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BRIDGES

LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

Volume 19, No. 4

MAY 1995

\$2.50 per Copy

CONTENTS:

- 3 **Business News** *Algirdas Rimas*
- 6 **Political News** Democracy Advances In Lithuania *M. Katherine Lane*
- 8 **Political News** Hail Fellows, Those Zemaiciai *Asta Banionis*
- 10 **Humanitarian Aid** Mother of "Sodas" Children's Home *Jeanne Dorr*
- 13 **Education**Libraries in Lithuania *Ramune Kubilius*
- 14 **Technology** Lithuanian Resources on the Information Superhighway *Thomas Baltis*
- 17 **Education**Educational Council News *Ramune Kubilius*
- 19 **Cultural Arts** The New York Scene *Aukse Trojanas*
- 20 **From the Lithuanian Press** *Ramune Kubilius*
- 22 **Sports News** *Vytas Grybauskas*



Children of foster mother Raimunda Miskieniene attending Sunday morning Mass. (See HUMANITARIAN AID p. 10)

To Our Readers:

This issue brings some exciting news and developments; the information superhighway is open in Lithuania - news, discussion groups and other sources of information regarding Lithuania are available to Internet users. Thanks to guest writer Thomas Baltis, we're pleased to provide a list of addresses for your "cruising pleasure."

The local elections in Lithuanian cities and counties proved to be a challenge to the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (LDDP). Asta and guest writer Katherine Lane of the International Republican Institute give us insight into the elections, preparation for them, and their results.

Mother's Day reminds us all of a mother's love for her children. Jeanne provides us with the perfect example of a loving foster mother sharing her love with 15 foster children.

Business news is good - developments and opportunities abound in Lithuania as more federal funding becomes available to encourage investment in Lithuania. Read all about it in Algis' column.

Ramune continues to provide us with news from the Lithuanian press in addition to the efforts being made by the LAC's Educational Council. We're forever grateful to Ramune - for her tireless efforts in supplying us with so much interesting information.

Aukse takes us to an exhibit of the works of Kestutis Zapkus in New York. Enjoy the works through Aukse's interpretation in Cultural Arts.

In addition, you'll find information regarding various camps, conferences and courses scheduled for this spring and summer. Happy reading.....



Audrone Gulbinas, Editor

BRIDGES: Lithuanian-American News Journal (ISSN 8750-8028), is published 10 times per year by the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19134

BRIDGES Journal
Editorial / Subscription Offices
2715 E. Allegheny Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19134
Fax 609-234-8782

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BRIDGES: Lithuanian-American News Journal serves as a link between Lithuanian Americans and their Lithuanian heritage (as well as a source of information for those interested in Lithuania and/or the activities/goals/background of Lithuanian Americans), by presenting items on Lithuanian culture, history, conditions in Lithuania, Lithuanian related events and personalities in America; and serves the aspirations of those who want to assist Lithuania's integration into the community of democratically governed, free market economic system, nations of the world. **BRIDGES** - The Official Publication of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc.

POSTMASTER: Send any address corrections and/or changes to **BRIDGES JOURNAL**, 2715 E. Allegheny Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19134.

Algirdas Rimas

Business News

Baltic-American Chamber of Commerce investment seminar at the Lithuanian Embassy

To follow up on our March issue item, the Los Angeles based Baltic-American Chamber of Commerce had a successful seminar and business mixer to attract potential investors to Lithuania. The event took place March 16 at the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington. A sizeable contingent of blue chip company representatives were among the 50 firms attending. These included Westinghouse, Hughes Aircraft, Comsat, Nations Bank, Foster Wheeler and Booze, Allen, Hamilton. Baltic experts from the Federal Government's trade and investment agencies, and the president of the Baltic-American Enterprise Fund also turned out for the event. Food and drink were provided compliments of SAS, the Scandinavian Airlines.

In Ambassador Eidintas' absence, the Embassy's counselor, Jonas Paskauskas, acted as host. The Embassy's Lithuanian-American adviser for economic affairs, Linas Orentas, conducted the program. Darius Pranckevicius, the Embassy's Second Secretary, delivered a presentation on the current economic situation of Lithuania. He described it as having turned the corner. Pranckevicius cited figures projecting substantial growth and a sharp drop in inflation for 1995.

Kris Hammargren, an investment officer from the government-run Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), described her experiences on an official investment mission to the Baltics. The mission, headed by OPIC's president, Ruth Harkin, took over a dozen U.S. companies, including General Motors, Riggs National Bank, and AM-Saras to Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn. The last named company is a small New York electronics manufacturer headed by Vytautas Daugirdas, who also contributes his talents as a member of the Lithuanian-American Community's Economic Affairs Council. Meetings were held with the President of Lithuania, Algirdas Brazauskas, Prime Minister Adolfas Slezevicius, other high officials and numerous business leaders.

Deals were struck. OPIC announced that it would support a company from Oregon to set-up a lumber mill. More on this and other OPIC initiatives follow below. Another OPIC mission participant, James Barton, president of a high-tech Washington area company, Science Applications International, said he was impressed with the high quality of Lithuanian scientists and engineers in computer and laser technologies and certain other spe-

cialties. This could make investing in Lithuanian technology-based industries attractive to many potential investors.

Brewster Campbell, President of the 50 million dollar Baltic-American Enterprise Fund, who also had just returned from a trip to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, gave an update on the Fund's activities. His remarks are covered below.

John Zerr, attorney at the Philadelphia law firm of Ballard, Spahr, Andrews and Ingersoll, made a convincing case why any serious investor should retain a competent lawyer when dealing in Lithuania. He said that the country's constitution and its commercial laws provide basic safeguards against expropriation of private property and that the concept of private contractual law is recognized. Tax laws favor foreign investors and repatriated profits are exempt from taxes. However, many problems remain, including inconsistencies in the body of laws and regulations in effect.

A bilateral investment treaty between the US and Lithuania is being concluded. Once it is approved by both countries, possibly in 1995, investors will have additional protection. Mr. Zerr's firm is one of two major American law firms that are known to have established offices in Lithuania. The other is McDermott, Will and Emery of Chicago.

OPIC backs U.S. investment in a Lithuanian lumber mill

Ruth Harkin, President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), announced on March 7, OPIC's first ever investment support project in Lithuania. Ms. Harkin released the news during her two-day stay in Vilnius, where she headed an official investment mission.

OPIC's support will consist of about 20 million dollars worth of political risk insurance to Ochoco Lumber Company of Pineville, Oregon. It will enable the U.S. company, in a joint-venture with its Lithuanian partners, to build a lumber mill at the town of Kupiskis. Rough green softwood will be dried and surfaced at the mill for export to western Europe. Raw lumber will be obtained locally and imported from Russia.

Indirect support for U.S. investments in Lithuania and other countries in the region was also provided through OPIC backing of four private investment funds. These include the 240 million dollar Auburndale Property Fund, the 100 million dollar Bancroft Eastern Euro-

pean Fund, the 160 million First NIS Regional Fund and the 60 million dollar Calvert Emerging Europe Fund.

Baltic American Enterprise Fund names its resident representative in Lithuania

Michael Diedring has been named the resident representative of the Baltic American Enterprise Fund in Lithuania. Mr. Diedring is a Washington-based attorney who has been with the American Bar Association working on its Central and Eastern European Legal Initiative (CEELI) program. He is a specialist in financial and commercial law issues and has made significant contributions to legal reform in Lithuania. Mr. Diedring and his family plan to move to Vilnius in May. It is noteworthy that the two key attorneys who had launched and run the highly lauded CEELI project in Vilnius are Lithuanian-Americans Ernest Raskauskas of Washington, D.C. and John Zerr of Philadelphia. Mr. Zerr is a member of the LAC Economic Affairs Council.

The announcement concerning Mr. Diedring was made by Brewster Campbell, President of the Fund, at the March 16 Chamber of Commerce presentation described in the previous news item. Mr. Campbell also disclosed the names of his other representatives: Robert Stark in Riga and Pamela Greene in Tallinn. Mr. Stark is also a veteran of the CEELI program, and Ms. Greene is a former U.S. Commerce Department specialist on the Baltics.

Mr. Campbell said that the Fund is now operational with only 10 million dollars of its 50 million dollar authorized start-up capital having been obligated. The fund is considering projects for direct investment, lending and issuing guarantees for commercial loans. The focus is on small and middle-size enterprises. Average financing for any one project is in the 100-150,000 dollar range. The fund is also planning to work with local banks in Lithuania by issuing some of them guarantees for the purpose of Export-Import (Ex-Im) Bank lending. Under its policies, the U.S. federal government's Ex-Im Bank could then consider loans of 300-400,000 dollars without first having to obtain a sovereign guarantee from the Lithuanian government for each transaction.

LAC Conference on Doing Business with Lithuania Planned

The LAC Economic Affairs Council will host a conference on trade and investment with Lithuania, during the weekend of May 20-21, 1995 at the Lithuanian Center in the Chicago suburb of Lemont. The address is State Road and 127th Street, Lemont, IL., tel (708) 257-8787. Registration starts at 8:30 AM, Saturday, May 20th.

Presentations are planned by the Lithuanian Embassy's Washington staff, private financial experts, and Lithuanian-American business leaders with a track record of doing business in Lithuania. The US Commerce De-

partment is expected to discuss the many US government programs available to assist US exporters and investors. Brewster Campbell, president of the Baltic-American Enterprise Fund has agreed to talk about his fund's activities. John Zerr, of the Philadelphia law firm, Ballard, Spahr, Andrews and Ingersoll will speak on the status of commercial law in Lithuania.

