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The "Displaced Person"...Lithuania's Waters...Cross Country Running

P e r s p e c t i v e s

Cleaning the basement was never one of my favorite tasks. Instead, I rummage through the countless boxes and shout up to my husband that it's going to be tough, but eventually doable. He knows full well that these boxes store beautiful story books, historical reference guides, art books, and many other items of literature handed down to us from relatives and friends. He also knows that I sit on an old kitchen chair and read, rather than organize the mess.

Some of my favorites are those bought for pennies at Lithuanian parish sales. These are volumes that date back to the late 1800s. They were printed either here in the United States or in Germany or Poland during the prohibition of book printing the Czarist regime had decreed. As I read the stories, I can imagine the times and lives of my relatives.

Writers in exile were prolific. They produced encyclopedias and reference books, educational and entertaining books for children, dramatic and romantic novels, and historical essays that captured the truth of those horror-filled days.

As I was growing up, I took all of this for granted. It wasn't until my cousin explained how profound an impression we, as exiles, made upon her thoughts and viewpoints during our first visit to Lithuania in 1983. She said that when she talked to my husband and me for the first time, she realized that the thought of Lithuanians living free and independent, yet with the Lithuanian spirit, could be possible. She felt renewed in the hope that a generation of Lithuanians could make the dream of independent Lithuania a reality. And they did.

The dusty books contain a lifetime – many lifetimes – of rich Lithuanian heritage that can be felt with one's heart and soul as each word is read. When they are spoken aloud, they produce a melody that connects and unites each generation of Lithuanians. The melody transcends the evils that were inflicted upon them and restores the mystical essence of the country we love.

Cleaning the basement entails putting aside the books I've already read and setting aside the ones which look really promising. Oh yes, I also have to find a more comfortable chair.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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**On the cover:**

V. K. Jonynas's graphic illustration of haymaking in the old style is just one of the fine examples of Lithuanian art in exile.

From METRAŠTIS, 1950. Edited by T. Dr. L. Andriekus, O. F.M. Boston, Ma: Darbininkas Publishing: 1949. p.191.

When Lithuanians were housed in Displaced Person camps in Germany after the Second World War, culture, tradition, literature, politics, and education were not halted. In fact, magazines, newspapers, and books (literary, reference and educational) were written and published to sustain the Lithuanian's need for cultural continuity.

The illustrations (Liepa - July; Rugpiūtis - August) come from MŪSŲ KALENDORIUS, 1948. (OUR CALENDAR, 1948) - a booklet with an almanac feel covering the year's events and holidays, with added poetry, short stories, and essays. The editor expressed that the plight of the exile would be short, but in the interim it was vital to maintain the Lithuanian language and culture wherever fates would lead them. The booklet was published in Dillingen/Donau, Germany, edited by A. Merkelis.

From Lithuania...

A Change for the Conservatives

Prime Minister Rolandas Paksas was elected to the post of the Homeland Union Board (the Lithuanian Conservative Party) Chairman on July 12th, and has replaced former leader Gediminas Vagnorius, who had resigned on July 11th.

Vagnorius accused Conservative Party Chairman and Lithuania's Seimas (Parliament) Chairman, Vytautas Landsbergis, of forming conditions, which caused a conflict between the Cabinet and the President. This resulted in the resignation of the ministry cabinet led by Vagnorius.

The former Prime Minister said the internal conflicts came to light after the Cabinet resignation. Vagnorius said he did not want confrontation inside the party; therefore, he decided to resign from the Homeland Union Board Chairman's post.

After an unexpected resignation of the Party's Board Chairman Gediminas Vagnorius together with the party's board, he was replaced by Prime Minister Rolandas Paksas, who earlier had replaced Vagnorius in the post of Premier as well. According to party regulations, the newly approved Party Board Chairman Rolandas Paksas proposed 14 candidates to 11 places in the new board.

During a special meeting, the Homeland Union Board congress elected 11 members on July 11th, including; Seimas Chancellor Jurgis Razma, Seimas First Vice Chairman Andrius

Kubilius, and MPs Elena Petrošienė and Audronius Ažubalis.

Three mayors -- Juozas Butkevičius, Vitas Matuzas, and Juozas Imbrasas -- also were elected. There will be also one Cabinet member -- Transport Minister Rimantas Didžiokas.

Other board members are the Young Conservative League's Vice-Chairman Ramūnas Baužinskas, *Tevynės Sąjungos Žinios* Editor-in-Chief Vladimiras Laucius, and the AB Kauno Audiniai Board Chairman Ramūnas Garbaravičius. Seimas Vice-Chairman Andrius Kubilius is the only one who remained from the old board.

Evaluating the first part of the Conservative Party's special meeting, Seimas's Chairman Vytautas Landsbergis stated during a news conference that the approach to the internal activities of the party, to the work for the state, and to the sharing of responsibility or not sharing had been discussed.

"I think that a more moderate, rational, and more of a state approach gained the upper hand. This is not a conflict of persons, it is not a personal victory for anybody, but a solution to the situation. The party is large, it affects the development of the state, and it should continue to be strong." Landsbergis said.

He did not make forecasts of Vagnorius's future in the party. Landsbergis only stressed that everything would depend on Vagnorius himself. ♦

SOURCES used for this article were the ELTA News Agency and the Respublika daily newspaper.

Ina Bertulytė Bray

GOD'S LITTLE BIRDS

"NKVD" -- "Gulags" -- "Soviets" -- "Stalin", all symbols of total subjugation, of constant terror. A lifetime has passed since the summer of 1944 when the reality of these words had driven our parents or grandparents, along with hundreds of thousands of other Lithuanians, from their homes.

Bundles in hand, babes in arms, overpowering their fear of the Nazis, defying bombs and unimaginable hardships; they headed West to Germany. Germany, for all practical purposes, was their only choice, their only "safe haven". Yes, Germany accepted the fleeing masses, but they entered as "Untermenschen" -- sub-humans, experiencing the horrors and deprivations that that designation implied. They bent their heads, they accepted, and they survived.

It was not surprising then that an almost palpable bond developed among these survivors. I will never forget an extraordinary Catholic Mass, somewhere in Graz, Austria, in August of 1944. Miraculously, it was a Mass for our Lithuanians, ending of course with "Marija, Marija." A more heart-wrenching hymn probably had never filled that cavernous church. As it soared to Heaven, every note carried the pain as well as the gratitude of the congregation. I was a child then, but to this day, "Marija, Marija" takes me misty-eyed to that church on that sunny Sunday morning. We



No Title — by Henrikas Blyskis

were alive, we were in the West, and we were with fellow Lithuanians.

The end of the War created a curious category for humanity: "DP" -- Displaced Person (affectionately known as "Dievo Paukščiukai" -- "God's little birds", who never sowed only reaped). From an intense struggle just to survive, thousands suddenly became "warehoused" in camps, suspended in animation, removed from their matrices of normal life, waiting for a most uncertain future. In contrast to the welcome that the world rolls out today for the Kosovo refugees, it took until 1949/1950, amid stringent restrictions and qualifications, and at times with bondage akin to slavery (e.g. Australian alligator farms, plantations in the American South or in Brazil) before release would

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come for most of these "DP's". A few never would pass the innumerable tests and had no choice but to remain in devastated Germany.

Thousands of our Lithuanians came to the United States, the celebrated "land of milk and honey," and as best they could started a new life. For years, however, they sustained the covert or overt dream to return home, and this deep-seated attachment to their homeland created a powerful back-drop in the very core of their being. It made it easier to accept "pushing the broom" for a living or sacrificing for their children. In memories or on weekends they could have an existence among their compatriots that was psychologically far more satisfying. Sustained by this psychic energy, they succeeded in creating socially, culturally, and to some degree politically ebullient communities, juxtaposed with those of the earlier immigrants.

In time, however, the concept of "returning home" turned into mystical symbolism. Although these parents and grandparents were patriotic "true believers", they also were pragmatic realists. Their lives had to be lived here and the only security that they could provide for their children's future spelled "education." Thus, attaining education became paramount.

I can still see my mother's wagging finger: "What you put into your head, no one ever will be able to take away!" It is only necessary to look at the honor roll Bronze Tablets in the library of the University of Illinois or the lists of students at top flight American universities (Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Berkeley, etc.) to see the impact of such collective "finger waggings" of that time.

