

Family Ties . . .

Seven students from Konavle, Croatia were able to spend approximately two and 1/2 weeks in California this year as par of SACO's Student Ambassador and Exchange program. Most of their time was spent in the Monterey Bay area, but trips to Yosemite and San Francisco were also on their itinerary. One of the students was Paula Bronzan, a cousin to our treasurer David Bronzan! "If she's a Bronzan from Konavle, we MUST be related," thought David when he first heard that Paula was part of the student group. But it took research from Lynne Hodges in Watsonville and Tom Ninkovich in Cavtat, combined with family tree work by David's nephew Brandon, to determine the exact family tie — distant, but a tie nevertheless! David and fourteen of his extended family of cousins in Central California gathered to meet and welcome Paula and the other student ambassadors at the SACO Picnic in July—where



Paula Bronzan and some California Cousins

there were over 200 attendees making the students feel right at home! As the visiting progressed, the memories came back — David and Cousin Bob remembered visiting with Paula's grandparents on a trip several years ago! Now they have names and addresses and a better way to keep in touch. And, icing on the cake: David realized that their cousin Lili Mulja, from their Borovinic side of the family, also came with the group as an adult chaperone!! There was reminiscing all around as well as lots of "let's make plans to go to Croatia again". (See SAEP information p. 6)



Greetings
to our Newest Members ...
Dobrodošli !

Craig and Carol Bronzan - Reno, Nevada

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All Slavonic American Association

2023 Summer Picnic

A Wonderful Time was had by ALL! Our Annual Summer gathering was held on Sunday, August 6, at St. Peter the Apostle Serbian Orthodox Church Social Hall, and the event was successful on all levels! We had over 90 members and friends in attendance who began the afternoon visiting and re-connecting while enjoying some refreshments from the hors d'oeuvres table and the bar, tended by Andrei Romanenko



Al & Nick Zaninovich, Richard Barsanti

The room was decorated with the official Association colors of blue and gold, and attendees quickly populated the dessert table with an amazing array of deliciousness! **Thank You** to all of the ladies who brought their luscious treats to share! Our VP Victoria Kovacevich and friends Ashley Tartaglia and Matt Pandol provided the recorded musical selections—some traditional tambura tunes, and some more modern—that entertained us over the PA, while our amazing collection of chefs and BBQ specialists were kept busy in the kitchen and tending the coals! The tables at the side of the room were filled with a wide array raffle prizes; Donna and Michael Smith and her cousin Susan Gonsalves, along with the enthusiastic help of two of our scholarship recipients, made sure everyone had an opportunity to place their raffle tickets in the bag of their most-desired prize, and Toni Lerandeau was at-the-ready to make sure everyone had the opportunity to purchase tickets for the 50/50 Cash Drawing.



Toni Lerandeau

Before our meal, President Marko Zaninovich warmly welcomed everyone and expressed appreciation for their attendance, and appreciation to Fr. George Gligich and St. Anthony's Church for graciously hosting our gathering. Marko also extended thanks and recognition to the many volunteers who helped make the day special—especially for the hard-working BBQ and kitchen crew: Nick Buratovich, Mark Kovacevich, Al Zaninovich, Nick Zaninovich, Richard Barsanti,



Nick Buratovich

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Anthony Tartaglia, and Matt Pandol. Thanks also to David Turnipseed who was unable to attend but sent his delicious salad dressing for all to enjoy! Yum! Marko then led us in a moment of silence for each of the four members and friends who have passed on since our last club gathering: John Kovacevich, Matt Pandol, Steve Caric, and Kenneth Kovacevich. Scholarship recipient Helena Zubacz, along with her sisters Sofia and Teresa, led us in singing the National Anthem, and after our singing, their dad, Fr. Greg Zubacz, led us in a prayer of invocation and thanks for the celebration and the meal.

Then it was time to eat ... and lunch was delicious! Debra Vasilovich deftly orchestrated the delivery of BBQed lamb kebabs, chicken, sauerkraut, mostaccioli, salad and bread to the tables— a great feast! Bottles of red and white wine on the tables were shared by the diners, and buoyant conversation filled the room.

