

# BRIDGES

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## To Our Readers:

The Olympic Games have a special meaning for Lithuanians throughout the world. Not so long ago, we had to comb the Soviet rosters looking for names that ended in "aitis" "onis" "ūnas" "auskas" "vičius" to find our compatriots. We felt obliged to make sure that our friends and fellow sports fans knew that the star Soviet basketball team was made up mostly of Lithuanians.

Then came independence, and the same nay-sayers who said a little country like Lithuania would miss being part of a superpower's line-up watched as that little country fielded a decent Olympic team. We groaned collectively and showered CBS with complaints when it aired a commercial just as the Latvians and Lithuanians were marching in during the opening ceremonies. An American soft-drink company featured a commercial showing a fictional Lithuanian skier taking trains and buses to the winter games in 1990.

And then there were the summer games in Barcelona in 1992, when the Lithuanian basketball team won the bronze medal making it the third most powerful national team in the world. The athletes, mostly from Žalgiris in Kaunas, were up against the U.S. Dream Team, just as they will be again this year. They made a Grateful Dead-inspired tee shirt their unofficial uniform.

This year, 64 Lithuanians will participate in 15 events. Perhaps the "two-seated without coxswain" competition doesn't hold the glamour of diving or gymnastics, but you'll be able to find Lithuanians in the boating events, as well as in the 100 m. butterfly, Greco-Roman wrestling, bicycling, discus, javelin and, of course, basketball.

So let's sit back and enjoy the 1996 Atlanta Summer Games, in full appreciation of the fact that a country with only 2/3 the population of Maryland could produce so many qualifying athletes.

Su viltim!

*Diana S. Vidutis*

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## On the cover

Heidi Van de Vijver of Belgium (#50) cycles behind Jolanta Polikevičiūtė of Lithuania (#4) during the women's 100K road racing, July 21, in Olympic cycling competition in Atlanta. Rita Razmaitė of Šiauliai was disqualified from competition after testing positive for use of performance-enhancing drugs. © Paul Alers/UPI

Algis Rimas

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# Business and Investment News

## Lithuania's national economy strengthens in the Spring

Spring thaws are bringing back life to the Lithuanian national economy after the freeze brought on by the winter's banking crisis, budget shortages, payments deficits and continuing sectoral problems in energy and agriculture. But, if Lithuania's Department of Statistics is to be a guide, the economy performed reasonably well even in the winter. According to revised figures released in May, industrial production during the first three months of 1996 grew by 10 percent over the corresponding period in 1995, and retail sales rose by 14 percent. The total of all that was produced in Lithuania in 1995, the gross national product, increased, after inflation, by two percent to an equivalent of over \$5.6 billion. Just how accurately that figure reflects what is actually occurring in the economy is suspect since a significant portion of exchange takes place in the black market economy. Prime Minister Stankevičius recently allegedly told a group of local business leaders that one third of the economy operates off-the books.

The indicators showed more good news in April. After inflation in the first quarter reached 8.1 percent, it dipped to a mere 1.3 percent rate of increase for the month of April. Consumer price increases were highest on utility charges, medicine and fresh vegetables. Unemployment topped out at 8.3 percent in March, dropping to eight percent in April (seasonal jobs may explain some of this improvement). The average monthly wage rose by 4.3 percent in April to an equivalent of \$ 160. The minimum wage is \$52.50 per month. Highest paid employment is found in financial services - average monthly income is \$238 per month; the lowest paid workers are in agriculture - average monthly wage is \$ 56.

Finally, interest rates tumbled. Commercial banks in April were charging borrowers monthly rates of 1.9 percent for litas loans and 2 percent for loans in foreign exchange. Bank margins were on the order of one-half point. Lower rates were reflected in lower government finance costs which helped bridge its budget deficit. Ninety day treasury notes bearing 22 percent yields in April were being sub-

Algis Rimas is a business consultant living in Reston, Virginia. Before retiring from the U.S. Foreign Service, he served from 1992 to 1994 at the American Embassy in Vilnius as its deputy principal officer.

scribed in May at 18.7 percent. The Lithuanian government sold an issue of over 55 million litas ( 4 lts to 1\$) worth of thirty-day notes in early May at 17 percent interest.

The interest rate decline coincided with a decrease in commercial bank assets which fell in April by 3.6 percent to \$1.4 billion. Total bank deposits decreased by 4.6 percent to \$1.1 billion. Of this amount, domestic deposits (amounting only to \$ 400,000) shrank by 7.6 percent.

## ...but heads into more storm clouds ahead

According to Lithuanian media reports, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned of a possible crisis in 8 to 9 months unless the Lithuanian government resolutely tackles its problems in the financial and energy sectors. Finance Minister Križinauskas, Central Bank president Šarkinas and Energy Minister Kutas reportedly met with parliamentary groups in late May to discuss the situation. Kutas reportedly said that the combined debt in the energy sector ( to Russian suppliers) had risen to over \$175 million and it continues to increase. The practice of subsidizing energy use appears to be a sore point with international advisers in the IMF/World Bank, who want to see Lithuanians bite the bullet and end the practice immediately. Lithuanian officials, faced with an increasingly restive public, want a slower phase-out of subsidies. Recent anti-poverty demonstrations in Vilnius, and promises of more to come, brought home the political consequences of social and economic hardship endured by the majority of the population. The ruling LDDP party, whose past government leaders were accused of waste, fraud and mismanagement in their handling of the economy, may not exactly welcome responsibility for prescribing more austerity measures in the run-up to the October parliamentary elections.

However, Russian suppliers, such as Gazprom, the sole source of natural gas, are holding Lithuania's feet to the fire, demanding payment for overdue bills. Gazprom in the past had reduced the flow of gas to Lithuania's pipeline when bills went unpaid and it is now threatening to charge more for its product if the \$32 .7 million overdue account is not settled soon. To raise money, Minister Kutas reportedly proposed to increase sales taxes on gasoline and oil products and to sell off to private investors up to 30 percent of Lithuanian gas and oil pipelines. Subsequently, the government did announce a 40 percent hike in gasoline taxes (and for good measure increased sales taxes on alcohol to

20 percent and on tobacco to 50 percent). For more on taxes and government budget woes see below.

The other bone of contention between the IMF/World Bank and the Lithuanian government appeared to be the handling of the banking crisis and its aftermath. Although details reported in the press were sketchy, the initial plan suggested by the World Bank appeared based on merging all the problem banks into one by July 1. Whether it would be nationalized or remain under private ownership was unclear. As part of the rescue package, the World Bank was expected to contribute about \$50 million. The Lithuanian side apparently preferred a more gradual approach. Options were explored to permit Litimpeks, the Joint Stock Innovation Bank and Western Bank to gradually return to business on a reduced scale after restructuring their portfolios. Depositors in some of the affected banks were invited to convert their deposits to shares in the banks.

On May 21, the government appeared to shift its position when it announced that it would, after all, nationalize the Joint Stock Innovation Bank and commit about one-half billion litas (\$125 million) to its revival. Previous plans to attract more capital from private share-holders were abandoned. The bank may be restored to private ownership once it is again operational.

Nomura Securities of Japan reportedly has expressed interest in the privatization project. Litimpeks has not been affected by this decision and it will continue to operate as a private bank. The fate of the third major bank plagued by lack of liquidity, Western Bank, remains unresolved at this writing.

There is also a third area of reported disagreement between the IMF and the Lithuanian government. It is over agricultural policy. The Lithuanians have tended to protect their domestic market using trade restrictions and high tariffs. The IMF challenged such restrictive trade policies as counterproductive and called on the Lithuanians to reduce agricultural tariffs to 20 percent by September and to a flat 10 percent by September of 1997. The Lithuanian government reportedly agreed only to freeze its tariff levels. Market protection may have had its intended effect: after five years of decline in acreage planted, spring plantings this year reportedly are at the level of last year. However, only one-third of private farmers polled by the media reported having sufficient equipment and implements. This percentage fell to one-fifth at farming cooperatives. Despite technical advice to the contrary, farmers continue to plant traditional grain. They are reluctant to shift into potentially more valuable commodities such as flax and sugar beet. Complaints continue over high prices of inputs and low commodity prices.

## **International ties that bind**

The IMF and the World Bank are not the only outside voices influencing Lithuanian economic policies. The European Union (EU), which Lithuania wishes to join, has a large presence in the country. The EU Commission, from its offices in Vilnius, handed the Lithuanian government a 160 page questionnaire calibrated to determine the degree of Lithuania's eligibility to become a member. EU experts have a strong presence in Lithuania and are working to assist in harmonizing Lithuanian policies, laws and regulations with those of the EU. Barriers to trade, at least with the EU, will inevitably be dismantled.

In the meantime, the Lithuanian parliament is considering ratifying the country's association agreement with the EU. It is the only parliament among countries seeking EU association which has not yet ratified such an agreement. Although the association status would be only a preliminary step to full membership, it carries obligations, including removal of the current Constitutional prohibition against land ownership by foreign citizens. A vote on the land ownership provision and the association agreement is scheduled for late June.

Other recent commitments undertaken by Lithuania include a free trade pact with the Czech Republic, an understanding to seek more cooperation on trade with Poland, trade agreements with the other Baltic states, agricultural trade understanding with Switzerland and an investment protection agreement with Israel, Lithuania's major trading partner east of Suez. Also, Lithuania's parliament is expected to vote soon on ratifying a number of intellectual property protection treaties, including the 1983 Paris Convention on Industrial Property Protection, the 1990 Washington Treaty on Cooperation in Patents Rights Enforcement and the 1886 Berne Convention on Protecting Works of Art and Literature.

## **Lithuanian budget deficits, debts and major projects**

During the first quarter of the year, budget expenditures exceeded revenues by over \$73 million. The revenue shortfall was aggravated when many companies could not pay their taxes because of accounts frozen in commercial banks affected by the banking crisis. Finance Minister Križinauskas obtained some financial first aid from a consortium of foreign banks (Chemical, Dresdner, Nomura, Tokyo/Mitsubishi), borrowing \$33 million at 8 percent. Prime Minister Stankevičius has announced that another \$33 million would be borrowed to pay government salaries and pension benefits. Prospects for contracting loans improved with the drop in interest rates in May. However, according to press reports, an expected \$14 million loan from the IMF reportedly was not disbursed, possibly over the disagreements reported above.

In step with the expanding budget deficit, foreign debt has been rising. Direct government incurred debt reached \$822 million, equivalent to some 20 percent of the estimated GDP. In 1995, this ration was approximately 15 percent. Debt service payments for the year are estimated to increase to 20 percent of export earnings compared to 1.2 percent last year. As a result, Finance Ministry Secretary Lionginas said that the uses of future foreign loans will be controlled more tightly. By year's end over 60 percent of foreign lending will go to investment projects, compared to 40 percent at present. Government guaranteed loans will increasingly be reserved for large investment projects (small and medium businesses will have to make their own arrangements) and government debt financing. A spokeswoman for the political opposition, economics professor Birutė Visokavičienė, accused the government of laxness in enforcing repayments of foreign loans guaranteed by the government.

