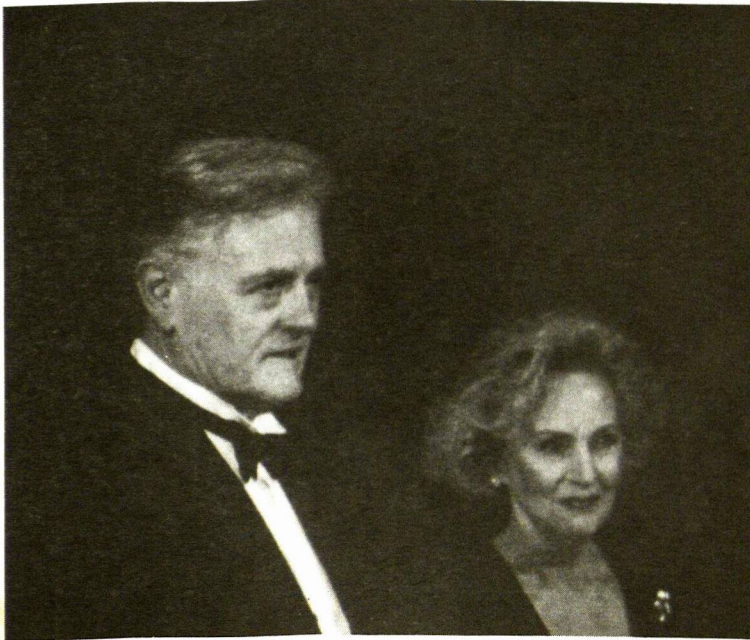

BRIDGES

LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

Volume 22

Issue 2, 1998



*President Valdas Adamkus and First Lady Alma Adamkus
at the Inaugural celebrations*

PERSPECTIVES

THE BRIDGES ISSUES ISSUE

When I began my work as BRIDGES editor in January of this year, my first thought was "Let's get started!" Unfortunately, one can't head for the future without first dealing with the past. And that past included the most-asked question: "What happened to the six missing BRIDGES issues from 1997?"

The six missing BRIDGES issues are just that – missing. When the BRIDGES editor left the position, the Community found it difficult to find a replacement editor. This long period of time essentially placed the journal in suspended animation. Work was not completed, nor articles collected for new issues. Yet, BRIDGES still existed for our readers and the Lithuanian-American Community.

When I was asked to edit, the Community decided that we had to continue with BRIDGES's mission and work toward producing a quality news journal. My work had begun but "the spirits of the missing issues" still lingered. Thus, it was decided that your 1997 subscriptions would be extended for the first six issues of 1998. We believe you'll like what we've been doing and will be doing with BRIDGES so much so, that you'll stay with us and re-subscribe after the first six issues.

Some of the new additions to our journal include; "Reflections" – a spiritual perspective, "Cameos" – readers write about people of Lithuanian heritage who have made a difference, and "Current Events" – news and happenings from Lithuanian-American communities and Lithuania.

Our focus is your focus – Lithuanians in politics, economics, education, culture, sports and humanities. Don't hesitate to write and let us know what interests you. BRIDGES wants to span the sources and subjects that will appeal to you!

Rasa Ardyš-Juska

Editor

BRIDGES

Lithuanian-American News Journal

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Regina Narusis

The Inauguration of President Valdas Adamkus

Valdas Adamkus was sworn in as President of the Republic of Lithuania at a swearing in ceremony during a special Parliament (Seimo) session on February 26th at 11:15 a.m. Since the Parliament Session Hall does not hold too many spectators, admittance to the ceremony was by invitation only. In attendance were members of the Seimas, the Prime Minister Gediminas Vagnorius and his ministers, diplomats from various nations, clergy and special guests, including Cardinal George from Chicago, Illinois.

Because the new president had lived in the United States until a few years ago (though born in Lithuania), a number of Lithuanian-Americans had been invited. About a hundred Lithuanian-Americans traveled to Lithuania for the occasion but, only a few were able to attend the swearing in ceremonies in the Seimas. Some of the attendees were Stasys Baras, Grazina and James Liautaud, Al Kezelis, Vytautas Kamantas, and

REGINA NARUSIS, a practicing attorney in Illinois, is the President of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

myself. Prominent at the ceremony was the ever gracious and lovely Mrs. Alma Adamkus.

The Glory of Freedom

After the swearing in ceremony at the Seimas, we were bused by caravan to the Cathedral for a High Mass at 1:00 p.m. The admittance for the Mass was again by invitation; however, many more people were able to attend the Mass. Immediately after the Mass, the Republic's military

paraded in review, and various Lithuanian town representatives in their regional costumes presented their towns' flags in the Cathedral Square.

The President took this opportunity to speak to his nation. He spoke of freedom, the glory of freedom, and the duty of all to respect the freedom of others. "The fire of freedom that is alive in the heart of every Lithuanian has never died. Today we sing

NATO EXPANSION:

The most important foreign policy issue in decades.

The Senate vote on NATO expansion was expected to occur during the week of March ninth. The matter finally came to the Senate floor on Tuesday, March 17th. Those who favored expansion had expected a debate in an orderly manner leading to affirmation of the NATO enlargement. Instead, the debate had been sandwiched in between other issues, procedural squabbles, and partisan positioning. Now it may not even come up again until after the spring break.

