
BRIDGES

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Travels in Lithuania...A Class Reunion...Books for Lithuania and for Us

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

The Lithuanian-American Community's Annual Board of Directors' meeting (Tarybos Sesija) took place in Milwaukee, Wisconsin between October 8th and the 10th. It held the usual fare of constructive criticism, new ideas and proposals, and discussions punctuated by debate. It was the standard meeting revolving around an emotional subject — keeping an ethnic culture alive and prosperous into the 21st century.

The rhetorical question, that is perennially brought up for all to recognize, wrestle with, then put away for later, centers on the seeming demise of chapters across the United States. I say seeming because those active members who have spent most of their lives working to maintain the Lithuanian-American Community's focus have witnessed their chapters shrinking with time. People move, pass away, or just decide to take a few years off from the activity planning and participation. Reality is that chapters are seeing smaller and older communities. But is it really reality?

It is interesting to note that more and more current immigrants from Lithuania are showing up on America's shores. Some families wind up near the older, established Lithuanian communities. They take the time to mingle and eventually take an active role in the countless events and activities.

Then there is that percentage of immigrants that enters the U.S. and "disappears". There is an old Lithuanian saying, "Where there are five Lithuanians, there will be a community." That "disappearing" group of newly arrived immigrants want the same thing as a typical American family wants — a safe, healthy lifestyle with good schools to help them give their best to their children. They are not disappearing from view. We just don't know where to look.

So, the question is not what should we do for our shrinking Lithuanian communities, but how can we reach those Lithuanian suburban communities? They're out there; we just need the mechanisms to let them know that the Lithuanian-American Community is here whenever they need it.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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DEPARTMENTS . . .**2 PERSPECTIVES****21 CURRENT EVENTS**

The Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival — 2000 is gearing up for June 30th, July 1st and 2nd. Thus far over 30 folk dance groups from the

United States alone have registered to perform at the Festival.

The Festival will be held at the Hershey Centre in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada on July 2nd. Those interested in more information regarding tickets, hotels, the banquet, or dance group registration, contact the Festival's office at 2185 Stavebank Road, Mississauga, Ont., Canada L5C 1T3 or phone 905-275-6505 or e-mail jonaitis@pathcom.com.



On the cover:
Lithuanian woman depicted in C. Vecellio's book, "Costumes Anciens et Modernes", published in 1860, in Paris, France. The book is part of Chicago's Newberry Library's Bonaparte collection of books published before 1900. More on this on page 19.

Jeanne Dorr

Love at First Sight



Did you ever meet a new person and feel this person would forever be a part of your life? I was fortunate to have that experience, and as usual it came about by accident.

A friend from Philadelphia was visiting a museum in New York, which was having a large amber exhibit. My friend overheard a man and woman discussing their upcoming trip to Lithuania. They sounded so excited she couldn't help introducing herself to them. It was at this moment, although no one knew it at the time, that many hearts and hands would be joined in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Lithuania. Not bad for a twenty-minute conversation.

Julie Skurdenis and her husband Paul Lalli expressed their desire to help the people of Lithuania on a person to person basis. My friend gave Julie my phone number and Julie promised to call me. When Julie makes a promise -- she keeps it. It was not long afterwards that I picked up the phone and could immediately tell from the voice on the other end that this was a person who wanted to do something. After a very long conversation, Julie decided to sponsor a boy and a girl through Lithuanian Orphan Care. She and Paul were hopeful they would get someone they could write to from time to time.

As our friendship blossomed via telephone, I learned that Julie was a college librarian as well as a travel writer with a special interest in archeology. Paul was a professor of modern languages. The couple has an adopted daughter, Katy, as well as several cats.

As the letters began to fly between New York and Lithuania and back again, Julie was kind

enough to share her new friends with me. I felt as though I was becoming a part of both these families. Julie and Paul decided to spend a few weeks in Lithuania during the summer of 1998, and it appeared our paths would cross. It seemed unbelievable that we would have to go to Lithuania to finally meet, but with Julie's schedule of traveling the world, we just couldn't seem to "get it together." I kept thinking, "How can I meet them? I don't even know what they look like?" So it became a must -- the meeting must happen.

Finally, the big day arrived, and Julie and Paul made the journey to our house in New Jersey. I also invited our mutual friend from Philadelphia to dinner. The occasion could not have been better. That dinner cemented the friendship: these were the friendliest people I ever encountered.

Spring came and went. The telephone calls, the planning and packing continued, and Julie and Paul left for Lithuania. I followed a few weeks later. The day after my arrival, my teenage cousin and I headed for Šiauliai to meet Julie and Paul. Julie's two sisters were also on the trip, so it gave us an opportunity to get acquainted.

The next day, in Paul's rental car, we headed for the village outside of Šiauliai where we would meet the first Orphan Care family. Again, we were somewhat apprehensive. Julie and Paul had bought the family gifts, but they did not want to seem overbearing or overwhelming. I am sure the Lithuanian family was feeling the same apprehension -- wondering if what they had planned would be appropriate. These were farm people who were trying to make two professors, who were also world travel-

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.

ers, feel welcome. My cousin and I were just along for the ride as friends.

We drove through small towns, past fields and beautiful scenery. It was at this point things were getting a little foggy, as far as directions go. We turned around a few times and backtracked. Paul is a very patient man but I was starting my usual nagging with, "Let's ask someone."

We found a lone man standing on a corner. As soon as he saw us, he recognized us; he was our host. Romas was concerned we might not be able to find the farm, so he waited for us. He directed us to the farm -- we hadn't been too far off.

As soon as we arrived, his wife Regina and daughters, eleven year-old Rūta and six year-old Rasa, ran out to meet us. It was love at first sight for the two families. The house was a typical Lithuanian farmhouse, both comfortable and spotless. As is usual in Lithuania, the table was laden with food, everything from their farm.

We sat down to the sumptuous meal and learned the family's story. Romas's grandfather built the house but he was deported. After independence, the family got their property back but it needed work, work, and more work. Because of the economic situation Romas is not only a full time farmer but holds down a second job of stoking a huge furnace in a commercial establishment. Regina and the girls help take care of the animals and the crops.

Conversation jumped from one topic to another, and then they told us how they came about adopting Rasa. Rūta is their natural daughter. After several years passed without any more children, the couple decided to adopt because they didn't want Rūta to grow up alone. They knew they had enough love and enough room for more than one child. They visited an orphanage and waited. Eventually they received a call from the director.

As Romas' face turned bright red, Regina related the story of the call. The director phoned them and said she had a little girl who was abandoned at birth. She told them, "I have the perfect daughter for you. She looks exactly like your husband." The truth is that Rūta and Rasa do look exactly alike. Rūta is a wonderful and caring big sister who truly loves Rasa.

After dinner Julie opened her shopping bags and it became Christmas in July. The girls could barely contain themselves, but they managed to sit like perfect little ladies while the gifts were explained to them. Julie and Paul not only sent them postcards from their world travels but also brought them small gifts from each place. They were delighted with the colorful poster of the "Big Apple," picture books, and games. But the girls finally lost their control with the bottles of bubbles and their different size rings to blow them. In an instant the room was filled with bubbles.

For Regina, there were gifts, which she could only dream about: American products of hand lotion, a scarf from Iran, and gifts from far away places around the globe. Romas was also given gifts that left him speechless. They, in turn, presented Julie and Paul with remembrances of their trip and the gratitude of the entire family. There was even a gift for Julie's mother who corresponded with the family. Romas and Regina both choked up and held back tears as they thanked Julie and Paul not only for the material gifts, but also for the gift of friendship.