The program will last all day Saturday and half-day on Sunday. The working language for the most part will be Lithuanian. There will be a \$50 dollar registration fee payable at the door. Included in the fee are a continental breakfast, working lunch (Lithuanian cooking) and refreshments throughout the session. All interested persons are welcome to attend. Advance notification is not required.

News and Views on the Lithuanian economy

Skirma Kondratas, formerly Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in the Bush administration, was the highest ranking official of Lithuanian-American heritage to have held appointed public office in the Federal Government. (If any of our readers have information to the contrary, please let BRIDGES know). Ms. Kondratas is currently a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a Washington think-tank, where among other interests, she studies Lithuanian social and economic policies.

Ms. Kondratas recently visited Lithuania. Her observations on the country's economy were reported in the local press as follows: There is evidence of a widening gap in incomes between the few who are able to take advantage of a system particular to the transitional economy and the many who are sinking into poverty. A priority objective should be to encourage the emergence of a middle class through job creation, lower taxation and a predictable system of law and order. She advocates policies to foster industrial development. Ms. Kondratas believes that current rates of taxation are too high. Tax rates reportedly reached 60-70 percent of earned profits. As a result, tax evasion is rampant. An estimated 400,000 potential tax payers pay no taxes and work in the black and grey market economies; but if the government were to enforce its tax laws effectively, there would be wholesale bankruptcies and the economy would collapse.

Having been a frequent traveler to Lithuania since 1966, Ms. Kondratas observed that the Vilnius cityscape has become more attractive in the intervening years, thanks to private enterprise. She strongly advocates the virtues of private property. In a parting shot, she was reported to say that the Lithuanian government should use the proceeds from the sale of public property to establish a fund for social security, instead of using such revenues to expand the power and perks of office holders. Ms. Kondratas also contributes her advice to the LAC Economic Affairs Council of which she is a member.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Summer Bicycle trip to Lithuania

Join us for a seventeen day bicycle tour of Lithuania, departing the third week of June. We will cycle from the Vilnius area to Klaipeda, stopping at sights and cities along the way. The pace will be casual, 20-40 miles a day, seeking the less traveled by-ways. Lodging will be in youth hostels and pensions. We are seeking an economical, self sufficient trip. Equipment rental can be arranged. This trip is open to all who want to see Lithuania in a different way. Please call or write as soon as possible for further information:

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Lithuanian interest rates

For those who are interested in depositing money in Lithuanian commercial banks, here is a sampling of average annual interest rates on certificates of deposit prevailing in March:

	U.S. dollar deposits	Litas deposits (4 Lts= 1 US dollar)
3 month	12.5 %	18.5
6 month	13.5	20.0
12 mos.	13.5	Not offered

U.S. foreign assistance to Lithuania on the chopping-block

We have heard from authoritative sources that massive cuts in the U.S. foreign assistance program to Lithuania are being planned by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The current annual aid level of 14 million dollars reportedly is to be slashed 40 percent, to 8.4 million dollars for the fiscal year that begins in October. The projected reduction would also represent a drop in the proportion of total U.S. aid dollars going to Lithuania. USAID currently earmarks 3.5 percent of its budget to Lithuania. That share would dwindle to 2.1 percent if the proposed cuts go through.

The other two Baltic countries may be due for even more severe pruning. Aid for Estonia is to be eliminated entirely in recognition of that country's success in improving its economy. Latvia's aid may also face the axe for the same reason. Poland, however, is slated for an increase in its allocation.

There is no denying the fact that the federal government's budget for foreign assistance faces hard times in today's political climate. According to recent reports, the House Foreign Affairs Committee is recommending average annual cuts of 10 percent in the foreign affairs and foreign aid budget. However, the reportedly proposed 40 percent cut in Lithuania would practically gut that relatively small program. The consequences on the fragile Lithuanian economy would be disproportionate and unfair. The usual response of Lithuanian-Americans at times like this would be to call their Congressional representatives.

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M. Katherine Lane

Democracy Advances In Lithuania

The March municipal elections in Lithuania were a major event not only for the political parties, but also for an American non-governmental organization that was deeply involved in the election preparations. The International Republican Institute (IRI) conducted a series of training seminars to support and strengthen the Lithuanian democratic process in preparation for the March 1995 local elections. IRI's program, directed from its Vilnius office, provided technical assistance to local branches of Lithuanian pro-democratic political parties. Through a nationwide series of local political party seminars and consultations, IRI trained candidates, elected officials, and party activists in cities including Kaunas, Siauliai, Klaipeda, Marijampole, and Utena. These seminars focused on the political fundamentals of theme/message development, voter contact, local party structure and organization, media relations, and communication techniques.

In addition, IRI held a regional seminar in Druskininkai in February to reinforce the techniques taught at the local seminars. Claire Sechler, IRI Regional Director for Central and Eastern Europe; Katherine Lane, IRI Program Officer for Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia; Christopher Shields, IRI Resident Program Officer for Lithuania; and Julie Brennan, IRI Program Assistant for Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, accompanied by Republican volunteer experts in the fields of political communication and organization, participated in a two-day mock election exercise with 84 participants from 11 political parties. Many participants had attended previous IRI seminars and maintained a base of knowledge that made this exercise very successful. Participants divided into groups representing candidates,

campaign teams, media, and special interest groups and then simulated all of the aspects of the campaign right up to a mock election day. The following day, Respublika wrote "The elections were already held in Druskininkai."

One of the most important and interesting aspects of IRI's training is the inclusion of all pro-democratic parties in the seminars. Participants are encouraged to leave their party affiliations at the door, replacing them with IRI-produced fictitious labels. The role-playing exercises are executed in a non-partisan manner, allowing for a dialogue to begin between members of many different parties, breaking down some existing barriers. This method of IRI training receives one of the most consistent favorable comments during the evaluation process. The exercise takes on greater importance during the coalition building process, providing a familiarity and basis for negotiations. According to Lietuvos Aidas, Christian Democrats in Druskininkai endorse the multi-party training approach remarking, "It now depends on the candidates themselves who will better use the knowledge they gained in the seminar."

The municipal elections of March 25 were held to fill the 1,488 seats on the 12 City Councils and 44 Municipal District Councils. These elections placed a variety of demands on the current political parties that had splintered off from Sajudis to form a broader political spectrum. To compete effectively in the 1995 municipal elections, Lithuania's political parties needed to decentralize their power and concentrate on building local party branches. In addition, it was imperative that the party candidates and leaders communicate directly with the voters. This type of campaigning adds to the understanding of constituent responsibility for the candidate and the civic responsibility of the voter.

IRI training was evident throughout the campaign



Two participants from the IRI seminar in Klaipeda in November, 1994: Role playing exercise of voter contact. The party activist with party brochure (developed at the seminar) is speaking with a voter.

M. Katherine Lane is the Program Officer for the International Republican Institute



Role playing exercise at IRI sponsored workshop in Siauliai, October, 1994. Participants in this particular working group are from the Democratic Labor Party, the National Union, the Christian Democratic Party and the Conservative Party. They are writing their fictitious "party's" campaign plan.

process — national and local leaders conducted voter contact programs, party slogans developed at IRI seminars were used, and targeted use of direct mail was employed. The active use of these modern campaign techniques, particularly by rightist and centrist parties produced results in the municipal elections. Although overall voter turnout was low (42.47%), the Conservative Party was particularly effective in its use of voter contact and turnout, resulting in 29.1% of the total vote. This outcome follows in line with the referendum voting of August 1994. Although the referendum turnout did not pass the 50 percent threshold, the "yes" vote ran above 90 percent as a result of the organized campaign of the pro-referendum forces, spearheaded by the Conservative Party.

IRI is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing democracy worldwide. Established in 1984, IRI conducts a wide range of programs outside the United States designed to promote and strengthen democratic ideals and institutions. IRI programs are nonpartisan but clearly adhere to fundamental Republican principles such as individual freedom, equality of opportunity, and the entrepreneurial spirit that fosters economic development. The IRI Lithuania program is financed by a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Based in Washington, D.C., IRI maintains offices in ten countries outside the United States.

Active in Lithuania and the Baltics since 1991, IRI has remained focused on the area of greatest need

— strengthening local political party networks. IRI's commitment to democratic development in Lithuania was increased in 1994 with the placement of a Resident Program Officer in Vilnius. This has allowed IRI to maintain immediate response capabilities and remain abreast of the nuances of the political situation both in Vilnius and secondary cities. Three local and one regional seminar devoted to party structure and development in an off-election year are scheduled before October 1995.

Since IRI's assistance began, Lithuania's parties have been strengthened significantly with an increased number of local branches, more developed organizational structures, and the beginning of active voter outreach efforts. IRI remains committed to Lithuania's political development and currently is drafting a program in anticipation of the Fall 1996 national elections.

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Asta Banionis

Hail Fellows, Those Žemaičiai

As the March 25, 1995 local election results demonstrate the strongest bulwark for democratic institutions in Lithuania now rests in the lands of the žemaičiai (Lithuania's low-landers), Žemaitija. The democratic reform parties have solid majorities in most of the city and county councils of that region. If the Vilnius intellectuals who founded "Sajudis" can take credit for rallying all of Lithuania to the cause of independence, it will be the people of Žemaitija who now have the historic opportunity of showing the rest of Lithuania what democracy can be — how local issues and problems can best be addressed and solved through local initiative, not central government mandates.