NATO expansion is the single most important foreign policy in decades, for it will redraw the world's political boundaries. Some Senators worked on NATO expansion since shortly after the communist regime collapse in Eastern Europe. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held at least 12 hearings on NATO expansion commencing in 1994, and voted 16 to two supporting expansion.

Few, if any, foreign policy issues have been so closed scrutinized in open and public sessions. Over 1,000 articles were published on the subject in our newspapers, journals and magazines. Need we remind the Re-

the glory of freedom and let this word sound off in history and the present."

President Adamkus called the nation to create a contemporary society with underlying values of mutual understanding, support of the weak, sympathy and assistance to those in need, and consolation for those whose souls cry out for it. He reminded the large crowd of Lithuania's proud and ancient past, while pledging to strive for honesty, fairness, carefulness, and morality.

The President promised to serve, not to rule and called the people to join the work of rebuilding the nation. He emphasized that the main goal in his foreign policy remains the



Regina Narusis with President Valdas Adamkus.

Photo: B. V. Narusis

same: the European Union and NATO. He closed his remarks by saying, "Lithuania shall grow, so it must. We shall grow together with it. I am one of you. I am with you."

The crowd was moved; for he had read their hearts. As I looked over the thousands of people in the square, I spotted

two flags being held together; the flags of Lithuania and the United States. I knew at that moment that the future of Lithuania was sound; for we stood together.

Immediately after the ceremonies at the Cathedral Square, the President proceeded to the Presidential

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publicans that NATO expansion was included in their "contract with America".

President Clinton supports expansion, as did and still does Sen. Dole. Yet opponents wish to postpone the vote until June "to give it more time". Perhaps they ought to pay more attention to foreign policy and less time to "Sexgate".

The expansion issue is long overdue. The Baltic countries and other Central and Eastern European countries have earned their place as NATO members. To delay admission would only cast doubt on the firmness of America's moral and strategic commitments in Europe and its ability to lead.

NATO's primary purpose and benefit has been ensuring stability in democratic Europe by guaranteeing territorial integrity of NATO members. NATO expansion would enlarge Europe's democratic stability zone, and thus its prosperity. Such expansion prevents wars, creates markets for investment and exports, and finds new allies and support.

Some opponents claim the cost is too much. United States has lost time, energy, money and blood in the last two world wars. What price will we put on European stability for America? A firm NATO commitment makes attacks far less likely. There may be added costs, but there will be more power and additional forces in the alliance as well.

Some Senators wish to impose a moratorium on future enlargement. That would be an even larger mistake than the rejection of the present enlargement. Such a condition is contrary to Article 10 of the NATO charter which provides open membership to "any other

European state in a position to further the principles of the treaty and contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area".

Any moratorium is totally uncalled for as the Senate would have to agree to any NATO enlargement. Why prejudice the issue now? Further, imposing restrictions will only lessen American influence. The United States must maintain a positive

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(con't from INAUGURATION)

Palace for the turn over of the presidency.

Celebrations

Inaugural celebrations took place in various places that evening. Most of the Lithuanian-Americans attended the inaugural ball at Rotuse Street, where we were met by a lively band. Upon entry we were served champagne and a sumptuous buffet feast, with exquisite Lithuanian desserts to end the dinner. It was a gala event long to be remembered.

The next day, at a Presidential reception for Lithuanian-Americans and others, I delivered the signed greetings of thousands of Lithuanian-Americans that were bound in two books by the Lithuanian-American Community. This served as a reminder that we stand ready, willing and able to help Lithuania whenever it is needed.

We, Lithuanian - Americans, are proud of Lithuania's new president. He is one of our own. In the time he lived

in the United States, almost 50 years, he not only served the United States government but, also the Lithuanian-American Community Board of Directors. He brings to Lithuania many skills and experiences steeped in democracy, in a free market economy, and a commitment to strong ties with the West.

We wish him success as he leads Lithuania to a democratic, secure, stable, prosperous and free future.

(con't from NATO EXPANSION)

interest in Europe's future.

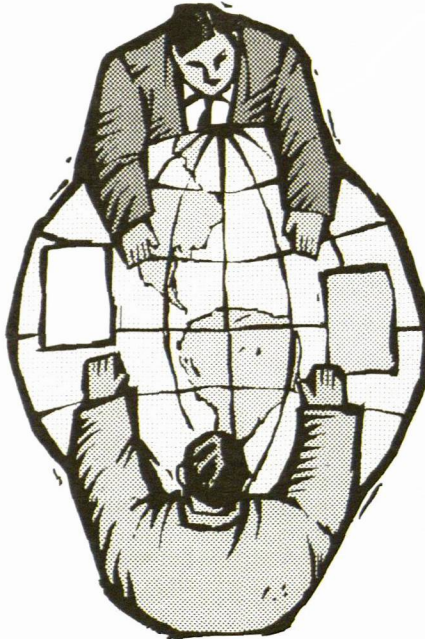
Other Senators fear Russia. Since when do we, Americans, allow our foreign policy to be set by Russia? The Russian public, as their own polls show, do not care about NATO expansion. Only the hard-liners are bothered. We need to remind Russia that guaranteed stability in Central and Eastern Europe will only enhance Russia's security. Does Russia really believe that Lithuania is a threat to Russia's security?

The Lithuanian-Russian Treaty of July 29, 1991, signed by President Yeltsin, acknowledged Lithuania's right to independently determine the means to guarantee its sovereignty and security, including membership in any defensive alliance. NATO is a defensive alliance.

