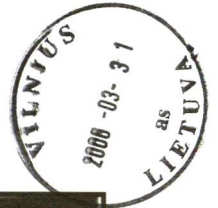


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march 2006

LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

Letter from the Editor

February and March have been very busy months. I hope you have had an opportunity to attend a local commemoration celebrating February 16 and March 11. The two dates are near and dear to the Lithuanian heart.

This year marks the sixteenth anniversary of the reestablishment of Lithuania's independence. For those who fled the communist regime or to those who traveled to visit Lithuania during that time, we truly understand what regaining independence means to Lithuania. The Lithuanian people worked hard to regain their independence and they were aided by Lithuanians all over the free world in their struggle. In trying to find something appropriate for this issue, I turned to a speech I received from the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington. President Adamkus spoke of Lithuania's role in today's world. He pointed at the success of the Baltic countries in breaking away from the Soviet Union when few people believed it could ever happen. He also spoke of the role Eastern Europe would play in helping emerging democracies. The evidence is clear; the Baltic States performed the impossible; therefore there should be hope for other nations. Democracy is within reach of other nations and this time there should be more optimists than when Lithuania issued the Declaration on March 11.

The Supreme Council Act of the reestablishment of independence is not a very long document. But the courage it took for those people who signed it was incredible. What would have happened to them and their families if the movement had failed? They were given no guarantees before they put their names on the document.

As always, I want to thank all the writers for the articles they have submitted for the March issue. I urge you to continue sending articles and events in your area to Bridges. In each issue we hope to have something of interest for everyone. I am also grateful to those of you who contact me by email and regular mail. Your input is very important and I enjoy hearing from you.

How ironic that Lithuania issued the declaration in March, the time of spring and nature's rebirth. On that note I will close this letter and wish you happy reading and a happy spring.


Jeanne Shalna Dorr

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*Cover: Artwork is a woodcut of Saint Casimir by Vytautas Ignas, detail of a section of work from 1968 entitled "Lithuania".

Discovering Terra Democratica in Eastern Europe and Beyond: Successes, Challenges and the Way Forward”

Sixteen years ago this month, Lithuania declared the rebirth of independence. Yet, on an historical timeline, sixteen years is merely a dot. In that time so many things have changed. The hopes and dreams of joining NATO and the European Union have been realized. Vilnius has undergone a renaissance and can proudly stand with any capital city in Europe. Of course, no gift is greater than freedom and human dignity. But there are still many issues that need to be resolved.

I selected this speech by President Adamkus to point out where Lithuania has gone and the path it hopes to take in the future.

Jeanne Dorr



President Valdas Adamkus in Vilnius at January 13th. Commemoration in front of the Parliament.

Photo by Banga Grigaliunaite

Chicago Council on Foreign Relations
Chicago, September 19th, 2005

Distinguished Chairman, Dear Members of the Council,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today again, among the friends, former colleagues, and many others whom I know from way back. Let me express sincere gratitude for the invitation and this welcoming reception.

As you know, Chicago has been part of my life -- just like the United States has been part of lives of my countrymen, many of whom found shelter and homes in the Chicago area. I am grateful to the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, for an opportunity to return after my last appearance three years ago.

Indeed, many things have changed since our last meeting here in September 2002, when we marked together the first anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy. I would even go as far as to say that our whole outlook of the world has changed, as we

redrew, for better or worse, the way we view national security issues, challenges of globalization and interdependence.

On the other hand, some things remained unchanged. One of them -- so dear to us -- is the commitment of Lithuania and the United States to shared values and common security, their commitment to maintain and foster the transatlantic link and expand the area of democracy, political stability and welfare in Eastern Europe and beyond.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Three years ago, here in Chicago, my message to the Council was straightforward: small democracies like Lithuania can play an important role in global security, especially when they act in alliance with other democracies. My message was that size does not matter -- it is mutual support, creativity and readiness to contribute to the Euro-Atlantic family that is important for strengthening new quality relationship between Europe and the United States.

Looking back, I can see that this message was well understood and supported here, in America, and in Europe. Everyone has benefited from transformations in Eastern Europe and the consequent enlargement of the North Atlantic Alliance and the EU. Thanks to this, Lithuania now not only has the political will, but also a economic and practical foundation for acting as a Euro-Atlantic ally.

Today I would like to share my thoughts on how to advance the cause of freedom and democracy further to the East of Europe; how to apply the knowledge of successful transitions in Eastern Europe to countries and regions that are far far away from the cradles of the Velvet and the Singing Revolutions.

But first let me start with a small recollection of our recent history. Let me take you back in time to the 1990's, when Lithuania was still in the grip of Soviet Union and I was still a native Chicagoan, using every opportunity to help my country from exile. Back then, the winds of change from the Berlin Wall have awoken nations to begin their fight for independence and democracy. Though there were many skeptics in the West and even more unfriendly "opponents" in Moscow, we had no doubt that our choice was right.

How many of you gathered in this hall today believed back then that Lithuania and the rest of the Baltic countries would break away from the Soviet Union and build market economies? How many of you expected that, in fifteen years only, the post-communist Europe would return to the Transatlantic community and the European family by acceding to Western institutions?

SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA ACT

On the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania

The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, expressing the will of the nation, decrees and solemnly proclaims that the execution of the sovereign powers of the State of Lithuania, abolished by foreign forces in 1940, is re-established, and henceforth Lithuania again is an independent state.

The Act of Independence of 16 February 1918 of the Council of Lithuania and the Constituent Assembly (Seimas) decree of 15 May 1920 on the re-established democratic State of Lithuania never lost their legal effect and comprise the constitutional foundation of the State of Lithuania.

The territory of Lithuania is whole and indivisible, and the constitution of no other state is valid on it.

The State of Lithuania stresses its adherence to universally recognised principles of international law, recognises the principle of inviolability of borders as formulated in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Helsinki in 1975, and guarantees human, civil and ethnic minorities rights.

*The Supreme Council of the Republic Lithuania, expressing its sovereign power,
by this Act begins to realise the complete sovereignty of the State.*

My guess is that, if asked today, how many of you believe you will see a democratic Afghanistan, a prosperous, federal and constitutional State of Iraq or peaceful Middle East within the next decade -- we will see more optimists among us here than those who believed in Lithuania's case in the whole State Department back in the 1990's!

I believe this ability and optimism to have a vision and work to achieve it is an argument good enough to challenge ourselves and promote democratization around the globe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

European nations showed their determination and courage to bring down the Iron Wall, to unite Europe and to instill the values of democracy, free market and the rule of law into their lives. Now, it is up to our determination to make this vision a reality in the Black Sea and the South Caucasus Region, in the Middle East and Iraq.

Let me say outright – we, in Lithuania, Poland or Latvia, don't have any magic formulas on how to start and complete democratic transition. On the other hand, we are the ones who have unique experience in successful completion of the process of democratic institution building and free market reforms.

Looking back on the road we made from the occupation to become a strong market economy and a European democracy, I would say we have succeeded because of three things.

Firstly, we have never given up our principles and values to narrow pragmatic interests. We did not sell our independ-

ence for cheaper oil nor did we trade our goal to join NATO for any sort of unilateral guarantees. Secondly, our political and academic establishment was able to agree on the issues of major importance to the country, such as market reforms and foreign policy goals. Thirdly, a little help from outside contributed significantly to the success of ongoing reforms. This is the very right place and occasion to say this, because the United States has been one of the most enthusiastic supporters of Lithuania's democratization, investing not only political, but also real capital of up to 400 million USD in Lithuanian enterprises.

Today all of these issues are critical in all the states where we are witnessing volcanic eruptions of grass-roots democracy: Ukraine, Georgia or Moldova, to name a few. And probably even more so in the countries that are suffering from autocratic and isolated regimes like in Belarus.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let's make it clear - the enlargement of NATO and the European Union does not guarantee democracy in the European neighborhood and beyond. On the contrary, they put additional responsibilities and obligations on our shoulders in order to help fragile governments in the Black Sea region to go through the process of reforms and democratization.

Hard work is ahead of us. It is our obligation today to help Ukraine, Georgia or Moldova to build internal political consensus on the strategic economic and foreign policies that these countries want to pursue; to help them restore their confidence in public institutions and upgrade ways in

which public policies are made. Finally, to unfreeze the “frozen conflicts” that are obstacles to their economic development, dividing their societies.

Today these countries look at us the same way we looked at the West a decade ago – expecting encouragement, direction and, finally – a clear European and transatlantic perspective, where they will fit as full members of democratic communities.

We cannot ignore them nor can we turn a blind eye to the strategic Black Sea region that is locked between Russia, searching today for its, hopefully, democratic way, the fast-changing Turkey and the Central Asia.

We know all too well from our own experience that lack of political agreement and good governance will destroy every grain of confidence in democracy as such. And even now as we speak we are witnesses to dissatisfaction with corruption and internal political fights that discredit the ideals of freedom and democracy from Middle East to Russia and South Caucasus.

