

bridges

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january-february 2006

LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

Letter from the Editor

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and New Year. I would like to thank those of you who sent Christmas greetings by regular mail or email. They are always greatly appreciated.

We have two important dates to remember in this issue. This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the terrible events in Vilnius on January 13. The world looked on in horror as the tanks rolled through the city to the TV tower and the parliament building. Because we now live in an age of technology of live broadcasts and instant photographs, the communists could no longer use the standard "they started it" excuse. Viewers around the world watched in horror as innocent, unarmed people were shot and mowed down by tanks. In spite of the disinformation and propaganda issued by the occupiers, the shots from their guns and their frightening tanks moving toward the crowd, the Lithuanian people triumphed that night. Many of those standing outside day and night in freezing temperatures had never lived in a free Lithuania. Young and old, city and country people flooded into Vilnius by any means they could find to protect the TV tower and the parliament building. People gathered in other Lithuanian cities to protect what could be possible targets of a replay in Vilnius. They were not alone as people all over the world protested this act of brutality. The world was finally paying attention. Although the events happened in Vilnius there were other cities on high alert. Kaunas was one of them and we are privileged to have an eyewitness article written by Dr. Liucija Baskauskas.

In searching for something to publish for February 16, I came across an article in a February 1981 issue of Bridges by Rimantas Stirbys. Rimantas was the editor of Bridges at the time and I felt the information in his article is as inspiring today as it was twenty-five years ago. At that time the reestablishment of independence was a hope and a dream of people in Lithuania as well as Lithuanians all over the world. Today many communities have chosen to commemorate February 16 and March 11 with a single date. At the time I started to contact them for the calendar, many did not have their details completed. Please try to find a Lithuanian American Community near you and join in the commemoration. For your closest community or for details of the commemorations please check www.javlb.org to find your local chapter.

Thinking of summer plans? Dr. Elona Vaisnys suggests you visit Connecticut while Teresė Gečys tells you about the Lithuanian Song Festival in Chicago.

Connie Evans wrote the beautiful article about Immaculate Conception Parish celebrating its 110th anniversary. May there be many more anniversaries!

Charolette Zemaitytė Horvatic introduces us to the Lithuanian Community in the Heartland.

Dr. Viktoras Stankus shared his thoughts about a presentation he attended by Natan Shransky. Thank you to Lithuanian Consul for Ohio Ingrida Bublys for sending the article to Bridges.

Many scientists around the world are concerned with the environment. Among them is Joseph Vadus, Vice-President, IEEE Oceanic Engineering Society. A conference will be held this May in Klaipėda concerning these problems.

Don't forget to check out Renata Kucas' advice on getting the best results from your medication.

What can a mother do to help her children learn Lithuanian while at the same time see that they are enjoying themselves? Audra Kubilius Daulys tells you what she found to be very helpful.

I know you will enjoy Gloria O'Brien's Lithuanian Geographical Legends.

This month brings the third and final article about Janina Degutyte's poetry. M. G. Slavenas, the translator of the poems, allows us peer into the heart and soul of this very complex woman.

I am so pleased that so many people are sending articles and news information on such a variety of subjects. Thank you! Don't forget to check the calendar for an event near you. With the next issue of Bridges we'll be thinking spring!

Jeanne Shalna Dorr
Jeanne Shalna Dorr

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*Cover: "Malda už Tėvyne", Prayer for my Country by Jurgis Juodis from his collection of 50 paintings in honor of Lithuania's 50th Anniversary of restoration of Independence and 717th Anniversary of founding of the Kingdom. Printed in 1967 by Franciscan Fathers Press, Brooklyn, NY

Lithuania AND The Roots of Independence

Americans tend to forget that July 4th, the anniversary of the signing of the American Declaration of Independence, did not automatically usher in a period of new found freedom. The Revolutionary War, which ended with the defeat of the British at Yorktown in 1781, was still followed by decades of skirmishing, negotiation, and yet more wars with the British and with other European powers before American independence was assured.

Similarly, February 16th, which we all celebrate as Lithuania's Independence Day, tends to be regarded as the benchmark from which we measure Lithuania's short period of twentieth century freedom. The hurricane of events which envelopes that date is often overlooked.

A better understanding of the origins of Lithuania's independence (as well as an appreciation of Lithuania's legitimate claims to national sovereignty) depends on a wider historical perspective.

Lithuanian nationalism, which had lain dormant since the ill-fated commonwealth with Poland was partitioned in the 18th century, experienced a steady revival in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Efforts to undo the earlier Polonization of Lithuanian language and culture ran parallel with tentative steps to negotiate with the Russian czars for greater autonomy. These building blocks of a new Lithuanian identity were radicalized by the onset of World War I.

The Independence Declaration of February 16th, 1918, was actually issued while Lithuania was under German occupation. World War I had moved onto Lithuania's doorstep when German troops battled with the Russians on Lithuanian soil throughout 1915. After they successfully ousted the Russians, the Germans replaced them as Lithuania's rulers. Up to that point, Lithuanians of various ideological orientations had been getting increasingly vocal in complaining of Russian tyranny and in negotiating for limited self-rule. Now, instead of traveling to Moscow with their entreaties they traveled to Berlin. Constant pressure and the wildly fluctuating international situation succeeded in maneuvering the German administration into a series of concessions. By December 1917, the Lithuanian National Council prepared an earlier version of the Declaration which was agreed to by Kaiser Wilhelm. Some self-rule was assured, at least on paper, but in this version, the Council had succumbed to German pressure to also declare "permanent ties between the Lithuanian State and the German Empire," relegating Lithuania to a virtual fiefdom. As a result, the coalition of forces in the Lithuanian nationalist movement began to fracture. The February 16th declaration, by which the Council proclaimed Lithuania to be "freed from any unions with other nations which previously had existed", was as much

a compromise to reunite the diverse political factions as it was a first step to true independence.

The February 16th version was, of course, rejected by the Germans. Furthermore, Lithuania's concept of self-government, a democratic republic with a duly elected president, also clashed with that of the German Kaiser. A Lithuanian monarchy appeared to be the only acceptable form. Pretenders to the throne abounded, but the Duke of Urach was finally chosen in June 1918 to ascend the throne as King Mindaugas II. He even started studying the Lithuanian language so that he could be prepared.

A revolution in Germany in November 1918 allowed the Lithuanians to reassert their own priorities, but the still ongoing war between Germany and now-Soviet Russia (following the 1917 Bolshevik revolution) kept matters in turmoil. A Bolshevik invasion of Lithuania in 1919 was defeated by that nation's fledgling army only with the help of the Germans (who wanted to protect the administrative organs they still had scattered throughout Lithuania).

By mid-1919, the Germans had finished evacuating their nationals; meanwhile, Lithuanian troops - supplemented with partisans and virtually any able-bodied Lithuanian who could carry a gun - succeeded in pushing the Russians out of Lithuania.

Further negotiations ensued and finally, on June 12, 1920, a peace treaty was signed in Moscow. The significant, first article of the treaty read as follows: "Basing itself upon the declaration of the USSR's Assembly that each nation has the right of self determination, and becoming entirely independent from the state which it is now part of, without any reservations Russia recognizes Lithuania's independence and self-government with all its due jurisdictional rights, and with good will renounces for all times, all rights of Russian sovereignty which she had had over the Lithuanian nation and its territories."

Although we now know how that treaty - and the sovereignty of the Lithuanian nation and its people was grossly violated by the Soviets during World War II, it provided the first step toward international recognition of Lithuania as an independent nation, a recognition still maintained by the United States and other Western powers.

We at Bridges feel that it is important that Lithuanian Americans be fully informed about important details of Lithuanian history, especially in the face of almost awesome ignorance often displayed by non-Lithuanians, including members of the news media, and especially in the face of Soviet disinformation intended to undercut Lithuania's claims.

Rimantas Stirbys
Reprint from Bridges, February 1981.



Painted greetings for Lithuania's Independence Day, sent from Siberia on Feb. 16, 1955 (This is a reproduction of art work from Freedom fighters Museum in Marijampolė).

Liucija Baskauskas (Baškauskaitė), Phd.

The Nightmare of January 13



I was invited to attend a conference in Lithuania in the spring of 1989 for the purpose of reestablishing the Vytautas Didysis University in Kaunas. I had last been to Lithuania 10 years previous when my family and I spent the year in Vilnius on a USA-USSR cultural exchange program administered by the International Research and Exchange Board.

The changes during those ten years were devastating. I saw the effects of

the Chernobyl disaster on the children and on the adult population in the form of illnesses, cancers, growths and tumors. The majority of the wells were nitrate poisoned. Mothers were marching in candle light vigils protesting the induction of their sons into the Soviet army. Women were having multiple abortions. Suicide rates were soaring. The generation who had lived in an independent Lithuania was dying and with them the dream of freedom.

A loud SOS was being issued by this generation of my gene pool in my native land. I vowed to do anything in my power to help. I didn't want to be in a position that some people are in now. They saw the crimes of Hitler and Stalin and sat by and did nothing.

Upon returning to Sweden where I was the Resident Director of the California University Abroad program, I discussed what I saw with my colleagues and friends at Uppsala University. We decided to organize a Baltic rim conference in Kaunas where I had agreed to take an administrative position at the new University. We decided to focus on the Baltic Sea drainage basin as a region for sustainable development of all surrounding countries. It would take the solidarity and commitment of all who lived in the region to effect the changes that were necessary for a better quality of life.

The Baltic Family Conference was held in October of 1990. It was the first time since WWII that Scandinavian scholars and policy makers arrived by a chartered plane to Lithuania, the first time that there was an international conference in Kaunas, the first time that issues of security, peace, nonviolence, ecology, family structure and cultural continuity were discussed by the peoples around the Baltic Sea and the first time that links were formed by Universities in the entire area.

When the conference ended and the Scandinavian guests were boarding the airplane, I was thanking them, saying good-bye and shaking hands. The Soviet army troops at the airport told me to stop and when I didn't, they physically lifted me and

carried me away from the conference participants. Shaking hands was not allowed. Lithuania was still blockaded.

At the time, my family and I were living in small hotel room. My husband, Stephen Anaya, was commuting to Vilnius to teach at the Art Academy. My two younger children, Vejas and Vasara, were attending a local public elementary school. Our oldest daughter, Justina, was in California completing her undergraduate studies. By the end of the year, we were able to get housing in an abandoned Soviet generals' "guest house" and have use of a kitchen for the first time. We were also able to hire a car and driver from the government pool to make our commute manageable.

As the year came to a close, the mounting tension in Lithuania was palpable. There were more and more incidents of young men being abducted by Soviet troops, more protests, more reported abuses of every kind. In December, I was acting Rector of the Vytautas Magnus University when the United States Consul asked me to arrange a meeting of all U.S. citizens affiliated with the University. He asked me for my evacuation plan. He wanted cars with special license plates available for each person in case they were to be evacuated across the border. He told us that the airport would be shortly closed and that lives were in danger. We were instructed to carry our passports with us at all times.

My husband and I decided to stay in Lithuania with our children. We decided to stay close together. One beautiful, sunny December afternoon, we were all driving to Vilnius when we saw two tanks crossing the landscaped center divider in front of us. My first thought was that this was a location shot for some film. As we watched the pavement being destroyed and heard the guns firing at the Press House, we knew that this was real, shockingly real.

On the morning of January 13, the alarm sirens sounded in Kaunas at 3 a.m. We turned on the TV and heard only static. We knew then that the Vilnius Television tower had been occupied by the Soviet troops. As I had previously arranged, I received a telephone message that armed men would escort me to the University to begin evacuation. My husband stayed with the children.

Men using construction equipment were positioning concrete barriers in our neighborhood to protect the transmission towers. Heavy trucks were already positioned to protect and entrances and plate glass windows at the University building, which was the property of the communist party and thus "illegally" occupied. It was a beehive of activity in the middle of the night.

My first task was to hide the student records and protect the male students from being abducted into the Soviet army.

A small group of faculty and administration moved important documents and equipment and set up an alternative communication center. At the same time, the public address radio in the University building was activated by the Kaunas studio of the Lithuania National Radio and Television network. I heard a voice in broken English say: "Please help us! We are being invaded!"