Then it was time to tour the farm. On the way out the door Romas made what was almost a fatal mistake. He showed Julie a new litter of kittens, so small he held them all in his hand. My first thoughts were "Here comes trouble." He's showing these kittens to America's number one cat lover. Images were racing through my mind as I pictured Julie and me stand-



Rūta (with goat) and Rasa spend some time with their sponsors.

Photo: Jeanne Dorr

ing in long bureaucratic lines in Vilnius trying to do the paper work to get the kittens out of Lithuania and back to New York. I could actually see the gears turning in Julie's head despite the fact that they hadn't said a word to us. She was too busy talking to the kittens. These are probably the only bilingual farm kittens in Lithuania.

I left the area quickly and told the children to tell Aunt Julie there was something they wanted her to see outside. That broke the spell, and we were out the door only to be met by a goat. We viewed the beautiful flowers, discussing each variety.

I was rapidly becoming annoyed with my teen-age cousin who seemed to be pushing me. She wanted to see the movie "Titanic", and I felt she could be a little more patient. As I turned around to snap at her, there was only the goat and me. Apparently he decided it was snack time and was enjoying my skirt. When I looked down he already had a fair amount in his mouth -- he probably had been partial to the yellow roses on the skirt. I managed to disengage my skirt from his mouth and joined the rest of the group who were feeding a new calf with a baby bottle.

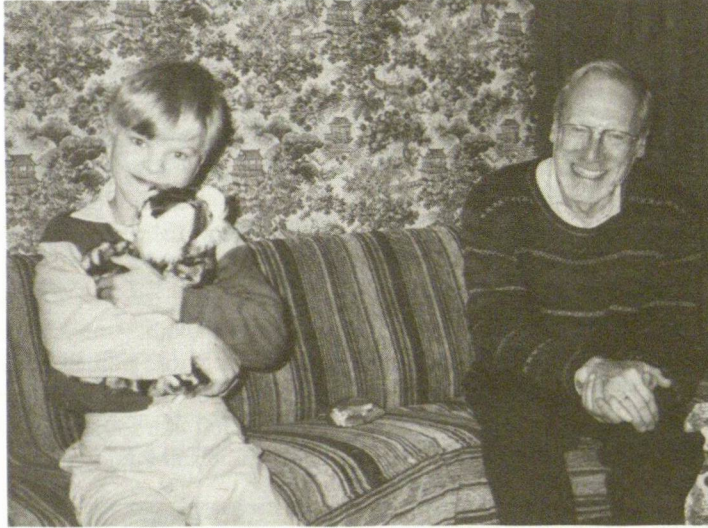
After that it was on to see the pigs. Two of them, one black and one white seemed to be in the middle of a fast paced game of tag. We held on for dear life as they raced around us. We were simply an obstacle in their way.

As we walked around I couldn't help thinking that if there were a perfect spot on earth at this moment then this would be it. But then as reality hit, I thought of the tremendous amount of work with no weekend break. These were people of the earth; they worked with their hands and their hearts. Those hearts were big enough to love another child. I wondered where Rasa would be without these par-

ents and sister who loved and nurtured her.

As the sun began to set, it was the time we were all dreading -- the time to say goodbye. After tearful hugs and kisses, we drove off with promises of another trip to Lithuania and another visit. There was no need for more words; it had been love at first sight.

We spent the night in our hotel, and in the morning we went our separate ways with plans to meet in Vilnius to visit Julie and Paul's second family in another week.



Lukas holds a stuffed toy given to him by Paul, his sponsor.

Photo: Jeanne Dorr

The week flew and we met in Vilnius. The two families were totally opposite. Irena was a single mother living in a Vilnius apartment complex with seven year-old Lukas. Again, we were welcomed with open arms. Lukas was a precious little blond who looked like he could be on a travel poster advertising a tour for Lithuania. They proudly showed us around the apartment where

Irena did all the remodeling herself. She is a music teacher and her creativity extends to art and design.

Lukas proudly showed us his small bedroom where his artwork was displayed. This was not the work of an average seven year-old. There was detail after detail included in all his drawings. After Julie and Paul admired one particular picture, Lukas took it from his wall and shyly handed it to them. This was Lukas's gift to his sponsors. Once more, it was love at first sight.

The shopping bags were opened again and Christmas in July was happening all over. Lukas was beside himself with the shirts, games, paints, posters, and other gifts. There was even a present for the hamster. Irena beamed with her gifts from Julie and Paul's travels around the world.

As Lukas played with his hamster, Irena told us her story. She never married and almost despaired

of ever having her own child. She loved children so much but it seemed destined that her love would always be for other people's children. Someone encouraged her to apply to an orphanage. She was almost certain she would be turned down because she was single. But her need to share her life with a child was greater than her fear of being rejected by the agency. So she applied, and much to her surprise the orphanage called her. They had a little boy who been abandoned at birth. Would she like to have a son? The minute she saw him, it was love at first at first sight. There was not a moment of hesitation on her part.

Although she loved Lukas with her heart and soul, the adjustment was difficult. He had nightmares and was afraid of everything, but mainly he was afraid Irena would leave him. Little by little, with patience, understanding and love, not only from Irena but also from her family, Lukas began to adjust to family life. Lukas was very fortunate because he not only had a mother; he had grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

But life is still not picture-perfect. As many single parents, Irena worries about the hours she teaches. There are times her schedule conflicts with Lukas's school hours. She has to find someone to stay with him while she is working. Because she teaches music, she often has later lessons. She cannot afford to turn down any work because Lithuanian teachers are paid by the number of lessons they teach. Needless to say, money is always a concern. But Irena will quickly point out that the joys of loving Lukas far outweigh any difficulties.

Because they live in a large city, which offers many cultural events, Irena and Lukas take advantage of the concerts, art exhibits, and anything else that either does not have a charge nor has a minimal cost. Lukas is enrolled in several classes, such as art and Lithuanian folk dancing.

The plan for the day was to invite Irena and Lukas to a local restaurant. We left the apartment and met Julie's sisters in an Italian restaurant. What we didn't know was that this was Lukas' first time in a restaurant. I wish, readers, you could have been there to share his excitement! He could hardly keep his feet on the ground he was flying so high.

We decided on several kinds of pizza but Lukas became totally baffled. When Irena called him to the table at home, the food was on the table. Why

did we have to wait to eat? Why was the man coming back to the table asking us questions like what we wanted to drink? Was it possible the stove was broken? Would it help if he stood near the door to tell them where to bring the pizza? After what must have seemed like an eternity to a seven-year-old, the food arrived. The moment was priceless. He didn't know where to start. But once he figured it out, he never said a word until he had sampled everything and made a pronouncement on each dish. My own opinion is that on that day a future restaurant critic was born.

When Paul suggested ordering a pizza for Lukas to take home for supper, Irena protested but Lukas just grinned. The pizza was ordered and again came the sad moment of hugs, kisses, and good-byes. We met two families through the mail as strangers and left Lithuania with two new "extended" families.

Julie and Paul continue to be a part of their children's lives. How can I possibly thank this couple for their love and concern for these children and their families? I feel such gratitude to them for inviting me to share these happy moments with them. Perhaps the simplest words are the best -- thank you, dear friends.

A debt of gratitude is owed to Snieguolė Jurskis, formerly of Philadelphia and now of Kaunas, for bringing us all together. There are no strangers in Snieguolė's life, only people she hasn't met yet. If she hadn't walked up to Julie and Paul in the museum, Rasa and Lukas and their families would not have become part of us all.

To Regina and Romas, and Irena, you are owed our heart-felt thanks for opening your homes and hearts to two of Lithuania's abandoned children.

