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Our 25th Year!



The Road to NATO...A Unique Class Assignment...Visiting Lithuania...Art and Poetry

P E R S P E C T I V E S

I'm ranting and raving because I've been felled by an itch. Poison oak, poison ivy or poison sumac – whatever it was that was growing in my backyard as I was clearing the brush, I got it. And it itches. Still.

My sons have always been very sensitive to this vile and heinous group of vines and plants. My husband and I seemed to be immune to them. Until two weeks ago.

My mother would say, "Now in Lithuania, this type of plant never existed. We never came out of the woods with an itch, just a basket of beautiful baravykai – mushrooms."

Why this poisonous weed doesn't thrive in Lithuania is really beyond my limited horticultural knowledge. My husband, who still has not experienced the wonders of the ivy, says that it doesn't grow in Lithuania due to the latitude and colder climate. Maybe because there were so many human adversaries to the Lithuanian people, Mother Nature looked kindly upon our people. Or maybe the vaidilutes, the nature worshippers, and the farmers who lived harmoniously with the land helped bless the vast green stretches of woods and fields with only life-sustaining and beneficial plants

I could go on and nonsensically theorize. Yet, my cousins in Lithuania will still look at me as if I've made up this fantastic story when I warn them about not wandering into the four feet of my "woods" for fear of the evil poison ivy plants. They'll never understand until they wake up with the skin-ripping itch.

The joys of gardening will never be the same for me again. Oh, to be in Lithuania with a simple basket on my arms filled with plump baravykai, instead of this red, incessant itch. Hopefully, when the itch ceases, my normal disposition will return. So will my normal sense of humor.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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On the cover:
Jeanne Dorr's photo of Rasa with hints of an artistic twist grace our cover this month.

Happy St. George's Day!



The guardian of animals was never forgotten by Lithuanian farmers on April 23rd. Without them, much of the tilling and sowing could not be done.

On this special day, the animals were encircled by smoking burning plants believed to have protective properties.

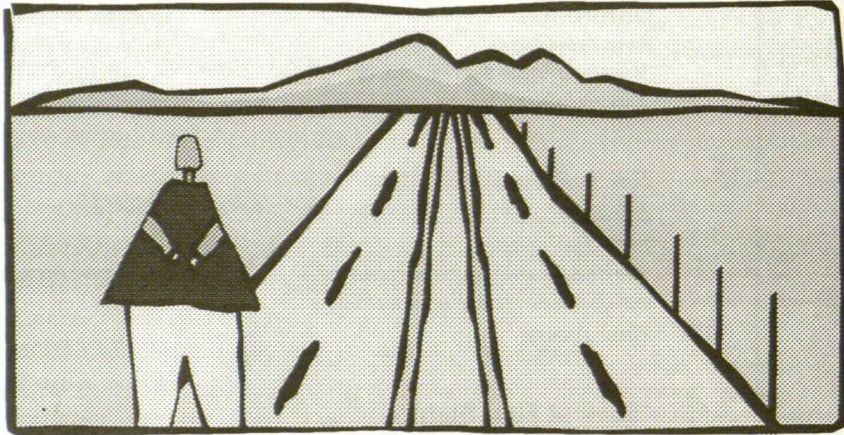
Shepherds and livestock were sprinkled with water to protect them from illnesses, evil spirits, and village sorceresses.

Rituals centering around eggs were performed to increase the productivity of livestock.

All in all, it is the day all animals dream of — a day off with pretty good perks!

Regina Narušis

The Road to Prague



Even though Lithuania made application for NATO membership much earlier, it was not specifically named as an accession candidate until the Washington Summit in April of 1999. Such recognition, however, did not guarantee accession.

At the NATO special meeting in Brussels in June of 2001, NATO committed itself to the “open door policy” and to fulfill its commitment pledged to review each applicant’s progress in 2002. During the same time, co-operation within the framework of “Partnership for Peace” was enhanced with the adoption of the Membership Action Program (MAP). These programs were meant to help each applicant country to meet the required standards and prepare them for their possible membership at some time in the future. However, it became clear in June of 2001 that postponement of the decision to expand NATO was no longer an option and that some form of expansion would take place at the Summit in 2002. These questions remain – which aspirants are likely to fulfill the criteria by the 2002 Summit, and which should be invited to commence accession negotiations?

At present, there are ten NATO aspirant appli-

cants, among them Lithuania. An invitation to all ten candidates, though in line with the Vilnius Declaration, is probably unlikely. A “mini” enlargement also seems unlikely. The “mini” enlargement may mean only one or two countries, such as Slovenia, Lithuania, and maybe Slovakia. The most likely scenario is five to seven countries. The big problem facing NATO today is what to do with those aspirants that are not invited in 2002. They need to be given hope and an incentive to continue moving forward.

It was assumed that the three Baltic countries would be the key issue in Prague, however that may no longer be the case. All three appear to be fairly well prepared. Russia has softened its rhetoric on expansion and appears to have come to grip with the expansion of NATO to include the Baltic countries. Further, NATO cannot risk losing credibility by denying membership to candidates that have fulfilled the Alliance criteria.

The Baltic nations seem to have the support of Denmark, Iceland, Norway, United States, Britain, and now Germany. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republics support them as well. President Chirac of France, while on a visit to the three Baltic

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countries, pledged that France would support their desire for speedy accession to the Alliance.

How committed is the United States to including all or at least some of the Baltic counties in the next round of enlargement? President Bush in his speech in Warsaw called for a NATO that stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea and listed all three Baltic nations as strong candidates for membership. He made his position clear that expansion of NATO should include as many as can be included.

On October 24th 2001, Senator Helms introduced in the Senate, and Congressman Bereuter in the House, the "Freedom Consolidation Act of 2001". This Act sought to provide financial assistance to the NATO candidates, but most importantly, reiterates both former President Clinton's and now President Bush's strong positions for a broad NATO expansion. On November 7, 2001 the House passed this bill by 372 votes out of 431 present, with 46 voting against and 14 members not voting. The bill came before the Senate, but was delayed in order to allow the Senate Armed Services Committee to hold hearings to consider the matter. The hearings were set for February 28th and then postponed to April 2002. In the Senate, the bill was known as Senate bill 1572. The Senate vote will tell us where the Senate stands and what more will need to be done by Lithuania's supporters in promoting the ratification process that requires two-thirds vote of the Senate.

Lithuania is regarded by most as the best-prepared candidate for NATO. Polls show that the majority of the Lithuanian people support NATO membership. They see it as a way to guarantee their independence. The Lithuanian government has committed the 2% of the nation's gross national product for defense. All major political parties have pledged support for NATO membership. Lithuanian armed forces have met the NATO criteria. The free market economy continues to grow, and democracy has been established. The last of the MAP evaluations are now being completed.

On February 22, 2002, NATO Secretary General, George Robertson, visited Vilnius. However, he does not make the decisions on NATO expansion and therefore his remarks in Vilnius were of a general and non-committal nature. He made it quite clear no decision has yet taken place, and that the decision as to who will be invited will occur at the Prague Summit in November of 2002. The next indicator will come from the NATO Foreign

Ministers Meeting scheduled this May. By then the MAP evaluations should have been completed, so that preliminary discussions can take place. As it stands now, Lithuania deserves and should be invited to join NATO at the Prague Summit.

The road to Prague has not been without delay or detour. The September 11th attack upon the United States has delayed the process. Attention has been focused on fighting terrorism and not on NATO expansion. Some have even questioned the need for NATO, claiming that even though Article 5 of the Treaty was invoked, NATO itself has only played a limited, largely political and symbolic role in the war against terrorism. That is because the European NATO allies are "militarily undersized", so says NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson. The war on terrorism thus far has diverted NATO's attention from focusing on wider membership. NATO members need to deal with these new issues. However, NATO's institutional problems should not, and cannot, limit the NATO expansion process if the Alliance seeks to maintain its credibility and value.

The United Nations is an organization of nations with divergent values. The European Union is an economic alliance. NATO is an alliance of nations with shared values. It is the strongest and most effective military alliance that the United States has entered into. NATO is as needed today, as it was when it was founded in 1949. It was this Alliance that prevented war in Europe for fifty years. It is now in the process of making all of Europe safe and secure and in the meantime is attempting to build a new relationship with a better Russia, we hope.

The events of September 11th only bolster the case for NATO as a viable defense and also a security alliance. Further enlargement of NATO will contribute to the process of integration of Europe, which will further stabilize Europe and add strong new allies for the United States in the war against terrorism. ♦

Lithuanians DO Make a Difference

Volunteerism usually encompasses cupcake sales, folk dance concerts, blynų baliai (pancake fests), and other community-based events. The good feelings and results stay right there – in the community. But there are other ways to make a difference outside the community, and the results stretch toward the outlying area, at times to Washington, and many times Lithuania.

With a simple call or visit, many Lithuanian-Americans affect public affairs decisions. Every month Illinois Gov. George Ryan's office staff members visit with Lithuanian-American individuals acknowledging their work. In other areas of the country, a letter to a Senator or an individual's efforts to coordinate meetings with other ethnic groups produce differences that can affect foreign policy.

Lithuanians make a difference every day. Here are just a few examples.