The contributions of anthropologist Marija Gimbutienė, zoologist Birutė Galdikas, science fiction writer Algis Budrys, computer scientist Algis Avizienis, Lithuania's President Valdas Adamkus, and so many, many others from those "DP" ranks have enriched the world.

Those heroic "DP's" left an indelible legacy in all of us. They nurtured a commitment to a cause, Lithuania, which had sustained them through all the hardships, even depravity, of

their exile. They imbued their own capacity for sacrifice for others. Thus, even before the "Wall" fell, a legion of volunteers who had matured or even aged in the civil society of the West, enthusiastically if not passionately flew to the aid of their beloved "homeland." The exodus of our parents and grandparents in 1944, the deportations to Siberia, and particularly the Soviet occupation have reshaped the character of the remaining population in Lithuania. The evidence of that came clearly into focus with the reestablishment of independence. Yet the reaching back and reaching out to those "back home", particularly by the "DP's", continued almost unabated.

In 1999/2000 it will be 50 years since the final migration of the "DP's". Sadly, except perhaps in academic literature, that epoch increasingly seems to be drifting into not much more than personal reminiscences or the occasional statistic in our publications. At best, it is becoming relegated to a footnote on the pages of history. And yet, what stories of that time period lie as yet dormant: stories of heroism, of indescribable pain, of survival against all odds and life suspended, and of lives rebuilt! There are also stories exposing the all too human, more sinister nature of humanity -- these also are an integral part of the historic fabric of our people, the collective psyche of our community.

Fifty years have passed. The time has come to allow those stories, and the significance and residue -- positive and negative -- of those pivotal events to surface again. Who are they who had the strength to overcome almost unimaginable physical and psychological adversities to start life again? What were the wellsprings of this life force: love for ones roots? faith in ones religion? belief in ones future? or the primordial instincts in protecting ones progeny?

Who are we, the refugee children, whose physical and emotional security had vanished overnight, our identities eliminated, who had known starvation, who had woken in the morning aware that the day might bring death to our parents, or to us from a well-placed threat, an

arrest, a pointed pistol, a bomb? How can we possibly not stand apart? This history needs to be acknowledged, gathered, listened to and recorded, examined, and time is running out.

So where does one start? By necessity, on a national and international level. By joint effort, all Lithuanian organizations, as well as the government of Lithuania, should accept the year 2000 as the "Year of the DP." Such a declaration would create an umbrella for a myriad of activities in every community, nationally and abroad.

Within the rubric of that theme, possible activities are limited only by the availability of implementers. For starters: programs, symposia, lectures, papers, exhibitions, and most definitely articles or publications should be on every organization's agenda. Much of this raw material by default is or will be in Lithuanian, but if it is to reach the wider, particularly academic readership, the English language becomes a must.

Academic institutions should be encouraged to offer this theme for theses or dissertation topics and for public events, such as conferences or lecture series. A wider, non-Lithuanian community would thus be exposed to that neglected facet of history.

It is also time to emulate the Jewish communities and honor those heroes of whatever nationality who risked all to rescue our Lithuanians. The Lithuanian American Community is to be commended for having established a program to collect reminiscences as oral history or in written form. Such a program should be



Ilustracija — by Paulius Augustas

strengthened and should reach every community, no matter under whose auspices.

A treasure trove of icons of the "DP" era (diaries, publications, certificates, photographs, pamphlets, etc.) no doubt exists in attics or chests and will be tossed unless repositories are established and those that do exist are well publicized.

The Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas has established a center, *Iševijos Studijų Centras*, for the study of the refugees of that time period. Ways need to be found for wider-reaching collaboration with this Center

or Western centers with similar interests. And, it might be fitting to receive Congressional recognition for that group of immigrants to the United States and their value and contributions to American society. (Compared to more recent immigrants, the monetary cost alone of integrating those newcomers from Eastern Europe was minimal indeed!)

There is a history to capture, a story to tell. Before it is too late, let's start. This may be our last chance to record that part of American-Lithuanian history, which has never been seen by most of the American population. ♦

Illustration from p. 5 from Metmenys. Chicago, IL; M. Morkūno Spaustuve. Issue 7, 1963, p. 38.

Illustration from p. 7 from Literatūra — Metraštis. Chicago, IL; Lithuanian Literary Society. 1950, p.245.

Hope for Lithuania's Waters

Their typical summer day begins with Ponas Leonas waking his grandson Antanas at 5:30 in the morning and urging him to dress quickly, grab a quick sandwich, and be on their way. They walk about two miles to the banks of the Nemunas River in Vilnius.

On their way, they dig up some worms and pay close attention to where other fishermen are rustling off. Fishing may not be as plentiful as in the past, but fish are caught and memorialized during colorful conversations at the end of the day. Ponas Leonas (Mr. Leon) enjoys these days with his grandson as he reminisces about the days of the first independence when fish were longer, fatter and more abundant.

Ponas Leonas and his grandson became our guides during our visit to Lietuva (Lithuania) the summer of 1998. My son Kovas, an avid fisherman from the age of two, cannot exist very long without fishing – be it by the sea or the rivers and lakes. So we were very happy when Ponas



Antanas and Kovas fish off the Banks of the Nemunas River in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Photo: R. Ardys-Juška

Leonas and Antanas volunteered to share with us their fishing place.

We started off one particular day rather late by any fisherman's standards, 8:00 a.m. From first glance, the banks of the Nemunas River seem to be overgrown by

shrubs and trees with no penetrable entrance. Yet the closer we walked to the river, we could ascertain more clearly the narrow footpaths made by generations of young and old fishermen alike.

As we moved through the coolness of the wooded area, Ponas Leonas talked of the Nemunas of the past. Since he was a child, he had fished in these river waters, as well as in other lakes throughout Lithuania. He recalled the long, plump *ešeriai* (perch), which had populated Nemunas. Other fish included pike, trout, and stickleback. Ponas Leonas also recalled that during the Soviet period the Nemunas would change color, from the easy-going light green to foamy pink or oily blue. Fishermen

RASA ARDYS-JUŠKA is the editor of BRIDGES.

would slit open their catch and find parasites pouring out. During long periods, fish were veritably non-existent in the river waters.

In Western countries environmental protection is a way of life and of protecting natural resources. Granted, even before the 1990s Lithuania's citizens were aware of industry destruction of their natural resources, but they were powerless and not prepared to act as their more sophisticated counterparts in the Western countries. Before his presidency, Valdas Adamkus was a high-ranking United States EPA official in the Midwest until his retirement and subsequent election to the presidency of Lietuva. He was instrumental in increasing awareness and introducing environmental control information and implementation. From there, united Baltic organizations have increased their work in protecting existing and disappearing species.

This type of mindset became official in Lithuania when the terms "Environment" and "Environmental Protection" were approved of in the Environment Protection Law passed in 1992. According to Lithuania's Ministry of Environmental Protection, before the restoration of independence, all data collected by environmental specialists were secret. In 1992/1993 the Environmental Protection Department prepared a new Ecological Monitoring Program.

The Monitoring Program specialists observe fish populations in the Baltic Sea (herring and flounder); in the Kuršių Marios (Kuršių Lagoon); in lakes, rivers (roach and perch); and in streams (river trout and freshwater sculpin). The populations of roach, perch and flounder are monitored in conjunction with neighboring Baltic countries' environmental monitoring systems. River trout and freshwater sculpin are particularly sensitive to pollution indices and best describe the river ecosystem.

