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# BRIDGES

• LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL •

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*NATO Accession Treaty Signed...Travel to Lithuania Spurs Memories...Summer Camps...*

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

*There was a recent New York NPR show where an interviewer wanted to know how people were dealing with the vast amount of television coverage of the American-Iraq War. Some callers said that they followed the news like an addiction and felt increased amounts of anxiety. Others said that they continued to watch the news as they normally had. While some went so far as to suspend their cable subscriptions because the news was too overwhelming.*

*So what is the "right" amount of information that people can take before they feel it overtake their emotions?*

*In our household, both of my sons have increased their news viewing habits and the results are an increased vocabulary, building of righteous opinions, and positive support for the soldiers overseas. I do have to say that during discussions, they have been showing a more serious and deliberate side to their personalities.*

*My husband, the "contrarian", listens to talk radio shows. He enjoys listening to the conservatives lambaste the liberals, then laughs along with the liberals. From the two types of programs, he picks up lines to annoy the conservatives, while simultaneously throwing the liberals for a loop. A real Jersey boy.*

*I just can't watch or listen to excessive amounts of news simply because, as a journalism graduate, I know that bad news sells better than good news. Thusly, until a reporter announces that the war has ended, news reports will carry information that may cause anxiety and dismay, mine of course. This is great for troop support, but absolute hell on going about a "normal" lifestyle without feeling the angst that the reports produce.*

*Since my whole family bounces from one end of the news spectrum to the other, you can well imagine how discussions about summer plans are going. At this point, I believe I'm winning, because everyone agrees that we may have to wait until a reporter announces the end of the war to travel anywhere outside the U.S.*

*Rasa Ardys-Juška*

Editor

## BRIDGES

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### BRIDGES Consultants

ALGIMANTAS GEČYS, President,  
Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.  
TERESĖ GEČYS, Information Services.  
RASA ARDYS-JUŠKA, Editor  
RAMAS PLIŪRA, Treasurer, Lithuanian-American Community, Inc., and  
Subscriptions Manager.

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## Lenten Days in Lithuania

The last three days of Lent held not only religious significance, but carried pagan beliefs that these holy days could significantly change one's future.

On Holy Thursday (Didysis Kėtvirtadienis), if one bathed in a river, lake or pond, all unsightly blemishes and boils would vanish. It was necessary to clean and clear the house on this day. Whatever was swept up could be scattered onto other residences to guarantee a clean house for the rest of the year.

On Good Friday (Didysis Penktadienis), all cleaning stopped because it was thought that the dust could get into Jesus' eyes.

Weather prediction was practiced on Holy Saturday (Didysis Šeštadienis) by marking the direction from which the wind blew. People brought home from church blessed fire and water. The fire was used to vanquish snakes, while the water was used to protect homes from evil spirits.

Source: *Lithuanian Customs and Traditions* by Danutė Brazytė Bindokienė.  
(Chicago: The Lithuanian World Community, 1989)

### On the cover:

An old wooden fishing boat takes tourists for a tour of Nida from the lagoon.

Photo: Kay A. Yankoski



# Lithuania seals historic NATO accession treaty

**O**ne more significant phase in the Lithuania's way to NATO has been achieved. Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis, who attended a special session of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels on March 26, sealed a landmark document, the Accession Protocol to the Washington Treaty.

Lithuania is among seven post-Communist East European countries – Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Romania, which put their signatures on the protocols. Representatives of permanent NATO member countries also signed the documents.

Addressing the session participants, Valionis noted this was the moment for the Lithuania's nine-year aspiration to come finally true. The first time it was officially formulated in a letter to NATO

Secretary General Manfred Woerner by Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas in 1994.

The membership uniting an alliance of democratic states would mean reliable safety guarantees for Lithuania, Valionis stressed. The Baltic State was ready to contribute politically and militarily to the Euro-Atlantic safety.

Valionis also spoke of Lithuania continuing social, economic, defense, and legal reforms, and working intensively to ensure information safety.

The signing of the documents, he said, will give a start to a series of ratification procedures in the national parliaments of 19 current NATO members. The process is expected to be finished in spring 2004.

With ratification over, the invited nations are to join the Alliance in May of the coming year. ♦

## America's Pres. Bush thanks Lithuania

**L**ithuanian President Rolandas Paksas received a letter on March 25<sup>th</sup> from Pres. George W. Bush thanking Lithuania for the Baltic country's support to the international coalition's operations in Iraq.

According to the presidential press service statement, the U.S. president spoke of very close and warm relations between the United States of America and Lithuania, as well as his hope for further strengthening of this co-operation. He also said it was nice to receive a letter from Lithuania's Pres. Paksas notifying him of the March 17th Lithuanian National Defense Council ruling on material contribution to the coalition efforts in disarming Iraq.

Bush remembered his visit to the Baltic country last autumn and the wish of Lithuanian people to remain free. They know by their history the price for freedom, the US president stated.

Bush also reminded Paksas of his leadership be-

ing of great importance in this crucial moment. Lithuania and her people may be proud of helping to disarm a dangerous Iraq and free its people from the rule of a brutal aggressor, the U.S. president wrote.

On that same day, the Lithuanian 141-seat parliament, following lengthy debates, passed a resolution on dispatching the country's military to the US-led international operation in the Gulf region. The paper garnered support among 59 MPs to 13 "against" and 2 "abstaining".

The resolution made the way for sending up to ten logistics specialists and up to six medical officers on a six-month mission to this area.

Defense Minister Linas Linkevičius said the mission will cost around 0.6 million litas – the amount to come from the ministry's budget. ♦

*ELTA provided this report to The Information Center for Homecoming Lithuanians and Bridges.*



**Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.  
17th Board of Directors National Election Committee**

# LAC will vote for new Board of Directors

**T**he Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. (LAC) was established over 50 years ago to foster Lithuanian heritage; to minister to cultural, education, and social needs of Lithuanian American communities; and to offer assistance to Lithuania and her people. On May 3 to the 11th, 2003 Lithuanian -American Community, Inc. will hold elections of its highest governing body – the 17th National Board of Directors of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

The Board of Directors will consist of 60 elected (for a three-year term) members from all regions of the U.S., as well as ten chairpersons of the regional executive committees of LAC. The LAC Board of Directors meets once a year, each year hosted by a different Chapter of LAC, Inc.

The newly elected Board of Directors will meet for its first session September 12 to the 14<sup>th</sup>, 2003 in Omaha, Nebraska. At this time, the Directors will elect the new President of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. The President-elect, within 30 days, will select the members of the NEC to be confirmed by the Board of Directors. The National Board of Directors sets the annual goals to be administered by the LAC National Executive Committee.

The LAC National Board of Directors are elected by all people of Lithuanian origin residing in the U.S. and their non-Lithuanian spouses who are interested in Lithuania and the preservation of Lithuanian heritage. It is important that the LAC National Board of Directors represent the wide interests of ALL Lithuanians and Lithuanian-Americans currently residing in America. Therefore, we invite EVERYONE to actively participate in the elections.

You may cast your vote at your nearest chapter's polling place on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, and the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> or by conventional mail. (All LAC chapters are listed on [www.javlb.org/chapters.htm](http://www.javlb.org/chapters.htm)).

Those who would like to vote by mail should register. Election commissions need to know your name and address where the election ballot will be mailed. This data will not be used for any other purpose. If you'd like to register by e-mail, then copy and fill out the form at the end of this announcement and send it to [tarybosrinkimai@comcast.net](mailto:tarybosrinkimai@comcast.net) no later than April 15, 2003.