One of the casualties of the tight budget may become the Butingė off-shore oil handling facility project. The California engineering company, Fluor Daniel, suspended its participation on April 25 after the government failed to come through with its share of the promised financing. Fluor had been supported by the US ExIm Bank to the tune of an estimated \$5 million in providing consulting management and design work for the project. To salvage the project, the Lithuanian government reportedly is considering reducing its 51 percent stake to 34 percent by selling shares to private investors and earmarking for the project some of the tax revenues from the gas tax hike. To restart and complete the facility, some \$116 million will be needed from Lithuanian sources to match the \$150 reportedly committed by the ExIm.

Other projects appeared to fare better. Public sector investments in the telecommunication infrastructure is slated to double in 1996 to \$60 million from the previous year. The telephone company estimates that it will be able to eliminate its backlog of phone installation requests and satisfy all customers with prompter service. The ratio of telephones per 100 inhabitants has reached 25 which is better than many countries in central and eastern Europe, including the Czech Republic.

Mažeikiai oil refinery was given a boost when Chase and a consortium of other foreign banks worked out a \$37.5 million loan package to cover the purchase of 30,000 metric tons of Russian crude oil for refining at Mažeikiai. The loan would not require a governmental guarantee of repayment but it does require government approval as the refinery is state owned. If the deal goes through, its backers claim that Mažeikiai could earn \$150-170 million in revenues. This could assist the refinery in financing its long planned up-grading of its facilities.

The World Bank has announced its decision to lend \$10 million for energy conservation in housing. The loan would be for 20 years at 5-6 percent and administered through several commercial banks. The Danish government would provide an additional \$5.6 million for the purpose. Eligible borrowers from the fund would be home owner associations, individuals and local governments seeking to reduce energy consumption in their dwellings and communal spaces such as schools.

More project money was promised by an international public sector group composed of the World Bank, the Japanese Export Import Bank, Nordic Bank, and the EBRD for road development. The \$86.2 million package will be available for implementing the Via Baltica highway project and upgrading the Klaipeda to Minsk East-West highway.

Among significant private investment projects, Philips has announced a plan to build a plant in Šiauliai to produce telecommunication components. No price tag was cited, but Philips indicated that it would go ahead regardless of any delays experienced in developing the Siauliai airport project, now long in gestation. AT&T representatives have also visited Vilnius. Although there have been no specific details, and an AT&T spokesman cautioned not to expect any investment decisions before the summer, the Lithuanian press reported that according to Economics Minister Kaminskas, AT&T was considering investing \$100 million in a yet unspecified project.

The U.S. based Stanton Group signed a memorandum of understanding with the utility, Lietuvos energija, to develop the electricity generation and transmission infrastructure. One project would develop a high tension connector grid with Poland, enabling the export to the West of Lithuanian-generated electricity. Another project would be the completion of the Kruonis hydro generating plant. A third would be the improvement of the fossil fuel generating plant at Elektrėnai to handle the emulsified oil based fuel imported from Venezuela. The cost of the combined projects is estimated at over \$100 million.

Finally, a Massachusetts state delegation, led by Lt. Governor Paul Cellucci, visited Lithuania in May and talked of cooperating on joint projects in energy development, financial services, health care and environmental protection.

## Changes in the investment climate

The magazine, Institutional Investor, published in London, rated Lithuania the 89th country in the world in terms of investment risk. It based its ranking on a poll of 100 leading international banks. Lithuania has been slipping behind its neighbors, Estonia and Latvia in attracting foreign investment on a per capita basis. Last year, new direct foreign investment amounted to only \$50 million. Complaints

listed by the foreign business most frequently include the following: changes and uncertainty in commercial and tax laws and regulations, bureaucratic red tape, crime/corruption, and lack of information.

Algis Avižienis, Director of the Lithuanian Investment Agency, acknowledged there were obstacles to investment but pointed out that over 70 percent of foreign business managers in Lithuania were not only satisfied with their decisions but would be willing to invest more. In addition, Lithuania offers the benefits of its prime geographic location for east-west trading, it has a skilled and educated work force and, contrary to popular impressions, its crime

rate, compared to that of the region, is relatively low. Therefore, Lithuania at this time may offer entrepreneurial investors more opportunities for obtaining higher returns than could be realized in competing countries.

New investment incentives were announced in May by Economics Minister Zenonas Kaminskas. Reinvested company profits will no longer be subject to a 10 percent corporate tax. This would apply to both foreign and domestic investors. Foreign investment incentives would also be extended to local investors investing foreign held resources.

## OPINION

**Paul Goble**

### Analysis from Washington

#### A Dangerous Suggestion

Two senior military analysts in Moscow have called for the creation of special military formations to reestablish Russian power in the non-Russian former Soviet republics.

Writing in the April 11 issue of the Moscow paper, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Independence Newspaper), Lieutenant General Valeriy Dementyev and Anton Surikov, an advisor of the Moscow-based Defense Research Institute, have rejected the notion that Russia does not have foreign enemies. They argue instead that Russia's "fundamental potential adversaries" remain the U.S. and the NATO countries and that Moscow's "primary enemy" consists of "the forces of aggressive nationalism."

Among these forces, they lump together "the army, police and other paramilitary groups in the Baltic republics, the illegal armed organizations of Dudayev, the Tajik opposition, and others."

Further, the authors suggest that "as a result of the events of 1991, the Russian national entity has been divided" and that discrimination against ethnic minorities is taking place everywhere "with the exception of Belarus and perhaps Ukraine."

To respond to these challenges, the two authors suggest that Moscow must be prepared to use force to oppose territorial claims against the Russian Federation by the "ethnocratic" Baltic states and claims to the Caspian Sea bed by Azerbaijan.

They argue that the Russian Federation must be prepared to use force in a "preemptive" manner to prevent a "NATO advance onto the territory of the former Soviet Union."

And they suggest that "specialized elite units" of the Russian army should conduct such "local wars" and carry out a "cleansing" of political opponents from the territory of the non-Russian countries involved. Among the tasks to be assigned to these groups and loyal local militias — "to be formed from representatives of the pro-Russian local population" — will be "the filtration of nationalists and the deportation of some categories of citizens from different areas."

It is disturbing enough that such an outrageous proposal should be made by senior Russian military thinkers and appear in Moscow's leading reformist paper. It is even more disturbing that, in the week since the article appeared, the Russian government has not explicitly disowned it and that Western governments have not condemned it.

For the real danger here lies not with the article itself but the nature of reactions to it.

There is the possibility that this inflammatory article will pass without comment and criticism either in Russia or the West. Some will see this silence as a form of assent and assume that they can push even further.

Moreover, the article could be used by the Yeltsin government as a device to remind the West that Yeltsin is under pressure from some Russians to behave even more harshly than he has. And consequently that the West has no choice but to support him in his "moderate" course and to show understanding when he takes what would otherwise be criticized as extreme steps.

And if there is no response, this article will contribute to the even harsher rhetoric in Moscow that by itself will have consequences in Russia's relationships not only with the former Soviet republics but with the West as well.

**Evaldas Imbrasas**<http://www.tdd.lt/lkl/>

# The Olympics

Sixty-four Lithuanians will be participating in the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta starting July 20. The list includes 16 cyclists, 14 track-and-field athletes, and, of course 12 basketball players. Lithuanians will take part in 15 different sporting events in all

Lithuanian female rower (single boat), **Birutė Sakickienė**, won second place in the rowing qualification regatta that took place Sunday, June 9th in Lucerne, Switzerland, and earned a pass to Atlanta Olympic Games. Other Lithuanian rowers who will compete in Atlanta are the Pair without Coxswain - **Juozas Bagdonas** and **Einius Petkus**. They earned a pass last year in the World Rowing championship in Tampere, Finland, finishing in seventh place. Bagdonas and Petkus will prepare for Olympic Games in the United States along with the national team of this country. B. Sakickienė will be training at home in Lithuania.

Lithuanian Olympian discus thrower, **Virgilijus Alekna**, gained second place in the international athletic competitions in Duisburg (Germany) on Wednesday, June 12th. His best result was 67.16 meters (the winner, current world champion Lars Riedel from Germany, had 69.54 m - the best result this season). V. Alekna's best this season's result is 67.62 m - it's also one of the best results this season in the world. Let's remember that the only gold medal in the last Olympic Games in Barcelona '92 was won by another Lithuanian discus thrower, current Olympic champion **Romas Ubartas**.

**Lithuanian basketball national team:**

The Lithuanian national team traveled to Australia in May to play several control games with the Australian team in preparation for the Atlanta '96 Olympic Games. The Lithuanians played without their stars, Šarūnas Marčiulionis and Arvydas Sabonis, Artūras Karnišovas and Gintaras Einikis. Marčiulionis and Sabonis were taking a rest after the grueling NBA championship games. Both have minor injuries but that should not have any influence on their play in Atlanta. Karnišovas still plays for his team FC Barcelona in the Spanish basketball league ACB. Einikis still plays for "Saratov Avtodoroznik" in the Russian league. Marčiulionis was recently traded to Denver.

Also on June 12, **Rita Ramanauskaitė**, Lithuanian female javelin thrower and candidate to the national Olympic team was second in the international competitions in Pori, Finland. Her best result was 60.44 m.

**Basketball****The Lithuanian Olympic Team Basketball Pre-Olympic Schedule in the US**

July 7 vs. Croatia in Chicago at the Rosemont Horizon. 1pm

July 9 vs. Brazil in Las Vegas at the Thomas & Mack Center. 7:30 pm.

July 12 vs. Phoenix Suns in Phoenix at the America West Arena. 7:30 pm

July 15 vs. Greece in Chicago at the Rosemont Horizon. 7:00 pm.

July 16 vs. Puerto Rico in New York at Madison Square Garden. 7:30 pm

July 17 in New York. Opponent not yet specified.

Tickets for all games can be obtained through TicketMaster (312-559-1212).

**International Basketball Tournaments in Spain**

The Lithuanian national team left for Spain on June 12 to play in two international tournaments there. The team includes Lithuania's best players:

Centers: A. Sabonis, G. Einikis. E. Žukauskas, V. Praskevičius

Forwards: A. Karnišovas, S. Stombergas, K. Šeštokas, M. Žukauskas

Guards: R. Kurtinaitis, D. Maskoliūnas, D. Lukminas, T. Pačesas, R. Vaišvila

NBA star Š. Marčiulionis left for Sacramento on June 11 to receive medical advice about his injured leg. He is expected to join the team later. The head coach is Vladas Garastas. Donn Nelson, Assistant Coach of the Phoenix Suns, is also one of the coaches for the Lithuanian national basketball team.