The selected general biological and specific parameters for evaluation of these populations well define their condition and reflect changes in pollution. Parameters used are: fish length,

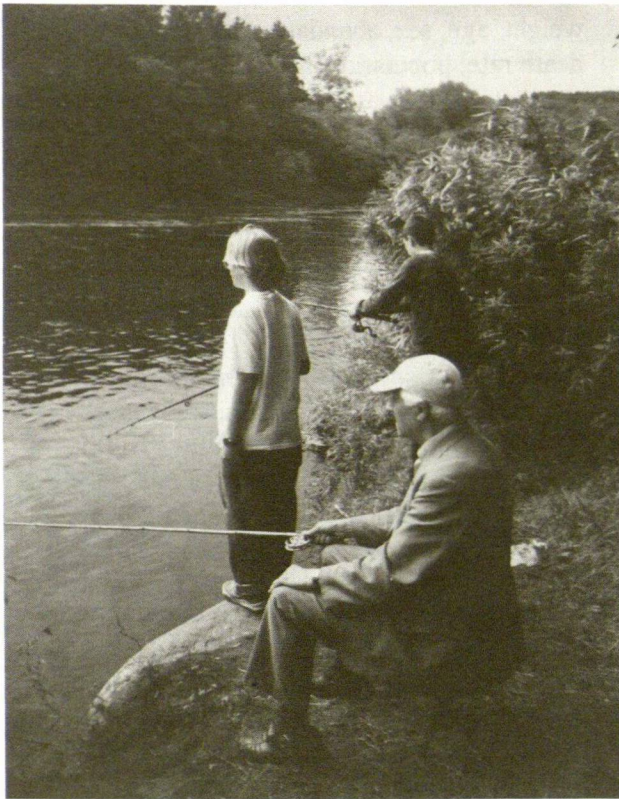
weight, age, sex, abundance, age-class, growth, death rate, population age and dimensional structure. The work of monitoring is in itself awesome for a small country as Lithuania. There are over 30,000 rivers, rivulets, and canals between 250 meters to longer than 200 kilometers in length. These travel past industries, out of country and then back, or are used for organic/waste material discharge containment.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection states that river pollution remains the most acute ecological problem presently. The city of Kaunas, with a population of over half a million, still has no wastewater treatment plant. The untreated wastewater is dumped directly into the Nemunas or Neris Rivers. Even though the recent decline of industry and reduced use of chemicals in agriculture have helped to decrease water pollution, construction of a wastewater treatment plant in Kaunas and biological waste water treatment facilities in Vilnius, Šiauliai, and Klaipėda would help reduce organic pollution by 70 percent.

According to the Ministry, today's Lithuanian waters contain approximately 88 fish species: 27 are marine fish, 52 are settled freshwater fish, and nine are migratory fish species. In the Baltic Sea, besides the marine fish, there live 11 migratory species and about 15 freshwater species. All of which depend on proper pollution controls to be able to exist and flourish in Lithuania's waters.

In addition to the fish species being monitored by the Lithuanian Ecological Program, the Baltic Sea is home to Baltic herring, Baltic sprat, cod, river flounder, turbot, and migrating European smelt, vimba, sea trout, and Atlantic salmon. The Baltic shelf near Lithuania is an important spawning site for herring and turbot, as well as a feeding place for migratory species. Changes that occur in this location correspond closely to changes over the whole Baltic Sea.

In the Kuršių Marios, 50 to 55 different fish species are found, including bream, roach, pike-perch, European smelt, river perch, stickle-



(from foreground) Ponas Leonas, Kovas and Antanas
fish by the Nemunas River.
Photo: R. Ardys-Juška

backs, and ruff. From the 1920s to the present, commercial fish resources have declined by more than two times mainly due to the reduction in migratory fish resources. The migratory species dominated the community between 1926 and 1938. By 1947 to 1965 the community was dominated by settled fish like eel, vimba, bream, roach, and stander. Later, between 1970 to 1990, the community structure changed again with the stickleback dominating the migratory fish group, and the roach and bream dominating the settled fish group. Recent Ministry of Environmental Protection data shows that immigration of salmon and vimba in to the Marios and the Nemunas basin is gradually increasing.

The Lithuanian Ecological Monitoring Program reports that the largest group of fish dominating Lithuanian lakes and reservoirs include perch, pike, roach, tench, bream, rudd,

ruff, bleak, crucean carp, and silver bream. While, small rivers (small streams, streams, upper reaches of rivers) are homes to stone-loach, the three-spined stickleback, minnows, trout, sculpins, gudgeon, roach, and bleak. The middle-sized rivers contain in addition to the previous fish species, the pike, dace and chub. Larger rivers include all the different populations and the bream and white bream.

Although the research shows that the different fish communities are increasing in size and occurrence, little of that was seen when Ponas Leonas, his grandson, my son, and I visited the banks of Nemunas. But again, there are good days and bad days when fishing takes a little extra effort. The bait, worms, were sufficient to catch small perch. Bait and tackle stores in Vilnius offered an array of European and Japanese tackle brands used here in the States at lower prices. A small, long, oval-shaped wooden painted bobber was an excellent find. These are rarely found in the U.S.

On our trip to Trakai, fishing was a little more satisfying. The lake surrounding the medieval castle was noticeably more alive. Several times the boys were successful with their catches. They used the simple painted bobbers and worms to land a few four to five-inch perch, which glistened bright yellow in the sun. At one point, Kovas caught a small stickleback – a fish that I had never seen before.

There were no “keepers”, but the adventure of fishing in different waters was more than thrilling for my son. Kovas has resolved to repeat this trip, but expand it to include other lakes and rivers throughout Lithuania. The park systems (*see next article*) offer beautiful views, hiking paths, and water to swim in, sail and row on, and, naturally dip your fishing line in during the warm summer months. These are definitely on his list the next time we fly to Lithuania. ♦

Source for information regarding Lithuania's water and wildlife status: The Ministry of Environmental Protection of Lithuania.

Sr. Ona Mikaila

A Stroll Through The Park . . .

There are five national parks in Lithuania designed to preserve the country's scenic beauty, areas of particular cultural and historical interest, and to allow visitors to enjoy the natural, unspoiled environment.

Aukštaitija National Park

This is the first of Lithuania's national parks. It is in the beautiful lake-district of eastern Lithuania, north of Vilnius, in the so-called highlands. The largest lake here is Dringis, while the deepest is Lake Tauragnas. The area is wooded and teeming with wildlife: elk, deer, and boar.

Some of the old peasant villages are preserved here with their picturesque wooden houses. At the center of the park is the village of Palūšė, which boasts a very old wooden church with a separate bell tower. The region lends itself to all kinds of outdoor sports like sailing, canoeing, hiking, and fishing. ☞

Trakai National Park

This is both a very picturesque and historically interesting site. It is easily reached by a twenty-minute drive south west of Vilnius. The town of Trakai stands on a bit of land between two lakes, which are part of a group of some 30 interconnected lakes. That is why Trakai is known as "The Town of the Waters".

The largest lake is called Galvė and is dotted with small islands. Lake Galvė has become a center for water sports, especially sailing. Yachts and steamboats offer trips across the lake. A castle stands on one of these islands, the only "Water Castle" in Lithuania. Vytautas Didysis (Vytautas the Great) built it and loved to spend time there. This is where he died in 1430. The castle was rebuilt in red brick after World War II, and the inside has now

been restored and decorated. It is open to the public and can be reached by a long wooden bridge across the lake.

The ruins of a still older castle can be found in the old town of Trakai, which also boasts of having one of the oldest churches in Lithuania, built also by Vytautas Didysis. ☞

*Walking towards the Trakai
medieval castle.*

Photo: R. Ardys-Juška



SR. ONA MIKAILA is a writer and editor of *Bendradarbis*, and belongs to the order of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Lithuanian order in Putnam, Connecticut.

Neringa National Park

This long, narrow, bow-shaped peninsula, with its miles of sandy beaches, pine woods and sand dunes, is one of the most exotically beautiful spots in all of Lithuania. At its widest point, it is no more than three miles wide, with water on both sides. The peninsula separates the Kuršių Marios from the Baltic Sea. It can be reached by ferry from Klaipėda.

Neringa, with its constantly shifting sands, is the most ecologically fragile of the national parks. Originally covered with pine forests, it was denuded in the 18th century and the wind-blown sands buried 14 fishing villages. The pines have been reintroduced and are now flourishing.

Four fishing villages still remain, along with picturesque resort towns like Nida and Juodkrantė. Juodkrantė has an interesting feature called Raganų Kalnas (Witches' Hill), decorated with large wooden sculptures of various characters found in old folk legends and stories. (*A "Ragana" greets visitors at right.*)

Nida is an attractive town where German writer Thomas Mann built himself a summerhouse in the 1930s. It also boasts of having the highest sand dune – about 60 meters in height – with a spectacular view at the top. People can be seen trekking along the tops of the dunes, but the going is far from easy.

Although this spot is certainly worth seeing, efforts are also being made to preserve it and an entrance fee is required. ☹

Žemaitija National Park

The western part of Lithuania, known as the lowlands, is a unique region with its own dialect, folk culture, and a distinctive natural beauty. The rolling countryside is dotted with lakes and old villages.