Although the žemaičiai have borne the brunt of Lithuanian "ethnic humor" for generations, I prefer to characterize this noble western Baltic clan with the words of Father Antanas Saulaitis, a Lithuanian-American Jesuit, well known in our communities. He always reminds his listeners that it was the žemaičiai who for over two hundred years fought off the greatest war machine of Medieval Europe, the "kryžiuočiai" (the Crusader Knights) and saved Lithuania's independence. A truly remarkable feat when you consider that this victory was accomplished by preventing the two orders (the Knights of the Cross and the Knights of the Sword) from ever crossing, let alone conquering, the narrow 60 mile stretch of land (north-to-south) which makes up their homeland, Žemaitija. If their stubborn devotion to principle is still intact, their newly elected city and county councils may be Lithuania's best hope for developing a modern democratic tradition.

Slightly over 43% of the total number of registered voters in Lithuania went to the polls to elect 12 city councils and 44 county councils. These councils will now serve for two years — if the Prime Minister doesn't exercise his extensive authority under current law to disband these popularly elected units of government.

Of the 1,076,000 voters who came to the polls, 53% gave their votes to the democratic reform candidates. A marginal victory, but one which allows the roots of local democracy to again take hold in at least some regions of the country. The official breakdown for the parties is: Homeland Union (Lithuanian Conservatives) 29.1%, Christian Democrats 19.9%, Center Union 5.5%, Social Democrats 4.8%, Political Prisoners/Deportees 3.8%, National Union 3.3%, Liberal Union 2.6%, Democrats

0.5%, Freedom Union 0.3%. Republicans 0.3%, Independence Party 0.1%, while Young Lithuania got 1.0%, and the National Progressives 0.8%. The ruling Democratic Labor party (in the Seimas) received 19.9% and their spin-off party headed by the collective farm bosses called the Farmers party 6.9%. The ethnic-based Polish Union garnered 4.5% of the total votes cast.

If we look at the total number of seats (1,488) won, the breakout is as follows. Homeland Union (Lithuanian Conservatives) won 426 seats, Democratic Labor 297 seats, Christian Democrats 247 seats, Farmers Party 105 seats, Center Union 74 seats, Social Democrats 72 seats, Polish Union 68 seats, Political Prisoners/Deportees 56 seats, National Union 49 seats, Liberal Union 40 seats, Young Lithuania 16 seats, National Progressives 14 seats, Democrats 9 seats, Freedom Union 6 seats, Republicans 5 seats, Independence Party 2 seats. The Green Party didn't manage to win a single seat in these nation-wide elections.

How to explain the election results? Lithuania's leading op-ed writer, Rimvydas Valatka, who writes for the largest daily, *Lietuvos Rytas*, wrote on March 27, 1995 in an editorial entitled, "The Loss of the Ruling Party":

The biggest giant has lost its balance. Its electorate abandoned it to its own fate. After receiving 50 percent of the votes in the Seimas elections, and nearly 60 percent in the presidential elections, the LDDP now only received 19.9%. This was payback for its arrogance, its failure to pay attention to public opinion, its attacks against the press, and the economic scandals within which its leadership is bogged down.

Tough language from a political analyst. Mr. Valatka goes on to suggest that the LDDP short on new talent, fielded very unappealing candidates who were well known to local voters for their various weaknesses if not outright corruption.

I prefer to think that the democratic reform parties are finally beginning to recruit real members and build effective party structures which can get their message across to the voters of Lithuania, as well as getting their voters to the polls on time. This was a well earned victory for the reformers, particularly the Homeland Union, the Christian Democrats and even the Center Union. The party leadership which continues to disappoint is the Social Democrats who have a fine and

honorable tradition within Lithuanian history and should be defending the rights of the common working man and woman in Lithuania. Lithuanian labor should be finding a home within the Social Democratic Party, but it appears that the leadership hasn't opened the door to their participation.

The most interesting campaign was run by the Homeland Union (Lithuanian Conservatives). They were able to define their campaign slogan, "Our local councils will work for you!" in very concrete and relevant pledges which demonstrated a real understanding of local government. The party has pledged to hold its candidates responsible for: 1. promoting an attitude of "serving" the public; 2. the civil servants will be conscientious and qualified specialists; 3. jobs will be filled through open competition; 4. city and county councilmen will voluntarily declare their financial assets (since President Brazauskas vetoed the law which would have required financial disclosure for all public officials); 5. all city and county council meetings will be open to the public and journalists (they may yet regret making that pledge); 6. village and township supervisors will be appointed only after consultation with the villagers or township residents. In addition to these major issues, each local party slate was encouraged to establish pledges on very specific local issues, like a new sewer system, a new elementary school building or to work for the return of a forest ranger post. The Homeland Union drew heavily on teachers, doctors, independent farmers and small businessmen for their candidates and this effort to bring into the political process a wider pool of talent, really paid off.

Over the next months we'll watch the development of these newly elected city and county councils and report on their progress or lack thereof. The future of democracy in Lithuania depends on their success.

Events Back in Washington, DC

If the political process looks a little brighter in Lithuania, there is a real cloud of doom hovering over the U.S. aid program for Lithuania.

With budget-cutters running rampant in the U.S. Congress, and the Clinton Administration scurrying to protect favored programs -Lithuania is being left high-and-dry. U.S. aid to Lithuania has never been extravagant. Some might even call it miserly compared to the attention lavished on Poland, the Czech Republic, Russia and even Albania. Despite the fact that Lithuania has received, on average, only \$12 million in technical assistance per year for only three years, the Administration's bean-counters have issued orders that the U.S. aid program to Lithuania for fiscal year 1996 is to be slashed by almost 40%. Curious, that this should coincide with the recent gains by Lithuania's democrats.

And the political appointees of President Clinton appear to be sanctioning all of this. So much for the President's visit to Riga last year and his memorable

words about his personal commitment to assist in the integration of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia into the West.

Even regional programs like the Baltic-American Enterprise Fund are being shafted. The Polish-American Enterprise Fund was fully funded within three years, as was the Czech-Slovak fund and the Hungarian fund. Now, we're told that the Baltic-American Enterprise Fund will be funded over five years! One might ask, "Who's the mole trying to undermine the growth of private enterprise in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia?" Affordable capital is so desperately needed for small entrepreneurs, especially in Lithuania, yet someone in the Clinton Administration keeps undermining the implementation of the Baltic fund. Remember that it took this Administration 13 months to appoint a board of directors for this fund.

If this sounds like second-class treatment for Lithuania - it is! The only people who can change this are Lithuanian-Americans and other American supporters of Lithuania by calling, writing and visiting their Congressmen and Senators, now. The message is quite simple. It is wrong to relegate the people of Lithuania to such shabby treatment. They are just as much an integral part of Central and Eastern Europe as Poland. And furthermore, this lack of concern for the development of Lithuania is an insult to American citizens who care about Lithuania's success. There are countries in the world who have been feeding at the public trough of U.S. aid for over 20 or even 30 years, and yet, after a token effort in Lithuania for three years, U.S. officials seem to be writing off these people who fought so hard for democracy and independence for a half-century.

LAC, Inc. Annual Legislative Conference

This year's legislative conference will be held in Washington, DC on Friday, June 9, 1995 from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. The Public Affairs Office of LAC, Inc. is now accepting registrations. Early registration for the all-day conference is: \$45.00 per person which includes lunch. Topics will include the status of current U.S. foreign aid, the prospects for NATO expansion and organized crime in Lithuania. Come meet your fellow political junkies and community activists. Call the PAO at 703-524-0698 for further details or fax: 703-524-0947. The legislative conference will be followed on June 10-11, 1995 with a conference of LAC, Inc. local chapters. Everyone is encouraged to attend both events.

Jeanne Dorr

Mother of "Sodas" Children's Home

I think most people will agree that one of the most beautiful words in any language is MOTHER. Whether it is mother, mama, motina or any other derivative, the word floods us with memories. In this May issue I would like to wish all the mothers, grandmothers, aunts and everyone



Raimunda Miskieniene

else who has ever cared for a child, a happy Mother's Day.

During my trip to Lithuania I met many wonderful mothers and grandmothers, but the ones who impressed me the most were the foster mothers. These are the women who care for and love the children of strangers. Foster children are not just any children, some have been abandoned and others have been abused. Some have physical and mental handicaps, but whatever their state of being, they are loved by their foster mothers. I visited three group homes in Vidukle and the patience and love all three mothers exhibited was incredible. One mother was a nun and was raising nine children, the other two, along with their husbands, were raising twenty-two children between them.

The woman I spent the most time with is the one I would like to tell you about in this month's column. Raimunda Miskieniene and her husband live in Kaunas and are raising fifteen foster children. They are part of Father Viktor Aukstakalnis' group home program. As I was receiving the names of children and their care-givers from Dr. Prunskis, I noticed the same name on many of the forms. It seemed that every paper that came my way from Chicago had the

name of Raimunda Miskieniene on it. What I did not realize at the time was that her entire household was being sponsored by people from Philadelphia and South Jersey and that was I why I was getting all her paperwork. I knew I could never rest until I met this exceptional woman. The only facts I had were her name, address, phone number and the names of the children.