Therefore, it is our civic duty to help build open and democratic societies from Ukraine to Georgia. And as the United States and Lithuania share democratization (in the EU neighborhood) as one of the top foreign policy priorities, the time is ripe to move from words to action.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now I would like to move to the focal point of my speech. Do we have enough political will to engage in a costly project of building democracies and advancing freedom, be it in the Middle East, the South Caucasus or Eastern Europe? And if the answer is “yes”, who should take the lead in the democratization process? What instruments and ideas could facilitate the transition toward democracy? How can Europe and its smaller Member States like Lithuania contribute to building a strong Europe, surrounded by prosperous and democratic neighbors? What are the stakes in this for the European Union, the US government, the world of NGOs or for the Chicago community?

Issues of political will and leadership are central to our democratization discussion, so let’s address them first and discuss the practical steps that we are going through later.

Let me start by saying that Eastern Europe is not “finished business: yet, at least from the point of view of those who agree with Winston Churchill that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried. And discovering “terra democratica” in the Black Sea region is not a one-day-free-ride or a sweet foreign affair.

The Rose Revolution in Georgia on November 2003 was the first sign that ideas of freedom and democracy are in the air like long-awaited oxygen. It took less than a year until we saw a similar democratic breakthrough in Ukraine, where I, together with President Alexander Kwasniewski and Javier Solana, was a mediator in a series of negotiations which led to the second round of elections and a vic-

tory of democratic forces, led by the incumbent President, Viktor Yushchenko.

Taken all together – the Orange, the Rose and even the Tulip Revolution in Kirgystan – show that ideas of freedom, prosperity and the rule of law have a universal appeal. It is especially true when we speak about students and young business people, or the youth in general, who are the most active element of any society. Having this in mind, it is the new EU Member States that should take the lead and formulate a comprehensive policy for meeting the needs of democratizing Black Sea Region.

We know the region and the mindset of people, we have gone through similar reforms and we know the pitfalls and the painful medicines.

It is good to see that today leaders of all the Baltic States understand that it is too early to sit back and enjoy our achievements with a cup of tea and a Sunday “Chicago Tribune” in our hands, when our democratic know-how is required in the Black Sea Region. But let’s be realistic - we cannot do it alone.

We need the US Administration, European Union member states and the European Commission to make the vision of a free and democratic region from the Baltic to the Black Sea reality. It is not a project of secondary importance to the ones in Middle East or Afghanistan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am an optimist and a believer that it is a matter of hard work to reconnect the East and the West of Europe; that it is a matter of time to bring countries of the European neighborhood into the NATO and the European Union family.

How should we proceed then? Tonight, I would like to present a number of ideas as to how we can prepare, contribute to and by doing so – help finish the homework the countries that have chosen to embark on the road of democracy and transatlantic integration.

First, we should start from a small, yet very important and visible thing – sharing regional experience and building the regional identity in the Black Sea and the South Caucasus Regions.

It is a proven fact that regional partnerships create synergies that push the boundaries of the possible, opening new venues for cooperation and modernisation. Together these countries could be more effective in pursuing common regional interests, especially in areas of economic and social development.

In the Baltics, we achieved a lot creating a wide network of multidimensional partnerships that link regional State actors, businesses and NGOs. This is a must in order to listen to each other’s interests and agree on a common political regional agenda. I believe that a similar model could

also be successful in our neighbourhood, and we are eager to promote it.

Next May Lithuania will host a high-level New Democracies Summit for sharing successes and lessons learned from Baltic regional co-operation in order to create instruments of trust and co-operation in the South Caucasus and develop solutions for settlement of the "frozen conflicts" in the Black Sea region.

Secondly, we have to focus our efforts and contribute to building civil societies. George Soros, whom I met few days ago in New York, spent years and fortunes helping to build open societies from Hungary to Lithuania. We are grateful for his far-sighted vision and work.

Today it is our turn to lend a helping hand to our neighbours in the East, develop people-to-people contacts and assist in raising a new generation of experts and leaders.

We have some encouraging projects underway. The European Humanities University – a Belarusian University – that was forced into exile by Lukashenko's regime is a unique, transatlantic project advancing the case for freedom and democracy in Belarus. It is a real alternative to the regime that is desperate to suppress the teaching of democratic values and skills to future generations of the Belarusian people.

The University will make "ideology-free" research available to hundreds of Belarusian students. Situated in Vilnius and sponsored by the Lithuanian Government, private foundations, the European Union and the American Government, it seeks to revitalize the spirit of intellectual life for Belarusians by Belarusians. I am happy to note that The MacArthur Foundation from Chicago, headed by Jonathan Fanton, is one of the staunchest supporters of this project.

Last, but not least, we have to enhance coordination and cooperation between EU and United States wide "democratization" agendas. We are in no way competitors, but partners when we want to widen the area of stability and security. The sooner we pool our expertise and efforts, the better for Belarus, for the Black Sea Region and Caucasus and for real, democratic changes in Russia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

"Freedom is on the march", to quote a letter of the US President, George W. Bush, to me, referring to our joint democratization efforts in the region.

From my experience in the office as a President, I know quite well that some leaders and states view efforts of the United States or the European Union in the Middle East, Iraq and Afghanistan with suspicion. Expansion of democratization has nothing to do with the past territorial or ideological expansion which brought loss of independence and destruction to small nations across Europe.

Its origin and the logic behind it are completely different.

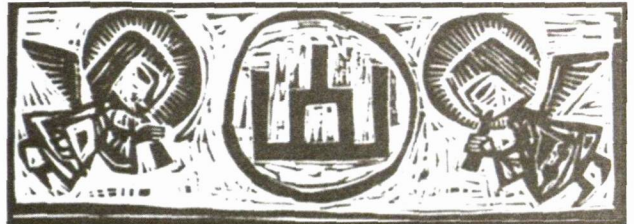
Its results – the emergence of democratic communities and stronger economies, safeguarded by Paxa Americana is exactly the opposite to the Cold War "divide and rule".

Therefore, today we have no other choice but to continue on the road of freedom. It is the only window of opportunity for those that want enjoy the right to live and work in secure and prosperous democratic communities.

I wish you all the best in your truly inspiring and challenging endeavors.

Thank you for your attention.

President Valdas Adamkus



Detail of woodcut "Lithuania", by Vytautas Ignas

Vytautas Ignas-Ignatavičius

Vytautas (1924-), painter, born in Zacižas, county of Raseiniai, on May 16, 1924. He started his studies at the Vilnius Art Academy in 1941 and graduated from the School of Applied Art in Freiburg i. Br. in 1948. Arriving in the United States in 1949, he worked in stained glass studios in Cleveland, Chicago, and New York. A member of the Print Club Gallery of Philadelphia, he is a freelance stained glass designer in New York, where he teaches at the Catan Rose Institute of Art. His work has met with critical approval and been acquired by the Cleveland Museum of Art. A prolific painter, Ignas is attracted to expressionism, although he lacks the virulence of some expressionists. He has been influenced by Lithuanian folk art and by primitive art in general. Stained glass spirit and technique have affected the form and composition of his oils and graphics, but not the color or the ultimate purpose of his art. His technique is marked by simplicity, as he disdains a rich palette in favor of a few main tones charged with a symbolic quality. Man's solitude is a frequent theme in his paintings, which have a distinct philosophical dimension. The ascetic atmosphere and the haggard figures in some of his paintings are an expression of Ignas' existentialist stance and his concern with social problems. His work is also replete with references to his native Žemaitija. While his watercolors reveal more of his spontaneous feeling, they do not leave a lasting imprint on his work. He also works in mixed media.

* From ENCYCLOPEDIA LITUANICA

**The artist and his wife will be relocating to Lithuania in May.*

St. Alphonsus Church "Where Saints Have Prayed"

*St. Alphonsus Church
Saratoga St. at Park Ave
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Telephone 410- 685- 6090*

Dear Friends,

There was a time when downtown Baltimore was all about shopping at Hutzler's, Hochschild's, Steward's, and the Hecht-May Company. Many people would come in to beautiful St. Alphonsus Church for Mass and to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and pray the Miraculous Medal Novena or just to light a votive candle.

The big department stores are all gone from the downtown area but St. Alphonsus Church is still standing - like a beacon in the night.

St. Alphonsus Church is still a "Powerhouse of Prayer". It is a place where saints have lifted their voices in prayer, especially St. John Neumann and Blessed Francis X. Seelos. Both men were pastors here, and with them you and I are a part of the Communion of Saints. As a part of that Communion of Saints, our prayers are for those who are suffering, for those who are joyful, and for those who have passed on to eternal life.

St. Alphonsus Church is full of great history and tradition. That tradition continues through various prayer services, held not only in English, but in Lithuanian and in Latin. Our hope and desire is that the tradition continues through your kindness and generosity. The Church built in 1845 needs much repair.

I hope that your visit to St. Alphonsus is a good experience. Come, visit us often.

*Yours in Christ,
Msgr. Arthur W. Bastress, Pastor*

Saint Alphonsus Church, a landmark at Saratoga Street and Park Avenue in downtown Baltimore since 1845, designed by the eminent architect Robert Cary Long in Southern German neo-Gothic style, was once dubbed "the German cathedral".