Peace and stability can only be secured through NATO expansion to include all countries meeting NATO criteria. Does the U.S. have the right to deny these countries their right to choose this defensive alliance? Doesn't the U.S. owe them that right as penance for Yalta?

Other Senators are attempting to link NATO admission to membership in the European Union. Success of European integration has been possible only because of American security guarantees. Of course, United States is not a member of the Union, yet it is a NATO member. The greatest virtue of the NATO alliance is that it is led and safeguarded by the United States. American leadership is not only central to NATO but, also to the NATO enlargement debate. This is a moral issue, not only a self-interest act.

Let us hope the Senate comes to appreciate the importance of the enlargement and strengthening of NATO by promptly taking up the expansion debate and votes without limiting or restricting further expansion. Moratoriums or partial enlargement will only leave a vacuum in Europe and encourage anti-western forces in Russia. Lithuania deserves to be invited.



Myra Goodwin

A Life-Changing Experience

An American educator, Myra Goodwin, returns year after year to teach educators in Lithuania. During an American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education (A.P.P.L.E.) faculty member meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania, she explained why.

So often those of us who have taught with A.P.P.L.E. are asked the same question over and over: What is A.P.P.L.E.? How does it help the Lithuanian educators? What does it mean to the A.P.P.L.E. faculty? Why do some people, many of whom have no Lithuanian connections, return year after year? To these questions, let me tell you about some of the gifts that I believe A.P.P.L.E. gives to the Lithuanians.

The Gift of Knowledge

Before arriving in Lithuania, we spend months preparing for the classes we are to teach. When in Lithuania, we go to a town or city and for two intense weeks we pass on the educational knowledge and skills we believe are most valuable. To those of you who are here for the first time, I guarantee that you will find the teaching to be exhilarating and exhausting. Sharing the gift of knowledge is our purpose.

The Gift of Laughter

When I went to Lithuania six years ago, I noticed the lack of smiles and eye contact from the teachers. Often they would look at the floor or turn away when I approached them.

Then for two weeks we worked together...and we laughed together. We had fun! We did silly things on Talent Night. I'll always remember John Sullivan (our favorite Hawaiian), shedding his clothes and doing a hula dance. All of us nearly died laughing. John, however, did more than simply demonstrate a dance. John demonstrated that it was okay to laugh at ourselves. I think this was either something new for the teachers, or something they did not expect from the Americans. Many times Lithuanians have said to me, "In Lithuania, we are very reserved. We have enjoyed the freedom to laugh with our A.P.P.L.E. friends."

The Gift of Hope

A Lithuanian friend of mine made this comment: "As children, we were taught not to think because it was dangerous. When the Soviets invaded, they either killed or deported many of the most intelligent and the most productive people in the country. We learned not to ask questions and to hide our intelligence."

During the A.P.P.L.E. courses, we notice that many Lithuanian teachers come to the classes prepared to write every word that is said. They want us to tell them "the answers". They seem to want us to give them a recipe for teaching. Immediately, we explain that we are there to share ideas and techniques, which have worked for us, and that there is no recipe. We tell them that they must constantly brainstorm and problem solve. The power is within their own heads – the power is within themselves! As they realize this, their sense of hope in deal-

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MYRA GOODWIN, a professional teacher, has taught with the American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education, A.P.P.L.E. for six years. This article was the basis for her remarks given last summer in Vilnius to the A.P.P.L.E. faculty members who were teaching in Lithuania. (Permission to reprint this article was given by A.P.P.L.E., P.O. Box 617, Durham, CT, 06422)

(con't from *EXPERIENCE*)

ing with the future increases. This concept is important, not only for teachers, but for every Lithuanian.

The Gift of Care

One of my favorite writers is Henri Nouwen. He says that in America we want to fix things. We want cures for the problems. We create agencies to provide cures for the ills of society. Nouwen also says that "cure without care is dehumanizing". Many of the social service agencies in our country are examples of that.

A.P.P.L.E. is an organization whose desire is to help educators find solutions. It is certainly true that we want to help them fix things. *A.P.P.L.E.*, however, provides care.

A.P.P.L.E.'s schedule is structured so that relationships naturally form. Faculty members do not teach and then return to the isolation of their rooms. Faculty members are required to participate in English coaching sessions for the Lithuanians and choice lectures (with topics ranging from discussions on women's issues to the less serious line-dancing lessons). Most of the evenings are planned so that *A.P.P.L.E.* faculty and the Lithuanian educators spend time together. Relationships form. CARE happens.

Several years ago in Vilnius on the day the *A.P.P.L.E.* seminars were ending, Gita Kupcinskis, an *A.P.P.L.E.* teacher, returned to her classroom to find these words written on the chalkboard: "Thank you for the journey home. Yours to Lithuania, ours to becoming human beings again."

So...what do the *A.P.P.L.E.* lecturers receive from Lithuania? I find it very difficult and emotional for me to put this into words. For me, Lithuania is my "healing place". I come to Lithuania, I put aside all of the demands of my life, and I allow something very deep inside of me to be touched. I experience the goodness of the Lithuanian people. I experience the generosity of the Lithuanian people.

