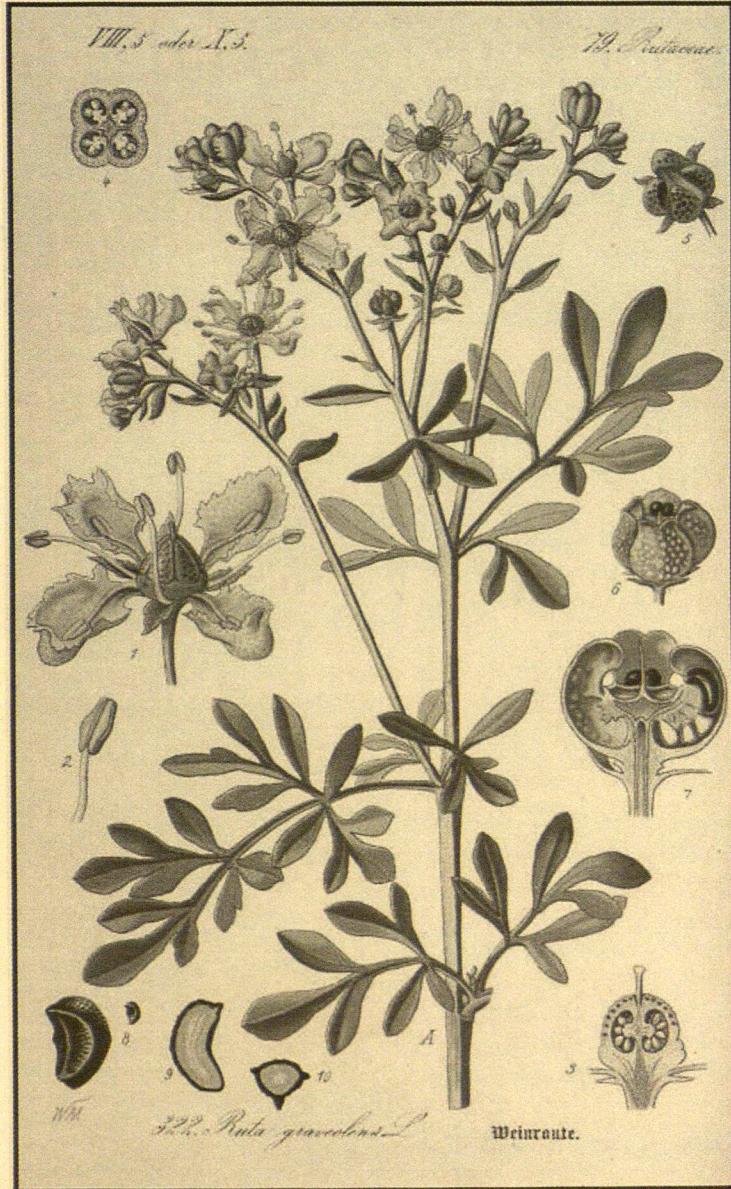


BRIDGES

• LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL •

Volume 25

Issue 3, April 2001



Take Part in NATO Enlargement...Angels of St. Clare...A Mission for an Ancestor

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

Spring's newly-mowed grass smells, refreshing and long-awaited colors, warm, tingling breezes, and gentle showers bring forth the poetic side of most people. How not to introduce this issue with a poem?!

Algirdas Žolynas was born in Austria of Lithuanian parents, and since then has moved twenty three times. He now teaches writing and literature at the United States International University in San Diego and resides with his wife in Escondido.

*Žolynas' poetry has appeared widely in American journals and anthologies, and he is the author of two collections of poetry. Recently he co-edited an anthology titled *Men of Our Time: An Anthology of Male Poetry in Contemporary America*. Žolynas' poetry has been translated into Lithuanian, Spanish, and Polish -- the last by Czeslaw Milosz. (By the way, Žolynas means a grass field)*

ROOTED AND WAVERING

By Algirdas Žolynas

*The seed I planted
has sprung into a sunflower
taller than myself.*

*We stand in the morning light
facing each other.*

*I am between
the sun and the sunflower.*

*Already the large head
is home for bejeweled insects and mites
whose names I'll never learn.*

*A small breeze comes by
and the yellow head
nods a few times on its springy stalk.
Yes, yes it says.*

*The breeze pivots above the garden,
swirls away part of the morning.
No, no says the sunflower.*

*I am the sunflower, rooted
and wavering through a long day's
affirmations and denials,
dragging the sun
by its gold chain behind me.*

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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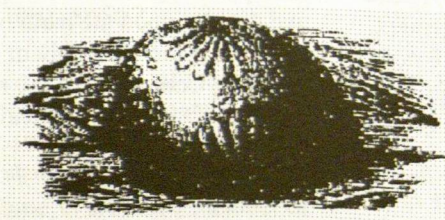
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Happy Easter
Season!

On the cover:
Image of *Ruta graveolens* (Rutaceae)
from Prof. Dr. Otto Wilhelm Thomé
Flora von Deutschland Österreich und der Schweiz.
1885, Gera, Germany.
This is a favorite of Lithuanians!



From the Republic of Lithuania

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Lithuania



The NATO Parliamentary Assembly – Spring Session will take place between May 27th to the 31st, 2001 at the Contemporary Art Center, 2 Vokiečių gatvė, in Vilnius, Lithuania. To understand the importance of this Assembly, it is vital to know its activities and structure.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly

The inception date of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) is considered to be July 18, 1955 when 158 parliamentarians from the fourteen member countries of the North Atlantic Alliance gathered to the Conference of Members of NATO Parliaments. This name was later changed to the Conference of NATO Parliamentarians and later, the North Atlantic Assembly in 1966. The organization has used the official name of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly since June 1, 1999.

The NATO PA is an institution separate from NATO. However, the NATO PA maintains a close working relationship and regular contacts with the North Atlantic Alliance; while NATO responds to all recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Assembly.

The NATO PA provides the critical forum for parliamentarians from NATO member countries and associate members to exchange opinions and ideas and to find common solutions on an array of Euro-Atlantic security issues. The NATO PA pays considerable attention to the Alliance enlargement issues and to relations with Russia and the Ukraine.

The Assembly unites 214 parliamentarians from 19 NATO member countries and 73 parliamentari-

ans from 17 Associate members. Only representatives of national parliaments may become members of the Assembly. Associate members do not vote in the Assembly. Members of the executive government may not be delegated to the Assembly.

The Standing Committee is the governing body of the Assembly. It consists of the leader; one alternate member from each member delegation; ex officio, the President; four Vice-Presidents; and Treasurer of the Assembly, as well as the Chairmen of the Committees, but they may only vote when they are at the same time representing their delegations in the Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee prepares the agenda for the sessions, approves the draft Assembly budget submitted to the session, co-ordinates the work of the Committees, ensures that the North Atlantic Council (NATO decision-making body) takes into account the recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Assembly, appoints the Secretary General etc. The Assembly's Bureau, the President, four Vice-Presidents and Treasurer are elected every year in the autumn. The President and Vice-Presidents may be re-elected once, and the Treasurer may be re-elected twice. Vice-Presidents must be representing different member countries; also, at least one member of the Bureau must be a representative of either the Canadian or U.S. Delegation. The Assembly elects its President each year. The President represents the Assembly and decides upon the main issues in between the sessions of the Assembly or the meetings of the Standing Committee or the meetings of the Bureau. The NATO PA meets twice a year in plenary ses-

MORE on the NATO Parliamentary Assembly can be found on www.lrs.lt. This article comes from the Republic of Lithuania Seimas website.

sion – a spring meeting and an autumn annual meeting. Sessions take place in different countries each year.

There are five committees in the Assembly:

- The Political Committee;
- The Defense and Security Committee;
- The Economics and Security Committee;
- The Civilian Affairs Committee;
- The Science and Technology Committee.

The Committees also create Sub-Committees and Working Groups. The Committees produce reports for consideration and amendment by the spring session and voting by the autumn session of the Assembly. They also meet several times a year on fact-finding missions designed to gather information on the topic or area of utmost importance to that Committee.

The Assembly may express its position through policy recommendations and resolutions. To strengthen the development of parliamentary democracy in Central and Eastern European countries and the relations between these countries and the Assembly, the Rose-Roth seminars and conferences were launched in 1990 on the initiative of then President of the Assembly, Congressman Charlie Rose and Senator Bill Roth. Since then, 41 seminars have been arranged in various countries.

The official languages of the Assembly are English and French. The activities of the Assembly are financed from the contributions by the governments of the member countries. These contributions are based on the criteria used with respect to the NATO civil budget.

The International Secretariat of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly is based in Brussels. The Secretariat co-ordinates the work of the Assembly, organizes visits, seminars and training, and collects and analyzes information related to the Assembly's work. The Secretary General appointed by the Standing Committee oversees the staff of the International Secretariat.

What is the relationship between the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and Lithuania?

Lithuania is an associate member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. This status was granted to Lithuania during the 1990 annual autumn session in Madrid, Spain.

Since Lithuania became an associate member of

the NATO PA, two Rose-Roth Initiative seminars have been arranged in Vilnius, Lithuania: The Security Needs of the Baltic States (December 1991); and the Security of the Baltic Region (October 1995).

Between June 8th and 12th, 1998, the Defense and Security Sub-Committee on Northern Security Issues visited Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. It was the first time that Lithuania, together with Latvia and Estonia, had the possibility to make contributions to a report. The report discussed the security situation of and prospects for the Baltic States after the Madrid Summit (*Report on European Security: the Baltic Contribution*).

On June 17th and 18th 1999, the Economic Sub-Committee on East-West Economic Co-operation and Convergence visited Lithuania. On June 21st to the 23rd 2000, the Political Sub-Committee on Central and Eastern Europe visited Bratislava and Vilnius. Between August 31st and September 10th, 2000, the Assembly went on the Annual Tour of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, for the first time visiting non-NATO member countries.