Your registration will be forwarded to the LAC Regional Election Committee closest to your place of residence and a ballot will be mailed to you.

Each LAC Inc District has a Board of Elections, which follow...

**Boston District** – Marius Žiaugra,  
([ziaugra@pbworld.com](mailto:ziaugra@pbworld.com))

**Connecticut District** – Irena Alksnienė,  
([alks@snet.net](mailto:alks@snet.net))

**Florida District** – Kazimieras Stasiukevičius,  
([gtreins@aol.com](mailto:gtreins@aol.com))

**"Crossroads" District** – Liuda Flores,  
([liuda@hal-pc.org](mailto:liuda@hal-pc.org))

**Michigan District** – Ramutė Petruilienė,  
([vlpetrulis@aol.com](mailto:vlpetrulis@aol.com))

**New York District** – Vladas Sidas, ([sid100@aol.com](mailto:sid100@aol.com))

**Ohio District** – Ona Šilėnienė, ([stikliute@juno.com](mailto:stikliute@juno.com))

**South East District** – Juozas Gaila, ([gailaj@erols.com](mailto:gailaj@erols.com))

**Western District** – Rolandas Giedraitis, DDS,  
([rolandas@earthlink.net](mailto:rolandas@earthlink.net))

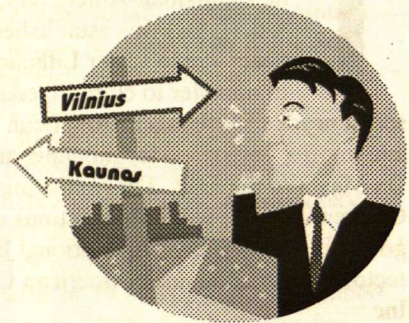
**Midwest District** – Nijolė Grigaliūnienė,  
([nijoleg@prodigy.net](mailto:nijoleg@prodigy.net)).

*THE LAC NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION COMMITTEE is chaired by Dalia Jakienė, with the following Commission Members Daumantas Matulis, Milda Mikušauskienė, Vidmantas Rukšys, Ieva Vozbutaitė.*



# Traveling to Lithuania and back with memories

*People...visits...sights...conversations... encounters...leave very deep impressions. Edvardas Baranauskas, Kay Yankoski, Gloria Kivytaite O'Brien, and Audrė Kapačinskas take you to Lithuania in their writings to view different perspectives of the same land so very dear to all our hearts.*



## *My Visit to Pilsviškiai*

*Edvardas Baranauskas*

A friend of mine, someone I have known for many years, arrived in Lithuania the third week in May 2002, and was going to return to California sometime in August. My wife and I were at the airport to greet him, and he invited us to come and visit him and his mother in the small town of Pilsviškiai, just northeast of Vilkauskis. His name is Simas Kudirka. Perhaps his name may ring a bell with some of you, but if it does not, may I refresh your memory somewhat?

Simas was a radio operator aboard the Soviet fishing trawler, *Sovietskaya Litva*, which was moored alongside a United States Coast Guard Cutter off the coast of Martha's Vineyard, on November 23, 1970, during discussions about fishing

problems between the Soviets and American fishermen. He was able to jump onto the deck of the cutter, asked for political asylum, but his request was denied.

Officers from the Soviet vessel were then invited to come aboard; they beat him up and forcibly returned him. This pitiless demeanor attracted worldwide attention, created a furor in the United States, led to President Nixon's outrage, and demands by many members of Congress for a full investigation.

However, there was a happy ending to this story. Simas arrived in the United States with his family four years later, and how this came about, is a story by itself, as we shall later find out.

My wife and I eagerly looked forward to this

*THIS SPECIAL COMPILATION presents the talents of Edvardas Baranauskas, Kay Yankoski, and Gloria Kivytaite O'Brien, previous contributors to **Bridges**, and introducing Audrė Kapačinskas, who we hope will continue to write in the future.*



visit, and our relatives were kind enough to take us there one beautiful Saturday morning. The driving time to Pilviškiai, from where we live in Vilnius, took about two hours. I was impressed with this quaint little town. Simas' house is situated on a quiet street lined with one family homes, and the only noise I heard came from the occasional barking of a dog just across the street. This is what I would call real suburban living. The church isn't too far away, and neither is the bus stop where you can go to either Marijampolė or Vilkaviškis.

Simas greeted us as we pulled into the driveway. His mother was sitting outside, in the shade, at the side entrance, relaxing.

What a wonderful, sweet person she is. Her memory and hearing impressed me very much, very good for a person who has seen 95 summers. She survived two World Wars and many of the stressful years of Stalin and his successors. After Simas was returned to the Soviet Union, he was charged with treason and sentenced to ten years in a labor camp. The uncertainty of her son's surviving such a harsh environment surely must have preyed upon her nerves. In spite of all of this, she remained steadfast and would celebrate her 96th birthday in August.

Marytė is Simas' mother's constant companion, and she provides her with all the tender loving care that she needs. She is a remarkable woman herself, in more ways than one, for she also takes care of the large garden in back of the house. When Simas goes back to the states, his many friends help Marytė in every way they can, in her chores, and in taking care of his dear Mom. This, I am sure, puts his mind at ease. During my conversation with his mother, she regretted that she was not able to help in any way with routine daily work around the house. Can you imagine that?

When it was time to have dinner, Marytė and my wife helped her to the dining room table, and she measured every step she took. Marytė had to help her with the meal, and she has an excellent appetite, I might add.



During their visit...from left, Edvardas. Baranauskas, Marija Sulskis, and Simas Kudirka.

Photo: E. Baranauskas

Simas and I discussed a variety of subjects. I was very much surprised to learn that he loves to read books, and especially those in English, at that. Much water has passed under the bridge over the years, and his knowledge of English has improved dramatically. In fact, he even loaned my wife a good book, in English, about the sinister inner workings of the Soviet KGB, written by a former agent.

Simas purchased his house not too long ago, and is still in the process of remodeling it. His wife Gene has not seen it, but when she does, I feel sure that she will love it, and the neighborhood as well.

I gave him copies of some of the newspaper stories about how the American people, and President Nixon, reacted to his forced return. He especially enjoyed seeing the article in the *New York Times*, which had a picture of the note he wrote, in broken English, and threw to the Coast Guard crew, in a pack of cigarettes, telling them of his intentions. He had no idea of how strongly the American people reacted.

In September of 1975, he was honored at a dinner in Amsterdam, New York, and the mayor gave him a key to the city, which he still has and treasures. He spoke highly of the Knights of Lithuania and remembers the late Dr. Jack Stukas and his widow Loretta very well.



I asked him about his children. His daughter Lolita is married, works in the state of Washington. Simas proudly showed us a picture of his 19 year-old grandson. His son Evaldas is unmarried, lives and works in New York.

I was amazed to see how sharp his Mom's memory is. My first wife, Eleanore, and I last saw her at a party in New Jersey in 1975, and we had some pictures taken of us together. I gave her a variety of several of them to look over, and she studied each one carefully. When she came to a picture of the one where she was standing alongside my wife, she pointed to her, and said, without hesitation, who she was. She did not even ask me beforehand who the person could possibly be. I was very impressed, for the picture was taken twenty-seven years ago, and she was not even wearing eyeglasses.

Simas hopes that he will return next year to live in Lithuania with Gene, his wife. Simas returned to Santa Monica in early August, and we wished him Godspeed. He is trying so hard to start a new life for his wife and himself in Lithuania, and also in taking care of his dear mother, who he loves so very much. They certainly deserve the very best that life has to offer, after what they all have been through.