I walked down the corridor to the studio and offered to help. The Director seated me at a table in the studio where a small team of men were broadcasting in Russian, Polish and Lithuanian. There was a great calm. Everyone knew that at any moment Soviet troops could attack as they had already done in Vilnius. Every moment was precious. I realized that my entire life was just a preparation for this moment. I hoped to be able to make a difference in the fate of my people.

The broadcast was possible because the Sitkunai transmission towers outside of Kaunas hooked into an open KGB line and radio relayed the message to Riga, which in turn radio relayed to Tallin, Helsinki and to the world satellite system. Riga amplified our signal to the western part of Lithuania so that they could see the television broadcasts. The rest of the country, including Vilnius, could hear the broadcasts on the radio. As I was told later, the Scandinavian viewers turned on their televisions and were stunned by the events. The participants of the Baltic Family conference immediately went into action, calling their government officials, organizing protests and forming support systems.

It was my task to translate the news into English and to objectively translate for everyone who wished to speak, including Soviet army officers. I also provided the social and cultural context of the news for an international audience. After some 20 hours on the air, I checked on my family and returned to be a member of the daily team for the following month.

It seemed that all of Lithuania had rallied. The residents of Kaunas were spectacular. Women set up around the clock food kitchens to support the volunteers. Businessmen brought fresh video tapes. Children drew their experiences and posted them on the sides of the building. Fresh news arrived constantly from eyewitnesses who had gone to Vilnius to protect the parliament building. When I would return home at 2 a.m., I would hear the voices of angels. They were the sounds of the songs of the men and women who had gathered to protect the transmission towers during the bitterly cold nights.

I was able to expand the English language coverage by organizing a team to translate the printed news into English. Within a few days, as the Soviet disinformation and propaganda became dominant, I was able to organize "Projektas Faktas" which encouraged eyewitnesses to bring their notarized accounts of the Soviet army attacks that they had experienced to the Universities in Kaunas and Vilnius so that a

true account could be presented to the global community. Over two thousand eyewitness reports, medical records, maps and other documentation were collected and preserved.

The University provided a safe haven for a number of events. I was able to host a series of meetings with Soviet army officer's wives concerning their families' safety and to provide a forum for Soviet dissidents who flocked to Lithuania to support the revolution. I was able to sponsor a concert of top Lithuanian musical stars in the auditorium and to broadcast the event. It was touching to interview members of the audience who had been shipped to Siberia as small children and who now held their own babies in their arms, while bravely defying the mighty Soviet power. A clear message was sent by the youth of Lithuania that they were not victims, but victors.

I developed a daily hourly television program in Lithuanian and English to provide in depth coverage of the people and events throughout Lithuania. Editing was very limited and the danger of travel was reinforced by Soviet army tank unit checkpoints on the road between Kaunas and Vilnius. It was scary to come upon such a military check point on a foggy night. I traveled with an armed driver, who became an expert cameraman.

Within a month, there was an afternoon break-in at my home with one of my children present. The children's rooms were completely destroyed, heavy oak doors were ripped off the hinges and bathroom fixtures were torn from the walls. It was clear that someone did not want me and my family to remain in Lithuania. My husband and I increased our safety precautions. Our daughter, Justina, arrived via Riga and was appointed the Foreign Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister in the newly formed government. Our family continued to live and work in Lithuania.

Through it all, I had a feeling of being at the right place at the right time doing the right thing. It was a time of total focus and concentration of everyone's thoughts, dreams, desires and action as one. The entire nation was mobilized in a way that Jung described as the manifestation of the collective unconscious. The force was so powerful because a survival of an entire people was at stake.

*Liucija Baskauskas (Baškauskaitė), Phd.
Los Angeles, CA*

Cultural Anthropologist. Professor emeritus. Honorary doctorate: Linköping University, Sweden and Stonehill College, Massachusetts. Recipient of the January 13 Medal for Valor from the Republic of Lithuania. Founder and Director of Tele-3, the first independent national television network in Lithuania.

cultural (and other) tidbits



Frank Zapolis, LAC Cultural Council Special Award for Lifetime Achievement propagating Lithuanian Folk Dance Sigitā Balzekienė, Executive President of Lithuanian Foundation, Regina Narušienė, chair of LAC Board of Directors, Dr. Romualdas Kriaučiūnas, recipient of Award in Journalism, Ilona Čiapaitė, recipient of Drama Award, Faustas Latėnas, Vice minister of Lithuania's Ministry of Culture, Marija Remienė, chair of LAC Cultural Council, Vytautas Virkau, recipient of Fine Arts Award.

LAC ANNUAL CULTURAL AWARD GALA

In the fall of 2005 the Cultural Council of Lithuanian American Community, Inc., chaired by **Marija Remienė**, again had the difficult task of selecting honorees for the 23rd annual LAC Cultural Awards. It is not easy to decide whether to honor lifetime achievement or recent brilliant flashes of accomplishment that may not sustain the test of time. Almost since inception of the annual awards, the tendency has been to recognize and honor those who have demonstrated endurance and perseverance in the fields of Fine Arts, Folk Dance Instruction, Journalism, Music, Radio Programming, and Theater. November 27, 2005 at the Gala Award night at Jaunimo Centras (Youth Center) in Chicago elder achievers again were in the majority, but with one very welcome exception.

Ilona Čiapaitė, director of three year old "Žaltvykslė" Theater Group (of Chicago), the youngest of awardees, took the **Theater Award**. In short three years, "Žaltvykslė" under Čiapaitė's tutelage, has produced a number of plays which were performed to high acclaim in Chicago as well as other Lithuanian American Communities. **Fine Arts** prize went to **Vytautas Virkau**, (Chicago area) illustrator of all Kazys Bradunas poetry books, as well as other literary publications, member of "ex libris" society and many other artistic associations. **Romualdas Kriaučiūnas, Ph.D.** (Lansing, MI), captured the **Journalism** prize for the astounding number of 566 articles on a multitude of subjects published in almost all Lithuanian diaspora periodicals as well as some in Lithuania. His articles in English on non-Lithuanian subjects are not even counted in the above number!

Achievement in the field of **Music** was bestowed

to **Antanas Skridulis** (Florida), a long time director of choir "Sietynas" in Daytona Beach, a contributor of topics on music in Lithuanian periodicals. Because of age and poor health he was unable to travel to Chicago to accept his award. Also unable to come was **Antanina Bulotienė** (Colorado), the recipient of **Folk Dance Instruction** award. Mrs. Bulotienė is the director of Denver's "Rūta" Folk Dance group which has participated in six Lithuanian Folk Dance Festivals and has performed in over 150 different ethnic events to showcase Lithuanian folk dances to the American public. **Radio Programming** was also awarded in absentia to **Kazys Gogelis**, for over 50 years producer and announcer of Detroit's "Lithuanian Voice" weekly radio program.

Each of the above received a \$1,000 prize, which was funded by the Lithuanian Foundation and personally presented by the Mrs. Sigitā Balzekas, the Lithuanian Foundation's Executive President.

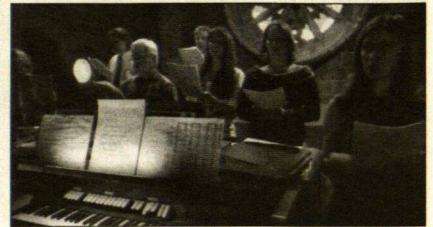
Just as at Hollywood "Oscars", there were special category awards. **Frank Zapolis** was recognized and honored for lifetime devotion to the art of Lithuanian folk dance and the propagation of Lithuanian culture to the American public. He was born and grew up in Chicago. More than 60 years of his life have been devoted to Lithuanian folk dancing, both as a participant and as a teacher. Fifty-seven years ago, together with Juzė Daudzvardis, Honorary Consul of Lithuania in Chicago, F. Zapolis started the tradition of decorating a Lithuanian Christmas tree at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry and presenting a Lithuanian cultural program during the Christmas season. This tradition is continued to this day. He started dancing in 1948 with the "Ateitis"

Continued on page 18

Immaculate Conception Parish Celebrates 110 Years



Special anniversary mass at the Immaculate Conception Church in East St. Louis, Illinois, celebrated by Fr. Ralph Haas.



Church choir assembled for the celebration (L to R): Dalia Grybinas Lee, Giedrius Dailidė, Jesse Evans, Tomas Grybinas, Vaida Čeplaitė, Joana Balasevičiūtė. Silvija Bisigirskytė organist and Jurgita Piotrowski, choir director.



The ICS Reunion banquet - Algimantas Mogenis - one of the moderators of "Memories".



L to R: Rimas Mulokas, Danutė Žabaitė Lasky, Jurgita Piotrowski (her back), Ambassador Vygautas Ušackas, and Jonas Balasevičius.



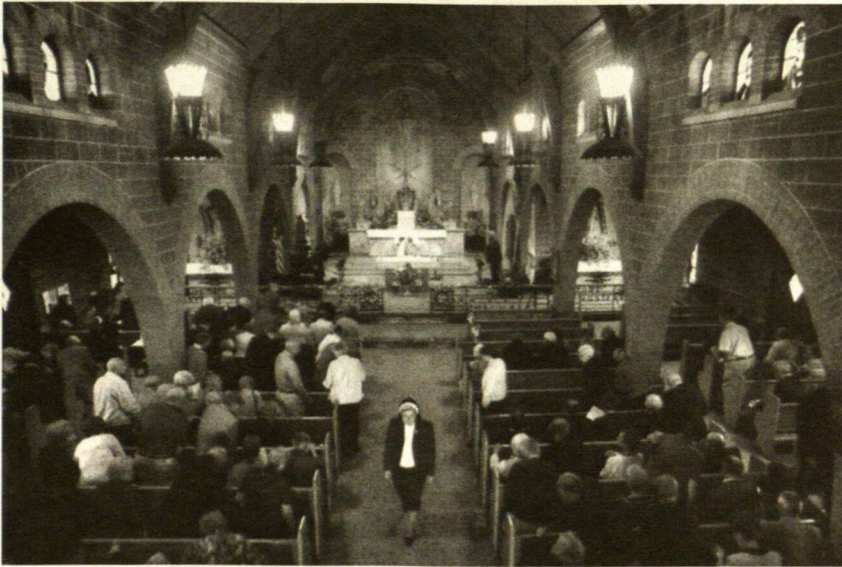
Reception after the Mass and presentation of the "Memory Gallery" - school and parish photos throughout the years from 1930's until present.

On Sunday October 16, 2005 parishioners, alumni and friends gathered in East St. Louis, Illinois to celebrate the 110th anniversary of Immaculate Conception parish. A full day of events was planned for the enjoyment of all. Quite a few of the approximately 250 people who attended traveled from as far away as California, Arizona, Massachusetts and West Virginia to reminisce and meet up with old friends.

The events were jointly planned and sponsored by the Lithuanian American Community, East St. Louis Chapter and the parish. Danutė Žabaitė Lasky, current chapter president, and her husband, John Lasky (IC grade school alumnus) spearheaded the efforts. Board members Zigmąs Grybinas, Jurgita Piotrowski and Giedrius Dailidė, along with a host of others, assisted in putting on the gala. In addition, former parishioner and school alumnus, Thom Petraitis, set up a website, www.icnation.com, as a tool for former classmates to communicate, share old photos and keep in touch.

One of the highlights of the anniversary was the release of a book, "110 Years of Faith in East St. Louis, Illinois: Immaculate Conception Lithuanian Catholic Church". The purpose of the publication is to spotlight the unique Lithuanian art and architecture of the church and to honor those early immigrants who founded the church. The current edifice was constructed in 1956, after a fire destroyed the original building in 1943. Reverend Antanas Deksnys, pastor at that time, chose Jonas Mulokas to be the architect. His style is evocative of many designs and themes found in traditional Lithuanian arts. Three other Lithuanian artists contributed: stained glass windows by Vytautas Jonynas; sculpture by Vytautas Kašuba and woodcarving by Petras Vėbra.

Although not large by modern standards, this one church contains a surprising fifty-five stained glass windows. Sixteen of those windows represent Marian shrines from Lithuania and all around the world. Full color photos of the windows and the other art works complement the chronicles of the parish. Attendees of the anniversary marveled at the professional quality of the book about their beloved church.



Guests are departing after the Mass. In front and center is Sr. Regina Marie Dubickas.