If you would like to sponsor a child through Lithuanian Orphan Care, the cost is \$150 a year. The degree to which you become involved is up to you. This was a very special case and most people are not this close to their families. If you cannot sponsor a child at this time, any gift is greatly appreciated. Please send your tax deductible checks to:

Lithuanian Orphan Care
2711 W. 71st St
Chicago, IL 60629 ♦

Ed Shakalis

A Lithuanian Class Reunion

I made my first radio contact with Jonas (LY2ZZ) an amateur radio operator from Šiauliai, Lithuania in 1988. All communications were in Lithuanian. My friend Bruno Davis (Uždavinys) KB1PI from Norwood, Massachusetts and I would get together on two meters after talking with the LY's (Lithuanian Hams) and discuss what was said. It was then that I realized that my Lithuanian vocabulary was limited and if I was to continue talking with the Lithuanians, I had to improve my language skills.

In 1990 I heard of an Adult Education Lithuanian Class that was being taught by Irena Kveragaitė, a recent arrival from Lithuania. At the age of 69, I enrolled in Irena's class, which lasted for two years. Each Saturday for four hours Irena taught us the modern Lithuanian grammar. I soon discovered that the Lithuanian I learned as a child contained many Slavic words and had to be purged from my vocabulary.

Irena was a great teacher; she showed a lot of patience and understanding. It was all worth while when a Lithuanian ham asked me where was I born in Lithuania, and I said, "Cambridge, Massachusetts, just outside of Rokiškis".

Younger people and older American-

Lithuanians like me should consider signing up for a class. Give yourself a treat; it is a lot of fun as well as challenging.

In June 1991, the "Lietuvos Radijo Megeju Draugija" (Lithuanian Amateur Radio Society) invited my sons Bill and Rick, Bruno, his wife Blance and daughter Nancy, Vilius Rapšys from Palatine Illinois and me to visit with the Amateur Radio Club members in Lithuania. Jonas, LY2ZZ, met us in Riga, Latvia with a touring bus and drove us all over Lithuania. We visited Amateur Radio Clubs in Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Vilnius, Klaipėda and Marijampolė.

Each city's club would be our hosts in their city. For example, we were guests of the Vilnius Club and after a couple of days of sight-seeing, the bus took us to the outskirts of Kaunas. There the Vilnius club members got off the bus and the Kaunas club would take over. This was repeated throughout Lithuania. It was a trip I will never forget.

Several months ago I met Irena Sebeda (married name) and we reminisced about our Lithuanian class experience and thought that it would be nice to have a class reunion. It was agreed to have it on Sunday July 11th at my place called "WATAVUE", located in Plmouth, Massachusetts on Cape Cod Bay. Twenty-three students and friends showed up. We had

ED SHAKALIS is a retired Electrical Engineer, P.E. and presently an Amateur Radio Operator with USA call sign of KD1BJ and Lithuanian call sign LY3CJ. He is also on the Board of the Lithuanian-American Community of Cape Cod.

beautiful weather, and plenty of food and drink, including dešra and kopūstai. It was very pleasant to be with so many "Lithuanian-philes".

One of the Alumni at the reunion was Ted Schilling, "The Lithuanian Consigliare of Cape Cod" said that he decided to take Irena's Lithuanian language course after he came back from Lithuania where he attended a lawyers' conference. I wondered why the other students wanted to study Lithuanian; so, I asked Irena if she knew. Irena then asked some of her students to submit an essay on "Why I am Studying Lithuanian".

I was impressed with the essays written by David Skirkey and Glenn Johnson. These are included, as follows:

From David Skirkey:

I have been interested in Lithuanian language and culture since I was quite young. My father is Lithuanian; his mother was born in Panošiškės, a small village near Trakai. He, being of the "I'm just an American now" persuasion, gave me little to go on, but did not discourage me. In high school, I studied Latin and then Spanish. Spanish was especially easy and fun, but as I learned about the culture, I began to ask questions about my own. I found a booklet that my father had saved -- **The Lithuanian Language: A Characterization** by Alfred Senn.

When I first saw Lithuanian words in print, I was hooked. The words resonated with me in a way that I can only describe as eerie, as if I had always known Lithuanian, but only forgotten. As I had little spending money, I got a copy of Dambriūnas's **Introduction to Modern Lithuanian** from the library and copied the lessons by hand into a notebook. Since then, I've learned most of what I know from books and old tapes. I've always been on the lookout for a native speaker who would be willing to coach me on pronunciation and conversation. So, meeting Irena was a godsend.

I've long been used to explaining to people why I've gone through so much trouble to learn such a difficult and relatively obscure language. I often say that it's because I'm of Lithuanian descent. But it's really not that simple. In fact, most of the reasons I've come up with don't adequately explain it. It's a gut feeling, a calling, something in my blood, I guess. On one level, I appreciate the Lithuanian language as an aesthetic object. Language is a kind of social edifice. It contains and preserves the collective experience of the race that creates it. As such, our Lithuanian language is an ancient and rich source. It has a character that is yet young, playful and childlike, full of music and love of life, of plants and animals, of natural and cosmic phenomena. Before poetry, it is itself poetry.

On another, more personal level, I'm the last one in my family that still knows the language, and I feel honor-bound to hold on to it. And, having recently visited Lithuania for the first time, the real Lithuania, stripped of all the romance and fairy-tales, I feel challenged and encouraged to continue. It was quite a thing for me to sit at my aunt's kitchen table in Vilnius and simply discuss this and that.

A couple of weeks ago, a woman from Kaunas (an English teacher) asked me, "Why would you want to learn Lithuanian? What will you use it for?" I could only answer, "What do you use it for?"

From Glenn Johnson:

In May 1989, I visited Lithuania for the first time as part of a Soviet Union tour. The tour covered Moscow, Leningrad, and Vilnius. Prior to that trip, I have never really given Lithuania much thought. I had probably learned about Lithuania in geography class as a child, but it wasn't an everyday thought, like a country such as Japan, Mexico or Russia. My mother is German and my father, Scottish. So, I have no Lithuanian bloodline that I know of. I often am asked why I study Lithuanian if I

have no connection? My answers vary, but my outlook on life changed after visiting and learning the history of the country.

While in Vilnius, I was exposed to an old and historic culture, beautiful land and friendly people. I visited again in November of 1989 for two weeks. I "adopted" a new country. After that visit, I knew that I wanted to learn the Lithuanian language to be able to communicate with the locals. I was introduced to Irena, bought the Green book, and studied with her for two years.

I again visited Lithuania in July of 1990 and in July 1991, four times in 2 years. Friends who had met me during earlier visits were amazed that I could communicate with them in their native tongue. I have met many Lithuanians throughout the country from my connections in Vilnius and with Irena.

I also attended the Vilnius University summer program in 1991. While my grammar was good, my vocabulary was limited and still is. I met friends and their relatives while traveling throughout Lithuania. It has been a wonderful experience, as learning a new language and facts about a new culture should be. The fact that I visited the country and was treated like a

family member helped spark the desire to learn more.

Learning a new, unique language was fun. I've read some history, followed news events, and kept in touch with old friends. Studying Lithuanian has helped my knowledge of the English language and grammar, as well. Knowledge of Lithuanian has not developed into a job in Vilnius, but perhaps someday it will.

Irena made my weekly drives from Newport, Rhode Island to Boston worth the trip. If I didn't have such a good teacher who made the learning process fun, I probably would not have remained a student or kept my interest for so long. I'm sure that many of her students would give a similar comment. (Also, the green book, if you complete the chapters and problems, is a very good teaching tool.)