Committee Reports and Resolutions

In 1996, the Defense and Security Committee produced the *Report on the Security of the Baltic Region: a Challenge to a New Europe (AN 233 DSC/NC (96) 4)*. Between May 22nd and 26th 1998, the Barcelona spring session discussed the draft the *Report on European Security: the Baltic Contribution (AR 272 DSC/NC (98) 5)*. It was supplemented after the Sub-Committee visits to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and submitted to the autumn session in Edinburgh on November 8th to the 13th, 1998. This Report was supported by the members of the Defense and Security Committee and later by the Plenary. The Committee Rapporteur was assisted by Mr. Audronius Ažubalis, member of the Delegation of the Lithuanian parliament to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. The Defense and Security Committee also discussed the draft Resolution on NATO and the Baltic States (RESOLUTION 281) presented by the Committee Rapporteur Mr. Jan Hoekema (Netherlands). The Lithuanian Delegation proposed seven amendments to the draft Resolution, six of which were supported. This Resolution was also supported by the Plenary.

In 1999, the Secretariat produced the *Report on*

the Economic Situation in Lithuania. In 2000, the Secretariat produced the *Report on the Annual Tour*. In November 2000, during the Annual Session in Berlin, the Political Committee discussed the draft Resolution on NATO Enlargement (presented by Mr. Bert Koenders, Netherlands). It was proposed for the first time to indicate the countries – namely, Slovenia, Slovakia and Lithuania – who should be invited to the NATO accession negotiations during the Summit meeting in 2002. U.S. Senator Mr. William Roth, former President of the Assembly, proposed this amendment to the Resolution. His proposal stirred heated debate, but was finally supported by the Committee. However, the Plenary voted in favor of the amendment tabled by the Turkish, Bulgarian and Romanian parliamentarians, proposing not to indicate specific countries.

Presidential Visits

On September 9th to the 10th 1999, Mr. Javier Ruperez, President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (elected during the 1998 autumn session in Edinburgh), and Mr. Simon Lunn, Secretary General, visited Lithuania. On an earlier visit, on September 1994, Mr. Loic Bouvard, President of the Assembly, and Mr. Peter Corterier, Secretary General, had visited Lithuania.

During the 1998 spring session in Barcelona, the Standing Committee considered the candidatures for hosting the 2001 sessions. Former Yugoslav Republic Macedonia, Bulgaria and Lithuania applied for it. The Standing Committee decided in favor of Lithuania: the spring session 2001 will take place in Lithuania on May 27th to the 31st. ♦

From The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc.

Sign a Petition to Support NATO Enlargement to the Baltics

Washington, DC (JBANC) --- The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) has joined a national campaign to promote NATO membership for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and other aspiring nations. The petition, directed to President George W. Bush, requests that his administration help in securing invitations for the three Baltic countries and other aspiring nations at the next NATO Summit in 2002, at the next Alliance Summit. Please join this petition drive today! Your energetic and active support is crucial.

Please return all completed petitions to JBANC by **June 1**. The petitions will be presented to President Bush at this time, prior to his European trip. Feel free to distribute this petition to other individuals or organizations.

To download the petition as an Acrobat Reader file, click: <http://216.164.88.144/gg/natopetition.pdf> OR to submit electronically, click: <http://216.164.88.144/gg/natopetition.htm>. Your submission will be assembled with others for presentation to President Bush.

Below you will see the letter, which you may copy, sign with your name and address, and send to

JBANC at 400 Hurley Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850 (Tel: (301) 340-1954, Fax: (301) 309-1406, E-Mail: jbanc@jbanc.org, Net: <http://jbanc.org>). Or you may send it straight to the White House.

The President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Since it has been established that the enlargement of NATO is in the interest of the United States in securing peace and stability; and since the United States has consistently supported the enlargement of NATO as a national policy and has supported the quest of the aspiring nations that have signed a joint resolution in Vilnius May 2000 to that effect.

Therefore, we now urge you, Mr. President, to activate the above stated policy of these United States and invite such aspiring nations to NATO membership and that the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania be included in such invitation at the NATO summit in 2002. ♦

From The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc.

JBANC Concludes Fourth Baltic Conference

(JBANC/Washington, D.C.) – The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) held its fourth biannual conference March 8-10 in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area on the theme of "Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania: the Next Ten Years". Most of the presentations and discussions concerned Baltic security issues, especially the desirability of enlarging NATO in 2002 to include all qualified aspirant countries, most notably the three Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Among the notable participants from the Baltic countries were: Juri Luik, Estonia's Defense Minister; Alvydas Medalinskas, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Lithuanian Seimas; Maris Riekstins, Latvia's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; and Giedrius Čekuolis, Lithuania's Deputy Foreign Minister.

Ambassador Jurgenson of Estonia, Ambassador Ronis of Latvia, and the newly arrived Ambassador Usackas of Lithuania also addressed the conference.

Lisa Bronson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, spoke on U.S. relations with the Baltic Countries, and informed her audience that no decisions have yet been taken by President Bush's Administration regarding either the enlargement of NATO in 2002 or the selection of new members. She described the preparations needed to meet admission standards into NATO and emphasized their importance.

Dr. Ronald Asmus, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs and currently a member of the Council of Foreign Relations, endorsed Baltic membership in NATO. "They qualify on moral, political and strategic grounds," he said. Dr. Asmus thought that even now, any U.S. president would defend the Baltic countries if they were threatened. Maj. Gen. Kievenaar, U.S. Army (ret.), asserted that the Baltics were defensible militarily despite some voices that maintained a contrary view.

Dr. Paul Goble of Radio Free Europe and Radio

Liberty informed that the Russian Duma had allocated more than \$50 million to launch a propaganda campaign to advance its objectives, including keeping the Baltics out of NATO.

He warned that on the road to NATO membership a concerted effort would be made in the media to blacken the reputation of the Baltic countries. Helle Bering, editor at the Washington Times, the newspaper that broke the story about Russian nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad, said she too expected to see more critical articles about the Baltics appearing in the media as a result of Russian efforts.

Many other speakers participated in panels on regional cooperation, security and stability within the NATO framework, defense cooperation and the view of the Baltics in the media. They included Ambassador Butora of Slovakia; Conrad Tribble, the Northern Europe Initiative Coordinator at the Department of State; former U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania, Keith Smith; Bruce Jackson of the U.S. Committee on NATO; Col. Janusz Bojarski, Polish Military attaché in Washington; Col. Grant Hayden of the Maryland National Guard; and Gintas Alksninis, Washington correspondent of the Lithuanian daily, *Lietuvos Rytas*.

Other conference events included visits to Congress and the State Department. Participants attended briefings by staff members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Durbin's office and Senator Campbell's office. They spoke about Senator Helm's support for Baltic membership in NATO, the work of the Helsinki Commission, and the forthcoming Congressional trip to attend the NATO Parliamentary Assembly meeting at Vilnius. The staff members also described recently held hearings conducted by Senator Gordon Smith and Senator Joseph Biden during which General Wesley Clark and other witnesses testified in favor of NATO enlargement to include the Baltics. Cameron Munter, Director of Central and East European Affairs at the National Security Council, presided over the State Department brief-

ing. The conference also featured a Department of Commerce hosted session on investment and trade opportunities in the Baltic countries.

The then president of JBANC, Janis Kukainis, president of the American Latvian Association (ALA), conducted the conference program and was assisted by Mati Koiva, President of the Estonian American National Council, Inc. and Saulius Kuprys, President of the Lithuanian American Coun-

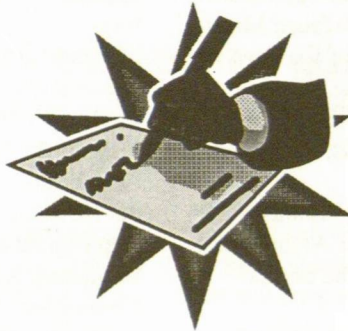
cil, Inc. The Managing Director, Karl Altau, assisted by his program assistant, Simonas Girdzijauskas and the manager of expandnato.org, Rojs Dauburs, made the necessary administrative arrangements. According to JBANC's practice of rotating leadership positions among its three member organizations, Mr. Kuprys took over as JBANC president following the conference. ♦

From the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania, Washington, D.C.

Russian and Lithuanian Presidents Sign a Joint Declaration

Moscow: Washington, D.C. - Russian President Vladimir Putin and Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus signed a joint statement on March 30, 2001 on the results of their talks. The document supports the activation of a bilateral dialogue, and "recognizes the right of every country to choose the way for ensuring its security along with the commitment not to strengthen its own security at the expense of the security of other countries". The statement names other international documents as the basis for Russian-Lithuanian cooperation, including their bilateral agreement of July 29, 1991, which recognizes the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both states.

Both Presidents stated that the two countries "attach great importance to the broadening and strengthening of cooperation and interaction in the development of the Russian Kaliningrad region, including in the context of the future enlargement of the European Union". Both countries will pay special attention to establishing the "maximum possible freedom of movement for residents of Russia's Kaliningrad region and Lithuania by means of bilateral basis and the meeting of international commitments. "The countries will discuss the possibilities of further improvement of the bilateral legal basis for cargo transportation and tran-



sit, including military transit, hazardous cargoes, energy resources, and other cargoes, through the territories of both states", the statement said.

The statement stated that Russia would make efforts to conclude the ratification process of the Russian-Lithuanian border treaty.

In the joint statement, the presidents proposed "all-level" bilateral dialogue and more extensive consulting in the international policy field. Both countries will work together in the Council of the Baltic Sea Countries, will put efforts to stimulate joint projects in the frame of "Nida Initiatives", and will prepare new proposals for further practical implementation of the European Union's Northern Dimension. The two presidents agreed on a joint patronage over the cultural foundation, which was created by the initiative of Lithuania.

Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus's three-day official visit to Russia (from March 29th to the 31st) included meetings with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, Chairman of the Russian Federation's Federal Assembly Council Yegor Stroyev, and mayor of Moscow Yury Luzhkov, among others. President Adamkus traveled on March 31st to the Kaliningrad region. He is the first Head of State of a western country to visit the Russian enclave. ♦

From the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

Focus on Grass Roots Activities in High Gear

LAC Regional Conferences

Dr. Romualdas Kriauciūnas, Vice President for Organizational Affairs, organized two conferences for regional and chapter executive committees. The main focus of the regional meetings was to initiate an action plan for political activism for Lithuania's acceptance into NATO.

1. The Atlantic Regional Conference for Boston, Connecticut, New York and the southeastern region was held April 21-22, in Philadelphia, PA in the Lithuanian Cultural Center of Philadelphia (Lithuanian Music Hall), 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia. The Conference was hosted by the Executive Committees of the Southeastern Region (V. Maciūnas, Pres.) and Philadelphia Chapter of LAC (V. Bagdonavičius, Pres.). Saturday, April 21, there was a cocktail party reception followed by a concert featuring "The Dainava Men's Octet" from Chicago with Darius Polikaitis, musical director.

2. The Midwest Regional Conference for Michigan, Ohio, Midwest regions and chapters was held April 28-29, 2001 in Lemont, IL at the Lithuanian World Center, 14911 127th St., Lemont, IL. The LAC Midwest Region Executive Committee (Birutė Vindašienė, Pres.) hosted this conference. Chapters independent/not assigned to any particular LAC region: Houston, Kansas City, Omaha and Denver were invited to attend this conference. Saturday evening, April 28, there was an informal "Get Together" Social in the "Bočių Menė" Room at the Lithuanian World Center. The Lithuanian Opera of Chicago staged "Elixir of Love" on Sunday, April 29, at 3:00 p.m.

"Third Wave" Lithuanian Immigrant Issues

It has been reported to us that successful, well-attended meetings on changes in immigration law were held in Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, and Elizabeth. Please let us know where else these meetings were arranged. Also, please inform new arrivals from Lithuania that "Draugas", the Lithuanian-American Chicago-based daily newspaper, publishes a weekly column written by Dalia Badarienė with important and timely information for new immigrants. Changes in section 245(i) of the immigration law have a deadline of April 30, 2001 for filing applications to obtain legal alien status in the United States.

NATO Question

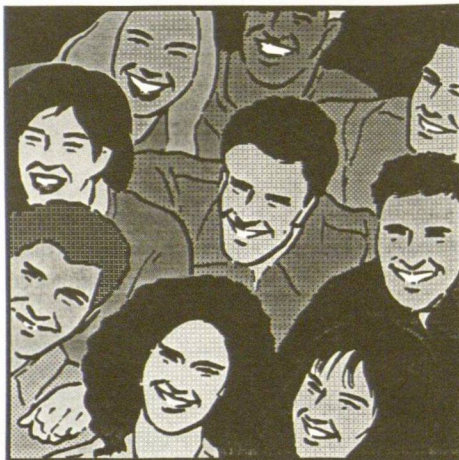
Leaders of five major Lithuanian American organizations signed a Memorandum at the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington on March 11, 2001 pledging to work together toward the common goal of Lithuania's invitation to join NATO in 2002. Before February 16 celebrations, all chapters were sent texts of resolutions and sample letters to government officials. Please send the signed resolutions to President George W. Bush and to members of Congress, and please forward copies to the LAC Washington Office.

The LAC web site, www.javlb.org, has new shorter versions of letters to the President, Senators and Congressmen. In the next few months, the Bush Administration will be making decision on the expansion of NATO. Please start a massive letter writing campaign

to make sure that Lithuania is included in the next round of invitations to join NATO in 2002.

50th Anniversary of the LAC – Celebration in Chicago

The main celebration will take place in Chicago, October 12-14, 2001. One of the highlights will be a concert by the world renowned Lithuanian Boys Choir "Ažuoliukas", who will be in the U.S. participating in a youth choir competition in Utah in October. Details of the 50th anniversary celebration will follow in the future, but please reserve those dates for a trip to Chicago.



Director of LAC Public Affairs Office in Washington Resigns

Mrs. Audronė Pakštienė resigned from her post as of March 31, 2001. With deep regret, we express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to Audronė for her years of service to the Lithuanian American Community and wish her well in her future endeavors. Until a new director is appointed, Mr. Algirdas J. Rimas, Chairman of the Public Affairs Council, will take charge of the Washington Office with volunteer help.

News in Brief...

We are pleased to announce the founding of a new LAC Chapter in the South-west suburbs of Chicago thanks to the efforts of Mrs. Birutė Vindašienė, Midwest Region President.

Judy Petrokas has agreed to be LAC representative in Dayton, OH. We look forward to many years of close cooperation with Judy Petrokas. She replaces the recently deceased

Aldona Ryan, who was a very active Knight of Lithuania, and a loyal and devoted friend of Lithuania and the Lithuanian American Community.

The Florida Region of LAC held its annual conference April 24-25, 2001 in Palm Beach, FL.

A reminder: Mr. Balys Raugas, editor of the 50th anniversary "History of the LAC" publication is eagerly waiting for your LAC Chapter histories.

Be sure to check out these web

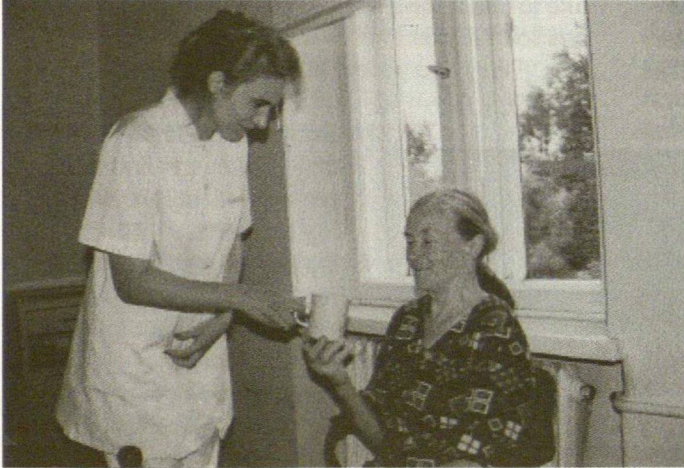
sites:

- LAC National Executive Committee's www.javlb.org;
- Lithuanians of Florida <http://www.angelfire.com/fl2/Lithuanians>;
- New York Region's <http://members.aol.com/lithny>;
- Los Angeles Lithuanians' www.langas.com;
- Seattle Lithuanian Community's <http://members.aol.com/LAPELIS/>;
- Philadelphia Chapter's www.Phillylac.org;
- Atlanta Chapter's <http://www.geocities.com/lietuviaiatlantoje>;
- The Lithuanian Community in Cleveland's <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Ranch/8441/>;
- Lithuanian-American Youth Association's <http://www.tamos.net/~javljs/>;
- and Arizona Chapter's www.lithaz.org.

Also don't forget the Lithuanian language radio shows, which can be heard on the internet: <http://www.thecityradio.com/wjcu/> (Cleveland on Sundays from 8:00 to 10:00 am) and www.wnwr.com (Philadelphia on Sundays at 9:00 am). ♦

Jeanne Dorr

The Angels of St. Clare's Hospital



Angels seem to be the rage all over America. One can hardly turn around without seeing angels on television or in books on the bestseller lists. You can't go into a grocery store without seeing tiny angel pins; angels, angles everywhere. But who are these angels? Are they real or are they imaginary? Do they wear flowing white robes, are their beautiful heads surrounded by halos, and are their wingspans magnificent? I'm afraid the angels I met at St. Clare's hospital / hospice in Utena were none of these. They were rather ordinary people who came each day to a job that would probably depress most of us. They work long hours and wear a smile for every patient, even the most difficult ones.

Several years ago a *Bridges* reader from New York sent me information about Sister Dolorita Butkus and St. Clare's. I have to admit that I read it and filed it away for future reference. It was not a depressing article, but I just didn't think I could handle one more thing on my plate. My plate was filled with children and their prob-

lems from Lithuanian Orphan Care, and this point I couldn't cope with one more headache. But as I was to learn much later, one of Sister Dolorita's favorite sayings is, "The Lord works in mysterious ways." He certainly does, as I was to learn the hard way.

In 1999, I had the pleasure of meeting Sister when she was a guest at St.

Andrew's Church for their annual Christmas concert. We talked and talked, and then we talked some more. Sister was bubbling over with enthusiasm and love for Lithuania's people. She was hoping for a miracle – a low price air ticket and permission from her superiors to make another trip to Lithuania. At the time of the concert, neither request looked too promising, but that didn't dampen Sister's spirits. Again she told me how the Lord worked in mysterious ways. I was beginning to get the point.

Although we both live in New Jersey, Sister Dolorita and I kept in touch via letter and phone. We just couldn't seem to get together; we always seemed to be going in different directions. But what I did know was that Sister's greatest joy is in helping others. She doesn't do these things to see her name in print or to receive praise or honors. She does it because it needs to be done and it is the right thing to do. To put it simply, someone has to do these things.