From Detroit.

A recent immigrant, Valdas Piestys, desired not only America's way of life, but also to not break the connections with Lithuanians. His avid involvement with the Lithuanian-American Community in Detroit allowed him to be voted as the chapter's chairman. It also brought about unexpected good tidings.

On March 17th, the chapter along with the help from Michigan district's chairwoman's Liūda Rugienienė's and staff member's Jonas Urbonas' help organized the March 11th re-establishment of

Lithuania's Independence Day celebration.

Lithuanian Ambassador, Vytatutas Ušackas, Michigan's U.S. Congressman Joe Knollenberg's assistant Shawn Ciavattone, and Michigan State Legislature Congressman Andrew Raczkowski gathered with Lithuanian-Americans to celebrate the day.

The highlight of the event came when Mich. Cong. Raczkowski presented the State of Michigan's Legislature Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 6 to Amb. Ušackas and the assembly.

The Resolution had been offered by Senators McCotter and Jaye and co-sponsored by Representatives: Toy, Lipsey, Richardville, Julian, DeWeese, Raczkowski, Pappageorge, Rocca Gielegem, Bishop, Faunce, Birkholz, Bogardus, Richner, Ehardt, Garcia, Jacobs, and Shulman.

The Concurrent Resolution's main focus was to "memorialize the President and the Congress of the United States to support the addition of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The cohesiveness of this Lithuanian-American Community – chapter and district – promoted them to reach out and receive support from Michigan's State Legislature. As each state of the United States expresses their support to Washington, NATO enlargement with Lithuania as the next addition will be an assured reality.

From Philadelphia.

When the call to urge your congressmen and senators to support Senate Concurrent Resolution

RASA ARDYS-JUŠKA is the editor of BRIDGES. The article used information collected by Teresė Gečys, Information Services Coordinator for the LAC.



Detroit's Lithuanian group: (from left) Valdas Piestys, Lithuania's Amb. Vygaudas Ušackas, Vytautas Kutkus, Jurgis Jurgutis, and Danguolė Jurgutienė.



From left: Michigan Congressman Andrew Raczkowski presents the Legislature's Resolution to Lithuania's Amb. Vygaudas Ušackas.

Photos: Jonas Urbonas

34 in July 2001 went out, many responded. Now the call to urge these same representatives to support the "Freedom Consolidation Act" has been repeated, and many are arming themselves with pen, paper, or even e-mail. Does it affect any change? We won't know until it's passed – or at worse, rejected.

Kazys Razgaitis, of Philadelphia's Lithuanian-American Community, was able to speak to his Senator at a town meeting. In addition to expressing his concerns, Razgaitis received a letter as well. One, which can only spur others to contact their representatives, too.

Pennsylvania's Arlen Specter wrote to Razgaitis. He stated, "I support the idea of expanding NATO to include other countries in the region as well as to include Lithuania in the alliance. I am a cosponsor of S. 1572, the "Freedom Consolidation Act of 2001" which reaffirms support of such expansion. As the people of Lithuania enjoy the freedom and independence established ten years, I would like to offer my best for a prosperous future."

Be it by letter, in person, or by e-mail, your voice counts.

From Ohio.

Friendships are important, especially when they're cross-cultural. Dr. Viktoras Stankus, Board Member of the Public Affairs Council of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc., knew that it takes more than one small ethnic group to garner

support for Lithuania's inclusion into NATO.

After many months and many meetings, three Ohio ethnic organizations were united and wrote an "Ohio Appeal".

It began, "This appeal from Ohio by The American Jewish Committee, The Polish American Congress, The Lithuanian-American Community of the USA Inc. to the Senate of the United States of America to enact The Freedom Consolidation Act in order to admit Lithuanian and the other candidate countries in to NATO is a continuation of the action the State of Ohio took as the first US Governmental body to recognize the peaceful declaration of the restoration of Lithuania's independence from the ten Soviet Union, on March 11, 1990."

The Appeal underlined their past, "The Polish Community of Ohio actively supports Lithuania's entrance into NATO... holds in high esteem Lithuania's decision during World War II not to join the Nazi-Soviet attack on Poland and to allow Polish Army officers and soldiers to escape into Lithuania, from thence to England to continue the fight against the Nazis."

The Appeal also underlined their future, "The American Jewish Committee is currently leading the drive with the government of Lithuania to restore the 500 year old architectural marvel, the Jewish Old City in Vilnius. It is for Lithuania's entrance into NATO, for the safety provided would assure the reflowering of Jewish life in Lithuania so ravaged by World War II."

The Appeal concluded with how NATO

enlargement would also benefit the free world, "It would provide safety for US forces as more Lithuanians serve in NATO, as they have with NATO forces in Bosnia and Kosovo. And as Lithuania grows stronger economically, as a result of NATO membership, it would help the US to shoulder the financial cost of protecting freedom."

Words to live by and fight for – The Ohio Appeal was signed by Dr. Martin J. Plax, Area Director of the American Jewish Committee Cleveland Chapter; Mr. John Borkowski, President of the Polish American Congress; and Dr. Viktoras Stankus.

In Chicago..

Governor George Ryan's staff is always on the move. They keep in touch with the myriad ethnic groups they thrive in the Windy City, including the Lithuanian-American organizations.

Recently, Gov. Ryan sponsored the 10th Annual Governor's Tribute to Ethnic Women's Organizations. The exhibits included over 40 different ethnic women's organizations displaying a colorful array of cultural items and information about their charitable work.

Hedy Ratner, Commissioner of the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women in Illinois, presented the Governor's award to representatives of the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, Women's Guild.

Even *Bridges* readers..

Every time our *Bridges* readers read our publication, especially Jeanne Dorr's article, there is at least one subscriber who generously contributes to the organizations whose members take the time to describe their work and wonderful results in these issues.

Just recently in an e-mail, Jeanne Dorr sent over her recent article with this little, yet substantial message, "Bridges readers have just about hit the \$250,000 mark in Orphan Care donations." Kudos to all of you who have made a difference to the forgotten children in Lithuania!

Lithuanians DO make a difference every day in and outside their communities. Whichever way you choose to enlighten and inform others about Lithuanian-Americans and Lithuanians, your input is the key to help Lithuania transcend into the future and never be forgotten.



Pictured from left: Irene Norbut, Ratner, Ruth Hoffman and Sophia Zukas.

Photo: Gov. Ryan's office

John Clark

Not Just Another Class Assignment...

All their lives the stories filled their ears. Secondhand accounts told in hushed tones. The grandchildren of the survivors from Siberia gathered first hand re-telling of the actual events from the survivors of the greatest deportation the world has seen.

"The lives of our grandparents are a living recollection of our nation. Their enduring view on life is a model of the vitality and patience of our Lithuanian nation", writes seventeen-year-old Aurelija Ruzgytė who participated in "The Democracy Project" at Juozo Milintino Secondary School in Panevėžys, Lithuania.

An exchange program with host school, Jenny Nystromsskolan in Klamar, Sweden required each participating student to record the oral histories of the eldest family member depicting personal experiences the effect of government had on the individual. These teenage authors each chose their own style to present what they gathered. Later, they were interviewed and had a chance to discuss and give their opinions about what Democracy meant to them. What follows is the first part of their "Democracy Project".



The Democracy Project teachers and students.

Photo: J. Clark

Gustė Pociūtė relates the story of finding an unsent letter among the thick old books belonging to her grandfather.

"Dear Leonid Iljitch Brezhnev, I am an ordinary person from Lithuania. I dare disturb you expecting that it will be useful for you to find out how hard our life is. I often meet people who can't cope with troubles and problems, they face.

The great officials aren't interested in the present situation. Human activity is restrained and personal initiative is forbidden. Even educated people and those seeking improvement, having big plans for the future, are damned to

give everything up.

We can't make a complaint to anyone. Ordinary people haven't got the right to neither: to say what they think nor to criticize or disagree with local authorities. We have got neither freedom of speech, nor religious liberty. Catholics are persecuted and punished for their views and beliefs.

Being a well-educated man and knowing what life in other countries is like, I am envious of those whose rights and liberties are not restrained.

Is it possible to live and work for the welfare of our motherland, respect and serve the power, if our

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opinion is absolutely ignored? People are considered to be worthless beings. There is a great barrier among the state officials and us – ordinary people.

Those, who are in power, get a number of side benefits; they get packets of various foods, while we can get only pig's legs and heads spending half of our life queuing in the shops.

I don't believe that the people of our republic will suffer from constant humiliation and indulge themselves towards those in power. The state authority having curbed the nation cannot survive for a long time. Aren't there any other ways to rule the country? Is it necessary to threaten people and punish them in the most cruel way in order to show foreign delegation how well organized you are holding firmly the nation in your hands?

I told my grandfather about this letter and the impression it made on me. He understood that it would be very naive to hope that the letter would reach the addressee. Because of this reason, he didn't post it. Maybe this way was better, admitted my grandfather. Probably, the letter would have made Brezhnev angry, and instead of helping, he could have received a punishment for my family. I still remember my grandfather's words, 'Who could dream that some day such times would come, when the power would be criticized by an independent press, and the people would be able to acquire a promising walk on life without the restriction of any rights!'