Old photo of the beautifully decorated main altar during the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

In 1917, with the German community dispersed and the Redemptorist provincialate moved to New York, St. Alphonsus was acquired by the Roman Catholic Lithuanian Parish of St. John the Baptist, which then assumed the name of the church and reopened the school, functioning across the street since 1847.

St. John Neumann lived in the present rectory as rector, master of novices, and vice-provincial. Another rector, Father Joseph Seelos, C.Ss.R. is a candidate for canonization. If he is canonized, St. Alphonsus will be the only parish church in this country, and perhaps in the world, to boast of two former pastors as canonized saints. Moreover, Blessed George Matulaitis once visited St. Alphonsus, as did Archbishop Teofilus Matulionis, who is also a possible candidate for beatification as a martyr.

St. Alphonsus ministers to a far-flung Lithuanian community and to those who feel the need for more traditional services. St. Alphonsus is the designated home to the Tridentine Mass every Sunday and Holy Day, while reaching out to a new generation downtown, a link between old and new Baltimore.

Submitted by: Liuda Avizonis

Editor's Note: We wish St. Alphonsus many more years of success in serving the people of Baltimore as well as the Lithuanians in the area. We must all do everything we can to support our Lithuanian parishes. As Monsignor Bastress stated in his letter, the church was built in 1845 and is in need of repairs. If you can help financially, please send a contribution to the church. If you happen to be Baltimore, please stop by and visit this beautiful church.

Science/Technology

Dr. Victor Klemas

Congratulations to Victor Klemas, Professor of Marine Studies, Co-Director of the Center for Remote Sensing and Professor of Geography & Electrical Engineering at the University of Delaware Graduate College of Marine Studies.

Dr. Klemas has been awarded a Fulbright Grant. The grant starts on April 8 and extends to May 19. Dr. Klemas will teach a course at Klaipėda University. The focus will be on Satellite Oceanography, primarily on how to use satellites, aircraft and research ships to study the physical and biological processes in the Baltic Sea. This includes some very practical things, like tracking oil spills, measuring currents and predicting where they will carry pollutants, observe waves and predict damage to beaches, and monitor changes in wetlands due to coastal development.

Some of the immediate problems are oil drilling by Russian companies and plans to build natural gas pipelines along the sea bottom, which contains many hazardous materials, including WW II munitions that were dumped at the end of the war.

Dr. Klemas will stay an extra week in Lithuania to run the US/EU Baltic Symposium. The symposium will take place in Klaipėda on May 23-26.

More information may be obtained at
www.us-baltic2006.org.

Editor's Note: We wish Dr. Klemas good luck and a successful stay in Lithuania.

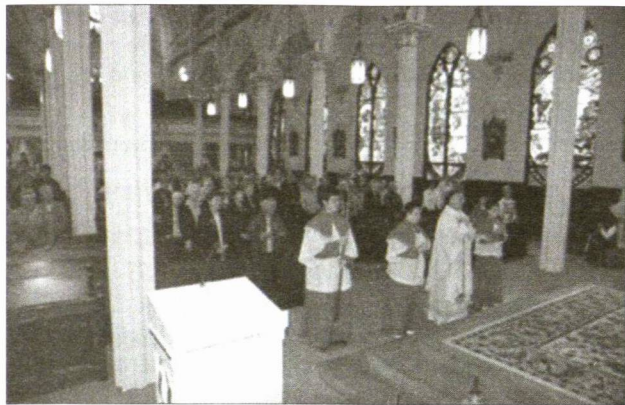
ONE MORE ATTEMPT AT SELF-DEFINITION

*I come from a tribe of nature worshippers,
pantheists, believers in fairies, forest sprites, and wood nymphs,
who heard devils in their windmills,
met them in the woods, cloven-hoofed
and dapper gentlemen of the night,
who named the god of thunder,
who praised and glorified bread, dark rye waving
waist-high out of the earth,
and held it sacred, wasting not a crumb, who
spent afternoons mushrooming in forests of pine,
fir, and birch, who transferred Jesus
from his wooden cross, transformed him
into a wood-carved, worrying peasant,
raised him on a wooden pole above the crossroads
where he sat with infinite patience
in rain and snow, wooden legs apart,
wooden elbows on wooden knees,
wooden chin in wooden hand,
worrying and sorrowing for the world. . . .
these people who named their sons and daughters
after amber, rue, fir tree, dawn, storm,
and the only people I know who have a diminutive
form for God Himself -- "God-my-little-buddy."*

*Any wonder I catch myself speaking
to trees, flowers, bushes--these eucalyptus so far
from Eastern Europe--or that I bend down to the earth,
gather pebbles, acorns, leaves, boles, bring
them home, enshrine them on mantelpieces or above
porcelain fixtures in corners, any wonder
I grow nervous in rooms
and must step outside and touch a tree,
or sink my toes in the dirt, or watch the birds fly by.*

*Poem by Algirdas Žolynas
Reprinted with permission.*

A TRIP TO THE COAL MINE REGION OF PENNSYLVANIA



Father Peter Burkauskas, Philadelphia, celebrates Mass in St. George's Church, Shenandoah, PA

Photo by Rimasa Gedeika

It has become a tradition for Philadelphia's Vincas Kreve Lithuanian school to have a field trip every spring. This year on a cool and cloudy first of May, the school students accompanied by their parents and some parishioners of St. Andrew's traveled to the coal mines of Pennsylvania.

Many of us were aware of this region's long Lithuanian past from local stories. However, our curiosity was peaked by a presentation a few weeks back given to our school students by Diane Rooney from California who is the president of Lithuanian World Genealogy Association. She talked about towns like Shenandoah and Frackville, where Lithuanians settled as far back as the 19th century, describing their everyday toils, concerns and hopes for the future.

The two and a half hour bus ride did not seem long as we observed the passing rocky cliffs grow in size and the picturesque towns nestled in their valleys. Our first stop was Ashland where we visited a long abandoned mine and learned about the hardships the miners had to endure in those days knowing that many of them were from Lithuania. Third grader Kristukas Akerley, in his trip report wrote: "First we rode in an old steam engine train that smelled of sulfur and the uneven tracks rattled and shook the car". This 75 year old steam engine pulled our train on the uneven rails to the other side of Mahanoy Mountain where we observed a beautiful panorama of the valley and the Mammoth Vein. The guide showed us a narrow tunnel which was used to illegally harvest the coal for private consumption or sale.

Another train with open cars took us down 1800 feet through a Pioneer tunnel in the Mahanoy Mountain. In this dark underground tunnel with water dripping on our heads,

we heard the guide describe the digging process of the coal and heard that not only grown men, but also boys labored here from dawn to dusk.

Overjoyed that times have changed, we proceeded to nearby Centralia, where we observed smoking earth due to an underground fire that has been burning for a few decades. Efforts to extinguish it have been in vain. The scene was awesome, together with the knowledge that many inhabitants refused the government's help to move to a safer location. Ms Millie Helt, who was born in this region and accompanied us on the trip, said that most of the inhabitants who stayed were from Zemaitija.

From Centralia we hurried to Shenandoah and the first Lithuanian church built in the USA, where we were met by the local Lithuanians and joined by Father Peter Burkauskas from St. Andrew's in Philadelphia who came on a separate bus. It had been quite a while since Lithuanian hymns and prayers were heard in the church of St. George, but they united the hearts of those present from many generations and several waves of immigrants.

After the closure of the coal mines, many young people drifted to other parts of the state to find jobs. However, the Lithuanian spirit is still alive in the region. That was evident not only in the large numbers who came to greet us and participate in the Lithuanian sung mass but also in their activities to uphold Lithuanian traditions. The Knights of Lithuania are still active and every August Lithuanian Day is celebrated with a fair filled with Lithuanian food, songs and dances.

After holy Mass we were treated with coffee and cake and a trip to a Knights of Lithuania museum in Frackville that houses an exposition of pictures, artifacts and art work of Lithuanians of the region.

The trip ended with dinner at "Granny's" restaurant. The owner is of Lithuanian descent and named it after his grandmother. There was even Lithuanian "balandeliai" on the menu!

Continued on page 22



Bernice Mikatavage explains the region's history to Danute Gedeika.

Photo by Rimasa Gedeika

Brief history of
"GRANNY'S"
 Restaurant - Hotel in
 FRACKVILLE, PA

The origin of GRANNY'S dates back prior to the year 1920 with the inflow of immigrants into America from Lithuania. Enoch Petriconis was a ski soldier in the hills of his homeland for the occupying Russian army. He immigrated to America with his wife Petrona, and became a naturalized citizen soon thereafter. They settled around Frackville, in Northeastern Pennsylvania where work in the anthracite coal mines attracted many Eastern and Northern European immigrants.

The Lithuanian communities flourished in every coal mining town, centered around the churches and businesses built and owned by Lithuanians. The family established a tavern, which became a popular gathering spot in the area for coal miners between work shifts and Lithuanian friends. Recollections of those early years were of patrons conversing in their Lithuanian language, since not many were fluent in English. The elementary school taught Lithuanian history and language, and at every Mass the sermon was given in the Lithuanian language.