After many years as a nurse in Illinois, Sister asked permission to help in Lithuania. She

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. All photos from DR. STROLIENĖ.

started to work at a school in Utena, where there literally was nothing as far as supplies. After Sister Dolorita and Sister Michele Garas did what they could do there, Sister Dolorita was asked to teach pastoral ministry and to be the school nurse at St. Anthony's College in Kretinga. That assignment lasted for two years and then she was called back to Utena. This project was much larger – she was needed to help start a hospice. The idea was actually the idea of a Caritas worker who managed to get a dilapidated building from the local government in Utena. Lithuanians need very little living space and very often several families live together in three or four rooms. Having a terminally ill person in these cramped quarters puts even more stress on everyone, including the patient. Things were far worse in the countryside where many of the people still live without plumbing and have dirt floors. Having a clean bed, medical care, and loving hands to minister to the body would ease a person's final days. Having someone pray with them and for them made it even better.

Trying to get something done in Lithuania that needs documents of any kind can be a living nightmare. Regardless of what papers you have obtained, there is always one more that is needed before you can proceed. The running around, standing in line only to be told you need still another official stamp, is enough to make the average American throw her hands up in despair; but not Sister. Her tenaciousness matches her gentleness. Sister was here for a purpose, and this was one of her purposes.

Eventually the building was habitable and with the help of Robert Boris, then director of Aid to Lithuania, thirty beds and many needed

supplies were delivered. Now it seemed everyone and his brother needed the building. Local hospitals would not have minded seeing the project fail; they could really use the beds and medical supplies for their own facilities. The building was really appealing to the Mafia; they would like to use it for a hotel or restaurant. But everyone soon learned not to mess with St. Clare's angels. They had powerful help on their side. Sister

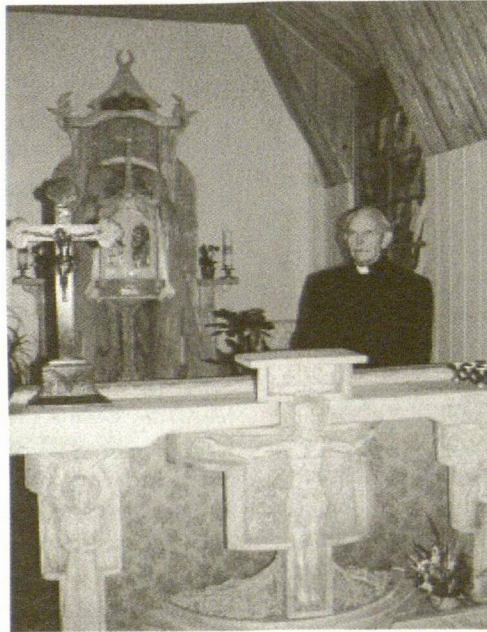
and so many others worked night and day putting their hearts into this project and no one was going to interfere. At last the big day arrived and it was ready.

As I was about to leave for Lithuania, I told Sister I thought I was ready to visit St. Clare's. She was delighted and gave me the name and phone number of the director. We hoped we could travel to Lithuania together, but Sister was still waiting for her miracles of an airline ticket and permission to go. She never doubted it would happen; it was just a little late in coming. She did get her miracle, but she would be leaving for Lithuania, as I would be returning. She

wished me a good trip and assured me I would be in her prayers.

About two weeks after arriving in Lithuania, I phoned the hospital only to be told the director was on vacation. As soon as I mentioned Sister Dolorita's name, I was given the director's home phone number. I really hated to annoy her at home, especially since she was on vacation, but my schedule was very tight. I dialed the number rather reluctantly only to be greeted by a cheerful voice. Apparently, the hospital phoned her to tell her of my call. She eased my conscience for disturbing her at home, and we set a time to meet at the hospital.

I put into service one of many friends in



Father Petras at the Hospital Chapel's altar.

Photo: Dr. Strolienė

Lithuania who has a car. This time it was a college soccer coach. He asked me if he could bring his sixteen-year-old daughter. I thought Rūta would enjoy company, so I invited my twenty-year-old cousin along. As the girls chattered in the back seat about the latest fads, music, and clothing fashions, I was getting second thoughts and cold feet about this trip. I was back to my old insecurities of not knowing how to handle a situation where you know this is the final stop for most of the patients.

As we pulled up in front of St. Clare's, I was still worrying. I decided not to take any photographs inside because I firmly believe people have the right to die with dignity. The outside was beautifully landscaped with benches for those patients who are still ambulatory and can enjoy the garden. From the outside, the building was well maintained.

Dr. Auksė Strolienė who is a neurologist as well as the administrator of St. Clare's greeted us at the front door. Dr. Strolienė is one of the "angels" who so graciously gave up one of her vacation days to give me a tour of St. Clare's.

She gave me a brief history of the hospital and showed me "before and after" photographs of the hospital. I mentioned to her that I would not be taking pictures, and she generously offered to send me some of the hospital pictures. She was true to her word, and the pictures arrived at my house soon after I returned home.

We started our tour with the chapel. It was a small room and contained a beautiful hand made wooden altar, which was donated by a couple from New Jersey. Over the altar was a beautiful window. As we prayed in the chapel Father Petras Adomonis arrived. Father is in charge of saying Mass as well as giving comfort to the patients and their families. Father had a wish that more patients could visit the beautiful chapel, but this is not possible since St. Clare's does not have an elevator, and the steps make it impossible to bring people in wheelchairs downstairs. Father Petras accommodates these people by saying Mass upstairs on a table.

I asked Dr. Strolienė how long the average patient stays at St. Clare's, and she replied that it was usually about four months. This is the time that the government insurance covers. However,

no one is asked to leave when the four months is over. The sad truth is that most people do not live that long. Last year seventy-eight people died at St. Clare's. Lithuanians still prefer to care for their family members at home until it is no longer possible.

There were eight people on the first floor, but they were too sick to attend Mass even though the chapel was not far from them. Everything from hallways to rooms was spotless. The Angels of St. Clare's were attractive, happy, young women. They joked with those patients who were able to smile back, and they sympathized with those who were despondent. They were always giving love and hugging their patients and knew each by name. For those who were near the end, the angels held them and softly prayed for them. Believe me when I tell you, they were not in this profession for money or for glory. What was even more amazing to me was that Dr. Strolienė knew the names and background of every patient in every room.

When I was able to talk to the patients, I did so. For some I simply looked in the room and said a silent prayer for them. I visited a stroke victim as well as two with Alzheimer's. There were bells tied to the beds so that the nurses could be summoned.

My heart broke for the husband and wife in one of the rooms. She cried bitterly while her husband looked on helplessly. Somehow, she knew she was not going to go home and was inconsolable. The nurse said her husband spent as many hours a day as he could with her, but he was exhausted from working his small farm. They had no children, and when his wife died, he would lose his helpmate and best friend.

One room held five women, all too sick to raise their heads from their pillows. In another room were five men suffering from trauma and diabetes. These ten people had to be turned constantly so they would not develop bedsores.

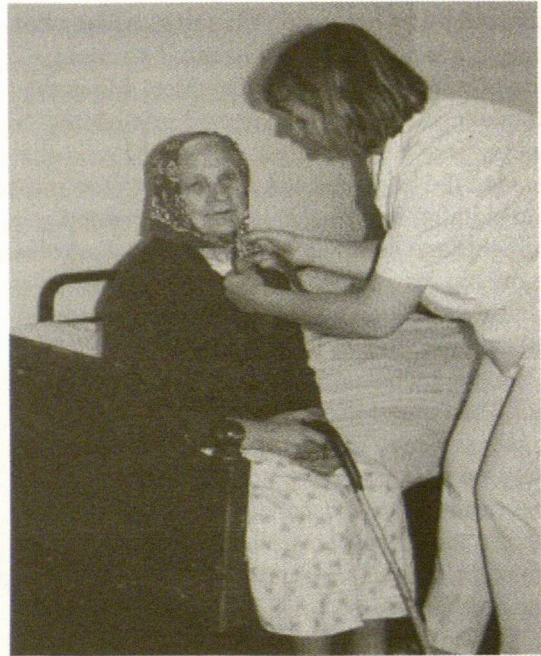
I saw only one patient who was mobile. He was an elderly man walking up and down the hall with his head bandaged. He, and all the patients and their families I spoke to, had only words of praise for St. Clare's. One woman who came to St. Clare's from a local farm told me it was the cleanest place she had ever seen in her

life. She was right. Everything sparkled. There was a special bathroom installed that the patients could use themselves. I saw a well-equipped physical therapy room where most of the equipment was donated from America.

I can't tell you how many times Dr. Strolienė emphasized that they were built on charity given through the goodness of others and even today could not exist without charity. Everywhere I went there was evidence of the generosity of the Knights of Lithuania. There was a very large Vytis emblem gracing one hall. Their work and donations were instrumental in opening St. Clare's Hospital. In the corner of one hall was a television that the patients enjoyed when they are able to sit up. The hospital placed an ad in a local paper asking if someone could donate an old television. Instead, a local man who won a sum of money on a Lithuanian lottery ticket bought them a new one. Needless to say, they were thrilled and grateful.

My next stop was the kitchen where they were so proud of a dishwasher that was obtained by Sister Dolorita. The cook was very proud of her domain and showed me her stove, but she did admit that there were times when she could get only one burner to work. Most patients are on a special diet, while six of them eat only pureed food. The patients eat four times a day at the cost of about one dollar per meal. Their costs are off set by the generosity of local people who donate potatoes, beans, and anything else they can spare.

Dr. Strolienė asked me if I would publicly thank the woman who does the wash at St. Clare's. When the hospital first opened, they had no washing machines. Wearing boots and using the hottest water she could tolerate, Leokadija Lasienė climbed into a large bathtub and washed everything by hand. There was no end to the laundry, and her hands were so red and raw that they bled. She would then hang the clothes outdoors in freezing weather. After that, she carefully and lovingly ironed everything so that the patients would be more comfortable, and the sheets would not be too rough on their skin. She came in at dawn and never left until everything was dried and pressed. She often works seven days a week and her salary is \$100 a month. But



A nurse helps a patient at St. Clare's.