Eight-year-old Jonas Sakėnas' funeral in Buriat, Mongolia

Another sixteen-year-old student, Lina Klemkaitė tells of noticing the tiredness in her grandmother's hands, Emilija Pačkauskienė a daughter of exile, as the story is told.

"I recall the year 1944, my brother Antanas Bumblys, was taken to the Russian front near Liepaja. After he injured his hand, he was taken to a hospital in Šiauliai. He recovered and was again sent back to the front, but this time he ran away, returning home.

After the war, Antanas was arrested as a deserter, as well as my mother and father. The Russian soldiers thought that my family was connected with the partisans. All of their property was taken, leaving only the bare walls and some furniture. I was not at home at the time, so I was not arrested. I left with a thin, striped dress and broken shoes.

My brother, who was arrested in the yard, was beaten so badly that later blood entered his lungs. For some time, he was in jail in Panevėžys, later being moved to Vilnius, then exiled to Vorkuta, to work in the carbon mines. But in Vorkuta, he was being treated for his wounds more than he worked.

After my parents were arrested, I could not return home. I hid and slept in bushes and ditches. I remember once while milking a cow, a car full of Russian soldiers stopped and surrounded the house. They told me to show them the location of a bunker of bandits. When I told them there were no bandits, they stood me near a wall and told me they would shoot. They shot twice near my head. Then my aunt came running towards them, and they ran away.

When my parents and brother returned after two months, we never rediscovered happiness. On the night of March 29, 1949, our house was again surrounded. Mother and I escaped through a window. We felt certain one soldier saw us, but probably did not say anything to the others. But why did he do this? There were good soldiers, too.

My mother and I were left behind in Lithuania where we always had to hide. People would hide us but never for a long period of time. People were always afraid that Russian soldiers would come by the house.

The feeling we experienced, I would not wish on the worst man. I do not have anger in my heart, and I do not blame the Russians. God must blame them as to why people's fates were so broken."

I am looking at my grandmother's hands, and thinking about my family and the nation's strength. Would the new generation know not to surrender?



Lithuanian community in Siberia.

Margarita Vladimirova, in her ninth year of studies, tells the story of, Petronėlė Pakarnienė, her grandmother.

Here some young girls are looking at you from an old yellow picture. I already know that they are the students of the Joniškėlis Ignas Karpis agricultural school. And the date on the other side of the picture says – 1940. I know from history textbooks that this year was fatal for Lithuania.

“When I was sixteen and entered the Joniškėlis Ignas Karpis agricultural school, our teachers asked us to join the Komsomol organization [collective farms]. But only three from two hundred pupils did. The teacher, who wanted me to join the organization, came to talk to my father. She tried to persuade him, promising many advantages (scholarships). He said that neither his father nor he had ever belonged to any party, and he advised the same to his children. Father answered strictly “no” because he wanted to protect me...

Soon soldiers began to run away from the Lithuanian army. Those, who stayed, were joined to the subunits of the Soviet army. The people were divided in such a way that only two or three Lithuanian soldiers belonged to the same subunit. The officers who stayed were disappearing at night. Nobody knew what was happening, and only later the reasons for the disappearances was discovered.

Officers were arrested, those with senior ranks were simply shot, and the rest were taken north. The authorities of the Soviet army deceived the officers with the highest rank. They were sent for vacation or with hopes of going to Moscow to de-



Lithuanian deportee, Genovaitė's Petrošiūtė's wedding, 1958, in Siberia.

velop their qualifications to join the Soviet army. After several days, the officers with their belongings boarded trains and found themselves in camps by the Laptev Sea in the north. Those, who didn't believe the promises and remained in Lithuania, were forced to hide themselves. They understood, that all the promises were lies and that the “Stalin's Sunlight” would be hot and bring much pain and suffering”.

Grandmother becomes silent... What is she thinking about? I see that her thoughts are far away, in her youth. Maybe, grandmother remembers how in 1940 the troops of the soviet army came to Lithuania. And maybe she is thinking about the persecution, deportation, and shooting the intelligent people?

Suddenly she goes on with her story as if knowing my thoughts.

“During the winter of 1945, a next door neighbor, Leimantas returned home to Daniūnai, Pasvalys district. He returned from Germany, from Berlin. He was wearing woman's clothes so not to be caught. As he was of thin complexion and had long hair, nobody recognized him. Leimantas did all the woman's chores: he could spin wool and linen, and he did the washing and cooking. Nobody suspected that he was a man. His wife told everybody that her husband's sister had come and was helping to take care of the kids.

On May 9, 1945, Victory Day, he wanted to cut his hair and went to his neighbor. “Skribai” [Soviet police] noticed him. Though he was in woman's clothes, skribai started shooting and told him to stop. Not hearing the shouts, his

leg was shot through; the man fell, and raised his hands. When "skribai" came up they asked nothing about who "she" was, they only started to beat him with their rifles. They beat him to death. They left him right on the ground and went away. His wife with kids took the man home, laid the corpse out, and buried it.

Regulators from the region came saying that grain gathered in the barns from fields by families must be thrashed and taken to the state. Country people would be gathered together, they would thrash, and take the corn to Joniškėlis. I was there, and I did these things.

Once we saw "skribai" coming on horse-drawn carriages, coming from the Pasvalys direction. They were sitting high in the carriage as if on sacks. But we noticed people's feet, some of them with shoes, others bare. We went to the corn store to give our corn to the state and on our way back passing the market place, we saw a horrible sight: the pavement and fence were covered by corpses. Even our horses took fright of the sight. There were twenty-four desecrated bodies. Some of the bodies were naked and burnt. "Skribai" kicked them, took their pants, and shoes off. Those bodies of partisans hung on the fence for a week. People cried watching them from a distance but nobody confessed to be their wives or mothers. You couldn't do this, because they would do the same with the families".

Grandmother is holding some pictures from her deportation. Yes, she had to visit the land of Baikal by force.

"At dawn some "skribai" and soldiers entered the house and told us to get ready. They had an interpreter, who explained that we were to be taken to Siberia. We were told to take some warm clothes.

On May 22nd, 1948, they took us by horse. We went from Joniškėlis to Panevėžys railway station by lorries. Some two-storied wagons with nailed up windows were ready. Old and sick people were put down on the floor, young and mature people stayed on the second floor. Later, the door of the wagons was tied with wire, and soldiers with bayoneted guns were standing on both sides of the wagon.

I made a small hole in the wall while lying on a wooden bed and was watching the way. We slept little at night, because the passing trains made a lot of noise. Babies would become frightened and of-

ten started crying. Later we got used to everything; babies adjusted, too. Besides, time was unending, and we were very exhausted. We were sleepy in the morning and couldn't open our eyes.

At last, after seventeen days of travel, the train stopped next to Ulan-Udė and we had to get out of the wagon.

It was getting dark and cold. Men broke the wooden beds in the wagon and took them outside to make a fire to warm us. It was the first night of horror. Children were crying, sick people were moaning. Some of the people died.

At dawn, we noticed a row of trucks. We were told to get in. We were checked and counted according to lists.

We were taken to guarded forest camps. The soldiers checked us again and handed us to the commandant. We couldn't even gather berries without his permission.

I spent nineteen years in Siberia and had no hope of returning to Lithuania".

Now only some pictures, painful memories, and the loss of dear people testify to those horrible years. I have never forgotten God in my life, I always prayed, asked for mercy and blessing. I believe that God has heard my praying, and therefore I am still living".

I am looking at my Grandmother. I am proud of her because she managed not to surrender. She is alive today; I am happy that I can talk to her. I become stronger, I learn to meet my life as a gift, realize that one must never surrender. I also think that my duty is to keep my grandmother's memories and the old album, which will tell about her, when she leaves us...

The Project continued...

The nineteen students who participated in "The Democracy Project" gathered oral histories, performed a theatrical interpretation on the histories, and conducted a survey to expose the differences in their school and the host school in Kalmar, Sweden, which spoke volumes about the contrasting educational systems.

Time was set aside to discuss the results of a survey that was conducted among the students in the Swedish school. Nineteen Lithuanian students and their three teachers along with fifteen Swedish students and three of their teachers met to discuss the results of the questionnaire and the meaning of the numerical answers. Also present in the room

was Johan Romare, a reporter for "Barometern" the Kalmar newspaper, and Mathis Bogren, a photographer.

When the Lithuanian students were asked to what extent "do you experience that your school and studies are effected by your own choices and decisions", they answered: 0% totally; 22% a lot; 59% a little; 18% not at all.

When asked, "to what extent are you pleased with your possibility to direct your school situation?" 0% totally; 6% a lot; 49% a little; 44% not at all.

When the Lithuanian students were asked to comment. The students stated that if they give their opinion, and it does not agree with the teachers, they are punished through the marks they receive.

The next morning the "Barometern" headlined Johan Romare's story with "Lithuanian youth don't dare speak their opinion".