The day began with Mass at 11:30am, followed by a reception in the church hall. Light refreshments were served and guests were free to mingle and chat. One popular feature at the reception was the "Memory Gallery". Almost 200 photos sent in by alumni and parishioners were copied and assembled onto 15 large poster boards for everyone to enjoy. Several of the boards were dedicated to memories of the school and the Sisters who taught there. Other popular shots were of church groups, sodalities, First Communions, weddings, May crownings, and sports teams. One special display commemorated the ascension of the beloved Fr. Deksnys to Bishop of all Lithuanians throughout Europe.

Another special guest was Ambassador Vygaudas Ušackas, who served as keynote speaker at the banquet later in the day. He took the time to visit and sign copies of his new book. Also, the family of the late Jonas Mulokas flew in from California to take part. In attendance were his widow, Jadvyga Mulokas, her son

and daughter-in-law, Rimas and Rūta Mulokas.

At the banquet, the microphone was opened for anyone with memories to share. Not ones to be shy, many alumni told both touching and funny stories about growing up at Immaculate Conception. The earliest stories came from classes in the 30's and 40's. Representatives of every decade forward gave testimonials about how much the school meant to them, what a great education they received.

In the end, it can be said that a great time was had by all. Many old friendships were renewed, memories shared, and new hope for the future was realized.

(Copies of the book, "110 Years of Faith in East St. Louis, Illinois: Immaculate Conception Lithuanian Catholic Church" are still available by contacting Danutė Lasky at 636-256-8059 or danutezl@prodigy.net. The book price is \$25.)

Connie Evans

Editor's Note: *Congratulations to Immaculate Conception parish. May you celebrate many more anniversaries. The book truly shows the beauty of the church and its Lithuanian influence. One does not have to travel to Lithuania to see a magnificent church. East St. Louis, IL is certainly much closer.*

News and Views Continued from page 26

The film was made by director Bob Wise for the History Channel.

The battle scenes were filmed in the streets of the Vilnius Old Town, in the forests of Nemencine, in the settlement of Kairenai, at Rumsiskes Folk Museum, and at the Lithuanian Film Studio.

Information Center for Homecoming Lithuanians

EU chooses Vilnius the European capital of culture.

Brussels/Vilnius, (ELTA) - The European Union's Education, Youth and Culture Council on Monday officially announced that Vilnius, the main city of Lithuania, is nominated the European capital of culture.

In Brussels, the council decided to nominate Vilnius and Linz, a city in Austria, the European capitals of culture in 2009.

Vladimiras Prudnikovas, the Lithuanian minister for culture, who is now staying in Brussels, has stated that, once the document of the European Parliament and the EU certifying the nomination is delivered, Vilnius will begin major preparatory jobs.

The minister said that a state commission chaired by the prime minister will be made up. Other preparations will include founding a public institution for the management of the program "Vilnius - European Capital of Culture 2009" and selecting of projects.

"We are glad and feel sincere gratitude for the decision of the EU Council and Parliament, which offers us the possibility to be the first new member state of the

EU to join that pan-European program and introduce ourselves to Europe as a culture-fostering nation. We are confident that Vilnius, as the capital of a new member state, is fully prepared to relate the old tradition of European culture to current challenges and to cope with this job in the best manner", Prudnikovas said in Brussels.

In 2009, Lithuania will equally celebrate the millennium of the state, specifically the date when the name of the country was first mentioned in written sources. One of centerpieces of the celebration should be the reconstruction of the Ducal Palace in Vilnius, which had been the seat of Lithuanian dukes in the past.

Information Center for Homecoming Lithuanians

Dissent, Freedom, Democracy!

One of the most widely known former Soviet dissidents is peace activist and advocate for democracy, former Israeli government minister Natan Sharansky. He stood tall and brave against the KGB for human rights and democracy, and democratic reform in the repressive Soviet Union alongside dissidents Sakharov of Russia, Kovalchuk of Ukraine, and Petkus of Lithuania with whom he was jailed in the same Soviet prison.

His presentation on the prospects of Peace in the Middle East and Democracy's true worth was on November 9th 2005 at Landerhaven Reception Center in Cleveland. It was organized by the Ohio-Israel Chamber of Commerce and the American Friends of Midreshet Beit Shean and co-sponsored by the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland as part of the Robert Goldberg Distinguished Lecture Series.

Howard Gudell president of OICC, Wendy Shwartz president of AFMBS, and Yoel Cohen director of Midreshet Beit Shean greeted the capacity crowd. Bill Heller chair of JCFC's Partnership 2000 program welcomed the assembled. Sharansky's daughter Rachel Sharansky presented her father to the attentive audience.

Natan Sharansky gave a moving account of the struggle of the dissidents against the totalitarian regime of the former USSR. He inspired all with his dedication to democracy building.

He believes that Israel is on the right track in giving concessions to the Palestinians but that it must maintain its support for the democratic government in Palestine. True peace can only be achieved if the surrounding Arab States become democratic. To that end, he believes the USA has to inspire democracy building among the local peoples, work with them and not only with the entrenched leaders and their regimes.

Lithuanian Consul for Ohio Ingrida Bublys and Dr. Viktoras Stankus, vice-president of the Lithuanian American Community Cleveland Chapter attended Sharansky's presentation. They were gratified that during the question and answer period moderator Cynthia Dettelbach, editor of The Cleveland Jewish News, picked their Lithuanian community question from among the numerous handed in written questions for Sharansky to answer.

Sharansky answered that Russia today is not the same as the former Soviet Union, millions are not imprisoned in concentration camps, but restrictions remain on the press etc. Thus the former dissidents, those countries now free of that system should maintain ties and propagate the safety and growth of democracy. For example, Sharansky related that he had been recently invited to speak at an event in Georgia where the Lithuanian leaders and those of the other Baltic countries pledged to work on behalf of NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine.



Dr. Viktoras Stankus, Ingrida Bublys and Natan Sharansky.

After the presentation, speaking informally, Lithuanian Consul Bublys and Dr Stankus were able to highlight their community's cooperation with the Jewish community in the struggle for freedom and human rights. Dr. Stankus had the opportunity to work with Aileen Kassen and Dr. Bell of the Jewish Community Federation, with the American Jewish Committee Cleveland Chapter, and in arranging an interview for Lithuanian dissident Tomas Venclova with Al Gray of the Jewish Community Center for the Cleveland Jewish News.

Among other endeavors consul Bublys arranged and hosted a meeting of Lithuanian ambassador Vygaudas Usackas with the leadership of the Cleveland American Jewish Committee. Afterwards Dr Stankus had the opportunity to author a letter that was sent to all US Senators calling for NATO expansion including Lithuania, signed jointly by the Cleveland AJC, the Ohio Polish American Congress and the Lithuanian American Community.

Thus in the spirit of this cooperation it was so gratifying to obtain an autographed copy of Natan Sharansky's book, "The Case for Democracy, The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror"

The dedication page reads, "To the memory of Andrei Sakharov, a man who proved that with moral clarity and courage, we can change the world. Sharansky amplifies this by the closing statement in his book, "The democracies of the world can defeat the tyranny that threatens our world today, and the tyrannies that would threaten it tomorrow. To do so, we must believe not only that all people are created equal but also that all people are created equal.

Sharansky's book: www.publicaffairsbooks.com

Dr. Viktoras Stankus

Vice-President Lithuanian American Community Cleveland Chapter

Dr. Viktoras Stankus is a practicing dentist in Cleveland. He is a former captain in the US Army and a current member of the Reserve Officers Association. Dr. Stankus is President of KSU Lithuanian program- providing scholarships to students of Lithuanian descent studying at Kent State University; current vice-president of the LAC Cleveland chapter and former co-president, and former member LAC public affairs council of LAC National Executive Committee and a current member LAC National Council.

US/EU-Baltic International Environmental Symposium IN KLAIPĖDA, LITHUANIA



Joseph Vadus, Vice Pres.,
IEEE Oceanic
Engineering Society.

Oglala Sioux proverb:
*"Treat the earth well: it was not
given to you by your parents, it
was loaned to you by your children.
We do not inherit the Earth from
our Ancestors, we borrow it from
our Children."*

*There are many people in the world
working to protect the earth and its
valuable resources. Among them are
those whose goals are to protect the
Baltic Sea.*

*I have been fortunate to work on this
article with Joseph Vadus who pro-
vided me information on this techni-
cal subject and has answered my
endless stream of questions with the
greatest patience.*

*The following are excerpts from the
IEEE publication, Oceanic Engineering
Society Newsletter. The article was
written by Mr. Vadus, LF-IEEE
Symposium, Co-Chairman and Vice
President, International IEEE Oceanic
Engineering Society.*

J. D.

INTRODUCTION

The First US-Baltic International Symposium was successfully conducted in Klaipėda, Lithuania, June 14-17, 2004 with participation of all nine Baltic Nations, the U.S. and seven other nations. Sponsors included Lithuania's Ministry of Environment and Center of Marine Research; The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National

Ocean Service; The U. S. Office of Naval Research Global; and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineer's (IEEE) Oceanic Engineering Society and IEEE Region 8. The Opening Address was presented by Mr. Vaclov Stancovic, Member of Lithuania's Parliament, who recognized the importance of the Baltic Sea environment, its resources and the coastal zone. In that regard, he proposed having a moratorium on offshore oil drilling and production in the Baltic Sea. The subject of marine pollution, especially oil pollution, was covered by many papers. There were papers on potential oil spills, tracking of spills and clean up, and discussions of the controversial offshore drilling platform that just began oil production about 20 km from Kaliningrad and Lithuania's southern tip, near Nida on the Curonian Spit, a World Heritage Site. Neighboring countries Latvia and Estonia are also concerned about possible spills from this site.

MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND OBSERVATIONS

Since 1992, the Center of Marine Research in Klaipėda focused on the Lithuanian economic zone, known for: its fishery regions; spawning grounds of Baltic herring and other fish; wintering areas of birds; wide sandy beaches; developing economic and recreational infrastructure, and partly on the influence of neighboring regions. (A. Kubiliūtė, A. Stankevičius, Lithuania)

Baltic Ocean Observation System (BOOS) is a formal association of institutes from the nine Baltic Nations taking national responsibility for operational oceanographic services, which support the protection of lives and properties and the promotion of development. This includes: routine collection, interpretation and presentation of data from the ocean and atmosphere; and establishment of a marine database from which time series and statistical analysis can be obtained. BOOS focuses primarily on observations, analysis and model predictions for water level, waves, currents, temperature, salinity, sea ice, oxygen, nutrients, algae, and chlorophyll; and contributes to improved efficiency of marine operations, and reducing the risk of accidents. At present, the BOOS members are cooperating in the EU financed project PAPA, which will integrate and further develop the present operational ocean monitoring, data management and modeling activities within the Baltic Sea with the purpose of producing data products and ocean forecasts of a higher quality. (E. Buch et al, Denmark).

There is a continuing need to monitor the environment to understand processes, discover changes, and be able to forecast in different time scales and warn of pending events. Monitoring and research has a long tradition in the Baltic Sea and there are some time series going back hundreds of years, some a hundred years, and several younger mainly starting in the sixties and seventies due to increased environmental concerns. (H. Dahlin, Sweden)

Water level in the Klaipėda Strait (1898-2001), during a century rose near the Lithuanian coast by 13.5 cm. Since 1960, the mean water level has been rising by 3.0 mm per year. The rise of the long-term water level is associated with advection of warm and wet air masses during the cold period, stronger air flow from the west, and rising air temperature, which causes the rise of water temperature. A more rapid rise of the water level is attributed to the destruction of coasts, flooding of the land, and upsetting ecological balance. Forecasts state that by 2030 water level may rise by 9 cm, and, if the trend continues, 15 cm by 2050. (I. Dailidienė, B. Tilickis, A. Stankevičius, Lithuania)

OIL POLLUTION

The intense shipping in the Baltic Sea accounts for approximately 15% of all maritime traffic around the world. In 2000, 80 million tons of oil were transported in the Baltic. Forecasts indicate that by 2015, the total amount of oil transported will amount to more than 130 million tons a year. The issues of oil recovery and shoreline cleanup must be addressed. Oil is a serious threat to the Baltic ecosystems and wildlife, destroying habitats for many plants and marine life, including the spawning areas of fish. Oil decomposes slowly in the cold waters of the Baltic Sea, where the average water temperature is only about 10 degrees Celsius. Cleanup operations may unavoidably harm marine life and coastal habitats. Spills can have serious repercussions for tourism and commercial fisheries (Helcom proceedings, 2003).