Lake Plateliai is the largest and deepest lake of the area with remarkably clear water. Various legends are associated with it. A castle once stood on one of the islands in the lake with a submerged pathway to the shore, a secret escape route for the inhabitants. The shores of Lake Plateliai are excellent for camping and the lake itself is used for sailing. ☹



Photo: Ramunė Kubilius

Dzūkija National Park

Dzūkija is in the southern section of Lithuania and was once called Dainava. It is famous for its folksongs -- "dainos", and still retains much of the old Lithuanian culture. The old villages are interesting to explore, and the people still practice the old crafts like basket weaving and woodcarving.

This is a land of contrasts with hot summers and very cold winters. It is still quite heavily forested. The sandy soil supports pine trees. People come from all over to pick mushrooms in the woods.

At the junction of the Nemunas and Merkys rivers is the very old town of Merkinė famous for its historical castle hill. Merkinė is one of the oldest sites of human habitation in Lithuania. A castle, which once stood on the mound, was a royal residence where the rulers and their nobles came for the good hunting in the surrounding forests. ☹

Laima Šalčius

Looking Back at...

Lithuania's 1998 Song Festival

Our family's first trip to Lithuania was during the summer of 1988 in the heat of *Glasnost and Perestroika*. Since that time at least one of us has gone back almost annually. However, last summer's visit probably was one of the most personally gratifying for us, for at least three of us.

Our youngest daughter, Terese, my husband John, and I were in Lithuania with "Klumpė", the folk dance troupe with members from southeastern Wisconsin and northeastern Illinois. We had gone to Vilnius to participate in the 1998 Song Festival, *Dainų Šventė*. Of course, we were there to dance, not to sing. John and I had often thought that we would like to dance with a group, but because of work commitments, time was not available for rehearsals. That changed that year!

At our first rehearsal, we learned that the group was in need of women. We asked our daughter, a senior in high school at the time, if she would like to join us. When she agreed, we began our "careers" as Lithuanian folk dancers, rehearsing in the basement of a bowling alley in Waukegan, Illinois every Sunday morning from 9 A.M. to 11:30 A.M.

Our director/teacher, Ingrida Rutkauskaitė Špokienė, was a young woman who had recently emigrated from Lithuania to the United States. Several years ago when "Klumpė" had first performed in Lithuania, one of our members met Ingrida in Panevėžys, her hometown. Something was "just right" for them and, after a long distance courtship,

Ingrida and Viktoras were married. Ingrida had danced professionally in Lithuania where they take folk dancing very seriously. Having come to the U.S. at a time when "Klumpė" was in need of a director, she stepped right into the job.

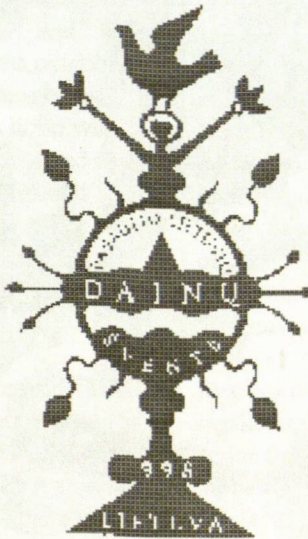
We had arrived in Vilnius a few days before the rest of the troupe had flown in on Sunday, June 28th. At noon of that day, we were to meet everyone at the hotel and were to register for our rooms at the same time. Even though we had our own apartment, we wanted the camaraderie; so we felt we would spend the week in the hotel together with our dance group in the *Sporto Viešbutis*.

This hotel reminded us of the Intourist hotels we had experienced in the Soviet Union. Accommodations were far from the style we are accustomed to. There was one bathroom at one end of the floor for women and another bathroom at the opposite end for men. There were no showers and only two bathtubs for the entire floor. When we saw what awaited us, we decided to remain in our own apartment. We simply made a

point of meeting our troupe at the hotel whenever we needed to travel anywhere together.

That first Sunday, most of us met at the Cathedral for evening mass, and afterwards, walked up a couple of blocks to 'Markus and Ko.' restaurant for a meal. The management definitely had to scurry to accommodate nearly 20 people.

Monday, the 29th of June, was a day of special visitations. About 7 o'clock in the morning, a bus with the driver, Ingrida's father Arvydas Rut-



The Festival's emblem designed by Mikalojus Vilutis.

LAIMA ŠALČIUS is an active member of the Lithuanian folk dance group, KLUMPĖ. The group has members from southeastern Wisconsin and northeastern Illinois.

kauskas, awaited the troupe. We were to spend the day in Panevėžys, a city in the heart of Lithuania and Ingrida's hometown. Ingrida's parents had planned the day out for us. Her mother, Irena Rutkauskienė, is the director of "Linelis"; the children's dance troupe in Panevėžys.

A guided visit of the art gallery in Panevėžys had been arranged. The mayor of the city received us in his chambers and presented each troupe member with a gift: a book about the city and a woven bookmark in the Lithuanian tradition. In turn, on behalf of "Klumpė", our president Vilija Sužiedelis presented a gift to the mayor. Following the standard, formal greetings, some friendly conversation ensued. Even my husband, who had been to Panevėžys on business some years before, was drawn into the conversation with the mayor: an enthusiastic, friendly, and gracious host. We had a light lunch in the second-floor restaurant of the city's hotel on the main street in downtown Panevėžys.

Free time was provided for exploration. In the center of the city off of the main street is a picturesque park with a wide staircase leading to a lake and a lake walkway around it. While everyone, including our daughter, went about exploring the shops, John and I walked around the lake and simply relaxed sitting on a wall that encircled the lake. Meeting by our bus at the agreed upon time, everyone took a ride out of town to a restaurant on the outskirts for a meal of "šaltibarščiai" and "cepelinai" -- that is cold beet soup and sizable meat-filled potato dumplings served with a sour cream and bacon sauce. To say we were "stuffed" would be an understatement!

Part of our day included a trip to the local weaving and knitting company, "Tulpė". Beautifully made sweaters, dresses, skirts, duvets, table cloths, pillow covers, and more were a fraction of the cost

of not only what would be paid in the U.S., but also of what one would pay in Vilnius. Not one in our group went away empty handed; everyone found something either for themselves or to give as gifts.

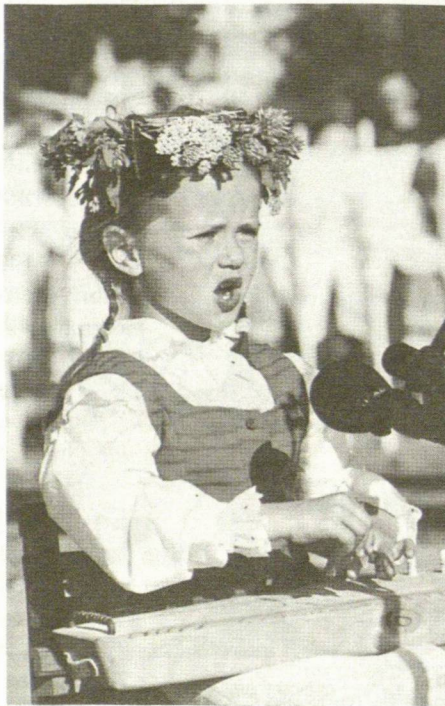
The grand finale to Monday was the reception given in honor of "Klumpė". At the home of "Linelis" -- that is the dance troupe's own facility -- the members of "Klumpė" were received like royalty. A double receiving line had formed an archway of Lithuanian sashes to welcome everyone as each person walked into the hall. An unbelievable program of song, music, and dance made every member of "Klumpė" feel special. A serving area approximately the size of three ping-pong tables was laden with food, and a Lithuanian band played waltzes and polkas well into the night. Even the mayor and his wife joined the celebration.

My husband and I met a woman who turned out to be a distant relative hailing from Prienai, the town where my father-in-law had grown up. The teens and young adults of our group spent the evening dancing, dancing, and still dancing some more. As the night turned to early morning, the celebration came to an end. A bus ride back to Vilnius awaited everyone, and most slept all the way back.

As the bus entered Vilnius at 2:45 A.M. it dropped Terese, John, and me off in front of the Cathedral and headed to the hotel with the rest. Walking the few blocks to our apartment, we realized that a new day was already dawning in the East. We got to

bed as the sun was first peeking out.