Photo: Dr. Strolienė

not a complaint came from her lips because she believes she is doing God's work for the patients.

Life is easier now because Barbara and Richard Bladis of New Jersey, the same generous people who donated the altar, donated a commercial washer and dryer. Mrs. Lasienė is very grateful for the washer and dryer, but she still stays, often very late, until every item is pressed. Leokadija Lasienė is truly one of St. Clare's angels.

I asked Dr. Strolienė what would be at the top of her "wish list". She didn't hesitate for a moment before she replied. What was needed most at St. Clare's is an elevator. It would make life so much easier to bring patients up and down the stairs. The steps are both steep and narrow, and one of the most difficult tasks is to bring bodies down these stairs. An elevator would cost about \$55,000 so that is probably what it will remain – a dream on a wish list. But there are so many things still needed at St. Clare's, and donations of any sum would be appreciated. Dr. Strolienė constantly reminded me that St. Clare's was built on charity and still exists because of charity and the goodness of people far away, who will proba-

bly never see this wonderful and necessary hospital.

As we left St. Clare's, I felt it was a bitter-sweet experience. The patients were given the best possible care, but I knew most would return home to their families. It was their final stop here on earth.

On the trip back to Kaunas, I noticed that our two young traveling companions were much quieter. They seemed to be deep in their own thoughts, and there was no more chatter of fashions or music. Perhaps they realized how precious and short life could be.

I would like to thank the *Bridges* reader from Far Rockaway, NY who introduced me to St. Clare's Hospital long before I ever got there. I would like to add my gratitude, along with the entire staff of St. Clare's to Sister Dolorita for her endless prayers and boundless energy in

making the hospice a place of care and peace. To Father Petras Adomonis, Dr. Strolienė, and all the angels of St. Clare's, thank you for your love and dedication to the people of Lithuania in the hours of their greatest need.

As I have written, St. Clare's is ALWAYS in need of your help. For those of you who would like to help, please send your checks by **registered** mail to:

Dr. Auksė Strolienė
St. Clare's Hospital
S. Darius ir S. Girėno 14
4910 Utena Lithuania

Checks should be written to St Clare's Hospital.

I would like to close with this quote by James Russell Lowell: "All God's angels come to us disguised." ♦

John Patrick (Petruskevičius)

Jeanne Dorr Honored

For the past 26 years, New Jersey has held its annual Heritage Festival Ball. Every ethnic group in the state is invited to celebrate their own ethnicity within the diversity of New Jersey. And, each year provides another opportunity to honor special representatives from those groups.

Last year, Jules Veblaitis of Elizabeth, ever-active in his community, in the A.P.P.L.E. program for education in Lithuania, and the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. was the special honoree by the Lithuanians.

The Lithuanian representatives to the committee, Loretta Stukas and John Patrick, were proud to announce that the honoree at the Heritage Festival Ball held on April 29, 2001 in West Orange, New Jersey was Jeanne Dorr of Willingboro.

Jeanne, a frequent contributor to *Bridges*

magazine, is very active in promoting the welfare of Lithuanians here and in our Motherland. A summary of her activities on behalf of Lithuania as presented to the Committee of the Heritage Ball follows.

Jeanne Dorr was born in Scranton, PA, the grandchild of immigrants from a section of [Czarist Russia-held Lithuania]. These loving grandparents and her parents bestowed on her a love of their new country, America, and a kinship with the land of her ancestors.

America is and was the land of opportunity, and the opportunity for education was not to be missed. Jeanne earned a B.S. degree in education. She teaches in Willingboro, NJ. She is married to Tim, and has sons Christopher and Richard.

In 1979, Jeanne traveled for the first of sev-

JOHN PATRICK (PETRUSKEVIČIUS) is a Lithuanian representative, along with Mrs. Loretta Stukas, on the New Jersey Heritage Festival Ball, Inc. committee.

eral times to Soviet-occupied Lithuania. There, her heart went out to the vast number of people who, because of Communism, had no hope for the future. She remembered the stories of repression and hopelessness her grandparents often told her. Jeanne resolved to make whatever difference she could.

Being a teacher, she had many opportunities to teach children in America about the oppressive Soviet system so many fortunate Americans could not understand. She had a friend in Lithuania, also a teacher, and Jeanne coordinated a pen-pal program. The reality innocently depicted in the letters that came from Lithuania shocked the American children. This pen-pal project was featured on the front page of the Sunday edition of the *Burlington County Times*, and brought phone calls from many interested people of Lithuanian heritage. The pen pal project was a success, and many of the friendships continue to this day.

She was elated when on March 11, 1990 Lithuania peacefully declared her independence. When the Soviet army mobilized in Lithuania in 1991 and attempted to quell what is known today as the "Singing Revolution", Jeanne was horrified. She and many other people of good will, both Lithuanian and non-Lithuanian, reacted with all the political muscle and publicity they could muster.

Jeanne assisted in organizing demonstrations in New York City and Washington D.C. to protest the blockade by the Soviets and the violence inflicted on innocent Lithuanians whose only crime was calling for freedom. She participated in many protest marches and appeared at the doors of many influential politicians. The tireless work of Jeanne Dorr and many others like her allowed Lithuania to become a free and independent nation.

But Lithuania was still a country in need. Fifty years of Communist domination left Lithuania in a shambles. She organized clothing drives, established contacts at medical schools to obtain medical supplies, sent school supplies and anything else she could get donated. She has arranged for medical help and has raised more than \$10,000 for wheelchairs.

She and her husband volunteered to be surro-

gate parents to children coming to the Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia. When Dr. Jack and Loretta Stukas started a cooperative program between Lithuanian physicians and the Deborah Heart and Lung Hospital in New Jersey, Jeanne assisted in providing housing and shelter to those families whose only hope for life for the children was the fine medical care of Deborah. Some of the unfortunate children died, but the families were comforted by the efforts of a community organized by Jeanne Dorr.

She is a member of the people of directors of Lithuanian Orphan Care, part of the Human Services Division of the Lithuanian American Community. This is a volunteer group whose primary goal is to keep families intact in Lithuania. She has raised more than \$300,000 in six years for Lithuanian Orphan Care. Every other summer she travels to Lithuania and visits as many of the Orphan Care families as possible.

She is currently the co-chair of the Southeastern Lithuanian Community's public affairs office and the public affairs chair of the Philadelphia-South Jersey Lithuanian-American Community. She is editor of *Labas*, a newsletter that reaches more than a thousand families. This newsletter is intended to instill in those Lithuanian Americans who cannot speak the language of their ancestors a love of Lithuania and their heritage. She also writes a monthly column in *Bridges*, the English language magazine of the Lithuanian American Community. Jeanne is often called for speaking engagements. She has chaired humanitarian aid seminars dealing with aid for children and the elderly. She is also a member of the Knights of Lithuania Philadelphia Council No. 3.

Congratulations to Jeanne for the honor bestowed for her work. Let us all thank Jeanne, and last year's recipient, Jules Veblaitis, for the fine work done on behalf of Lithuania and the fine publicity brought to the Lithuanian-American Community. ♦

James M. Boubonis

MISSION TO MIROSLAVAS

I woke up early enough, considering how much I'd had to drink the night before at my cousin Marytė's house. Her husband Vytas, quite the jolly one, had plied me repeatedly with French cognac and Lithuanian beer. "*Įpilk, Marytė! Gerk, Džimi!*" Meanwhile, I had been attempting to speak French with Marytė, who is a French teacher in Alytus, since I speak better French than Lithuanian, and the others present, except young Uostė, spoke little English. But as the level of cognac got lower and lower in the bottle, I found myself less and less speaking in French, English, and Lithuanian, but speaking more and more in "Frenghuanian". Eventually I had decided to stick with Lithuanian only for better or worse.

After our soiree, my cousin Gintas had taken me back to his house, where I was to spend the night.

I had been preparing for this trip, in a sense, for four years. It was when I first learned of the possibility of having living relatives in Lithuania that I began studying the language, history, culture, and geography of our *tėvynė*. My first goal was to meet my living kin. The second goal, and nearly as important, was to honor those no longer living.

This was the third full day of my first trip to Lithuania. I washed and reported to the front room for breakfast, a delicious feast prepared by Gintas' charming wife Augė, though it was dampened somewhat by my grogginess. A few cups of coffee helped that, but before we got on our way on our planned journey, I felt obliged to confess to my hosts that I believed I had inadvertently broken a supporting rail on the rollout bed I was using in the guest room. They graciously waved it off, claiming it was a cheap piece of furniture anyway.

We got in the van – Gintas, Uostė, the elder of his two daughters, and I. Gintas drove to an apartment building where we picked up another cousin, Birutė, and her daughter Ieva.

Before leaving town, we stopped at an outdoor flower stand and bought a wreath of flowers and a candle or two. Then we rolled out of town, on a quiet, cold day, westward into the Dzukija countryside.

I am the first of the American-born bearing my family name to return to Lithuania. This would not have come about at all if I had not happened across a Vilnius telephone book at the Amberland shop in the Boston Lithuanian Citizens Association, and if I had not, out of curiosity, looked up 'Baubonis' and found an entry; if Juozas Baubonis of Vilnius, a probable kinsman (though it hasn't yet been proven) had not replied to my letter; if my father hadn't remembered that my great uncle Joe had once said something about having come from a place called 'Mirsla,' or something like that; and if Juozas hadn't taken that information, realized it was the Dzukija town Miroslavas, and, traveling there, hadn't found a 91-year-old lady named Marcelina who knew exactly who my relatives were.

I reflected on all this, and the sublime joys and moral responsibilities it gave me, as the van cruised past farm after farm on gently rolling hills, interrupted by an occasional lake, pond, or stretch of woods. A dusting of recent snow mottled the gray-brown soil with patches of white. No wonder my grandfather Antanas and his brothers Juozas and Ignas, after some years of working the coalmines in western Pennsylvania, had decided to settle in southeast Wisconsin. It reminded them of their homeland.