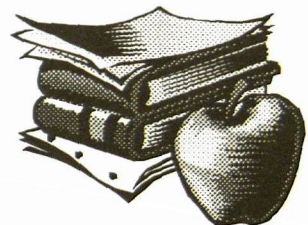
I become friends with people who tell of

growing up in Siberia or who tell of being at the TV tower when the tanks arrived the night of January 13, 1991. I know that I am here to learn from them. My materialistic world seems very far away...and very unimportant.

As they teach me, I receive the gift of knowledge. As I dance and sing and spend evenings with my friends, I receive the gift of laughter. When I return to the U.S. and face the often-painful challenges and difficulties of life common to all human beings, I remember the faces and the strength of my friends, and I know that I have received the gift of hope. As I hold the presents I have been given, and as we hug our good-byes and I feel the sincerity of the embraces, I know that I have also been given the gift of care.

To those of you who are new to *A.P.P.L.E.*, I can tell you that the relationships with the people in Lithuania will be as deep as you allow. If you happen to be in a town without regular hot water, don't let that become an issue for you. If you happen to have a bed that is not quite as soft as the one you have at home, don't let that become an issue. Allow yourself to experience the true beauty of Lithuania – the people. Allow yourself to experience relationships with the most beautiful, giving people you can ever meet.

Last summer my wonderful friend and mentor, Dr. Jane Schulz, taught with *A.P.P.L.E.*. Jane has taught for years in the U.S. as well as in other countries. When she was leaving Lithuania, she said with tears in her eyes, "You know, at this stage in my life there are not many life-changing experiences. Lithuania has been life changing." Jane's comments sum up the reason we return year after year after year.



Laima Šileikyte-Hood

The Baltic Nations

at the Smithsonian Institution



Nearly one million tourists descend upon The National Mall in Washington, D.C. each year during the summer months to experience the variety of exhibitions that the Smithsonian Institution has to offer. This year, The Festival of American Folklife, produced by the Smithsonian Institution's Smithsonian Center and Cultural Studies, will highlight the living cultural traditions of the Baltic nations – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on June 24th to 28th and July 1st to the 5th.

Every summer for two weeks, the Smithsonian, the National Museum of the United States, produces this Festival during the height of the tourist season. The Festival has been in operation for three decades; 60 different nations have participated, as have most states and territories of the U.S.

This Festival was designated the "Top Event in the U.S." by the tourism industry, has won scholarly and journalistic acclaim, and Academy, Emmy, and Grammy Awards for its products. It has also been a model for similar events around the world including the Olympic Arts Festival, as part of the Olympic Games held in Atlanta.

Focus on the Baltic Nations

This year's 32nd annual Festival will feature musicians, artists, performers, cooks, craftspeople, and scholars demonstrating, presenting, and discussing the cultures of the Baltic nations.

LAIMA ŠILEIKYTE-HOOD is a member of the Lithuanian Committee preparing for the Festival of American Folklife.

The Festival of American Folklife will take place from 11 am into the evening during the two-week period. About 150 participants from the Baltics – 50 from each nation – will introduce their cultures with song, dance, food, crafts, and exhibits. Visitors will have a chance to join in, learn songs and dances, ask questions, eat foods, and learn about grassroots culture directly from the people who create it.

A Baltic-American Smithsonian Folklife Festival Committee was formed two years ago to identify resources and help plan for this Festival. The members of the committee made two trips to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia where they had an opportunity to meet with the Ministers of Culture and festival coordinators from the Baltic countries, and experience first-hand the hospitality of the Baltic people.

The Committee was especially impressed with Lithuania's Festival director, Zita Kelmickaite. She arranged a visit to Marcinkoniai, a village in Dzukija, where the committee members spent an afternoon in an authentic village in Lithuania. Zita's energy and enthusiasm convinced the Smithsonian Institution representatives that the Baltic countries, and especially Lithuania, would be well prepared bringing their rich and unique culture to the Festival.

In addition to the Baltic-American Smithsonian Committee, a Washington D.C.-based Lithuanian committee, headed by Dalia Lukiene, will provide translators and interpreters introducing the visiting Lithuanian participants to the American culture. They will also spend time with the participants during off

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(con't from SMITHSONIAN)

Dana Grajauskas

hours exploring Washington's sites.

Baltics Front and Center

Not only does the Festival provide the important opportunity for Americans and others to learn about Baltic culture, but it also garners publicity reaching 40 million people via national television, radio, and print media – nearly \$8 to 12 million in positive exposure. Smithsonian Folkways, a Smithsonian Institution educational branch, will release CD audio recordings based on the Festival program.

Other educational materials, a virtual festival on the World Wide Web, and a *Smithsonian* magazine advertising insert distributed to two million readers will provide the Baltic countries the opportunity to place their cultures front and center, instilling pride, and stimulating efforts to develop local cultural-economic resources. This is a Festival not to be missed.



If you would like more information or to make a tax-exempt financial contribution to this Festival, please contact:

*Folklife Programs
& Cultural Studies
Smithsonian Institution
MRC 914
Washington, D.C. 20560*

"I Love Neringa!"

"Camp is fun. Camp is funny. Camp is nice. And, it is good." -Lauren, age 7

If one of our youngest campers recognizes that camp is "fun, nice and good", then Camp Neringa is achieving its goals! Neringa's mission has always been to foster Lithuanian culture, Christian values, and positive character development.

Camp Neringa is located in the midst of the beautiful mountains and forests of Vermont. It was founded 29 years ago by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who came to this location with years of experience, having organized camps at their own convent in Putnam, Connecticut, since 1944.