The Baltic Sea presents many difficulties for navigation. Winter storms, poor visibility, narrow channels, ice cover, winding passages with limited depth on one hand, and high-density traffic areas with crossing vessels on the other, can combine to cause problems and result in high incidence of accidents. According to statistics annually in the Baltic Sea there are approximately three major accidents with oil spills. During the process of transformation of oil hydrocarbons more toxic compound can be produced that have carcinogenic and mutagenic properties. Besides acute effects of oil spills, such as polluted beaches or mass-stranding of oiled sea birds, long-term effects of spills from these incidents include, e.g. locally increased levels of PAHs contamination in sediments. (Frumin, Germany).

DANGEROUS MATERIALS

Every year, there are increases in crude oil and oil production transportation. There are about 2000 large ships and tankers operating in the Baltic Sea each day. New oil terminals were constructed in the Baltic Sea: Butinge, Primorsk, Vysock, extend oil terminals in the main East Baltic ports. Navigational risk assessments are very important, to find legal and organizational solutions to decrease navigational and environmental risk. (Y. Paulauskas et al, Lithuania)

The ecological threat posed by more than 300,000 tons of chemical weapons dumped in the shallow depth of the Northern European seas after the Second World War demands the urgent attention of the international community. The amount dumped represents more than three times as much as the total reported chemical arsenals of United States and Russia. The munitions were disposed of where fishing is actively pursued in close proximity to densely populated



Prof. Algimantas Juozapavičius, Vilnius University; Vida Klemas; Prof. Victor Klemas, University of Delaware; Prof. Raimundas Jasinevičius, Kaunas University of Technology; Joseph Vadus, Vice Pres., IEEE Oceanic Engineering Society.

coastlines, with long-term consequences. Also, the corrosion of the shells and rounds which were dumped five decades ago is progressing fast now. (Frumin, Germany)

Baltic Sea priorities are: environmental problems, environmental forecasting, ecological risks assessment from various pollutants, including those from dump sites of chemical weapons. This involves the study of processes of intra-basin mixing, and basin/basin exchange with dissolved and suspended matter. Care must be taken with dangerous situations. Such measurements were taken in the Børnholm dump site of chemical weapons (2000), in Arkona/Bornholm (2001) and Bornholm/Slupsk Furrow (2003) water exchange areas, and in the vicinity of a marine petroleum production platform built on the Sambian-Curonian Plateau not far from Klaipėda. (V. Paka, Russia)

There are 132 Hot Spots around the Baltic Sea. Many chemicals get into the sea during their manufacturing, processing, transportation and application in remediation as a consequence of emergency spills. The main ecological problems of the Baltic Sea are eutrophication, pollution with harmful and toxic substances, oil-spills accidents and sea-dumped chemical weapons. The greatest quantity of total phosphorus and total nitrogen causing eutrophication goes into the sea from the territory of Poland, and then follow Russia, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Latvia, Estonia and Germany. There are a lot of chemical pollutants in the water and sediments of the sea (heavy metals, organo-chloro compounds, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, phenols, petroleum products). According to the literature data the residence time of metals in an ecosystem of the Baltic Sea is rather insignificant for lead (7 years), cadmium (6 years) and mercury (6 years), it is a little bit more for zinc (10 years) and maximum for benzo (a) pyrene (20 years), copper (27 years) and PCBs (35 years). The entry of copper, lead and PCBs exceeds the marine assimilation capacity. (Frumin, Germany).

MARINE LIFE

Coastal fish monitoring has been carried out in the Baltic Sea coastal zone at the area north of Palanga and in two different areas of the Curonian Lagoon since 1992. Fish monitoring was performed annually using multimesh gill nets standardized and adopted by the Helsinki Commission to be used along the coastal zone of the Baltic Sea (Neuman et al., 1997). The main reasons of freshwater and migratory fish abundance increasing could be attributed to more intensive freshening and as the result warming of water in the coastal zone in process of Klaipėda Strait deepening. Migratory fish species were improved by decreasing pollution in the Nemunas River Basin. (Stankevičius; Dubra, Lithuania).

TECHNOLOGY

Naval oceanography utilizes ships, undersea vehicles and the application of oceanographic models and data bases. The latest instrumentation includes multi beam systems for hydrographic measurement and radar backscatter measurements of sea surface conditions. Environmental acoustic measurements are taken to determine ambient noise and acoustic transmission losses. Operations include application of laser hydrography and multi spectral scanner for coastal survey. Unmanned, untethered vehicles offer great potential for future applications in making oceanographic measurements. (E. Gough, J. Carroll, USA)

A cost-effective strategy for monitoring wetland change uses Landsat TM to detect biomass change over large regions and High-resolution IKONOS satellite imagery to study detail sites. These new techniques improve monitoring wetland losses, fragmentation, invasive species, riparian buffers and Chlorophyll concentration. (V. Klemas, USA)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer, Co-Chairman Dr. Algirdas Stankevičius and the Symposium Committee recognize the valuable contributions of the authors and the active participation of all attendees. The writer wishes to thank Jeanne Dorr for astutely editing the original paper for the BRIDGES readership, who are most welcome to attend the Second US-Baltic International Symposium in Klaipėda May 23-25, 2006.

BACKGROUND

Joseph Vadus was born in Minersville, PA. His four grandparents were born in Lithuania. Joseph's father, Joseph and his mother Anna were born in the United States. He attended St. Francis of Assisi Church and school and received his early education from the Sisters of St. Casimir and is a graduate of Minersville High School. He received his B.S. Electrical Engineering, Penn State University; M.S. in Ocean Engineering from Long Island University, NY and then served as Adjunct Professor of Ocean Engineering.

He retired from the U.S. Department of Commerce's

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as Senior Technology Advisor.

Mr. Vadus has 10 patents in radar, computer technology, ocean systems (6 awarded, 4 pending); over 90 publications/papers; and many major keynote addresses in international venues.

In 2002, he was in contact with the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington and received some good contacts in Government ocean-oriented organizations in Lithuania. On his own, he arranged for a meeting with Dr. Algirdas Stankevičius, Director of the Center of Marine Research in Klaipėda. During his visit in Klaipėda they planned the first US-Baltic International Symposium 2004, which was a great success. Dr Victor Klemas, University of Delaware was and is the US Chair for the Technical Program; and has contributed substantially by inviting papers and organizing sessions.

Mr. Vadus desired to interact with the "intelligentsia" to strengthen the outlook of university graduates and early careers and give Lithuania visibility among the nine Baltic Nations. Their success could 'bootstrap' those who follow. He wanted International Scientists and Engineers to come to the conference hosted in Lithuania. The theme of the 2006 Symposium "Integrated Ocean Observation Systems for Managing Global and Regional Ecosystems Using Marine Research, Monitoring and Technologies" is a new high priority topic of all coastal nations. This symposium is one of the first of its kind.....others will follow.

He is pleased to lead this activity and help Lithuania be recognized and respected in the International Community. In some small way, he hopes to provide a small "return on investment" to the many who helped him along the way: parents, grandparents, teachers, neighbors and friends. His entire career in industry (Sperry Rand Corp.) and government (US Dept. of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) was mainly focused on advanced research and development of technology and systems for the development of the oceans and their resources. His wife Gloria, active in environmental activities, has influenced his engineering development projects to be sure they were in harmony with the environment.

Mr. Vadus' many awards and honors are so numerous they would take several pages in this magazine.

Editor's Note: *A very special thank you to Dr. V. Klemas, University of Delaware, for arranging the meeting with Joseph Vadus, albeit an online meeting.*

The next US/EU-Baltic International Symposium will be held on May 23- 26 in Klaipėda, Lithuania. The web site is www.us-baltic2006.org. BRIDGES wishes the participants a successful symposium.

The Lithuanian Community in the Heartland

Kansas City, Missouri

The Lithuanian community in the Heartland, has been a charter member of the Kansas City, Missouri Mayor's Ethnic Enrichment Commission, (EEC) since its inception in 1976, the year of America's bicentennial. This organization's mission is to promote knowledge and understanding of the ethnic diversity in our city and outlying suburbs. Our community has been very active in the outreach activities of the EEC ever since joining the organization. We have two persons representing our community on the EEC.

The activities which are sponsored by the EEC on a regular basis are as follows:

The Ethnic Enrichment Festival, held each year on the third full weekend in August. This festival now in its 26th year, is held in a large city park, and is a well attended event. Every year, about 50 countries ethnically-themed booths where they sell their ethnic foods and every 30 minutes, a different country presents a musical/dance program. A beer garden features various local and international beers; there is also a fashion show, a Parade of Flags and Passport books for children 12 and under are all offerings of the weekend agenda, which make this event a must for family fun.

The annual Diplomatic Ball, which is hosted each year by a different country or group of similar countries, and features an ethnic dinner menu and entertainment from the hosting country(ies). Tickets are in the \$50 range and proceeds go toward a scholarship fund for a worthy college bound student who has been active in his particular ethnic group. For future reference, we'd like to say that our Lithuanian community will join with several Slavic countries in hosting the 2007 Diplomatic Ball, here in Kansas City, if any of your communities would like to make a weekend of visiting Kansas City and attending the Ball that year.

EEC Outreach Activities-Cultural Programs are given at churches, schools, colleges, and libraries. Our Lithuanian community also participates in civic events such as parades and public celebrations, honoring dignitaries, etc.

Since our beginnings, as a formal Lithuanian organization, (Lithuanians of America), we have held regular events for



CASTLE: Members of Kansas City community stand in front of the the Lithuanian booth at the annual Ethnic Enrichment Festival.

members, who were advised of these events through our quarterly newsletter.

The events include: An annual Independence Day Celebration, which we gradually began to include in with the celebration of St. Casimir's feast day Mass, for sake of time, repetition, savings on hall rental, etc.

An annual Kūčios Table with sampling of traditional foods, followed by a pot luck and a visit from "Father Frost" for the anoūkai, following group singing of Christmas carols.

A Mass in honor of Our Lady of Šiluva, sometimes followed by a social hour with light refreshments. We have also begun a new tradition of passing out "St. Casimir Cookies", and "Our Lady of Šiluva Sweets" after these Masses. The parishioners of the church where we have the Mass are of many other ethnic origins; and this gesture of friendship has been very positively received by the members of the parish.

Margarita's Mugė, which we have sponsored in November for the last seven years, incorporates a Lithuanian Kitchen selling Lithuanian dishes, mini dance performances, a diverse array of crafts for holiday gift giving, including amber, and a daily visit from Father Frost and photos with the children, etc.

Our Lithuanian community also has a "culture box" filled with artifacts, which we put on display at events around the city; thus presenting a "show and tell" to educate and promote greater understanding of our heritage. This is often done together with other ethnic groups to show our city's diversity of cultures.



left to right:
Sally Zemaitytė-Dannov,
Margarita Zemaitienė,
Amy Zemaitytė-Newman

The Aidas Dance group, which is the most visible sign of our Lithuanian cultural presence in the Kansas City area, has continuously performed at civic events throughout the region, since its formation in 1981. The group has performed at six consecutive Šokių Šventė since it was organized. They also perform locally at nursing homes, schools, churches, clubs, etc.

Aidas performers are not all of Lithuanian descent, but because they have shown their love of dance, and their commitment to the advancement of the group, they have been heartily welcomed into the "flock". The camaraderie in our group is one of its many strengths and our group has proved that one does not have to be born a Lithuanian to BE a Lithuanian in heart.

Charlotte Zemaitytė Horvatic

Charlotte Horvatic is a past President of the LOA. She and her husband, Dick represent Lithuania on the Mayor's Ethnic Enrichment Commission, the local international group. Charlotte has been stage manager for Kansas City's Ethnic Enrichment Festival for the past three years (Dick heads the festival). She also contributes regularly to the Varpas, the LOA newsletter, and is a founding member of the Aidas Lithuanian Dancers.

Although the KC chapter is part of the Lithuanian American Community, in America's Crossroads Region, it is also its own entity, also a not for profit, called Lithuanians of America. It was started years before the Lithuanians in this area knew there was a national group, and continues to be primary here because of the language issue. Most of the people in this chapter are descendants of "first wave" immigrants, whose grandparents/great grandparents immigrated to the US, who have no Lithuanian language skills.