My "quest for knowledge" was based on my first trip abroad. I realized how much I didn't know about many things. While Spanish is spoken in many areas and continents, Lithuanian is only spoken in one region in Europe. Besides, it's fun to know something different from most other people. If only I had more people to converse with... ♦



The reunion by the water. Standing (from left to right): Myron Miller, Ed Gonski, Birutė Skricki, Irena Kveragaitė-Šebedienė (teacher), Mary Knasas, Pat Adakonis, Alfredas Šebeda, Pat Plevock, Aidas Kupčinskas, Rev. Peter Shakalis, Arnold Plevock. Sitting (from left to right): Bill Olewitz, Ramona Gonski, Brenda (Birutė) Bates, Nancy Davis (behind), Ed Shakalis (host), Gita Kupčinskienė, Ted Schilling.

Photo: Ed Shakalis

Albert Gustaff

An Update on: "Books For Lithuania"

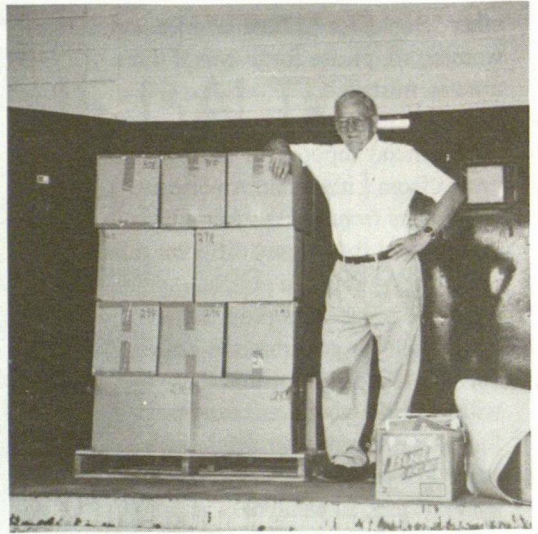
Since 1994, men and women have been collecting and packing textbooks under my guidance. My intense desire was to collect sufficient textbooks to send to all the schools that had classes in English as a Second Language.

I began my task by collecting and sending a few cartons of Literature and textbooks to teachers with whom I was acquainted. They greeted the program with enthusiasm. Libraries were initiated, and the books were utilized with benefit to education. Teachers from other rajonai (regions) in Lithuania made requests. "Books for Lithuania" came into existence.

Unfortunately, 18,000 books are not adequate to provide for every teacher in the country. There is also a need to replenish the supply at times. To possess a book in Lithuania is a precious commodity. The project, "Books for Lithuania" should continue.

I ask Lithuanian Americans in other sections of the U.S.A. to send textbooks so that every English teacher in every school would have the use and benefit of good English textbooks and Literature. I would gladly pass on to any interested person or persons the knowledge I have gleaned throughout this long and very valuable program.

In the meantime, I am happy to tell you that a container load, weighing twelve tons, of 18,000 English books arrived in Vilnius on August 27, 1999. The following is an excerpt from correspondence mailed to each teacher who had requested



Albert Gustaff delivering cartons for the container.

Photo: A. Gustaff

books for her students:

"Dear Teachers of English:

At long last 415 cartons of almost 18,000 English books are on their way to Vilnius. They are scheduled to arrive there on August 27, plus or minus two days.

Twenty-seven schools or school districts will receive cartons.

Please be aware that the average weight of a carton is 25 kilograms. You may need a truck, van, or a few automobiles to bring the cartons back to the schools.

Included in this letter is a list of the numbered cartons and its contents that you will receive. In general, we did not list "Books for Lithuania" paperback books in the cartons. They were used as packing material to make the carton firm so that it would not collapse when other cartons were piled on top.

Every year the school departments in Maryland discard thousands of books, mostly to recyclers, free of charge. About 10% of the discards that are in good and usable condition have been made available to us. We sent out teams of men to collect them from the schools. They were sorted and packed by

ALBERT GUSTAFF (ALBERTAS GUZEVIČIUS) is not only the enthusiastic founder of "Books for Lithuania", but an active member of the Lithuanian Community in Baltimore, Maryland. He and his wife, **LEONA** (a contributing writer to **BRIDGES**) live in Frederick, Maryland.

other "Books for Lithuania" men and women; so, please forgive us if there are any mistakes."

Financial support for this project comes from Lithuanian Americans, Americans from many other ethnic groups, and from many different religious faiths. This is a people to people or people to teachers program. No foundations or governments are involved. It is our hope that these books will serve the youth, as many prepare for careers in government, industry, and other vocations.

Sincerely, in behalf of Lietuvių Socialinių Reikalų Taryba, [The Lithuanian American Community's Lithuanian Human Services Council], Lietuvių Namai in Baltimore Maryland, Friends of Lithuania throughout the United States who made generous donations, and those who collected, packed, and worked for the "Books for Lithuania" project, and my beloved wife who wrote stories about Lithuanian heroes and heroines to raise funds.

I thank the Lithuanian Human Services Council in Chicago, Illinois; *BRIDGES* News Journal; Eddy Budelis; the members of the Lithuanian Hall Association in Baltimore, Maryland; Gordon Matulonis, owner of the establishment where the books were stored and packed; George Ward, designer of the gold engraving, "Laisvė"; and the many Lithuanian Americans, as well as other Americans who generously donated funds to the "Books for Lithuania" for their vast and much appreciated support.

To help the "Books for Lithuania" project with textbooks or donations, or to start collecting and sending in your area, write to:

Mr. Albert Gustaff
6910 Palace Court
Frederick, MD 21703
E-mail: Guzevicius@aol.com ◆



Lithuanian American who delivered cartons to the container: (From left to right) Joseph Matulonis, Jonas Danaitis, Balys Brasauskas, Matthew Randolph, Albert Gustaff, Vytautas Brasauskas, and Eddy Budelis.



Albert Gustaff and Jonas Kardokas load the cartons into the container.

Photos: A. Gustaff

Kay Yankoski

SUMMER ON THE BALTIC

Palanga and Nida

The Sights, the Sounds, the Smells, the Tastes!

Ms. Yankoski visits Lithuania every two years and brings back memories, photos, and adventures packed with a sense of humor.

On this, my sixth trip, *geras oras* (good weather) prevailed. The weather was about as good as it gets -- hot by their standards, but for a Virginian, positively delightful! I needed a jacket in the evenings and used a blanket every night except one time in Nida.

My usual guide for this trip had "chicken fever" [pox] and so her 70 year-old mother took me instead. The difference between mother and daughter, albeit 40 years, drastically changed the tone of this trip -- from relatively forward thinking to do it as cheap as possible! With the exchange rate so much in our favor (and me paying for both of us), this was rather disconcerting and not my choice. But that aside...

We took the night train to Klaipėda -- a steal for Americans at \$25 for 2 people! We had two lower



A wooden sculpture greets café guests in Palanga.

berths in first class. Our upper berth bunkmates were a young Russian couple. When I saw how they had to get up there, I knew I never could have hoisted myself to an upper berth. For \$3 extra, we got clean linen in a sealed package -- fresh and crisp and most welcome.

It was rather stuffy, so I asked the Russian fellow not to close the window completely. However, during the night, the wind began to howl and I ended up wrapping myself in my beach towel in addition to the issued blanket to keep warm since I could not shut the window. Compared to a hot bus ride, it was a good way to get to Klaipėda.

While I was waiting to use the WC, a fellow reeking of beer started muttering to me about the *amerikonkos* (Americans) on the train. It was an uncomfortable moment.

We stayed in guestrooms at a veterinarian's clinic in Palanga -- *tualetas* (toilet) across the hall, *dušai* (showers) right next to our room. It was my first experience sharing either -- not my choice, but not terrible.

