



# All Slavonic American Association

## Annual Meeting Highlights

The Annual Business Meeting of the All Slavonic American Association was held on Sunday, March 8, at Marie Callender’s Restaurant in Visalia. Election of officers was held and those members elected to serve as your Board of Directors for 2015 are shown at right.

### Information Highlights were presented as follows:

#### Membership:

The Association closed 2014 with a membership of 119 adult members. The 2015 active membership as of the meeting date (those who have renewed membership by paying their annual dues) is 81.

Our secretary reported that there are several members who have not yet renewed, so there is an expectation that the number will increase shortly. All members are encouraged to recruit new members!

#### Social:

Both of our 2014 annual social functions (Summer Picnic in Fresno, and Holiday Social in Visalia) were enjoyable and provided the social and cultural experience that we strive for. The 2015 Summer Picnic will be held in Delano.

#### Financial:

The year-end financial reports of the Association indicate that, due to the generosity of our members, our Scholarship Fund is in a solid financial position and we look forward to once again awarding several deserving college-bound students with scholarships from the Association. Two students were awarded scholarships from the Association in 2014.

The financial status of the General Fund is less rosy, however; the downturn in the

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President . . . . .	Louie Obradovich
Vice President . . . . .	Nick Pavlovich
Secretary . . . . .	Donna Bronzan
Treasurer . . . . .	David Bronzan
Social Chair . . . . .	Joann Hall
Scholarship Chair . . . . .	Yvonne Duran
Auditor . . . . .	Susan Gonzalves

## Annual Meeting, cont . . .

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economy that began in 2008 has resulted in the gradual dwindling of our investment accounts, and a drop in membership has resulted in less income in the form of dues. Your Board will be working hard to reverse this trend. We always welcome the input and participation of the membership; our Board of Directors meetings are open to all members to attend, add suggestions, voice concerns, and work for the good of the Association.

**Next Board Meeting:** 5:30 pm, Tuesday, May 12  
The Bear Club Restaurant  
1695 E. Manning Ave, Reedley

## Birthday Grams . . .

Let’s celebrate milestones! ASAA extends birthday wishes to all those members who will be blowing out a candle or two this quarter ... and belated birthday wishes for those who celebrated last quarter!

### *želi Vam dobro zdravlje i sreću*

- |                               |                                 |                            |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Nick Pavlovich — Jan 3        | Zorka Tarailo — March 25        | Georgia Cucuk — May 14     |
| Michael Yingst — Jan 4        | Tootsie Riggs—April 1           | Brian Hixson — May 16      |
| Marilyn Bahn Jurkovich —Jan 6 | Mike Pestorich — April 8        | Alyssa Turnipseed — May 19 |
| Anton Zaninovich — Jan 7      | Ron Radish — April 18           | Patty Hixson — May 25      |
| Patricia Jurkovich — Jan 8    | Margaret Zaninovich — April 19  | Fran Pavlovich — June 1    |
| Louie Obradovich — Jan 16     | Betty Papac — April 21          | Eric Zalunardo — June 3    |
| Mike Ubick — Jan 21           | Marko Zaninovich Sr. — April 22 | Dona Pestorich — June 3    |
| Janet Ferguson — Jan 23       | Tonky Zaninovich — April 26     | Margaret Weersing — June 7 |
| Marko Zaninovich Jr. — Jan 24 | Rosemary Cameron — April 30     | Linda Obradovich — Jun 10  |
| Matt Pandol III — Jan 31      | Barbara Vulich — May 4          | Matt Pandol — June 27      |
| Stephanie Mello — Feb 9       | Luka Zaninovich — May 5         | Scott Obradovich — June 27 |
| Amy Turnipseed — Feb 10       | Dominique Zaninovich—May        |                            |
| Myrna Zivanich — Feb 14       | 5Babe Obradovich — May 12       |                            |
| Robert Walker— March 19       | Nick Jurkovich — May 13         |                            |



*If we missed you ... please let us know!*

## Ancient Craft . . . A Rug by Any Other Name ...

A historian once wrote: If we were to research into the achievements of each nation and its contributions to the original human culture, the Serbs could boast epic poetry and Pirot rugs.

Setting epic poetry aside for the time being, we know that the rugs are not only a landmark of Pirot, but of the Serbian cultural heritage in general. Rug weaving is one of the most ancient crafts in these regions, tracing its descent back to as early as the Middle Ages. And the craft of rug weaving finds its artistic zenith in the town of Pirot, near the Serbian-Bulgarian border, once a thriving trade center on the caravan route between Europe and the Middle East.



