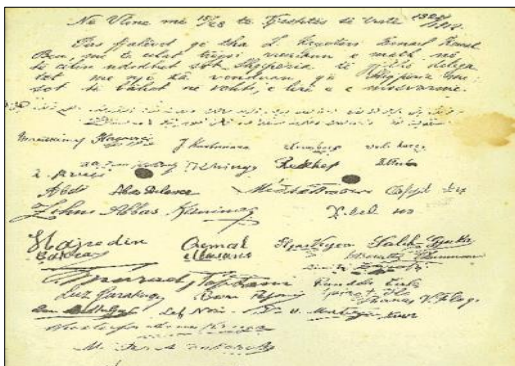
**from Ohrid and Struga:** Zyhdî Bey, Dr. Myrtezai and Nuri Efendi Sojliu,

**from Sh'Jak [Shijak]:** Xhemal Bey, Ymer Beu and Ibrahim Efendi,

**from Tirana:** Abdi bey Toptani and Murad bey Toptani,

**from Vlona [Vlorë]:** Ismail Kemal Bey, Zyhni Efendi, Aristidhi Ruci, Kjazim Kokoshi, Jan Minga and Ekrem Bey,

**from the Albanian colony of Bucharest:** Dhimitër Zografî, Dhimitër Mbroja, Dhimitër Beratti and Dhimitër Ilua [Ilo] (the latter still awaited).



After checking the documents, Salih Gjuka took the floor and stated that since Korça was currently surrounded by the army and could not send delegates, since its patriotic spirit was known and since in their midst there were gentlemen from Korça known, too, for their patriotism, these men, Pandeli Cali, Athanas Floqi and Spiro Ilua, should be recognized as representatives of Korça. The gathering gave its unanimous agreement to this and approved this decision. Mustafa Asim Efendi requested that Shkodra, for its part that was in a worse state than Korça, be represented by Luigj Gurakuqi who had represented it in the other national gatherings and who was one of the initiators of that meeting. The assembly once again gave its unanimous approval and agreed to Luigj Gurakuqi representing Shkodra.

From Përmet came telegrams stating that if its delegate, Veli bey Klisura, did not get to Vlorë, he should be represented by Syreja bey Vlorë and Mid'hat bey Frashëri.

Another telegram arrived from Hamdi bey and Mustafa Barotçiu who announced that they, too, would be arriving as delegates for Ohrid and Struga.

Thereafter, Rexhep bey took the floor and stated that Ismail Kemal bey ought to be elected chairman of the assembly, Luigj Gurakuqi as first secretary and Shefqet bey Daiu as second secretary. The delegates agreed to this request and elected the proposed men, who were heartily applauded.

The issue of voting was then brought to the floor and, after much discussion, it was decided that each region (*kaza*) should have only one vote, irrespective of the number of delegates it had.

Mustafa Asim Efendi pleaded that the present Albanian question and the country's situation ought to be made very clear to European public opinion.

The chairman, Ismail Kemal Bey, then took the floor and, in an ardent, fluid and reasonable speech, stated that although they had always been faithful to the Ottoman Empire, the Albanians had never forgotten their own language and nationality, the best proof of this being the endeavors and uprisings that had taken place from time to time, in particular over the last four years, to preserve their rights and customs. The Ottoman Government had never taken their interests into consideration and had never been willing to recompense the Albanians for the great services they had rendered. It had recently shown some interest in coming to an understanding with our people, but had not given proof of good faith and had not taken all the steps needed to appease and satisfy the Albanians. War had recently broken out with four countries in the Balkans that were seeking change and rights for their peoples, united by their ethnicity and religion.

Later, these countries put aside their initial objective and, as the war was going well for them, they agreed to divide the Empire up among themselves, including Albania. Realizing that the Turkish army had been defeated and that the Empire would not survive, the Albanians, who had played a greater role in the fighting than the soldiers, hastened to take requisite steps in their own interests as owners of the country. For this reason, Ismail Kemal bey departed for Istanbul and, having come to an understanding with the Albanians of Bucharest, too, set off for Vienna where he reached an agreement with the Great Powers that had vital interests in the Balkans. As there was no more hope of saving Albania by means of arms, the only road to salvation was to separate Albania from Turkey. Ismail Kemal bey promoted this idea and objective that was well received by all the Great Powers, in particular by Austria and Italy. It was only Russia that remained somewhat hostile to the idea because of the Slavs, but it did not deny the existence of Albania and an Albanian people. To realize this objective, he invited all Albanians to gather in Vlora and was delighted today to see that his call had not been in vain, and that delegates had been sent from all parts of Albania to reflect together on ways to save the Fatherland. According to Ismail Qemal Bey, the most urgent measures that the Albanian nation must take today are these: that Albania be independent under a provisional government; that a council of elders be elected to assist and supervise the government; and that a commission be sent to Europe to defend Albanian interests among the Great Powers.