Upon my arrival in Kaunas, I telephoned her to set a mutually agreeable time for our meeting. Although we had a pleasant conversation, I still knew nothing about her personally. Since I was staying in the usual state-built apartment, I was trying to visualize seventeen people living in the same situation. There were only my two cousins and me here and we were stepping over each other in the three room apartment. How in the world could you put seventeen people in these living quarters? I knew I would need to take my aspirin with me. Fifteen children? Surely the noise would be deafening and confusion would be reigning. At this point my imagination was working overtime. By the time I got to her house, I pictured Raimunda to be a cross between Mary Poppins and Mrs. Doubtfire, actually I was leaning more toward Mrs. Doubtfire. A young woman met me

at the door and I was about to ask if her mother was home when she extended her hand and introduced herself as Raimunda. So much for an overactive imagination! Raimunda is a lovely young woman in her thirties. I was not in a state-built apartment, but in a small house quite far from downtown Kaunas. The house was as neat as a pin. Everything had a place and everything was in its place. My next shock was to see a teen-aged young man cooking in the kitchen. Would wonders never cease on this visit? We sat in a small room where we enjoyed coffee while this proud young mother showed me albums of photographs of her children. Like any proud mother, she told me of all the accomplishments of her family. Later I was given a tour of the four room house. As I mentioned earlier, everything was in its place. The beds, when not in use, could be folded against the walls. On our return, the young man was still cooking in the kitchen. On the wall was a list of everyone's duties for the coming week. All the children must learn to do all the jobs. Outside there was a young girl hanging clothes on the line and a short distance away were the little ones having the time of their lives with two big empty paper

boxes. When you're that young, a empty box can be anything you want it to be, in this case I think it was a car. There was a large garden and also a greenhouse. Chickens shared the yard with the "drivers" of the "automobile". A goat was enjoying herself and not paying attention to any of us. The cow was grazing elsewhere.

I asked Raimunda to tell me about herself. I was curious what kind of person can take so much responsibility and handle it so well. She told me she came from a family with only two children. She wished she had a lot of brothers and sisters. Her parents always had an extra place at their table for anyone who was hungry, so even as a young child, she saw the need for one person to help another. The most influential person in her life was her grandmother, who lived in a country village.

Raimunda spent most of her early life staying with her grandmother. During the summer and on weekends, her grandmother would take as many of her grandchildren as could gather back to the village with her. Raimunda's fondest memory was riding to church on Sunday in the back of a horse-drawn wagon with her grandmother and cousins. I asked her if her family was afraid to attend Mass in those days. She said it never entered their minds not to go to church on Sundays. When she spoke of her grandmother her voice became softer and her smile brightened. She referred to this beloved grandmother as her second mother. She had a happy childhood and spoke of her parents in glowing terms.

She entered Vilnius University with an intent to study medicine. While she was there, she studied mathematics, physics, and music. It was only at the end of my trip that I realized she spoke flawless English. As Raimunda began to work summers in a hospital she began to feel that medicine was too impersonal for her. She wanted to help people, especially children, but she needed a more personal and closer relationship than medicine had to offer. It seemed that while she was doing summer work in the hospital, children attached themselves to her like the "Pied Piper". She abandoned the idea of medicine and for a short time seemed to be at loose ends with herself as to what profession to follow. Between the ages of twenty and thirty she couldn't find her place in the spectrum of life, the only thing she was sure of was that she wanted to help children.

In 1990 she married her husband, Vitalis, a computer programmer and they moved to Kaunas. Vitalis was born in Siberia and lived there until he was five years old. I sensed that Raimunda was not eager to discuss her husband's childhood and I respected their privacy.

She began to visit the orphanage in Kaunas and the children would cling to her and beg her not to leave them there. As Raimunda would walk by the orphanage, she

would see the children behind the fence. Some looked sad and withdrawn. Others would look through the fence and ask her to take them home with her; she could no longer face the children or listen to their voices. She began to talk to her husband about the youngsters and he agreed they could bring some children home for the weekend. When Sunday evening came, it became more and more difficult to return the children to the orphanage.

In 1991 they decided to apply for permission to take five foster children. In her mind, she decided her children would range from seven to twelve years. What was the final result? Five children ranging in age from one year to fifteen years. The legal hassle was unbelievable. She made 30 trips from Kaunas to Vilnius, from one ministry to another, only to be told to come back with different papers. When she went back something was always missing, including the people who worked in the ministries. Remember that this was a time of great turmoil in Lithuania. What was acceptable yesterday was against the law today. This was a ministry that was still dancing to the tune of the old Soviet style of doing things. If you wanted something badly enough you simply had to persevere - and Raimunda wanted her children more than anything in the world. Finally, the big day arrived and Raimunda and Vitalis took their "family" home to their two room house. The early days were very difficult. The children had no idea of how to behave in a family or social setting. When she tried to set up a schedule for chores around the house, some of the older ones rebelled. They did not have to work in the orphanage and were still given three



Children from "Sodas"

meals a day there. One problem that had to be avoided before it started was to teach the children that they could no longer "help themselves" to what they wanted in the stores. They had no desire to do well in school. The attitude was that no one cared...so why bother? Some would not look her in the eye when they spoke to her, they stared at the floor, others didn't talk at all. One little boy grabbed all the food at meal time and would eat until he became ill. The older ones decided they wanted to return to the orphanage

if they had to do work around the house. She made a deal with them, stay for one month. If they were still unhappy, they could go back to the institution. She handled one problem at a time and she admits she learned by making mistakes.

We spoke of discipline. Raimunda strongly believes that children need equal doses of love, religious upbringing, and discipline. One of the most effective punishments is to tell them they will not be allowed on an outing to visit her parents. The children love their grandparents with all their hearts. Another time, they were procrastinating feeding the goat. They kept insisting they would do it "later", when they had more time. When it was lunch time, they ran into the house saying they were hungry. The children were told they would eat "later", surely they were not hungrier than the goat who had been waiting to be fed since early morning. They quickly understood the lesson, the goat was immediately fed and they never had to be reminded again.

How did this family grow to fifteen? After the first five children arrived, they began to talk about their brothers and sisters who were in orphanages throughout Lithuania. As many as possible were reunited at Raimunda's. Another time a teacher called her to the school. There was a brother and sister, both under ten. Their mother had been brought up in an orphanage, she had no sense of family values and did not want her children. She simply walked away and left them on the street.

They were taken in by a woman who was an alcoholic who really didn't want them either. The teacher begged Raimunda to take them, she promised to do all the paperwork and make all the trips to Vilnius. She was true to her word and Raimunda had two more children. Another child was found in the trunk of a car in Palanga. Luckily, someone had seen a bloody bundle being stuffed into the trunk. This child also lives with Raimunda. He has a sister who is slightly younger than Raimunda, but her husband will not allow her to bring her little brother home. Instead, she comes to Raimunda's house to visit him. This is the only child of the fifteen that actually has any connection with any outside family member. Each time a new child arrives, the other children help to make the newcomer welcome. They especially love the little ones, it seems they bring love and laughter with them wherever they go. Did any of them ever choose to return to the orphanage? Of course not!

What are the problems of this large family? They are the same as in any family; children who do not always put forth the effort they should with their studies. Raimunda is very strict about education, perhaps because she is so well educated, she understands the need for her children to always do their best. Of course there are always the ones who try to get out of their chores. She even had to face the

problem of what the children were to call her. Some call her Mama Raimunda, while others call her Aunt Raimunda. When she visits their schools, she is known as their mother. People in the schools would stare at this young woman when they were told she was the mother of fifteen! However, this mother must cope with children who came to her with deep emotional scars.

Because Raimunda is well educated, she is able to offer her children many different avenues to pursue. When I was there, the older ones were involved in a program in Estonia where they were able to work and earn some pocket money. They were also taking advantage of a special program in



Raimunda's children playing

Palanga, where all the children could have a short holiday for a very reasonable price.

These children are learning every aspect of family life. Raimunda was able to connect with a family in Norway which also has many foster children. The Norwegian government and the Norwegian people are very generous toward the people who are raising children in a family atmosphere. The family in Norway was given building materials, far more than they needed, so they sent them on to Raimunda and her husband to start building an addition to their house. The family was also given a mini-van, they sent their ten year old van to Raimunda. It has a lot of miles and periodically breaks down, but our Lithuanian family is happy to have it.

Raimunda is trying to create a support group where the different foster parents can contact each other. Some of the older grandparents have no idea as to what is available to them and they don't know where to go for help.

Raimunda praised the city of Kaunas for being one of the most progressive cities in Lithuania as far as foster children and their welfare. They have offered small incentives for people to raise the children at home. One of the drawbacks

continued on page 16

Ramune Kubilius

Libraries in Lithuania

An area which interests me—what advances are libraries, the great equalizers and educators of a population, and librarians doing these days in Lithuania? I scan the Lithuanian librarians' journal, TARP KNYGU, and receive clippings from a few librarians in Lithuania. Some librarians receive travel stipends and fellowships to go to conferences or work-related trips to other countries. Some libraries lose their funding, or their space...

* Edita Vorobjova, the librarian from the Lithuanian National Library, whose visit to the United States was described in the March 1995 BRIDGES ended her 2 month stay (not 3 months as was incorrectly written) at the end of March. Before her trip to the Library of Congress, she was able to visit the libraries at University of Illinois, Northwestern University, DePaul University, McHenry County College, Evanston Public Library and others. She met with librarians to learn about adding subject heading access to cataloged items as the National Library plans to convert its card catalogs to machine readable form (online catalogs). To specialists in the field, it is clearly an improvement in access to the materials already cataloged (not really a backlog at all). Edita's e-mail messages to newly met colleagues who had hosted her during her stay in Chicago indicated that her stay in Washington, D.C. was going well, time was short and there was much to learn, but she was having a chance to play tourist and see parts of the Smithsonian's collections.

* The Open Society Fund of the Soros Foundation has helped various professionals from Lithuania attend conferences and meetings by subsidizing their travel costs. There are various funding possibilities for Lithuania's professionals. The American Library Association regularly publicizes its international fellowship programs. In the February 1995 issue, one can read about librarians from Guyana, Malaysia, Tanzania, Russia, and Estonia... who were awarded fellowships to come to the United States for three to twelve months. Unfortunately, none came from Lithuania.—U.S. libraries which are interested in hosting international fellows should contact Robert Doyle, director, Library Fellows Program, ALA, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; 800-545-2433, ext. 3200.—Non-U.S. librarians interested in participating in the program should contact the public affairs or cultural affairs or cultural affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in their country.