Students enjoy a train ride.

Photo by Rimas Gedeika



Granny's Restaurant-Hotel.

Photo by Eugenija Fedoesjeva

One of thirteen children in the family, Victor did not finish high school. Instead, he started driving a truck in his early teens, working in the coal business and the family tavern. His father passed away at an early age, and he carried on the tradition in the family business with his mother. He married Evelyn in the local Lithuanian church, and had two children, Victor and Diane. Devoted to his aging mother (they conversed only in Lithuanian), he saved her from a fire in the building in 1964 by carrying her down a ladder from an upper level window. Son Victor married Eileen, whose father was a coal miner born in Oldbury, England. After several years of being away in the Navy and traveling as an engineer, son Victor was convinced by his wife to return to their roots in Frackville and start a hospitality business. It was important to carry on the tradition of the family in the community, and many pictures and some furnishings from the original family business were moved to the new location. The building chosen was constructed in the same year as the original location (1920). Coincidentally, it happened to be built originally for Mary Weis, who was born in Lithuania and married Anthony Weis. Mary entertained many Lithuanian customers in her large boarding house, and was a good cook. So that tradition was carried on as well when Victor and Eileen started their restaurant and small hotel by renovating that building. Old antiques from the family and area were used in the new business started

in 1986. Eileen decided that it was most appropriate to name the business GRANNY'S, to commemorate our traditions and promote the ideals upon which our families were brought up. Many recipes from Lithuanian families were collected in a Lithuanian cookbook and used occasionally in the restaurant. The family takes pride in their heritage, giving guests of all nationalities a feeling of hospitality that flows from the original Granny.

Compiled by:

*Laurynas R. Misevičius and
 Eugenija Fedosejeva*



Inside the mine.

Photo by Kazys Razgaitis



Learning about mining.

Photo by Rimas Gedeika

The Partisans and the Schools in Lithuania

The Lithuanian Amber Roots Club in Philadelphia was blessed with a very special visitor on the 18th of November in 2005. This visitor was the widow of the famous Partisan, Juozas Lukša, known as Daumantas, Skrajunas and other names. Dr. Nijolė Braženaitė -Paronetto was accompanied by Karyl Arnold and Dr. Rozalija Somkaitė, who work with the Lithuanian National Foundation-Tautos Fondas. Together they are endeavoring to place into each school in Lithuania a well documented copy of the 5th edition of the book, "Partizanai" written by Juozas Daumantas.

Nijolė left Lithuania for a medical education before the Nazi and Soviet invasions. When she met Juozas in Paris during the summer of 1948, he was going by the name of Skrajunas, "one who flies around." He had broken through the Iron Curtain twice, in 1947 and 1948. In 1948 he carried Partisan press matter, correspondence for abroad, and a long letter to Pope Pius XII. Their purpose was to inform the West that the people of Lithuania were perishing, as well as their Catholic faith and language, thru the hands of the occupying forces.

As we know today, this dangerous journey to arouse the West from its lethargy did not bring about the hoped for results. The Partisans back in Lithuania continued their struggle against a godless tyrant. These thoughts continued to weigh heavily on the mind and heart of Juozas, knowing that the lives of his fellow fighters in Lithuania were ending in death, others dying in the depths of Russia or in a Soviet prison. Using this time in freedom, he wrote a book telling of his experiences as a Partisan. In Lithuania the book is called "Partizanai" by Juozas Daumantas. It was translated into English by E. J. Harrison and Maryland Books. I was able to obtain a second hand copy of this book, titled, "Fighters for Freedom". After reading the book and a few of the letters that Juozas wrote to Nijole, I was left with a great impression of this young man. He was an excellent writer, and of course, a very dedicated Lithuanian. Nijolė said that his first "love" was Lithuania.

The letters he wrote to Nijolė while she was hospitalized are truly beautiful. She was hospitalized in Paris and later in a tuberculosis sanitarium in France near the Swiss border. Fully recovered, in the summer of 1950, they married, knowing he would soon be returning to Lithuania. They hoped by the grace of God to be reunited someday. The newlyweds were able to spend only one week together before he had to leave for training with the



Dr. Nijolė Braženaitė-Paronetto, Karyl Arnold and Dr. Rozalija Somkaitė.

Photo by Millie Helt, Nov. 2005

French and American forces. He and two other Lithuanians, with the help of American intelligence, were able to parachute into Lithuania during the night of October 4, 1950. Nijolė waited, not knowing what was happening. Five years later, she learned from an American Congressman, Charles Kersten, that Juozas was betrayed one year after their marriage. A partisan by the name of Jonas Kukauskas, under torture, agreed to cooperate with the Soviets, causing the death of Juozas Lukša. He died September 4, 1951. Upon discovery, many partisans would blow themselves up with hand grenades so as not to cause the death of their friends or families, to be unrecognizable and unable to give out information. Perhaps by a special grace given because of his closeness to the Blessed Mother, Juozas was not taken alive nor was he blown up by a grenade. He was to be captured alive, but was shot by men who were afraid he would shoot them first.

Today the Juozas Lukša Gimnazija in Garliava displays the artifacts in their Juozas Lukša Museum within the school. He perished near Garliava. The lives of more than 20,000 Partisan men and women were extinguished.

And so Nijolė went on to make a happy life for herself in New York. She is now a retired pathologist, married to a pathologist. She is a mother and a grandmother. It was indeed a pleasure for us to spend some time with her and to hear a sad but inspiring story from her own lips. How important it is to make sure these heroes of Lithuania will not be forgotten. They perished, but their sacrifices maintained the Lithuania's identity. Their story needs to be retold. The children of Lithuania need to know that the Soviets misled the people. The Partisan men and women were heroes who dedicated their lives to their their country. And that is why Nijolė, Rozalija and Karyl are working hard to provide copies of this book to the schools. For a donation of \$11.00, a book will be placed into a Lithuanian school. If your heart is telling you to help, then please send your donation to:

Lithuanian National Foundation, Inc. - Tautos Fondas
307 West 30th Street, New York NY 10001

Contributions are tax-deductible.

Please indicate the donation is for placing of the book "Partiznai" into Lithuanian schools.

Millie Markauskaitė Helt

Millie Markauskaite Helt is the coordinator for the
Lithuanian Heritage Club, Amber Roots, of Philadelphia, PA.

milliemarks@aol.com

Return To Our GOD

Lent is the season which is the spring time of the soul. As a farmer scatters seed in the soil in springtime, that men may have daily bread, so God wills to sow the seed of grace during Lent, that we may become fervent Christians at Easter. Lent is a time when God calls out to our souls to lead a new life. We ought to be deeply touched, when for the first time in the course of the church year, we hear from Christ's lips the announcement of His suffering will be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man. Behold we are going up to Jerusalem and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the "Son of man". In using these words of the Gospel, the Church wants to announce that we are entering upon the season devoted to the Passion of Christ. Let us not overlook the great motive for the suffering of Jesus, which is love.

The incarnation of God's Son is a great testimony of love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Jesus' suffering is the highest of all proofs of His love.

Traveling through Samaria, Jesus comes at Jacob's well and meets a Samaritan woman and asks her for water. As dialog follows she can see that he knows better than she knows

about herself and the woman drops all her defenses. In this thirst represents all the deepest yearnings of the human heart; love, truth, desires etc. To refuse to believe is to remain in darkness.

St. John's gospel narrative contains a series of "signs"; the transformation of water into wine at Cana, the cure of the royal official's son, the cure of the paralytic at the pool, etc... It proclaims the triumph of light over darkness, as Jesus is presented as the Light of the world and the raising of Lazarus is the climax of signs. We learn about a miracle of healing in various places of the Gospel. As Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem He meets a blind beggar. When the latter is aware that Jesus is passing by, he cries aloud: "Jesus; Son of David, have mercy on me." Jesus asks, "What should I do for thee?" And the beggar says: "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Jesus says to him, "Receive thy sight; thy faith has made thee whole." Who is this blind man by the wayside? He is a type of all mankind.

This blind man is all of us. The purpose of Lent is the renewal of the life of grace. Christ desires to restore us to our spiritual sight.

Sister Margarita Bareikaite

Sister Margarita Bareikaite belongs to the order of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Lithuanian order in Putnam, CT. Sister Margarita is the Chair of the Religious Affairs Council of the Lithuanian American Community and is a regular contributor to Bridges.

Conference Announcement

The Association for the Advancement of
Baltic Studies (AABS)
announces the
20th Conference on Baltic Studies

June 15-17, 2006

The George Washington University
Washington, DC

Re-Imagining the Baltic Region:
Perspectives on the Past, Present, and Future.

What is the "Baltic region?" Has the meaning of this concept changed over time? What are the cultural, social, economic, environmental, military, legal, and political implications of expanding the borders of the "Baltic region" both westward and eastward?