Coming back to the saga of Simas Kudirka... Simas spent over three years in a Soviet labor camp. How he managed to be released from that hell-hole, and come to live in the United States, is a story stranger than fiction.

While he was incarcerated, he was not forgotten in America. For years the Lithuanian-American communities appealed to members of Congress and State Department officials to intervene on Kudirka's behalf in seeking his release, but the Soviets brushed all of this aside by saying this was an "internal Soviet matter." The situation seemed to be hopeless, and it appeared that only a miracle could save him.

On July 23, 1973 a miracle did occur. An elderly woman in Lithuania wrote to her sister in Connecticut about meeting Simas' mother in a marketplace. The letter went on to say what no one in America had known before. Simas Kudirka's mother was born in Brooklyn, New York and that she, at the age of six, had returned to Lithuania with her parents to live. The year may have been about 1912, two years before the

outbreak of the First World War. If this was true, it meant that she was an American citizen.

A priest at St. Mary's Queen of Angels Lithuanian parish in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, Rev. Anthony S. Petrauskas, found the baptismal record of Marija Sulskis, the birth name of Simas' mother, dated September 29, 1906.

Three months after finding this record, and after government investigators authenticated it, Kudirka's mother was recognized as a citizen of the United States.

Officials in Washington determined that Simas was now a U.S. citizen also because of his birth to American parentage. Then, on July 17, 1974, Simas Kudirka was officially recognized as a U.S. citizen.

Now, powerful members of Congress and President Gerald R. Ford appealed to the Soviets for Kudirka's release. The Kremlin wanted Congress to approve trade concessions, and Soviet leader Brezhnev probably realized that it would be in the Soviet Union's best interest to let Kudirka go, for this action would improve relations with the United States. On August 23, 1974, a day he still remembers, Simas was summoned to the warden's office and told he was to be released from prison. Six hours later, he was on a train taking him from Moscow back to Lithuania, where he learned of the incredible turn of events that led to his release.

On November 5, 1974, Simas Kudirka, his wife Gene, daughter Lolita, son Evaldas, and his mother, Marija Sulskis, were allowed to leave the Soviet Union. It was only after their plane touched down at Kennedy Airport in New York did they realize that now they had reached freedom at last.

On October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2002, I received a sad telephone call from Pilviškiai. The mother of Simas Kudirka, Marija Sulskis, had passed away. Simas had been notified by phone and was too overcome with grief. He loved his mother so very much. She was 96 years of age.



## *Antanas and Birutė*

Gloria Kivytaitė O'Brien

*This is a continuation of Gloria's previous memoirs, "...as I was visiting Lithuania...", that have been published in other Bridges issues.*

**A**ntanas is my mother's first cousin, much younger than she. He and his wife Birutė spent years in exile in Siberia. They were able to return to Lithuania some years ago, and after much trouble, their own home was restored to them. Always smiling and optimistic, they welcomed our surprise visit with boisterous pleasure, and Antanas played host, keeping us busy while Birutė disappeared into her kitchen to do her "thing".

In company with all other exiles, they are fiercely patriotic, and Antanas let us know how happy he is, that we, born and bred in the U.S., continue to visit Lithuania and remain interested in her present and future. He enthusiastically recited a long poem full of patriotic fire and nostalgic sentiment. We were impressed by his mem-

ory and brought to tears by the beautiful language.

Birutė threw open the door to her dining room and invited us to the table laden with, among other delights, my favorite thing – potato pancakes. They are talented and enthusiastic singers – one does not sit at their table without being treated to a round of wonderful folk songs along with the usual drinks.

Antanas was sincere and enthusiastic in his praise for his beloved wife. In 2002, they celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, and their life was still full of smiles and compliments for each other. Their children hired a "meistras" to carve a tall wooden shrine commemorating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and this beauty had been erected in their front yard. The artist also carved a pair of tall staffs (lazdos), one for each of them, topped by a couple of intertwined rings and the number "50". When we saw them, they were still twined with the greens that had been decorating them for the celebration party. ♦

## *Lithuania — for the last time*

Kay A. Yankoski

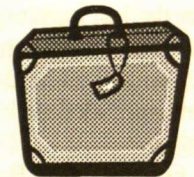
**I**t is my seventh and, I say, my last trip to Lithuania – my stamina and my funds are in short supply these days. As my plane descends into Vilnius, I am always amazed at how green it is – the forests go on forever. People there always ask me if we have forests here – not walking distance from my house, as is usually the case there.

Three friends meet me at the airport, and we taxi to the flat where I will stay. Friends here in the U.S. ask, what will you do? And, I answer, I'll know when I get there. My guide had to take her vacation the last week in June and the first week in July, and she would spend this time with

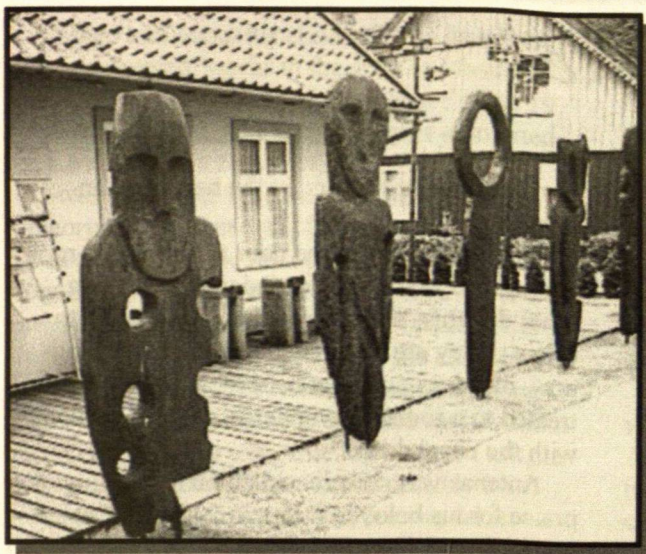
me. I don't speak the language and I need help.

When I got there, she told me that she only had the first week off! The two "boys" (my contemporaries) with her would help me with the second week. Time at a spa was on my Wish List. The boys said they would take me there on the bus (a two-hour trip) and leave me – I didn't feel adventurous, I felt abandoned!

After a shower and short nap, my guide came for me, and we had a simple supper, then a bus ride to the river to the *Baltica* Festival. It was also the *Rasos* (dew) Fest, so we wove wreaths of wildflowers which we tossed into the river (to find our true love). It was also the longest day of the







Large copies of Neolithic amber amulets found near Juodkrantė (Neringa).

Photo: K. Yankoski

year and the night for the St. John's Bonfires – when the young sing and dance and drink 'til dawn and beyond.

The *raganos* (witches) were brewing their magic tea in a huge cauldron. Drink a cup of that tea, make a wish, and it will come true. Lithuania was the last pagan country in Europe, and it retains many interesting pagan customs/traditions. We walked under the archway of greenery and were sprinkled with wet branches to bring us good luck.

Getting to the Baltic was our first priority. The once daily bus (a six-hour ride) left at 11 a.m. – until now – it had just changed to 7 a.m. which meant a 5 a.m. wake up, 6 a.m. taxi, and on the bus by 7 a.m.! I slept most of the way and woke only at the comfort stop – in drizzling rain – but this is Lithuania (*Lietuva* comes from the word *lietus* or rain). Now you know why everything is so green!

We arrived in Nida on the Baltic Sea about 1:30 p.m. in more rain. My raincoat and umbrella are always in my *maišas* along with my water bottle, toilet paper, a jacket, and dictionary. The 100 year-old cottage, where we stay with the *drakona*, is walking distance from the bus station. Her gate was padlocked, so we waited until she ambled home from church and let us in.