Originally, such a rug was only an object of use, but in time it became a status symbol. Rugs were presented as a gift only on special occasions – they signified heritage and were an inextricable part of the region in which they were created. Woven for over four centuries in the town after which they were named -- Pirot (from the Turkish word *pirilit*—"pattern"), these rugs decorated the salons of the Serbian dynasties of Karadjordjevic and Obrenovic and rulers often presented them to foreign diplomats, as a valuable gift and a unique token of remembrance from Serbia.

In terms of the quality of workmanship as well as durability, this craft reached its peak in the 18th century. By the early 20th century, most houses had a loom for weaving rugs, and in Pirot alone, 1,800 households out of 2,000 wove rugs.

However, what was a thriving craft practiced by 5,000 weavers a century ago is now under threat of extinction, with only 10 women still keeping the tradition going. Today, in the backroom of a small house in Pirot, a handful of women, with dexterous fingers racing up and down large wooden looms more than a century old, weave the bold geometric patterns distinct to Pirot carpets, and still use the traditional methods for their creations. These women are members of the Lady's Heart Cooperative, an organization founded in 2009 for the express purpose preventing the intricate, artistic skills nurtured throughout centuries from passing into oblivion.

"Pirot carpet weaving is our treasure which is passed on from generation to generation. It's the knowledge I learned from my mother and my grandmother," says Slavica Ciric, founder of Lady's Heart. "And now our weaving is ... a rare craft on the verge of extinction."

Pirot carpets are known for their rich colors and patterns, with nearly 100 known Pirot motifs and shapes. Original Pirot carpets are extremely dense, thin and have the same design on both

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## Who do you think you are?

As in the past two newsletters, we continue our profile of members, a bit of their personal family history and professional lives. In this issue, we profile a member who joined our organization in 1949 (sponsored by his uncle Matt Caric) and is thus a LIFE Member (member for 50 years or more):

**Kenneth Kovacevich Sr.** was born at home in Reedley to Joseph and Lucy Novak Kovacevich. Kenny's father Joseph immigrated in 1911 from Stari Grad, island of Hvar, and his mother Lucy made her way to America in 1921 from the town of Hvar. Kenny's grandfather, John Kovacevich, and his two brothers immigrated in 1909 and settled in the Reedley/Dinuba area. They worked and saved their money so in 1911 they were able to bring Kate (their sister), Anna (John's wife), and John's daughters and four sons to America. A fun fact: Kenny has the pottery dishes that the family brought with them from Stari Grad in 1911 through Ellis Island to Reedley.



Joseph continued farming in the Reedley area; Lucy was working in a cannery in San Jose when she caught Joseph's eye, and they married in 1925 in the cathedral in San Jose. Reedley was the home of the young farming couple as they grew table grapes, wine grapes, and raisins.

Meanwhile, Marko Zaninovich immigrated to Orange Cove from Grablje, Hvar (1920) and young Mary Balen, along with her parents, immigrated from Nova Nevadecue (near Rijeka) to Bisbee, Arizona where Mary's father worked in the copper fields. Eventually the Balen family made their way to East Reedley, also pursuing a life in farming. That is where Mary Balen and Marko Zaninovich met and married, and when their daughter Mary Ann was about 2 years old, their family moved to the Delano area to farm.

In 1942 young Kenny Kovacevich (age 14) attended the Zaninovich Family Reunion held along the river in Kingsburg. There he met little Mary Ann, only about 9 yrs. old at the time, not knowing that one day she would become his bride. Mary Ann attended Immaculate Heart High School in Los Angeles and Fresno State College, and then she and Kenny were married in 1955 at St. John's Cathedral, Fresno.

With Mary Ann by his side as loving wife, partner, and record-keeper for the farming business, Kenny branched out from his family's farm, moved a bit south, and began farming on his own in the Delano area. Agriculture has been Kenny's life-long pursuit and passion. He is very

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## Happening Around the State . . .

### "Gazde" in Los Angeles ~

*Croatia's most acclaimed folk-pop group*

Presented by the Croatian Fraternal Union

**Saturday, April 18th**

7.30pm at St Anthony's Parish Center

714 Alpine Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

General Admission: \$45 ~ Under 16: \$30 ~ At the Door (all ages): \$55

Tickets available from Adriatic Travel, San Pedro Tel.: 310-548-1446



### Festival of the Mandolins ~ San Francisco

**Sunday, April 26, 2015**

11AM Workshops (bring your mandolin!) ~ 1PM Concert

**and** delicious Bulgarian food!

Tickets \$20, (\$15 if paid in advance), children free

Contact: Croatian American Cultural Center ~ Phone: 510-649-0941



### Serbian Food Festival

**Saturday, June 6**

*Always great food and great fun!*



### 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Croatian Extravaganza — Sacramento

**June 13-14, 2015** ~ A European Festival in the Old World Tradition.

Croatian American Cultural Center ~ 3730 Auburn Blvd.