* The Lithuanian Library of Medicine, located right near the Ministry of Health building in downtown Vilnius, enjoyed its 50th anniversary in October 1994. A number of articles appeared in Lithuania's press during

1994, about the Library's collections and successes. Although the Library is rather "young" by European standards, its varied collections had been donated by various doctors from their private collections. There are over 700,000 volumes in the collection. A facsimile copy of the 1548 Vilnius publication "Commentariola medica et physica" is held there, but so are CD-ROMs including MEDLINE which the U.S. National Library of Medicine compiles, and a travelling medical videotape collection is housed at the Library. INTERNET access is being set up, the Library is a World Health Organization documents depository library. The librarians became very visible—they were interviewed in Lithuania's press, one librarian received a one year U.S. National Library of Medicine international fellowship, the director (Salvinija Kociene) was part of the delegation in August 1994 to the IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) convention in Havana, Cuba. In honor of the 50th anniversary, the Library sponsored an ex libris (bookplate) contest: 39 artists from 16 countries participated—from Argentina, Brazil, Poland, Italy and elsewhere. 12 artists represented Lithuania, and a winning bookplate was chosen to be used by the Library.

In 1994, while the library staff was preparing for 50th anniversary celebration plans, the Library was visited and toured by various officials from Lithuanian government offices. They had other ideas for the Library's building on Kastonu Street, a building the Library has occupied since 1991 (after moving from much more crowded quarters). In March 1994, Prime Minister Slezevicius issued a project to move the Library to the outskirts of Vilnius. Then in October, a special committee of the Ministry of Health announced that moving the Library and its collections would destroy its infrastructure and would compromise its international networking ties. (Also, the Library provides current awareness services for officials at the Ministry of Health).

Let's wish the Library well in 1995. May Lithuania have a number of delegates to the Medical Library Association's 95th Annual Meeting/ 7th International Conference on Medical Librarianship in May 1995 in Washington, D.C.

FULLBRIGHT Scholars

In a February 1995 issue of the CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, a list was published of 1994/95 overseas scholars who received William J. Fullbright stipends to lecture or conduct research in the United

continued on page 16

Thomas Baltis

Lithuanian Resources on the Information Superhighway

So many articles about the information superhighway are appearing in the national press that whether you start your day with a cup of coffee and a copy of the Wall Street Journal or occasionally browse through Time magazine you will have a hard time finding an issue of your favorite publication that doesn't feature an article about some guy who is trying to merge onto the left lane of the Infohighway while keeping one hand on the driving wheel and making traffic signals to the cars behind him with the other hand. This isn't one of those articles.

If you are still not on the Infohighway go to your local book store and get one of those handy books with step by step instructions on how to get connected. Unfortunately while the information on "how to buy a car" to ride the information superhighway and "pay the toll at the entrance ramps" is overabundant, very little is being written about how to get to a specific destinations quickly and safely once you're on the road. Instead of making you read another "driver's manual" I would like to give all of you who are traversing the information superhighway in search of information about Lithuania, its people, political or economical developments some directions and travel tips.

E-mail

Whether you subscribe to on-line services such as Prodigy, CompuServe, America On Line (AOL) or Ge-nie or have a direct or dial-up Internet connection you know that most widely accessible application of the information superhighway is electronic mail (e-mail). Most of the information about Lithuania is in fact accessible through e-mail, either via personal contacts with people, or through participation in electronic mail lists. Whatever the nature of the information you are searching for, it is usually fairly hard to find the right person with the right answers if you do not know their e-mail address. Most of the on-line services (AOL, CompuServe) have special directories for finding their members' e-mail addresses. If you know the name of the person whom you want to contact, you may want to send e-mail to electronic post office managers at the organizations that have e-mail connectivity in Lithuania and request an e-mail address for that person. Here is a partial list of organizations that are connected to Internet and addresses of their post office maintainers (If you're looking

for an organization not listed here you can send e-mail to Lithuanian domain administrator daiva@sc-uni.ktu.lt and inquire about connectivity of specific organizations):

Vilnius:

Vilnius University	postmaster@vu.lt
Mathematics and Informatics Institute	postmaster@mii.lt
Physics Institute	fi.postmaster@fi.lt
Ministry of Culture and Education	mce.postmaster@mce.lt
Science, Studies and Technology Agency	lv.postmaster@lv.lt
Lithuanian Science Academy	ma.postmaster@ma.lt

Kaunas:

Kaunas Medical Academy	postmaster@kma.lt
Kaunas University of Technology	ktu.postmaster@ktu.lt
Vytautas Magnus University	postmaster@vdu.lt

Klaipeda:

University of Klaipeda	klu.postmaster@klu.lt
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If you like to be involved in discussions with groups of people that share your interests in Lithuania you will find the electronic mailing lists quite useful. For people limited to e-mail functionality by their access to the Infohighway mail lists are the easiest way to start exploring Lithuanian information. Here is a list of electronic e-mail lists and subscription addresses that encompass discussions on various Lithuanian themes:

BALT-L LISTSERV@ib.rl.ac.uk

BALT-L is the oldest of all the lists described here. It is dedicated to discussions of issues affecting the whole Baltics region. You are bound to meet people from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and a variety of other countries on this list. The spectrum of discussion topics is quite broad and ranges from political to cultural to economic issues. Almost every day you can find messages

here with useful information such as the daily newsletters. The credit for the popularity of this list goes to its never resting editor Mr. Edis Bevan (A.E.B.Bevan@ib.rl.ac.uk)

LEK-L LEK-L-request@HiAgder.no

LEK-L is the official mail list of the "Lietuviu Elektroninis Klubas." In spite of its considerably lesser number of subscribers relative to BALT-L, the messages reaching your mailbox from this list can be surprisingly voluminous. Lithuanians from Australia, the US., France, Germany and a dozen of other countries spend their time discussing various aspects of Lithuanian cultural, social, scientific life. LEK-L is maintained by Dr. Algirdas Pakstas (Algiras.Pakstas@HiAgder.no)

NORDBALT

LISTSERV@SEARN.SUNET.SE

NORBALT is a discussion list of computer and networking technology developments in Baltic and Nordic countries. Messages on problems and ideas of networking and telecommunications are circulating in this list. Naturally many computer system administrators are its subscribers.

FREE-LIST LISTSERV@VM2.KTU.LT

FREE-LIST is just about exactly what its name says it is, a free list. The young age of this discussion list makes it impossible to characterize its atmosphere in any specific way, however from the recent discussion topics it is easy to see that this will be one of the more interesting places to "talk" about Lithuania in the near future. Some articles have touched on subjects as diverse as philosophy and Lithuanian anecdotes. In addition to the FREE-LIST there are other new discussion lists on this server, if you would like to get more information about what mail lists are operational send e-mail to postmaster@vm2.ktu.lt.

Discussion Groups

Another popular application of the Information Superhighway is the discussion group network known as the USENet. USENet is accessible through some on-line services (AOL, CompuServe) and most Internet access providers. There is only one discussion group on the USENet that features discussions of Lithuanian and Baltic topics. This newsgroup is: **soc.culture.baltics**.

This discussion group has historically been plagued with personal attacks and political opinion clashes. I would not suggest this resource for those of you who are only starting to explore the Infohighway. However if you are well familiar with the etiquette of the Internet culture and are not afraid of taking on a well-seasoned opposition of opinions you might find **soc.culture.baltics** a refreshing challenge.

WWW & Gopher

The last four applications that I want to touch on are more pertinent to those of you with direct or dial-up access to the Internet. Traditionally these resources IRC (Internet Relay Chat), Gopher, WWW (World Wide Web) and Telnet have only been limited to people that have their computers connected directly to the Internet. Only recently they began to be available to broader audiences through dial-up connections and even some on-line services such as CompuServe. Both WWW and Gopher are on-line information access systems that allow people using special client software to access information located on geographically remote servers over the Internet network. I list both WWW and Gopher servers that carry information about Lithuania together with e-mail addresses of their maintainers (Locations of the servers are in the widely used URL format):

<http://www.mcs.com/~thomas/www/lt/thomas@mcs.com>

This information server called "Lietuvos Veidrodis" provides three key services to its visitors: a jump point to other Lithuanian WWW servers, a duplicate copy of some of the information residing on Lithuanian servers for increased access speed, and a system that allows all guests to make comments to all Lithuanian WWW servers' administrators through a single e-mail message.

<http://nemunas.sc-uni.ktu.lt/daiva@sc-uni.ktu.lt>
gopher://nemunas.sc-uni.ktu.lt/milda@sc-uni.ktu.lt

This is Lithuanian Education and Research Network LITNET Network Operations Center server. The most extensive collection of general interest documents can be found here. Information on Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) and LITNET NOC is accessible from this server.

<http://neris.mii.lt/vyta@ktl.mii.lt>

The main LITNET server houses a variety of hypertext documents on Lithuania its history and culture at this location. If you are looking for information on the City of Vilnius you're in the right place.

<http://tauras.vu.lt/maju@tauras.vu.lt>
gopher://gopher.vu.lt/saulius@tauras.vu.lt

Vilnius University's main WWW and Gopher server resides here. It offers a range of information about Vilnius University and its affairs.

<http://rc.lrs.lt/root@rc.lrs.lt>
gopher://rc.lrs.lt/romas@rc.lrs.lt

This server is your access point to the Lithuanian Seimas (Parliament). Databases of Lithuanian laws passed in Seimas as well as news bits on Lithuania from various

press agencies from around the planet are available from this server.