HOW ARE THE CHANGES REFLECTED IN IDEAS AND PRACTICES REGARDING ETHNICITY, NATIONHOOD, AND CITIZENSHIP? WEALTH, POVERTY, AND FREE MARKETS? GENDER NORMS AND ROLES? MEMORIES AND THE WRITING OF HISTORY? CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE REGION IN FILM, MUSIC, LITERATURE, AND ART?

INFORMATION ON SECTION CHAIRS WILL BE AVAILABLE AT
THE FOLLOWING WEBSITE:

WWW.BALTICSTUDIES-AABS.LANET.LV.



DAINU
ŠVENTĖ
CHICAGO - 2006

8th NORTH AMERICAN LITHUANIAN SONG FESTIVAL

July 2, 2006 in Chicago, IL

Let's raise our voices together in Lithuanian song!

Sponsors:

Lithuanian American Communities
of the
United States and Canada
and
the North American Lithuanian
Music Association

Register your choir

<http://dainusvente.org>

* Chair of the Organizational Committee:
Dr. Audrius Polikaitis, Chicago, IL

* Musical Director: Rita Kliorys, Cleveland, OH

Join your local Lithuanian choir,
start one where there is none!

*Let's join our voices in a mighty celebration of
Lithuanian singing!*

http://lithuanian-american.org/events_en.php



Benefits of Cholesterol Testing

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a normal part of your blood and cells. You get cholesterol in two ways. Your body makes some of it, and the rest comes from the foods you eat. When cholesterol levels get too high, it is a major risk for heart disease and stroke.

Cholesterol testing is performed at your doctor's office or at community health clinics. A small amount of your blood is needed to run the test. The sample is sent to a laboratory for processing. Your results are usually available within seven to ten days.

The laboratory test measures four important things:

1. Full Lipid Panel – this test looks at your total cholesterol as well as a breakdown of the different types of good and bad cholesterol.
2. Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL) – LDL is also known as the “bad” cholesterol. Too much LDL cholesterol can clog your arteries and increase your risk of heart attack and stroke.
3. High-Density Lipoprotein (HDL) – HDL is known as the “good” cholesterol. Your body makes HDL cholesterol for your protection and it helps to carry cholesterol away from your arteries.

4. Triglycerides (TG) – TG is a form of fat. People with diabetes, heart disease, or who are overweight often have high triglycerides.

If your screening results are high, you should see your doctor. Eating foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol can help you lower your cholesterol and keep it at goal. It is very important to be physically active as long as your doctor approves. If changing your food and exercise is not enough for reaching a good cholesterol number, your doctor can help you find the cholesterol lowering medication which is right for you. There are many to choose from.

Finally, what are the healthy levels of cholesterol ?

- * Total cholesterol – less than 200 mg/dl.
- * LDL – less than 100 mg/dl is best.
- * HDL – greater than 40 mg/dl
(This goal may be higher for females).
- * Triglycerides – less than 15 mg/dl.

We want you to live a long and healthy life !

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.

LAC News LITHUANIAN AMBASSADOR PARTICIPATED IN THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PALM BEACH LITHUANIAN COMMUNITY

On January 8, 2006, Lithuanian Ambassador to the U.S. Vygaudas Usackas participated in the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Lithuanian Community in Palm Beach, Florida.

The Ambassador expressed his delight and appreciation for the Palm Beach Lithuanian Community for last year having opened the Lithuanian Saturday School “Saulės krantas.”

Ambassador Usackas encouraged the parents of the children of “Saulės krantas” school to participate in Lithuanian events more actively, stating that they are, and will remain, the future gravity center of Lithuanian activities in Palm Beach.

Kestas Vaskelevicius, Press and Public Affairs
Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in USA
4590 MacArthur Blvd, NW, Suite 200 Washington, DC, 20007-4226
(202) 234-5860, #121 kv@ltembassyus.org

Editor's Note: *Bridges would like to add our congratulations and best wishes to the Lithuanian Community of Palm Beach.*

Laurynas R. Misevičius

A Lithuanian NBA – All Star

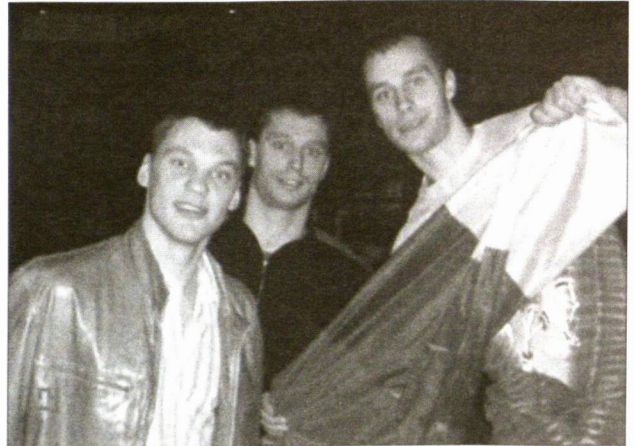
Many of you probably know, this season there were a total of 6 Lithuanians, who started off in the NBA, more than ever perviously – Žydrūnas Ilgauskas is still playing for the Cleveland “Cavaliers”, Darius Songaila winding up with the Chicago “Bulls”, Linas Kleiza drafted by the Denver “Nuggets”, Arvydas Macijauskas taken by New Orleans (now temporarily relocated to Oklahoma) “Hornets”, finally Martynas Andriūškevičius contracted by the Cleveland “Cavaliers” as well, however, as of yet hasn’t had an opportunity on the court. Nevertheless, this year neither of those 5 are getting as much attention as the Indiana “Pacer”, Šarūnas Jasikevičius, an MVP in the Euroleague 2005 and European Championship in 2003, when Lithuania conquered the “old continent” in Stockholm, Sweden claiming the gold medals in men’s basketball once again after...64 years (L.M.)

Excerpts from a Greg Boeck article in USA TODAY.

“Great shooter, but too slow and unpolished with the basketball to make it in the NBA as a point guard.” - was the verdict against Šarūnas coming out of his student years at the University of Maryland in 1998. So the 6-4, 197-pound Kaunas boy - shooting guard returned to Europe after being bypassed in the NBA draft and turned himself into a ring-bearing, star point guard in the next seven years. He won three Euro league (the strongest basketball league in the world after the NBA) titles and MVP honors both in the Euro league and European Championship. But still no NBA contract... Stereotypes die hard.

Well, check again! In a return to the States that even he had just about given up on, the oldest (Šarūnas is almost 30 now) and most experienced rookie in the NBA is rewriting his basketball rap sheet with the Indiana Pacers. Armed with a three-year, \$12 million deal and Larry Bird’s “nickname” as a “great international basketball player,” Jasikevičius has arrived with his feared jumper and big-game mentality as not only a rookie of the year candidate but as one of the NBA’s most dangerous sixth men. On February 17th there was a Lithuanian presence in the rookie challenge game in Houston, TX - you guessed it right, Šarūnas was invited to participate in it, already reaching the all star level at NBA in his first year here. (L.M.)

Jasikevičius first journeyed to America from his



Left to right: Sarūnas Jasikevičius, Arendijus Mejeras and Jordanas Mejeras holding the Lithuanian flag. The Mejeras brothers are exchange students and basketball players from Kaunas who are studying in Texas.

native Kaunas, Lithuania, a basketball-crazy city of nearly a half million people. As a senior at Solanco High in Quarryville, Pa., he studied English in order for acceptance into the University of Maryland.

In Maryland he didn’t crack the starting line-up until his junior year. In his last season for his college he caught fire in the NCAA tournament and led Maryland to the Sweet 16. But the NBA still didn’t bite. People were focusing too much on what he couldn’t do.

Jasikevičius concedes he got up for games against the U.S. team. “It’s one of those fun games to play because there is no pressure.”

But he lives for the big game and the last shot. That’s his favorite stage. “He’s not afraid of anyone,” says Phoenix “Suns” coach Mike D’Antoni, who faced him when he coached in Italy in 2001-02.

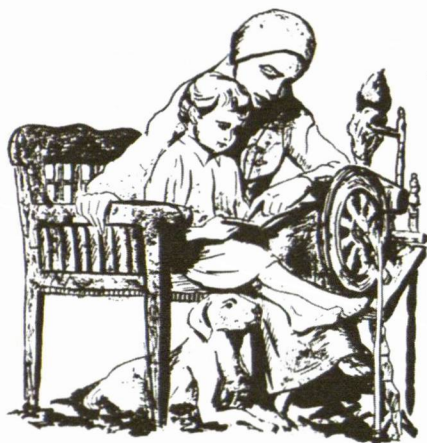
The legendary Bird traveled to Europe last season and saw him play, and the “Pacers” beat out the Utah “Jazz” and Cleveland “Cavaliers”, who offered a chance for Šarūnas to play with his childhood friend and Lithuanian teammate, Žydrūnas Ilgauskas and their newest addition another center from Kaunas Martynas Andriūškevičius.

“I felt Indy had more a chance of winning,” Jasikevičius says.

Veteran in age, rookie at heart...