Reactions by the teachers to the student's statement that they are punished for speaking their opinion were:

- Teachers tried to stop the conversation.
- Students were told that they were lying.
- The students that spoke out were told during the break to leave the room and go to a drama lesson.
- The teachers wanted to limit the conversation to five students they selected; however, once the teachers left the room, the expelled students returned.
- When it became obvious that teachers could not control the conversation, the teachers joked between themselves feigning indifference.
- Teachers claimed that only half of the students agreed, since one-half did not speak.
- Teachers could easily say the names of students who showed disagreement, but spoke no names of those agreeing.
- With the printing in the newspaper of the student's statements, the teachers told their students that "they had blackened all of Lithuania".

Johan Romare's story went on to explain that the Swedish pupils have more power than the youth in Lithuania. But democracy takes time, and the Lithuanian school is going in the right direction.

"In Lithuania, we don't often dare say what we think to the teachers", says Aurelia Ruzgytė, "If we are too honest, we risk a bad mark or some other

punishment".

"Of course there is a big difference between our schools, says Vaida Vincevičiūtė, but I think we are going in the right direction. It has improved since independence".

The article continues. Vaida Vincevičiūtė and Aurelia Ruzgytė mean that the lack of democracy is a consequence of a society where democracy is not granted. The school is a reflection of the rest of the country that has a heritage of oppression and being occupied.

"We have felt very welcome here, says Vaida, "We learned a lot and hope our Swedish friends also will get something from this part of the cooperation".

Students and teachers were purposely separated to give each an opportunity to express their opinions openly among themselves. It turned out that both groups discussed the same topics and came up with the following ideas to be implemented.

- ◆ Create democracy within the school by electing a Student Council that is engaged by the Director and the Teachers.
 - ◆ Create democracy by developing an atmosphere that allows teachers, students, and administrators to express their opinion without fear of punishment or retribution.
 - ◆ Create democracy by Students and Teachers speaking on an equal level—conversing with respect, absent of fear.
 - ◆ Create democracy by organizing student meetings where they can openly express their ideas, frustrations and opinions.
 - ◆ Create democracy by setting up cooperation between Students and Parents to solve problems between Students and Teachers.
 - ◆ Create democracy by arranging consistent meetings between Teachers, Parents and Students to advise the administrators.
 - ◆ Create democracy through a student written newspaper on matters of interest to students.
- Each of the participants, whether student or teacher, came away from the project touched by the raw reality so blatantly exposed. The project continues. Over the past three school years, students from the two schools have maintained an ongoing exchange. ◆

Jeanne Dorr



Rasa and the family goat.

Two years ago I wrote an article for Bridges entitled "Love at First Sight." It was about a visit I made with a couple who sponsor two children through Lithuanian Orphan Care. They were meeting the children for the first time, and I was privileged to accompany them. I guess this could really be a sequel to that article.

On my last trip to Lithuania I was once again asked to accompany Julie Skurdenis and her husband, Paul Lalli, to visit these two fortunate children. As luck would have it, we just were not able to connect when it came time to meet with young Lukas and his mother in Vil-

"Love at First Sight" Revisited

nius. It seems when they were in Vilnius, I was in Kaunas. There was no way to work out a visit.

I did, however, speak to Lukas' adoptive mother on the phone. Although I was an hour and a half away from them and longing to be part of the festivities, I could hear the excitement in her voice at meeting with Lukas' sponsors again. I also heard a mother's pride in her voice as Irena told me about her son's many academic, artistic, and musical accomplishments.

Lukas' mother is a single woman who always wanted to have a child. She believes it was fate that put her and the abandoned little boy together. Irena is a music teacher as well as an accomplished musician, and it is almost as though Lukas inherited these traits from her.

She continued to tell me how Lukas was the light of her life as well as her pride and joy. I was so happy that this reunion was taking place, but saddened that I could not take part in

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.

it. Irena went on to say how grateful they were to Julie and Paul for making them part of their lives. Actually, Julie and Paul were just as grateful to Irena for sharing her son with them.

What she didn't tell them was that Lukas was very seriously ill during the winter. She didn't want Julie and Paul to worry, and worry they would. It was a very difficult winter for Irena, and she was filled with fear for her son. The only reason I knew about the illness was that Mrs. Landsbergis told me about it much later when we were working together. The people in Lithuania who work with Lithuanian Orphan Care keep their pulse on what is happening to all their children.

I did, however, have a stroke of good luck, when we were able to work out a mutual agreeable time to visit their farm child who lives near Šiauliai. Julie and Paul stopped for me in Kaunas. My cousin, who had never been to the Hill of Crosses, joined us. I really can't criticize her for not seeing this spectacular sight. I live a half-hour from the Liberty Bell, and it took me fourteen years to get there. I guess people are the same all over the world. We long to see the world but don't appreciate what we have in our own backyards.

Julie and Paul met us in Kaunas. As we piled into the car, the rain was soaking us from all sides. At one point, it was almost impossible to drive. The visibility was next to zero. After much joking and many silent Hail Marys on my part, we finally reached Šiauliai.

Since we didn't know when we would arrive, we decided to spend the night there and meet the family the next day. We checked into a small hotel and waited for the rain to stop. Our plan was to visit the Hill of Crosses at sunset. All I could say was that the rain stopped, the sun appeared, and we arrived as it was sinking beyond the hill. I'm not going to try to describe it because I don't have the words to do the scene justice. If you have never been there, try to imagine the sun disappearing with thousands and thousands of crosses in the background. Photographs cannot do the Hill of Crosses justice.

The next morning we headed for the farm where the family lives outside of Šiauliai. It took us about a half-hour to get there. Paul is a great driver, and Julie is a fantastic navigator. I do best at looking out the car window. Although I had been there before with them, I didn't have a clue where we were until we actually arrived.

As soon as we came down the end of the dirt road, we could see the entire family outside waiting for us. This time we didn't feel like strangers as we did at our first meeting two years earlier. Everyone threw their arms around everyone else, and there were tears of joy in all our eyes.

Rasa is a sweetheart who could make even ice smile. She is nine years old and was even prettier than the last time we saw her. Rūta, her thirteen-year-old foster sister, is very protective of her. She's almost like a second mother to the little girl. Perhaps it is because Rasa is quite tiny and petite for her age that everyone feels a need to protect her. Rūta is the biological daughter of Regina and Romas. They longed for a second child and applied to the local authorities. That is when they found Rasa who had been abandoned by her birth mother. Her mother simply walked out the door of the hospital without looking back. She already had four children at home and decided she didn't need another one. If you look at both Rasa and Rūta, you honestly cannot tell they are not biological sisters. Both girls are so much loved by Romas and Regina; they never think of Rasa as not being their own child.

As we entered the spotless farmhouse, the table was straining under the weight of the dishes. Lithuanian people are known for their hospitality, and this family was no exception. I can't even begin to calculate how many days Regina and her daughters spent in the kitchen without the aid of prepackaged foods, frozen foods, a microwave, and the processed foods that we use and depend on when we have guests. They did this in spite of the fact that they work like men on the farm. Everything

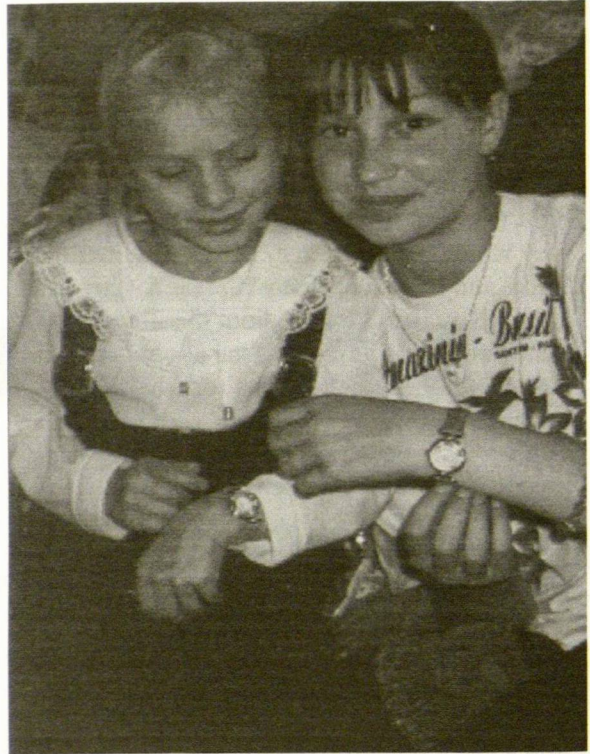
on the table came from their land. The crowning glory came when Rūta brought out a magnificent layered cake she baked by herself. It was not only delicious; it was a work of art.

Julie and Paul are professors as well as travel writers. Wherever they go, they always remember Lukas and Rasa, as well as Rūta. Just as Regina and Romas make no distinction between Rasa and Rūta, neither do Julie and Paul. Rūta was decked out in a shirt they sent her from a trip to Brazil. There was a poster on the wall of the "Big Apple", and Regina served tea that arrived in one of their packages.

We sat around the table as the family was awed by the gifts the couple had brought them from around the world. But Julie and Paul had just as much fun giving and explaining the gifts. Rūta is a well-mannered young lady who smiled her thanks. Rasa, who is ordinarily quite shy, kept jumping up, running over to them, and kissing them as she opened each gift. But in spite of all the exotic gifts from around the world, you could see that Rasa was still looking for something else, although she was too polite to ever ask. It came at the very end, the gift she longed for the most – the plastic bottles of liquid bubble mix and the little wands to form the different shapes of bubbles. It was what she remembered from our last visit. Now her day was made!