Following the meal was one of the major focuses of the annual picnic—the awarding of scholarships to deserving young people who are furthering their educations. Our Scholarship Chairman Marc Hure was pleased to announce and award the following scholarships from the Tom and Martha Slaven Scholarship Program: **Anthony Tartaglia** of Earlimart, son of Anthony and Ann Tartaglia, graduate of Central Valley Christian High School in Visalia, was awarded the **Winifred Pandol Memorial Scholarship** in the amount of \$2,000. **Helena Maria Zubacz** of Clo-



Helena Zubacz receives award from Marc Hure

vis, daughter of Fr. Greg and Melita Zubacz, graduate of University High School, Fresno, was the recipient of the **Maikovich Family Scholarship**, also \$2,000. **Mark Joseph Kovacevich** of Delano, son of Mark and Abbie Kovacevich, graduate of Bakersfield Christian High School, was awarded the **Antone V. Zaninovich Memorial Scholarship**, also \$2000; Mark was unable to attend, so his father accepted on his behalf. On behalf of the entire



Marc Hure awards Anthony Tartaglia

ASAA membership, Marc extended our congratulations and Best Wishes for continued success in their academic pursuits. *(Please read more about these 3 outstanding young scholars on p. 4-5).* Marc expressed his appreciation to the scholarship committee (Katherine Slaven, Nick Pavlovich, and Nick Jurkovich), and to the entire ASAA membership for their continued support of our scholarship fundraising efforts.



Mark Sr. accepts on behalf of Mark Jr.

And with that, it was time for the Scholarship Raffle! Social Chair Donna Smith recruited the scholarship recipients to read the winning numbers and do the leg-work delivery of over 20 items, from a succulent arrangement to food/wine baskets to scenic photographs to beautiful cutting boards to a case of Martinelli's Cider—there were ample items to

continued next page

“Travels with Danger!”

by Niko Lerandean

I have enjoyed writing about SACO's Student Ambassador and Exchange Program's trip to Croatia in the summer of 2022. My first few articles traced our trip from Zagreb to Dubrovnik. As I only have a few more destinations to cover, let's jump right in!

As you may recall, we were staying in Cavtat for the last week of our trip and made a series of daytrips from our base there. One day from Cavtat we took a bus to Cilipi for a day of full-on cultural immersion. We started the day by attending Sunday Mass at the Church of Saint Nicholas (Crkva sv. Nikole). After mass, we attended a craft fair and watched a performance of traditional dancing right outside the doors of the church. On sale at the craft fair were items of lace and traditional woven items handmade by local women.

The traditional dancing was very entertaining and not something that you would see everyday. The male dancers wore white shirts with black vests with red shoes and hats, and the gals had long, full embroidered skirts. Finally, we visited a museum showcasing the history of rural Konavle, the valley where Cilipi is located. I was really excited to see on display a copy of the book, *Blossoms into Gold*, by Californians Donna and Kathryn Mekis.

For our day trip to the island of Lokrum, we took a ferry from Cavtat. We visited the Benedictine Monastery ruins and the Botanical Gardens. We also saw the iron throne from “Game of Thrones.” After lunch, we got to swim in the Adriatic. From Lokrum, we took a ferry to Dubrovnik and walked the walls of the city. I would recommend doing it in the early morning hours, if you can! It was super hot in the afternoon!

Another day trip took us to Sokol Grad, a medieval fortress located in the hills above Dunave. It had a very informative museum that explained its history and displayed many weapons and artifacts. Sokol Grad is just north of Gruda, another town



Silk Worm production

we visited, specifically to see AR Atelier, the art workshop of Antonia Ruskovic. She gave us a tour of her silk-worm facility where she creates the silk she uses for her beautiful embroidery and silk paintings. Following this visit, we boarded a plane heading home.

It was an absolutely unforgettable trip that I would recommend for any student. This trip opened a beautiful world to me, one that has honestly changed my life. I am forever grateful to the Slavic American Cultural Organization for creating this once-in-a-lifetime experience and giving me the opportunity to connect with my Croatian relatives. I have since returned to my grandfather's village for a longer visit in summer of 2023, and I'll tell you all about that in my next article!