Jasikevičius lives on Indianapolis’ north side, close to his teammates. There is a Lithuanian community, but he hasn’t made a contact yet. However, he keeps in

Continued on page 18



Read Across America Day, LITHUANIAN STYLE

*Art work is from
a cover by J.Ž. in
1960 - Lithuania
School "Maironio
Mokyklos"
10 year
Anniversary
Booklet
Brooklyn, NY*

Read Across America Day is an event established by the National Education Association to celebrate and promote literacy in the public schools, and tends to be a bigger deal at the elementary level than middle or high school levels. It is marked on March 2, the birthday of author Theodore Geisel, better-known as Dr. Seuss.

At my daughter's school last year, the occasion was expanded into Read Across America Week, and given an additional international spin: a letter came home weeks before requesting books in other languages to be shown to the students, and an invitation to any parents who speak another language to bring in materials to read to kids in class.

We were new to the school district and impressed with its diversity – at my daughter's bus stop was a student who went to Chinese school on Sundays and another who attended a program on Saturdays taught in an Indian dialect, in addition to my own proud student of Philadelphia's V. Kreve Lithuanian Heritage School.

So I sent a note in to the reading resources director (there IS such a job!) and offered to present Lithuanian literature to a couple of classes.

If you have had any experience with Lithuanian organizations, you know that the same five people do everything, the rest drop off their kids. This is much the same in the "American" sphere. The reading resources director was surprised and pleased by my offer – surprised, because, as she said, "We have 13 languages spoken among our student body, but Lithuanian was not on the list." (And I fill out every line on the enrollment forms why...?) Pleased, because no other parent in the school had offered to read to the kids, 13 available languages notwithstanding.

So she gave me a schedule she'd prepared – nine (9!!) half-hour appointments across grades K through 5, over two days.

I saw it through, brain intact, and am here to say it was an

effective way to work some Lithuanian culture into an American school curriculum that includes no mention of it. Here's what worked in my presentations:

1. Wearing my national costume. Certainly, mine were made by Tamošaitienė's students in Canada and are, if I do say so myself, fabulous. But they're also a strong visual that locks most kids' attention in on you as soon as you walk in.
2. Wearing/bringing amber. In every grade, I began with a quick look at the map or globe to locate Lithuania and the Baltic for the class, explained amber as pine sap from the time when the dinosaurs roamed the land, and that it still washes up on the beaches there. If you have or can borrow a hunk of amber with a bug in it, so much the better. I let the kids handle my jewelry and they were positively reverent. And a little girl named Amber was stunned to learn the origins of her moniker. Sheesh.
3. Do not even attempt to do this presentation for Kindergartners. At the first mention of dinosaurs – what was I thinking?—they were off and running about their favorite dinos and no learning took place. Nor was it meant to – I'm convinced kindergarten teachers sign up for guest readers and such to get a half hour off from trying to teach a group of essentially, adorable lunatics.
4. In all the grades, they were very interested in the different pronunciations of Lithuanian letters. An illustrated alphabet book was examined carefully, and finally made clear to my daughter Aleksandra's classmates why there is no "x" in her name – there is no "x" in Lithuanian.
5. Younger grades were happy enough to look at and hear our version of Pooh: Meskiukas Rudnosiukas. If those kids learned anything that day, it's how to sing "Šliumpu-pumpu!" For older grades, reading, showing and simultaneously translating an illustrated copy of Jurate ir Kastytis offered a darker comparison to The Little Mermaid, and tied in a legend about amber to boot. An illustrated version of Egle Zalciu Karaliene could work well too, our culture's Beauty and the Beast.
6. They want to hear the language! Even to hear what their names would be in Lithuanian, if a version exists. (In middle school I told a friend named Gregory that his name in Lithuanian was "Grybas" and he totally bought it. Enjoyed that to myself for years, but that's another story.) Read the actual texts, or sections, translating the words.

7. The older grades were enthralled by the history of knygnesiaiai, or book smugglers. It does require setting the scene a bit and explaining the brutality of the czarist regimes. American kids don't have much grasp of oppression or suppression, lucky! But once they understand why even illiterate farmers risked their lives and livelihoods to smuggle printed materials into Lithuania, the children were completely captivated by stories of their methods: in sacks of pigs, under corpses in coffins, in fake wagon bottoms, etc. It helped that my daughter had just finished a research project on this for her scout program and even presented this part herself for her own (then) 4th grade class. But the information is available on the Internet with some googling and makes quite a point with your young audience. When I told one antsy young man holding one of my books that he'd have gone to jail and lost his farm for being caught with that in his hands, I owned him for the rest of my session.

Now, I'm not suggesting you agree to 9 classroom visits for the sake of sharing our heritage. (Elementary school teachers exist on a higher plane for me forever!) But a little goes a long way, with a bit of planning and flexibility. Even in the same grades, different classes seized on different parts of the presentation, taking it in different directions from their friends down the hall. And even if you will only be

reading from one or two texts, bring as many as you can to pass around. I borrowed from several families to expand my selections.

You can certainly use these ideas next time your child's school asks you to present Lithuania for any occasion. The teachers will love you for it. You may score some brownie points with the principal. And no matter how nonchalant your own child may be on the subject – your kid will be so proud of you.

Rasa Brittain

Rasa Bobelyte-Brittain is a first-generation Lithuanian-American and an overly-proud native of Brooklyn, NY. She is a writer, producer and on-air broadcast talent with a New York City Emmy (TV) and by-lines in publications ranging from The New York Times to Sports Afield – not to mention BRIDGES! After more than ten years as News Director for New York City powerhouse WLTW-FM, she's currently getting acquainted with Philadelphia radio listeners as newscaster Rasa Kaye on KYW Newsradio and The Big Talker WPHT. Within the Lithuanian community, she sings with Philadelphia's choir Laisve and is preparing the sopranos of the V. Kreve Lithuanian Heritage School for the upcoming North American Lithuanian Song Festival in Chicago.

Mykolas Burokevicius

According to a recent article in the Philadelphia Inquirer by Liudas Dapkus, Mykolas Burokevicius a former Communist Party leader was released from prison after serving twelve years in Lukiskes Prison in Vilnius. He was convicted of murder and other crimes related to the January 1991 Soviet crackdown which he helped to orchestrate.

Fourteen people died and many were injured in Lithuania while a week later another attack took place in Latvia, leaving five more dead.

The attacks were the last show of strength for a crumbling soviet empire. Far from extinguishing the thirst for independence, the attacks emboldened the protesters and their mission of a free Lithuania was accomplished later that year.

Lithuanians gathered at the Parliament building on January 13 to light symbolic

bonfires and remember those who were killed and injured. They also visited the TV tower to lay flowers and light candles for the victims of January 13.

Burokevicius, who took his orders from Moscow, led a group intent on preventing Lithuania from regaining independence, may leave for Russia. Six colleagues who stood trial with him relocated to Russia after being released from prison.

If he chooses to remain in Lithuania he will find a country that has shed its Soviet past and has been transformed by independence and market reform into one of Europe's fastest growing economies.

How ironic that he was released on January 13. If he passed the Parliament building he may have seen people laying flowers near a section of the barricade left standing as a reminder of those who paid a high cost for Lithuania's independence.

TRIVIA QUESTION

Who saved the Lithuanian language and folk-customs from extinction during the Union of Lithuania and Poland

(14th-18th centuries)?

- The Polish nobles
- The ruling classes of Lithuania
- The Lithuanian Peasants
- The Polish clergy

Submitted by Ed Shakalis

ANSWER TO TRVIA QUESTION
on page 22

Mayor Peter Strazdas

*Congratulations
to
Peter Strazdas
who was recently elected mayor of
Portage, Michigan.*

Mayor Strazdas is the grandson of Justin Strazdas who immigrated to the United States from Lithuania in 1911.

The new mayor's priorities include :

Beginning regular, town-hall-style workshops on Saturday mornings at City Hall to give citizens a new forum to communicate with the council.

Meeting with officials at Stryker Corp. and Pfizer Inc. to discuss their plans for Portage and the region.

Exploring new cooperative ventures with area governments.

Holding an orientation for the council on legal and ethical issues.

"We are faced with daunting challenges that include reduced state revenue-sharing, ongoing staffing adjustments with Pfizer, rising energy costs and health-care costs, citizens who rightfully demand better services from local units of government," Strazdas said.



MAYOR PETER STRAZDAS AND HIS FAMILY.

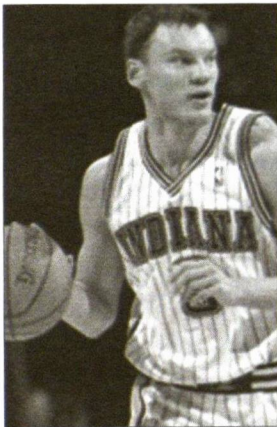
When asked why he chose to seek public office, the mayor stated he had volunteered his services for more than a decade on different city projects, including being an elected Council member. His three children grew up in Portage and were educated there. He feels he has much to give back to his community so that others could enjoy the same standards.

We wish the new mayor and his family our good wishes and the best of luck.