Lithuania is an agricultural nation, and no one works harder than the farmers. They work endless hours doing backbreaking work and often have to wait months to be paid for their labors. Most small farmers work the way their parents, grandparents, and their great grandparents worked. They are simply trying to stay afloat and don't have the money for modern conveniences. After all is said and done, they are still at the mercy of the weather. Romas is no exception, and this time we could see the discouragement on his face and hear it in his words.

He worked more hours than he could count, invested approximately \$1500 last summer, and earned approximately \$500. To him and to other Lithuanian farmers, this loss is almost



Rasa and Rūta enjoy their gifts.

Photo: J. Dorr

enough to wipe them out. He had not been paid for several months for the milk he sold. This is very common practice, especially for milk. The buyers know the farmers can't hold on to the milk for a better price, and so the farmer has to accept what he is offered.

To supplement his income Romas considers himself very fortunate to have a part time job away from the farm. He works several days a week and earns an additional fifty dollars a month.

As on all Lithuanian farms, everyone works including the children. They have chores to do both before and after school. Romas just shrugged his shoulders when we asked him how long he could continue to work the farm. The problem was that there was no alternative.

We turned the conversation to happier topics as the proud parents spoke about their children.

Rasa, although petite, really is good at milking the cows. In fact, she only asked for one Christmas present. She begged for her very own milking pail, and she showed it to us with great pride. Rūta is learning to play the piano and cello in school. Unfortunately, she has to stay after school to practice. Often she comes home when it is dark, and like all parents, they worry about her walking home alone. It's the only way she can practice; they don't have a piano and they certainly can't afford a cello.

A rather large, cuddly Newfoundland puppy bounded into the room and immediately started to greet everyone with big, sloppy kisses. He put me in mind of a big teddy bear. As the others continued to talk around the table, Rasa and I went outside. My little companion showed me three delightful kittens. I warned her not to show them to Aunt Julie who is the biggest cat lover in the state of New York. I still had to get back to Vilnius, and I didn't think Paul would appreciate sharing the car with three more passengers regardless of how small they were. Like any little girl, Rasa was happy with our "secret" and giggled as she promised to keep the kittens away from Julie.

We gathered some eggs, and I had no problem with this, as I'm not afraid of chickens. I did the same thing at her age because my grandmother kept chickens while living in the middle of the city. Rasa took my hand as she promised to show me a surprise. She opened the door to where the pigs were kept. The smell was enough to almost knock me over. I grew up in a coal-mining town in Pennsylvania, so I was accustomed to some pretty awful smells, especially on damp days. But I wasn't prepared for this.

Rasa was too small to reach the light, so as I searched for it I was getting used to the smell and the noises. When I finally found the light, I couldn't believe my eyes. There on the floor was the biggest sow I have ever seen with her piglets gathered around her. I had no intention of getting close enough to count them. All I knew was that there were a lot of them. Rasa kept urging me to come closer, but I just was-

n't as courageous as a nine-year-old.

At this point, everyone else joined us. I was still staring at the big sow, enamored by the sheer size of her. Romas explained that she weighed about 600 pounds and had rolled on and crushed several of the piglets. He was unsure if they would be able to keep her much longer. The rest of the group joined us as we all admired the piglets, cows, and everything else that ran or flew on the farm.

As we prepared to take our leave, it was time for the outhouse stop. Much to our delight, it was newly repainted. This is a very necessary stop when one is in the country, as you really don't have too many alternatives.

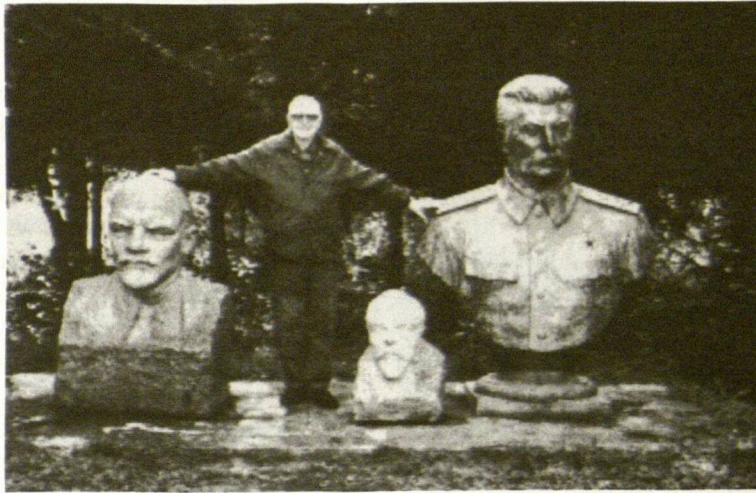
I guess we were all trying to avoid the inevitable as long as we could. It really is very hard to say good-bye. Tears welled up in our eyes as one final hug was given. As we drove down the dirt road, we could barely keep our eyes from this hard working, loving family as they waved at us from a distance. Yet, we couldn't see them because our own eyes were filled with tears.

A very special thank you to Julie and Paul for always including me in their visits to the children they sponsor. They really made my day!

Everyone who sponsors a child is not as involved as Julie and Paul. This is a decision made mutually by them and the families of the children.

If you are interested in sponsoring a child, the cost is \$150 a year. We will send you any information we have about the child. If you do not wish to be a sponsor, but would like to make a donation, any amount is appreciated. Please send your tax-deductible checks to:

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

Edward Baranauskas

Welcome to Grutas Park

There are many places of interest in Lithuania for tourists to see, but none aroused so much public controversy, both pro and con, since the inception of Grutas Park, better known to Lithuanians as Gruto Parkas. It is located in the small town of Grutas, a drive of about an hour and a half from Vilnius, on the road to Druskininkai.

The official opening took place on April 1, 2001, but it was in the planning stage for perhaps a year or more. When it became known for certainty that this park was to become the home for the statues of Lenin, Stalin, and other Communists, many people were outraged and protested its construction because it would bring back haunting memories of one of the most horrifying periods of Lithuanian history, and would disgrace the memory of those quarter-million Lithuanians who were arrested, killed, or deported to the wastelands of Siberia under Communist rule. Adding to the controversy, it was in the nearby Grutas forest where Lithuanian parti-

sans fought a long, bloody, and losing war against the Red Army for years.

On the other hand, there were Lithuanians who were equally supportive of this project for they felt it would contain a valuable historical lesson for future generations of Lithuanians to see, and this past, as unpleasant as it was, should not be “swept under the rug”.

Despite these protests, and since there was no law prohibiting him for doing so, the owner of the park, Viliumas Malinauskas, gambled a good part of his wealth, went ahead with his plans, and bought as many of these Soviet relics he could find that once were scattered throughout Lithuania.

His gamble paid off. Grutas Park has been featured in travel magazines all over the world, and tourists have come here from foreign countries to see it. In fact, he was honored in Boston last September 2001, and given a prize by Harvard University, labeled the “Ig Noble Prize”, to people whose achievements “cannot or should

*EDWARD BARANAUSKAS has written for **Bridges** for several years from his home in Schenectady, New York. He has recently relocated to Lithuania. In the picture above, Mr. Baranauskas keeps company with several Soviet “comrades”.*

not be reproduced”.

With all of this publicity given to Grutas Park, I decided to go there and see, first hand, what all the fuss was about. The admission price was 5 litas for adults, and 2 litas for children. I asked the cashier how many people came here daily, and she thought it was about 700, on average. I remember reading in one of the newspapers where Mr. Malinauskas estimated, for the year 2001, that 200,000 visitors would come to the park. It seems that Mr. Malinauskas' investment is paying off, and is helping to reduce the huge unemployment rate in the Druskininkai area.

Upon entering, I noticed what appeared to be a long bulletin board along one side of the walkway. Protected from the weather, under glass, were a lot of letters from irate people and organizations protesting the construction of this “Stalinworld”, a term coined by some people. In addition, figures were given of how many Lithuanians were exiled and died at the hands of the Communists.

The first exhibit that attracted my attention was a cattle car, the same type that took deportees to the harsh life that awaited them in the Siberian tundra. I was disappointed because no provisions were made to have visitors step inside to get a better look and to see for themselves that this means of transportation was not designed for human beings, but strictly for livestock, with no heating or toilet provisions.

The park was designed to please the younger and smaller members of the family, as well as the adults who primarily came to see history. There is a small zoo nearby that houses several wild pigs and birds, and a playground where youngsters can enjoy the swings, seesaws, and climbing squares while their parents made the tour.

The restaurant is actually the starting and ending points for the collection of some 70 sculptures. There are six semi-circles of statues, and each one has their own name. The one that I was looking for was called unofficially, “The Totalitarian Circle” where Lenin, Stalin, Karl Marx, and others were displayed.

The collection of this open-air museum consists of sculptures and bas-reliefs of the so-called “heroes” of the Soviet period that symbolized the cruelty and absurdity of the occupation period



This statue of Stalin was originally on a pedestal in front of the train station in Vilnius.

Photo: E. Baranauskas

that distorted history.