The delegates unanimously agreed with the words of Ismail Qemajli and resolved that Albania, as of today,

should be on her own, free and independent under a provisional government.

This decision was greeted by endless applause from all sides. The meeting was adjourned until the following day and the delegates went out and greeted the flag that was raised at five thirty in the afternoon.

Ismail Qemal bey was chosen as president of the Provisional Government and Dom Nikollë Kaçorri as its vice-president.

### Who was Dr. Robert Elsie?



**Robert Elsie** was a Canadian-born German scholar who specialized in Albanian literature and folklore.

**Born:** June 29, 1950, Vancouver, Canada

**Died:** October 2, 2017, Bonn, Germany

**Main interest:** Culture

**Education:** Free University of Berlin, University of Bonn, University of British Columbia

**Awards:** Albanian language, Medal of Gratitude

#### **Dr. Robert Elsie, a devoted scholar on a lonely quest of Albanian studies**

Albanian studies' best known foreign scholar, who left behind an unparalleled body of work about the nation's culture, literature, and linguistics.

One of the founding tenets of the Hellenic philosophy of Epicureanism is to seek happiness and rejoice in one's work in obscurity, away from the public attention and the spotlight of mortals. Epicurus (341-270 BCE), the school's founder, maintained that fame and popularity are ephemeral and their relentless pursuit leads to misery and loneliness. He ascribed the concept *Lathe Biosas* (life in obscurity) a certain saintly quality that was elemental for an authentic and spiritually fulfilling life.

In today's world, inundated with celebrities, where public attention is sought at all costs, few modern scholars may desire or seek to embrace

that austere Epicurean vision. But having read some of his work, I think Dr. Robert Elsie, the Canadian-born scholar of Albanian studies, who passed away last year at the age of 67, embodied that lofty ideal in the full sense of the word. His was on a solitary quest into an obscure field snubbed by international scholars with worldly ambitions and often ignored by the Albanians themselves. Yet, Dr. Elsie devoted his professional life and labored for almost four decades into that very field that promised nothing but obscurity and irrelevance in the world of international spotlight.

His interests were deep, but a brief description that probably fits his scholarly pursuits is that he was a linguist, historian, interpreter, and student of Albania—a country which he was motivated to study because of its cultural loneliness and isolation. That loneliness would have been disheartening for anyone, but in Dr. Elsie it stirred a lifelong curiosity and was at the heart of his success as the best known foreign scholar who spoke fluent Albanian and left behind an unparalleled body of work about the nation's culture, literature, and linguistics.

For many years he scoured archives across Europe and beyond, curating texts, articles, poems, tales, fragments, travelogues and photographs about the Albanian people and their history and translated, edited, or brought them to light, in English and German languages. His complete oeuvre about Albania is vast, numbering over sixty books which he was listed as author, editor, translator, commentator, or contributor. For years, his website has been a portal to this expanding work, whose contents stretch back to eleventh century, when the earliest written fragments about the Albanian people began to appear. He discovered his passion about Albania in the late 1970s after he traveled there with a group of students from the University of Bonn's Institute of Linguistics at a time when the country was still a cultural terra incognita for the rest of the world. His fascination with the country and its people grew over the years as he learned the language and customs and gained rare access to the Albanian institutions that harbored the country's cultural artifacts.

He maintained that one cannot hope to study a nation without learning its language first. His

initial interests led him to focus on Albanian literature, where he first published a Dictionary of Albanian Language in 1986, and followed with *An Elusive Eagle Soars: Anthology of Modern Albanian Poetry in 1993*, and *the History of Albanian Literature in 1995*. He also translated both in English and German the **anthology of Albanian Poetry from 16th Century to the Present**, and the works of **the best known Albanian poet, Migjeni**.

