

# All Slavonic American Association

## 2024 Summer Picnic Success !

**Good Times!** Our Annual Summer gathering was held on Sunday, July 28 at the American Slavonic Social Hall in Delano and the hall was abuzz with joyous conversation and camaraderie throughout the afternoon. The tables were beautifully decorated by Abby and Victoria Kovacevich and a wonderful mix of traditional Slavic and contemporary tunes curated by Stefanie Pandol emanated from the sound system and added to the festivity.

The numbers alone spell success: we had more guests in attendance (115), we raised more funds in the scholarship raffle (\$1,125) and the Prize Drawing (\$520), and we had more entrants in the Bocce tournament than in any of the past 10 years. The bar offered a complimentary special of the day: a Bellini (white peaches and prosecco), as well as authentic Croatian Ožusko beer imported especially for the occasion. The adjacent salami and cheese hos d'oeuvres table was enhanced with sausage bites hot off the grill. Guests happily mingled, admired the photographic art and many raffle prizes on display, and purchased their “winning” tickets.



Croatian Consul  
General Renee Pea

Before lunch was served President Marko welcomed everyone in attendance, we were led in singing “God Bless America” by Henry Mendoza on his guitar, and Marko led us in a brief remembrance of those members and friends whom were lost to us during the year. We were then treated to the beautiful song “Marianna” sung by Susan Barletta—a true gift!

President Marko then introduced a very special guest—Ms. Renee Pea, Croatian Consul General from Los Angeles. She congratulated ASAA on their 120 history and our on-going goal to celebrate and promote Slavic culture in the San Joaquin Valley. She spoke briefly about her role as Consul General and also provided insight into the process and time frames for obtaining Croatian citizenship. It was a delight to meet her and have her join us for the day. Then came lunch . . .

The lunch was outstanding: BBQed lamb, chicken, mostaccioli, sauerkraut, salad and rolls. Delicious and plentiful. Bottles of red and white wine on the



Susan Barletta

*continued p. 2*

tables added to our guests’ enjoyment. Our many, many thanks go to the volunteers who prepared and served the meal: Nick and Al Zaninovich, Mark Kovacevich, Matt Pandol III, David Turnipseed, Rich Barsanti, Nick Buratovich, and Niko Lerandeau. An array of desserts were available from which all were invited to self-serve; so much deliciousness brought by the ladies in attendance! Thank you all!

Following lunch our Scholarship Chair, Marc Hure, presented scholarship awards from our Tom and Martha Slaven Scholarship Program. Four outstanding students were honored this year for their academic achievements, extra-curricular participation, and community service, and each was presented with a \$2,000 scholarship award: Danielle Fiamengo, Dominic Niko Lerandeau, Ava Waggoner, and Marie Zaninovich. Please see p. 8-9 of this newsletter to read more about these excellent scholarship recipients. Marc extended his thanks to the Scholarship reviewers and raters for their work in selecting this years’ recipients: Nick Pavlovich, Katherine Slaven, and Nick Jurkovich. These students were then given one more opportunity to sell raffle tickets (as they had been doing throughout the afternoon) and then the raffle began!



New tractor for the  
Fox’s grandson

Olive oils, wines, special liqueurs, lovely gift baskets with a variety of goodies, even a Croatian Euro coin proof set ... and more — a wide array of raffle items (23 in all) were available to the holders of the winning tickets! Social Chair Donna Smith called the numbers and the Scholarship recipients delivered the prizes to the winners. This is always a fun way to conclude our lunch time together, and makes for a great addition to our scholarship fund. ASAA extends a huge “Thank You” to all the donors of the raffle items and those who participated as ticket purchasers well.

The excitement then moved outside to the bocce courts where 16 teams participated in the single-elimination tourney. Thanks are extended to Victoria Kovacevich, “Bocce Commissioner”, for organizing the brackets and supervising the hotly-contested matches. Rising to the top as champions this year: Matt Pandol III and his partner Monte Peckinpah (Note: Matt was a repeat winner having claimed the top spot last year as well, albeit with a different partner). Congratulations! The duo got to claim 1/2 of the pot and ALL of the bragging rights!

