

In Memory of Djab Burchinow (1921-2010)

Djab Naminow Burchinow passed away on July 20, 2010 in Aurora, Colorado at the age of 88. He was born in Belgrade, in the former Yugoslavia, on August 14, 1921. He completed secondary education in Belgrade at the Russian Cadet Corps and later attended Vienna University and the Sorbonne in Paris during World War II, studying chemistry. In October 1951, Djab with his wife Namdjial and son Amur Sanan were the first Kalmyks to immigrate to the US after a successful legal challenge to the then prevailing bar against Asian immigration. They had two more children in the US, a son, Naran Uchur and a daughter, Elsa. Djab worked as an engineer for several companies, eventually joining General Electric, where he worked for 16 years before retiring.



Djab Naminow Burchinow

While he worked as an engineer, his passion was the social and cultural preservation and promotion of the broader Mongolian community. The rehabilitation of the Kalmyks following 13 years of exile in Siberia happened in no small measure due to Djab's unceasing efforts in drawing national and international attention to their deportation at Stalin's orders.

Djab also strongly defended the independence of Mongolia during the cold war years, writing numerous letters to US and UN officials, urging that they recognize Mongolia, which made easier Mongolia's entry into the UN in 1961 and normalization of US-Mongolia relations in 1987.

Djab pursued humanitarian initiatives on behalf of children from Kalmykia and Mongolia to receive critical medical care and surgery in the United States. During the AIDS epidemic in Kalmykia, Djab solicited donations of medical supplies from pharmaceutical companies and with help from the Soros Foundation, he personally delivered thousands of dollars of medical supplies to Kalmykia. Djab also solicited universities throughout the US to provide scholarship support to Kalmyk and Mongolian students. He helped over 100 students in their efforts to study in the United States.

More recently, Djab convinced the United Nations to investigate the desertification of the Kalmyk Republic, which eventually led to inclusion of the Kalmyk region in the UN's formal study of the global problem.

Djab's life represented the life of a rare Mongol, not only because of the great love he had for his people but also one who saw the unity of the Mongol people through their diversity. Over more than a half century of social activism, he has been a tireless advocate of human and civil rights and more than that, Mongolian cultural and political independence. In his actions and deeds, he embodied 20th century Pan-Mongol principles. Through his humanitarian and educational work and his publications, Djab was the recipient of MACA's 2003 Humanitarian of the Year Award. He was named an honorary citizen of the Kalmyk Republic, and Mongolia for his many services to the Kalmyk and Mongolian people, and received numerous advisory posts and ceremonial recognition by Kalmyk State University, and the Kalmyk and Mongolian governments. The Djab Naminow Burchinow Kalmyk People's Fund was established in Kalmykia in his honor to continue his philanthropic endeavors.

Djab was predeceased by his wife Namdjial in 2006 and son Amur Sanan. He is survived by his son, daughter and nine grandchildren.

Please join MACA in a memorial service on Sunday August 8, 2010, 1PM at Nitsan Temple, Howell NJ to remember and honor the life of this unique individual who not only was a witness to history, but changed it. Please call 732-297-1140 or email MACA@MACA-USA.org to confirm your attendance.

The Mongol-American Cultural Association is a 501C3, not-for-profit corporation. The aims of the corporation are cultural and humanitarian, as well as charitable aid to the children of the Mongolia's.