



Djoko Simnjanovski

JUN 16, 1953 - JAN 21, 2024



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Djoko (Joe) Simnjanovski was born on June 16, 1953, in Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic). He lived in Escondido, California his entire “American Life.”

Djoko ascended into heaven on January 21st, 2024, at 9:57pm after a lengthy battle with cancer. He was preceded in death by his parents, Risto and Mara, his wife of 45 years, Zorka, and youngest son, Brian. Djoko is survived by his eldest son, Riste, daughter-in-law, Lauren (pregnant with his third grandchild), and grandchildren, Uriah (4) and Elle (2).

His parents, Risto Simjanovski and Mara Manajlovski, had 3 children: sons Djoko and Petar (Pero), and daughter, Bogdana.

Djoko moved to the United States in his early twenties after serving in the Yugoslavian military, when he met his future wife, by chance, when Zorka had returned from the US to visit family in Yugoslavia. The two knew each other for three days before they were married and, for the 45 years after their wedding, were rarely apart. Djoko was remembered to have told a friend when he saw Zorka, “That’s the girl I’m going to marry.” He told stories about how Spasoje and Mirjana “saved” him from “life in the village.”

The story goes that Djoko knew that “she was the one.” Several days later, after running into one another on multiple occasions (it was confirmed that Djoko had worked diligently to ensure he was at the locations Zorka was). Djoko brought Zorka to meet Mara, Djoko’s mother. Mara was known to not allow girls into the home; however, when Mara saw Zorka at her front door, she immediately embraced her and said, “...you are my daughter-in-law.”

Several days later, the three of them took a train into the city to find a ring, and the two were subsequently married. Zorka accepted Lauren as her daughter-in-law in the same way several decades later.



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As a sidebar, when Djoko and Zorka came to the US as a couple, an error with immigration resulted in their last name “gaining” an additional letter, “Simjanovski” became “Simnjanovski.” The couple did not correct the mistake and when asked why, Djoko responded with, “I never want to stand in that line again.”

Djoko was a charming, endearing, and hardworking man who will be remembered for his unwavering love for his family, his wife, his children, his daughter-in-law, Lauren, his grandchildren, and countless friends and family who will forever miss his humor, humility, and honesty.

Djoko was heartbroken when his son Brian (27 at the time) passed away in a car accident and devastated when his wife, Zorka, passed. He visited the gravesites of his wife and son regularly, even while undergoing cancer treatments.

Djoko beat a Stage IV metastatic lung cancer diagnosis, which had spread to both sides of his brain; doctors at the time gave him 6 weeks to live. Djoko fought for nearly four years, long enough to create lasting memories with those he loved most.

He did not battle alone; however, he had a community of life-long friends and family who were always a phone call away. Trpko and Trpana, friends of over five decades, had a profound love for Djoko and Zorka. A community of friends and family, too many to list, were cultivated from the tiny villages on the outskirts of Macedonia, and the memories and relationships forged there were both cherished and shared fondly with their children and grandchildren.

Djoko and Zorka had two sons, Riste and Brian. Their children enjoyed an amazing childhood surrounded by loving and hardworking parents. The home environment they built was one without entitlement or extravagant gifts, but rather, a home rooted in hard work, discipline, and a deep love of God. They taught their children to work hard, treat others better than they wished to be treated, and to put more into the world than they took out.

Djoko taught his sons how to fish (even though Riste was allergic to seafood), do home repairs, properly level and set a block wall, and most importantly, during those difficult teenage years, how to effectively use a shovel in the dead of summer.



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God's humor and humility were not mistaken when Riste noticed the hospital pastor's nametag, embossed with the name: "Lopata"...Slavic for "shovel."

Djoko ran successful residential construction companies with his friend and business partner, Blagoja. He spoke frequently about his longtime friend, Zivko (Zippy) and how a few kind gestures from friends had the ability to change the trajectory of someone's life forever.

He spoke frequently about character, as well as hard work, and was adamant that intelligence and talent would frequently lose to someone with perseverance and determination. He was not wrong. From a teenager who did not speak English and one who took odds jobs as a heavy machinery driver to a successful businessman and entrepreneur, it was amazing to witness what a stern handshake and a promise could provide where contracts could not.

Prior to Djoko's passing, he was read multiple prayers and held the hands of his son, daughter-in-law, grandchildren, and life-long friends; he left this world knowing that he was loved and would be forever missed.

We, as a community, take honor in knowing that he now sits in the Kingdom of Heaven and awaits us all.

Djoko had a thick outer shell, made softer each time he heard his grandchildren cheer "Dedo!!!" (grandpa) as they ran to greet him.

His impact on the lives of so many will never be forgotten, and his passing, while the end of an amazing life, is only the beginning of what is in store for him now.

Thank you for taking the time to remember Djoko; if you are reading this, rest easy in knowing that he loved you, too.


If you have images or stories you would like to share, you can email them to his son, Riste, at riste@verizon.net


A video memorial is linked below for individuals who could not attend the service:


<https://plus.smilebox.com/play?g=66352407-c2a8-4473-ba0a-5d9bf8c2d630&sbid=3466>

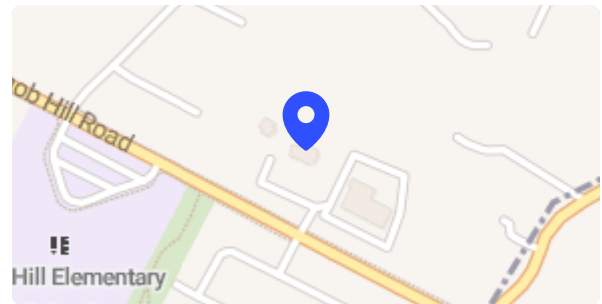


Funeral Service


 **Friday**, February 23, 2024


 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM PT

 **Saint Petka Serbian Orthodox Church**
1854 Knob Hill Rd , San Marcos CA 92069



Burial

 **Friday**, February 23, 2024

 11:30 AM PT

 **Oak Hill Memorial Park**
2640 Glenridge Rd, Escondido CA 92027-4532





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Djoko by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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