Other WWW servers with useful information about Lithuania can be found at: <http://vm.ktu.lt/>

gopher://vm.ktu.lt/

gopmaster@vm.ktu.lt

<http://www.vm.vu.lt/>

webmaster@ltvucc11.vu.vu

<http://bosas.soften.ktu.lt/>

kaspar@soften.ktu.lt

IRC

If you enjoy talking with people from all over the world you will fall in love with the IRC. IRC is a global teleconferencing system which provides "rooms" called channels where people express their ideas interactively by typing text. The channel where everyone talks about Lithuania is conveniently called **#Lietuva**.

Telnet

Today, the only resource available through Telnet is the Vilnius University Library Catalog System. This system allows you to search the archives of Vilnius University Library for specific holdings and their availability. The catalog system can be accessed at the following location: <telnet://munin.vu.lt>. To sign onto the system use **login name "OPAC"** and **password "OPAC."**

The information superhighway is changing with a speed of light. New resources of Lithuanian information are being added and new projects initiated as you are reading this article. This is by far not a comprehensive guide to "digital" Lithuania. I hope however that I have provided you here with some useful pointers to the general information resources that Lithuania has to offer to the global information community. If you have specific questions regarding Lithuanian resources feel free to send me e-mail at thomas@mcs.com. I would also be grateful for any suggestions or comments and feedback on this article its content, and your wishes for future articles on the topic of Lithuania and information technologies.

Libraries in Lithuania

continued from page 13

States. Its Council for the Exchange of International Scholars listed Lithuania's Sigita Tamulevicius, Associate Professor of Physics at Kaunas Technological University who is at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology); Leonidas Donskis, Head of the Philosophy Department at Klaipeda University who is at Dickinson College; Albertas Zalatorius, Professor and Chair of Lithuanian Literature at Vilnius Pedagogical University who is at University of Illinois at Chicago; Dalia Tekoriene, Professor of English Philology at University of Vilnius who is at Kent State University.

SODOS Children's Home

continued from page 12

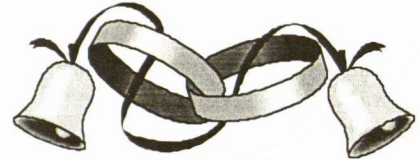
is that the government pays many more litas each month to the institutions for each child than they do to the families who raise them. As I have written on numerous occasions, people are not getting rich from these programs. You have to have a real love for children, especially when those children are not your own.

I want to offer my gratitude to Raimunda Miskieniene for the many hours we spent together. It was a joy to meet such an energetic and loving young mother. May God give her good health and strength to continue her work with Lithuania's FORGOTTEN CHILDREN. To all mothers, Happy Mother's Day!

The Philadelphia chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community is selling tote bags to raise money for Lithuanian Orphan Care. The bags are blue with the words "Lithuanian Orphan Care" imprinted on them. In the center is the cover picture of November's BRIDGES, the nine year old girl holding her small brother. The cost of each bag is \$8 plus \$2 for postage. If you would like to purchase a bag, please send your check payable to the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. to:

Jeanne Dorr
4 Shrewsbury Yard
Riverton, NJ 08077.

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Ramune Kubilius

Educational Council News

The Lithuanian-American Community's Educational Council distributes various dictionaries, workbooks and other publications in both English and Lithuanian. A team is now in the process of re-structuring Lithuanian language school programming for each grade (or groups of grades). Weekend school teachers have expressed concerns that their schools and classes devise "mission statements". They want to try to address the needs of all of the children- those who are learning Lithuanian, those who speak it a bit, and those who until recently lived in Lithuania and spoke it regularly. The fundamental challenge, some American-trained teachers say, is to decide what foundations to build with the students, so that in 3-4 hours per weekend session, they feel proud to learn or improve their Lithuanian language skills and feel proud to be of Lithuanian heritage. They should also gain appreciation of Lithuanian culture, literature and history. By the end of the school year, and its transition to the next, certain educational objectives should be met.

Verbs, Verbs, Verbs

A new workbook being distributed by the Educational Council is one prepared by Lithuanian language student Loretta Kuliawat Denhart and her tutor Dalile Polikaitis of Los Angeles, CA. The workbook is entitled *A GUIDE TO CONJUGATING LITHUANIAN VERBS*. In the Introduction, the authors write: "Many people avoid studying new languages because they perceive the process far too complicated...Communication happens on many levels, only two of which are the written and spoken word. By learning how to use the basic building blocks of a language you can gain enough proficiency to understand others and be understood yourself...Verbs are an essential building block to learning a language. This volume was originally developed to be a quick reference to correct verb forms for students who are using the tape and book series *EASY WAY TO LITHUANIAN* (prepared under the auspices of the Educational Council - rk)..." Section One includes 232 verb conjugations from *EASY WAY*... Section Two: Appendix A. is an alphabetical index of the 232 verbs found in Section One, in Lithuanian-English order with short definitions, plus additional commonly used verbs. Appendix B. Same verbs as in Appendix A, but in English-Lithuanian order.

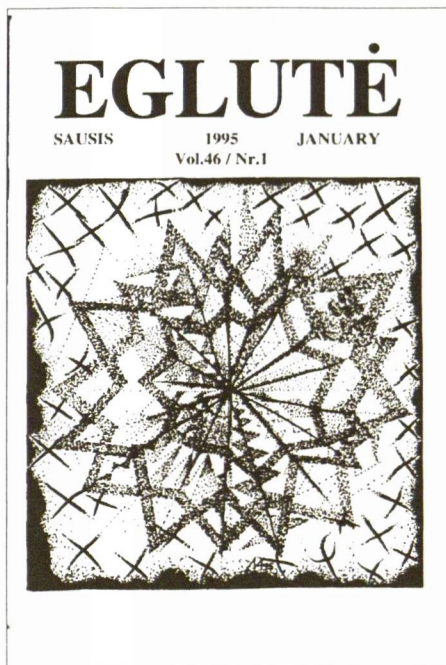
New Teaching Text

The Educational Council is supporting and will distribute the new Lithuanian language teaching tool by former Educational Council president Jonas Kavaliunas. The book (with a working title of just *LITHUANIAN*) is now at the printers, and audiotapes are being finished in Lithuania to accompany the text. It is hoped that the new textbook will complement *EASY WAY TO LITHUANIAN*.

Eglute

About 95 subscriptions of *EGLUTE* (The Little Fir) are being sent to readers in Lithuania. The Lithuanian language children's magazine (with poetry, stories, puzzles), edited by Nijole Nausedas, is published by the

Educational Council. Previously, the magazine had been edited and published by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Putnam, CT. Recently, the Educational Council has begun releasing audiotape versions of *EGLUTE*. Two issues are recorded on each tape. It is hoped that *BRIDGES*



readers may be interested in subscribing to *EGLUTE* for themselves or for readers in America and Lithuania.

Summer Camp

The Educational Council is already setting up the program for the annual summer camp, to be held at Camp Dainava near Manchester, MI August 6-13th. Lithuanian educators and Lithuanian language students will gather

for concurrently run sessions. The two groups will meet daily during Lithuanian choir practice, folk dancing, during evening programs and meals. The educators, who teach at over two dozen weekend Lithuanian language schools throughout the U.S., will listen to lectures to enhance their own knowledge and to share teaching tips and techniques. The mostly adult students in the Lithuanian language classes will be divided into beginning and advanced classes (to be taught this year by veteran teachers Jonaitis and R. Udrys). The Lithuanian language speaking school-aged children who accompany their teacher parents will be divided into small groups (by age) and in a Lithuanian-language speaking environment, will spend a part of each day doing crafts, learning about nature and playing games under the guidance of specially selected students. (If a need arises, plans are underway to organize a group of children who accompany parents in the Lithuanian language classes to be taught the rudiments of Lithuanian along with learning crafts, etc.)

In the past, more than 100 people have participated

in the weeklong summer camps each year. Those familiar with the camp know that it does not resemble a resort by any means—campers must bring their own towels and bedding, share toilet facilities, sleep in small dormitory-style rooms, and eat in a large cafeteria-style building. Camp Dainava, with its own little lake Spyglis, is surrounded by farms, and the nearest town is a drive (or long walk) away. Most campers who return to Dainava year after year feel that it is a very relaxing place which is conducive to learning—it is a little bit of Lithuania here in America.

Correction

The correct price for MODERN LITHUANIAN- A TEXTBOOK FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS, published in Vilnius, 1994 is \$35. It was listed incorrently in the December 1994 issue of BRIDGES, p.5.

(For more information about Educational Council publications or the summer camp, contact Educational Council president Regina Kucas, 13648 Kickapoo Trail, Lockport, IL 60441).

Camp Neringa

Located in the hills of southern Vermont and administered by the Lithuanian Sisters from Putnam offers a unique opportunity for children of Lithuanian-American heritage to experience their ethnicity in truly beautiful surroundings.

The session for children ages 7-16 is from July 30 - August 5. The family session is scheduled for August 17 - 20th. Anyone wishing more information should contact: NERINGA, 600 Liberty Hwy, Putnam, CT 06260 Tel. (203) 928-7955

Both photos: Scenes from Camp Neringa - summer 1994



ANNOUNCEMENT Lithuanian Language Course at CAMP DAINAVA Manchester, MI August 6-13, 1995

for beginners, intermediate and advanced students or those just wishing to refresh their Lithuanian language. No limitations regarding age or formal education.