"Camp is fun and a learning place. You learn many Lithuanian customs and dances." -Mark, age 9

Each summer has brought with it a wealth of activities and experiences for children, ages seven to 16, for those who speak Lithuanian and for those who do not. For two weeks, children, together with their peers and the aid of experienced and dedicated staff, participate in everything from Lithuanian dancing, singing, and folk art to faith and value discussion groups and liturgy. All these activities fall within the context of summer camp –which, of course, means games, sports, swimming, hiking, and lots of fun!

"We like coming back to Neringa year after year, because it gives us a chance to live without modern technology and get in touch with nature that surrounds you." -Alina, age 12

An emphasis is placed not only on teaching and passing on Lithuanian traditions and culture, which is especially valuable for children who do not have an opportunity to partake in Lithuanian community activities in their home towns, but also on Christian faith and values together with character development. The tran-

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DANA GRAJAUSKAS is the Executive Director of Neringa, Inc. Neringa's campers provided their opinions and thoughts.

(con't from NERINGA)

quility and beauty of the surroundings provide a natural setting for children to discuss the important topics of faith, values, and personal growth.

"Not only is camp fun and exciting, but also a beautiful home filled with a wonderful family of friends."

-Philitha, age 13

Neringa boasts sessions for young families with small children. The week-long, Lithuanian-speaking family camp is well-grounded in its 19th year. The English-speaking, long weekend session, celebrating its 5th anniversary this year, is quickly gaining experience and forming its own traditions.

"This family weekend helps us to remember what's really important in life."

-Marybeth, a Neringa mom

During the family sessions, young families with small children camp together in a program which includes family activities, as well as, separate activities for children and for parents. This session brings together everyone from

aunts and uncles to grandparents, to camp together with their families and children in a Lithuanian and Christian atmosphere.

"Neringa is a special place; when I'm not here I still have great memories. As the years go on, I think camp has helped me mature in many ways. I hope I keep the tradition up with my kids and future generations." -Nick, age 14

We encourage you to keep the tradition alive! We invite you to take the opportunity to experience Neringa with your family, or to provide the experience for your children. If you would like more information, or would like to register, please contact the Neringa office at:

NERINGA

66 Salisbury Road, Watertown MA 02172
617-923-4583(phone) 617-923-4120 (fax)
neringai@yahoo.com



Neringa's campers enjoy arts and crafts time together.

Photo: L. Kulbiene



Jeanne Dorr

Children GIVE of Themselves

The Lithuanian Americans of the Philadelphia area were treated to a delightful afternoon at the St. Andrew's Church Hall, on Sunday, January 18.

The students of Vinco Kreves Lituianistine Mokykla (Lithuanian School) performed an original play in the Lithuanian language written and directed by Julia Danta. This was a play "about children, for children".

"Zibutes Laime" (Zibute's Happiness) dealt with a young girl who tried to find happiness everywhere except where she should have been searching. She found her way to the palace of the King and Queen who lived long ago in Lithuania. Zibute expressed her problem to the royal family but, they couldn't help her.

Zibute thought by wearing the Queen's precious pearls that she would be happy. It didn't work. Maybe if she

sat on the King's throne, happiness would be hers. Still no luck. She was beginning to get the idea that money and power didn't necessarily bring happiness. In fact, she was quite surprised to learn that the King and Queen had their own problems.



Zibute (Daina Maciunas) talks to two of the "orphans" (Lina Maciunas and Vilija Viliamas)

Photo: Rimas Gedeika

Although it was a very serious topic, there were plenty of humorous moments; especially when a modern day teenager entered this medieval castle. A ringing cellular phone in the boy's pocket, a big boom box which leaves the poor king perplexed as to how an entire orchestra can fit in the apparatus, plus a general misunderstanding between the younger and older generations gave the audience ample opportunity to chuckle.

Zibute eventually meets a young girl who is thankful for her blind sister. She meets four orphans who are grateful because they are able to stay together despite the loss of their parents, and having few, if any, material goods.

JEANNE DORR is a member of the Board of Directors of Lithuanian Orphan Care, a branch of the Human Services Council of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. She is also a Social Studies teacher in New Jersey.

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It was then that Zibute realized she could only find happiness by being a “giving” person. Then, happiness would come back to her.

The young actors and actresses were fantastic. The parents planned the scenery, provided the music, taught the dancing, and worked the lighting. Others designed and sewed the costumes. Parents and grandparents cooked a delicious hot lunch and served it to a sold-out audience. This was as good a performance as I have ever seen in any dinner theater. And the food was far better.

Mrs. Danta, the play’s director, is the coordinator of the weekly Lithuanian radio program sponsored by the Philadelphia Chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community. With all the work the program involved every week, it’s a mystery to me how she found the time to write and direct such a professional play.

What does this have to do with *Lithuanian Orphan Care*? All the proceeds were donated to help our forgotten children in Lithuania. As if all this wasn’t enough, I have to share a very moving incident with you. As I was leav-

ing the hall and trying to retrieve my coat, three of the young actresses came up to me and put a plastic margarine cup in hand. They proudly told me there was \$9.07 in the cup. It was their tips from working in the coat room, and they wanted the forgotten children, Lithuanian orphans, to have it.

Dear readers, don’t worry about the state of tomorrow’s youth. With young people like this, how can we go wrong?