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proud to have his five children working with him today as growers, packers, and shippers in the Delano area.

Kenny has been very active over the years in ASAA (a member for 65 years!), the American Slavonic Social Club in Delano, the Elks Club, and St. Mary's Church. Until her passing in 1995, he and Mary Ann took pleasure in traveling and enjoyed many trips together. He is the very proud father of 3 daughters and 2 sons, and grandfather to 12 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren, and 2 more little "great" ones on the way!

Kenny still enjoys traveling, and he loves a good party — he never misses an ASAA social function, and this past New Year's Eve he rang in the new year with friends at the Croatian Cultural Center Gala in Sacramento.

## Travel News



*"Island Hopping on the Dalmatian Coast"* from Croatia

Traveller online magazine:

Lush islands of southern Dalmatia: Brac, Hvar, Korcula and Mljet islands, clear contenders for the world's most idyllic vacation spots. Getting out to the islands from the coast is easy all year round but jumping from island to island, not so much.

Last year, **Krilo company** started the first catamaran route that ran from Split to Milna on Brac island, than continued to Hvar and Korcula before docking in Dubrovnik. It was highly popular with visitors and now Croatia Traveller has learned that the company will run the route this year from May to October and will add Mljet, with its National Park, to the itinerary. Last year the ferry only ran twice a week but a Krilo representative has informed Croatia Traveller that the plan is to run the boat daily this year, at least during the summer season. Let's keep our fingers crossed . . .

*"Private VIP Tours"* offered by Adriatic Travel, San Pedro, CA.

Multiple-day private VIP tours for up to 6 people in a Mercedes Van across Croatia. Experienced drivers; knowledgeable, English-speaking guides, excursions to the most popular destinations.

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sides. Woven only from the wool of locally grown sheep, they are known to last for more than a century.

The weaving of rugs is a rather strenuous and long process. It requires geometrical precision, supreme skill and creativity. Traditionally a female activity, young girls would start at the loom at the age of 10, practicing every day for five years to reach a level considered good enough. Their weaving skill had a great impact on their marriage prospects – it was considered a measure of intelligence because of the knowledge of mathematics required to calculate the size and distribution of patterns.

For centuries, women have been weaving their pain, joy, messages and symbols into the rugs. Sitting on low wooden benches, the women work gently, using nothing but their fingers to weave through wool stretched on vertical looms. Because the carpets are hand-made with complex geometrical designs, one weaver produces less than a square meter per month, Ciric explained.

The concentration necessary for this kind of precise work often means that once a weaver sits down at the loom, she loses all sense of time. "The pattern in a mysterious way simply possesses her, drags her into the depth and she's so taken by her work that everything around her stops. She forgets about the time, she surrenders herself to the pattern," says Ciric. And it's those patterns that give Pirot carpets a mystical allure.



Some claim that a Pirot carpet has magical powers; they say its colorful patterns and symbols are designed to bring luck and protect from evil. Nearly every home in this eastern Serbian town has one — big or small, rolled out on the floor, wrapped around the furniture or hung on the wall. Says

Ciric, "For most people, those are just colorful carpets, but we see more," she said. "We see a story unfolding through symbols and colors."

Even though this skill is now practiced only by a handful of women, Ciric and her fellow weavers from Lady's Heart are trying to pass it on to the next generation, organizing winter courses for schoolchildren, including boys.

"There is a new generation coming along and if we manage to pass on this knowledge to them, I think there won't be any danger of this craft dying out," says Ciric. "We are the guardians of the tradition of Pirot carpet weaving, and we do this with love."

**You don't stumble upon your heritage.  
It's there, just waiting to be explored and shared.**



## CROATIAN CULINARY HERITAGE

A mouthwatering mix of 700 treasured family recipes from Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the greater Mediterranean, as well as favorite American recipes submitted by Croatian American Women's Club members in Los Angeles.

This new Croatian cookbook also highlights the history of some of California's favorite Croatian-owned restaurants dating back to 1849, including old favorites such as Tadich Grill, Good Fellow's Grotto, Nickodell, Ante's, Cigo's and more.

Presented and sold by the Croatian American Women's Club of Los Angeles: \$25.00

[croatianamericanwomensclub.org](http://croatianamericanwomensclub.org)

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