If you missed the Picnic/Festival this year you’ll surely want to make note so as not to miss next year. In 2025 we will be celebrating in Fresno in late July or early August. Make note and plan to join us!



Matt and Monte  
Bocce Champs 2024

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

## 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	Nov 11 - Antoinette Lerandean
Oct 7 - John D. Zaninovich	Nov 15 - Lucy Pandol
Oct 9 - Paris Blohm	Nov 16 - Janie Jurkovich
Oct 11 - Melita Zubacz	Nov 19 - Briana Ritchie
Oct 15 - Andrew Pandol	Nov 28 - Peter Zaninovich
Oct 18 - Kathy Hixson	Dec 1 - Michael Smith
Oct 22 - Nick V. Zaninovich	Dec 6 - Maren Ritchie
Oct 24 - Ashley Tartaglia	Dec 9 - Frank Martin
Oct 28 - Cassie Bronzan	Dec 10 - Steve Jurkovich
Oct 30 - Carol Bronzan	Dec 14 - Katherine Etsell
Nov 3 - Kenny Jelacich	Dec 15 - Linda Pandol
Nov 4 - Brock Obradovich	Dec 18 - Marianne Keathley
Nov 6 - Bob Vasilovich	Dec 19 - Gary Ferguson
Nov 9 - Yvonne Duran	Dec 20 - Susan Gonsalves
Nov 10 - Curtis Bronzan	Dec 21 - Nancy Turnipseed
Nov 11 - Brad Hixson	Dec 30 - Michael Turnipseed

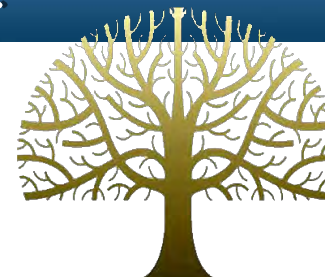


*If we missed you ... please let us know!*



## Who Do You Think You Are ?

*Johnny P. Zaninovich has been a resident of Delano and an integral part of the grape industry there for 64 years; he has been a member of ASAA for 49 years. He recently shared with us his story and his Croatian roots:*



Johnny's paternal grandfather Ivan (1868-1944), born in Velo Grablje, Island of Hvar, followed the path of many others in that era by temporarily leaving family in 1901 to venture to the United States. He settled in California and worked as a dishwasher at the iconic Cliff House in San Francisco. Although it survived the 1906 earthquake, the Cliff House was destroyed by fire in 1907 prompting Ivan's return to Hvar, home to wife Margaret and family. (Ivan would later make a return trip to the US when Johnny P was born; he stayed for about three years before returning to Hvar.) Ivan's son John (1897-1969) (Johnny P's father), made his own trek to the U.S. in 1921, traveling with cousins Marko and George Zaninovich; the trio came to the San Joaquin Valley and settled in the Dinuba, Orange Cove, and Delano areas where they began their farming careers. Eventually, with dedication and hard work, each acquired their own farm land, John's being in Dinuba.

Meanwhile, Johnny P's maternal grandparents, Bartol "Bert" Balen (1883-1964) and Mary Blazeovich (1884-1976) were living in Novi Vinodolski, Croatia, a small village approximately 40 miles south of Rijeka. Seeking better fortunes for his family, in 1910 Bert immigrated to the US and went to Bisbee, Arizona to work in the mines. Mary and their two daughters, Katie and Mary, eventually joined Bert in Arizona in 1919 and son Pete was born in 1923. Shortly thereafter, at the invitation of friends and/or family, the Balen family came to the valley and settled into the farming community of Navelencia/Reedley where they made their permanent home.

Details are elusive, but Katie Balen and John Zaninovich met (perhaps at a Dalmatian social gathering/dance?), romance was born, and Katie and John, Johnny P's parents, were married in 1925. The young couple welcomed three daughters and a son: Margaret, Mary, Katherine, and Johnny Pete (1934). Tragedy struck early in 1935, however; Johnny was merely 6 months old when his mother passed away. It was 4 years later that John married Mira Tudor, a recent immigrant also originally from Hvar, the village of Milna, just down the road from Velo Grablje. The family soon welcomed baby sister Nada.