*More information on the
KC community and their events can be found at
www.aidasdancers.org.*

Jeronimas Kačinskas

1907-2005

Our deepest sympathy to the family of Jeronimas Kačinskas who died in September at the Marian Manor Nursing Home in South Boston. He was 98.

Mr. Kačinskas was a composer, conductor, violinist and pianist. He was considered by some to be one of the most influential contemporary composers of his native Lithuania.

Mr. Kačinskas taught conducting and composition at Berklee from 1967 until his retirement in 1986. He was the organist and choir director of St. Peter Lithuanian Church in South Boston.

Jeronimas Kačinskas received numerous awards for his work.



CHANGE OF ADDRESS ANNOUNCEMENT!

TEMPORARY RELOCATION OF THE EMBASSY OF LITHUANIA

Due to the reconstruction of the building of the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania, the embassy will temporarily, starting December 12, 2005 until further notice, be located at:

**4590 MacArthur Blvd,
Washington, DC, 20007-4226**

All embassy sections (consular, economic, cultural, press, administration, and ambassador's and DCM office) will be temporarily relocated to the new location. Telephone numbers and e-mail addresses will remain the same.

The main telephone of the embassy is:

202-234-5860

e-mail address:

info@ltembassyus.org

Kestas Vaskelevicius

Press and Public Affairs

Embassy of Lithuania, USA

Tel (202) 234-5860, #121

kv@ltembassyus.org

YOU NEVER KNOW WHERE

You never know where you'll find a Lithuanian in a decision-making position. In Connecticut, for example, Edward Dombroskas heads the state Division of Tourism which attracts \$10 billion a year (not counting the billion generated by Indian casinos) to Connecticut and is the second largest industry in the state (after manufacturing); an estimated 120,000 jobs are directly linked to tourism.

It was Edward Dombroskas' vision that saw the possibilities of tourism for Connecticut and his organizational abilities persuaded the skeptics, organized the support, and headed the task force that proposed how Connecticut could develop tourism. In 1992, the state legislature voted to establish the Connecticut Office of Tourism and asked Dombroskas to be its Executive Director.

Dombroskas' energetic organizational abilities were noticed by his peers. In 2001, the National Council of State Tourism Directors (representing 50 states and the five U.S. territories) elected Edward Dombroskas Council Chair and re-elected him to the position 2002. In 2002, he was also honored by the National Council of State Tourism Directors with the National Tourism Director of the Year award.

Edward Dombroskas' grandparents and parents were parishioners of the Lithuanian St. Andrew's parish in New Britain, Connecticut (St. Andrew's has a special place in the heart of this article's author, because her family, World War II refugees, were welcomed at St. Andrew's when they arrived in the States). Grandfather Dombroskas was a policeman. Father Dombroskas followed his father into the police force but later became superintendent of inspectors for the town of West Hartford and still later developed the basic building codes for Connecticut that are in force to this day. "Public service runs in the family," beams Ed Dombroskas.

Ed's mother was Polish, and he grew up observing the traditions of both parents. He married Ann Marie, an Irish girl who embraced her husband's traditions and kept her own.

On Christmas Eve the Dombroskas children set an extra plate and leave the front door unlocked for a passing hungry stranger and the family shares Christmas wafers, "plotkelės", with one another and embraces in a tradition cherished by Lithuanians



Edward Dombroskas and Dr. Elona Vaisnys in the latter's office at Yale University.

Photo by Jean Edmunds

the world over.

And for Easter, the Dombroskas family colored eggs and then competed enthusiastically to see whose Easter egg would beat the largest number of weaker-shelled contenders.

The Dombroskasès live in West Hartford with their youngest, daughter Lynn, a Junior at Conard High School in West Hartford. Their older sons attend college – Ted is a senior at the University of Southern Maine and Robert is a sophomore at Springfield College.

Edward Dombroskas graduated from Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, with a major in political science. After graduation, he joined the Connecticut Attorney General's Office as a special investigator. He was soon promoted to Personnel Director of the Connecticut State University System and specialized in contract negotiations for nine years.

One success led to another and Dombroskas was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Connecticut Department of Economic Development. It was in this position, which he held for five years, that he became convinced of the importance of developing tourism for the economic growth of Connecticut.

At one of the many international tourism conferences that he attended, Dombroskas saw tourism literature from Lithuania. "I was struck by how many names sounded familiar!" He decided that he and his wife must visit Lithuania. The trip is planned for 2006-2007, a trip Ed Dombroskas intends to enjoy thoroughly as a tourist!

Does he have a message for Lithuanians? "Visit Connecticut! It is full of the spirit of Lithuanians who worked in its farms and factories, in its government and in its colleges and universities. It has Lithuanian

Renata Kucas



Getting The Best Results from Your Medications

Happy, Healthy New Year Wishes to all our dear readers!

May 2006 bring you all you desire and information you need. This month, to start this new year. I recommend the next eight tips as guidelines you should follow to always get the best results from your medications.

- Always finish taking your prescribed supply of short-term medications such as antibiotics.
- Always take your medication with a full glass of water unless otherwise instructed.
- Do not crush or mix medications into hot liquids

or foods, as this may cause a medication to lose its effectiveness.

- Never take any over-the-counter or prescription medications with alcohol.
- Never take any unfinished prescription medication or medications prescribed for another reason, without a doctor's approval.
- Never take anyone else's prescription medication.
- Always check the label of your medications for instructions on storage.
- Do not take outdated medications!

Renata Kucas

Pharmacist Renata Kucas BA, BS, Rph. has 24 years experience. She currently works at the nation's first hospital, Pennsylvania Hospital, located in center city Philadelphia. She will address current topics and at times make suggestions for improving your own approach to managing medications or addressing your personal health-care concerns.

parishes and a Lithuanian cultural archive at a Lithuanian sisters' convent, a castle built by a Nazi concentration-camp survivor Father Yla, and an annual picnic that attracts several thousand Lithuanians and features a program performed by 100 Lithuanian campers. It has chapters of the Knights of Lithuania, "Vyciai", and chapters of the Lithuanian American Community whose current president and most of the National Executive Committee live in Connecticut."

"But come to Connecticut also for American history (old time Mystic Seaport, submarine museum in Groton) and culture (the houses of Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher Stowe of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" fame), visit Yale University, enjoy the International Festival of Arts and Ideas, and come for the rest and relaxation offered by our bed-and-breakfasts in beautiful settings, our skiing, our fishing, our beaches."

Connecticut, indeed, is a state that has a lot to offer, even if its Lithuanian Director of Tourism says so himself.

Elona Vaisnys

Elona Vaisnys, Lithuanian American Community National Executive Committee Vice President for Community Development, is Editor and Webmaster of the five departments of engineering at Yale University. She holds a Ph.D. in French literature from Yale.

Remembering the Past

In a recent Chicago Tribune Travel Section article the European Parliament has called on European Union member states to support its proposal for promoting the route of the former Iron Curtain dividing Eastern and Western Europe as a tourist trail.

The proposed trail would start at the Arctic Sea and lead along Finland's border with Russia, and then through the Baltic States and Poland to Germany. Here it would shadow the former border between the eastern and western part of the country. It would continue along the Austrian border with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary and along the Danube to the Black Sea.

The idea was partly inspired by the Boston Freedom Trail which commemorates the Revolutionary War in the United States and the Berlin Wall Trail, a 100-mile route that follows the wall that divided the German capital during the Cold War.

Submitted by: Ramunė Kubilius

CULTURAL (and other) TIDBITS*Continued from page 7*

dance group and later was a long time director of the Knights of Lithuania folk dance ensemble of Chicago. His contributions to the promulgation of Lithuanian folk dancing and Lithuanian culture deserve a separate, more thorough article. **Frank Zapolis** was honored with a special award and a medal presented by **Faustas Latėnas**, vice-minister of Lithuania's Ministry of Culture.

The evening's surprise award of special distinction was sent by Lithuania's Department for Minorities and Emigres. The Cultural Council presented the unique gift plaque from Lithuania to **Antanas Vėlavičius** and a bouquet of roses to **Mrs. Viktorija Vėlavičius** for their untiring help for whatever task the Lithuanian American Community, Inc. needs to have done. Antanas Vėlavičius is available for cultural projects, Human Services Council activities and anywhere an extra pair of hands is needed. Never seeking recognition or gratitude, he was surprised by the attention and applause. Reluctantly he approached the stage to receive his gift.

The Awards Gala was honored by the presence and greetings of Vice-minister **Faustas Latėnas**, Arvydas Daunoravičius, Lithuania's Consul General for Chicago, **Mrs. Regina Narušis, Esq.**, Chair of the Board of Directors of Lithuanian American Community, Inc., and **Mrs. Sigita Balzekas**, Executive President of Lithuanian Foundation. Official proceedings and presentations were followed by a concert by tenor **Arūnas Dingelis** of Lithuanian State Opera. All who heard his singing came away impressed and convinced that Arunas Dingelis is a rising star to watch.

Sources: "Draugas" and "Amerikos lietuvis"

..... and other tidbits**For 2006 tourists planning to visit Lithuania**

The Botanical Gardens of Kaunas, which belong to Vytautas Magnus University, will have a new look next spring. Reconstruction and modernization of the Gardens' infrastructure is part of "Ecological, scientific and cultural development of tourism at Kaunas Botanical Gardens" project funded by the European Union. It is hoped that by May Open Door Days in Kaunas, the reconstructed greenhouses, landscaping with water pools and new lighting will greet local visitors and tourists. An international scientific three day conference on the indigenous plants of the Baltic region will highlight the opening of the reconstructed Botanical Gardens.

The Tourism and Culture Center of Palanga is planning to install computerized information terminals for its visitors. The six terminals placed at strategic city locations

will be available 24 hours a day. They will relay information in four languages (Lithuanian, English, German and Russian) on festivals, entertainment venues, hotel or guest house accommodations with capability to make reservations and accept payment for all of the above. The terminals are expected to carry advertising for hotels, restaurants and cultural events. The administration of Palanga will submit a grant request to the European Union for the development of tourism in the city.

The Hill of the Crosses, also, is not lagging behind in providing services for the thousands of tourists who visit the site during all times of the year. Plans are in the making to provide more convenient parking, improved rest area facilities and an information center. The construction of Hill of the Crosses administration building also is in the plans. It is anticipated that these improvements will be financed by Lithuania's government and the European Union. Work already has started to make the area around the Hill safer, with handrails along the wooden steps leading to the top of the hill and other safety features.

Source: Information Center for homecoming Lithuanians

Have you checked out the official web site of the Eighth Song Festival sponsored by the Lithuanian American and Lithuanian-Canadian Communities to be held in Chicago July 2, 2006? www.lithuaniansongfest.org is now accessible in both Lithuanian and English. Every bit of information about the Song Festival is there - list of participating choirs, the program, the official events, tickets, hotel accommodations and much more. And it is not too soon to make hotel reservations which can be done from the web site. I already made mine! Hope to meet many BRIDGES readers in Chicago in July!

Terese M. Gečys

Terese M. Gečys is Fourth term member of LAC Board of Directors, 2000-2003 secretary of LAC National Executive Committee and past as well as current president Philadelphia Chapter of LAC.

Rimvydas Šilbajoris, Ph.D.

1-6-1926 to 12-3-2005

Just as the December 2005 BRIDGES was reaching our readers' homes, we received word that Prof. Rimvydas Šilbajoris, the author of an introduction to an article by Marija Gražina Slavėnas about poet Janina Degutytė, died suddenly December 3, 2005 just one month before his 80th birthday.

We express our sincere condolences to the family and friends of prof. Šilbajoris. He will be deeply missed not only by his family, but by all who enjoyed his insightful reviews of Lithuanian literature.

Margaret Kosmala

POSTCARD FROM THE STRIP

The Lithuanians' Cup

Great Fencing Mixes With Warm Hospitality



KAUNAS

Juratė picked us up at the airport and drove us into the suburbs of Kaunas, Lithuania's second largest city. After snaking through miles of concrete Soviet-era apartment buildings, we parked at one of these gray monoliths and scaled its dimly lit stairs. Inside was a completely different world; the apartment was full of light and warmth, with beautiful wooden furniture filling the rooms and heated tiles under foot. Juratė's friend Rita greeted us with a wide smile as her husband fit mittens onto their children's hands. This was just my introduction to the vitality and hospitality that welcomed me in Lithuania.