Thank goodness that the first day of the general rehearsal, Tuesday, did not begin until a bit later. Rehearsals were at Lokomotyvo Stadijone, a stadium not far from the train station. No one could miss the members of "Klumpė"; we were all in medium blue sport shirts with "Klumpė" monogrammed on the pocket. The women even had blue



A glimpse from the Song Festival — a little girl strums the 'kanklės'.

From the official 1998 Song Festival booklet

broomstick skirts as part of the uniform. Imagine 1,600 dancers making the dust fly in the stadium; and truly, the dust did fly. No one was particularly certain how they were going to handle a full week of the dust. No need to worry. It actually rained on and off for the rest of the week; so that our rehearsals were dust-free but in gear which was to keep the dancers dry.

Our own rehearsals actually prevented us from seeing some of the programs. However, Thursday evening we went to Kalnų Parkas, which is just beyond the Cathedral, to see the music ensembles and the more professional folk dance troupes perform. This was an enormous outdoor theater in the manner of a Greek play, though benches were only on one side of the performance area. Vilija Sužiedėlienė had made certain that we all had a meal. Arriving early allowed everyone to enjoy fresh fruit, cheese, sausage, French bread, rye bread, and juices. Meals definitely taste better eaten outdoors.

The ensembles began their dress rehearsal as daylight dissipated. The night sky was lit up with millions of small lamps on the trees that served as the backdrop for the performing musicians and dancers. This dress rehearsal of the ensembles was something to remember. The evening could not have been more majestic. The outstanding performances indicated a level of proficiency in music and dance that was incomparable.

Friday night was our own dress rehearsal. This time it was in a stadium across the Neris River, Žalgiris Stadijonas, named after Lithuania's winning battle with the Tartars during the Middle Ages. We had been performing 1,600 strong; now there were 3,000 dancers. As we performed, we could only imagine the precision of movement necessary to accurately depict what each dance intended. It turns out that the precision was there; only each of us, as a small part of something very large, had difficulty realizing this. All was actually quite phenomenal.

The dress rehearsal had gone so well that the director of the dance program told everyone that Saturday morning will have no rehearsal. Hence, we just had to do a good job Saturday evening, which was our program. Indeed it turned out well, and as fireworks marked the end of yet another grand dance program, friends and relatives of the dancers came down into the main area with bouquets of flowers and boxes of candy in their hands. We had

come to Vilnius to do our part. We had done so in dance, but our responsibilities were not quite over. Sunday, the day of the singing, there was a parade.

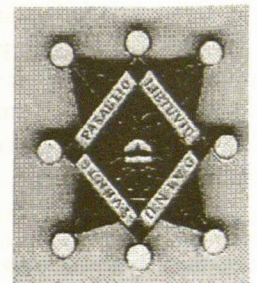
From the Cathedral to Vingio Parkas, the location of this enormous, marathon-like concert, every song and dance group marched in a parade through the streets of downtown Vilnius. Often there were great cheers in the crowd as "Klumpė" passed the parade watchers; we were from far away, from the U.S.A., and we were greeted warmly. However, that warmth was not enough to keep everyone warm as the wet and rainy afternoon wore on.

This Sunday concert of song truly was marathon-like; it lasted approximately five hours, the last hour and one-half of which we did not watch. Terese, John, and I were already quite wet from the rain and we were definitely cold; so, we went back to our bus, curled up in a ball in our seats, and fell asleep. I might add that several from our troupe did exactly the same thing. As more bodies congregated into the bus, it got warmer. And, we could still hear the singing. We were so wet, so tired, that even the grandeur of the fireworks which followed made little impression on us. How fortunate that no one fell ill!

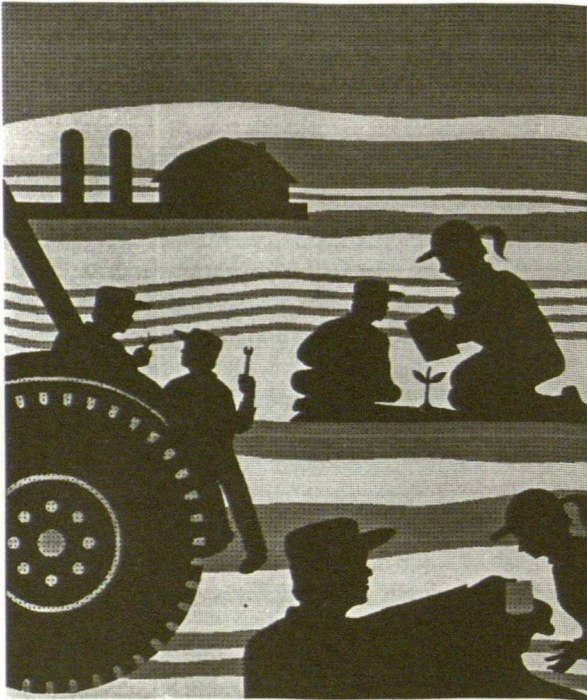
So this week of camaraderie amongst the dancers of "Klumpė" came to an end. Some returned to the U.S. immediately; most stayed a little longer. We, too, stayed. Wanting to see some sights, visit some relatives, buy some souvenirs, we had plenty to look forward to. However, nothing would compare to our having danced in the Song Festival of 1998. It is one thing to be an observer, a member of the audience; it is another story to be a participant. The preferred perspective is that of a participant. ♦



The Song Festival's commemorative medallions designed by Mikalojus Viliutis.



Leland Ruth



Aid to Farmers on the Horizon

THE AUKSUČIAI FOUNDATION was formed in the United States as a non-profit, public benefit corporation under the provisions of California law (Corporate ID # 213609) in January of this year. Its purpose is to provide a farmer-to-farmer and youth exchange programs, which will involve education, training, scientific development, and cultural exchanges between the agricultural and forest communities of Lithuania and the United States.

This group volunteers their time and money to help in the development of a non-profit project whose purpose is to provide direct assistance to small-scale Lithuanian farmers. They are inviting Americans of Lithuanian heritage and their friends world-wide to help in providing assistance to the project that will result in Lithuanian farmers becoming more self-sufficient and competitive in the newly developing free market economy.

THE AUKSUČIAI FOUNDATION is planning, in cooperation with the Dotnuva Agricultural Academy, the establishment of research and demonstration plots showing modern farming technologies on land currently under long-term lease near the town of Kuršėnai, village of Auksučiai, County of Šiauliai. Additionally, the Foundation will be facilitating research and educational exchanges between Land Grant Universities and Colleges, and universities both public and private and their counterparts in the Republic of Lithuania.

This Foundation is a private, non-profit entity that has the support of the local government in the Šiauliai region and the Lithuanian Ministry of Agriculture. It is in its developmental stage and needs your assistance in making its programs a reality. The Foundation urges that you become part of this exciting project by giving direct financial assistance, access to farm equipment manufacturers

LELAND (LEE) RUTH owns a consulting firm in Sacramento, California, which specializes in agricultural association organization development. His father's family surname was Rutkauskas. He came to the U.S. in 1906 and eventually migrated to Northern California where he was a cattle rancher.

or dealers, or any other in-kind support you can provide. They are open to discussing their 1999-2000 plan of activity with you and how you might take part.

About the Auksučiai Foundation Board of Directors, USA:

- ♦ President **Vytautas J. Šliupas**, P.E., of Burlingame, CA is an irrigation, drainage and water resources engineer. Thirty years experience worldwide including Lithuania. Fluent in Lithuanian.
- ♦ Vice President **Lawrence D. Clement**, of Fairfield, CA is County Director/Farm Advisor, Soils, Water, Economics, University of California Cooperative Extension. Over 25 years of experience including Russia and Lithuania.
- ♦ Vice President International Relations Professor **Calvin O. Qualset**, of Santa Rosa, CA is a Cereal Grain Geneticist and Director of Resource Conservation Program, University of California, Davis. Over 30 years experience worldwide. He has visited Lithuania.
- ♦ Secretary **Leland H. Ruth**, of Sacramento, CA is President Emeritus of the Agricultural Council of California. Over 35 years experience including Ukraine (Crimea), Russia, Armenia and Lithuania. Some knowledge of Lithuanian.
- ♦ Treasurer **Kestutis J. Šliupas**, of Vacaville, CA is a Database Administrator with Zeneca Corporation. 12 years of experience. Fluent in Lithuanian and has visited Lithuania.