## European Junior Basketball Championship

The Lithuanian men's junior basketball team will be participating in the European Junior Basketball Championship taking place in Turkey June 30 to July 7 against Israel, the U.S.A., Slovenia, Croatia and Turkey. The preliminary roster is as follows:

Centers: Ž. Ilgauskas, V. Praskevičius, N. Jurkšas  
 Forwards: M. Žukauskas, K. Šeštokas, T. Masiulis (Žalgiris), N. Karlikanovas, A. Jurkūnas, G. Aidietis (Monmouth, NCAA), E. Jocys, D. Adomaitis, M. Timinskas, T. Ivanauskas (Šilutė)  
 Guards: M. Janulis (Syracuse, NCAA), S. Jasikevičius (Maryland, NCAA), K. Marčiulionis (High School, USA), R. Petraitis (Mažeikiai)  
 The Lithuanian junior team coach is H. Giedraitis; assistant coach is S. Sakalauskas.

## At the Olympics

As Lithuanian basketball fans all over the world proudly recall, the Lithuanian national basketball team won bronze medals at the Barcelona Olympic Games in 1992. They were third in place to the U.S.A.'s "Dream Team" which won the gold and Croatia the silver. Enthusiasts are looking forward to an equally riveting performance this year, with Lithuania perhaps upsetting the Dream Team or at least grabbing second place.

Group A: U.S.A., Croatia, Lithuania, Argentina, China, Angola

Group B: Brazil, Yugoslavia, Greece, Puerto Rico, Australia, Korea

July 20 v. Croatia at 3:00 pm  
 July 22 v. Argentina at 8:00 pm  
 July 24 v. U.S.A. at 8:00 pm  
 July 26 v. Angola at 10:00 pm  
 July 28 v. China at 10:00 pm

### Candidates for Lithuanian national team

#### Centers

**Arvydas Sabonis** (Portland Trailblazers, NBA), 223 cm  
**Gintaras Einikis** (Saratov Avtodoroznik, Russia), 208 cm  
**Virginijus Praskevičius** (Kaunas Atletas, LKL), 206 cm  
**Zydrunas Ilgauskas** (Kaunas Atletas, LKL), 218 cm  
**Eurelijus Zukauskas** (Klaipeda Neptunas, LKL), 218 cm

#### Forwards

**Arturas Karnisovas** (FC Barcelona, Spain), 204 cm  
**Saulius Stombergas** (Kaunas Atletas, LKL), 204 cm  
**Dainius Adomaitis** (Vilnius Statyba, LKL), 200 cm  
**Evaldas Jocys** (Plunge Olimpas, LKL), 202 cm  
**Kestutis Sestokas** (Kaunas Zalgiris, LKL), 202 cm  
**Andrius Jurkunas** (Clemson univ., NCAA), 205 cm  
**Mindaugas Timinskas** (Iona univ., NCAA), 203 cm  
**Mindaugas Zukauskas** (Siauliai Siauliai, LKL), 202 cm

#### Guards

**Sarunas Marciulionis** (Sacramento Kings, NBA), 196 cm  
**Rimas Kurtinaitis** (Kaunas Zalgiris, LKL), 196 cm  
**Darius Lukminas** (Kaunas Zalgiris, LKL), 192 cm  
**Darius Maskoliunas** (Kaunas Zalgiris, LKL), 194 cm  
**Tomas Pacesas** (Kaunas Atletas, LKL), 190 cm  
**Rytis Vaisvila** (Kaunas Atletas, LKL), 192 cm  
**Darius Sirtautas** (Kaunas Zalgiris, LKL), 190 cm  
**Alvydas Pazdrzdis** (McNeeze univ., NCAA), 192 cm

These are the final standings of the 1995-96 Basketball season in Lithuania:

Place	Team	Won	Lost	Off. : Def.	Streak	Last 10
1	Kaunas "Atletas"	30	6	3211:2687	Won 2	8-2
2	Kaunas "Zalgiris"	27	9	3323:2906	Won 1	8-2
3	Plunge "Olimpas"	25	11	3339:3000	Won 2	7-3
4	Silute "Silute"	18	18	2994:3018	Lost 5	3-7
5	Vilnius "Sakalai"	18	18	3179:3256	Won 1	4-6
6	Vilnius "Statyba"	17	19	3115:3133	Lost 1	5-5
7	Klaipeda "Neptunas"	17	19	2905:2982	Lost 1	6-4
8	Siauliai "Siauliai"	16	20	2906:2934	Won 1	3-7
9	Alytus "Savy"	9	27	2992:3461	Won 1	4-6
10	Panevezys "Lietkabelis"	3	33	2658:3245	Lost 2	2-8

## The Lithuanian Olympic Team

The Lithuanian Olympic team that will participate in the 1996 Atlanta games will be the largest in history: 64 athletes participating in 15 sporting events. An additional 38 individuals (managers, trainers, doctors, masseurs, bicycle mechanics) will travel, bringing the total number to 102. At the 1992 Barcelona games, 47 athletes participated in 11 sporting events.

The group leader is Stasys Šaparnis, vice president of the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee. Trainers include three foreigners: two Americans (Don Nelson for basketball and Mark Taylor for swimming) and one Russian (Boris Vasiljev for bicycling). [A third American, Michael Lohberg, was later added as swimming coach.]

Following is a list of participants and their trainers as submitted by the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee:

<b>Athletes and Trainers</b>		
Kayaking and Canoeing: two-person kayak	<b>Vidas Kupčinskas/ Vaidas Mizeras</b>	Trainer: Juozas Gedminas (all from Kaunas)
Boxing	<b>Vitalijus Karpačiauskas</b> Alternate: <b>Rimantas Prišmantas</b>	Trainer: Julius Kibas (all from Panevėžys)
Bicycling-- Men's-- Track and Field:	<b>Artūras Kasputis</b> <b>Remigijus Lupeikis</b>	Trainers: Narsutis Dumauskas Vaclovas Šiugždinis (all from Klaipėda, except where otherwise indicated)
Bicycling-- Men's-- Track	<b>Artūras Trumpauskas</b> <b>Mindaugas Umaras</b> <b>Linas Balčiūnas</b> <b>Raimondas Vilčinskas</b>	
Bicycling-- Men's--Road	<b>Ivanas Romanovas</b> <b>Donatas Virbickas</b> <b>Arnoldas Saprykinas</b> <b>Saulius Ruškys</b> <b>Raimondas Rumšas (Šilutė)</b>	
Bicycling--Women's-- Road	<b>Diana Žiliūtė</b> <b>Jolanta Polikevičiūtė</b> <b>Rasa Polikevičiūtė</b>	
Bicycling--Women's-- Road	<b>Rasa Mažeikytė</b> <b>Rita Razmaitė (Šiauliai)</b>	Trainers: Valerijus Konovalovas Antanas Jakimavičius Boris Vasiljev (Moscow) (all from Panevėžys except where otherwise indicated)
Judo	<b>Algimantas Merkevičius</b>	Trainer: Petras Vinciūnas (both from Kaunas)
Wrestling--Freestyle	<b>Ričardas Pauliukonis</b>	Trainer: Sergejus Kasimovas (both from Klaipėda)
Wrestling--Greco-Roman	<b>Remigijus Šukevičius (Kaunas)</b> <b>Ruslan Vartanov (Vilnius)</b>	Trainer: Eduardas Fainštinis (Vilnius)
Rowing--Men's--Two- Seated without Coxswain	<b>Juozas Bagdonas/ Einis Petkus</b>	Trainer: Kęstutis Bartkus (all from Vilnius)
Rowing--Women's-- Single-seated	<b>Birutė Šakickienė</b>	Trainer: Algirdas Arelis (both from Kaunas)

Basketball	<b>Arvydas Sabonis</b> <b>Šarūnas Marčiulionis</b> (Vilnius) <b>Artūras Karnišovas</b> (Vilnius) <b>Gintaras Einikis</b> <b>Rimas Kurtinaitis</b> <b>Darius Lukminas</b> <b>Saulius Štombergas</b> <b>Darius Maskoliūnas</b> <b>Kęstutis Šeštokas</b> <b>Eurelijus Žukauskas</b> (Klaipėda) <b>Virgilijus Praškevičius</b> <b>Tomas Pačėsas</b>	Trainers: <b>Vladas Garastas</b> <b>Jonas Kazlauskas</b> (Vilnius) <b>Don Nelson</b> (USA)  Lithuanian Basketball Commissioner: <b>Algimantas Pavilionis</b> (Vilnius)  (all from Kaunas except where otherwise indicated)	
Light Athletics: Height	<b>Nelė Žilinskienė</b> (Vilnius)	Trainers: <b>Kęstutis Šapka</b> <b>Romanas Pšigockis</b> <b>Rimas Kalibatas</b> (all from Vilnius except where otherwise indicated)	
Light Athletics: Septathlon	<b>Remigija Nazarovienė</b> (Vilnius)		
Light Athletics: Rutulys	<b>Saulius Kleiza</b> (Kaunas)		
Light Athletics: Discus	<b>Virgilijus Alekna</b> (Vilnius) <b>Vaclovas Kidykas</b>		
Light Athletics: Javelin	<b>Rita Ramanauskaitė</b> (Kaunas)		
Light Athletics: Archery	<b>Audrius Raizgys</b> (Kaunas)		
Light Athletics: Walking	<b>Sonata Milušauskaitė</b> (Birštonas) <b>Valdas Kazlauskas</b> (Druskininkai)		
Marathon	<b>Stefanija Statkuvienė</b> <b>Dainius Virbickas</b> <b>Pavelas Fedorenko</b> (Panevėžys) <b>Česlovas Kundrotas</b> (Šiauliai)		
Gymnastics-- artistic	<b>Kristina Kliukevičiūtė</b>		
Swimming: 50 & 100 m.	<b>Raimundas Mažuolis</b> (Vilnius)		Trainers: <b>Evaldas Skyrius</b> <b>Evaldas Belevičius</b> <b>Mark Taylor</b> (USA) <b>Michael Lohberg</b> (USA) (all from Kaunas except where otherwise indicated)
Swimming: 50 & 200 m.	<b>Laura Petrutytė</b> (Vilnius)		
Swimming: 50 & 100 m. & Butterfly	<b>Dita Želvienė</b>		
Swimming: 100 m. Backstroke	<b>Mindaugas Špokas</b>	The Lithuanian team will also participate in the 4 X 100 m. competition.	
Swimming: 100 m. Breaststroke	<b>Nerijus Beiga</b>		
Swimming: 200 m. Backstroke	<b>Arūnas Savickas</b> (Panevėžys)		
Swimming: 100 m. Backstroke	<b>Darius Grigalionis</b> (Panevėžys)		
Swimming: 100 & 200 m. Butterfly	<b>Mindaugas Bružas</b> (Klaipėda)		

Heavy Athletics:	<b>Ramūnas Vyšniauskas</b>	Trainer: Bronius Vyšniauskas (both from Klaipėda)
Shooting (stationary)	<b>Daina Gudzinevičiūtė</b>	Trainer: Leonas Molotokas (both from Vilnius)
Table tennis	<b>Rūta Garkauskaitė</b>	Trainer: Roma Garkauskienė (both from Kaunas)
Modern Pentathlon	<b>Andrejus Zadneprovskis</b>	Trainer: Edmundas Margevičius (both from Kaunas)