It makes me burst with pride to be associated with the kind and caring people of these organizations in Philadelphia. But most of my gratitude is to these children for the many hours of practice, the missed soccer games, and the social events that were put aside so that they could help the children of Lithuania.



Scanning the Internet for Lithuania

For those of you who like to relax by reading, walking or gardening, there are a few out there who turn on their computers and surf the Internet for locations to capture their fancy. If you haven’t explored cyber space yet and need a little direction, here are just a few sites to get you started.

➤ www.iti.lt/eng contains home pages of individuals and companies, and the news desk links. This is a good “looksee” for those interested in what the average Lithuanian net surfer may use.

- www.elta.lt The Lithuanian News Agency has been in existence since the 1920s and continues to provide up-to-date news briefs on Lithuania’s events. Links lead you from the agency’s history to the recent news pages, both in English and Lithuanian. Other links include a direct path to other news agencies and the Parliament.
- www.lrs.lt links you to Lithuania’s Seimas or Parliament. Many links give you the recent news from government-related agencies and the Seimas proper. Lithuanian and English versions included as a choice.
- www.online.lt links to Lithuanian-oriented information. This web page is loaded. Also contains an index to other web sites.
- www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/3414 —the official A.P.P.L.E. web page provides all the latest information and history of this organization.
- www.JAVLB.org At this point, The Lithuanian-American Community’s web page is under construction. But this particular page gives a good summary of the organization’s work and structure. If you want the basics

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about this organization, there found here. A more detailed web page will be up in the coming months.

The Lithuanian E-Zine by Bernard Tirva, is not a web page but, an electronic magazine sent to your e-mailbox at your request. New to this year, the first three issues contain a variety of articles as: "Dedication of Official Texas Historical Marker for the Lithuanians in Texas", "Sports — Marius Janulis", "The Ninth Fort", and others.

To check out this E-zine, e-mail Mr. Tirva at this address: tirva@pdq.net

Let's say you're ready to venture forward on the Net. Visit some of the web pages above or use any search engine, like;

- www.metacrawler.com
- www.hotbot.com
- www.yahoo.com

Just write in the word "Lithuania", and lists of sites are available for exploration. From city descriptions, newspapers, organizational pages, individual's pages, Lithuania is swimming along the Internet river of information. Give it a try!

If you find something of interest you'd like to share with us, contact the *BRIDGES* editor and we'll put in your news bytes.



C A M E O S

"A combination of heritage and personal experiences produces works of art."

by Auste Vygantas

We live in a progressive society. In our search for a better tomorrow, often we tend to ignore the past, to ignore our heritage and traditions, and join the mechanical march to the future. Often we forget that there is beauty in diversity, and that by delving into our heritage, new thoughts and ideas are possible, which help to enrich cultural experiences.



One person, Marianne Jonaitis Loftus, a long time resident of Chicago's North Shore, has raised her family, and participated in professional and volunteer work, all with a conscious awareness of her Lithuanian heritage.

Marianne's father came to the United States from Vilkauskis, Lithuania. Her childhood was spent in Chicago's Brighton Park area where her father was a pharmacist and a poet; a collection of his poems *Sielos Broliai* was published in 1967. Marianne attended Immaculate Conception Grammar School, and the family developed close ties with the Lithuanian Sisters of St. Casimir. Often, an admired aunt, a Dominican sister, and an uncle, a priest, would visit; Marianne, as a child, decided Lithuanians were intelligent, attractive people.

Marianne continued her education at Visitation High School and the College of St. Francis, where, on a scholarship, she obtained a degree in chemistry. For a while, she worked as an analytical chemist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Then she worked as a chemistry and biology teacher at Longwood Academy. Marriage to Bill Loftus and raising six children followed.

Throughout her school years, teachers observed and commented on Marianne's artistic talents. While in high school, she took human figure drawing class at the Art Institute, and other art classes in college.



After raising her family, Marianne made a conscious decision to follow her artistic inclinations and pursue them to her potential. She was fortunate to have received a Smith Scholarship from the Art Institute of Chicago to attend Oxbow in Sagatuck, Michigan for three consecutive summers. There, she gained experience in various media. Marianne found special enjoyment in

mixed media incorporating etchings and other printmaking techniques with watercolors.

It was in this media technique that Marianne “pushed the envelope of creativity” and produced her five famous monoprints. In these works, she delved into her Lithuanian heritage and combined it with personal experience. Dancing double-helixed chromosomes of yellow, green and red frolic among the quiet monochromatic pastel fruit patterns. Each painting has a musical title.

The special significance of these paintings is that there is an identity being revealed. The tri-colored chromosomes express her Lithuanian heritage, interacting intimately with family and surroundings. The movement of the chromosomes expresses her love of jazz. The Lithuanian heritage, not forgotten but expressed, adds a touch of richness to a diverse national culture. Together, national heritage and personal experience provide an immense source of inspiration to an artist attempting to understand the metaphysical self.