The *drakona* is a retired professor who loves being in charge. We were force fed like Strasbourg geese until we left to say hello to the *jūra* (the sea). It was windy and cold. A tee shirt, flannel shirt, and hooded jacket barely kept me warm enough. We stood at the top of the stairs descending to the beach and watched the angry waves thrash against the shore. The beach is two km from our cottage – hardly a short walk.

Each night I would sleep for four hours or so, wake and “write” in my head, then fall asleep for another few hours. I would draw back the curtain, hoping for blue skies and trees not bending in the wind. On the sixth day – my birthday – I drew back the curtains to gorgeous blue skies and little wind. Off to the beach – it never got above 66 degrees, so it was really off to nestle in the dunes. It was still too cold and windy to go down by the sea. We joked that while the witches had kept the rain away, we forgot to ask them to keep the *šaltas vėjas* (cold winds) away too. It did start to rain during the morning, so we hurried home where I introduced my guide to that culinary delight, creamed tuna on toast.

There was no hot water in our cottage and I, the crazy American, wanted a hot shower. So, we stopped at every rest house we passed and asked if I could bathe there. I think if you ask enough people to do something, eventually one will say YES! And we got that answer at the rest house right next door where the maintenance man agreed to let me take a bath (only one person and only one time). We paid the girl at the desk, and she was more agreeable; I had my second bath in eight days there – on my birthday – not only did the sun shine but I had a bath too!

On one of the bleaker days, we went on an excursion to Sveksna, one of my three goals on this trip. A widow in our Lithuanian community married into the family that bought this town several generations ago; Sveksna dates back to 1509. They migrated to the United States, and after he died a few years ago, she returned to Sveksna with his ashes.

When we checked at the Nida bus station, we found that the one daily bus from Klaipėda to Sveksna left at 5 a.m.! We got a horrific quote from a taxi driver in Nida. But I return to my the-



ory: ask enough people and eventually one will say YES. An amber vendor at the *kopos* (big dunes) suggested that we take the bus into Klaipėda and talk to taxi drivers there to get a better rate.

As we rode through the small towns of Neringa, I asked my guide to talk to our minibus driver about this idea. He was more than happy to drop off the other passengers in Klaipėda then proceed to Sveksna with us and take us back to Nida.

We had a delightful afternoon visiting the big, beautiful church in the town square; entering the grounds of the *Villa Genowefa* (one of four villas; this one built by the late Count's grandfather to honor his wife); and visiting the small four-room museum (this building used to house the dogs) with a guide who spoke English very well. Unfortunately the owner was in Vilnius at the time, so we only saw the villa from the outside. The sundial in front of the villa was a copy of one in the Louvre, and the big pond/lake down below the villa had some beautiful statuary in the middle of it. We had an amazingly good lunch for such a small place and headed back to Nida.

On another day we met our fellow house guest, a retired woman dentist from Vilnius, at the bank. She was on her way to visit an artist friend. She usually went to the *Moterų Pližas* (women's nude beach) and even at 66 degrees would go into the sea! She invited us to join her. With the beach not an option, we were glad for the diversion.

We headed up toward the big dune. The artist's home turned out to be an interesting place that we had passed previously, and I had photographed the wooden carving above the entryway of a man with chains and a padlock around his neck. The artist told me it was him, and it was every man. He also knew the artist I was trying to track down (another of my three goals) and told me he would be in Vilnius by the time I got back there.

One of my favorite places to visit in Nida is the *Gintaro Muziejus* (Amber Museum) around the corner from our cottage. The complex extends from the street down to the *marios* (lagoon) with small in-ground exhibits along the walkway. The outdoor glass display cases on the street side have been replaced with huge reproductions of neolithic amber amulets found at Juodkrantė. Magnificent

one-of-a-kind necklaces made by Lithuanian artists are for sale inside for several hundred dollars.

We also visited a new museum of history, the *Neringos Muziejus*, where I complimented their good English translations. This museum served as a reminder of the German influence on Nida; German tourists abound today in Nida and Neringa. The Germans built and operated a post road through Neringa from 1745 to 1833. At the beginning of the 20th century, they built many large hotels which housed an artists' colony of about 200 mostly German expressionists. Thomas Mann's house is now a museum as well as that of Hermann Blode, whose walls are filled with the works of those who could not pay for accommodations with money.

One day as we strolled by the Fisherman's Cottage Museum, a group of Brits was walking on the same street. I asked how they were enjoying their trip (through all three Baltic countries) and one replied, "HUGELY!"

On our last night in Nida, my guide said we should eat fish since we had been next to the sea for over a week. We found a nice place along the *marios* and again, I chuckled at the English translations. Everything seems to be fried (even "roasted chicken breast"), but I saw a fish dish that was poached, and I chose that one – it was a winner. My guide chose a favorite of hers: in English "fish in dough". It turned out to be what we would call batter-fried fish. Fish is not filleted in Lithuania, so proceed with caution.

I am not really "there" until I see a *gandras* (a stork). A farmer considers it good luck to have a nest of storks on his property. The big flat nests sit high atop what looks like a utility pole in most cases. Although, I did see one that was only about three feet off the ground. Usually the storks stroll through the fields near the road, but occasionally one will be standing in its nest. When I saw a carved wooden one in a shop in Nida, I bought it as a reminder of all the ones I've seen in Lithuanian fields.

Each night after supper in Nida, we strolled to the *Centras* (center of town) to buy ice cream. In previous years, we sampled the many varieties of Popsicles, but this year there was a young fellow scooping more expensive ice cream in rather exotic flavors – mango became our favorite. At one restaurant, mango juice was on the menu, and one



evening we stopped there to have it for “dessert” in lieu of our usual ice cream. Although another day, we had cones after lunch and supper to make up for that one omission!

Our after supper stroll continued along the *marios* (lagoon) together with the multitudes out walking and cycling. Sea birds circled, and even two swans calmly swam in the water.

After eight cold and windy days by the Baltic, we were on the bus back to Vilnius. As we passed through Klaipėda, there was a festival going on: it was their 750th anniversary and national dress was everywhere we looked. I was sorry not to be strolling among them and looking at all the folk art for sale.

It was a pleasure the next morning to shower and shampoo with hot water. I blew my hair dry with abandon, ending up looking like I had been electrocuted. I plugged in my curling iron and heard an ominous “pop” – what a time to expire! Plan B – rewet hair and try for some semblance of order.

I met a journalist friend Monday afternoon in Vilnius. She was leaving on Wednesday for a five-day family reunion, and I was leaving the next day for three days in Druskininkai to visit a spa. She is my shopping guide. Usually I go out with her at the beginning of my trip to see what’s in the shops in Vilnius, then I go to Nida where I can make a comparison and return to Vilnius where we meet again, and I make my last purchases. Since we went to Nida immediately upon my arrival, this was our only meeting.

There was little of interest to buy this time. Unlike the last trip when there had been much original folk art in the shops. So we were content to have a nice lunch and visit. I thought wistfully of all the wonderful things I’d seen in Nida and not purchased.

On Tuesday my *šeimininkė* (landlady) accompanied me to Druskininkai to visit a spa (or *sanitorija* as they are called there). This was my second goal for the trip. A friend in Washington reminded me that Druskininkai comes from the word *druska* or salt.

We stayed with three generations of a family: the grandparents lived downstairs, while their widowed daughter and three children lived on the second floor. The daughter is a doctor with good enough English that we could communicate easily,

though simply.