Experienced instructors with vacation-like surroundings and atmosphere. For information and application contact:

Mrs. Ruta Udrys,
1718 Maunta Lane, Jackson, MI 49201
Telephone: (517) 784-7834

Aukse Trojanas

The New York Scene

Kestutis Zapkus recently had his 24th one-man show. Zapkus, an abstract expressionist, presented recent paintings at the Andre Zarre Gallery from March 7th to April



Kestutis Zapkus speaking about his work - "Conjugation: Cotton Duck/Portrait Linen"

1st. These works explore ideas and events in an original and compelling manner. The artist has a curiosity about the multivalent nature of human behavior and experience. He likes to experiment with technique and to play with images, including visual inside jokes that only fellow artists might appreciate. His work addresses the "daily eventfulness of the world in accumulated time." The viewer is thrown into a chaos buffered by the underlying intelligence of the artist, leaving one more aware of the wonder and music of the world as well as its horror and despair.

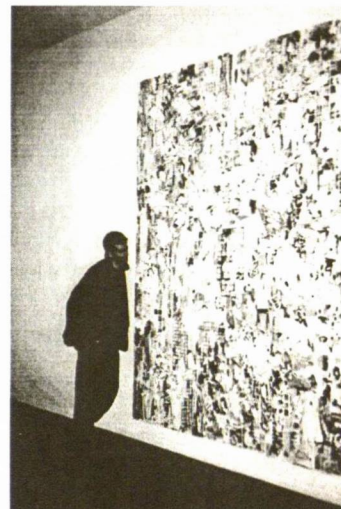
A truly compelling work is "Rivers of Rwanda." One is drawn into a flow of purple rivers, mud and sky, punctuated by the yellow rims of burning fires and constellations of falling spears. The United Nations ambassador of Rwanda has come twice to view the work and was very moved by it.

Zapkus has been influenced greatly by Mondrian and Cezanne. His piece "Conjugation: cotton duck/portrait linen" is a homage to Cezanne and to his painterly exploration of Mont Saint Victoire. Zapkus creates a study which explores Cezanne's ideas and techniques on modern canvas vs. the fine

linen of the 19th century.

"Desire for Verdancy" is an appealing aerial view suggesting a flight over green suburbs on an overcast day. "Considered Quotes" suggests glimpses of people through the grid of apartment windows. "Midnight Reverie on Mont Saint Victoire" is a witty light and sound show, a playful, geometric appreciation of the work of Cezanne.

The largest work, "World Affairs/Acid Light" seems to achieve his stated goal "to condense his entire perception of the world," in this case with an overlay of a pervasive mass media interpreted as acid light. His works have been likened to a fugue wherein many individualistic segments create coherence despite the tension in their juxtaposition. The pieces of a puzzle fit together but not without protest and a startling harmony.



Polish artist Ireneusz Ciara examines "World Affairs/Acid Light"



Film maker Jonas Mekas speaking to floral artist Vidas Marcinkevicius

Ramune Kubilius

From the Lithuanian Press...

Selected excerpts from the Lithuanian Press in America.

BRIDGES readers should be aware of the fact that I'm not a professional translator, as evidenced by corrections that have to be made at times. Lithuanian-English dictionaries don't always include the translations I seek, i.e. organizations names, etc.

Kaunas conserving energy/budget

The City Council of Kaunas has decided to save electrical energy. It was decided that street lights will only be lit on one side of the street after 11 pm each night. On some streets, only every third light will be lit. The reason behind these decisions? In January alone, one fifth of the annual lighting budget of 2 mil. litai was "burnt up".

(DARBININKAS, 3/3/95)

NY Center and the United Way

The Lithuanian Cultural Center, Inc., 355 Highland Blvd, Brooklyn, NY 11207 is now a "designated organization" with the United Way of New York City. Donors should ask that the Cultural Center be notified about the designated donation. In order to be on the list, the United Way required that the Cultural Center provide information about its human services activities, purposes, finances, IRS and other not-for-profit status verification information. Four United Way workers began the fortunate cycle by designating that donations could be taken out of their wages—and their donations in 1994 totalled \$1200...

(DARBININKAS, 3/10/95, from an article by AAB)

Partisan's memoirs published

The 279-page second edition of the English language version of FIGHTERS FOR FREEDOM- LITHUANIAN PARTISANS VERSUS THE U.S.S.R. by Juozas Daumantas is available. The author whose real name was Juozas Luksa, was a partisan leader. In the book he wrote of partisan activities during the time period between 1944 and 1947. He himself was able to flee to the West, reaching Germany and France, and bringing news of underground activities in Lithuania. He made plans for further partisan war activities. He returned to Lithuania by plane, but his whereabouts were given to the enemy and he was killed. (During their concerts, members of the Kaunas partisans' choir which toured North America in March remembered this revered partisan leader.-rk)

(DARBININKAS, 3/10/95)

Lithuanian Commemorative Coin issued

A new silver 50 litas piece will be issued in Lithuania to commemorate the 5th anniversary of Lithuania's redeclaration of independence. The front of the piece will include a cut oak tree stump from which a small green seedling is sprouting. The words "Valstybes atgimimas" (rebirth of a nation) and the years 1990 and 1995 will be chiselled. The backside will show Lithuania's coat of arms - above the coat of arms "Lietuva", below it "50 litu". On the side, words from the Lithuanian anthem- "Tegul meile Lietuvos dega musu sirdyse" (the love of Lithuania...). The commemorative monetary piece will be made to fill orders placed in advance. The piece will be placed in a special plastic display case. The cost is estimated to be \$20. Requests for ordering information may be sent to Mr. Tomas Michalskis, Lithuanian Embassy, 2622 16th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20009, by sending a FAX message to his attention at 202-328-0466 or by calling 202-234-5860.

(DRAUGAS, 3/10/95)

Highway safety

Every fifth automobile accident in Lithuania results in death, while the European average is only one of every thirteen auto accident results in a fatality. A conference was called in Lithuania to discuss highway safety. Government officials, researchers, highway police and industry representatives concluded that the fault lies not so much with the government as with the low cultural (road etiquette) of Lithuania's drivers.

(DRAUGAS, 3/29/95)

Earth Day Celebrated

Lithuania celebrated Earth Day March 22nd. In Vilnius a special flag was raised, celebratory speeches were given by Environmental Protection Minister Bronius Bradauskas and Vilnius Mayor Vytautas Jasulaitis. Lithuania's President, Algirdas Brazauskas and Seimas President Ceslovas Juršenis also attended. Short pieces were performed by "Aras" and "Astra" choruses and the "Trimitas" orchestra. The ensemble "Lietuva" performed on the traditional Lithuanian wind horns ("ragai") and participants marched towards Gediminas Hill. At the foot of the hill, traditional ceremonies representing fire,

water, earth and air were enacted. Participants watched fireworks, danced and sang.

(DRAUGAS, 3/28/95)

Sleigh Races resume

On January 4th, a nice winter tradition returned to Sartu Lake; horse-drawn sleigh races. In Eastern Lithuania, those races were common already in the 17th century. This year, fifty year old P. Navalinskas from Sirvintai took more than one prize home, winning several events.

(DRAUGAS, 3/24/95)

Artist Dies in Paris

Artist Vytautas Kasiulis died in Paris, France on March 12th at the age of 77. The artist had studied in the Kaunas Art School, and when he completed his studies in 1941, he was invited to teach there. After the war, Kasiulis moved to the West. He taught in Freiburg at the art school established by V.K. Jonynas. In 1948, he moved to Paris, and by 1950, he was known in the Parisian art world. In one prestigious art contest, his work "Motherhood" ("Motinyste") won 11th place. His work, together with 49 other awarded works were brought to New York for a showing. From that time, collectors from France, the United States, and Scandinavia collected the work of Vytautas Kasiulis who had showings in Paris and other French cities.

(DRAUGAS, 3/23/95)

Status of pensioners in Lithuania

History has not been very kind to Lithuania's inhabitants born before World War II. During their lifetimes, they were witnesses to the first Soviet occupation, survived World War II and Nazi occupation, and then they witnessed Soviet annexation. Now, during the transition to market economy, many of these people are at the bottom of the class pyramid. The average pension in Lithuania is now 130 litai a month. That comprises about 40% of a month's earnings.

To put it simply, there are too many retirees and too few working people to support them. Of the 1.6 million people working last year, only 1.28 million paid into the social insurance fund Sodros, which provides government aid to 892,000 persons. (Of those 892,000; 666,000 are pensioners, 124,000 persons have some type of disability or handicap, and others receive aid for loss of breadwinner, etc.)

The large number of pensioners is an inheritance of the Soviet system where women retired at age 55, men at age 60. Men may go into retirement, having worked 25 cumulative years, women after 20 years. The Lithuanian Parliament has raised the age of retirement for those who wish to receive all of their pension. As of January 1, 1995, every year until 2009 the age for retirement for men will

be raised by two months, and by four months for women. Men will have to be 62.5 years of age, women 60 years of age. By 2004, men and women who wish to receive their complete pension will have had to work 30 years. Old age pension will have two components- the government guaranteed base pension of 80 litai and a supplementary pension which will be defined by a formula (using among other things the person's number of work years). The World Bank and other institutions also recommend that Lithuania adopt a supplementary private retirement insurance model. Solid retirement pensions are being awarded by Kraft Jacobs Suchard which purchased a Kaunas confectionary factory in 1993. However, personal initiative, the lengthening of the age of retirement and pension indexing are long-term possible solutions. The fact remains that some retirees live with their families who can help support them, while others live alone in poverty or in the least have problems making ends meet. In recent statistics, it has been shown, that there are almost equal numbers of poverty stricken pensioners as there are those who are supported by their more well-off families.