From an article by Irena Regienė, DRAUGAS June 28, 1996

<b>Accompanying Officials</b>		
Stasys Šaparnis	Head of Mission	Vilnius
Kazys Steponavičius	Deputy Head of Mission	Vilnius
Remigijus Gaška	Olympic Attache	USA
Nijolė Domarkienė	Representative for Accreditation and Liaison with Olympic Committee	Vilnius
Laimonas Tapinas	Press Attache	Vilnius
Vytautas Zumeris	Physician for Basketball Team	Vilnius
Juozas Petkevičius	Masseur for Basketball Team	Kaunas
Dalius Barkauskas	Physician	Kaunas
Zigmas Živatkauskas	Masseur	Vilnius
Vladas Sklizmantas	Physician	Vilnius
Vitalijus Sliusorenko	Physician for Bicycle Team	Klaipėda
Vasilijus Špundovas	Mechanic for Bicyclists	Vilnius

From an article by Irena Regienė, DRAUGAS, July 5, 1996



photo courtesy of DRAUGAS

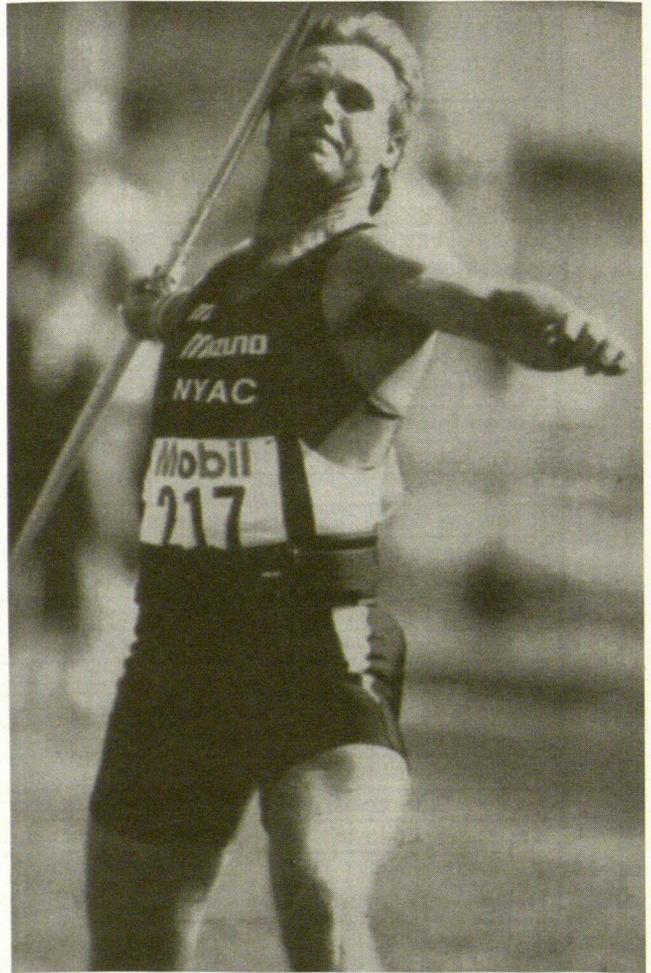
A group of cyclists from Lithuania, participating in the 26th Olympiad at Atlanta, GA. From the left to right: Artūras Kasputis, Artūras Trumpauskas, Mindaugas Umaras and Jonas Romanovas.

## Lithuanian-American U.S. Javelin Champion

Tom Pukštys, 28, a 1986 graduate of Stagg High School in Palos Hills, first threw the javelin on a family visit to Lithuania when he was 13. He rose to national prominence in 1990 as a senior at the University of Florida after notching the second-best throw in the country that year. Pukštys finished 10th at the 1992 Olympics and set the current U.S. record of 281 feet, 2 inches the following year at a meet in Finland. He won U.S. titles in 1993 and 1995 and placed ninth at the 1993 World Championships. Pukštys, a motorcycle devotee who eventually wants to race competitively, recently resigned his position as an assistant track coach at Brown University and plans to move south after the Olympics to train with Louisiana State University throwing coach Rolf Uebel.

Defending Olympic champion and world record-holder Jan Zelezny of the Czech Republic, who broke his own mark month with a throw of 323 feet, 1 inch, is favored to win the gold. Pukštys' goal is to finish in the top six.

[Chicago Tribune, Sunday June 16, 1996 from an article by Bonnie DeSimone]



Tom Puikštys (photo courtesy of DRAUGAS)

## Lithuanian-American Wins First in Synchronized Swimming in American Junior Olympics

Alia Jūratė Arbaitė from Tucson, Arizona became America's young champion in solo water ballet (synchronized swimming) at the American Junior Olympics in Denver, Colorado. At the international water ballet competition that took place on May 17 in Dusseldorf, Germany, Alia won sixth place among 117 competitors in a solo performance, and seventh place in a duet with her partner, Kelly Wilkinson.

From an article by A.N., DRAUGAS June 28, 1996

## Those Shirts Again

Colorful jerseys of the Lithuanian Basketball team may be purchased by calling the Phoenix Suns Marketing Department (800-821-7151 or 800-211-5887)

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Ramunė Kubilius

# Excerpts from Lithuanian Sources in the US

## News Briefs from Lithuanian Sources in the U.S.

### Lithuanian School in Poland

The Kovo 11 (March 11th) High School in Punksas, Poland will celebrate its 40th anniversary July 5-7, 1996. Former teachers and students are expected to attend the anniversary celebration which will begin July 5th with the high school drama club's presentation. On July 6th, there will be an official program with concerts and reunions of various graduating classes. On July 7th, the high school's ethnographic ensemble will perform. The school, which is one of the Lithuanian islands in Poland, will commemorate its anniversary by preparing a book and a jubilee pin.

(TEVIŠKES ŽIBURIAI, 3/19/96)

### Little Fir Tree

EGLUTĖ is a Lithuanian monthly magazine for children. Even though its first issue appeared during Christmas of 1949, the magazine celebrates its birthday in January, 1950. The magazine is now going into its 46th year! The first editor (1951-55) of the magazine was poet Bernardas Braždžionis (who emigrated from Lithuania after World War II to Los Angeles and recently returned to Lithuania to live-rk).

The journal was administered from 1952 and edited from 1959 until 1993 by the sisters of the Immaculate Conception Convent in Putnam, CT. In 1993, the Lithuanian-American Community's Educational Council took over its administration, and as of 1995, its editing. The present editor/head of its editorial collective is Regina Kučas, president of the Educational Council. The technical editor is Audronė Norušis; the administrator is Viktoras Kučas.

EGLUTĖ in the past was popular among young children growing up outside of Lithuania. During one period, children were writing letters to the mouse "Puputis" whose travels around the world (and to the moon) were written up in the magazine. Today, there are about 350 paid subscribers — 100 in Lithuania. The remainder are in North America, Poland, Germany and England.

Some Lithuanian language schools or benefactors (in Hamilton, Canada; Lemont, IL; Chicago, IL; Los Angeles, CA) order one or more subscriptions. The magazine, it is hoped, still plays a role in entertaining and educating young Lithuanian language-reading children (and the adults who read to them), no matter where they live. (At one time, an elderly subscriber was a loyal EGLUTĖ reader because he said that the journal was written in simple enough Lithuanian for him to practice!-rk). In December 1995 a little rhyming poem solicited subscribers: If you are a good child and you know how to read, It's now the time, to EGLUTĖ to subscribe ("Jei esi geras vaikas/ir moki jau skaityti./Yra pats laikas/Eglutę užsakyti!"). The annual fee is \$15 (in the U.S.), \$20 (in other countries). The subscription address is: EGLUTĖ, 13648 Kickapoo Trail, Lockport, IL 60441, USA.

(TEVIŠKES ŽIBURIAI, 3/19/96, from an article by Aldona Smulkštys)

## Culture Initiatives

The Lithuanian-American Community's Cultural Council complements the work of other LAC Councils. While the Educational Council supports educational needs, the Cultural Council seeks to ensure that Lithuanian culture remains alive and lively. The Council and its energetic president, Alė Keželis, has sought out new projects. In years past, the Cultural Council sponsored a cultural awards festival which awarded "the best of..." prizes for literature, music, etc. In 1995, the Cultural Council changed that tradition — awards were given for persons who are active in Lithuanian cultural life (outside of Lithuania) — to honor them, to recognize their contributions, and to encourage them to work on future endeavors.

Among the Council projects — a verbal history of the Lithuanian diaspora. This would include their stories, successes and failures. Three films are planned which would document the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc's work since its founding, in both Lithuanian and in English. A Lithuanian language press drive is planned whereby new subscribers during the time period would receive discounts. The Cultural Council, like other LAC Councils and other

organizations and individuals, hopes to receive financial support from the Lithuanian Foundation in the coming year.

(DRAUGAS, 4/4/96, from an article by Jurgis Janušaitis)

## “Birūta Designs” in Cleveland

The Cleveland Plain Dealer’s March 21st “Style” pages included an article by fashion editor Janet McCue illustrated with eight photographs. The article highlights the work of three sisters who make young girls’ special days even more special. In 1996, the ten-year-old “Biruta Designs” (from the names of Birutė and Rūta) sewed 100 Holy Communion dresses and 200 veils for young Catholic girls in the Cleveland area. The three sisters are the Mekesaitis sisters—Birutė Vedegis, Rūta Degutis, and Vitalija Butkus.

The sisters also are active in Lithuanian activities—Birutė is an officer of the Lithuanian-American Community’s Cleveland chapter and is active in Lithuanian scouts; Rūta runs a branch of Transpak, which provides services such as sending parcels and transfers money to Lithuania.

(DRAUGAS, 4/4/96)

## Summer Olympics

Lithuania is planning on sending 100 persons to the summer Olympic Games in Atlanta: 80 athletes and 20 trainers, etc. About 40 of the athletes — basketball players, bicyclists, field and track athletes, rowers — have already achieved wins in their sports. It is hoped that the remainder will appear on the Olympic Committee’s final lists which come out June 15th. There were 46 athletes who went to the Barcelona games.

Some of the best hopes for medals lie with the basketball team, the bicyclists, perhaps swimmer R. Mazuolis, and maybe the boxers. Many of the athletes will depart Lithuania for Atlanta on July 17th, on a LAL (Lietuvos aviaolinija) charter flight. The passengers will include President Algirdas Brazauskas, sports federation officials, journalists, etc. The bicyclists will fly in from Colombia where they are training, and the basketball team will arrive around July 5th to play. The athletes will stay in the Olympic village and some trainers and others will stay in rented cottages about 20 minutes outside of Atlanta’s Olympic stadiums.

Even though Atlanta is on the minds of the Lithuanian Olympic Committee members, the Italian ambassador Frank Tempesta visited LTOK headquarters. Rome is seeking to become the site of the 2004 games, and support is being from Lithuania’s Olympic Committee. Rome is one of 11 cities seeking to host those games.