Honorary Members:

Mrs. **Alma Adamkienė**, First Lady of Lithuania; Dr. **Algirdas Avišienis**, University of California, Los Angeles; and Professor Emeritus **Czeslaw Milosz**, Nobel Prize Laureate, University of California, Berkeley.

Honorary Directors:

Lithuania: Prof. Habil. Dr. **Leonas Kadziulis**, Chairman Lithuanian Science Council, Vilnius; Dr. **Edvardas Gedvilas**, District Rural Commissioner, Kuršėnai; **Vladas Kavaliauskas**, Forester,

Kuršėnai-Auksučiai Distr.; **Darius Malinauskas**, Gen. Manager Kruojos Vingis, UAB, Šiauliai.

The Foundation has no paid administrative overhead – 100% of the donations received goes to support programs. The plan includes a research, demonstration, and learning center at the Auksučiai Farm. At this facility an Honor Roll of those Lithuanian-Americans and their world-wide friends who had the vision to make the program possible will be proudly exhibited. All the Foundation asks is for the opportunity to do what it can with donors' help to provide a new direction and future for Lithuanian agriculture.

If you would like to make a difference for Lithuanian farmers, make checks payable to THE AUKSUČIAI FOUNDATION and send to:

THE AUKSUČIAI FOUNDATION
2907 Frontera Way
Burlingame, CA 94010 USA

Please designate the family surname you wish to receive recognition.

For additional information log on to the Internet Website: <<http://home.earthlink.net/~sliupasvyt/auksuciai.htm>>

or contact by e-mail:

Vytautas J. Sliupas — sliupasvyt@earthlink.net
or Leland H. Ruth — LelandRuth@aol.com
or Lawrence D. Clement — ldclement@ucdavis.edu

THE AUKSUČIAI FOUNDATION has tax exempt status from the California Franchise Tax Board. Federal IRS Tax Exempt Status is pending. ♦

Rimas Gedeika

Lithuanian Runners Show Their Pride and Talent

Inga Juodeskienė finished fourth in the 5k race, at the World Military Cross Country Championships at Mayport Naval Station, Jacksonville, Florida, on February 24, 1999. Her time was 17 min 45 sec., just two seconds from the bronze medal. The winner was Morocco's Elkamch Zhor, the current record holder in this distance.

The Conseil International Du Sport (CISM), the international military organization whose motto is "Friendship through Sports", has been sponsoring this event for 47 years. This year the Championships drew over 300 military athletes from 24 countries. One of the countries was Lithuania.

Lithuania's team was made up of four soldiers from two different battalions. The team's captain, Lieutenant Raimondas Juo-



Algis Balčiūnas and Inga Juodeskienė hold the Lithuanian flag as Bronius Basalykas looks on at the Military Cross Country Championship ceremonies at the Mayport Naval Base in Florida.

Photo by Rimas Gedeika

deska and private Inga Juodeskienė from the Jegerio Batalionas (The Hunter's Battalion), and Sgt. Algis Balčiūnas and private Bronius Basalykas from the Geležinio Vilko Batalionas (The Iron Wolf Battalion).

Commodore Greg Hoffman -- Lithuania's Host

Every country had a host whose primary responsibility was to insure the well being of that country's athletes -- that is, to make them feel right at home. Lithuania, Belgium, France, Canada, Italy, and Spain had Commodore Greg Hoffman, the commanding officer of the Helicopter Anti-Submarine Light Wing, Atlantic Fleet, as its host. In addition, each country had a team leader, "a mother hen", whose task was to insure that that team got to the right place at the right time. Lithuania's team's leader was Command

RIMAS GEDEIKA, a marathon runner, is a regular contributor to BRIDGES and an avid Lithuanian sports enthusiast, especially track and field.

Master Chief Jerry Williams, the command's highest ranking NCO.

Even though Commodore Hoffman was hosting five other countries, it became very obvious, almost right from the first day, that the four Lithuanian soldiers were special to him. On Opening Day, prior to the start of the Ceremonies, each country's team captain and host were driven by separate cars to the field. For this ceremonial entrance, Commodore Hoffman chose to ride with Lt. Raimondas Juodeska. He also chose to accompany him to all other events that took place that day. Officers under his command escorted the other countries.

The Opening Day Ceremonies were very impressive. All the soldiers dressed in their nation's Class A military uniforms marched into the field. For me it was an awe-inspiring sight to see the Lithuanian soldiers marching in, proudly carrying their flag, being on equal ground with the other countries. And when they marched past the reviewing stand and Lt. Juodeska, Commodore Hoffman, and the other dignitaries saluted the Lithuanian flag, my chest swelled with pride.

Once all the athletes had marched on the field, Col. Gola, from Italy, opened the games. The ceremony was similar in grandeur to the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games -- with the invocation, the athlete's oath, the marching music, the parachutist bringing the CISM flag, and the jet fighters flying overhead. It was a memorable event.

On the day of the race, Commodore Hoffman took time off from his busy work schedule to come and cheer the Lithuanian team. After the races, he and his staff invited all of us for few, cold ones to toast Inga and her success on the field of battle.

On the last day, Commodore Hoffman really surprised us. He invited us to attend a helicopter flight simulator. Each one of us had the opportunity to "fly", to land, to hover, and occasionally to "crash" the helicopter into the ocean. We were the only ones to be granted to partake in this very special experience.

We were greatly honored to have received

such VIP treatment from Commodore Hoffman. All of us extend our thanks to him and his staff for making us feel special.

The Main Event -- The Races

All three cross-country races took place on Thursday, February 24. It was a super perfect day for the runners -- the temperature was in the low 50's, with very little humidity.

The first race was the men's 12 Km. Although none of the Lithuanian runners were entered in this event; nevertheless, there was a Lithuanian-American, Air Force Major Andrius Klemas, a member of the American team, running this race.

Andrius is not a stranger to Lithuanian's running community. He has participated in several "Sporto Šventes" in Lithuania and winning its initial marathon. In addition to his running accomplishments, he was very instrumental in obtaining scholarships for Lithuanian runners to attend American Universities.

A soldier from Morocco won the race. The Moroccans also won the other four places.

The women's 5k race started at 10:00 AM. There were 47 runners representing 13 countries running this event. Inga Juodeskienė was one of those runners.

The course consisted of two loops around the last nine holes of a golf course. It had several small but steep hills and one major obstacle -- namely a steep ditch whose bottom was filled with muddy water. Each runner had to run it, twice. It was here where most of the runners began to separate.

Inga got off to a good start. During the first loop she was among the top five runners. She was running effortlessly, confidently, and looking very strong. Approaching the "mud obstacle" for the second time, she was running neck and neck with the German runner. They were both in third place. As they came up on the other side of the muddy ditch, both were still neck and neck. Then, about 100 yards past the obstacle, the German girl started to pull away

With about 800 yards to the finish line, it was quite apparent that Inga would not catch the German girl, nor would any other runner catch her. At this point Inga could have slowed down, being assured of a fourth place finish. But to quit, to slow down, was not in her character. Her fierce competitive nature, her physical and mental toughness did not allow her to take the easy route. Inga continued to run as hard as she could -- to push and push and push all the way to the finish line. Her valiant, never say die effort, clearly showed the true character of the Lithuanian runner/soldier.

After crossing the finish line, barely able to stand, her chest heaving, gasping for breath, Inga managed to say, "I ran as hard as I could... I so much wanted a medal... I couldn't run any harder... I couldn't catch the German girl!"

A few minutes later, after regaining her composure, Inga said, "I wish that the course had a few more hills. I felt very strong running them. I know that my mountain training would have helped me even more. Maybe a medal. I ran as hard as I could."

Last year Inga took 8th place; this year, 4th. A truly laudable achievement. Next year -- a medal!

The men's 5k race started right after the women's race. In this race Lithuania had three entries. Although all three runners ran gallantly, their results were not among the top 50%. Raimondas Juodeska started off very well, but around the first kilometer he severely pulled his left quad and had to drop out. Basalykas, who two months prior to this race had an ankle operation, ran on sheer guts. "I came here not only to run, but to finish." Algis Balčiūnas ran a good race finishing in the middle of the pack.

The Closing Ceremonies took place that afternoon. This time the athletes lined up in their athletic attire. The mood was more relaxed, more jovial. Again the ceremonies were very similar to those of the Olympic Games. The individual as well as the team winners received

their medals. The flags of the first three finishers were raised and the national anthem of the gold medal winner echoed throughout the field.