The walk to Vytauto gatvė (street) was pretty far and that was not even halfway to the beach. It took us 30 minutes to get there. Conveniently, right

KAY YANKOSKI is a world traveler and an active member of the Washington Lithuanian-American Community. As Kay says, "These are the candid comments of a cranky old maid on her sixth journey to the Motherland. The experiences/adventures are not to be confused with those of a sanitized/organized tour group." We find them quite humorous!

down the block was a big supermarket with long checkout lines at all times of day and night. Two more blocks away was a *turgus* (open market) where every morning I bought a peach and *bandukes* (rolls) for the next day's *pusryčiai* (breakfast).

The *pliažas* (beach area) was a mob scene, with *Basanavičiaus gatvė* being packed like sardines. I remembered *Juratė's gatvė* from previous trips and that became our route to the beach. So as not to burn in the hot sun, we usually went from 3:00 to 6:00 in the afternoon.

Murphy's Law -- spend only a little time in the sun the first day so as not to burn. Then, the next day it rains!

We walked up to the *Gintaro Muziejus* (Amber Museum), taking the path through the woods that is parallel to the *pliažas*. It is as lovely as ever. Both front and back of Count *Tiškevičius's* 19th century mansion look like a fairy tale castle. We only saw one *gulbė* (swan) in the ponds in front.

By the time we walked back to our *namas* (house), the sky had darkened and we were housebound for the afternoon -- thank goodness for books! *Perkūnas* (thunder) roared, the skies opened up, gutters overflowed, and later, trucks had to haul away all the dirt that had washed onto the paved street.

The following day also started out dreary; so, we

A gift shop beckons to people...(below)

A wooden statue of a "drakonas" looms in a museum in Klaipėda. (right)



All Photos: Kay Yankoski

out of a very tall living tree for his family plot.

We went to the lovely Tiškevičius Palace and botanical garden, now a museum. The Russians cut down the tropical palms and put in roses instead. The Tiškevičius *koplyčia* (*chapel*) was my favorite site in Kretinga, sitting on a high mound (too many steps to climb although the padlocked door was street level) in the middle of the cemetery.

The Sights

Palanga is where "It's Happening" -- at least for the younger generation. It was noisy; it was crowded. (I must be getting old!).

The crowds -- Basanavičiaus gatvė was a sea of people, wall-to-wall, including all the way down to the *Jūros Tiltas* (*the bridge to the sea*) to watch the sun set.

The tallest girls -- with the longest legs, with the shortest shorts or skirts, or alternatively, long skirts or dresses with slits "up to there"!

The highest heels or platform shoes -- how do they walk, especially on all of that cracked pavement? (I must be getting old!) Men's' shoes -- they are strange colors and styles.

Lots of empty beer bottles on the beach, which was also littered with cigarette butts and lots of other debris. Beer is sold singly on the beach and drinking on the street starts as early as 10 a.m. By contrast, the beach in Nida was almost spotless.

A mime on Vytauto gatvė, in top hat and tails with department store dummy make up, was unblinking and really very good. For a donation he would pose for a photo and kiss the lady's hand in a very courtly, if stiff, manner.

The regulation big snake on the boardwalk -- usually wrapped around the neck of some brave young girl.

A very pretty, very tan, very blonde girl roller-bladed up the middle of Vytauto gatvė in white tee shirt and scanty shorts. She was a real traffic stopper.

Hair -- there is a new hair color in addition to that which God gave you or the dyed orange and bleached blonde. It is black! Usually on younger girls or women clad all in black who end up looking like Vampira or Motorcycle Momma.

More Hair -- two natural redheaded children; my first sighting in 12 years of travel there.

Hair-Related -- the extraordinary usage of

combs. The great combing of the hair wherever you are, on every possible occasion, and often with no discernible improvement.

Designer Wear in Palanga -- Lots of Dolce & Gabbana, Versace, Tommy -- the usual knock offs. Nida fails to make a fashion statement; summer comfort prevails, minus the designer labels.

I am never really "there" until I see my first *gan-dras* (*stork*).

Paddleboats on the sea with parents and children beyond the pier in Palanga and no life vests! I was a little horror stricken at Trakai in a rowboat without a life vest on a lake 80 meters deep in spots!

The Sounds

The noise -- live bands everywhere, some playing to crowds, some to empty seats. Too many and too close together to really enjoy. (I know, I know; I must be getting old!)

Horses hooves -- the comforting clip clop I heard late at night or early in the morn while still nestled in my wee little bed.

Cell phones -- they are everywhere; there is no escape! Most prominent accessory on the young and mostly female.

In Nida -- the absence of sounds, peace and quiet, and I loved it!

The Tastes

A boiled potato -- how can a plain boiled potato taste so good? What is the secret?

Cooking with lard has given way to vegetable oil -- much to my relief and that of my cholesterol count.

Favorite English translation on the menu in Palanga: frog hips with lemon sauce!

Favorite English translation on the menu in Nida: chicken tights or that other specialty of the house -- chicken string! Why, oh why, don't they get somebody who speaks English to translate for them?

"The Sauce" for '99 is ketchup -- on your *šašlykas* (*shish kabob*), on your *karbonadas* (*sautéed meat*)!

Bobelinė -- a new liqueur made from *spanguolės* (*cranberries*), a recipe from Mr. Bobelis, a Lithuanian-American member of Seimas.

Kugelis in a crock at Ritos Smūklė in Vilnius -- so there's no real crusty top or bottom.

The Smells

Mama Mia, it's a *Picerija* (pizzeria)! My nose told me long before my brain figured it out. At first, *pica* did not register with me at all.

The stench of urine pervades almost every toilet, including our place in Palanga, which was clean, but nonetheless smelled strongly of urine. Neither of the flats in which I stayed had this problem, thank goodness. (NOTE: We Americans are sanitized to a fare-thee-well and are probably spoiled by a no smell, clean smell.) There are a lot more pay public toilets and they are usually pretty clean -- well worth the small charge.

Refrigerators -- they all smell of oily dried meats or fish. Refer back to my comment about Americans and our love affair with Mr. Clean, Lemon Pledge, Fantastic, Tidy Bowl, etc.

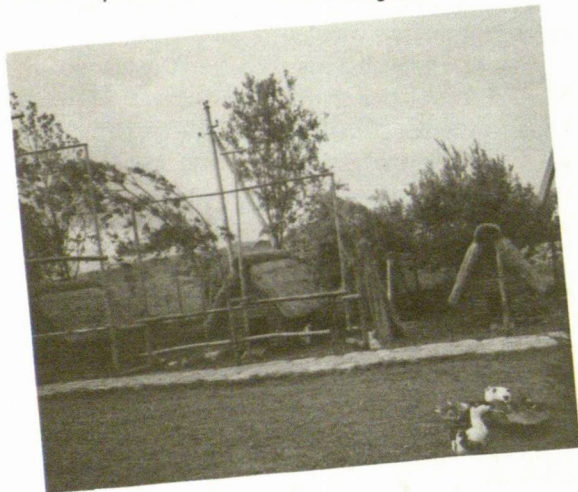
Nida

All too soon our five days in Palanga were over and we were headed to Nida for four days. Somehow all of our connections, though unplanned, meshed; we never waited more than 15 or 20 minutes anywhere. It rained early when we left Palanga, but by the time we arrived in Nida, it was beach weather again.

Nida remains as quaint and charming as ever, a country cousin to Palanga. It is still 72% forests. No crowds, no noise. Not too many young people either; they are all in Palanga, with good reason -- that's where "the action" is.