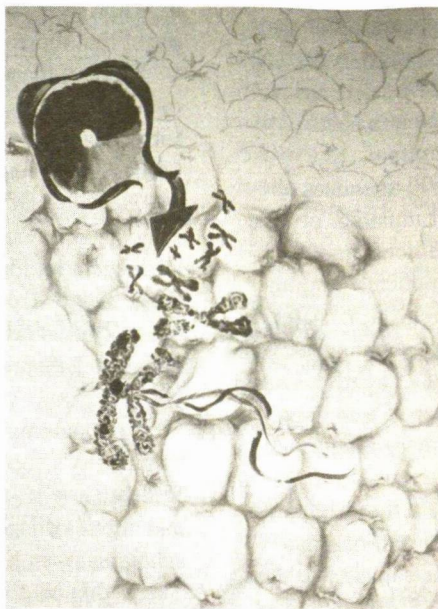


These paintings were exhibited at the Nomad Central Gallery in Chicago, and received high praise from viewers and reviewers. We congratulate Marianne on her achievements, and consider her an inspiration to our endeavors.



Marianne Loftus stands between two of her monoprints at the Nomad Central Gallery in Chicago.

Photo: Auste Vygantas



Marianne Loftus's monoprint with double-helixed chromosomes among fruit patterns.

Photo: Auste Vygantas

AUSTE VYGANTAS is a BRIDGES reader living in Illinois. She wanted to share Marianne Loftus's "phenomenal energy and phenomenal commitment to her heritage" through her work, with our readers.

****CAMEOS highlights people who are in your community and have made a difference in other people's lives by their Lithuanian-American spirit, work, or accomplishments. If you know someone who you would like to introduce to BRIDGES readers, please send your manuscript, with or without pictures, to the BRIDGES editor, c/o Rasa Ardys-Juska, 1212 Mohegan Road, Manasquan, NJ 08736

CURRENT EVENTS

Highlights From Lithuanian Independence Day Celebrations

Sioux City, Iowa

by Agnes Dicipetryte-Donovan

Lithuanian-Americans and their friends convened Sunday, February 15, 1998 at the Sioux City Convention Center to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the declaration of Lithuania's independence.

Birute Vindasius, Chairperson of the Lithuanian-American Community of Mid-West Region States, was the main speaker at Sunday's celebration. She spoke to the nearly 100 attendees about the history of Lithuania, present economic conditions, and the Lithuanian-American Community organization. Agnes Donovan, mistress of ceremonies, welcomed Richard Zvirgzdinas as an honored speaker. Councilman Tim Jacobs attended the function also.

Donovan said that Lithuanians are innately patriotic and have proved their loyalty to their new homeland of America. But, she added, they are aware of their Lithuanian culture and heritage, which has been instilled in them.

The colors of the Lithuanian flag – yellow, green and red – abounded in decorations at the celebration. Credits for organizing this event go to Donovan, Donna Christopherson, Jeanne Maskevich, Irene Reburn, Ann Yorkus and Vera Ulanskas.

Kansas City, Kansas

by Kazys and Margarita
Zemaitis

The celebration of Lithuania's freedom was held in the Conference Center at the Kansas Community College, Kansas City on February 15th at 1:00 p.m.

The program theme was "Growing up in a Lithuanian Community" with emphasis on the old Lithuanian church of St. Casimir's in Kansas City. The church was torn down in 1947 and only a few people remember it. They recalled events and people of that time period.

Some of the speakers expounded about the Kansas City Lithuanian dance group, "Aidas", traveling to Lithuania in 1992. They had danced and sung songs of freedom at the Parliament building with other dance groups from Vilnius. Most of these families have returned to Lithuania and exchanged family stories.

An update was given on the community's support of five Lithuanian girls who came to live and attend college on basketball scholarships in Kansas City. These girls continue to break school records across the area: Aneta and Jurgita Kausaite, Rima Petronyte, Sonata Pranaityte, and Rasa Sukeviciute. Aneta, Jurgita and Rima were asked to return to Lithuania last summer to play on the national team that won the European Women's Basketball Championship.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

by Jeanne Dorr

The Philadelphia Chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community celebrated the 80th anniversary of Lithuania's independence first with Mass at St. Andrew's Lithuanian Church, and then at the Lithuanian Music Hall.

The Mass was celebrated with an opening procession of men, women, and children dressed in beautiful Lithuanian folk costumes. The flags of The United States, Lithuania, The Knights of Lithuania, Lithuanian Scouts, and Ateitininkai added splendor to the occasion. Father Petras Burkauskas, administrator of St. Andrew's, celebrated Mass with Monsignor Leon Peck and Father Joseph Rymdeika.

The formal program at the Music Hall was opened with Father Rymdeika's moving invocation. Philadelphia Mayor Edward Rendell, presented to the audience by Roma Krusinskas, (Pres. of the Philadelphia chapter), praised area Lithuanians for all their contributions to the city of Philadelphia and spoke of his admiration for the people of Lithuania. The community gave the Mayor an amber map of Lithuania and offered him an invitation to visit the country. He was truly appreciative of both.

The next two speakers were Dr. Paul Goble, director of the Washington bureau of Radio Free Europe, and Asta Banionis, the outgoing director of the Lithuanian-American Community's Public Affairs Office in

Washington, D.C. and currently associated with Radio Free Europe.

Dr. Goble addressed the audience in English with very strong words for Lithuanian-Americans who have become complacent about Lithuania and especially about Lithuania's acceptance into NATO. He urged the audience to become active again and not be lulled into complacency by a false sense of security.

Ms. Banionis, speaking in Lithuanian, discussed the role Lithuanians can play during this time of change. She told the audience that they could do what no person living in Lithuania can — they can be sure to let their representatives know that they expect them to act on legislation that will benefit Lithuania — especially the NATO issue.