I had traveled there with my German club mates, Carmen and Vanessa, to fence in the Lithuanians' Cup at Juratė's invitation. As tournament organizers, Juratė and Rita took us to the venue a day early to oversee the preparations. The site was in a small school gym, which was old, dilapidated and reeked of sweat. The bathroom facilities were meager, and as I watched, a man nailed an electric strip directly into the gym's wooden floor. I was a bit dismayed.

I learned quickly of the challenges to the Lithuanian Fencing Federation. For starters, Lithuania is small in size, with a population of only 3.6 million—about the same as Los Angeles. The country, which threw off Communist rule only fourteen years ago, has struggled economically and so funding of athletics has not been a high priority. As a result, fencing in Lithuania is limited to one weapon: epee. The two major cities, the capital Vilnius and cultural center Kaunas support Lithuania's three clubs, sustain all one hundred of its fencers, and host the two national tournaments: the Lithuanians' Cup

in December and the Lithuanian Championship in May. Two fencing schools train junior fencers until the age of 23. Then, if a fencer hasn't achieved International results, it can be difficult to find coaching support to continue competitive fencing. (Juratė and Rita, along with a few others, have recently established a club focusing on adult fencers to address this shortcoming.)

When I arrived at the venue the next day, my dismay evaporated. The gym had been transformed by posters, pictures, ribbons, and balloons. A festive raffle table and a winner's podium had been set up, and anticipation filled the air. The two events—women's and men's—were run with alacrity, new machines, and professionalism. The women's epee event was small by international standards: 22 competitors, including four Latvians who had braved a snowstorm, my two friends, and me, an American. And it was strong. Several of the fencers were world ranked and one of the Latvians was a former Olympian.

The day started with the roll call. We lined up in a row and stepped forward to salute the bout committee as each name was called. The head of the national federation gave a brief introduction and then fencing began. I ended up coming out of the pools in the middle of the field and ended up losing my first DE 15-13 to the eventual silver medalist. Juratė (who defeated Vanessa) and Carmen both advanced, but then lost in the round of eight. So we headed back to Rita's for showers and then returned later that afternoon to watch the finals.

The final four of women's and men's epee was a splendid affair. At 5:00,

there was a large and eager gathering of spectators lining the walls on benches and chairs. The women's and men's bouts alternated, giving the fencers a chance to rest without any dead time for the spectators. And while the fencers hooked up, the audience was treated to short dances by a troupe of high school girls. The two semifinal bouts in the women's epee were intense and fun to watch, each pitting a Lithuanian against a Latvian, and each ending with a narrow 15-14 score. In the end, the gold was won by Latvian Julija Vansovica, who was world ranked 36th.

Over the next couple of days, we were treated to more of the generous hospitality of our hosts. Juratė, Rita, and her family took us to see a fourteenth century castle, and gave us tours of both Kaunas and Vilnius. They treated us to traditional food and plied us with a variety of Lithuanian liquors. And when the time came to leave, we each were bestowed with a festive cake made out of flaky pastry to bring home.

By the end of the trip, I had become deeply impressed with the hospitality, energy, and resourcefulness of our hosts, the Lithuanian fencing community, and the people of a country that has undergone such enormous recent change. It made me realize how much can be done with so little, both in fencing and in life.

This article first appeared in the Summer 2005 issue of American Fencing.

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Submitted by: Dr. Edward Wicas



Pirmas Žingsnis - The First Step

Whether or not you personally approve of allowing young children to watch television or videos, there are plenty of people who allow their children to watch an indiscriminate amount of both. As a mother of three young children, I have found that allowing them to watch some (judiciously chosen) programs works better than a total boycott of these art forms. At least I then have some control over what they see and can help them develop some decent standards.

Living in the United States, our children experience all types of animation on television, videos and at the movie theatres. Some videos or programs feature stories and fables which teach children and keep them entertained, while some videos and programs feature way too much violence. Some of the animation is wonderful, some is terrible and much falls somewhere in between. The colors, the action, and the music are all riveting and entertaining.

The problem is much of this treasure trove is in English. For those of us trying to teach our children Lithuanian, there is a dearth of available quality material. I have a number of children's videos that have been translated (in some cases rather poorly with incredibly annoying voices) into Lithuanian from English (in many cases via a Russian translation). Some of the features I have seen in this category include a number of the Teletubby series translations, White Fang, The Wind in the Willows etc. I personally find them distracting because the original soundtrack can still be heard and the songs remain in English.

It was certainly a pleasure to see the video PIRMAS ŽINGSNIS from Debris Imaging, Inc. Andrius Stankus, the producer of the film, is a professional animator with four young sons. With the help of his wife and some friends (including some with an education background), he put together a wonderful video for children learning Lithuanian. The video features a friendly crocodile named Karis who introduces the different sections of the video. Colorful animation and a variety of voices and music introduce the alphabet, numbers, colors, forms and opposites in Lithuanian. The film also features a short section with a song about an annoying fly. There is enough repetition for children viewing the film to learn the concepts, but not enough to be annoying to either children or adults. This video is approximately 30 minutes long. My children have enjoyed watching it over and over and over ... The film has been out for a while, but doesn't get dated – my 2 year old is now watching it and enjoying it thoroughly. I'm sorry that this wonderful addition to Lithuanian children's resources did not receive more publicity.

This video is a great gift for the little ones. Here's hoping that another wonderful gem follows this important first step!

Audra Kubilius Daulys

Pirmas Žingsnis costs \$15 and can be obtained from:

**Andrius Stankus
c/o Debris Imaging**

1438 West Kinzie Suite #100, Chicago, IL 60622

312-850-0366

pz@debrisimaging.com

Please add \$3 for shipping. Illinois residents should add 8.75% state tax.

Lithuanian Legends - Continued from page 25.

subordinates, in drinking, gambling, debauchery and immoral living. Finally, one day, the old god, Perkūnas, destroyed the castle and burned all the houses, and the entire village with all its inhabitants sank into the earth. Some people say that if one passes there at night, one can hear a bell ringing from out of the depths. Those lost souls who dwell underground are begging the passerby to have mercy on them, release them, and allow them to rise to the surface. But above them and enclosing them, is a thick swampy bog and dense growth. It is said by the old folk, that the salty water of Druskininkai is the tears of those trapped underground at Raigardas.

Translated by Gloria Kivytaite O'Brien

Source: The tales were translated from several sources including "Lietuviškai Apie Lietuvą". Gloria Kivytaite O'Brien is a frequent contributor to Bridges. She grew up in Brooklyn, Annunciation Parish. Gloria can be contacted at Senaboba@aol.com

CORRECTION:

The November issue of Bridges contained an error in the "Devil and the Lithuanians." The second paragraph should have read Džukas rather than Džukija and the third paragraph should have been Aukštaitis rather than Aukštaitija. We apologize to Gloria and the readers.

M. G. Slavenas



M. G. Slavenas

TRANSLATOR'S COMMENTS

Janina Degutyte's (1928-1990) literary career coincides with the half-century of Lithuania's occupation by the Soviet Union. Born in pre-war Lithuania, Degutyte made her debut in the repressive climate of the mid-fifties and continued her literary career for the next four decades under varying pressures and restrictions of censorship. Her creative life was cut short by cancer in 1990, one month before Lithuania regained her independence. A two-time recipient of the prestigious National Poetry Award, she enjoyed an unceasing popularity which is attested to by the fact that her work was published and republished numerous times, the last two-volume collection of what now constitutes her entire output appearing as late as 1988. Among the writers of her generation, Degutyte represents Lithuanian lyric poetry at its finest. In English, it is largely unknown.

This collection offers a good cross-section of her creative output. With main emphasis on her best-known poetry from the sixties, it also includes several early poems and another few written during the last months of her life and left in manuscript. American readers should keep in mind that her poetry, in order to be fully understood and appreciated, must be read and interpreted in the political, social and cultural context of her times. This requires a re-orientation from the poetic idiom current in the West to the subverted multi-dimensional language which was used by artists working under repressive Communist regimes in the East.

Degutyte's early work was shaped by the neo-romantic and symbolist traditions as represented in Lithuanian literature by Salomėja Nėris and Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas. Among foreign poets with whom she found a spiritual affinity (some of whom she translated) are Rilke, Rimbaud, Celan, Akhmatova, Tsvetaeva and Pasternak. Out of these influences emerged a distinct voice of her own, marked by a beguiling lightness of touch and a very special sensibility. Writing in a precarious political climate, Degutyte yet succeeded in defining for herself a private realm separate from the corrupt public domain and within this realm to reclaim a degree of social and aesthetic freedom. Behind the seeming simplicity of her language, she offered a spiritual dimension filled with layers of personal and symbolic meaning which found an immediate echo among her readership.

Degutyte was an intensely committed poet. She was one of the first to raise environmental concerns and through her poetry point to the destructive side of the publicly lauded progress of civilization. In 1961, following Yevtushenko's famous "Babi Yar", she dedicated two poems to victims of the Holocaust, a

subject largely unmentionable in the Soviet Union. Equally unmentionable were the traumas suffered by Lithuanians during the war and the subsequent Soviet and Nazi occupations which she witnessed as a child. Within the constraints of traditional form, in shuttered phrases and veiled images, imbuing simple words with new meaning, Degutyte was uttering the unutterable. Reaching deep into folklore and mythology, through rhythms and images of folksongs and dirges, she cast herself in the role of a mother searching for the grave of her son or a sister trying to break an evil spell. In the process she created an archetype of Lithuanian women as symbols of silent resistance and survival. She used names and concepts familiar in European literary tradition and endowed them with special meaning applicable to her present. Cassandra talks about rising castles and galloping horses behind the fog, even though no one believes her. Scheherazade continues to weave her tales because the "last handful of soil" is still "unpaid". Sorrowful Niobes walk on "long bridges of memory" to search out the condemned but succumb in the end. The name most often associated with Degutyte is Antigone, from the poetic cycle "Roles". Antigone defies the king's orders in order to bury her slain brother and redeems wrongdoing through personal sacrifice because she adheres to an inner law Standing far above what the poet calls "temporary human laws". Antigone is a symbol of an unconditional moral commitment in an arbitrary, immoral world. In her own quiet, gentle ways, Degutyte is equally uncompromising in matters of conscience. During the period of the sixties, her voice was the quiet but resolute voice of conscience for an entire nation which had no voice.

In her autobiography, the poet refers to her life as a sequence of "losses and deprivations". In its direct, unpretentious authenticity, her fragmented autobiography, published in 1996 by the literary critic Viktorija Daujotyte, is one of the saddest books I have ever read (*Klausimai. Janina Degutyte: Atsakymai.* - Vilnius: Regnum, 1996). Using biographies as tools of interpretation is fraught with danger, but in this case it is an important key, offering glimpses into the personal life of an intensely private woman who as a child had to learn in the hardest way how to endure loss, neglect and rejection. Her father, who loved and protected her, was killed in 1942 during Lithuania's occupation by Nazi Germany. She mourned him all her life and dedicated a number of touching poems to his memory. After her father's death, she was left with her mother, an incurable alcoholic, who put her young daughter through long periods of deliberately cruel mental and physical abuse. Janina knew hunger and the shame of covering up for her mother. A severe case of rheumatic fever almost took her life and permanently damaged her health. Given the sordid reality of her childhood, we can only marvel that she did not lose her very soul.

Janina Degutyte is a survivor, but not at the expense of others. She did not turn hard or cold. From the injustices which she suffered comes her strong sense of justice, the deep sympathy for the oppressed, an astounding capacity for compassion, the sensitivity for all things living. Unable to reach her mother, she yet never abandoned her. Echoes of this destructive and inextricably co-dependent relationship haunt her poetry, but they are transformed. In her poems we find repeated references to a hard and cruel fate but not so much as an unbearable burden as one which she has taken upon herself by choice as a moral imperative. An undercurrent of sadness is always present, but this sadness is not of the hopeless and oppressive kind. It is filled with a wisdom and an understanding which can produce an almost healing effect.