(DRAUGAS, from the "Lietuva" bulletin, 4/11/95)

UNESCO

A commemoration of the 450th anniversary of the Lithuanian written word is possible if Lithuania's anniversary date is included in an upcoming UNESCO list of historical dates. Also with UNESCO's help, projects are underway to prepare images of Lithuanian ornaments for an electronic book and a compact disk of traditional Lithuanian folk songs. Projects such as these will not only preserve valuable traditions, but would also make them known around the world. If UNESCO funding is made available, further projects would include the preservation of 170,000 folk songs which have been collected in the last 80 years. Some of the recordings were made on old wax cylinders which are in danger of disintegrating. Also, Culture Minister Juozas Nekrošius expressed interest in joining UNESCO programs in order to familiarize the world with Lithuanian architecture and folk art and the problems of preservation.

(DRAUGAS, from an Elta news agency article, 4/8/95)

Lithuanian actress in award-winning film

One of the Oscar winners in the foreign film category this year was Russian filmmaker Nikita Michalkov's film in which Lithuanian actress Ingeborga Dapkunaite plays the leading role. Dapkunaite, now married to British director Stokes, received the role without an audition after Michalkov saw her smiling in a photograph. Ingebor Dapkunaite now lives in London and acts in Russia, England, and the United States.

(DARBININKAS, 4/7/95)

Vytas Grybauskas

Sports News



Foto: J. Urbonas

At the North American Lithuanian Sports Federation's "Seniors" Basketball Tournament, held in Detroit April 1-2, 1995; the winners of the tournament, members of Hamilton, Ontario's "Kovas" team.

The LAC, Inc. Florida Regional convention took place in Daytona Beach this past February 23-24th. The Atlanta, GA chapter of the LAC belongs to the Florida Region along with various chapters in Florida. Sports, as a topic, was awarded more time on the convention's agenda than ever before because of the fact that the 1996 Summer Olympics will be held in Atlanta, and Atlanta belongs to this region.

Although the agenda called for a report about Atlanta and the Olympics only on the second day of the convention, the subject was brought up much earlier, when Atlanta chapter president Kazlauskas made his report. Mr. Kazlauskas focused on the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee's representatives' visit to Atlanta. Mr. Dubauskas, President of the Gold Coast Chapter (near Miami) reported on his chapter's activities. Mr. Dubauskas' report included information on swimmer Laura Petrutyte, Lithuanian Olympic hopeful training here. Mr. Dubauskas announced that he and his wife will sponsor Laura until the Olympics, but requested financial support for English language courses for Petrutyte. The University of Miami has promised to grant Petrutyte a full four-year scholarship (worth \$25,000), if she passes the English language exam. After short discussions, the members agreed to fund Laura's courses with a \$800 grant.

Reports from other chapters focused solely on their chapters' activities and concerns.

The next report scheduled was to be made by Algis Rugienius, LAC National Executive Board member and VP for Sports Affairs, regarding Lithuanian athletes and their participation in the Olympics. It remains rather unclear why this topic was chosen and how it affects the LAC's Florida Region. In addition, it is unclear as to how Mr. Rugienius' name came to be listed on the program, since Mr. Rugienius was traveling in Lithuania concerning matters related to the Fifth Lithuanian World Games to be held this summer, and upon his return to the US, he was scheduled to go directly to Toronto for further discussions regarding the Games.

To fill this void, Region President Liutauras Siemaska from St. Petersburg presented a letter written by Rimas Gaska. Mr. Gaska is the Lithuanian National

Olympic Committee representative in the US and the attache in Atlanta. In his letter, Mr. Gaska invited the convention, or more directly the LAC Florida Region to organize the "Lithuanian House" in Atlanta, during the Olympics. This would be a rented house or facilities, where



Second place winners at the "Seniors" Basketball Tournament - Toronto's "Ausra" members with A. Rugienius, president of Detroit's "Kovas" - hosts of the event.

visitors would be acquainted with Lithuania, her culture, history and folkart through exhibits. This is a wonderful opportunity which should not be missed. Finally, Lithuanian House would serve as a gathering place for Lithuanian athletes and trainers, where they could meet with and relax with Lithuanian-Americans. This project would naturally require a competent leader and at least several other organizers. Mr. Gaska presented an estimated budget for the project as well; facility rental - \$18,360, exhibit installation - \$4,000, administrative and travel expenses - \$4,000, exhibit transportation costs - \$2,500 and miscellaneous expenses - \$1,140, for a total estimated expense of \$30,000. The National Executive Committee of the LAC has already declined to fund this project. Mr. Siemaska also views the project as unrealistic; he suggested rather to try to raise \$50,000 to support the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee.

Because the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee has not requested financial support, long and futile discussions ensued. No conclusions were drawn and the project was redirected to Mr. Gaska and the Lithuanian-Americans of Atlanta. Some members of the Atlanta community are themselves skeptical of the project, since transportation in Atlanta during the Olympics will only be possible through the use of trains and buses.

Evidently Mr. Gaska has approached the Knights of Lithuania for support of this project, but as of this writing, no response has yet been received.

The following day's program for the convention included a report by Vida Tautvydas from Atlanta. Ms. Tautvydas has been hired by the Atlanta Olympic Organizing Committee to act as guide and translator for the Lithuanian athletes. Ms. Tautvydas described the Olympic Games themselves, the scattered stadiums, various competitions and their organization. She had even planned to present a video, but refrained. This was a sound decision because this topic appeared to be boring to the majority of the convention's participants (most of whom are retirees). One participant even commented, "We won't be participating, we won't be going to observe...why are we wasting time?"

The organizers of the convention are to be commended for dedicating so much time during the convention to sports. In the future, however, in order for that time to be used more productively, members of the sports community should be invited to participate in the planning and actual discussions.

Stasys Meilus

On April 1, 1995 long-time athlete Stasys Meilus suddenly passed away in Palm City, Florida. Born in 1918, Stasys attended Mariampole high school, later graduating from Kaunas Ausra high school. Receiving his degree in Chemistry from Vilnius University, Stasys worked as a chemist in New Jersey until his retirement.

After a long line of losses of veteran athletes last year, Stasys Meilus' death comes as a new blow to Lithuanian

sports.

Stasys began playing soccer in Kaunas' LFLS club, but quickly realized that his hits were stronger and more accurate at the ping-pong table. In 1938, Stasys together with Vldas Adomavicius won the title of Lithuania's Table-tennis Doubles Champions. The following year Stasys represented Lithuania in the Baltic Championship Tournament as well as in Poland.

Stasys continued his table tennis career in Germany, where he won a series of competitions in both single and doubles play. He represented the Lithuanian all-stars against Munich's all-stars, winning 5:4, and went on to win the Munich International tournament.



Stasys Meilus

Victories continued in the US. In 1950, with his former partner V. Adomavicius, Stasys won the title of Runner-up in the US championships, as well as winning the New Jersey Doubles Championship twice. Stasys finished off his table tennis career by winning, for the third time, together with the rest of the Lithuanian team the title of Team State Champions.

Stasys Meilus was not only a fine athlete, but a warm, friendly and loving person. Surviving Stasys are his wife Birute, son Vincas, daughter Aldona and 5 grandchildren. The entire Lithuanian sports community mourns his passing.

Advertisement

ALICE DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANY MORE...

She moved to Florida. Alice Zupko, the Lithuanian proprietress of Alice's Flower Shop in Richmond Hill relocated to North Fort Myers five years ago, where she has opened her house as a haven for fleeing Lithuanian snowbirds and their friends from the North. She has a pool on the premises and tennis is just around the corner.

Sanibel Island and Fort Myers Beach are a short drive away. Alice serves a great breakfast to start a vacationer's day off right.

If you're planning a trip to sunny Florida and don't want to go broke - stay at:

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North Fort Myers, FL 33903

Tel. (813) 656-5886

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**INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITY
PHYSICIANS...NURSES**

The Baltic-American Medical & Surgical Clinic, a private medical clinic owned by a joint venture of American and Lithuanian physicians, opened in Vilnius in September. The clinic, which has its facilities in rented space within an existing hospital, is the first of its kind and has been renovated, furnished, equipped American medical standards. It operates on a fee-for-services basis, but the mission of the clinic includes a significant effort to assist in promoting better health care throughout the region. Beginning next year, in conjunction with International Medassist, Inc. (a non-profit corporation), the clinic hopes to be able to provide certain amounts of free care to people who could not otherwise afford it. There will also be assistance in training physicians and nurses from public hospitals. One of the objectives for the clinic is to have at least one American physician and nurse available to the clinic, on a rotating basis, during the first two years of its operations. An American nurse from New Jersey and an American physician's assistant from Washington each began a six-month stay at the clinic on October 1. A board certified general surgeon from Ohio began a 3 1/2 month stay on November 7, and a surgeon from Massachusetts will joined him for the month of January. The clinic is seeking other physicians and nurses interested in being part of this exciting and pioneering effort.

- Minimum commitment of two months preferred, but shorter stay will be considered. Clinic will seek to obtain a Lithuanian medical license for physician participants.
- No need for participants to speak or understand Lithuanian. Lithuanian staff is experienced and multi-lingual. Charting and recordkeeping in English.
- Only 30-35 hours required each week.
- Clinic will provide roundtrip air travel for participant and spouse and free use of a furnished apartment in Vilnius (utilities included).
- Clinic will pay modest living stipend. Additional fee income for physicians.

Persons interested in further information should contact:

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Wilmington, MA 01887 or
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BRIDGES**LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL**

Volume 19, No. 4 MAY 1995 \$2.50 per Copy