That evening, her English teacher friend came over, and we had more extensive conversation. I explained that I wanted some spa treatments, possibly the mud bath and whatever else might be interesting. I also told them about my quest (my third goal) for the artist/metal worker who participated in the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival four years ago. We used e-mail addresses, internet web sites, and telephone numbers trying to contact him from the U.S. – all to no avail.

The Druskininkai web site turned out to be “Echo in the Forest” (a house built on “one leg” – an oak tree – in the nearby forest). Ironically that exhibit ended the day before we arrived. The artist remained illusive but just a little out of reach! We toured this house – with the giant oak growing right through the middle of it – walking through the forest to get there. My landlady was shocked at the carving of *Adomas* (Adam) who was wearing what he always wore or didn’t wear.

The next day I woke early to walk to the *Lietuva Sanitorija* for my treatments. The doctor/daughter accompanied me and introduced me to one of her classmates who set me up for a mud bath and massage that day and the next day.

The mud bath was interesting: remove all your clothes, then lie down on a table on which there were piles of mud – two for ankles, two for knees, one at the base of the spine, and two more for your wrists. More mud is heaped on these same sites, then two “tarps” are wrapped around you, and you are left to “process”.

Being unable to move hands or feet from this position for 20 minutes was confining. I watched the clock hands tick by until I was roused from the table and sent to the showers where the attendant who piled the mud on me pointed out – with a muddy finger – all the spots that I had missed. I was still in the shower when a nude little old man appeared – the next victim! The mud bath was therapeutic for inflammation of the joints. After each treatment, you go to a resting room to lie down quietly on sofas covered with white sheets and a pillow for your head. Doctor/daughter warned me that the treatments make you tired, and this respite is most welcome.

Next, a massage, and since I was expecting a “traditional” massage, I was surprised to enter a room with a huge vat or tub of water in it. I



climbed in, tried to put my feet in the slots, grabbed onto the handrails and tried not to float to the top. The attendant “massages” you with a high-pressure hose underwater – interesting and different.

One shower and one long soak in a hot tub – all before lunch. I was beginning to look like a stewed prune, but I felt good. Again, the resting room, and then meeting the doctor/daughter. I came outside and caught up with doctor/daughter and her 18 year-old daughter, right off the bus from Vilnius where she goes to school.

Daughter, landlady, and I stopped for lunch. Then we took a three-hour boat trip to Liskiava, a village of 35 inhabitants with a converted church, monastery, and remnants of a castle. The castle remains were a hike away; it was a hot day, so only landlady scampered up to see them.

That night, *Perkūnas*, the God of Thunder, paid us a visit after midnight. Usually he is a regular visitor in Nida, but this was the first time he came calling during my visit.

On our third and last day in Druskininkai, we visited some museums – first, that of M. K. Čiurlionis, the famous composer and artist. His music played in the background. His grand piano stood in front of a big picture window with “bleachers” outside. Musicians perform inside with the window open for the guests outside to hear.

On to the museum of sculptor Jacques Lipchitz, which chronicles the history of pre-war Jews in this community which was 1/3 Jewish. Unfortunately it was “closed temporarily”, so we peered in the windows at the glorious photographs on the walls.

The industrious doctor/daughter finally received a reply to her messages to the illusive artist. He would be in Vilnius on Friday when I would be back there, and he would meet with me at the gallery in the old arsenal.

We arrived in Vilnius at the beginning of yet another storm – it broke trees in its path and swirled the grit off the streets into everything, including our scalps. Water even seeped in the bus windows.

On Friday morning, a relative of the landlady picked us up for an excursion to *Europos Parkas*, an outdoor sculpture garden several kilometers from Vilnius. It was raining, so we didn’t see too much since many of the sculptures were in the wet

grass, and we stayed on the paved pathways. It was very modern and not really to my taste (a labyrinth of old TV sets, for example). On the way back to Vilnius, we stopped at the 17th century Calvary Church with nearby new seminary that I visited a few years ago. A group of Poles visited the twelve chapels on the church grounds, singing from one to the next.

A friend picked me up on Friday afternoon to go to the KGB Museum. It was a chilling experience to see the first holding cell and then the torture rooms with a small plate-sized disc in the middle of the floor surrounded by icy water. To fall off the disc would be into the icy waters. Last was the execution chamber – a clear glass floor on top of what would have been the last walk for many – a shoe, a toothbrush, broken eyeglasses dropped along the way.

On to the Holocaust Museum for another gruesome viewing. Vilnius was once called the Jerusalem of the North with a thriving Jewish population, but only one synagogue remains. As we left that museum, an American couple was entering, so I gave them the one tattered English copy of the guide to the museum exhibits.

Our last stop was the museum at the old arsenal to meet the illusive one. I arrived to find an opening in full swing; my friend headed off to the den-



Entry to Echo of the Forest with a house built around a giant oak, so that it appears to be standing on one leg. In the foreground is Žilvinas — King of the Grass Snakes.

Photo: K. Yankoski



tist leaving me there, a bit bedraggled in the midst of better-dressed guests. A kind museum worker came to my assistance. I showed her my e-mails and other attempts to locate this man who was busily signing programs for his many admirers. He did sign a program for me, but when he asked my name, Kay Yankoski meant nothing to him. So I said, "*Kotryna Jankauskaitė*", and he signed immediately!

We stood in line and I took an embarrassing amount of time to tell him my tale of woe only to find that he did not bring the necklaces I was interested in purchasing from him! So near and yet so far – I was shaking his hand but that hand was empty of the merchandise I wanted to see. What to do?

He asked if I could come to Alytus (70 km away) where he lived – it was Friday, I was leaving Monday morning, I don't have a car, nor did anybody I knew, I didn't know the bus schedules, or who could accompany me on that bus trip. What's more, I don't speak the language. He said he would call me at the landlady's flat. He didn't speak any English, and I didn't speak enough Lithuanian to communicate, so I was hoping that the landlady would be present when he called.

On Saturday, another friend picked me up, and we headed to the President's Palace for the *Min-daugas* holiday, honoring the first king of Lithuania. The tall, handsome President appeared and spoke. Then he had no strong opponent for the December elections, but many think he is too old at 75, and as an outsider, he does not get the cooperation required to run the country.

The entertainment began with groups from the Basque country of France, a Latvian singing group AND Pueblo Indians from New Mexico! Next was a ceremony to unveil the portraits of 16 of Lithuania's rulers at the Cathedral Square.

The Indians were obviously the most exotic of the lot, although the Basques with their very long pointed wooden shoes ran a close second. The Indians told me they were having a wonderful time. A Basque woman with good English told me the "legend" of those strange pointed shoes. The Moors came into their villages, while the men were in the mountains and ravaged and ransacked. When the Basque men returned, they killed the Moors and impaled their hearts on the wooden shoes – hence the heart design on the men's shoes.



A roadside cross in Druskininkai — the most famous spa in Lithuania.

Photo: K. Yankoski

She again assured me that this was a legend.

We stopped for lunch, and the Jewish couple from the museum the day before called out to me, recommending the *balandeliai* for lunch. Hungry for English conversation as well, we chatted at length. On to a park where the festivities continued with singing, dancing, *alus*, and various little stalls selling all kinds of folk art.

Saturday passed with no call from the artist, so I asked a friend to call him for me. The museum worker reminded me that artists are not always reliable, responsible, and a bit forgetful. His mobile phone was always out of range. My friend thought this might not be successful for me, but at 8:30 on Sunday morning, the phone rang and it was "him". I quickly got the landlady on the phone, and it was arranged that we would meet at the museum at 2:00 that afternoon!