Johnny fondly remembers his childhood growing up on the farm with his four sisters, first in Dinuba and then later in Parlier. He remembers Croatian spoken almost exclusively at home because his second-mom Mira arrived knowing no English – her children became her English teachers. He recalls having a wide circle of friends both at school in Parlier and within the ever-growing Croatian-American community. He loved sports and at Parlier High School he was a standout player on the football, basketball and baseball teams. A 1952 Parlier High School



graduate, Johnny went on to Reedley College where he again excelled in football and baseball. He was the catcher for the Tiger's baseball team in 1953-1954; one favorite memory is catching a no-hitter against Porterville College! An enrollment at Fresno State was unfortunately short-lived; his father needed help on the farm (both tree fruit and vines were grown) so Johnny set aside his scholastic pursuits to take on more responsibility at home.

Going to the Selma Theater was an occasional source of recreation in those days, and a lovely young usherette caught Johnny's eye. Janice Craven caught his heart, too! But "Uncle Sam" also had his eye on Johnny ... with his famous "I Want You!" the military beckoned, Johnny answered his draft call and became a member of the US Army. After basic training he was stationed in Tacoma, Washington, where he served as a medic at Madigan Army Hospital. His athletic talents didn't escape notice, however . . . he was soon reassigned so that he could play for the Army basketball and baseball teams, and he also served as lifeguard at the base pool!

Johnny's Army service concluded in early 1959, he returned to the valley, and he and Janice were soon wed; the young couple welcomed daughter Katie in 1960, and that year they also moved to Delano where he began work with his Uncle Marko, Aunt Mary and cousin (and Best Man at their wedding) Marko B Zaninovich in farming, a member of the Sunview Vineyards team. Johnny has remained an integral member of the Sunview team ever since. He and



*Johnny P. Zaninovich*

Janice raised their daughter Katie and became active members of the Delano community. Daughter Katie married Matt Schneider May 24, 1981. Janice owned her own business, a Sewing Shop that sold sewing machines, fabrics, and notions. Both Janice and Johnny were selected as Grand Marshals of the Delano Harvest Festival parade and have received numerous awards and commendations for community service over the years. Sadly, Janice passed in 2005 but left a lasting legacy of volunteerism in the Delano community.

Johnny's pastime pursuits include woodworking and sports! He took skills learned in a Parlier woodshop class and has become an expert furniture refinisher of both family heirlooms and thrift shop finds. He is a loyal supporter of Reedley College and Cal State Bakersfield athletics, and in 2007 Johnny was honored for his athletic achievements and his support of Reedley College athletics with his induction into the Reedley Athletic Hall of Fame. He is a fan of all sports, most particularly the Raiders, of which he has an impressive collection of memorabilia, many from cousin Nick Papac (Del Rey), who was a quarterback for the Raiders, and from Raider quarterback and good friend Tom Flores (Sanger), who eventually coached for the Raiders.

A loyal friend and member of ASAA, in January Johnny will become a LIFE member with 50 uninterrupted years of membership and service to the club.

Thank you, Johnny, for sharing your story with us.

## Events . . .

Please join us in  
**CELEBRATING**  
the  
*75th Anniversary*  
of the  
**AMERICAN SLAVONIC SOCIAL CLUB**  
County Line Road & Road 148  
Delano, CA 93215  
Saturday, October 12th  
Doors open at 5:30 PM | Dinner at 6:30 PM  
Adults \$80 | Children under 12 \$20 | Children under 5 FREE  
Tickets will not be sold at the door:  
Please RSVP to Stefanie by Saturday, October 5th  
stefaniep@pandol.com or 661.809.0010  
payment can be sent to:  
American Slavonic Social Club  
P.O. Box 91, Delano, CA 93216