Submitted by: Philip Strazdas

NBA – All Star

Continued from page 15



Šarūnas Jasikevičius in action.

touch with folks back home. His parents, Linas and Rita Jasikevičius, visited Indiana early in the season and saw their son play his first two home games.

He's also an unusual rookie, approaching 30. "I don't feel like a rookie," he says.

Half way through the season, Bird senses he has found someone special. "He can create off the dribble, he's a deadeye shooter with unlimited range and he's a leader," Bird says,

sounding as if he's describing himself as a player. "He's a fiery type who gets after people. He also has a great work ethic and is a real professional. I think he has something to prove, but not to me."

Note: To celebrate the NBA's and Lithuania's shared passion of basketball by recognizing the contribution the NBA has made in promoting Lithuania's name worldwide Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania

to the USA and Mexico Ambassador Vygaudas Ušackas and the Lithuanian National Mens' Basketball Team Foundation hosted a Lithuanian Basketball Party at NBA All-Star Games 2006, which took place on February 17 in Houston, TX. The awards ceremony featured the state orders of Lithuania to Mr. David Stern, NBA commissioner, and Ms. Kim S. Bohuny, vice-president of Basketball Operations-International at NBA.

Author: Greg Boeck

Submitted with comments by: Laurynas R. Misevičius

Laurynas (Larry) R. Misevičius is a Financial Analyst at the Union Bank of Switzerland (its Securities division) and an active member of the Lithuanian American Community. He was the first president elect of the re-established Lithuanian Sports Club of Connecticut, also a chair of the Bridgeport (CT) Chapter of the Lithuanian American Community, and is currently a vice-chairman for sports in the National Executive Committee of the Lithuanian American Community. Additionally, he is an editor for the Lithuanian American weekly newspaper "Amerikos Lietuvis" northeast edition "Rytų Pakrantėje" and frequently writes for other Lithuanian and English language media.

Gloria O'Brien

The Underground Vaults Of The Bernardine Monastery

Part 1

BERNARDINŲ VIENUOLYNŲ POŽEMIAI

Graži mūsų sostinė, senasis Vilniaus miestas su savo senoviškais pastatais, su meniškėmis bažnyčiomis ir siauromis, vingiuotomis gatvelėmis.....

How beautiful is our capital, the ancient city of Vilnius, with its old buildings, its artistic churches and narrow, winding streets. From every corner, there

breathes the grandeur of age, which neither fires, nor wars, nor foreign occupation have been able to obliterate. An atmosphere of warmth and comfort remains, a musty aged beauty, now even more distinct, surrounded as it is by works of more modern architecture.

Lithuania's noblemen, forever competing against each other, beautified the city, building fine palaces and great churches, which remain to this day, evidence of former greatness. The city grew and spread, as outlying suburbs were joined to its territory.

The Bernardines established their monastery and church near Antakalnio Street, surrounded by the Vilnija, which made a loop at that place and joined with the Neris at Gediminas Hill. The church was quite large, but not especially recognized for its decorative elements, primarily since it was hidden in the shadow of the gothic masterpiece, St. Anne's church. The monastery stood against a lovely forested area with many rare types of trees, which partly obscured the southeastern side of the church's walls and the tall brick fence of the monastery.

From olden times, rumors had spread among the populace that a network of underground tunnels led from the Bernardine monastery to Gediminas

Hill, to Bekešo Hill, and thence to the castle at Trakai. There were many legends about the caves, which were said to be extremely old, although no living resident claimed to have seen them. As time passed, people forgot about the underground passages, and eventually, hardly anyone believed the old stories, though occasionally someone would stumble upon a trace of their existence.

At the right-hand side altar of the monastery's chapel, there had been a well-known miraculous painting of St. Anthony of Padua. When the monastery was forcibly closed by the Russians in 1864 and the monks relocated to the Franciscan monastery at Kretinga, they secretly took the painting with them. The surface of the painting was hung with gold and silver miniature representations of arms, legs or hearts, or plain silver plates with engraved notations, donated by people petitioning St. Anthony for help, or in thanks for the saint's aid in restoring health or happiness.

Amongst all those gold and silver treasures, there was a worn old leather purse, obviously a little moneybag, with the letter "R" embroidered in gold. No one knew what it meant, or who had put it there, but in 1864, when the painting was taken down to be sent to Kretinga, a thick brown envelope was discovered attached to its back, telling the story of the purse, and also touching on the monastery's underground. The story had been written by one of the monks of that time, and is given here.

1831 was a disastrous year for Lithuania. The rebellion against Russian rule had failed, and the poorly-organized insurgent groups scattered, with the Russian military in pursuit. Calling up additional troops, the Russians established control of cities, towns, villages and roads. With numerous agents watching and following residents, many persons were arrested as suspicious or untrustworthy. Those whose participation in the rebellion could not be proven were exiled to Siberia; anyone caught with a weapon was shot on the spot. Terror held sway throughout the land.



Art work by Juozas Bagdonas

Some rebels from Vilnius University were scattered in a clash with a well-armed company of Russian military in the Rudninkų forest, and individually running from their pursuers, sought their own hiding-places. Their leader, a student named Adomas Jasas, under cover of the approaching night, decided to return to Vilnius, where he and his sister had lived before the insurrection. He hoped to hide out there until things quieted down.

Avoiding roads and villages as well as open meadows, he made his way through fields and woods. It was a very difficult journey, requiring frequent long loops around dangerous inhabited places, and careful searches for places to safely ford a river or pass through a bog or marshland.

He thought about the past month's student meeting, when the students had enthusiastically received his public invitation to join the insurrection. The very next day, the university had been practically emptied, as the students gathered at the designated place deep in the Rudninkų forest. After a few days, more than forty persons had joined the group, and training began. It wasn't long, however, before they were discovered by the Russian troops and dispersed. Thankfully, it was close to evening, and most of the students were able to conceal themselves in the dense thickets and avoid capture.

And now Adomas was himself in hiding, though this very morning he had been a leader of this group of student rebels, full of hope for a successful fight for Lithuania's freedom. Not only he, but the entire group had been full of hope and plans. They had been poorly armed, with swords and pistols, but brimming with courage and resolve.

Now he had to run, if he wanted to avoid exile at the point of a bayonet to Siberia. If only he could reach Vilnius, he would be safe, as there would be plenty of hiding places in the city. The Russians wouldn't find him there.

His journey to Vilnius was made easier by the fact that he knew the city well, and wasn't afraid to get lost. He and his father and brother often hunted in the area, as his father's farmstead, in the village of Marcinkonys, lay between the Rudninkų forest and the town of Eišiškės. He stayed away from his father's house, not wanting to cause the persecution of his entire family.

Dawn had begun to streak the sky as he reached

the outskirts of Vilnius, and his danger increased. He had to be very careful and guard his every step, as the Russian army patrolled the streets, and he could easily fall into their hands. He checked the two pistols he had hidden under his cloak, and resolved that he wouldn't be taken alive.

Slowly he advanced, stopping to look around every now and then. Seeing a patrol or a guard, he would jump into a nearby courtyard and wait until they had passed. He wasted a great deal of time moving so slowly, and by the time he reached his own street, the day had lightened considerably. He lived in a busy neighborhood, on Pilies Gatvė (Castle Street) near St. John's church, but this early in the morning, nothing was moving yet. It was quiet everywhere, and only the marching feet of the patrols disturbed the peace. But the noise of their movements allowed him to conceal himself in time, and to evade capture.

A few hundred steps from his own home, he hid in a courtyard and carefully surveyed his building and those surrounding it. Everything looked the same; all was quiet. Just the same, he was not entirely satisfied and feared an ambush. He continued to move slowly and quietly, always looking around, ready to slip into some place or other at any moment. Drawing closer, he noticed that the courtyard gates of the house directly across the street from his, were slightly ajar. There was nothing he could see, but just the same, the open gates looked suspicious. He knew that a Greek merchant named Varonas lived in that house with his family. Varonas was very cautious and tidy, and would not commonly leave a gate open, not even by chance.

Adomas, flattening himself against a corner of the house, watched the gate from afar. Though he waited for a long while, he saw nothing suspicious, and so he decided to slowly approach his home. But just as he made his move, he saw a Russian gendarme's red hat at the opening of Varona's gate. He jumped back into the yard, but it was already too late. He had been seen. The Russian blew a sharp whistle, and a few more gendarmes shot across the street toward the yard where Adomas had been hiding. But he wasted no time, and scaled the fence into a garden, and, with all his strength began to run, hidden between fences and hedges, until he found himself by St. Mykolo church.

The police had not lost his trail; their group had even been enlarged. A group of Cossack riders had joined the chase at the Orthodox Spaso church, and a group of Russian infantry marching along Antakalnio Street joined as well. It looked as though Adomas was surrounded with no possibility of help. At night, it might have been possible to escape under cover of darkness, but now, in bright daylight, it was impossible to find a hiding place. His only hope was to try to reach the patch of forest in back of the Bernardine monastery, on the banks of the Vilnija.