We arrived just as the *drakonas* (the dragon)

Thatched pens with exotic fowl in Kretinga...



with whom we were staying came home from church. We were scolded because she expected us the night before and had made all this food. This is the woman who would have you eat *blyneliai* with *varške* (crepes with cottage cheese) (previously cooked in lard, this time she showed me the bottle of vegetable oil) and *vyšnių kompotas* (cherry compote) for every meal. If not -- *kodėl* (why)?

The fact of the matter is: I don't drink tea, but she wondered why I drank so much water (my beverage of choice and the smartest choice for me considering the heat); I don't particularly like soup in hot weather (except for cold soup, which was not an option); and, I'm not a big fan of *varške*. If I refused anything, it was always "Kodėl?"

We hiked up the road to the *kopos* (dunes) since my weak left leg could not take on all those stairs. We did come back down the stairs, and it seems to me that they have been replaced from a straight up to a tacking style with lots of benches along the way for rest stops. Everyone we passed going up as we were going down was panting -- with good reason. The *kopos* have shrunk significantly since I last saw them two years ago, and it is a cause for concern.

One day at the beach I looked down to see *gintaras* (amber) rushing past my feet in the waves. Others soon caught on and we were frantically grasping at outgoing waves trying to catch some. Still others were pulling up handfuls of seaweed and twigs to look for more shards. I was lucky enough to grab a piece about 2x1 inches that the *drakonas* was convinced I had bought, not found. I had it polished by the man who works on *gintaras* outside in the *centras* (main street area). I found another piece about the size and shape of a grape that was rough on the round side but glassy and smooth on the flat side. Lots of little crumbs too. This was my favorite beach activity. This situation did not repeat itself, and I had to content myself with finding tiny crumbs. It was fun, nevertheless, and I consider it a pastime unique to this area.

I met a young German couple who was fascinated by this search for *gintaras*. His theory was to keep his back to the sea; mine was to face the sea and try to grab some as it washed back to the sea. I think my method was more successful. I bumped into this same couple several more times and was delighted to have extensive conversations with them in English.

We also exchanged theories about all the big, expensive cars in Lithuania. He thought they were stolen; I thought gangsters drove them.

I looked forward to eating a *karštas šuniukas* (*hot dog*) in Nida, but there were none to be found, although *dešrainiai* (*hot dogs*) were all over Palanga. The lettuce put me off. On a hot dog? No way!

Geras oras prevailed; air 27C, water 20C!

Soon Nida was behind us as we boarded the *Raketa* (*hydrofoil*) for Kaunas. I knew from previous experience that they do not sell all the seats because it is expensive by their standards, but rather cram you all together like sardines in a can. So, I waited to be seated while my traveling companion dutifully sat in her assigned place (across the table from a greasy, dirty threesome -- our travel mates for the next four hours). Ultimately, we sat in an empty row of three seats, with a little room to sprawl.

We hit a sandbar once and had two ports of call, also some rainsqualls. But despite some strange churning noises, we kept moving toward Kaunas.

I met a charming Englishman on the *Raketa*; he, too, was a second generation Lithuanian who had come back to see from whence he (or rather, his grandparents) sprang. It was an enjoyable opportunity to have a relatively intelligent conversation, since my Lithuanian is very limited and I was not currently in the company of English-speaking people.

The captain of the *Raketa* was a *žebenkštis* (*weasel*) and the biggest thing about him was his nose. He strutted about to impress us with his importance. There were two passageways to the outside: one crowded with people, the other blocked by this weasel and his cohorts smoking and lolling about. They moved one time when I asked to pass by, but when I returned, he told me to go the other way. This is "Service with a Smile" in Lithuania!

The door of the WC would not close, so it was a balancing act to "go". I knew that from experience and because I walked in on a man who could not close the door either. When I had to use the facilities again, I asked my companion to hold the door for me. I heard an ominous "click" and found that I was locked in the bathroom -- I hadn't touched any buttons, locks, or doorknobs. I banged on the door until my companion got the message, and she sum-

moned my good friend, the Captain! Imagine his delight (and my amusement) when he found me inside. He motioned how the lock worked -- but I never touched anything, it just locked when the boat lurched. At least I did not spend four hours locked in a foul *tualetas*.

It had been a long day, beginning with no electricity at our *namas* (*house*). But, not to fear, the electricians, drinking beer at 10 a.m., were on the job. Then the four hours on the *Raketa*, a taxi to the *autobuso stotis* (*bus station*) in Kaunas, the bus ride back to Vilnius, then a taxi back to our respective flats.

Old Wives' Tales and Other Oddities

Don't send us soap [dish detergent], it has chemicals! [So, we "wash" our greasy dishes in cold water and wipe the grease off with a linen tea towel.]

Eating mayonnaise is like putting a knife in your stomach! [Results of a scientific study!]

There are microbes in Coke!

Cell phones are dangerous -- rays!

Beware of preservatives (i.e., canned tuna); eat only fresh (like the fish I saw being pulled from waters with raw sewage floating in it)!

Don't order *balandėliai* (*stuffed cabbage*) in a *kavinė* (*café*), they use old meat!

Attention! K-Mart Shoppers! Except for one street vendor in Nida, every shopkeeper/vendor gave me at least a 10% discount. Even the finest and most expensive amber shop in Vilnius offered 10% for cash and 5% for credit card purchases. Even small purchases, such as 25 litai came down to 22 litai when asked. As I said, only the vendor at the *kopos* in Nida said no discount, and as a result, he made no sale (at least with me).

In Summary

It's a hard trip and I'm not getting any younger. I keep saying this was my last trip. My friends respond: "Don't say that, our circumstances may change (improve)." Traveling there by public transportation is grueling for me. I thought the trips to and from the Baltic Sea would never end. Call me a cream puff or, as I said previously, I must be getting old. ♦

Rasa Ardys-Juška

“Books to Note”

I t is always difficult to find books about aspects of Lithuanian history, culture, and the people in the English language. Several books have been recently published that may fill in the gaps, although we need more writers to publish. A sorely-needed book would entail Lithuanian literature. It is difficult to translate some of the very well-known works but, definitely doable. Literature gives the reader a look into the way Lithuanians viewed themselves, their country, and their relationships.

In the meantime, the following books are excellent additions to any library and for any person craving comprehensive Lithuanian-related information. The books can be easily ordered by writing to the addresses included in the descriptions.

History — Politics

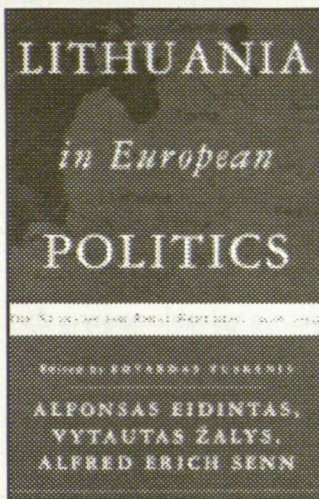
A HISTORY OF THE LITHUANIAN MILITARY FORCES IN WORLD WAR II 1939-1945 by Henry L. Gaidis fills in all the gaps about what happened in Lithuania during World War II. The fact that it covers this one specific time period allows the reader to delve into detailed information about many facets of the struggle for independence.

The Knight's review (January-February 1999) stated that “the text gives a brief history of the modern day Lithuanian army since its 1918 founding. Also included is a description of its military and political structure during the 1940 Soviet occupation, the 1941 Nazi invasion, the Lithuanian war front, the Second 1944 Soviet occupation, and the subsequent 1944 – 1956 Lithuanian partisan struggle.” Detailed documentation puts into perspective the time of the Nazi occupation and how Lithuania reacted to the Jewish persecution – countering the numerous falsehoods hostile to the Lithuanian people.