## SACO Annual Christmas Dinner

December 14, 2024  
PV Columbian / SACO Hall  
230 E. Lake Ave ~ Watsonville, CA





*to Our Newest Members*

Stephanie Bulich - Novato

Lynn Burich - Goleta

Marko E. Zaninovich - Bakersfield



### ***Croatian American Sports Hall of Fame to Induct Eleven at Banquet on October 26 in Pittsburg, PA.***

*Entering the HOF this year will be . . .*

- **John Mayasich**, a 1960 gold medal winner for the American Olympic ice hockey team;
- **Rudy Tomjanovich**, coach of the 2000 gold medal American basketball team;
- **Ralph Cindrich**, University of Pittsburgh-NFL football star and sports agent;
- **Kara Grgas-Wheeler Goucher**, long distance runner and seven time NCAA All American;
- **Tim Grgurich**, University of Pittsburgh basketball star and NBA Coach;
- **Jim Laslavic**, Penn State University and NFL football star;
- **Frank Sinkwich**, University of Georgia and Detroit Lions Football standout
- **Frank Solic**, Football player and Coach, University of Nebraska



*Posthumous inductees are*

- **Bill Fralic**, University of Pittsburgh football All American and Atlanta Falcons All Pro Football Lineman;
- **Paul Tomasovich**, legendary slow pitch softball player nicknamed "King Kong";
- **Fritzie Zivic**, Welterweight World Boxing Champion, nicknamed "The Croat Comet"

### ***Seattle ~ Long way away, but looks like fun !***



# Croatia Fest



**Saturday, October 5, 2024**

Croatian Vigil Mass—5:30

CroatiaFest Kick Off Dance & Sing-Along—6:30-11:00

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and Walmsley Hall

**Sunday, October 6, 2024**

Full day of events at the Seattle Center Armory ~ 12:00 - 6:00 pm

*Cooking Demos • Meet with the Consulates*

*Multiple entertainment groups • Luncheon—Traditional Croatian Food and Wines*

<https://www.croatiafest.org/>

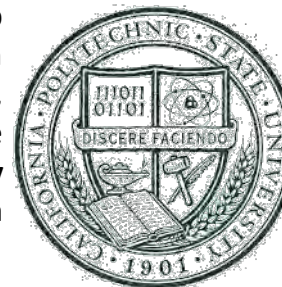
## **Meet Our Scholarship Recipients ... the A.S.**



**Danielle Fiamengo**, granddaughter of Gerry Marcia, has been awarded the Matt Pandol II Memorial Scholarship in the amount of \$2,000. Danielle is a graduate of Palos Verdes High School where she maintained a 4.37 GPA, was a CSF Gold Seal bearer, a member of the National Honor Society, the National Spanish Honors Society, and was awarded the Teachers' Choice Award.

As a student athlete, she excelled in both indoor (Coach's Award) and beach volleyball, while also maintaining active memberships in several on-campus clubs including Key Club (President), Photography Club (social media manager), Girl Up

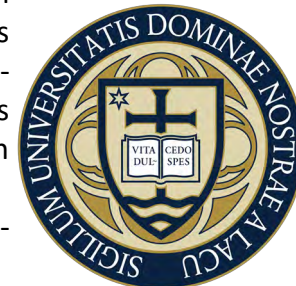
(Vice President), and Link Crew. Danielle volunteered her time with numerous volunteer organizations (Christian Service Food Drive, Glennville Round- Up Rodeo) while also working as an intern at the Findings Art Studio in San Pedro. Danielle has enrolled at **Cal Poly San Luis Obispo** pursuing a degree in Graphic Communications with a minor in Business. Congratulations, Danielle!



**Dominic Niko Lerandean** is a recipient of the Katherine Berger Maikovich Memorial Scholarship in the amount of \$2,000. Niko is the son of Paul and Toni Lerandean and a graduate of Clovis North High School where he maintained a 4.28 GPA while enrolled in multiple AP classes. His academic accolades are numerous including Scholar of Distinction, DAR Good Citizen Scholar, National Honor Society, and AP Scholar. He has also received several awards for his photography and has donated many of his projects for fund-raising efforts. Niko competed on the Clovis North track team as a high jumper and hurdler, was

a contributor to this newsletter as a serial writer ("Travels With Danger"), served as a Student Ambassador to Croatia (SACO), served as Kings River Conservancy docent, and volunteered with the Children of the American Revolution service projects.