There are two statues of Lenin here, and the one that impressed me the most was the huge one that stood at one time on a pedestal in Vilnius with his outstretched right hand held high, facing the former KGB building. After the collapse of the attempted coup in Moscow by the hard-liners failed in the summer of 1991, the Lithuanians displayed their wrath on “The Father of the Soviet Union” by having him removed from his pedestal, (minus his legs), with a crane lifting and swinging him high in the air. I saw this on national television back in the United States, and pictures of it appeared in the newspapers. Well, he is here with both his legs attached, but is missing the thumb on his right hand.

Joseph Stalin is here with his buddies. He stood, majestically at one time, on a pedestal in front of the railroad station in Vilnius facing the city. After his death, when Nikita Khrushchev gained power, he was denounced for being responsible for the deaths of countless millions of



Here is the original photo of the statue of Lenin being dismantled from its pedestal in Vilnius facing the KGB building.
Photo: Viktoras Kapočius



The same statue of Lenin rests comfortably in Grutas Park, greeting guests as Edvardas Baranauskas.
Photo: E. Baranauskas

his own people, he was disgraced, and his statue was then removed.

Vincas Mickevičius-Kapsukas has found a home here, too. He helped organize the Lithuanian Communist Party and was one of its leaders during the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. It was customary in those days for revolutionaries to be known by a name other than their surname. To honor his memory, the Soviet regime renamed the city of Marijampolė to Kapsukas, and Vilnius University became Kapsukas University. His statue stood in front of an art museum in the heart of Vilnius. After the winds of change swept across Lithuania, the names of the city and university were restored, and his statue no longer graced the landscape of Vilnius.

After completing the tour of exhibits, my relatives, my wife, and I went to the restaurant to enjoy a full course meal. I never before tasted such delicious potato pancakes cooked with mush-

rooms inside! You haven't lived until you tried it, take my word. For a party of four, the cost of this wonderful meal (including a generous tip to the young waiter) came to approximately \$15.75 in US money. The bill was paid in litas, of course, but this amount I arrived at after figuring out the rate of exchange.

The sight of those Communist leaders, who brought so much pain and horror during those difficult and most terrifying years of Soviet occupation bring back painful memories to those who lived during that period. The Lithuanian people have been blessed, and appreciate their freedom now more than ever. ♦

R E F L E C T I O N S

Sr. Margarita Bareikaitė

JESUS IS
OUR HOPE AND JOY
— ALLELUIA! —

Easter is a very important feast of the Church's year: it is the celebration of Jesus' victory over death. Each year, the believer must ask the question: "What difference does the resurrection of Christ make in my life?"

Today is the day to let the joy of Easter ring through our life – Alleluia! Some attribute our salvation to the atoning death of Jesus on the cross and forgetting the important role of His resurrection. In truth, the death and rising of Jesus were one saving act that should not be separated one from the other.

St. Paul speaks of Jesus being "handed over to death for our sins and raised up for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). One of Paul's often repeated teachings was that because Christ rose from the dead, we will rise with him: "If in union with Christ we have imitated Jesus death, we shall also imitate Him in His resurrection" (Rom. 6: 4-5). As we share in His life, it holds out the hope to us of our own resurrection from death.

"He who raised the Lord Jesus to life will raise us with Jesus in our turn, and put us by His side" (2 Cor. 4: 14). "He will give a new form to our lowly body of ours and remake it according to the pattern of His glorified body" (Phil 3: 21). However, Jesus did not

provide a complete blueprint for what life in the next life would be like. Jesus instead taught that it would be different from our present life. Also, He used images of what the next life would be like, the image of a seed blossoming forth into a plant (John 12:24).

It is clear that the teachings from the New Testament show that death does not mean the end for us. Those who are united with Christ will rise with Him. Our resurrected life will be a participating in the resurrected life of Jesus himself. The gospels present us with more accounts of the appearances of the risen Lord to His chosen witnesses, and every one of these appearances has something to teach us. Because the mysteries of the resurrection and life everlasting are beyond our comprehension, it would be easy for us to wander off into blind alleys trying to think about Him. We may ask our Lord with this prayer: "May God enlighten the eyes of our mind so that we may see what hope His call holds for you." (Eph. 1: 18).

Happy Easter to all, in the sign of happiness
deriving from Christ's blessed Resurrection.

ALLELUIA!

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

ART IN POETRY:

LINA RAMONA VITKAUSKAS

As a woman constantly communicating her thoughts using the written word, I have searched for a connection to something external that would clarify the compulsion to do so. After all, writers are supposed to have one vital, explicit conflict they attempt to resolve through the myriad of personae they adopt while enduring the writing process.

In this particular case, *wrapping the cord* serves as the conduit, the means by which all the symbolism and loose wires of myself find some fitting ends. Tightly bound and plugged into outlets on paper, finding final destinations to freely discharge themselves, all aspects of *wrapping the cord* are about the birthing process of a writer's work by anguish, both her own and her ancestral past's. It references itself to a woman who seeks herself constantly, a woman who is desperately trying to grab the lifeline—the umbilical cord—from the distant, uncultivated, unknown end of her heritage. This “climb up the cord” to the most nourishing and tangible end has hopefully led to the fertile beginnings of self-comprehension.

Most literally, the title *wrapping the cord* is representative of my grandmother, Laima, who came to America in 1949 from her homeland of Lithuania. Her family had been forced out during the war, and she, her sister, two cousins, an aunt, and grandmother were all forced to a work camp in Germany until they were able to have relatives make papers for them in the United States.

When my grandmother began work in a Chicago, IL *Sunbeam* appliance factory, her specific job was to wrap the appliance cords to ensure they would not unravel in their packages. I found this, her first opportunity in the United States, a country free from Communism and war ravaged socio-economic conflicts, to be a fitting title of a collection of work that would somehow reflect traces of my technique as a writer, and most importantly, hone in on my ethnic heritage to better define that technique.

LINA RAMONA VITKAUSKAS introduces her collection of poetry entitled *wrapping the cord* in the above excerpt from her preface. No publication information is yet available.

WHAT GRANDFATHER (TEVUKAS) SCRIBBLED INTO HIS AMERICAN DICTIONARY

*when it first arrived, it must have been Camelot
neatly bound.
this book, providing inert answers as a neighbor
lending sugar or a sharp snap of a mandolin string
acutely penetrating.*

*he learns, I find, the words please and sorry
as they are written in resigned loops, as soon
is in its urgency. I watch back to his lips
pursing, a salamander's tongue slip-knotting
the nubbed, dull teeth on shock, should, and
position.
he purges letter and week, a consonant-quartet
departure from the muffled, entombed tones of sick
and miss.*

*in 1967, he inscribes the inside cover with some
crude capital characters, next to the growing list,
where excuse and pardon nuzzle beneath the swell-
ing teat of vacation.
in 1973, some questions about American abstrac-
tions.
in 1976, gum and refrigerator are confidently
added.
in '79, glass sighs.*

*the garden of all these emblems forgot in later
conversation,
come back to agrarian utterances around our
kitchen table,
the visceral cradle of Lietuva's muddy hands. ♦*

POETRY IN ART:

EGIDIJUS RUDINSKAS

Graphic artist Egidijus Rudinskas and his art will be the subject of two gallery presentations:

- Skulski Art Gallery at the Polish Cultural Foundation (177 Broadway, Clark, NJ 07066, 732-382-7197) May 17 to June 7. Gallery hours: Tuesday to Friday – 4 to 9 pm and Saturday – 10 am to 2 pm.
- and the PII Gallery (242 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106) June 7 to the 28th. Opening reception: June 7 from 6 to 9 pm. No gallery hours given.

ABOUT RUDINSKAS' ART

Art critic Algis Uždavinsys described Egidijus Rudinskas's art in the following way:

"...contemporary Lithuanian artist Egidijus Rudinskas is one to whom the perennial values of our being is not just vain and evasive figures of speech, but ever living realities which one tries to make visible, and to whom poetry is not anything special in itself, but rather the mode of creativity proper to the human spirit.

Among the main themes explored by E. Rudinskas [is] the archetypal Tree of Life: an image, which is common to all Indo-European mythologies and beyond. While encountering the etching "Fruit", for instance, one sees some irregular apple



at the centre of mandala. The triad placed above the central basin is not a mere distant reflection of the Christian Trinity, but rather the embodiment of pre-Christian mythological figures which are paradoxically transformed into a dolorous image of some aged royal faces as if dreaming the sorrowful destiny of the world filled up with beautiful gentle forms and symbols: sprouts and flowers, birds and stars; two horses, or "ashvins", facing the axis "mundi" above the opened Eye of Providence and a tear dropping down — the sign of maternal love and compassion. The duality of cosmos is expressed by the figures of primordial man and woman in the lowest strata. The message conveyed by E. Rudinskas states that even in the "fallen world", "the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus, 3.5).

Patience, spiritual awareness, (or rather the ability to see everything as miraculous epiphanic moments – divine gifts thence to be transmitted into the interior of the soul) mercy, and compassion are among the main virtues one can trace in the creative work of E. Rudinskas, who as many in our time looks for reality in his own dreams, as Edwin Muir has put in his poem:

And thinking of the man
Hid in his cloud, we longed for light to break
And show that his face was the face once broken in
Eden,
Beloved world – without – end lamented face;
And not a blindfold mask on a pillar of dust. ♦

EGIDIJUS RUDINSKAS etchings' presentations were announced by the Skulski Art Gallery and the PII Gallery. The etching is entitled "Elegies (R. M. Rilke)".