(DARBININKAS, 3/22/96, from an interview conducted by journalist Vytautas Saulius with Lithuanian Olympic Committee President Artūras Poviliūnas)

## Utena at the Heart

The French National Geographic Institute, which determines Europe’s geographic center, announced a few years ago that the center is in Utena, 27 km. from Vilnius, Lithuania. A few months ago Lithuania’s geographic center was announced as being in the middle of fields and farmlands, between Kedainiai and Dotnuva. Geographer Rimantas Krupickas indicated that since some of Lithuania’s borders and the sea wall haven’t been finalized, the center may change.

(DARBININKAS, 3/22/96)

## Lithuanians on US College Basketball Teams

Lithuanian college basketball players presently are on teams at: Syracuse University, University of Maryland, Clemson, Monmouth, Valparaiso, Iona. All (except Iona) made it to the NCAA finals in March. There are presently two players at Monmouth—junior (and starter) Giedrius Aidietis and sophomore Gintautas Vileita. Both played on high school teams before going to Monmouth on scholarship. Giedrius was a student from Lithuania who received a scholarship to play high school basketball at Bishop Egan, PA. Monmouth went to the Division I finals of the NCAA for the first time this year.

(DARBININKAS, 3/29/96, from articles by Rimas Sedeika and Svajus Asadauskas)

## Bishops Protest Elimination of Religious and Ethics Classes in Schools

The Lithuanian Bishops’ Conference in February wrote a letter to Lithuania’s President Algirdas Brazauskas and Parliament’s Česlovas Juršėnas asking for a change in a new educational reform law. By that ruling (paragraph #17), religion classes are to be moved off of the regular educational lesson roster, and ethics classes are to be eliminated completely. The Chair of the Conference, Audrys Juozas Bačkis, wrote that the planned changes ignore the importance of courses such as these in Lithuanian schools.

At this time many people in Lithuania feel that many troubles are caused by irresponsible, unethical and immoral behavior. About two thirds of students’ parents clearly have shown that they want their children to become acquainted with religious studies which they themselves could not study in their schooldays during the Soviet occu-

pation. The proposed changes would erase several years of work in developing the programs, preparing teachers, encouraging cooperation and tolerance in schools by students and teachers alike.

The Bishops' Conference requests that the status of the lessons not be changed at this time, that parents want not new hardships but support in schools for their efforts to raise morally upstanding children. This support comes from religion and ethics classes. It is requested that the government announce proposed changes openly in the future so that the public and Church officials would have the chance to participate in dialogue and avoid misunderstandings.

(DARBININKAS, 3/29/96)

### **Dainava Camps This Summer**

June 15-22	Detroit Scout Camp
June 23-30	Lithuanian "Fronto bičiuliai"
July 9-20	Young "Ateitininkai"
July 21-28	Sendraugiai "Ateitininkai"
July 28-Aug 4	"Heritage" English language youth camp

### **Friendship Day Picnic in Putnam**

The traditional Friendship Day Picnic of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception will take place Sunday, July 28 on their beautiful convent grounds, 600 Liberty Highway, Putnam, Connecticut. The program for the day will open with Holy Mass celebrated by Rev. A. Saulaitis, S.J. at 11:00 am. There will be a variety of Lithuanian foods for lunch at noon, a performance of village dancing and singing by the Sodauto Boston Ensemble at 1:30, a program by the Neringa campers at 3:00, and a drawing of gifts (including a free trip to Lithuania) at 4:00. The picnic will end with a Prayer Vigil for Lithuania at 4:30. And, of course, everyone gets a snack before departing for home.

Among the variety of activities, you can browse among the art and craft exhibits, try your luck at winning one of a thousand prizes, sample the delicious ethnic dishes prepared by the sisters and volunteers, or just enjoy relaxing on the beautiful grounds.

Be with us on Sunday, July 28th, and don't forget to invite your neighbors and friends! Call 860-928-7955 for more information.

### **LANKAS Family Camp, Washington State, August 20-25, 1996**

Bring your family to LANKAS Family Camp located at KURSA, the Latvian campground in Shelton, Washington. Daily activities include sports, hiking, swimming, and Lithuanian crafts, cooking, songs and dances, language usage and videos. The cost is \$51 per person (child or adult) for six days, not including food. For information, contact Rasa Matas (206-485-3274).

### **Tribute to Publisher of Lithuanian Encyclopedia**

The Cape Cod, Massachusetts region lost another Lithuanian-American member. On May 22nd, Juozas Kapočius died after a long illness. The recipient of the LDK Gediminas medal, 3rd rank (awarded to him by Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas in November, 1995 through Lithuania's General Consul dr. Petras Anušas), J. Kapočius had been a printer, publisher, businessman and supporter of Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. efforts and activities. In pre-war Lithuania, he had operated a cinematographic studio and publishing house. In 1949, J. Kapočius traveled to the United States, and in 1953, he started publishing Lithuanian classical works in Boston

His biggest achievements are considered to be the publication of two encyclopedias: the thirty-seven-volume Lithuanian-language Lietuvių enciklopedija and the six-volume English-language Encyclopedia Lituanica. Aidas Kupčinskas, president of the Boston chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community, delivered a eulogy for the deceased in which he recalled that word reached him in Soviet-occupied Lithuania (where he lived at the time) of the Lithuanian-language encyclopedia being published in the United States. In Lithuania, this news was met with disbelief and awe.

Lithuania's Prime Minister wrote in Draugas that publisher Juozas Kapočius, along with the encyclopedia editors, stood at the helm of this giant contribution of the diaspora. To this day, the Lithuanian-language encyclopedia published by Kapočius in the US is a treasure and used by many people in present-day Lithuania.

(DRAUGAS, 6/12/96, from an article by Alfonsas Petrutis)

## DRAUGAS in English

DRAUGAS, the Lithuanian language paper published five times a week in Chicago has a new administrator, Ignas Budrys. Through his efforts, a small store has been set up at the DRAUGAS administrative building at [4545 West 63rd Street, Chicago (312-585-9500)] where people can stop and purchase small items as souvenirs of their visit to DRAUGAS.

During the Xth Lithuanian Folk Dance festival, DRAUGAS plans to participate in the printed matter and crafts fair at the Hyatt Hotel. At the booth, volunteers will distribute a special issue of DRAUGAS commemorating the festival as well as the first issue of an experimental weekly English-language edition of DRAUGAS.

(DRAUGAS, 6/15/96)

### "An Architectural Documentation of the Lithuanian Spirit"

On May 11, 1996, Julija Minkunas not only graduated from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. with a professional degree in architecture, she also received a \$1000 award for her scholarly project "An Architectural Documentation of the Lithuanian Spirit." The young architect received her Bachelor of Science in Architecture from the University in 1995.

The daughter of a nurse and an engineer from Cleveland, J. Minkunas has been active in Lithuanian cultural life in both Cleveland and in Washington, D.C. She was a representative to the World Lithuanian Youth Congress in Lithuania and England in 1994, and will dance with the group "Juosta" in the Xth Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival in Chicago.

A member of the Tau Sigma Delta Honors Society and on the Dean's List for Scholastic Excellence, the new architect won the University's Paul A. Goettelman Award which will enable her to seek out an architectural design which best utilizes the urban environment, either in the form of a park building or a monument. The project will be shown at the Thomas H. Locraft Conference Room.

A second award of \$500 was given to J. Mikunas at her graduation—it was from an anonymous donor, whose parents had been exiled to Siberia. He was deeply moved that a young Lithuanian American, born outside of Lithuania, had commemorated Lithuania's spirit through her project. Julija's project is a memorial which may be built in a park in Vilnius, Lithuania near Lukiškis Park, across the way from the former KGB Headquarters where the statue of Lenin formerly stood. It would include an information cen-

ter, a research library and archives. Her project utilizes materials typically found in Lithuania — wood, stone and bronze. Oak trees would be planted at the entrance, and oak monuments would have the names of those who were exiled to Siberia carved into them. The commemorative memorial would use lights and dark, then lights again, ending at the 16th century St. Jacob's Church, located on the other side of the former KGB Headquarters building. The visitor would feel the experience psychologically, then be able to receive information inside the center. The schematics of the projects of J. Minkunas and her fellow graduates were displayed at the university's Architecture Center, and the project received high praise and much interest.

(DRAUGAS, 6/22/96, from an article by Elvyra Vodopalas)

## Jaunimo Centras

The stretch of Claremont Avenue in front of the Lithuanian Youth Center in Chicago was renamed Honorary Lithuanian Youth Center Drive. Participating in the ceremonies on May 11th were: the Chicago Lithuanian Language School students, Lithuanian Scout representatives, Lithuanian Youth Center Administrator Zigmantas Mikuzis, 1st Congressional District Representative Bobby Rush, 16th Ward Alderman Shirley Coleman, Cook County Commissioner Joseph Moreno, Lithuanian Youth Center neighbor Chicago Cable TV Director Nolan Roger and others. A number of the local government representatives spoke with praise of the neatly upkept Youth Center property which has stood in that spot for 40 years. (The buildings include the Lithuanian Jesuit Fathers home, the Lithuanian Youth Center chapel, and the main building houses a cafe "kavine," and auditorium, an art gallery, classrooms for the Chicago Lithuanian Language School and Lithuanian Pedagogical Institute, the Lithuanian Archives, and the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center. A number of us who attended the Lithuanian Language School there many years ago remembered the automobile sales lot and neighboring factories, which together with a Chicago park surrounded the Lithuanian American "island." Although many Lithuanian Americans have moved to the suburbs in southwest Lemont and surroundings, the Lithuanian Youth Center has found new audiences among the newly arrived Lithuanians who gather there Saturday nights for their "pokyliai." The Lithuanian Opera Company still rehearses there, and the auditorium is still the site of many Lithuanian concerts. (Who knows what the future for the property will hold-rk) Promises were made by the Youth Center's neighbor, Chicago Cable TV, that efforts will be made to beautify Claremont Avenue and build a proper parking lot on its east end.

(DRAUGAS, 5/23/96, from an article by Ant. Pauzolis)

## Children's Festival in Punkskas

The second Children's Festival took place in Punkskas, Poland April 28th. The Polish Lithuanian Youth Association helped organize the festival as one of its permanent projects. More than 200 children and young people of Lithuanian descent gathered from various towns in the Suvalkai region of Poland, from Punkskas (which has a Lithuanian language school), from Seinai, Aradnykas and other towns where Lithuanian language lessons are given privately and there is no Lithuanian language school. The first festival in 1995, organized by "Jotva" group leader Alicija Uzdilas, drew 100 participants. Twelve folk dancing groups participated; a thirteenth from Warsaw was unable to attend. Each group performed two dances or re-enacted a traditional Lithuanian folk game. Several hundred members of the audience enthusiastically greeted the young people. Perhaps the most applause went to the young performers from Punkskas whose youngest participant was nearly three years old, and the oldest was not yet in first class (approximately 5th grade?-rk) All of the participants came together for the finale and performed the traditional Lithuanian folk dance "Kalvelis".