In 1997, as the Kosovo crisis deepened and the world's attention began to turn to the region, Dr. Elsie compiled works on the subject into a **600-page volume titled, Kosovo: In the Heart of the Powder Keg**. After the Kosovo War, he followed up with similar works which aimed to shed more light into the entangled culture and history of Albania and Kosovo.

Later on he expanded his focus into folk music and other aspects of the Albanian culture, including religion and the arts, where he continued to translate, edit, and write. But the solitude of the subject became obvious every time he discussed at length Albanian literature and its contemporary state.

In a 2016 interview for Prishtina Insight magazine, he described the frustration and the lack of interest in the field by universities and major linguistic centers that are primarily driven by economic interests.

Though his primary studies focused on the descriptive aspects of culture as it related to arts and humanities, he was often critical in interviews about the dysfunctional nature of Albania's socio-political environment that suffocated progress and divided its people. "Albania's biggest enemy is not Serbia, Greece, Montenegro or Macedonia, but Albania itself," he said in an interview for a local Albanian television in 2012. "Albanians still haven't learned how to work together... and I have always been surprised that Albania was able to exist."

In the end, Dr. Elsie's lifelong devotion to study Albania, its people, and culture, epitomized that coveted ideal of following one's heart in our life's work even when that promises us very little. What he said once about the country and his commitment to it may indeed be the very definition of true love: "Albania—it amazes and exhausts me, it drives me crazy, but it's never boring and there's always something that surprises, makes me happy or terrifies me, and I can never imagine that I would be able to live without Albania.

(Prishtina Insight Magazine)



Dr. Elsie fell in love with Albania and devoted many decades of his life to Albanian studies and has left us with voluminous and invaluable work capturing Albanian history, culture, folklore and traditions.

Some of his other work include:

**Historical dictionary of Albania**

**History of Albanian literature**

**The Tribes of Albania, History, Society and Culture**

**Albania in a Nutshell: A Brief History and Chronology of Events**

**A Biographical Dictionary of Albanian History**

**A dictionary of Albanian religion, mythology, and folk culture**

**Historical Dictionary of Kosovo**

**Tales from Old Shkodra: Early Albanian Short Stories**

**Keeping an Eye on the Albanians: Selected Writings in the Field of Albanian Studies**

**Albanian Alphabets: Borrowed and Invented**

**The London Conference and the Albanian Question (1912-1914): The Dispatches of Sir Edward Grey**

**Escape to Albania: Memoirs of a Jewish Girl from Hamburg**

**Early Albanian Bible Translations in Todhri Script**

**Classical Albanian Literature: A Reader**

**The Albanian Treason Trial (1945)**

**Early Albania: A Reader of Historical Texts, 11th-17th Centuries**

**Dialect relationships in Goidelic**

**Anthology of Modern Albanian Poetry: An Elusive Eagle Soars**

**A Passion for Theth: Albania's Rugged Shangri-La**

**Albania and Kosova in Colour 1913: The Autochromes of the Albert Kahn Collection**

**Studies in modern Albanian literature and culture**

**The Highland Lute**

**Dictionary of Albanian Literature**

*Before passing on, Dr. Elsie requested to be buried in the magical Alps of Albania. His eternal resting place is the beautiful village of Theth, in Northern Albania.*



## *Hymni i Vlorës*



Jam Vlonjat, e jam Vlonjat  
Shkabën e kam mëm e at,  
Shkaba trime dykrenore  
Fron e saj e ka në Vlorë.

Vlora, Vlora, Vlora, Vlora  
Rroki armët bënia forra,  
Vlora, Vlora, Vlora, Vlora  
Bjeri më tu lumtë dora.

Vlora është' e Kastriotit  
Muhamedi është' i Zotit,  
Vlora është e Shqipërisë  
Krishti është' i Perëndisë.

Vlora, Vlora, Vlora, Vlora  
Rroki armët bënia forra,  
Vlora, Vlora, Vlora, Vlora  
Bjeri më tu lumtë dora.

Vlora trime Shqipëtare  
Jetën e saj s'e do fare,  
Ja do bënet Shqipëri  
Ja do bënet gur' e hi.

Vlora, Vlora, Vlora, Vlora  
Rroki armët bënia forra,  
Vlora, Vlora, Vlora, Vlora  
Bjeri më tu lumtë dora.