C U R R E N T E V E N T S

Colgate student named Rotary Scholar

HAMILTON, N.Y. — Arnoldas Pranckevičius, a senior at Colgate University, has received a prestigious Rotary World Peace Scholarship from Rotary International. He is among only 70 persons so honored worldwide, and this is the Peace Scholarship program's inaugural year. He was nominated by the Rotary Club of Hamilton and endorsed by Central New York Rotary District 7150.

"The fact that he was chosen from nearly 300 candidates attests to the fine qualities that this young man possesses," said Bruce Frassinelli, governor of Rotary District 7150. "There is no doubt that he will not only make substantial contributions to his homeland, but also will further Rotary's goal of achieving world peace."

Pranckevičius plans to use his scholarship to earn a masters degree in international relations at Institut D'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po). Ultimately, he says, he wants to return to his native Lithuania to help with its effort to join the European Union (EU). "The [Sciences Po] graduate program in Paris, capital of one of the main driving forces of the European Union, will allow me to observe closely how European institutions function and how they reform themselves in order to accommodate future [EU] enlargement," he said. "This would be invaluable knowledge to bring back and apply in Lithuania, a would-be EU member."

While still in high school, Pranckevičius served on his local school board, was active in youth theater, acting in plays throughout Europe. As a member of the Lithuanian national debate team, he par-

ticipated in the World Debate Championships in Israel in 1998.

At Colgate, Pranckevičius is majoring in international relations and has written an honors thesis: "Is joining NATO in the national interest of Lithuania?" He is host of "The World Matters", a weekly program on Colgate's television station that he originated after the events of Sept. 11. He has written more than 250 bylined articles for national newspapers in Lithuania and weekly papers in the United States, has served as an intern in the office of U.S. Senator and Baltic Caucus Chair Richard Durbin (D-IL) and also interned at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Washington, D.C.

"Arnoldas is a treasure, almost literally shining with enthusiasm: for learning, Colgate, international relations; for Lithuania, his homeland; for the television program on world events that he moderates here and the newspaper work he does at home," said Colgate's interim president, Jane Pinchin. "He uses language with precision and, yes, beauty. How lucky we are to have had him here."

Pranckevičius is the son of Algimanta Pranckevičienė and Vilhelmas Pranckevičius of Panevėžys, Lithuania. ♦

— *Colgate University News*
Thursday, April 18, 2002

This Press Release can be found at: <http://www.colgate.edu/universitynews/showpr.asp?id=666>

Legal education and legal reform efforts in Lithuania

On Saturday, May 11, 2001 the Lithuanian-American Bar Association, Inc. (LABAS), will present a program, The Interplay Between Legal Education and Legal Reform Efforts in Lithuania, at the Scandinavia House in New York City.

The program will feature NY Consul General Rimantas Morkvėnas and Tadas Klimas, Dean of the Law School at Kaunas' Vytautas Magnus University. It will begin at 1:00 p.m., and is open to the public at no charge.

For details, contact LABAS President, Patricia A. Streeter, at pas@javadvokatai.org.

The Scandinavia House is located at 58 Park Avenue (between 37th and 38th St.), New York, New York 10016, Telephone: 212.879.9779. ♦

— *Patricia A. Streeter*
President,

Lithuanian-American Bar Association, Inc.
Webpage: <<http://www.javadvokatai.org>>

What's on the web...for Lithuanians?

Interactions – 36 Lithuanian American women artists...

First at Blank Center for the Arts, Michigan City, IN (March 23 - May 11, 2002) and then moving after that to the art museum at Pasaulio Lietuvių Centras (World Lithuanian Center), Lemont, IL.

The Lithuanian American Women Artists Association (LAWAA) was established in 1971 through the efforts of painter Vanda Balukas, who urged Lithuanian women artists to exchange ideas, participate in groups shows, and generally encourage each other to engage in creative work.

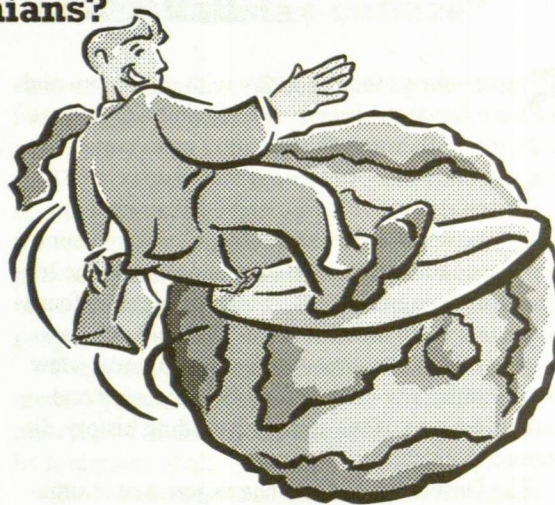
Among the goals of the organization are to encourage young women and girls to consider careers in the arts. LAWAA has worked with Girl Scout camps and at Sunday school workshops for traditional arts and crafts. The group has exhibited in Lithuanian galleries as well as other institutions of learning and culture, including Barat College, Beverly Art Center, Gary Art League, University Club, Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, Čiurlionis Art Gallery, Ukrainian Institute of Contemporary Art, and the Hyde Park Art Center.

Several shows have been organized around specific themes such as "Self Image", "Lithuanian Mystical Beings", and "Works on Paper/Fiber".

The core of the group consists of approximately 30 artists. A few years ago the members of LAWAA decided to replenish their membership with artists recently arrived from Lithuania, and the influx of new talent from their native land after the fall of the Soviet Union has been significant. Although individual member artists have different life experiences, different schools and fields of study, they are bound by their Lithuanian heritage and a strong desire to participate in the world of art.

LAWAA primarily represents Chicago and the vicinity. However, it accepts and encourages participation on a national and international level, and the current show includes artists from different parts of the US as well as Canada and Lithuania.

The show will continue until May 11. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday, 10 am – 4 pm, Saturdays 10 am – 2 pm. Docent-led tours are available and student groups are welcome. Please call ahead to arrange for a tour.



More information on <http://www.blankartcenter.org/>.

<http://www.bestartshop.com...>

One of growing number of sites selling art from Lithuania (and elsewhere). Also has a physical shop in Naperville, IL.

New book coming soon...

Silvia Foti (Silvia Kučėnas Foti, a Chicago area Northwestern University journalism grad) has written a mystery novel, *Praise for Skullduggery*.

Sneak peek reviews say: "A highly appealing, up-front heroine and a novel look at Chicago politics make this an attractive first mystery."--Library Journal.

More on www.freewebz.com/lotusink.

Lithuanian radio any time...

The radio program of Rochester's Lithuanian-American community has been broadcasting since 1950. Now it's available on the web any time, any day. You can hear previous shows and keep up with the latest Rochester news.

Here's the site: <http://www.27.brinkster.com/dainosaidas/index.html>. ♦

— *Ramune Kubilius*

Baltic Studies in Lithuania

Spend your summer holiday with us! Learn and have fun at the Intensive Lithuanian Language and Culture Summer Course 2002 at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania.

The course provides intensive Lithuanian language classes at different levels and an opportunity to get acquainted with Lithuanian culture. The lectures are given in English. Morning lectures focus on language. In the afternoons, the students participate in lectures aimed at giving a broader view of the Lithuanian culture focusing on issues and various aspects of the society including history, literature, politics, and art.

The University already has experience in organizing summer schools and semester or year-length courses for foreigners. We think that we are successful in that field – all students and participants highly evaluated teachers' competence and the

staff's work as well as the courses' organization in general.

Everyone who comes here has an opportunity to meet people from all over the world. We hope that this year many interesting people will come to spend four splendid summer weeks at Vytautas Magnus University.

More information about the Lithuanian Language and Culture Summer Course and Baltic Studies programme can be found on websites: <http://www.vdu.lt/international/Baltics.htm> or <http://www.vdu.lt/lkkvk/>. ♦

— *Assoc. prof. Ineta Savickienė*
Director of Baltic Studies programme

Lithuanian teachers receive Holocaust education training

A group of history teachers from Lithuanian secondary schools stayed in the US on a training visit from April 27 through May 3, as part of an education program designed jointly by an international commission for investigation of Nazi and Soviet crimes in Lithuania and by the New Jersey Holocaust Commission.

The agenda of Lithuanian teachers visited the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the Holocaust Center and headquarters of the NJ Holocaust Commission, and joined working teams with local teachers.

Prior to the trip, organizers and participants of the training visit met Lithuanian Education Minister Algirdas Monkevičius on April 26th.

"One must present a sore historical experience,



which was abundant in Lithuania owing to historical circumstances, in such a way that it would not represent just repetition of phrases written in a textbook," Monkevičius said.

Citing the election of an ultra rightist politician in the first round of French presidential polls, the education minister stated that "each generation must learn anew respect and tolerance with respect to one another and to persons of other nationality".