(DRAUGAS, 5/23/96, from an article by Živilė Makauskas)

## Thomas Mann Memorial in Nida

On the Baltic Coast of Lithuania, in the resort town of Nida, the reconstructed summer home of literary classic and Nobel Prize winner German writer Thomas Mann was dedicated. The restored building, named a cultural center, was dedicated by Neringa mayor S. Mikelis. He thanked the German government which donated 100,000 German marks towards the restoration effort. The first visitors were very complimentary about the efforts of Klaipeda architect S. Manomaitis and the Kristutis brothers' construction firm in keeping the summer home's authentic character.

(DRAUGAS, 5/23/96)

## Lithuanian Orphan Care

In 1992, Dr. Albina Prunskis from Chicago saw the plight of Lithuania's orphans during a visit to Lithuania. She began efforts to help support the people who care for the orphans living in their home towns and cities of Lithuania. Within a year, 50 orphans were being supported. In 1993, she coordinated efforts with the Lithuanian-American Community's Human Services Council and its president, Birutė Jasaitis, to create the "Lithuanian Orphan Care" Committee ("Lietuvos Našlaičių globos" komitetas) under the auspices of the Human Services Council. The activities of the committee greatly expanded and currently there are 500 orphans being helped by the fund created through the committee's efforts. Dr. Prunskis chaired the committee

until the fall of 1995 when she stepped aside due to health reasons. Today she is the committee's honorary chair.

(DRAUGAS, 5/21/96)

## Learning English at Balzekas Museum

English language lessons are being offered by the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture for \$1 per lesson and are additionally supported financially by a Lithuanian cultural fund. The classes are geared especially for newly permanent residents or temporary visitors from Lithuania who wish to learn English, find out about American culture, and share their experiences with each other. The first series of courses will run June 4 - June 27th on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at the Museum on Chicago's southwest side.

(DRAUGAS, 5/18/96)

## Lithuanian American TV Successes

The Lithuanian American Television ("Amerikos Lietuvių televizija"-ALT) has successfully completed one month of Saturday morning Lithuanian language programming 7-8 am on Chicago's Channel 23. The first 20 minutes are usually devoted to stories and interviews about the diaspora, especially life in Chicago's Lithuanian American community. The second 20 minutes feature news clips from Lithuania's news program "Panorama"-about politics, ecology and politics which might be of interest to persons living outside of Lithuania. The last 20 minutes feature children's programming from Lithuania (currently "Keistuoliu teatras" from Vilnius performing a version of the "Yellow Brick Road" called "Geltonųjų Plytų kelias").

Letters to the editor in the Lithuanian language newspaper DRAUGAS and those read on the air indicate that people are generally supportive about the efforts of Arvydas Reneckis and his entire crew to return a Lithuanian language television program to Chicago's airwaves. Advertisers and supporters are increasing. Some criticize the speed with which Lithuania's news announcers rattle off the news—they say they can understand only every third word! As Program Director Arvydas Reneckis illustrated one Saturday, slowing down the speed of the translation would be comedic. (Arvydas Reneckis is himself a rather recent immigrant from Lithuania who has been seen videotaping and documenting our diaspora cultural and political lives in the last few years.-rk)

As news items on the program and in the Lithuanian American press illustrate, the television program, translated on a Chicago area ethnic television channel, is a non-profit effort, supported by advertising and the viewers. Some people who live further than the 30 mile radius in

continued on page 24

# Bits and Pieces

## Westward Ho! Latvia, Estonia and ...

The March 28, 1996 issue of the Washington Post featured a front-page article by Lee Hockstader entitled "The Baltic Evolution: Westward Ho! Latvia, Estonia Embrace Europe as Post-Soviet Economies Bloom." Conspicuously absent from this report of Baltic economic success was Lithuania. Toward the end, the article states:

Lithuania, the third and largest former Soviet state on the Baltic, is sort of an odd man out.

Although it was a leader in the struggle to shrug off Soviet power, Lithuania was also among the first nations in post-Soviet Eastern Europe to return current and former Communists to power, in 1992. The result has been a somewhat slower free-market transformation and an economic and political culture that retains a more distinct post-Soviet flavor — including powerful organized crime groups — than either Latvia or Estonia, according to diplomats in the region.

## Watch Those Maps!

The June 3, 1996 issue of the Washington Post covered the gala opening of the Library of Congress' exhibit "Dresden: Treasures from the Saxon State Library." There was a slight error, however, in the printing of the 20,000 color guidebooks — a map purportedly of the "Saxon Empire" was, in fact, a map of the mid-17th century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The error was pointed out by Polish Ambassador **Jerzy Kozminski** in a letter of protest to Librarian of Congress **James Billington**:

"Although the Polish nobility twice chose princes of Saxony their king, Saxony by no means annexed the vast territories of the Commonwealth," Kominski wrote to Billington. "This historical inaccuracy is all the more disturbing because it appears in a document published and distributed by the Library of Congress, one of the greatest institutions of learning in the world."

The LOC stated the map came from an old National Gallery of Art catalogue. Library officials told the authors of the Washington Post article that, rather than adding erratum slips, and since they need to order more anyway, a map called "Saxony and Poland-Lithuania, ca. 1750" will appear in 30,000 new booklets.

## Infomercial on Three Baltic Presidents

At article in the Washington Post of June 17, 1996 described a controversy involving CBS journalists who balked at a recent directive to the network's Moscow bureau to help out on a pet project of Westinghouse Chairman Michael Jordan, whose conglomerate recently acquired CBS.

An associate producer in the bureau was dispatched on a three-day trip to Vilnius to gather footage of the presidents of Lithuanian, Latvia and Estonia. The producer also had to assemble some archive footage of the three leaders. The reason: Jordan wanted a promotional videotape made for a fund-raising dinner he is co-chairing [June 24] to salute the presidents of the former Soviet republics.

Westinghouse, it might be noted, has an \$8.5 million contract to upgrade a nuclear plant in Lithuania and is pursuing such work elsewhere in the region, although not in Latvia and Estonia."

"Jack Bergen, a Westinghouse senior vice president, called the company's conduct "totally appropriate" and said that executives from its nuclear division weren't attending the Manhattan dinner. He said the dinner is being sponsored by the nonprofit Institute for East-West Studies and that Jordan was recruited because his former boss at PepsiCo, Donald Kendall, is also being honored. Westinghouse asked CBS to produce the videotape on the three presidents and Kendall, he said, "to make the evening come alive."

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The memo said that "CBS News Productions has been commissioned to put together a 5- to 7-minute video" as "a tribute" to the Baltic presidents, to be "used by Jordan at a dinner he is hosting honoring the accomplishments of these three men in bringing democracy and capitalism to their nations."

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The assignment, made in a memo from CBS's New York headquarters to the Moscow bureau, took the producer out of the country at a time when the bureau is scrambling to cover the Russian presidential election. The memo said that "CBS News Productions has been commissioned to put together a 5- to 7-minute video" as "a tribute" to the Baltic presidents, to be "used by Jordan at a dinner he is hosting honoring the accomplishments of these three men in bringing democracy and capitalism to their nations." The

memo asked for pictures of the leaders' "industrial successes" to "make this thing fly."

Many Lithuanians would be more than a little surprised to see current President and former Communist Party Secretary Brazauskas portrayed as the country's torch-bearer of democracy. Brazauskas himself might grimace at his image as a vehicle for capitalism. Sometimes history gets revised in the interests of "making things fly."

## The Beginning of the Beginning

**Tomas A. Michalskis, Ph.D.**  
**Former Associate Editor of BRIDGES**

In his recent article on the Franciscan Kultūros Židinys (Cultural Center) in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn [BRIDGES May 1996], Mr. Cizauskas states that "... the displaced Lithuanians built cultural and religious centers, wherever they settled."

Given the historical facts, the above would seem to be an overstatement. Upon their arrival in the U.S.A., the post World War II refugees already found well over 140 Lithuanian Catholic parishes and established Lithuanian communities long in place, not to mention a thriving Lithuanian language press, schools, cultural institutions, religious and secular organizations and associations of all kinds.

As a native of Brooklyn, I remember the days when my own grandmother who was a Lithuanian village immigrant

who arrived in America before World War I, stood with me in the rain at the Norwood Avenue subway station to collect money from commuters to support BALFAS (refugee relief). The Lithuanian Franciscans first settled in an old house on Bushwick Avenue, through the donations of the old immigrants. So it was too with the new facility on Highland Boulevard.

The decline of Lithuanian American institutions has been marked and indeed accelerated since the end of World War II for the many reasons poignantly described by Mr. Cizauskas. The American Lithuanian community as I knew it in my own youth is no longer, nor will it ever be again. As Dag Hammarskjöld said, "The longest journey is the journey inwards."

A commemorative reissue of the Lithuanian T-shirts which were the sensation of the '92 Olympics, is available again by its original designer Greg Speirs. It is being unveiled at the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass.

Speirs said his Slow Leak Apparel, Co. Expects to revive some of the excitement and thrills from '92 when the Lithuanian team showed up wearing his slam-dunking skeleton design on shirts donated by the late Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead. The new T-shirts are already available (\$30., Call 914-271-6531), see web site: <http://www.skullman.com>.

"I came up with the slam-dunking skeleton because the bare bones depicts a team coming up from nothing. Skullman symbolized the Spirit of the Olympics. For this team it symbolized victory and for their country, independence.

After hearing about the Lithuanian story, Prince Albert of Monaco commissioned Speirs to design artwork for the Prince's four bobsleds, which will make their debut in the 1998 Olympics in Nagano, Japan. This also led Speirs to create an exclusive sportswear line for the Prince's Olympic Bobsled Team.

"This is part of a growing trend merging sports with art" says Bob Gladman, Speirs partner.

The "Skullman Extreme Team" apparel collection is to be shown at the N.S.G.A. World Sports Expo in Chicago July 13-15th. Designs include the "extreme windsurfer," "extreme mountain biker," snowboarder, extreme skier, skateboarders, in-lin skater, and volleyball, at the Skullman International booth. In building One (trade only).

Jeanne Dorr

# Vincent Kreder

## Peace Corps Volunteer in Lithuania



Vincent Kreder

For most people, the New Year starts on January 1 and ends on December 31. But people who are involved in education are not like most people, and we often follow a different drummer.

Our year starts on September 1 and ends on June 30, and because I started my year with a story about a teacher, I would also like to end it

by writing about another teacher.

I'd like to introduce you to Vincent Kreder. Vincent left New Jersey to join the first group of Peace Corps workers who were sent to the Baltics. He now works with the Soros Foundation in Lithuania. I met him for the first time during the summer of 1994 while visiting friends in Klaipėda. He was one of the warmest and most outgoing individuals I had ever met. It wasn't long before I felt I had known him all my life.