Coming Events . . . in San Francisco

At the Croatian American Cultural Center, San Francisco ...

Country Night – Music, BBQ and Dance



October 14, 2023 ~ 5:00 pm - 11:00 pm

60 Onondaga, San Francisco



Texas-style BBQ, live music from the County Cougars
line dancing, lots of fun and other surprises !

Call Danica at (650) 592-1190 for more information.

Croatian American Cultural Center

Croatian Heritage Festival

Sunday, October 29 — 1:00 p.m.



Traditional and popular Croatian music by
Sinovi Tamburitza Orchestra, Seattle, Washington.

Croatian American Cultural Center

60 Onondaga Avenue at Alemany Blvd. • San Francisco, CA 94112

<http://croatianamericanweb.org/>

Do you have a child or grandchild of Slavic descent, from any of the republics of the former Yugoslavia, who would like to travel to Croatia in Summer '24 (like our travel writer Niko "Danger")?

SACO's Student Ambassador and Exchange Program invites high school students (current Freshmen, Sophomores, and Juniors) and their parents to an informational meeting on:

Sunday, October 15, 2023, 1:00—3:00 pm

PV Columbian / SACO Hall

230 East Lake Avenue ~ Watsonville, CA 95076

More Information Call 831-595-5898

Application deadline December 1, 2023



Birthday Grams . . .

Celebrating milestones! ASAA extends birthday wishes to all those members who are celebrating birthdays this quarter ...

želi Vam dobro zdravlje i sreću

Oct 7 - Andrew Zaninovich

Oct 9 - Paris Blohm

Oct 11 - Melita Zubac

Oct 18 - Kathy Hixson

Oct 22 - Nick V. Zaninovich

Oct 28 - Cassie Bronzan

Oct 30 - Carol Bronzan

Nov 3 - Kenny Jelacich

Nov 4 - Brock Obradovich

Nov 9 - Yvonne Duran

Nov 10 - Curtis Bronzan

Nov 11 - Brad Hixson

Nov 11 - Antoinette Lerandau

Nov 15 - Lucy Pandol

Nov 16 - Janie Jurkovich

Nov 19 - Briana Ritchie

Nov 28 - Peter Zaninovich

Dec 1 - Michael Smith

Dec 6 - Maren Ritchie

Dec 9 - Frank Martin

Dec 10 - Steve Jurkovich

Dec 15 - Linda Pandol

Dec 18 - Marianne Keathley

Dec 19 - Gary Ferguson

Dec 20 - Susan Gonsalves

Dec 21 - Nancy Turnipseed

Dec 30 - Michael Turnipseed



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



Happy Birthday to Us!

The "**Sveslavensko - Američkog Dobrotvornog Društva**" (Benevolent Association of Slavs of America) was founded on November 4, 1904. This year we celebrate our 119th birthday!



Zivjeli !

entice the ticket-buyers. And enticed they were—the scholarship raffle raised \$740 ! Thank you to all who participated! The 50/50 raffle was next, and the total pot was \$680, so the winning ticket holder left with a \$340 smile!

The day concluded with a rousing Bocce Tournament— our "Second Annual Awesome Toss 'Em" - a single-elimination tourney with a total of eight 2-person teams. The winners, who received 1/2 of the pot but "ALL of the Bragging Rights" were Ashley Tartaglia and Matt Pandol! **Congratulations!** The day can be summarized as Great Fun, Great Food, a great time all around! You won't want to miss the next one! Plan now to attend our '24 Summer Festival to be held in Delano! We'll see you there!