Niko will be attending the **University of Notre Dame** pursuing a degree in architecture with a minor in Italian. Best Wishes, Niko!





# A.A. Tom and Martha Slaven Scholarship Program

**Ava Waggoner** is also a recipient of the Katherine Berger Maikovich Memorial Scholarship in the amount of \$2,000. Daughter of Anastascia Romanenko and Granddaughter of Andrej Romanenko, Ava is a graduate of Clovis High School with a 3.77 GPA, was member of the California Scholarship Federation, Block C, and member of the Principal's Honor Roll. During her Junior-Senior years she also attended the Center for Advanced Research and Technology where she studied Forensics and Biotechnology, and Psychology & Human Behavior.



Ava was a member and officer of the Clovis High German Club and also worked as a German language tutor.

Ava will be attending **California State University, Fresno** seeking to obtain a degree in Forensic Behavioral Sciences with a minor in Criminology.

Congratulations, Ava!

**Marie Zaninovich**, daughter of Andrew and Katy Zaninovich, was awarded the Maikovich Family Scholarship in the amount of \$2,000. Marie graduated from Garces Memorial High School with a 4.6 GPA and received the Faith Character Award, the Distinguished Athlete Award, and was a member of the California Scholarship Federation and National Honor Society. Throughout High School she participated in both varsity swim and water polo and was named all-area goalie of the year in 2023, and attended Junior Olympics competitions as



a member of the Bakersfield Water Polo Club. When not in the pool, Marie was also involved with FFA and Associated Student Body leadership. Her volunteer activities were many, including Assistance League, Kern Autism Network, and Altar Server. In summers she worked as a lifeguard and also performed a myriad of field and office duties for Sunview Vineyards. Marie is seeking a degree in Food Science at the **University of California, Davis**. Best Wishes, Marie!



**Michael Hure**, brother of Scholarship Chair Marc Hure, was recently inducted into the Delano High School Hall of Fame. A 1981 Delano HS grad, Michael was salutatorian, student body president, and a four-year varsity letterman in swimming, water polo, and soccer. He credits water polo/swim coach Gary Shaffer for impressing on him the values of hard work, discipline, and leadership by example.

Michael took those values to the Air Force Academy (where he also lettered in water polo all four years), graduated with a degree in Aeronautical Engineering, and began a career as a pilot with the US Air Force. He flew the KC135 and KC10 aircraft from 1986-1992, the latter in combat in Desert Shield & Desert Storm in the Gulf War of 1991-92.

For the past 30 years Michael has been a pilot for United Airlines, a 787 Captain based in San Francisco. He credits those attributes developed at Delano High School, dedication, teamwork, unselfish attitude, as central to his career and life. He still swims daily, and swims for a Masters swim team where he enjoys the same camaraderie that he enjoyed at Delano High.

Congratulations, Michael.



*Best Wishes*

to Marjorie Bacovcin Wooley and Andrej Romanenko who were recently wed. The ceremony was performed by Father George Gligich at St. Peter's Serbian Orthodox Church in Fresno on June 1, 2024. The happy couple said their "I Do's" wearing matching Western Ukrainian shirt and blouse and Marjorie wore a traditional floral crown. It was especially meaningful to Andrej and Marjorie that Deacon Christopher was present for the service.

The small intimate ceremony was followed by a reception on the church patio where family and friends feasted on barbequed kielbasa and pirohy (potato filled dumplings).

*Blessings to You!*

Newsletter of the  
**All Slavonic-American Association**,  
Published Quarterly  
Marko Zaninovich, President  
email: [allslavonic@gmail.com](mailto:allslavonic@gmail.com)  
web: [www.allslavonic.org](http://www.allslavonic.org)