In the history of Lithuanian lyric poetry, Degutyte is first and foremost a poet of nature. Although born and raised in the city, she has a deep and lasting spiritual bond with nature, both the immediate and the sensed world. At times she seems to merge with nature and to understand its very language. She talks to trees, communicates with birds, hears the whisper of each stirring leaf. This oneness is well reflected in the poem "Laments": "Tell me the flower into which you will be born, tell me the wind in which you will come alive". The smallest helpless creatures - a new born kitten, a blade of grass, a fluffy dandelion - are as sacred as any other form of creation, and she treats them with reverence and loving attention. Her nature poems are sometimes snapshots of minutest details, at other times filled with symbols and visions. Each new reading can evoke different reactions. Her favorite forms are miniatures which come in many shades and hues, like delicate water colors where each light stroke has to be exactly where it is and just touching it seems like an intrusion.

Degutyte's landscapes are drawn from the familiar nature surrounding her, the subdued landscape of northeastern Europe, the sights and sounds of her native Lithuania, which she loves. Recurrent images are sea, sky, surf, dunes, fields, a riverbank, a winding country road, flowers, trees. Her landscapes are filled with trees: defiant pines on the windswept shores of the Baltic Sea, silent self-sufficient spruces rising against the northern sky, a luminous apple tree blossoming in spring. Trees have a special significance in her worldview and assume many meanings. They can stand for truth, endurance, kindness and hope. A powerful metaphor is the solitary bare-branched tree in November. Her love of nature merges with love for her homeland, which is always described through images drawn from nature. One of her last poems, "It is easy to leave at dawn", reads like a personal prayer beckoning her into the unknown.

While she herself was grappling with complex personal problems, severe bouts of illness and thoughts of suicide, in her poetry she affirms life and embraces it in all its forms. An often-quoted example of this willingness to open herself to

life with every fiber of her being is the poem "Intermezzo" ("I am opened bare..."). In "Hamlet, from the cycle. Roles", a small rippling wave coming from the depth of the sea and expiring at her bare feet is enough reason for her "to be". Equally Strong is her sense of mission: "To live means to long for eternity".

Degutyte's later collections, published during the last decade of her life, show a gradual change in style, tone and mood. The mood is somber, the language more deliberate, the poems more reflexive, contemplative, even confessional. Some of the old themes re-emerge in new forms. A recurrent theme is her calling as an artist and the acceptance of this responsibility as her destiny at the expense of personal happiness. In an earlier poem ("Bread and Salt"), she sees herself enter the world as a "guest", almost triumphantly, through a "high gate adorned with wreaths", to accept her destiny as her "bread and salt". In her last collection, the youthful exuberance changes to humility, and the immediacy of the poetic "I" is replaced by a more distanced reflection about the weight of this responsibility and the sacrifices it engenders. In the poem "Unfolding in Purple," she uses the symbol of a wild rose offering her just opened petals to the "crossfire of the four winds". In the poem about the "painfully" blossoming thornbush, Degutyte reaffirms the moral commitment with full knowledge that it comes at a price.

Women figure prominently in all her poetry, but not in their conventional role as passionate or romantic lovers. Love is cosmic. Degutyte created unforgettable images of the Lithuanian mother as a symbol of hope and survival. Her admiration goes to the unsophisticated roiling country woman who draws her strength, her compassion and her unerring sense of righteousness from the native soil in which she is so deeply rooted, not from intellectualization ("Autumnal Landscape"). Unquestioned acceptance of the female condition is a traditional concept, but the sacrifice and selflessness which her women demonstrate come from strength rather than female weakness. In Degutyte's world-view, woman is indestructible, eternal ("For many long centuries"). The poem "Universe of Mothers" is a powerful vision of woman at the center of the universe, the great earth mother as a life-giving force for all creation.

In the more relaxed political climate of the eighties, faced with her deteriorating health, Degutyte begins to reach into long-suppressed personal traumas of her life. The cycle "Sonnets of Exile", while adhering to strict form, expresses an almost unremittingly dark existential anguish. In the cycle "Beyond Hope", dedicated to the memory of her mother, she develops new tragic depths and understanding as she liberates herself from this agonizingly painful and complex relationship which haunted her all her life and deprived her of realizing and fulfilling her own needs. In its unconventional treatment of the mother-daughter relationship, this cycle is singled out

by the feminist critic Solveiga Daugirdaitė as a new theme in Lithuanian literature. (Solveiga Daugirdaitė. *Rūpesčių moterys, moterų rūpesčiai*. - Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautošakos institutas. 2000, 136-142.) Several late poems ("Evening Marathons", "River", "Samogitia") express deeply personal experiences in carefully crafted form and language. A short poem written in September of 1989 ends with the simple statement: "This is how my childhood ended". We know from the context that she was referring to the onset of the mass deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia in 1941. It is one of those ironies of history that she was not granted to see the collapse of the Soviet Union and the re-establishment of Lithuania's independence.

In her earlier poetry, Degutytė used the traditional system of end rhyme and alliteration but even then quickly transcended conventions by loosening the form and flow of the sentence and achieving the weightlessness which is a unique characteristic of her poetry. In her later work, the easy, playful rhythms give way to free verse based on internal meters and rhythms and the seeming spontaneity to a more deliberate aesthetic distance. The main ingredient of her poetry is its underlying musicality. Degutytė loves music and several poems are named after musical forms: nocturne, fugue, intermezzo, sonata. She often adopts a pattern based on sound and a distribution of accents and pauses which flow without strict logical edges according to their own inner logic, like variations on a theme.

In translation, the thematic aspect is obviously easier to reproduce than the light impressionistic touch which endows Degutytė's poetry with its special intimate quality. Seemingly casual words and expressions can be especially elusive. English has a very different emotional tone and there is always the danger of sliding into sentimentality or pathos. A turn of phrase or an exclamation which may be just right in one language can produce an entirely different effect in the other. It is a translator's responsibility to avoid such pitfalls and reproduce the original in contexts and sound patterns appropriate to the new language.

I have been working with Degutytė's poetry for more than a decade. Not knowing her personally, I got to know some of her innermost thoughts through her art. I also learned to admire her integrity, her moral courage and her deeply compassionate and humanistic worldview. The most important discovery I made in this process is the absolute honesty and authenticity of her voice. It does not contain a single false note. Janina Degutytė died on February 8, 1990. It is a great loss that her creative life was cut short at a time when she was beginning to open up and assert herself as her own person, establishing her autonomy as an artist and as a woman. This little volume is a monument to her memory and a commitment to introduce her to the English-speaking world.

In closing, I would like to thank Professor Rimvydas Šilbajoris for writing the foreword to this collection and to Professor Emily Tall and Katherine Daly for valuable comments and suggestions. Last but not least I extend my gratitude to the Lithuanian Foundation in Chicago, Illinois, for awarding me a grant which made this publication possible.

JANINA DEGUTYTĖ: POEZIJA/POEMS
Selected and translated by M. G. Slavenas
Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishers
Vilnius, Lithuania
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294 pages

To Lithuania 1 SO DELICATE

So delicate, you could easily fit
Into the palm of a Ciurlionis king.
On the table of a feasting world,
You ate our daily slice of bread.

On the globe a tiny dot.
A piece of iron mesh from the armor
of a Zalgiris knight.
The conflagration of Pirciupis.
The clearest, purest drop from lakes
in the sky.

Over grayish fallows - a green dawn.
A sunshine shower on a city square.
You are a piece of age-old amber
With the scent of pines and traces
of ancient life.

Through our love you are powerful.
In our palms you will not be hurt.
You are the dearest fairy tale
of our longing.
In our eyes a land of the sun.

The book offers an introduction by Prof. R. Šilbajoris and extensive comments by the translator. The English translations come with the Lithuanian original.

You can order it for \$15.00 by emailing the translator at slavenmg@bscmail.buffalostate.edu write to: **SlavenMG,**
PO Box 363,
Deerfield, Illinois 60015.

You can also write to:
Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishers
Sirvydo 5,
Vilnius, Lithuania
e-mail vadovas@rsleidykla.lt

Editor's note: A very sincere thank you to the translator for the many hours she spent preparing these articles for *Bridges*. M.G. Slavenas has introduced the poetry of this very complex woman to many of us who would never have had the opportunity to read her poems.



Lithuanian Geographical Legends

NERINGA

On the western coast of Lithuania, where the sun plunges into the waves of the Baltic Sea, where the Nemunas spills its waters into the Curonian Lagoon (Kuršių Marios), on a tall hill once stood the mighty castle of Ventė. An amazing giant daughter was born to its rulers, and they named her Neringa. She grew, and grew, so quickly, that at nine months of age, she was as tall as an adult, and her flaxen plaits reached the ground. She was beautiful, good, and courageous. She always willingly helped everyone. When the foaming sea threatened to overturn a fishing boat, she boldly waded through the waves, and carried the boat to safety on shore. Tales of Neringa's beauty, her good heart and fine mind, spread far and wide.

One day a great storm arose from the west. The sea carried sands onto the shore, piling up large hills, and the strong winds tore them down. The waters of Nemunas and the sea threatened to overtake the land. Ventė, which guarded the mouth of the Nemunas, was in deadly peril. Neringa, thinking quickly, immediately began to build an embankment around the castle. She filled her apron with sand from the sea bottom, and carried it towards the land near Ventė, then emptied it. Again and again, despite the raging wind, Neringa carried the sand, and built a long rampart, saving the castle. As she carried the last apronful of sand, the ties on the apron broke, and a veritable hill of sand fell into the waters near shore. In that place, the lagoon is shallow, not more than one meter deep. And that is how the Neringa peninsula ("Curonian spit") was made, and the famous dunes of Nida were created.

HOW ANYKSČIAI GOT ITS NAME

A young country girl came to a little river, which ran from the Rubikių lake into the Šventosios river, to wash some clothes. She worked for a long time, vigorously flailing at the wash with her wooden beater. Weary after a while, she fell to daydreaming and accidentally hit her thumb so hard that she cried out in distress and pain: "Ai nykštį!, Ai nykštį"!! (Ow, my thumb! Ow, my thumb!)

She shouted so loudly, and complained so pitifully, that many people from the neighborhood rushed to help. When they saw what had happened, they consoled the girl, laughed a little, and went back home. From then on, people began to call the little river Anykšta, and when a town grew at its mouth, they named it Anykščiai.

SAMOGITIA'S LEGENDARY PLACES

PLATELIŲ LAKE

Near the little town of Salantai, in western Lithuania, lies the Platelių lake. Its banks curve and meander,

and its bottom is pitted and bumpy. Legend says that a large palace, filled with great wealth, is buried at the bottom of the lake. Here an evil princess caused the death of a serf by requiring him to dive in search of her diamond comb. Then she caused his grieving mother's death as well, by her callous indifference. The mother's curse dragged the princess and her castle down into the depths of the lake.

MEDVĖGALIS

The highest hill in Samogitia (Žemaitija) is Medvėgalis, which is actually made up of seven mounds. Many tales are told about Medvėgalis, where, it is said, pagans in olden days burned ritual sacrifices to the old gods. There once was a mighty, impregnable fort at the top of Medvėgalis, and it is said that the fort, with all its warriors and inhabitants, sank into the hill, never to be seen again. But when long, dark nights arrive with autumn, frightful things happen on Medvėgalis. Oxen are heard to scream and bellow; horses neigh in response, and loud and terrible moans are heard from deep underground. Then a hundred horsemen emerge from the depths of the hill, thundering, rattling and clanging, making the ground rumble. And when the cock crows, they disappear and quiet returns.

ŠATRIJA

The hill of Šatrija is thought to be the most beautiful in Lithuania. It is round in form – a puffy bump on the earth's backbone. Long, long ago the great giant, Alčis, mourning the death of his beloved, Jaučerytė, buried her deep in the hill of Šatrija. Šatrija has a most mysterious atmosphere, and people say that, just as in bygone days, witches still ride their brooms to meet and celebrate here on many a night.

HORSE'S FOREHEAD AT PLATELIŲ LAKE

Long, long ago, on an island in Platelių lake, there lived an evil queen possessed by devils. There she had a very fine castle, and she often rode along the shore on a beautiful white mare. The villagers feared and hated this queen, and tried many times to shoot her dead, but never succeeded in their attempts. That was because the queen wore iron gloves, and always caught their flying bullets.