To order the book, write to The Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, 5600 South Claremont Ave., Chicago, IL 60636-1039 – cost is \$28.50 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling.



RASA ARDYS-JUŠKA is the editor of BRIDGES.



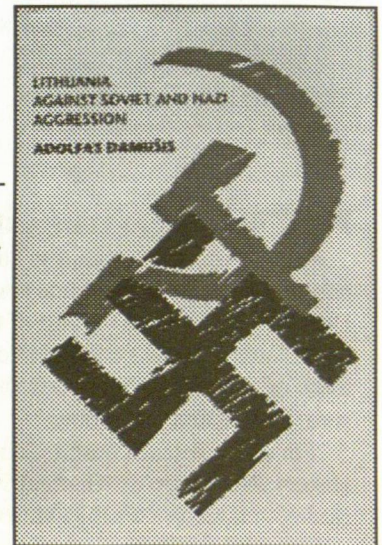
LITHUANIA IN EUROPEAN POLITICS – *The Years of the First Republic, 1918 to 1940* by Alfonsas Eidintas, Vytautas Zalys, and Edvardas Tuskenis (with an introduction and afterword by Alfred Erich Senn) is now in paperback. According to the St. Martin's Press, the book recounts how Lithuanian national consciousness grew from a shred feeling of unstructured instincts to a firm sense of nationhood.

A thorough review of the book was given in Issue 3, 1998 of *BRIDGES* by Tomas A. Michalski, PhD. Michalski stated that "the book is a very important and much-needed study. The history presented is not only timely, but extremely useful in understanding the perennial internal and international problems facing Lithuanian today."

The paperback version, copyright Oct. 18, 1999, is available at any bookstore. The publisher is St. Martin's Press, ISBN: 0-312-22458-3 (paperback), with a cost of \$18.95.

LITHUANIA AGAINST SOVIET AND NAZI AGGRESSION by Adolfas Damušis chronicles the three occupations of Lithuania during World War II with archival research and personal recollections. Source documents used for this important book were surveyed at two major repositories – the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and the Gestapo archive at Ludwigsburg, Germany. Information and photos from interviews with former colleagues in the resistance were also included.

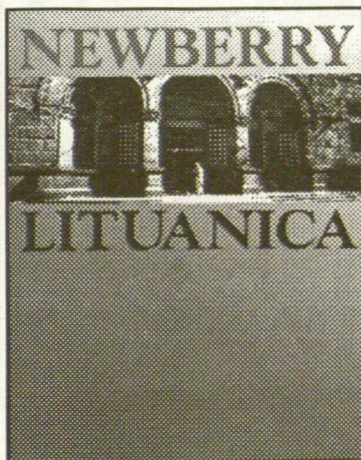
Damušis includes a brief history of Lithuania, events leading to and about the effects of the first and second Soviet occupation, the German occupation, anti-Nazi and anti-Soviet resistance, the National Lithuanian Army, and other detailed accounts and events of that time period. The 342-page book is amply illustrated with photos, maps and documents. The book is available from The American Foundation for Lithuanian Research, Inc., 12690 Archer Ave., Lemont, IL 60439 -- hardcover price is \$15.00.



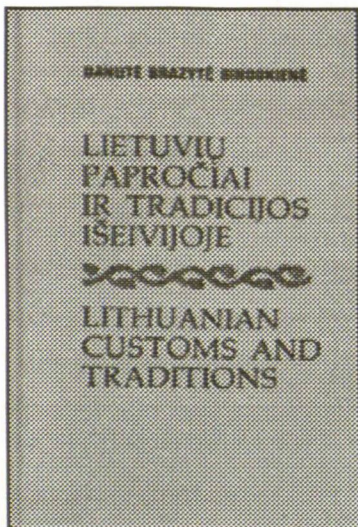
NEWBERRY LITUANICA by Giedra Subačienė and Giedrius Subačius presents a catalog of the oldest Lithuanian books found in the Bonaparte collection at the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois. The Lithuanian-American Community's Committee for the Commemoration of the 450th Anniversary of the Publication of the First Lithuanian Book initiated the sponsorship of a catalog featuring a vast and significant repository of linguistic books published before 1900.

Ninety-two books on Lithuanian and Prussian subjects were found amongst Prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte's, nephew of Emperor Napoleon I, collection. Many of the books are Lithuanian grammars, dictionaries, and a hymnal. This fine catalog describes each book to benefit prospective readers and researchers. Pictures and illustrations from the books give the reader an understanding of the contents of these valuable books.

To order this book, write to Dalia S. Anysienė, 614 F South Laflin Court, Chicago, Illinois 60607 – cost of the book is \$9.00 (checks made out to the Lithuanian-American Community).



Culture



LITHUANIAN CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS by Danutė Brazytė Bindokienė is now in its third printing. This popular book, written in both English and Lithuanian with a side-by-side format, includes family celebrations, calendar feast days, national holidays, and characteristics of Lithuanian culture. Songs, recipes, detailed customs, photos and illustrations bring the Lithuanian culture to life. Interesting trivia give the reader a more real life look into the life of Lithuanians. *BRIDGES* has highlighted information from this book many times – a valuable resource for those interested in customs and traditions.

To order this book, write to the World Lithuanian Community Educational Commission, 13648 Kickapoo Trail, Lockport, Illinois 60441 – cost is \$18.00.

Religion

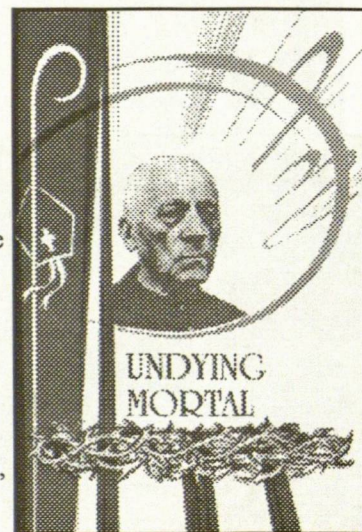
The trilogy **LITHUANIAN RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AMERICA** by historian Fr. William Wolkovich-Valkavičius is now complete. It took 12 years to research and write. Volume one encompasses the Eastcoast; Volume two is devoted exclusively to Pennsylvania; Volume three embraces Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, and the rest of the Midwest. There are over 150 entries on parishes, including Lithuanian Protestants, religious communities, and miscellaneous listings. Hundreds of clergy biographies, as well as those of outstanding nuns, are found in this hard cover, acid-free paper series. Indexes include parishes, persons, places, and institutions.

For a free detailed description and copies of book reviews of the first two volumes, write to: Lith. Parish History Project, 36 St. George Ave., Norwood, MA 02062-4420. If you identify yourself as a *BRIDGES* reader, you receive a substantial discount off the usual \$150.00 price of the series.

UNDYING MORTAL by Msgr. Pranas Gaida (translated by Rev. Anthony A. Jurgelaitis, O.P. S.T.L., S.T.Lr., Litt. D.) covers the life of Archbishop Teofilus Matulionis – "shepherd, prisoner and martyr".

In the author's foreword, Msgr. Gaida writes, "From the dark shadows of a long struggle against atheistic Communism, Teofilus Matulionis rose to the aid of the faithful like a shining star, radiating spirituality with quiet determination, prayer, sacrifice, brotherly love and unwavering faith. The light of his star shines not only in Lithuania, but throughout the Christian world." The Archbishop's birthplace, family, work, "trials and joys", meetings with people outside of Lithuania, and imprisonments are followed with detail within the book.

To order the book, write to The Lights of Homeland, 2185 Stavebank Rd., Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, L5C 1T3 – cost is \$8.00 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling.