Champs Ashley and Matt

Meet Our Scholarship Recipients ... the A.S.A.A. Tom and Martha Slaven Scholarship Program



Mark Joseph Kovacevich, son of Mark and Abby Kovacevich of Delano, and grandson of the late Kenneth and Mary Ann Kovacevich, is a graduate of Bakersfield Christian High School. He will continue his education at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo pursuing a major in Viticulture and Wine Making with a minor in Ag. Business. Mark, with a 3.95 GPA, was a member of the President's Honor Roll, was named Top FFA Student for 4 years at BCHS, is a California Scholastic Federation Member and Member of the National Honor Society. In addition to playing soccer and baseball at BCHS, Mark volunteered on campus with BCHS "Serve Days" and the annual Colors of Christmas program. Additionally Mark was selected to and completed the Ford Dream Builders (Ford Dimension) Leadership program, a year-long program that focuses on civic responsibility and leadership development through the creation of significant community service projects, and volunteered his time with Delano's Soup Kitchen Without Walls, providing meals for those in need. He also received extensive work experience on Kovacevich 5 Farms performing tasks from discing and backhoeing to harvesting and packing, and everything in between! We are pleased to present Mark with the ASAA **Antone V. Zaninovich Memorial Scholarship** in the amount of \$2,000 and extend our Congratulations and Best Wishes for his future success.



Anthony Tartaglia, son of Anthony and Ann Tartaglia of Earlimart, and grandson of the late Kenneth and Mary Ann Kovacevich, is a graduate of Central Valley Christian High School in Visalia. He will pursue a degree in Agricultural Systems Management with a minor in Viticulture from California State University, Fresno. Anthony maintained a 3.86 GPA while earning distinctions of Honor Roll achievement, Latin Honors, and a lifetime California Scholastic Federation Membership. He played both football and baseball while also being an active FFA participant, livestock exhibitor, and a member of the Tulare County Farm Bureau Youth Leadership program. Anthony volunteered at the Tulare County Fair working

Helena Maria Zubacz, daughter of Rev. Dr. Gregory and Melita Zubacz of Clovis, has graduated from University High School in Fresno and plans to continue her studies at California State University, Fresno. Her goals are to major in Speech Language Pathology and minor in music. Throughout high school Helena maintained a 4.2 GPA, was on the Dean's list for 3 years, received the AP Scholar award, and the Bronze Seal on the Classical Literacy Exam. Concurrent with her scholastic achievements are numerous awards for choral music and piano performance, including Central Cal and All-State Honor Choir (3 yrs), Certificates of Merit (3 yrs) for Music Theory and Piano Performance, and a Gold Medal at the Baroque Piano Music Festival. Helena was captain of the basketball team, volunteered with the Science Olympiad Team and the Interact Club on her campus. Away from school she volunteered as leader of Music Ministry, accompanist, vocalist, and Director of Youth Music at Our



Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Clovis, and as Director of Youth Music Ministry, Assistant Cantor, and Youth Group leader at St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church, Clovis. And she has her Open Water Scuba Diving Certification! We are pleased to present the ASAA **Maikovich Family Scholarship** in the amount of \$2,000 to Helena with our Congratulations and Best Wishes for her continuing educational pursuits.



with barn teardown, the Tulare County FoodLink program, and at St. Mary's Church in Visalia, specifically using his equipment skills (mower tractor and scraper) in yard cleanup and maintenance. Those skills were gained with many hours of work at Sunrise Ag, his family's farm, driving tractor, doing equipment maintenance, and working with irrigation systems. Anthony has also gained experience in automotive engine and transmission rebuild and repair, fabrication, paint/body and detail work as he has worked alongside Steve Dulcich of Motor Trend's "Roadkill Garage" YouTube show. It is with great pleasure that we award Anthony the ASAA **Winifred Pandol Memorial Scholarship** in the amount of \$2,000 and offer our Congratulations and Best Wishes for his future endeavors.



Kenneth J. Kovacevich

Celebrating a Life of Loyalty and Service



Whether you knew him as Kenny, Sr., Kenneth, Mr. KK, or Grandpa K., we can all agree that there is no life more fulfilled nor more vibrant than the one he lived.

Kenneth John Kovacevich was born in Reedley, California, on June 29, 1928, to parents Lucy (Novak) Kovacevich and Joseph Kovacevich. The middle child of three sons, brother to John and Anton, Kenny was raised and educated in Reedley. He grew up working on his family's farm growing grapes and plums and dreamed of the day that he would have his own farmland. Farming was to become his life-long passion!