We toured the city, sat in a sidewalk cafe enjoying the sights, and walked along the beach before returning to the house for dinner. Before the evening was over, he had me half-convinced that I should also be teaching in Lithuania. We said our good-byes and the next morning, I might add very early the next morning, Vince was leaving with a group of students for summer camp.

Our friendship grew and continued through letters. My letters to him were filled with complaints about my students while his were filled with glowing reports about the children he was teaching. I suggested to Vince that I write an article about him and asked him to send me some information about himself. We seemed to have a problem communicating even though we were writing in English; I wanted personal information about him and all he kept sending me were newspaper articles about his students' accomplishments.

Last summer, Vince came home to New Jersey for a visit with his family and he was kind enough to make time for a

two-day visit with my husband and me. For two days, it was like a non-stop talking marathon — but I managed to get my story! A certain amount of pressure was exerted — if he didn't tell me about himself there wasn't going to be any dinner for two days.

### Growing Up in New Jersey

While Vince was growing up in New Jersey, his family observed the usual Lithuanian traditions such as Kūčios and he learned to speak some Lithuanian. These customs continued through the efforts of his grandparents. But as they grew older and were no longer able to manage, little by little, the traditions were discontinued as they were in many Lithuanian-American families where the grandparents were the keepers of the flame.

In 1988, Vince took a teachers' educational tour to what was then the Soviet Union. One of the cities visited on the tour was Vilnius. Vince was amazed that, although the quality of life was so different, the warmth of the people he encountered throughout the tour was phenomenal. They has so little themselves but welcomed the American educators with open arms.

The trip apparently awakened the spark that was smoldering within him all these years. Vince wanted to know more about Lithuania and in some way be able to help the people improve their quality of life. He was able to do this through two organizations: **the Lithuanian-American Club of North Jersey** and **Americans for an Independent Lithuania**, based in Kearny. He even started taking a Lithuanian language course at Morris County college.

But Vince was never able to complete the course or to become active in the independence movement. While teaching English at Seton Hall University, he was involved in an accident which rendered him unable to walk for almost a year. It was during this period, unable to walk, that he had nothing to do but think. His thoughts always returned to how he could help Lithuania.

## Joining the Peace Corps

After independence was regained and Vince heard the Peace Corps would be going to the Baltics, he did not hesitate to seek more information. His only concern was that he would be rejected because of his leg. Although he was in therapy, it was still difficult to walk.

His fears turned out to be groundless. Two weeks after he called for information, Vince was summoned for an interview and told he was an ideal candidate. Before long, Vince and fourteen other educators were headed for Lithuania, while a smaller contingency would be based in Latvia and Estonia.

Vince Kreder was the only Lithuanian-American in the original group of Peace Corps volunteers to go to Lithuania. The first problem arose when they arrived in Vilnius. There was only one teacher training position available and two people who wanted it. But because Vince had advanced degrees and teaching experience, he was asked to go to Klaipėda. This city had been closed to foreigners, and the Peace Corps felt that they needed someone with broad teaching experience.



Karolis, Tomas, and Vincent

## Getting Settled in Klaipėda

To say that Vince was not happy about the change is an understatement. He had his heart set on Vilnius where he would not be as far from his relatives who lived near Kaunas. But Klaipėda? For one fleeting moment, Vince thought of scrapping the whole idea and going home, but he had come too far to quit before he got started.

The Peace Corps set up housing arrangements and the family Vince lived with was lovely. However, they had four small daughters and to accommodate Vince, the children were all sleeping in one small room. The living quarters were very crowded and there was little, if any, privacy.

After a month, he decided he would have to find different housing.

Vince found a place more suitable to his life style but still visited his first family. In the meantime, his days were filled with meetings and adjusting to life in a newly independent Lithuania. He was also not immune to bouts of homesickness as were the other volunteers, but they consoled and encouraged each other during these trying times.

Peace Corps volunteers were sent only to those schools which requested them. School No. 6 in Klaipėda was just becoming a school which would specialize in the English language. Vince would be teaching English four days a week to students in the ninth through twelfth grades. Friday would be "outreach" day, the day the volunteers would go to other schools in their cities to talk to students and give workshops for the teachers. I asked Vince if he ever met with any resistance from the teachers. He answered that he personally did not feel any resentment but that later some of the new teaching methods and techniques for teaching English which he presented were challenged. He was only there to explain different and newer methods of teaching but there were still teachers who were "indoctrinated" by the old soviet ways and old habits die hard.

But to get the program started there were what, at times, seemed like insurmountable obstacles. The biggest problem was a lack of teaching materials. Western schools were beginning to send teaching materials but they usually sent just one or two copies of a book. Lithuanian parents, like those worldwide, believed their children had homework only if they saw a book coming home each night. Of course, this was impossible and parents as well as students had to be reeducated that you most certainly can have homework without a book in your hand. The schools were reluctant to use some of the books which were already in place in the Lithuanian classrooms for a very good reason — many were filled with propaganda. In one textbook, a twelfth grade reading book, it stated that Peace Corps volunteers were in actuality not volunteers at all, they were American spies! That particular lesson was taught by Vince not only as an English lesson but also as a history lesson.

So one of the biggest problems for the teachers was finding materials and preparing for the lessons. The English Department of Seton Hall as well as the Lithuanian-American groups sent some materials. Vince requested enough English dictionaries for a class as well as a tape recorder. These groups in northern New Jersey raised the money and sent the requested items for which he was so thankful. Can you imagine trying to teach the English language without dictionaries?

Despite all the material shortages, Vince was deriving great pleasure from his students. He was overwhelmed by their warmth and their great respect for him as their



Vincent Kreder and 6th Graders, June 1995, Donelaitis School, Klaipėda

teacher. They always stood when he entered a room. If a student was late for class, he or she would stand by the door quietly and wait for the teacher to stop talking and invited them into the room. The student would apologize for being late as well as for causing an interruption.

Vince was especially delighted with the youngest children who were not his students but would call greetings to him using the one or two English words they knew. Whenever Vince had a chance, he would go into other classrooms and teach them such old American favorites as "Row, row, row your boat." Of course, they loved the songs and he loved the children.

As American holidays approached, the Peace Corps volunteers would teach about the particular holiday and its traditions. Often, a group of them would come together and cook a meal inviting their Lithuanian colleagues to share the celebration with them.

Within a few weeks, Vince had changed his mind and was delighted to be in Klaipėda. Parents invited him to their homes and he made friends among his Lithuanian colleagues. But regardless of how he looked at it, the distance was still great between Vince and his relatives who lived near Kaunas.

At this point, if he chose to spend the weekend with friends in Vilnius, it required a 10-hour train ride. Many of his weekends were spent simply exploring Lithuania and introducing his students to the game of baseball. This was quite a feat since he didn't have any baseball equipment. It was baseball in its most primitive state. Nevertheless, the students enjoyed it and were eager to improve their game.

### Staying on with Soros in Klaipėda

It seems that the two years quickly came to an end, and Vince once again was faced with a decision. He loved Lithuania and saw his labor bear fruit. He could sign for

## Special Thanks to Sara Lee and L'Eggs

Our sincerest gratitude to LCC Ltd. And its president, Algis Vasys, who, on behalf of Sara Lee Co., presented 100,000 pairs of L'Eggs pantyhose to eight Lithuanian charities. Estimated value of the gift was 1,000,000 litai. The recipients were:

- Kauno Miesto Socialinės Rupybos Skyrius
- Lietuvos Respublikos Švietimo ir Mokslo Ministerija
- Lietuvos Surikusio Inteleko Žmonių Globos Bendrija Viltis
- S.O.S. Vaikai
- Kauno III-ajai Klinikinei Ligoninei
- Kaimo Vaikai
- V. Landsbergio Fondui
- Lietuvos Artrito Fondui

another year in the Peace Corps or he could come back to New Jersey. It was at this time that he heard that the Soros Foundation had an opening in Klaipėda and this was the solution he needed. To readers unfamiliar with the Soros Foundation, it is also known as the "Open Society Fund." The foundation was established to ease the burden of countries which are emerging into democratic nations. They do this primarily through education and business assistance. They also offer grants to students of these countries to study all over the world. The students return home with their knowledge and share it with others.

Vince was assigned to Donelaičio school. His assignment was to teach listening skills and conversational English to students in the fifth through twelfth grades. The Soros Foundation sponsored a summer camp in Latvia for students to improve their debating skills, and Vince was very active in this summer activity. For ten days, the students attended workshops and worked on a model debate. The next camp was held in Klaipėda. The students were sent home with two topics to research. A competition was held in Panevėžys and the four most outstanding students in Lithuania were sent to Wales to compete. These were eleventh and twelfth graders and it was their first competition in a world debate. They did not win — a team from Canada did — but the Canadian coach who later gave a workshop in Lithuania remembered the Lithuanian students and commented on how impressed he was with them.

Vince is still working on the baseball as well as the debating team. The baseball is more difficult, and he's using tennis balls because someone might get hurt. A school from Long Island sent some students and teachers to Klaipėda and they were paired with the Donelaičio students. Their coach was so impressed that when he returned to New York he sent a letter to parents, students, and faculty members asking for donations for the baseball team. It wasn't long before Vince received bats, hats, and catcher's mitts. This shipment was augmented with equipment sent by Lou Slizis, the president of the Lithuanian-American Club of North Jersey. From the latest reports received from Vince, there are going to be some future all-star players coming out of Klaipėda.

Vince asked me to express his gratitude to all the organizations and individuals who in any way have made a difficult transition period more bearable for the students and for the teachers. But we in turn must thank Vincent for giving

not only his time but also himself to his students. He is a surrogate father as well as a big brother to those children who need a positive male role model, as in the case of little Tomas. Tomas is one of the shining lights in Vince's life but Vince has fulfilled the role of father and brother to the little boy. At the age of ten, Tomas speaks fluent English and it appears he will be a future Yankee star, thanks to Vince's guidance. Thank you, Vince, for having the courage and the spirit of adventure to accomplish what most of us can only think and dream about doing for Lithuania.

I wish the **BRIDGES** readers a happy and safe summer. I'll see you in September, but before you go on to the next article, please check your expiration date. I'm going to introduce you to a fantastic group of students from Lemon Bay High School in Englewood, Florida. You'll be amazed at what they have done not only for their community but for the children of Lithuania as well.



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Darius Laučius

# Union Pier

## Michigan's Lithuanian Riviera

As the sultry days of summer set in, the highways fill up with cars, vans and sport utility vehicles heading out into the countryside. One place in particular that Lithuanians from the Chicago area and other Midwest locations seek out is a spot located on Lake Michigan in the extreme southwest lower corner of the state. This "Lithuanian Riviera" is called Union Pier, a getaway which just a few years ago was nothing more than a shanty town. Today it houses several of the top ten bed-and-breakfast inns in the Midwest. It's a happening place even on the weekends in the dead of winter. But, for the time being, let's forget about winter until next December and concentrate on Summertime.

It doesn't matter whether you're seven or 70, Union Pier will surely be a pleasure for you. Whether you're at your cottage sitting in the yard and breathing in the fresh air or on the beach basking in the sun, you're bound to find the experience relaxing and rewarding.