Gintas slowed the vehicle and pointed to a roadside monument made of stone, explaining in

JAMES M. BOUBONIS is a first-time Bridges contributor who lives in Massachusetts.

Lithuanian, "This monument was put here after the war to honor the dead on both sides of the conflict. There were originally two soldiers' heads on the monument. The head of the Russian soldier was removed after Independence was restored." One sole soldier's head is left there, that of a German soldier. The lesson was well taken. Though the people of Dzukija are no fans of Nazism, the area was one of those hit the worst with Soviet atrocities, and there are still bitter feelings against anything Soviet.

Among those atrocities were the deportations of tens of thousands of Lithuanians to such God-forsaken places as the timberlands of Siberia – where in fact my Lithuanian relatives lived after they were deported. It seems that my eldest great-uncle Pranas had committed the bourgeois crime of inheriting his father's farm in the village of Vankišķiai, three kilometers from the slightly larger town of Miroslavas. Unforgivable, in the great and glorious Marxist state. Makes one dangerous, this owning of land.

No wonder Dzukija was a hotbed of partisan activity in the early years of the Soviet era. How many times I gritted my teeth over the injustice shown my family by the Communist goons: living in hardship and poverty for over a dozen years, while the family farmland suffered mismanagement and neglect at the hands of the glorious Soviet state. Eventually my cousins were "permitted" to return to their homeland, though they were by then penniless. Their farmhouse was gone, the orchard rendered useless through neglect, the barn and animals gone. Only the small goose pond and a cellar remained to tell them where their home had been.

Gintas turned the van up a narrow, winding



The author in between his cousins Gintas and Rūta.

Photo: J. Boubonis

road, and I knew we must have been nearing our destination. We all had been rather quiet during the ride. Yes, there was a language barrier, as my Lithuanian was nearly as limited as their English, but we could usually converse, with some patience. Uostė and Ieva occasionally chatted a bit, but all passengers seemed to be somewhat preoccupied with our mission.

All the while the van's radio had been playing. It wasn't

one of those Lithuanian stations that strives to play all the hits of the western, English-speaking world. I listened to one Lithuanian song after another, and enjoyed the experience so unusual for me.

The van rounded a sharp bend in the road, and Gintas suddenly attempted to slow up as he noticed an old lady waving at us for a ride. But we had seen her too late to stop safely, and Gintas made a sound of dismay and drove on.

A nostalgic Lithuanian song started playing on the radio, a man's voice accompanied quietly by acoustic guitar. I watched the frozen fields roll past, and mused over the fact that my grandfather, and his father and grandfather, had looked at these same fields so many times and so many years ago. No doubt they knew the farmers who had owned them at that time. I wondered whether they could see us now, on our pilgrimage to the one place where the living commonly goes to commemorate the departed. And I reminded myself that, among the graves of the old ones, I must put aside the thing that was bothering me, the only unpleasant thing I had encountered since arriving in Lithuania, the thing I had been unaware of until my cousin Rūta Dilbienė had informed me of it in her house in Vilnius.

“*Girdėjo šauksmą protėvių,*” Juozas had written of me. I had heard the call of the ancestors, and that’s why the American cousin, who had surfaced after my Lithuanian relatives’ hope of contact with the American branch of the family had been all but extinguished, was now riding in a van toward little Miroslavas in the middle of winter.

My relatives, throughout my ten-day first visit, all showed me great appreciation of this fact. I might just as easily have expressed my wonder over the fact that they had so readily welcomed the idea of my visit when I first proposed it, welcomed me into their homes, wined and dined me, and showed me many sights in true Lithuanian hospitality. Though we had been corresponding for a few years, sending family photos and news – mainly with my cousin Rūta in Vilnius where I started my trip, and with Juozas who had taken such pains to unite me with my closest kinsmen – they had no real indication of my character, and I could have been a criminal for all they knew... But after thinking it over, I realized that neither they nor I need have wondered over any of this. *Šauksmas protėvių* – it applied equally to all of us. The bond of common bloodlines, the shared family history... it sang to each one of us.

“*Čia Miroslavas,*” Gintas uttered softly, for my benefit, as everyone else in the van knew this place well. A few more turns down old unpaved streets, and we pulled up in front of the cemetery. We alighted from the van, carrying out the flowers, candles, and cameras, and, perhaps rather stiffly and uncertainly, walked toward the opening in the fence around the graveyard. It was a still day, with no wind, and not another soul in sight.

We would have much lighter moments that day. Afterward we would make a short visit to the church in Miroslavas, where our great-grandfather Tamošius Baubonis had been some sort of lay leader, perhaps what we would call a churchwarden in English. He was also a sort of Justice of the Peace, perhaps a *vaitas* or *viršaitis* as his father Mataušius Baubonis had been before him – a chief of the community, or bailiff.

We would also visit the location of the Baubonis farm, property returned to our family after

the restoration of independence; and a small house in Vankišķiai where Birutė and Ieva spend time during the summer.

The high point of the day would come when we went to the house of Vytautas Baubonis, an electrician who lives in Vankišķiai, where we enjoyed another fantastic Lithuanian feast, shared memories, drank, and enjoyed the beginning of the reunion of long-separated branches of the family. The dinner with Vytautas’ family had its share of emotional moments as well as joyous celebration.

But back at the cemetery we had stopped to pay our respects and pray at the gravesites of several of our kin, including those of Pranas and his son Stasys, the father of Gintas and Rūta and of my cousins Dalytė and Laima.

Then Gintas brought me to the spot I had long wanted to visit.

Down an aisle of the cemetery near the entrance was a small mound with a large dark headstone planted in the middle of it. I duly set aside my anger and placed the wreath. Birutė and I lit the candles.

It was this anger that was the cause of my grogginess upon awaking that morning, and not a hangover. It was not Vytas’ good ministries with the bottle the night before that made me sluggish that morning, but yet another outrage perpetrated on my family by the glorious Soviet Republic.

Not long after my relatives had been “permitted” to return to their homeland after many years of drudgery in Siberia, they were informed that the plot where our *prosenelis* Tamošius was buried was needed for someone else. There had been a wooden memorial to mark his grave, the old ones remembered, but over the years it had rotted away, and since the family was in Siberia there was no one to take care of it or replace it. The family was told in true Soviet fashion that they must pay to relocate the remains of Tamošius. Having no money, and no time to raise the necessary funds, they could not comply. So instead of properly relocating Tamošius’ coffin with even a pauper’s burial, which any decent government would have done, the local officials determined that the recently deceased – who somehow needed my great-grandfather’s gravesite more than he did – would

be buried in the same plot a few feet beyond the coffin of the original occupant. It was not my great-grandfather's headstone, but someone else's, on his grave.

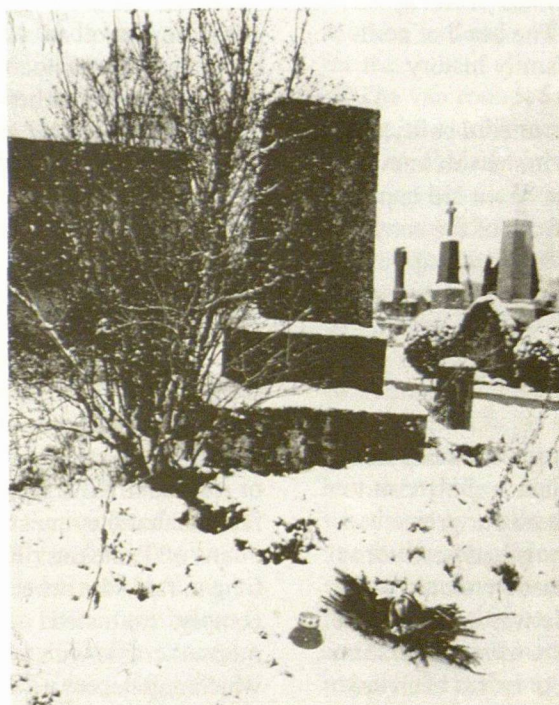
It was this that Rūta had told me only a couple days earlier, with help in translation from her daughter Agnė. This was why I had stayed awake too long in the rollout bed in Gintas' house in Alytus, tossing and turning, my anger eventually turning to rage. I had half resolved to find out who the person or persons were that made such an uncivilized decision on behalf of the glorious Soviet Republic, and be they Lithuanian or Russian, it was all the same. Surely such undignified treatment of the dead would not occur in a free Lithuania; it would be entirely contrary to Lithuanian cultural sensibility. Maybe it was Tamošius' very status as a landowner, church official, and government official in pre-Soviet Lithuania that had invited this callous disrespect on the part of the local officials.

As I stood in front of Great-Grandpa's place of rest, I knew that if I wanted him to remain at

peace, I should not be the cause of any further trouble. If those responsible for the disrespect shown toward his earthly remains are still living, I should leave them, and the whole matter, alone. I pictured his face as it appears in an old family portrait: gazing out at the camera, calm and strong, even stoic. He would want it this way – he was a church official (I am now a minor church official in our parish), a man of government service (I am a Non-Commissioned Officer in the U.S. Air Force), and a family man (I am a husband and father of two half-Lithuanian children), and he would want me to be at peace and to leave him in peace.

Instead, I am now in the process of securing a Lithuanian passport, for which my relatives tell me I do qualify on account of my grandfather being born in Lietuva. Possessing the passport will aid me in future endeavors in erecting a proper headstone for Tamošius Baubonis.

We breathed our final silent prayers, left the candles flickering in place, and quietly left the Miroslavas cemetery. ♦



Tamošius Baubonis gravesite in Miroslavas, Alytus, Lithuania.