Dalia Jakas, the Lithuanian Fund's representative, presented a check to the Lithuanian Sunday School. The children later performed with Lithuanian folk dancing. Parents and grandparents were justifiably filled with pride.

The Viltis choir, under the direction of Anele Kaulinis, performed an especially meaningful song, "My Homeland". Music was written by Ms. Kaulinis and the words by one of our local authors, Mr. Balys Raugas. The Lithuanian Country Band accompanied the Zilvinas Folk Dancers, directed by Estera Washofsky.

The program ended with the singing of "Lietuva Brangi", children waved Lithuanian flags, and, as typical of Lithuanian hospitality, refreshments were served. The Lithuanian-

American Community thanked all who made the day an overwhelming success. A special thanks went to the Knights of Lithuania, Council 3, for their participation.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from "What's Going On", The Lithuanian Citizen's Society newsletter

The annual Lithuanian Independence Day Celebration took place on Saturday, March 21st at the Lithuanian Hall on the South Side in Pittsburgh.

Social hour began with a cash bar at 2:00 pm, followed by a sit down dinner of ethnic and American food, entertainment, and plenty of fellowship.



Highlights From Lithuania

Source: ELTA News Agency at www.elta.lt/eng

Vytautas Landsbergis Awarded the Highest Honor

The Parliamentary leader of Lithuania, Vytautas Landsbergis received the Vytautas Magnus 1st Grade Order award from President Valdas Adamkus at a solemn Seimas session on March 11th.

After receiving the order, Landsbergis said he felt distinguished and hoped that other "March 11th brothers-in-arms" would also get awards. Adamkus said he granted the order because he felt history and personalities warranted such an honor.

Among those decorated previ-

ously with the Vytautas Magnus 1st Grade Order was poet Bernardas Brazdionis.

Zalgiris Basketball Players Congratulated

Lithuania's Prime Minister, Gediminas Vagnorius, congratulated the Zalgiris Club basketball players, coaches, and leadership wishing them luck in the European league. In Vagnorius's congratulatory letter, he wrote "Each victory of Lithuanian sportsmen means joy and pride for a small nation. The basketball club of Lithuania is in the spotlight of Europe again."

Zalgiris, the Lithuanian league champion, beat Belgrade's Beobanka for the second time with a score of 59 to 54. This allowed them to enter the semi-finals of the European Cup's quarter final and win a pass to next season's Euroleague.

Kaliningrad's Demilitarization Issue Up For Debate In Europe

Vytautas Landsbergis, Chairman of Lithuania's Seimas, maintained he viewed demilitarization of the Russian Kaliningrad enclave as a problem for all Europe and should be a more frequent topic of discussion, during a meeting with the visiting President of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Leni Fischer, in Vilnius on March 11th.

Fischer, who favors good relations, prompted Lithuania to continue work with Kaliningrad by involving Sweden, and other Scandinavian countries.

Fischer revealed plans to set up a European Union information center in the enclave and enlarge a European-level university.

REFLECTIONS

A Year of the Holy Spirit

by Sr. Margarita Bareika

"We stand before you, Holy Spirit, conscious of our sinfulness – come to us, remain with us and enlighten our hearts." VT

This year we focus on a deeper understanding of our role as Christians, and to renew our interest in the Holy Bible and the sacrament of baptism.



Many ask, "Why study the Bible?" It's true, the Bible is different from any other book. It comes from a land and culture different from our own: the Hebrews and from a time long ago. To understand the Bible, we have to decide just what it really is. Then we read, read it daily.

So, what is this book called the Bible? It is essentially a sharing of faith. It is a whole nation's belief in God. The people who wrote the Bible believed that God really did intervene in human history, and that He really does care about creation. The Bible is a collection of books of religious truth.



Our journey toward faith began the moment we became aware of God in our life. Whether a dynamic conversion or a gradual awakening to God's presence, it was the beginning of our relationship with God. Not

so on God's Part. There has never been a time when we were outside of God's awareness – we were fashioned in God's thought and brought to life by God's love.

Thus, the Bible should not be read quickly. To do so is to treat it as an ordinary book, which it isn't. It must be read slowly, prayerfully, and reflectively.

In the Old Testament, you will find a narrative of God's relationships with God's people, the awakening of their awareness, their flights from or their journeys toward God. In these stories, we may recognize our own story. To seek God and meaning in our life is as old as human kind.



Some biblical texts will seem strange to us until we get past the language to the ideas behind them. Sometimes, we get so distracted by unusual descriptions or details in the text that we might forget the religious message they were meant to convey. In reading the Holy Bible, we have to understand that we're not reading an historical narrative of ancient times. We are not looking

for any historical or scientific truth – we are seeking the religious message. So, we should be reading it because the Bible is the word of God.



In many ways the era of the prophets parallels our own time – for many of the same evils still exist. The prophets tried to awaken the slumbering consciousness of their nation; much of what they said applies to us as well. Many of the evils the prophets in the Bible spoke against still remain in our culture and even in our individual lives. We should be aware of the message of these prophetic individuals, since they challenged their own people long ago and continue to challenge us as well.

For those who call themselves Christian, the Bible provides us with a good understanding of what it means to live out the gospel. To sum up, "...fear God, and keep His commandments, since this is the whole duty of man." (Eccl. 12:13)

SISTER MARGARITA BAREIKA belongs to the order of The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Lithuanian order in Putnam, Connecticut. She is also the Chairperson of the Religious Affairs Council for the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

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