Apart from its attraction as a vacation spot, Union Pier is also known for its unofficial Lithuanian youth conventions where Lithuanians from all over the United States and Canada come together during the Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day weekends. These gatherings have become a tradition that is gaining momentum. Most of the attendees can be found on the shores of Lake Michigan at the "Vilija Beach." During those holiday weekends, the flags of the U.S., Canada and Lithuania are raised as a

symbol of solidarity. Old friends catch up on good times, new friends are made and current friendships grow. These gala weekends last for three straight days and nights.

Besides the beach, you can enjoy the delicacies of several local restaurants such as the Red Arrow Road House, which is the closest. However, if you want to venture five miles down the road to New Buffalo, the gateway into Southwest Michigan, you can sink your teeth into a legend at Redamak's, the hamburger that made New Buffalo famous. Other eating establishments in the area include the J-J Truck Stop, Rosie's Kitchen for breakfast and lunch, and Casey's Pub. Barbecuing your food is always acceptable and perhaps more economical.

The more mature crowd, on the other hand, remains at the cottages and has its own social gatherings. But in essence, it partakes in the same pleasures as their younger counterparts on the beach.

Union Pier is truly a great place to escape the rat race. The easiest way to get there is to take I-94 to Exit 6 in Michigan. It's only about an hour and a half from Chicago, three and a half hours from Detroit, and a tad farther for everyone else.... So pack up your family and friends and head toward Union Pier. See you on the beach!

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### News Briefs from page 17

which the program can be seen live have been purchasing videotapes of the program. For more information about the program, or to send a donation, contact: Lithuanian

American TV, Inc., P.O. Box 215, Downers Grove, IL 60515, tel: 708-969-2777.

(in part from a news item, DRAUGAS, 5/18/96)

Ramunė Kubilius and Diana Vidutis

# Move Over, Miss Marple... or Murder Mysteries With a Lithuanian Touch

## Panelė Zukas ir Žmogžudystė Bibliotekoje



Jo Dereske

Murder is a serious business, but the genre of murder mystery literature provides relaxing leisure reading for a number of its loyal followers. Murder mystery readers have their favorite authors—they may prefer British or American writers, female writers, mysteries with a theme, or international espionage.

It's fun to read an author's work whose themes or story lines are familiar. That's the case with the books of Jo Dereske. Her books, *Miss Zukas and the Library Murders* and *Miss Zukas and the Island Murders*, feature a number of Lithuanian motifs. The main character is a Lithuanian American resident of Bellingham, WA named Wilhelmina (Helma) Zukas. The slightly prim and proper public librarian grew up in Spoon River, MI. Twenty years ago, she graduated from a small high school (graduating class of '52) where her classmates' last names were Petronas, Asauskas, Durbas, Gimbutas and Kovas. Her cousin Rick greets her with "Kaip gyvuoji" and her Aunt Em sends her kugelis. Are there any doubts that the author knows about Lithuanian culture and Lithuanian American life?

In the second book (published in 1995), a colleague asked Helma "The names of your classmates. A lot of Poles?" "Lithuanian," Helma told him, bristling a little, briefly recalling the year there'd been a fight between the predominantly Lithuanian Scoop River boys and the predominantly Polish Manistee boys. Even in America, the

two nationalities couldn't resist the habit of living close to one another, affording them the opportunity to more conveniently continue ancient animosities as well as raid each other's restaurants and stores for the best ethnic food they grudgingly held in common..."

The February 1996 issue of *Tarp Knygų* contains a translation into Lithuanian (by Elena Macevičiūtė and Juozas Macevičius of the first chapter of *Panelė Zukas ir Žmogžudystė Bibliotekoje*. In an introductory paragraph, the author is described as having grandparents who emigrated from Lithuania around 1900.

When asked about the inspiration for her main character, Jo Dereske strongly says, "Miss Zukas is a librarian, as I am. Over the years, I've grown tired of stereotypical comments both for and against the image! I wanted to use some of the librarian stereotypes yet create a character who went beyond the image, who's self-assured and will grow, as we all do.

Why does a librarian have such an interest in crime and mystery? "The reasons people kill other people are elusive to most of us and I think it's a way of delving into the mystery. Plus, it's good fun to see an ordinary person outsmart a criminal.

How important is the Pacific Northwest setting to the plot? "Extremely. I think of the setting — and the weather — first. Northwesterners are very influenced by their setting and especially the weather. It sets the tone for the whole book."

In an article from the *Ludington Daily News* (September 22, 1995), Jane Gray quotes Jo Dereske as saying, "One of the most striking things about the Bellingham area is the number of Midwesterners who've moved here. The very

## Excerpt

"That family," Lillian said, shaking her head, warming up. "They were like a tornado, the way they sucked everybody up. Marrying into it was like joining the Mafia. Forget your own life; become an honorary Lithuanian. I'm half-Lithuanian myself but my family got over it." There you and Bruce and John were: my children, speaking Lithuanian before you were three."

"I only remember a few words now." Helma said.

"You'd probably still be speaking it if they hadn't started dying off the way they did."

first person I met when I decided to move to Bellingham, and was looking for a place to live, was a realtor named Toni Chevis, who was from Mason County and knew my parents. So when I placed Miss Zukas from Michigan I wanted to honor that experience of seeing a location through the eyes of an outsider which I think makes the area more vibrant. Miss Zukas is named for my Aunt Louise Zukas who lived near Custer and died two years ago. She was one of the most influential women in my life, although her personality was at the opposite end of the spectrum from Miss Zukas."

In the Bellingham Herald of April 16, 1995, Carolyn Casey writes, "Dereske, 47, welcomes people into her quiet world of libraries and notepads. Mention the Bellingham author's name to people around town and you'll hear about her kindness, dedication, warmth and sincerity."

"But don't let the greeting card comments lead you astray. While they certainly are accurate, Dereske has more than one side to her personality."

"Just above her welcoming smile is a pair of mischievous, catlike eyes that broadcast her sense of humor with just a twinge of pain around the edges, etched from a life that has had some grueling spots... Throughout all the work, Dereske ... kept day jobs in regional libraries. For many years a single mother of two kids, Dereske worked as a librarian during the day and a writer in the evening and early morning.... Her kids became accustomed to the incessant sound of their mother tapping at the typewriter in her room. They sprawled across her bed to be nearby while they did their homework. Dereske nearly died of diabetes in her 20s. Now she cheers each medical advance that sim-

plifies her treatment and helps her focus on something other than the disease."

Dereske began keeping a journal at age 11 and still makes daily entries. She recently found a story she wrote when she was just 8 and already determined to be an author.

Dereske comes by storytelling naturally.

Her mother was an insatiable reader who allowed Dereske to skip chores if she was reading. Her father, a Lithuanian immigrant, regularly told the family folk tales. Despite his limited education, he kept journals and even had articles published. Dereske's second husband, Kip Winsett, often is her first editor.

Dereske's favorite mystery writers include "Ruth Rendell, Sharon McCrumb, J.A. Jance, Parnell Hall, Margaret Maron and, of course, Dorothy L. Sayers."

Jo Dereske's books are published in paperback form by Avon Books and are available at most bookstores and public libraries with larger mystery collections.

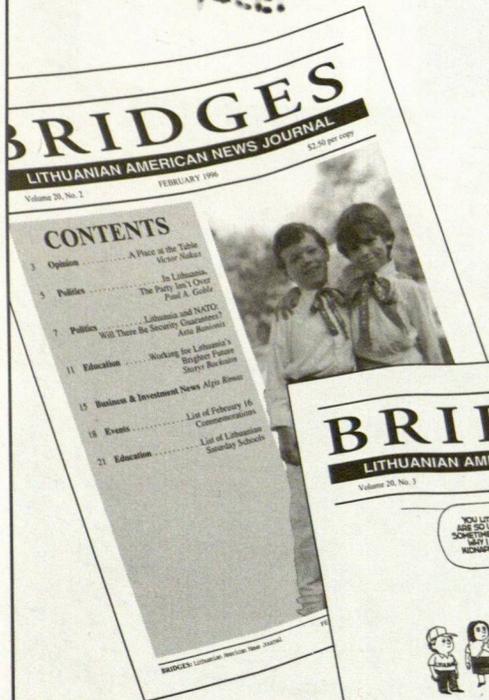


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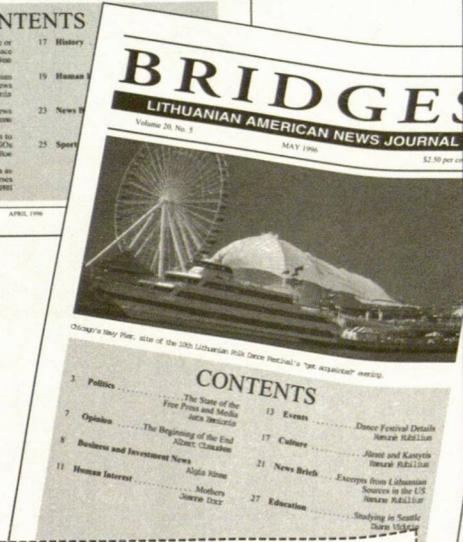
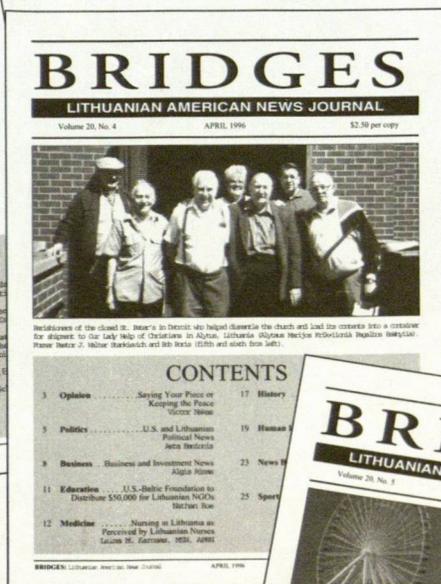
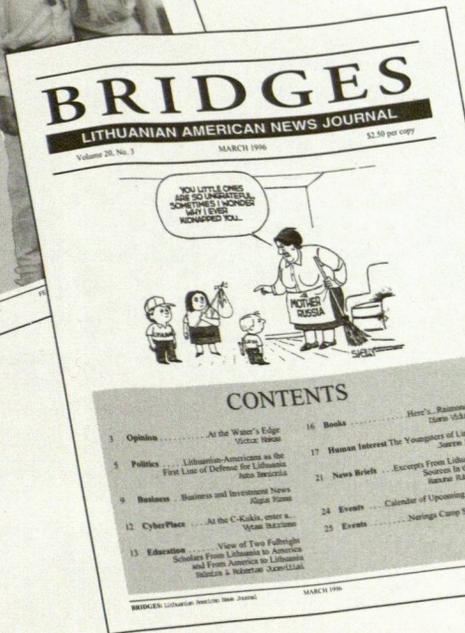
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