Photo: J. Boubonis

From the Omaha — Šiauliai Sister City Newsletter

Omaha, Nebraska and Šiauliai, Lithuania — *News from These Sister Cities!*

Sometimes a little article brings forth great changes and adventures. Here's news from Omaha, Nebraska and Šiauliai, Lithuania — sister cities with a wonderful future ahead of them. Below are excerpts from a letter from Larry Uebner, president of the Omaha Sister City Association, who explained how an idea sparked an unforgettable endeavor.

I'm glad you received our Sister City Newsletter. Thanks for your email.

You might like to know that the only way I found out about the Auksučiai Foundation was thru the June 1999 article in Bridges. Since then, the Omaha Sister City Assn., whose Sister City is Šiauliai, has been communicating with Vytautas Šliupas, President of the Auksučiai Foundation. Vytautas visited Omaha last August and we had a dinner at my house with several of the Lithuanian members of our Board of Directors. It was at that time that the Omaha Sister City Assn. pledged the \$2,000 to Auksučiai. I asked Vytautas if they needed anything at Auksučiai and he said, "The farm manager's house is almost completed, but we do not have electricity. We really need a generator." So the Omaha Sister City Assn. helped "turn on the lights" at Auksučiai. Auksučiai is in Šiauliai province, so it only makes sense to couple our link with Šiauliai and Vytautas' efforts in the province.

An official delegation from Omaha, led by our City Council President, Marc Kraft, visited Šiauliai in September 2000. I was able to visit Auksučiai with the farm manager and his wife — Raigėdas and Elvina Karosas. The farmhouse is beautiful (a log house built from the trees on the farm). Vytautas' organization and efforts are truly amazing. He has the support of a lot of people in California and I am working to develop support for him in Nebraska (after all, Lithuania is just about like Nebraska in regards to our agricultural strengths).

Omaha is hosting Dr. Vincas Laurutis, Rector of Šiauliai University and the 35-member "Studium" chorus from Šiauliai University. They will have several performances in Omaha and then embark

on a Midwest performance tour in Chardron, NE, a tour to the Black Hills and Mt. Rushmore, and performances in Denver and Colorado Springs. I will be accompanying the group.

We have some great activity between Omaha and Šiauliai. Last year President Valdas Adamkus hosted Dr. Rebecca Morris, Dept. of Business, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and her Executive MBA students in Vilnius. Dr. Morris has been taking a group of Executive MBA students over to Šiauliai every year for the past several years to do research and business consultation with Šiauliai businesses. Some of the businesses have benefited significantly from their consultations. President Adamkus learned of this project and invited Dr. Morris and her group to visit with him. It was an honor for the President to recognize our efforts in Šiauliai.

Well, so much from Omaha. I think all you really wanted to know was whether you could quote from our Newsletter, but if you get me talking about Šiauliai and the Omaha Sister City Assn. — it's hard to stop.

Best Regards,
Lawrence F. Uebner
Chairman, Omaha Sister City Assn.

An Official Delegation Visits Šiauliai

This past fall [2000], an official Omaha Sister City Delegation visited two of our sister cities, Šiauliai and Braunschweig. A core group of eight visited both cities, including Sister City Chairman Larry Uebner, Boardmember Sue

Leuschen, City Council Chairman Marc Kraft and his wife, Joanie, Don and Virginia Stuart, JoAnne Woltkamp, and Audrey Hulsey with Pegasus Travel. The delegation was joined for five days in Šiauliai by Boardmembers Nellie Sudavičius MacCallum, Donna Sulskis, Dalia Sudavičius, and Jerry and Irene Matz.

Upon arriving in Šiauliai, the delegation was treated to an evening of country music at *Jonė Pastogė* with old friends. Councilman Kraft was able to sit in a set and played drums with the Country Crows band. The following morning, the group set out for Klaipėda, a peninsula bordering the Baltic Sea. The peninsula is reached by a ferry and features a variety of wooden carvings of witches, forest creatures, and folk tales on Juodkrantė's Raganų Kalnas (The Witches' Hill). At the resort town of Nida, the group descended a 400-foot sand dune, lunched on traditional herring and [barščiai – cold beet soup], and dipped their toes in the very cold Baltic Sea.

The following day, Šiauliai Mayor, Vida Stasiūnaitė, and members of the City Board hosted an official reception at City Hall. Association Chairman Larry Uebner presented his speech in Lithuanian. The Mayor presented a large pair of traditional wooden shoes, as well as individual gifts, to Chairman Larry Uebner and the Association.

The group also met with Bishop Eugenijus Bartulis at the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul and toured its current renovations. The group then proceeded to our Sister University, Šiauliai University, for a tour and reception with Rector V. Lauritis, deans, and staff. The afternoon was spent at Kryžių Kalnas (Hill of the Crosses) and touring the local brewery, Gubernija. The mayor hosted a formal dinner and reception in the evening for the delegation at Aronija. The event was covered by the local paper and made front-page news!

The delegation's last day in Šiauliai was spent visiting local businesses, including Gricevičiaus Rūta candy factory, Putoksnis bottle manufacturing factory, a candle house factory, and a meeting with the General Director of the Chamber of Commerce, Dalia Barakauskas. A farewell party began with a reception at Šiauliai University's recently opened American Center and concluded with a fun-filled folk party hosted by the University and highlighted by performances by the University's Choir and the renown Saulė dance Troupe.

Šiauliai Bishop Bartulis Visits St. Anthony's Lithuanian Parish

The Most Reverend Eugenijus Bartulis, Bishop of the Diocese of Šiauliai, Lithuania, toured Lithuanian Catholic parishes throughout the United States [during April 2000]. Bishop Bartulis visited Omaha's St. Anthony's Lithuanian National Parish from April 6th to 9th.

Bishop Bartulis' Omaha tour included leading Lenten retreats and a fundraising mission to support the newly created diocese of Šiauliai in the post-Soviet Lithuania. Bartulis also conducted Lenten services for the Lithuanian-speaking parishioners – many who were born in Lithuania and emigrated here within the last 50 years.

In September, Bishop Bartulis greeted our official Sister City delegation with open arms with a private meeting and tour of the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Šiauliai. The Cathedral was undergoing renovations and the installation of a new heating/cooling system, which was made possible through his fundraising efforts.

Auksučiai Foundation Receives Sister City Donation

Recently, the Omaha Sister City Association contributed \$2,000 to the Auksučiai Foundation. This foundation was established in January 1999. The purpose is to provide a farmer-to-farmer and youth exchange programs between agricultural and forest communities of Lithuania and the United States.

The Foundation is in the process of establishing research and demonstration plots and a learning center at the Auksučiai Farm, on land leased in the county of Šiauliai. The farm's main goal is to provide assistance to Lithuanian farmers to become more self-sufficient and competitive in the newly developing free market economy in Lithuania.

Association President Larry Uebner had been discussing the farm project with Foundation President Vytautas Šliupas for several months. [During fall 2000], our Association's Board approved a donation ear-marked to provide power and lights to the complex. Additionally, Mr. Uebner and Nellie MacCallum as part of the official Šiauliai delegation trip visited the farm in September 2000. The Foundation graciously accepted the gift and is moving forward on plans to bring power to the site.

Regina Lišauskas

Lithuanian Independence Day Commemoration In San Diego

On March 4th 2001, the Lithuanian-American Community of San Diego organized a day of celebration commemorating both the original February 16th Independence Day of Lithuania, as well as the tenth anniversary of the March 11th Independence Day, when Lithuania again became free and independent from the Soviet Union.

The celebration was held at the Oceanside Senior Center, in Oceanside, just north of San Diego. After the official presenting of the flags and singing of both the American and Lithuanian anthems, the president of the LAC, San Diego, Algis Bačanskas introduced Father Michel Gagnon O.F.M., the pastor of San Luis Rey Mission, where we have Lithuanian Mass several times a year, to say the invocation. He welcomed all the guests who had come, not only from the San Diego area, but also from Orange County. The pastor also introduced our U.S. Congressman, Darrell Issa, who was very generous in coming to celebrate with us. In his brief speech, the congressman emphasized the importance of freedom and how we should never take it for granted. Later, Congressman Darrell Issa was presented with an honorary Lithuanian sash which is given to honor important guests.

The main guest speaker was Anthony Mažeika from Mission Viejo, who talked about how Lithuania became free again after the fall of the Soviet Union on March 11, 1991. He



The JURA folk dance ensemble: Right to left: Inga Vaitulevičiūtė, Saulius Vabalas, Giedrė Milašius, Saulius Lišauskas, and Regina Lišauskas.

Photo: R. Lišauskas

stresses how important it is for Lithuania, as well as the other two Baltic countries, Latvia and Estonia, to join NATO. He further stated that NATO is an American issue, and we should try to get the support of our congressmen and senators to lobby the President to support these Baltic countries for their quest to join NATO.

Mažeika quoted the Secretary of State Colin Powell, in a statement prepared for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, saying "our relations with Russia must not be dictated by any fear on our part. If we believe that enlargement of NATO should continue, for example, and we do, we should not fear that Russia will object". Anthony called upon Congressman Issa to be "our friend" and to help us achieve our goal – becoming a member of NATO.

Following Anthony Mažeika, the president of the Lithuanian-American Community, Western Region, Angelė Nelsas, briefly talked about her contacts with government officials who encourage her to go forward with the fight and persistence of being accepted to NATO with, as she says, "the passion" that we have in lieu of the billions of dollars. Angelė sure has the passion.

REGINA LIŠAUSKAS is the secretary for the San Diego chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

She has been working with government officials for many years for Lithuania's causes and is well known on Capitol Hill.