Kenny cherished his Croatian heritage and at the age of 18, on March 13, 1949 he paid his \$2.50 initiation fee to begin his membership with the **All Slavonic-American Association**. From that day on his membership never lapsed—he made sure his yearly dues were paid before he went overseas for military duty in January 1951, and his active participation resumed as soon as he returned in late 1952. He remained a loyal and active member for 75 years, longer than any other member on record.

Kenny was fiercely proud of and loyal to his country and served in the US Army during the Korean War. "God Bless America" was a favorite song that Kenny was honored to lead at each ASAA gathering.

Kenny married Mary Ann Zaninovich of Delano in 1955 and the young couple settled in Delano where his dream was realized—they purchased farm land in Earlimart and began their family and the farming operation that continues to this day. He often referred to this time as "the best part of my life." Their union led to a forty-year marriage, and they were blessed with five children: Kenny Jr., Carol, Mark, Marsha, and Ann. Kenny's family has now expanded to include two daughters-in-law, two sons-in-law, twelve grandchildren, and eleven great-grandchildren.

His first produce label was **MR. KK**, and over the years, Kenny, along with his immediate family, most predominantly grew grapes, but also row crops, persimmons, pomegranates, and almonds. Kenny encouraged his family to work hard, stay together and always be kind to each other.

After his arrival in Delano Kenny also joined the **American Slavonic Social Club**—again, a loyal association that would continue throughout his life. His membership

spanned 68 years during which he served on the Board of the Slav Club in different capacities. He was on the Board when the Slav Club held their first party in 1958, and most notably served as President for the last thirty-three years!

Kenny was extremely social, loved parties, and looked forward to visits with fellow guests, attending countless celebrations of both Slav organizations. His friendly and gregarious manner made others feel welcomed and at ease. Kenny's page in our ASAA membership ledger book is a testament to his generosity—on his page are listed the names of several gentlemen that were "hosted" or "sponsored" by Kenny over the years—names such as Caric, Slavich, Dulcich, Pandol, Zenovich, and Zaninovich, and others. He was always welcoming and inclusive—if you mentioned an upcoming trip to Croatia, he would be sure to share the contact information for his cousins in Hvar, and urge you to visit them and their restaurant! And he would contact them to let them know you were coming!

Kenny never hesitated to share advice and words of wisdom. Whether it be an impromptu encounter or a scheduled meeting, Kenny was sure to speak these words, "It's nice to say hello", and he meant it! In Kenny's eyes, true success was judged by one's relationships and his loyalty to others.

As a devout Catholic, Kenny embraced his faith and always supported local churches in Delano, Earlimart and Reedley. He particularly enjoyed numerous Croatian celebrations with family and friends at St. Anthony Croatian Church in Los Angeles.

In addition to donating his time and efforts to community causes, such as the Delano Elks Lodge, Kenny liked hunting and fishing, and thoroughly enjoyed traveling, and considered himself fortunate to do so. In his adult years, he loved Las Vegas, making friends with his slot hosts. As participants in gambling tournaments, Kenny and Mary Ann developed valued friendships with folks from all over the country.

After surviving the sudden and sorrowful passing of his wife, Kenny went on to live life to its fullest. He continued to travel, enjoying countless cruises and attending Slav celebrations from Sacramento to L.A.

As a collector of antiques, Kenny's vintage possessions and acquisitions were, and continue to be, proudly displayed on his family's properties. He particularly enjoyed collecting old farming tools and equipment. He graciously made arrangements for his large (and heavy) antique amphora, reclaimed from the Adriatic Sea, to be displayed on two occasions for ASAA artifact displays.

On June 26, 2023, with heavy hearts, we bade farewell to a devoted family man, a successful farmer, a cherished friend, and a Slav brother. We say Doviđenja, and in Kenny's own parting words, we all say to Kenny, "Thank you for your love!"

Our thanks to the Kovacevich Family for sharing their remembrances with us.