Colorado -- Training in the Mountains

Receiving financial support from several Lithuanian-American track and field fans, Inga was able to train in Colorado's Rocky Mountains. For two months prior to the race, she trained under Coach Vigil, one of America's foremost high altitude long distance coaches. Every day she tested running skills against America's best cross-country runners: among them Deena Drossin, the current American women's cross-country champion.

Under Coach Vigil's watchful eye, Inga strengthened herself both physically and mentally. And the results speak for themselves

Inga worked hard, trained hard. She showed everyone that Lithuanian runners are eager to learn, to improve their skills, and not be afraid to push themselves to their limits. This dedication, this positive attitude impressed Coach Vigil greatly. As a result, he agreed in principle to train Lithuania's long distance runners. He is willing to work with the Lithuanian coaches to set up a high altitude program, which would compliment their sea level plans.

Coach Vigil is willing to help the Lithuanian runners prepare not only for the year 2000 Olympics, but also for future world competition. Here is a perfect opportunity for Lithuania to help its runners.

The Games End but the Memories Linger

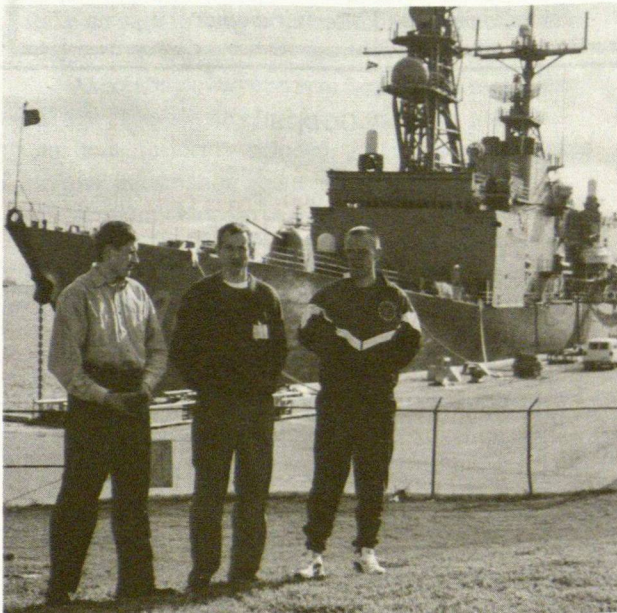
Saturday arrived and all the athletes started to get ready to go back home. Inga left at the crack of dawn. Raimondas, Algis, and Bronius, together with athletes from six other nations, boarded the German Military Air Bus for a flight back to Germany and then for a long car ride back home.

I left for home the following day. As my

plane headed eastward, my thoughts started to drift back to the events of the past few days. Images flew in my mind's eye. Once again I saw Inga, Bronius, and Algis proudly marching into the stadium with their flag waving proudly in the wind; again I saw Lt. Raimondas standing with Commodore Hoffman proudly saluting the Lithuanian flag as the three soldiers marched by the reviewing stand. Oh how proud I felt then and now -- 30,000 feet above ground!

Again I saw Inga running as hard as she could, giving everything she had, making all of us proud to be Lithuanian. I also saw Raimondas, Algis, and Bronius, and how well they represented Lithuania and their battalions. Finally I remembered Commodore Hoffman and the special VIP treatment that he gave us. All us felt greatly honored.

Next year the Games will be in Morocco. Next year Inga will hold the medal she so greatly worked hard for! ♦



Top photo: (left to right) Commodore Hoffman, Inga Juodeskienė, Lt. Raimondas Juodeska, and Command Master Chief Jerry Williams.

Middle photo: Inga leads the pack during the 5 K race during the Championships.

Photo to the left: Standing in front of a Navy war ship at the Mayport Naval Station are, from left, Bronius Basalykas, Algis Balčiūnas, and Raimondas Juodeska.

Photos by R. Gedeika

CURRENT EVENTS

An Act of Kindness

Recently, in the March 1999 issue of *BRIDGES*, the story of three U.S. Army sergeants who risked their lives to retrieve the body of a fallen Lithuanian platoon commander, Lt. Normundas Valteris, in Bosnia was included.

In addition to medals received from the United States, the Philadelphia Chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community honored Staff Sgt. Charles Crego, Sgt. Robert Bastian, and Sgt. Horace Johnson during their Lithuanian Independence Day celebration on Feb. 21st. Yet, the story doesn't end here.

Sgt. Robert Bastian, in a generous act of kindness and compassion, asked that the medal for bravery he had received from the U.S. Army be given to Lt. Valteris' family. He received a very touching thank you letter from the Lieutenant's mother. Rimasa Gedeika, a Philadelphia Chapter Lithuanian-American Community member, received a copy and, with the U.S. Army's permission, it is printed at right. ♦

— Jeanne Dorr

April 29, 1999
Šiauliai, Lithuania

Dear Mr. Senior Sergeant R. Bastian,

On April 17, 1999, the day when three years ago my son Normundas was killed, I was handed over your letter and the medal. I am very deeply touched and grateful to know that my son's, Normundas's, name is known and respected so far away from Lithuania.

I would like to let you know that this medal will be kept in our family as a most treasured relic.

I cannot find the proper words to express how I am feeling and what your words, dear Mr. R. Bastian, mean to me. The pain of loss is infinite. However, I wish you to know that your letter and the medal that I was handed on such a day, reminded me that although my son's life was short it was full of significance.

From the bottom of my heart I wish to thank you for your nice and warm words due to the remembrance of Normundas.

I wish you good luck in your military service. I hope you will stay healthy and strong all your life.

Let God take care of you and all the people that chose such a perilous occupation of a soldier as the war in the country where Normundas was killed still goes on.

Yours sincerely and with my best wishes,
Normundas Valteris's mother

Guinness Adds Adamkus to its Lists

Under the column titled "The president having the shortest record of residence in a home country," Lithuania's President Valdas Adamkus became an official subject for the Guinness Book of World Records, according to the Chicago-based *Draugas* (The Friend), a Lithuanian-language daily.

The column says that Valdas Adamkus was born in Lithuania but lived in the U.S. for 50 years and held the post of director for the Midwest region of the United States Environmental Protection Agency. It also states that Adamkus was elected to the presidential office in 1998. ♦

Ooops!

Last month's, June 1999, Trivia Quiz answer on page 25 was missing its last line.

The sentence should read: "If you are lucky to be blessed with a noble Roman nose, or you have a hidden desire to wear a toga and a rūta (rue) wreath on your head, you too may be his descendant or at least a descendant of an Ancient Roman."

We apologize for this omission to Mr. Edward Shakalis, author of the Trivia quiz. ♦

Census Taking in Lithuania

According to historians, the first attempt to register the inhabitants of Lithuania took place in the 13th century, a time of continual warfare, to record the number of men able to bear arms. Farms were counted by the number of smoking chimneys. A census was taken in 1897 while Lithuania was under Russian rule. In 1923 the population of independent Lithuania was counted. During the Soviet era four head counts were taken: in 1959, 1970, 1979 and 1989.

Preparation for a new census is now under way and will begin on December 2, 1999. This will be the first census since Lithuania regained independence in 1991.

The present census-taking project will be carried out under the auspices of the Department of Statistics, the census division headed by Dalia Ambrozaitis. She is hopeful that all will go well, "We will inform people ahead of time and hope not to get on their nerves too much."

The country has been divided into 12,000 districts with coordinating committees organized by March 1st, 1999. Fifteen thousand census workers will be needed. One census-taker will be responsible for 250 people in rural areas, and 350 in towns and cities. They will complete their task in ten days and be paid the salary of a government employee. Volunteers are encouraged to help students, teachers, and senior citizens. Each census-taker must take an oath to keep acquired information confidential.

Absolutely everyone is to be counted regardless of age or nationality: soldiers, prisoners, and nursing home residents included. Relatives will be asked to give information about persons overseas.

A preliminary survey made in December of 1998 showed up some of the problems involved in some of the larger cities -- not all houses and apartments are properly numbered. Postal workers mark their territory with chalk, while ambulances cannot find some addresses.

The specially devised questionnaire consists of 23 items. Information will be requested concerning each person's education, profession, languages spoken, and also religious affiliation, marital status, and physical handicaps.

Women will be asked at what age they had their

first child and how many children they now have. People will also be asked about their living conditions: how many rooms they occupy and use of bathroom facilities, elevators, etc.