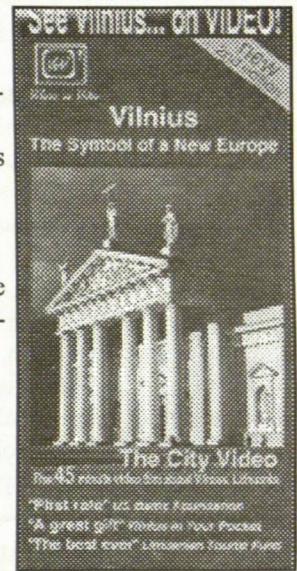


Video

VILNIUS – THE SYMBOL OF A NEW EUROPE released by Vilnius on Video is not a book, but a 47-minute documentary video focusing on the history and culture of Vilnius in the English language. The contents present Lithuanian history, principal tourist sites, the city's different cultures - including Lithuanian, Russian, Polish and Jewish, and a look at Vilnius today.

The film has an excellent score – ranging from Bach to traditional Lithuanian music – and highlights such places as the Old Town, churches, the University, the Trakai Castle, and the many new restaurants and shops. This video can be an excellent addition to any club meeting or as a pre-travel primer helping you decide where to go and what to see.

To order the video, write to APT Management, 736 N. Western Ave. #222, Lake Forest, Illinois 60045 – make checks payable to APT Management for \$25.00 (Illinois residents please add 6% sales tax). For additional copies, add \$20.00 each. ♦



C u r r e n t E v e n t s

Caregivers to Lithuania Have a Chance to Share

The Lithuanian Human Services Council of the USA., together with the Embassy of Lithuania and the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. Washington D. C. Chapter, invite you to participate in the "*Gift to Lithuania*" Conference on November 5 to 7, 1999 at the Key Bridge Marriott (1401 Lee Highway, Arlington, VA 22209)

The purpose of this conference is to:

- summarize the work that has been done;
- analyze what has and has not worked;
- gain an understanding of what is still required;
- obtain information from individuals who have worked and continue to work in Lithuania and with Lithuania's people in providing humanitarian assistance.

The Conference will begin with a "get acquainted" reception and end after symposiums and workshops.

The Organizing Committee is made up of Jūratė Budrys (chair), Algis Augaitis, Birutė Jasaitis, Rita Kazragas, Ramunė Kligys, Saulius Kuprys, Jurgis Lendraitis, and Dr. Vytautas Narutis. The Committee asks that those interested in attending, register in

advance by sending your full name, address, phone number together with the registration fee of \$85.00 per person to:

Jūratė Budrys
8015 S. Karlov
Chicago, IL 60652.

Make checks payable to: *Lithuanian Human Services Council.*

Hotel reservations can be made by calling the Key Bridge Marriott at 1-800-228-9290, mentioning the "Group Code LITO" and that you will be participating in the November 5th to the 7th, 1999 Conference. The room rate is \$104.00 per room per night.

If you need more information, please call Jūratė Budrys at 773-284-6786. ♦



Vilnius University Jubilee

A series of events devoted to the 420th jubilee of Vilnius University culminated in a conference entitled "Vilnius University in History -- History at Vilnius University" held on September 24th.

Lithuania's president Valdas Adamkus and his predecessor Algirdas Brazauskas also arrived at the solemn event to pay homage to the academic community.

In his discourse to the conference's participants, the rector of Vilnius University Prof. Rolandas Pavilionis said that on the occasion of this jubilee, "the University's book of honor was replenished by three new names of scientists." Honorary doctorates were conferred to rector of Muenster University Prof. Maria Wasna, Professor of Krakow's papal theology academy Ludwik Piechnik, and the rector of Danish Aalborg University Prof. Swen Lars Caspersen.

Polish historian Prof. Piechnik spoke about the beginning of Vilnius University, and economist Prof. Caspersen reviewed the political motifs of the university's foundation at the festive conference.

Vilnius University, the oldest higher school of Lithuania, has been holding numerous scientific conferences and events since early September of 1999 to mark its 420th anniversary. ♦

Seimas Approves State Budget Cut

After deliberations, which took more than a month, Seimas approved a proposal on October 15th to cut this year's state budget. The budget's income and expenses will be reduced by 450 million litas or 6.2% (US \$112.5 million) and will amount to 6.761 billion litas, according to the *Lietuvos Rytas*.

This is the first time that the state budget had been cut by such a significant amount. The budget amendment was approved by 72 parliamentarians; 18 lawmakers voted against; and 17 abstained from voting. Members of the opposition, as the Labor Democratic, Social Democratic, Center, and other factions, did not take part in voting or voted against the proposal.

Conservative faction deputy leader Alfonsas Bartkus admitted that the decision to approve of such a budget project was not an easy one. However, the MP noted that the Government should fulfill its obligations without any hindrances. He further urged the Government to execute a strict tax administration policy.

Social Democratic faction leader Aloyzas Sakalas claimed that the ruling coalition attempted to push the state into poverty again. Labour Democratic faction member Sigita Burbienė stated that the budget amendment did not correspond to reality. The opposition pointed out that the budget lacked more than one billion litas in planned income. ♦

Soviet Genocide Marked in Lithuania Minor

The 55th anniversary of the tragic events in Lithuania Minor (the present Kaliningrad enclave) was marked at a conference held by the Council for Lithuania Minor Issues in Vilnius on October 16th. The Council had asked Seimas for this commemoration since 1994.

The conference commemorated the events dating back to October 16th, 1944, when Soviet troops invaded the environs of the former Karaliaučius (Kaliningrad) region starting a massacre a few days later.

The Bolsheviks used to regard the people of Lithuania Minor, including the Klaipėda region occupied by Nazis in 1939, as Germans and thought it was necessary to avenge them for the sufferings caused by Nazis to Russia.

The organizers of the mournful anniversary conference told ELTA that Karaliaučius's residents had witnessed all the atrocities: civilians lying on the ground after being run over by Soviet tanks, girls nailed to a barn door, and old women killed in a sadistic way. The bodies of some 50 French war prisoners, witnesses of the Soviet troops' atrocities, were lying in a pile. In the seaside area, the Soviet planes bombed refugees. Also, children were forced to dig a pit for burying ill and exhausted people alive. The experts who carried out the research into the genocide of Lithuania Minor said that at least 300,000 civilians, of them 40 percent Lithuanians, were killed during the genocide. ♦

Former KGB Agent to Represent Russia in Lithuania

The new Russian envoy to Lithuania Jury Zubakov handed in his credentials to Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus in October. The new envoy is an experienced former KGB official keeping close ties with the former Russian Prime Minister and intelligence chief Jevgeny Primakov, according to the *Respublika* daily.

The Russian ambassador noted to the Lithuanian leader that both states "had a number of links both in international and in European policy".

"I hope that Lithuania, which enjoys such a convenient geographic situation and outer ties, will serve as a link between the East and the West in the future also. I hope that Lithuania will help to develop regional co-operation, create the architecture of a united Europe, and strengthen stability and security in Europe." noted the diplomat.

President Valdas Adamkus plans to visit Moscow in December. ♦

Another Gold for Lithuanian Cyclist

Lithuanian cyclists triumphed again at the women's World Road Race Championship in Verona, Italy where Edita Pučinskaitė won a gold medal and took the title of the world champion, the Lietuvos Rytas reported.

The Italy-based Pučinskaitė took the title from her colleague Diana Ziliūtė, who won the same title last year in the Netherlands. This time Ziliūtė, 23, came away with the bronze medal.

After the race, Pučinskaitė was quoted as saying, "I do not consider myself a champion yet. To become a real champion I have to win more races." ♦

Attention: Calling All Writers

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