Once, a few people decided to make a bullet of salt. With this projectile, they shot at the horse, hit its forehead, and killed it. The horse sank to the bottom of the lake, and with it, so did the queen. The people were overjoyed, and named the place where the horse drowned, "Arkliakaktė", the Horse's Forehead.

ISLAND OF LOVE

In the middle of the slowly, peacefully flowing Nemunas, there lies a tree-covered little island known as the "Love Island". Some people say that this is where the pagan vaidilutės (priestesses) tended a sacred flame in honor of Milda, the goddess of love. Other people tell this story:

One day, some young maidens gathered on the shore of the Nemunas, weaving flower wreaths and floating them on the river. One very pretty young girl let her wreath flow away on the current. Much time passed. The same pretty girl and her beloved rode in his rowboat on the Nemunas. And suddenly, as they passed an island, she spied her own flower wreath on the shore. It had taken root, and the flowers were blooming. This was a sure sign of her beloved's great and constant love. The girl, in her great joy, jumped up into his arms and embraced him. The boat overturned, and both the girl and her beloved disappeared into the depths of the Nemunas. Ever since, people have called that place "Love Island".

THE VALLEY OF RAIGARDAS

Not far from Druskininkai lies the impressive valley of Raigardas. People say that sometime long ago, there was a town there. Its ruler was an evil nobleman, who spent his time in his castle with his

Continued on page 20

News and Views

AMERICAN CHRISTMAS PRESENT TO LITHUANIAN ORPHANS

•LINAS KOJELIS TO PRESENT TWO \$10,000 GRANTS FROM USBF ON DECEMBER 22-23 IN VILNIUS

WASHINGTON D.C. – Linas Kojelis, co-founder and board member of the U.S.- Baltic Foundation (www.usbaltic.org), departed for Vilnius, Lithuania on December 20 to present \$20,000 in grants on behalf of the Foundation to Lithuanian orphanages. The grants are a result of a generous bequest from an anonymous Washington, D.C. benefactor.

“These two ‘Christmas gifts’ represent the best of American philanthropy and generosity to people who are most in need,” stated USBF Executive Director Jeff Nelson. Washington-based attorney Ernest Raskauskas, of counsel to USBF, was the advisor on the gifts, which will be used for two US \$10,000 grants to:

- Assist children and orphans in two programs of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: 1) in Vilnius, the Angel of Hope project works with street children and their mothers, and 2) in Mariampolė, the Childrens’ Crisis Center provides temporary or longer term emergency housing, clothing, and meals for children who have been forced out of their homes, or who have been abandoned. Both projects are supervised by Sister Igne Marijošius.

- Support the Pastogė orphanage and children’s center in Kaunas, administered by Ricardas Kukauskas. He and his staff have developed an innovative internal adoption program which educates the Lithuanian public about adoption. The project works with couples interested in learning about adoption, provides education and support groups for couples considering adoption, as well as new adoptive parents.

Mr. Raskauskas, who has worked on legal reform and charitable programs in

Lithuania for more than 15 years, stated that “as Lithuanian civil society continues to develop, the welfare and treatment of its children are important indicators of the development of the society at large.” Mr. Kojelis added that “I am very proud that USBF, which we established in 1990 to build democracy in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, has accepted a new mission, now that the Baltic States have joined NATO and the European Union.” Mr. Kojelis, a founder of USBF and it’s President from 1990-1997, explained that in those years USBF raised over \$6 million dollars and designed programs in municipal government development, ethics in government, and support for independent media and non-governmental organizations. Mr. Kojelis designed programs which established Schools of Public Administration at the University of Latvia (Riga) and Kaunas Technological University (Lithuania).

“Today, USBF serves as an international ‘community foundation’ through which any American donor can help the brave Baltic people, whose leadership in 1980’s-1990’s sparked the collapse of the Soviet Union,” said Mr. Nelson. Recently, USBF grants in Lithuania include funds for youth education programs (Kaimas Project) in Akmenės, Anykščiai, Marijampolė, Molėtai, Skuodas, Ukmergė, Utena, Vilnius and Zarasai, plus scholarships to students at the Vilnius Academy of Art (Stillman-Lack Foundation), Vytautas Magnus University, Vilnius University and the Borisevičiaus Seminary (Kojelis Family Fund). USBF is a 501(c)3 organization established in Washington, D.C. On March 4, 2006, USBF will host American Baltic Celebration gala awards dinner to commemorate the 15th anniversary of Baltic independence.

AMERICAN BALTIC CELEBRATION

Honoring Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga & the 15th Anniversary of Baltic Independence March 4, 2006, Washington, DC

Jeff Nelson, Executive Director

THE U.S. - BALTIC FOUNDATION

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Submitted by Laurynas (Larry) R. Misevicius

President proposes holding international book fair in Lithuania

President Valdas Adamkus has suggested that Lithuania host an international book fair in 2009. “The participation of Lithuania in the Goteborg Book Fair is one of the most outstanding examples of how Lithuanian culture can be presented to foreign communities. This experience must be considered and used in practice, since this is not merely a commercial issue. The president even raised the idea that Lithuania may become the host of such an international book fair when the country celebrates its millennium,” said presidential spokeswoman Rita Grumadaitė. The head of state received the organisers of the Goteborg Book Fair on Monday in Vilnius. Lithuanian Culture Minister Vladimiras Prudnikovas, who attended the meeting, said that the proposal to make Lithuania the hub of an international fair in 2009 is an interesting motion and, in his opinion, should be carried into effect. This year the book fair in Goteborg, the largest one in Northern Europe, featured Lithuania as a guest of honour. Aidas Andrijauskas, the president of the National Association of Publishers, indicated that during and after the fair hundreds of reporters filed reports about Lithuania. People could see, he said, that Lithuania has rather high book publishing standards and looks very positive in the context of other European countries.

The fair was presented with a collection of about 300 Lithuanian books published in the recent period. Eighteen Lithuanian publishing companies made contributions to the fair.

Information Center for Homecoming Lithuanians

LIETUVOS RYTAS

The historic battles for America’s independence have been brought back to life in Lithuania, the daily reported in a story about the shooting of a film about George Washington, the first president of the United States.

It took five weeks for Cosgrove Meurer Productions, an American film company, to make a film about the wars in the 18th century between the French and Indians and British and the US war for independence.

Continued on page 9

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PRESENTS

LITHUANIA 2006



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Brone Barauskiene.....tel: 708-403-5717 e-mail: mamabar3@aol.com

All VYTIS representatives speak English and Lithuanian !!

Calendar of Events for January, February, March and April 2006

Please check the addresses or appropriate websites to be sure the events are still being held.

BLp(LK)1195

January - 2006

January 8, 2006 - 2 pm
Christmas Concert
dedicated in memory of
January 13, 1991
Massacre of Vilnius Defenders
St Andrew Church
1913 Wallace St., Phila. PA.
215- 765- 2322

January 14th - 19th, 2006
Lithuanian Athletic Union of
North America (LAUNA) invites
to a ski vacation/competition,
and the American Lithuanian
Medical Association (ALGS) or
its annual seminar, in beautiful
Telluride, Colorado.
Everyone is invited.
Info:

Al Bielskus 440-833-0545

January 15, 2006
TV Tower Commemoration
Blessed Virgin of the
Annunciation Church
259 North Fifth St.
Brooklyn, NY
Parish Lower Hall
70 Havemeyer St.
Brooklyn, NY.
Hall is across the
street from the church.
Info: Vladas Sidas
ID100@AOL.COM

February 2006

Feb. 4, 2006
The members of the
Mid-America District will
host their 46th Annual
"Memories of Lithuania"
Banquet at the Sabre Room
Info:
www.knightsoflithuania.com

Feb. 11, 2006 - 4 pm
Lithuanian Independence
Commemoration
Latvian Hall
11710 3rd NE, Seattle, WA
Keynote speaker:
Vaiva Vebra Gust, National
president of the Lithuanian
American Community.
Entertainment - local talent.
Potluck supper
followed by live music.
Sponsors: Washington State
Chapter of Lithuanian
American Community
www.lithuanian-
american.org/seattle

Feb. 12, 2006 - 2:30 pm
SKIING-Wilmot, Wisconsin
Info: www.waukegan-lak
countylib.org

Feb. 12, 2006 - 1:00 pm
Lithuanian Independence
Celebration
St. Elizabeth Seton Parish Hall
9728 Palmeras Drive,
Sun City, Arizona
Info: <http://www.lithaz.org>

Feb. 25, 2006 - 6:30 pm
Celebration of
February 16 and March 11
OLPH Auditorium
Speaker: Lithuanian
Ambassador Vygaudas Usackas
Program: Grandis, the Chicago
Youth Folk Dance Ensemble
Sponsor: Cleveland Chapter,
Lithuanian American Community

Feb. 25, 2006 - 7:30 pm
SPORTS EVENING-Centre Club
200 W. Golf Rd.
Libertyville, IL 60048
Info: [http://www.waukegan-
lakecountylib.org](http://www.waukegan-
lakecountylib.org)

Feb. 26, 2006 - 1 pm
February 16 & March 11
Commemoration
Oceanside Senior Center
455 Country Club Lane,
Oceanside, California
Sponsor:
San Diego Chapter of LAC, Inc.
Info: www.lithsd.org

Feb. 26, 2006
Lithuanian Independence Days
February 16 and March 11
Celebrations 10:30 am Mass
St. Andrew Church
1913 Wallace St., Phila, Pa.
Program at 2 pm
Lithuanian Music Hall
2715 E. Allegheny Ave.
Phila., Pa.
Sponsored by:
LAC Phila. Chapter and
Phila Chapter of Lithuanian
Youth Association
Info: 215-938-0783
www.phillylac.org

Feb. 26, 2006 - 2:00 pm
Lithuanian Independence Day
& Family Celebration
Greenbelt Cultural Center
1215 Green Bay Road
North Chicago, IL 60064
www.LCFPD.org
Info: www.waukegan-lak
countylib.org

Feb. 26, 2006
Lithuanian Independence Day
12 Noon Mass (English)
Our Lady of the
Assumption Church
Osterville, MA
Reception 1 pm, church hall
Keynote speaker:
Lithuanian Ambassador
to the United States,

Vygaudas Usackas
Sponsor: Cape Cod Chapter,
Lithuanian American Community,

March - 2006

March 5, 2006
Lithuanian Independence Day
Celebration
Immaculate Conception
church hall.
Mass at 10:30 am,
celebration & lunch
immediately following.
Sponsored by:
East St. Louis Chapter of the
Lithuanian American Community
Info: Danute Zabaite Lasky
636-256-8059
danutezl@prodigy.net.

March 11, 2006 - 7:30 pm
Independence Day Concert
featuring renowned opera
soloist Virgilijus Noreika
St Casimir Parish Hall,
3855 Evans St.
Sponsored by Los Angeles
Chapter of the Lithuanian
American Community
Info: www.losangeleslib.com

March 18, 2006
"Ambassador's Cup 2006"
The Embassy of the Republic
of Lithuania will host an
annual men's Basketball
Tournament.
Place: Catholic University of
America (CUA) in
Washington, D.C.
Time: Start at 8:30 am and will
continue until about 6:30 pm.
Reception will follow from
7:00 pm till 9:00 pm.
The reception will also
celebrate the 16th anniversary

2006, Nr. 1

Publication of the Lithuanian
American Community
of Philadelphia (1999)
To register - or for more info.,
Vaidas Taucius
202-234-5860 ext.130
e-mail vaidas.taucius@item-
bassyus.org

March 21, 2006 - 7 pm
Amber Roots Heritage
Club Meeting
Culture Center
Lithuanian Music Hall
2715 E. Allegheny Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19134
All are welcome.
Milliemarks@aol.com
610-497-5469

April 2006

April 9, 2006 - 2 pm
Lithuanian Easter Egg
Dyeing Workshop
Seattle, Washington
www.lithuanian-
american.org/seattle

April 23, 2006 - 12 Noon
Easter Table Buffet
St. Andrew Parish Hall
1913 Wallace St.
Philadelphia, PA
MUST HAVE ADVANCE
RESERVATIONS
Info. & Reservations:
215-969-2117

April 29, 2006 - 7 pm
Spring Concert
Philadelphia "LAISVE" Choir
Lithuanian Music Hall
2715 E. Allegheny Ave.
Philadelphia, PA
Info: 215-938-0783

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