Off we went to mass at St. John's, near Vilnius University. There was a mix of young and old, unlike most churches in Lithuania filled with old women. After mass, we meandered through the tiny old streets of this glorious ancient walled city. We heard singing amidst scaffolding and renovation; we peered inside the Good Brothers Church,



a tiny gem of gilt and rich dark colors filled with people. On to the *Neringa Kavinė* where pensioners can have a free cup of coffee on Sunday between 11 and 1:00.

After a light lunch there, we walked to the arsenal museum for The Meeting! As we approached, I called out, "Jarutis?" "Jankauskaitė!" At last! I made my purchases, and he drove us home. I achieved my three goals – the last with less than 24 hours before my departure! *Valio!*

At 4:00 on Sunday, I met the last of my friends and acquaintances. This woman and her husband lived walking distance away. Their elder daughter and her husband were in Portugal for two weeks, and my friend was the "Night Nurse" for their two year-old son and six year-old daughter during that time. A quick visit, and it was time to pack for my return home the next morning.

There is a fabulous new super market chain (IKI) in Lithuania, and I walked to it each night to purchase my *bandelė* for the next morning's breakfast and sometimes for my supper. This chain is very grand compared to the small shops frequented by most people. I bought 200 mg of herb butter for less than 50 cents and enough brie for several rolls for little more than \$1.

One night at the cheese counter, a little old lady



## *To be a teenager visiting Lithuania*

*Audrė Kapačinskas*

**M**y name is Audrė Kapačinskas. I'm a 16 year-old from Chicago, and my best friend is Žiba Šaulys. Žiba and I have gone through a lot together. We were both dragged to Lithuanian school every Saturday for 12 years; we are both in Grandis (a Lithuanian Dance group); and we are both Sea Scouts. On the outside, we seem pretty normal, so what makes us different? Last year [2002], during our graduating year at Lithuanian school, Tėvas (Father) Saulaitis came to talk to our Istoriijos Burelis (History Club) about what he does in Lithuania, and what life is like there. The sub-

ject of orphans and children without homes came up, and as he began to elaborate on the subject, Žiba and I felt a growing desire within us to go there and see what was going on for ourselves.

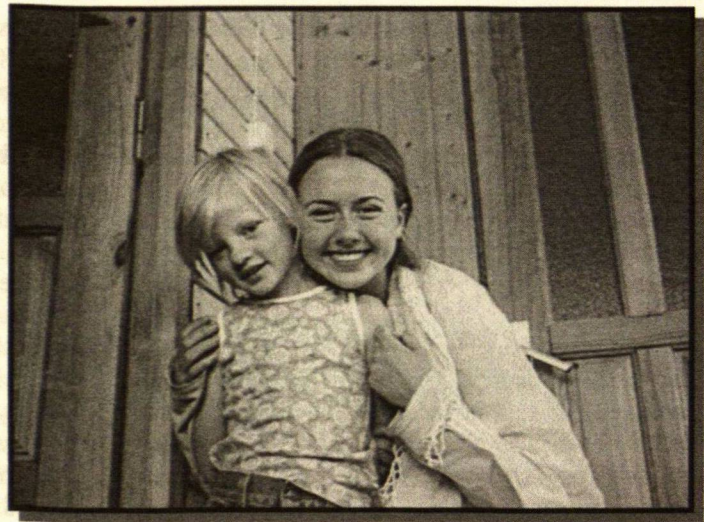
kept exclaiming *Jesus Marija* at the prices – exorbitant for them – 50 *litas* (divide by 3.5 for dollars) for a kilo of imported cheese. I loved buying fresh rolls everyday, but I was surprised at all the white bread there. This time the *drakona* bought it almost exclusively, while on previous visits, she scoffed at it – dark, heavy bread was true Lithuanian.

The potato is king in Lithuania. Many a day I ate meatless, but never potato-less. Tomatoes and cucumbers were the only other veggies on your plate. Breakfast and supper are simple, but the midday meal consists of soup, meat, potato, and veggies.

I do not travel with a group or a tour. I live like "they" do – it is a simpler time and place than Alexandria, VA. I need help because I don't speak the language, but I am willing to pay for their expenses (meals, admission fees, transportation costs), although many times they are reluctant to accept this, thinking they should treat me, the guest, or repay me in kind. My own thinking is that if someone invites me to do something special that I cannot afford, my answer is a resounding "Thank you!" But that is not the thinking there. In sum, this was my trip – from my vantage point!







The girls enjoyed being with their orphan friends in Lithuania. From left, Žiba Šaulys with a little friend and Audrė Kapačinskas, the author of the article with her small companion.

Photos: A. Kapačinskas

spring.

We decided to go to Marijampolė because of several reasons. The first and foremost was that it was the safest place for us to go. The second reason was that there was a convent that would allow us to stay there. After months of planning and writing papers on why we wanted to go to Lithuania, we were finally approved and a date was set for our departure.

When Žiba and I left, we really had no idea what to expect. The farthest we'd ever gone from home alone was to Michigan, and even THAT was a stretch. So when our parents finished their final good-byes, and we walked through the security gate of O'Hare Airport, the adventure that changed our lives began....

When the plane landed, Žiba and I looked at each other and gave the "What are we doing here?" look to one another. We were two extremely scared teenage girls in a country that was the exact opposite of the country where we were born and raised. We met a relative and the coordinator of our trip at the airport and went into the center of Vilnius where we remained for the next few days.

After the shock and jet lag had passed, we were picked up from Vilnius by Seselė Janina,

one of the sisters we were going to be living with. The most terrifying part of our trip, however, was arriving at our destination. When the car pulled into the driveway, we were greeted by seven of the children we would be working with for the next four weeks. Rather, the children stared at Žiba and me. I doubt that more than ten words were exchanged by either party for the next few hours. However, when Žiba and I presented a few gifts from America to the children, the ice seemed to have been broken.

Now, allow me to explain a little more about where I was working and why. Žiba and I were stationed in Marijampolė, a rather small town, or as the locals put it, "didelis kaimas" – "a large farm". We lived with a group of about 15 nuns and were given a room on the fourth floor of the convent to live in during our stay.

The house the children lived in was known as "Vaikų Namai" – directly translated it means children's home. The children's home resembled a small house; there were four small bedrooms, a small kitchen, a quaint dining room, all in all, it could house up to ten children at any given time. The home was nothing extravagant, but it was cozy and accommodated the children very well. The children themselves were re-



cently taken away from abusive households and were staying in the home until the government decided whether to send them back to their parents or to send them to an orphanage.

All the days blended into one, and the following weeks seemed to flow from one to the next. Everything was almost too good to be true. A few weeks before we came, we began to hear horror stories from our aunts and grandmothers about how dangerous Lithuania was; ultimately they were ploys to attempt to have us remain in Chicago and have a “typical teenage summer” (i. e., a rigorous schedule of sleeping until noon followed by numerous hours of watching TV every day).

However, I do believe that I made the right choice to come to Marijampolė. We learned so much from these children, and although it wasn't always easy, it was definitely more rewarding than anything I had ever done before. It was nothing Žiba and I had expected it to be. It was nothing we could have prepared ourselves for. We simply had to go and see for ourselves.

We met children who were accustomed to hearing that they were “bandits”, “scoundrels”, and “mistakes”. Getting to know the children, then hearing about their lives and what obstacles they had to overcome was unreal. How could those children take so much abuse and disappointment and still be able to smile at us? They didn't ask for much, all they ever wanted was someone to listen to them and treat them like they meant something. The children were so used to being ignored that when Žiba and I first started talking to them, they would stop in the middle of a conversation and look at us in astonishment, as if they didn't think we would still be sitting next to them, let alone still listening to what they were saying. In fact, their tendencies in regards to relationships were different than we had encountered before. The younger girls (from 2½ to about 12) began calling us “Teta” (aunt), and the youngest girl even began calling us mama. They yearned to be close to someone. Even the older children would ask us how long we intended to stay with them, and everyday they would tell us how many days we had left to spend with them. When we left, they asked us to give them pictures of us so that they would be

able to go to school and say that they had spent their summer with two girls from America.