During the artistic program, a newly formed folkloric ensemble performed a song, "Noblemen Saddling Their Steeds", with the following performers: Simona Valančiūtė-Kaušas on "kanklės", Audronė Kazlauskas on "luzdelis" and David Pivoriūnas playing the violin. They were enriched by the voices of Rolandas Kaušas, Violeta Pivoriūnas and Holly Churchill. Following the song, the trio played a piece called "Avietala" or the Little Raspberry.

The newly formed men's quartet took the stage and sang two songs entitled, "When I Rode", and "Walking in the Woods". Performers were: Saulius Lišauskas, Saulius Vabalas, Stasys Milašius, and Šarūnas Landys. Milda Landys accompanied them on the piano. Their songs received a rowdy round of applause from the audience of about 90 people.

Following the quartet, the ensemble "JŪRA" performed two folk dances, "Putinėlis" (Little Snowball Tree), and Quadrille "Rusnietis". The group is directed by Stasys Milašius. Enthusiasti-

cally the audience did not hold back their applause for the group who were made up of dancers of varied ages.

Following the program, everyone partook in the delicious potluck refreshments that have become a tradition in San Diego. Many had the opportunity to socialize with old friends as well as meet new ones. The mood was so upbeat that when music was heard some took their favorite partners and started to dance. Young and old were seen waltzing merrily around the dance floor not wanting to leave.

The committee was very pleased with the turnout despite of a threat of rain, which held off during the celebration. Everyone left with a smile on their faces. We all believe that San Diego has the best weather and the most enthusiastic people who work hard to bring all the Lithuanian-Americans together and participate in cultural as well as social events. If you doubt that, please come and visit us and see for yourselves. Any questions or comments, you may direct them to Regina Lišauskas – LAC San Diego secretary at: 203 Chapalita Dr., Encinitas, CA 92024 or email: Reginax@pacbell.net. ♦



Participants at the San Diego Commemoration: In front row from left to right: Violeta Pivoriūnas—program announcer; David Pivoriūnas; Anthony Mažeika—main speaker; Saulius Lišauskas; Regina Lišauskas; Congressman Darrell Issa; Angelė Nelsas; and Algis Bačanskas with participants in the background.

Photo: R. Lišauskas

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

Lithuanian Language Course

The 16th annual Lithuanian Language Course at Camp Dainava, Manchester, Michigan, will take place August 5th to the 12th, 2001. This intensive course, operating under the auspices of the Educational Council of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., is designed for beginners, intermediate, and advanced students, or those just wishing to refresh their Lithuanian. Experienced instructors in vacation-like surroundings and atmosphere teach the course. There are no limitations regarding age or formal education.

For more information or a registration form, please contact Mr. Vytautas Jonaitis, 1546 Quarry N. W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504; phone 616-458-6378; e-mail: vjonaitis@juno.com; or log onto: <http://www.javlb.org/educat/mokytoju.html>. ♦

- *Vytautas Jonaitis*

William P. "Bill" Durbin

*Ardent Supporter of Lithuanian Causes
Passes Away*

U.S. Senator Richard J. Durbin's brother, William "Bill" Durbin passed away on February 8th in Bethesda, Maryland at age 71 years.

Mr. Durbin supported the Jurbarkas children's hospital in Jurbarkas, Lithuania since 1997. He and his brother, Sen. Durbin, had visited his mother's, Ann Kutkaitė's, hometown of Jurbarkas, Lithuania. Soon after the visit, Durbin's mother passed away, and Bill decided to start the Ann Kutkaitė-Durbin Memorial Fund to help his mother's hometown's children's hospital. The Fund was successful in renovating the hospital and providing additional medical and bedding supplies.

In addition, Bill was very active in his support of not only Lithuania, but also Latvia and Estonia.

Left in mourning are his wife, Lorraine Kalish, nine sons, a daughter, twenty grandchildren, and brothers Robert E. Durbin of Long Beach, Calif., and Sen. Richard J. Durbin. ♦

TRIVIA QUIZ!

Who is the mother of Vytautas the Great?

- A. Jadvyga
- B. Birutė
- C. Ona

(answer on p. 26)

A Lithuanian Rural Parish in Need

Mr. Juozas Giedraitis, an honorary president of the National Foundation, asked Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid (LCRA) to make the plight of his native parish in Lithuania known. Rural parishes in Lithuania are extremely poor and struggling valiantly to repair their churches and begin the process of spiritual and moral rebirth. Unfortunately, they cannot do it on their own. Help must come from the West.

LCRA has agreed to help in this most worthy cause. Below is an excerpt from a letter written by the parish council of Vadžgiriai parish. On behalf of the Vadžgiris (near Jurbarkas, Lithuania) Catholic Community we pray for your support of much needed renovation work of our church.

The church was built 77 years ago and has never undergone any type of renovation. Now it is in dire need of repairs. The roof is leaking, the plaster walls are cracked and peeling, and the wood floor is totally rotten. It is imperative to halt further deterioration of the building.

The church has become the one single positive force in this rural area serving as a center not only for religious activities but other [activities] as well. In Vadžgiris and the surrounding area there are many young families that now actively support and participate in parish life. Due to the current extremely difficult economic situation in Lithuania, the parish community is unable to fully fund the various projects needed for total restoration and reconstruction of the church in Vadžgiris. The parish is in dire need of financial help and humbly asks for your understanding and financial support.

If you would like to help this worthwhile project, please send your donation to: **Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, 351 Highland Blvd., Brooklyn, NY 11207** with a note that it is designated for Vadžgiris. You will receive a receipt for your tax-exempt donation.

Signed: Rev. Alvydas Čiūras – Pastoral Council President; Gintaras Stoškus and Egidijus Giedraitis – members of the Council. ♦

- *Vida Jankauskas is the administrator for
Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid.*

A Publication That Really Talks!

Lithuania has a population of around 3.7 people. How can a small country like that defend itself against large nations of 100 million and 200 million? Does Lithuania have to join NATO? Why is Lithuania now searching for security and identity? Why is Estonia less corrupt than Lithuania? Why could homo sovieticus evolve in Lithuania? Why did Sergei Kovalev say, he was sorry? How many Lithuanian martyrs did the Pope honour on May 7 last year? Should there be more? Who has introduced ISO 9000 standards into Lithuania? And what did Janina Degutyte think of when she drank red wine?

Answers to all these questions, and lots more, are in the most recent issue of *LITHUANIAN PAPERS*, No. 14.

Lithuania must become better known in the world. Lithuania must seek new friends everywhere. Lithuania must influence the public opinion in its favour. The annual journal *LITHUANIAN PAPERS* has been doing this work over the past 14 years. Have you seen this 72-page journal? *LITHUANIAN PAPERS* is published every year in English by the Lithuanian Studies Society at the University of Tasmania. *LITHUANIAN PAPERS* now has subscrib-

ers in 29 foreign countries, and over 100 international writers have so far contributed articles to it.

YOU can help, by asking your local library to subscribe to *LITHUANIAN PAPERS*. YOU can help, by passing your copy of *LITHUANIAN PAPERS* on to your teacher, professor, English-speaking neighbor, journalist and any one else who would benefit from reading it. YOU can help, by giving *LITHUANIAN PAPERS* as a birthday present, or a Christmas gift or as a present on any other occasion to your family, relatives, and friends.

If you HAVE seen this journal, please make it known to others, and send a donation.

If you have NOT yet seen this journal, please hurry up and e-mail your order and postal address today to A.Taskunas@utas.edu.au. or write to Al Taskunas, Post Office Box 777, Sandy Bay, Tasmania, 7006, Australia.

All issues up to 1997 have been sold out already, and only a few copies are still available for 1998, 1999, and 2000. Price is \$8 per copy (in US or Australian currency), includes airmail postage and may be paid after receipt of the journal. ♦

— Al Taskunas (Editor, *Lithuanian Papers*).

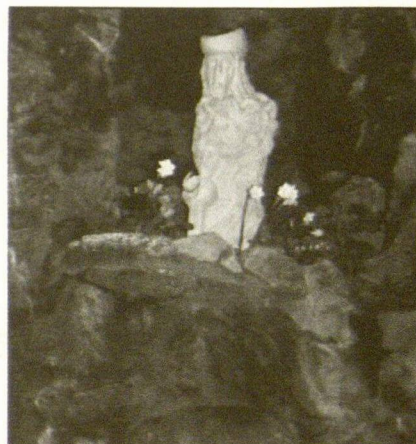
Answer to Trivia Quiz!

Birutė (14th century) was the wife of Prince Kęstutis, mother of Vytautas the Great. Historical sources say she belonged to a family of Samogitian magnates. According to ancient tradition, Birutė, born near Palanga on the Baltic seacoast, was a priestess (vaidilutė) who guarded the sacred fire of an altar in Palanga.

It was recorded in the Lithuanian chronicle of Bychowiec as follows:

“Kęstutis, ruling in Trakai and Samogitia, heard of a maiden of Palanga named Birutė, who according to the pagan custom, had promised the gods to preserve her chastity and was herself honored as a goddess. Kęstutis himself went there, and he was pleased with Birutė because she was beautiful and wise. He asked her to be his wife, but she did not wish to consent and she answered that she promised the gods to remain chaste until the end of her days. Kęstutis took her by force and with great respect accompanied her to Trakai, his capital. He invited his brothers, held a large wedding feast and took Birutė for his wife”.

The Lurdas: At the foot of Birutė's Hill, that is located in Palanga, there is a grotto that Count Tiškevičius' wife Antanina had built called “The Lurdas”.



Originally, a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary used to stand in a niche of the Lurdas.

During the revival of the Lithuanian nation, Vilius Orvydas donated a stone sculpture of his version of the Virgin Mary (see photo) that stands in the Lurdas to this day. It looks like a melted ice sculpture. I wonder what happened to the original statue of the Virgin Mary. ♦

— Ed Shakalis
And photo by William Shakalis

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