The social and demographic information thus received should be very helpful in preparing and coordinating social programs as the new millennium begins. ♦

— Sr. Ona Mikaila

Farmers Protest Agriculture Policies

Lithuanian farmers staged a mass protest on July 13th spanning twenty areas by blocking the roads and accusing the government of insufficient support to agriculture, according to Lithuania's daily newspapers.

The Farmers Party coordinated the protest, which united farmers from 18 districts. The party leader, MP Ramunas Karbauskis, insisted that the protest was only a warning and lasted only one day. When asked if the state would be able to find the additional money for agriculture, Karbauskis said that it was possible; since the Lithuanian government had found funds to send its soldiers to Bosnia.

The Lietuvos Rytas, a Lithuanian daily, added that the Agriculture House, the Farmers Union and the Agriculture Companies Association distanced themselves from the protest. The leader of the Agriculture Companies Association, Jeronimas Kraujelis, wondered why an MP would lead farmers to the streets instead of trying to solve the problems in the parliament, his own work place.

Karbauskis admitted to the *Lietuvos Aidas*, a Lithuanian daily, that the protest was not the best way to place demands, but all previous attempts to negotiate with authorities had failed. ♦

Source for news from Lithuania: ELTA News Agency

The Endowment Fund Grows Thanks To You

The Lithuanian-American Community (LAC) Endowment Fund was created at the October 1998 LAC Board of Directors annual meeting to provide better programs and services. From the time its creation was first announced to the present, generous donations have poured forth.

The LAC's cultural, educational, human services, economics, and public affairs councils work hard to help sponsor events and concerts, publish books and magazines, promote Lithuanian awareness in the United States, and provide services for young and old. As a non-profit community-based organization, all of this work is accomplished by committed volunteers.

There are five levels of donation:

- \$5,000 and over — **The Lithuanian Flag**: our country's honor.
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As of July 14th, the following generous contributors have helped make the Endowment Fund part of all Lithuanian-Americans' future.

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A sincere thank you to all these donors —
nuoširdžiai dėkojame už dosnumą. ♦

Lithuanian Army's Progress Praised

The Deputy Supreme Commander of the U.S. armed forces in Europe, Admiral Charles Abbot, told reporters he was impressed by the army development programs undertaken in Lithuania. He stated this after meeting with President Valdas Adamkus in Vilnius on July 14th.

The Admiral also stated that both countries could count on years of cooperation in peacekeeping missions in the Balkans and other projects which would make way for Lithuania's timely entrance into NATO.

Abbot is supervising various programs, among them the U.S. military assistance program -- Military to Military. He reports to NATO's Supreme Commander Wesley Clark who is expected to come to Lithuania later this month. Abbot had a series of interviews with the Minister for Defense Česlovas Stankevičius and Commander-In-Chief Brigadier General Jonas Kronkaitis.

Stankevičius stated that the commanders of American military forces in Europe and Lithuania had co-operated for years and that contacts with the U.S. military were of great benefit for Lithuanian servicemen. The minister pointed out the increasing financial support provided by the United States to Lithuania's armed forces. The U.S. assistance for 1999 is estimated at around \$5 million; with the 2000 amount, if approved by the U.S. Senate, to jump up to \$8 million.

Admiral Abbot had the opportunity to tour the Rukla training regiment. Before departing for the site, the officer said that Rukla and similar projects were the tools for achievement of common goals -- peace and stability in Europe. His visit to Lithuania ended on July 15th. ♦

Translated by Sr. Ona Mikaila

LITHUANIAN SEMINARIES

Lithuania now has four seminaries to educate its future priests. These seminaries are the oldest and largest Kaunas Seminary, a new seminary has just been built in Vilnius, the Telšiai Seminary, and the newly-opened seminary for the Vilkaviškis diocese.

Monsignor Anthony Rubšys, who taught Scripture for many years at the Christian Brothers' Manhattan College in New York and has recently translated and edited the new Lithuanian Bible, has been invited to teach at three Lithuanian seminaries. This interview with him was conducted by Fr. Kazimieras Ambrasas, SJ, a Lithuanian Jesuit now working in a parish in Montreal, Canada.



What are your impressions of our Lithuanian seminaries as compared with the colleges and seminaries in the West where you have been teaching?

Msgr. Rubšys:

The seminaries in Lithuania are a miracle. True, the interdiocesan seminary of Kaunas, although it survived the years of Soviet occupation, was very tightly controlled and restricted. It was forced to carry the heavy burden of history. The seminary in Telšiai, resurrected from

ruin by Bishop Antanas Vaičius, has already graduated its third group of newly ordained priests for the diocese. The Vilnius seminary, with its new buildings created "from nothing" by Archbishop Audrys Bačkis, has all the required courses. Its existence is also a miracle.

It would be unwise to compare the Lithuanian seminaries with those in the USA or Canada, because the circumstances are so different. The Lithuanian seminaries lack essentials: adequate buildings, faculty, books and educational material, yet they are filled with students. In the USA and Canada the seminaries are furnished with everything but, unfortunately, they are practically empty, -- at the moment, anyway. We don't

know what the future will bring.

Lithuanian seminarians begin their studies coming from very diverse backgrounds. They are somewhat affected by the attitudes of the now-defunct Soviet regime. Their religious education, if they had any, came from the family, mostly grandmothers, but not all were lucky to have a devout grandmother.

The seminaries are short of professors and often the bishops engage older men who have little idea what went on in the world beyond the

*SR. ONA MIKAILA is a writer and editor of **Bendradarbis**, and belongs to the order of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Lithuanian order in Putnam, Connecticut. This interview was originally printed in a Catholic magazine in Lithuania, and translated by Sr. Mikaila.*

Iron Curtain. It is difficult for them to satisfy the hunger for God that these young people have. They complain that they must study from old, yellowed notes when they yearn for wider horizons in their studies of philosophy and theology. They want to be educated for their full development as persons and not just as "cult ministers", to use a Soviet phrase.

While teaching Scripture in the U.S. did you notice a difference between American and European or specifically Lithuanian students?

Msgr. Rubšys:

Yes, there is a difference, but I would say that it lies not in the students themselves, but in their circumstances. Both here in Lithuania and in the States young people are eager to learn and to prepare themselves to meet the future. But young people respond to their surroundings. Perhaps American students, and Canadian as well, do not adequately make use of all that is available; while, Lithuanian students meet with many difficulties and feel frustrated and disappointed.

To what would you attribute these differences?

Msgr. Rubšys:

The root of these differences is, I would say, the historical and environmental circumstances that formed Lithuanian society. It is difficult to surmount fifty years of deprivation resulting in a "prison mentality". How long will it take? Social conditions in present-day Lithuania remind me of the Mohave Desert which is full of snakes and dangers. The "desert" in Lithuania makes itself felt when people try to grab whatever they can for themselves.

But not all the students that I met in the seminaries and universities are disappointed and depressed. I was fortunate to meet some very enthusiastic young people who are very concerned about the future of their country and who want to contribute by being priests or

teachers or in some other profession. They are not concerned only with how much money they might make. At this point I would say that, on the whole, Lithuanian students are more idealistic.

What, in your opinion, is most important in the training of our future priests?

Msgr. Rubšys:

The most important thing is to help a young person achieve full development as a human being -- only then should the young man be ordained a priest. Of course, he can be ordained at any time, but then he will be unhappy himself and will not be able to help others find meaning and happiness in their lives. In order to bring the Good News to others, he has to be "Good News" himself.

Pope John Paul II has said that quality is better than quantity; that it is better to have fewer seminarians, but to educate better priests. Do you find that this principle is being followed in Lithuanian seminaries today?

Msgr. Rubšys:

Screening of candidates is practiced in the USA, in Canada, and in Lithuania, but somewhat differently. In the USA the screening process is quite rigorous and is based on psychological evaluation. In Lithuania the process is achieved more simply; the seminarian's parish priest, doctor, and others are asked to write up his character profile. Eventually, Lithuanian seminaries will also make use of psychological evaluations.

What would be your wish for Lithuanian seminarians, their professors, and for all the Lithuanian faithful?

Msgr. Rubšys:

I would want them to remember that God loves all that He has created. Where there are a lot of difficulties, He is near! Don't be discouraged, God loves those who have the courage to keep going. ♦

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