When people ask what we did there, it's extremely hard to convey what we did and why because what occupied our time wasn't anything out of the ordinary. We were leading the same lives we would have in America, except we were in another country and helping other kids. Monday through Friday, we had forty-five minute English lessons with most of the children. Afterwards, we would simply spend time with them. We went swimming in the Šešupe River, walked around the “downtown” part of their town, went to museums with them, did artwork along with every day type things, such as going grocery shopping or cooking dinner for the house.

I don't know whether or not I really made a difference in any of the children's lives, but I hope that I did. This past summer was the best I've ever had, and it's definitely because of the trip I took with Žiba to Lietuva. Žiba and I left Chicago as two, young, scared teenage girls, but we came back two, independent “panelės” that are ready to take on anything that the world will throw at us because of seven very special children in Lithuania. ♦

*For more information on “Child's Gate to Learning”, go to their website at [www.childgate.org](http://www.childgate.org).*





Edited by Dainora Kupčinskaitė

# Camp Neringa

## summers and winters

### Neringa Summers

One summer evening in 2002, all the lights went out at Camp Neringa. Only the misty moon peeked through a wave of clouds at shadows moving slowly in various directions. These shadows were magically drawn forward by cryptically undulating music.

The skudučiai (pan pipes) invited some shadows up a hill, the kanklės (zither) beckoned others to the valley, the push-button accordion summoned shadows to the woods, while the rhythm of a drum drew others to the water. Every "shadow" was a mother, father, or grandparent at Neringa's Heritage Family Camp. These people had received a secret letter, telling them which instrument's sound they would try to discern in the darkness, and thus they would meet up with their teammates. The night game had begun!

The children were asleep, sweetly dreaming the stories they had seen the counselors and parents act out in the course of the day. Meanwhile, the parents were like characters in a fairy tale, searching for buried treasure, ferrying themselves across the zip-line to the domain of the thunder god Perkūnas, making their way through the "Devils' Gorge," striding through the "Baltic Sea," and hunting for archduke Gediminas of Lithuania.

This is just a fraction of the joy experienced by the smaller, the larger, and the seasoned members of Neringa's family. We can't divulge all of our secrets; we need to leave you some surprises... However, we do not doubt that you will come to

Camp Neringa this year. For everyone who goes there, the mere word "Neringa" is therapy for the soul, like a balm or an elixir of youth for one's heart. Now *that* is healthy! See you at Neringa!

-Rasa Ercmonienė

### Neringa Winters

The Moon said, "There is a village to the east called Lithuania. Did you know that they honor us?"

The Sun said, "No, I did not."

"The Lithuanians are doing all these rituals to make you come back to them. They think you're gone for good."

"Really?"

"Yes, they think that you are battling the Snake right now, and that you won't return from the war."

"You don't say?"

Thus began a story by seven year-old Dainius Bukauskas, inspired by what he had learned at the 2002 Kūčios and winter solstice celebration held at Camp Neringa.

The mid-December weekend at the Vermont campsite of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception was packed with endless fun for a group of about 30 adults and children.

Friday night, people gathered to find snacks and mulled wine waiting for them. In return, the guests were put to work preparing for the weekend's activities: making paper snowflakes, hanging cookies on strings, starting the traditional

*DAINORA KUPČINSKAITĖ is the assistant executive director of Camp Neringa. She compiled and edited the article with help from Dainius and Rasa Ercmonienė, a perennial counselor from Lithuania. Visit [www.neringa.org](http://www.neringa.org) to learn more about Neringa.*



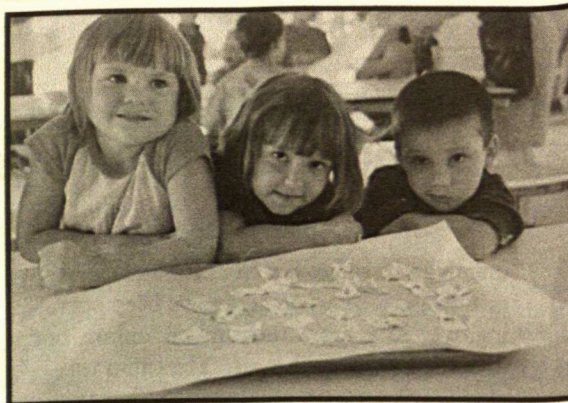
meals to be eaten the next evening.

On Saturday morning, the day started with a conversation about the winter's solstice traditions and songs of the ancient, pre-Christian Lithuanians. Our winter campers learned how to make traditional straw ornaments (called šiaudinukai or sodai). Outside, the snow was knee-deep, but this did not deter a rowdy bunch of people from wading through the snow to perform various solstice rituals to ensure a good crop and prosperous year to come. The afternoon was spent learning how to make candles as well as preparing for the special evening meal.

After we greeted the Evening Star with song, a dazzlingly decorated hall welcomed us for our evening celebrations. The food was delicious, Kalėda was good to the children, showering them with grains and candy when he came to visit, and the dancing left all participants breathless.

These are a couple of accounts of the many kinds of cultural, religious, and educational events that Neringa hosts year-round. The magic of Neringa infects the imagination of those who come to visit her, as is clear from little Dainius' interpretive story about the winter's solstice. Whether it be through summer camps or winter weekends, Neringa showers us with special gifts that we can cherish for years to come.

Visit [www.neringa.org](http://www.neringa.org) or write to [info@neringa.org](mailto:info@neringa.org) to learn more about Neringa or to obtain summer camp registration materials. ♦



*The little ones learn how to bake Lithuanian goodies, while the whole camp gets together to sing and dance.*

*Photos: Dana Grajauskas*

## Other camp news...

### Lankas Family Camp in the Seattle area

The parent volunteers of the Lithuanian community in Seattle coordinate a fun-filled week sharing the richness of our heritage with families.

**Location:** Latvian Education Center, Shelton, WA. The name of the camp is **KURSA**.

**Dates:** Check-in Sunday night, August 17, after 7 p.m. Camp closes on Saturday, Aug. 23, 10 a.m. The grand evening program will occur on Friday, the 22nd.

**Activities:** Lithuanian dancing, singing, language, crafts, history, folklore; sports, hiking, swimming, fun!

**Schedule:** See the schedule on the following web page for more information (tentative) <http://javlb.org/seattle/CAMP02.htm>. ♦



*Ramunė Kubilius*

## And more camp news...

### Lithuanian Heritage Camp in Michigan

**L**ithuanian Heritage Camp at Camp Dainava near Manchester, Michigan has been operating over 25 years without much fanfare, but at maximum capacity each year. The camp was founded and designed for children of Lithuanian descent (through at least one of their parents or grandparents) who do not speak Lithuanian, may live far from other persons of Lithuanian descent, yet who want to find out more about language, music, customs and history of the land of their forefathers.

The coordinator of Lithuanian Heritage Camps for the past 11 years has been Rima Polikaitis who "inherited" the coordination of the camp from Mrs. Jadvyga Damušis, founder and coordinator for about 15 years. (Mrs. Damušis now lives in Vilnius, Lithuania).