## Recipes

### Green Beans with Roast Beef (Mashurka me Mish)

By Donika



Ever wonder what to do with your leftover roast beef? This is a tasty and delicious meal, I prefer to bake it in the oven however, you can cook it in a pot on the stove top but it does taste **better** baked in the oven.

I don't really measure anything for this kind of dish, you just use what you have and put all together in the pan and cook.

I often use roasted peppers in my recipes and it adds a great flavor to the dish. You can buy roasted peppers in a jar as whole or as a paste if you desire to use them, or you can use a fresh red pepper, just cut it up in strips.

For this dish I use the leftover **roast beef**, all you have to do is cut it up in chunks or just break it up with your hand.

Beans don't soften or cook well if cooked first with **tomatoes** or salt, so for that reason I boil them ahead, we like our beans tender, you can skip that part if you desire, but it will take longer to cook.

As for the tomato paste, I always use the one that is imported from Italy and comes in a tube, it has great flavor.

#### What you will need:

- 2 lbs. fresh green beans (approximately)
- leftover roast beef
- 3-4 small potatoes

- 1 red pepper or roasted red pepper or red pepper paste
- 2-3 tbsp. tomato paste
- olive oil
- salt
- paprika for the potatoes
- pepper or red chili flakes if desired
- approximately 3 cups boiling water

Snap ends off of beans, cut into half . Rinse and bring to a boil (DO NOT ADD SALT), cook until they change color, takes about half an hour. Peel potatoes, and cut into quarters.

Drain beans, transfer to a baking pan, and add in the potatoes, beef, red pepper, and tomato paste. Pour over the water, you will need around 3 cups boiling water, I don't measure that part either, I just eye it.

Season with salt and add the pepper if using. Stir around and taste, adjust seasoning if need be. Sprinkle paprika over the potatoes. Drizzle with olive oil. Cover with foil and bake at 350 for 1 hour. Serve with rice or on its own. Enjoy!

### Grandma's Albanian Potato Musakka

By Donika



This is my grandma's recipe for potato musakka. Potato musakka is a popular recipe all across the Balkans. It is a simple and delicious dish to make. For me it is **special** as my grandma would make this for us kids on the weekends, and this recipe comes straight from her! So you know it's good!

#### What you need:

- large russet **potatoes** or 10 smaller ones
- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 onion

- 3 large eggs
- 1 and 3/4 cups milk
- olive oil
- 2-3 tbsp. butter + more if needed
- salt and pepper

Peel potatoes and slice into semi thin pieces, place in a bowl with **water** so that the potatoes do not brown until ready to assemble.

In a hot pan, heat some olive oil and add the butter. Once the butter is melted, add the diced onions. Cook onions until soft and **season** with salt and pepper. Add in ground beef and break up until mostly cooked. Season with salt and pepper.

Grease a 9 x 13 inch baking pan with butter or oil. Layer the sliced potatoes, twice around, lightly seasoning with salt every layer, and drizzle with olive oil or melted butter, whichever you prefer. Add the ground beef filling, and then top with remaining sliced potatoes.

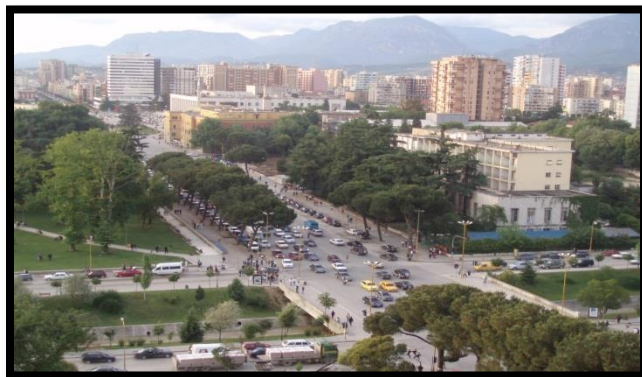
In a large bowl, mix in the eggs and milk, and season with salt and pepper. Pour mixture over the potatoes, drizzle with olive oil or melted butter.

Bake for 1 hour and 10 minutes, covered for the first 40 minutes, uncovered for the remaining time. Broil for a few minutes when done baking for a nice brown top. Enjoy!

*Ju Bëftë Mirë!*



Recipes courtesy of  
*“When Feta Met Olive with Donika”*





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