Ronaldas Racinskas, executive director of aforesaid investigation commission, said cooperation between the commission and the education ministry was gathering momentum, which might allow organizing

more teacher visits to United States. ♦

— *The Baltic News Service*

What is Lithuania's attitude toward Russian culture?

Lithuania's attitudes toward Russian culture and all things Russian was the subject in a recent, RFE/RL article, dated 23 April 2002, Prague, written by Valentinas Mite and sent to us from Anthony Mažeika. Here is an excerpt from that article.

"The Baltic states regained their independence in 1990 following 50 years of occupation by the Soviet Union. Russification was an official policy of the Soviet Union. Twelve years later, what are public attitudes in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia toward Russia? Is the influence of Russian culture felt in everyday life?

The influence of Russian culture is still felt strongly in everyday life in the Baltic states, though the official policy of the three countries is strongly pro-Western.

Russian TV channels are widely watched in all three countries; Russian popular music is played in Lithuanian and Latvian cafes and restaurants; and some Russian-language newspapers remain available and popular, especially in Latvia.

But experts say the way in which Russian culture is received differs among the three.

In Lithuania, attitudes toward Russian language and culture remain relatively positive. Of the three Baltic countries, Lithuania has the smallest percentage of ethnic Russians. The majority of Russians became citizens in 1989 and are now more or less integrated into Lithuanian society.

Rasa Ališauskienė works for the Gallup organization, which surveys popular attitudes. She says polls show Lithuanians have mostly positive attitudes toward Russians. She attributes this to the fact that Russian is still widely understood and that other foreign languages – with the exception of English among young people – have not made many inroads.

She says Russian TV channels have had a big influence in Lithuania. During the war in Kosovo in 1999, for example, she says many Lithuanians did not have a clear understanding of the conflict because they were seeing it through Lithuanian, Russian, and Western television channels.

The Russian influence is also seen strongly in popular music. The director of the Lithuanian Institute of Foreign Relations, Raimundas Lopata, says Russian pop music has become the norm in

cafes and restaurants. This is a change from Soviet times, when Russian pop music was mostly shunned.

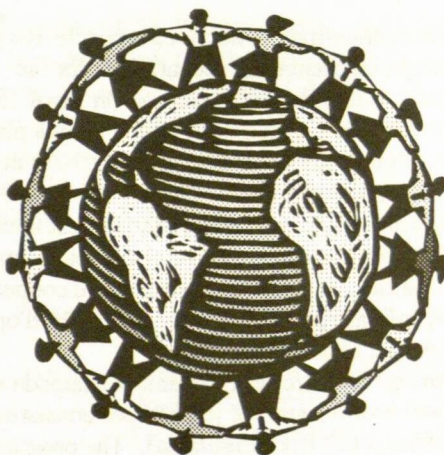
The younger generation – 10 to 13 years old – doesn't understand Russian well; English usually is the foreign language they learn first. However, Lopata said cursing in Russian is still widely common, even among those who do not know the language.

The former chairman of the Lithuanian parliament, Vytautas Landsbergis, goes so far as to say that many Lithuanians do not consider Russians to be foreigners at all.

"Do we consider the Russians to be foreigners or not? For some people in Lithuania, Russians are less foreigners than Americans or French. Russian capital is not considered [to be the same as Western] capital. For the majority of people, capitalists are those living in the United States."

Landsbergis said those Lithuanian businessmen who came from the Soviet nomenklatura know only one foreign language – Russian – and have good contacts in Russia. However, things are changing, and many businessmen now have contacts in the West and find business there more profitable." ♦

— sent in by Anthony Mažeika



A few pages from history...

Perhaps I may be giving away my age, but I would like to call to your attention a few pages from history. Nikita Khrushchev, that funny looking man who once headed the powerful Soviet Union, in 1956, made an unforgettable statement when he said: "Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you". Of course, that was directed at the United States. But, did this ever happen?

I remember vividly watching television news one evening (and this was 43 years ago, mind you), when our then Vice-President Richard M. Nixon was visiting Moscow and became involved in an exchange of words with Soviet Leader Khrushchev in what became known as "The Moscow Kitchen Debate".

Here is the story, dated July 24, 1959:

Heated exchanges between Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and Vice-President Richard Nixon did not take place at the Kremlin. They began unexpectedly today in a model kitchen.

Khrushchev challenged the Vice-President as Nixon was formally opening the United States National Exhibition before scores of reporters and television cameras. The show featured a model American home equipped with all the domestic

technology, including a washing machine and kitchen gadgets.

It prompted the Soviet leader to say that, "Americans should not think the Russian people will be astonished to see these things." Russian homes, he asserted, have modern conveniences. "You don't know anything about Communism except fear of it".

The exchange between the two men reached a boiling point when it moved from a comparison of the standard of living in each country to war between the two nations over West Berlin.

Referring to the recent threats by Premier Khrushchev to "free" West Berlin from American control, Vice-President Nixon said that neither country should be given the ultimatum to "accept dictation or fight," cautioning that if "war comes, we both lose".

Footnote: So, the man who said that "we will bury you", probably turned over in his grave when he learned that his son, Sergei, became a citizen of the United States of America several years ago.

Source of information: "Chronicle of America", (New York, NY: Dorling Kindersley Publishing Co.) ♦

— **Edvardas Baranauskas**

Rescuer-Medceur 2002 being planned

Lithuanian officials attended a conclusive planning conference for preparations for the "Rescuer-Medceur 2002" exercise on April 15th. This is the first event of such a type to take place across three Baltic countries on July 15-29, in the Latvian capital of Riga.

"Rescuer-Medceur" will be the largest international exercise, to number over 1,000 participants, in the Baltics. It is aimed to streamline cooperation among military and civilian institutions and operations during crises.

During the exercise, Lithuania's Klaipėda seaport will host the staff of joint forces consisting of 170 officers (50 from Lithuania). The program features computerized staff exercise Rescuer with a simulation of an explosion in a cargo terminal, oil spilling in Butingė terminal, a dam collapse in Kau-

nas Lagoon, and other scenarios.

Lithuania will send 12 divers to Sarex sea search and rescue exercise in Latvia. Medceur exercise in Estonia will include Lithuanian medical officers, air force helicopter Mi-8 with its crew, and servicemen platoon of Juozas Vitkus engineering battalion, the defence ministry reported.

Apart from Baltic servicemen, Rescuer-Medceur 2002 will attract those of Belarus, Denmark, Poland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, the Ukraine, and Germany. ♦



U.S. officials welcome human rights move for Belarus

Officials of the US State Department have applauded Lithuania's move to promote human rights protection in Belarus, during consultations with two Lithuanian MPs in Washington on April 24th.

The meeting on predominantly human rights issues in Belarus included representatives of the US State Department's Human Rights and Labor (DHRL) and European Affairs (EUR) offices, and of the US Agency for International Development.

Lithuanian MPs Rasa Juknevičienė and Valdas Stankevičius are co-chairpersons of Seimas' parliamentary group for contacts with the 13th Supreme Council of Belarus, dissolved by President Aleksandr Lukashenko, and with democratic forces.

The group was set up in April 2002 shortly after hearings in the Lithuanian parliament on human rights violations in the neighbouring Belarus. The event was organized upon pleas of the wives of Belarusian public figures who were missing or were otherwise affected by violations of human rights in Belarus. ♦

No human rights violations reported in Lithuania

Alvaro Gil-Robles, European commissioner for human rights, revealed that, at the moment, "on his office table there are no reports about human rights violations in Lithuania", as he held a news conference in Vilnius on April 5th amid an international conference on ombudsmen issues.

European Commissioner Gil-Robles acknowledged a speedy progress of the Lithuanian Ombudsman Office, existing only since 1995, over a short period of time. He lauded alignment of national human rights norms with European ones, albeit listing many cases of violations related to economic, social and children's rights in Lithuania like in many other European states.

Following this visit, the European official intends to come to Lithuania again with a detailed report on human rights records in this Baltic state. ♦

World Heritage Cities certificate conferred on Vilnius

The Organization of World Heritage Cities conferred a certificate to Lithuania's capital Vilnius for good management of its Old City on April 17th.

The certificate was signed by the Organization's President Jose Manuel Molina Garcia and Secretary General Denis Ricard. The paper reads that Vilnius city properly fulfilled its commitments and, in 2002, was registered as a member of the Organization of World Heritage Cities with a positive profile.

The unique Old City of Vilnius was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1994.

Last year, the 5th General Assembly of the Organization of World Heritage Cities in Mexican Puebla city announced its choice to hold an international regional conference for east and central Europe's cities in Vilnius in 2003. The Lithuanian main city was invited to vie as venue for this conference as a city which introduces advanced methods in the Old City revival strategy. ♦

News from Lithuania — The Baltic News Service

Address change for the LAC Public Affairs office

From March 26, 2002 the office of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc. in Reston, VA was moved to a new location. The address and the telephone numbers were changed. The office was open for business on April 2 at the new address. The new address and telephone numbers are as follows:

*Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.
Public Affairs Office
11876 Sunrise Valley Drive, Suite 200C
Reston, VA 20191
Tel. (703) 390-0498
Fax (703) 390-0497 ♦*

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