Rima's chief "commandant" for the past 11 years has been her brother, Marius Polikaitis. As she has said, she is responsible for the coordination of the program for the camp, while Marius is in charge of everything else, namely the routines and coordination of the campers themselves.

Rima Polikaitis, a speech pathologist by profession, and Marius Polikaitis, an accountant by profession, are joined each summer by other "graduates of the Lithuanian Heritage Camps" as well as young professional Lithuanian Americans who have spent many summers at Camp Dainava, have grown fond of that "little piece of Lithuania in the U.S." and want to convey the spirit to the new generation of campers.

During one presentation, Rima Polikaitis mentioned that the underlying goals at Lithuanian Heritage Camps have been the desire to convey Lithuanian traditions and values in a Roman Catholic and Christian environment. The desire to convey an authentic Lithuanian environment comes across in the fact that during singing lessons, with some preparation, campers sing actual Lithuanian language songs, also learning the background of the song and the meaning of the words. In learning

about Camp Dainava environs, campers learn the Lithuanian-language names of buildings and the little lake.

All campers know that they will be expected to participate in religious discussion groups, whether they are of Catholic descent or not. They are informed that the owner of Camp Dainava itself is the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Federation. They also learn of old Lithuanian country religious customs. Apparently, many of the students do not have the opportunity to discuss religious matters in their schools, so the opportunity to discuss religious and ethical questions with priests, nuns, and seminary students has been an eagerly awaited activity at the camps.

In 2002, 154 campers ages 7 to 16 cheerfully camped in Camp Dainava, going through one of the six thematic programming cycles developed by Rima Polikaitis and her team. Among the counselors were a number of former campers who enjoyed the camp so much that they asked to return as counselors.

In the last three years, a growing number (10 in 2002) campers have been recently arrived immigrants from Lithuania, who now live with their parents in the United States, but who, for whatever reasons, missed deadlines or didn't find out about other camps they could attend. Their presence has proven to be a mutually beneficial experience of sharing, according to Rima Polikaitis.

Through the years, a few campers' and counselors' neighbors, friends and relatives, who themselves have no drop of Lithuanian blood in them, have come to the camp to help out and have become so enthusiastic about Lithuanian culture, language, and history, that at the end of the camp they earn the title "Mr. (or Mrs.) Lithuania". They have proven to be good ambassadors for Lithuania and Lithuanians. ♦

*RAMUNĖ KUBILIUS is a regular contributor to Bridges.*



# R E F L E C T I O N S

*Sr. Margarita Bareikaitė*

## Called to life means... to love

**T**he pre-Lenten Sundays serve the purpose of preparing us for Lent. God desires to be the sower of the seed of grace, and we have to be the ready soil to receive this seed. He also wants to use our very weaknesses in order to accomplish great things in us. Lent is the springtime for the soul.

The Church tells us the most significant truths about Lent when she speaks about the suffering of Christ, about grace, and about love. We ought to be touched when we hear from Christ's lips the announcement of His suffering, "... that the Son of Man must be lifted up." (John 12,33).

We cannot celebrate the resurrection of Christ at Easter unless we have followed the way of the cross with Christ during the time of Lent. The Lord says to return to him with all your heart, with fasting, mourning... "Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing." (Joel 2:12-13). This means that to love without condition does not mean to love without concern.

God desires to enter into a relationship with us and wants our love in return. Our Lord never gives up loving us. His suffering is highest of all proofs of His love, "Greater love no man has than to lay down his life for his

friends." (John 15,13).

Hence we need a strong incentive for a proper observance of Lent – we require great charity. This incentive is the love of Christ. For our sake, yes, for my sake, Christ has done everything. Because of me He was scourged, crowned with thorns, carried the heavy cross, was crucified, and shed the last drop of His love, which I have to prove during the season of Lent

The purpose of Lent is the renewal of the life of grace. This, of course, is something divine, which God alone can bestow. Man has to prepare himself for this gift. God never forces grace on anyone. The means of preparing oneself are the sacraments, penance, Eucharist, the Bible, in addition to prayer and almsgiving. By these we make ready the way for grace. However, grace is something invisible, hidden away in the heart of man. Yet there is an outward sign of grace, and that is love of our fellow men. St. Paul gives a description of brotherly love: "charity is patient, kind, envieth not..."◆



*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.*



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

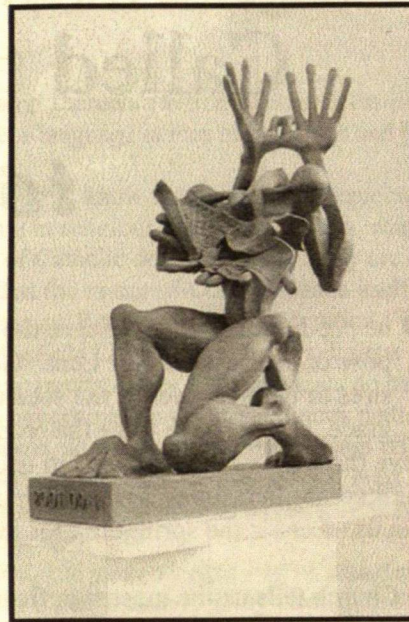
## Lithuanian sculptor pays tribute to victims of 9/11

**T**he tragic events of September 11, 2001 struck a deep chord in the hearts of the people of Lithuania. Memorials in the form of exhibitions, concerts, religious services, and media presentations were held in sympathy with the people of the United States. Art and musical compositions were created.

The striking sculpture by the renowned sculptor Kestutis Patamsis captures the overpowering emotions of this tragedy. It expresses the horror of broken, twisted, and mangled bodies of innocent victims crying out to heaven – the torn American flag in their hands offered up as evidence of an atrocious crime.

The sculptor wishes to donate this sculpture to the people of the United States. We are seeking an appropriate site.

Sculptor: Kestutis Patamsis, Kastonu 2/14-26, Vilnius 2001, Lithuania. Contact: Laima Žlioba, Lithuanian World Community, 1500 Lake Shore Drive South, Barrington, IL 60010, e-mail address: [www.lzlioba@hotmail.com](mailto:www.lzlioba@hotmail.com). ♦



*Sculpture for America's Sept. 11, 2001 victims by Kestutis Patamsis*

## Giving to the deaf and hard of hearing school in Panevėžys

**S**ome of the readers have requested more information on how to make a donation to the School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Panevėžys, Lithuania. If you are interested in sending a donation you may either send a check or wire money to the ADAPTA account which is the organization sponsoring the school.

To send a check, please write in ADAPTA and send to: Asta Karaliene, Ramygalos 48-33, Panevėžys 5300, Lithuania.

To wire money, play send it through your bank to: Vilniaus Bankas AB, Vilnius, SWIFT: CBVI LT 2X at Bankers Trust Company, New York, SWIFT: BKTR US 33, for further credit to: Tevu su neigaliais girdeti vaikais ir ju draugu bendrija "ADAPTA", Account No. 77447085822".

— *Ina Bertulyté Bray*

## Ooops!

**I**n the article "An Outstanding Woman for 2002", which appeared in Bridges – Issue 9, 2002, the correct name of the organization which named Sister Helen Ivanauskas "Outstanding Lithuanian Woman – 2002" is the Lithuanian American R.C. Women's Alliance, not Organization. The name of the presenter of the award was not K. Urban, but Kathryn Urban, vice-president on the National Board. We apologize for the mistake. ♦



# LITHUANIA 2003

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DETROIT	27	11
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NEWARK	28	13

CITY	DEPARTURE JUNE	RETURN JULY
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SAN FRANCISCO	28	13
TAMPA	29	12
TORONTO	29	14
WASHINGTON DC	29	13

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