Hidden by buildings and bushes, Adomas quietly slipped further towards the Bernardine monastery. Soon he had reached the hedges against the eastern side of the building. On the western side rose the tall stone wall, and on the north, there was his salvation – the little Bernardine forest.

Adomas, slipping into a large, thick bush, stopped to wipe the sweat from his brow, catch his breath and look around. He saw no policemen or soldiers. Only twenty paces away, he could see the white stone wall of the monastery, with a small gate that appeared to have been nailed shut years ago with cross-wise heavy beams. Between his hiding place and the monastery wall, there lay an open space that it would have been impossible to cross without being seen. And even if he were somehow able to reach the wall, he couldn't have scaled it without a ladder. He had no option but to move further into the woods and try to reach the forested banks of the Vilnija.

Adomas was preparing to run to the next large bush, when he heard the voices of policemen a few hundred steps in back of him, and at the same time, just in front of him, a twig snapped. Turning around, he saw the gray uniform of a soldier standing against a tree just a few yards away. He understood that the enemy had surrounded him on all sides. Sooner or later, they would find him, take him and most probably kill him right then and there. If only he could climb over the wall, he might be able to find a place to hide. He drew his pistols and again looked over at the monastery. He was amazed to see that the apparently sealed gate had opened, and that a monk stood there beckoning to him. Wasting no time, Adomas reached the monk's side in one great leap, and the gate silently closed behind him.

This maneuver was not unobserved; the soldier who had been standing against the tree shot off his rifle and shouted: "There he is! There he is!"

The bullet hit the monastery wall. Soldiers and police hurried in from all sides. An officer ran up and the soldier loudly and excitedly began to explain that he had seen a person jump from the bushes, through a gate in the wall, and disappear into the monastery courtyard.

The officer stepped up to the gate in the wall, and noted that it was securely nailed shut with cross-wise heavy beams. It would have been impossible to open the gate without prying off the beams. He drew his sword and tried to shove it through several cracks, but the weapon's point struck more stone in back of the gates. It was obvious that, in addition to being nailed shut on the outside, the gates were also bricked up on the inside, and there was no way to pass through.

But the soldier stubbornly insisted, that he definitely had seen a person run through the gates, and gave a detailed description of the individual, down to his clothing and appearance. The police recognized the description as that of the student rebel leader, Adomas Jasas. The officer, finally convinced, ordered that the monastery be completely surrounded, set a guard on the sealed gate, and, with the remaining police and military, himself marched up to the main monastery gate. He rang the bell and ordered the monk who responded, to open the gates and summon the abbot. The gatekeeper didn't dare refuse, and opened the gates so that the troops could enter the courtyard. Soon the abbot appeared.

The officer ordered all monks to line up in the courtyard, and, having required the monastery's list of personnel, checked and examined everyone, with a policeman who knew and would recognize Adomas Jasas. They found no one remotely resembling him. All the monks were much older men. Then ensued a search of the monastery and the church. Crawling through every corner, searching through every loft and space, thoroughly investigating the cellars, and verifying the solidity of the bricked-up little gate, no one and nothing suspicious was found. The search lasted for five hours, and the afternoon was well-advanced by the time the soldiers and police gathered in the courtyard and reported to the officer that the rebel had not been found. The officer decided that the soldier had

been mistaken in thinking he had seen the student, and he and his company left the monastery. They returned to the woods to search further, but found nothing.

Led by the monk who had admitted him, Adomas descended a steep flight of stone steps, to the underground. It was very dark, and he had to step carefully. His guide held him by the hand, and Adomas counted twenty-one steps before he felt level ground beneath his feet. They stopped there, while the monk took a candle from his pocket, lit it and led Adomas further. After a few turns to the right, then to the left, they entered a spacious chamber, with several openings leading in various directions. Here the monk lit a torch which hung on the wall, instructed Adomas to wait until he returned, and disappeared through one of the openings.

Adomas, exhausted from his long journey and flight from the authorities, sat down on the ground, covered by large, flat slabs of rock, and stretching out his legs, leaned back against the wall. He felt weariness and tension in every joint and muscle, but as he sat the tension began to recede. He didn't know it, when his head drooped, his eyes closed, and a deep, refreshing sleep suspended his thoughts.

He didn't know how long he had slept, but when

he woke, he saw a basket which held a loaf of bread. He remembered that he hadn't eaten in two days, and was assailed by a sharp hunger. He drew the basket nearer, seizing the bread, and also found a piece of smoked meat and a bottle of milk. Never had he tasted such delicious bread and meat. Half the loaf and a good part of the meat disappeared immediately. As he drank the milk, he felt his strength and energy return.

He considered his situation, and understood that he was in the Bernardine monastery's underground, but wasn't certain how he had gotten there. He wanted to believe that the Russians wouldn't find him. He knew that the police had surrounded the monastery, and had heard the soldier shout, so surely they knew of his whereabouts. How long would he have to stay here? Had he brought some misfortune upon the monks? He wouldn't want that. What should he do now? All these thoughts kept running through his mind, but he had no answers. To be continued next month.....

By Genrikas Songinas
English translation by Gloria O'Brien

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

Continued from page 10

A TRIP TO THE COAL MINE

The next day, a participant and a mother of two students, Vitalija Dunciene, wrote, "The trip was splendid. My boys don't remember when they hit the sack. This morning Vytis was looking out the window for the bus. We and the boys are very pleased with the outing. Thank you all for making it possible."

Many people are responsible for the success of the trip. Kazys Razgaitis, Chairman of the Parents' Committee, Pastor of St. Andrew's Church, Father Peter Burkauskas, Choir Director Ilona Babinskiene, the parishioners of



Shenandoah's St. George's Church, Ms. Millie Helt and all the participants from Philadelphia.

The trip is now history. However, it is my hope that it is just the beginning of the understanding of our roots and the importance of our heritage. Hopefully, our visit also, as Mrs. Dunciene wrote in her letter: "inspired our Shenandoah countrymen a new wish and energy to continue their trek."

Carving of mother and child in front of Granny's Restaurant.

Inga Cededinaitė

*Two photos by Kazys Razgaitis



Descending into the mine.

Continued from page 17

ANSWER TO TRVIA QUESTION

Look for the answer in the following excerpt from the book A HISTORY OF PAGAN EUROPE by Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick:

"Highland Lithuania was officially Christianized in 1387, in return for the crown of Poland. Samogytia, a district that battled against the Frankish Crusaders, did not accept official Christianity until 1414.

After the Union of Poland and Lithuania had been made permanent in 1569, Poland began to be seen as the dominant partner in the relationship and the state language became POLISH.

The political importance of Lithuania from the thirteenth and to the sixteenth centuries has thus remained one of the best-kept secrets of European history. THE RULING CLASSES OF LITHUANIA BECAME POLANIZED, BUT THE PEASANTS KEPT THEIR LANGUAGE AND FOLK-CUSTOMS, even under persecution after Lithuania passed to Russia in 1795."

Back then, if you asked an old Lithuanian Peasant, "WHY DID THE LITHUANIAN RULING CLASSES BECOME POLANIZED?"

He probably would say, "TIK VELNIAS ZINO" (only the devil knows)

Ed Shakalis

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All VYTIS representatives speak English and Lithuanian !!

Calendar of Events for March - April - May,

Please verify all events as placed and times are subject to change

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 5, 2006

Independence Day Commemoration
Mass 11am
Following Mass a dinner and program will be held.
St. Cyril's Church and Hall
44 N. Mill St.
Kansas City, KS 66101

Keynote speaker: Janina Litvinas from Rochester, NY.

Sponsored by:
Lithuanians of America and Lithuanian American Community

March 5, 2006

Kaziuko Mugė
"Viešpaties Atsimainimo" Church
Lower Hall after the Lithuanian Mass
6431 Perry Avenue, Maspeth, NY
Games, prizes, lottery, Lithuanian lunch, and cafe.

All are welcome-Sponsored by: NY Neringos/Tauro tunto skautai

March 12, 2006

Knights of Lithuania
Amber District Meeting
Easton, PA

Host C.63 of Lehigh Valley, PA

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 of March 11- the Day of the Restoration of the Independence of Lithuania (1990)
To register - or for more info.,
Vaidas Taucius
202-234-5860 ext.130
E-mail vaidas.taucius@item-bassyus.org

March 18, 2006 - 7 pm

Seattle, WA. Community Meeting/Potluck Social
Brief business meeting will be followed by a good time: tasty treats at a potluck table and friendly socializing. Bi-annual elections are on the agenda.
Location TBD.
Info. E-mail
lithseattle@hotmail.com

March 19, 2006 - 1 pm

ST. CASIMIR LUNCHEON
Knights of Lithuania, Council 141
St. George Church, 443 Park Ave.
Bridgeport, CT., Church Hall
For reservations and info.
E-mail pbschmidt@optonline.net

March 19, 2006 - 3:00 pm

THE BALTIC CONCERT SERIES at the First Church in Boston
66 Marlborough Street
Boston, MA
Performers include
Edita Orlinyte, violinist and
Edvinas Minkstimas, pianist.
Info:www.lithuanianamerican.org/boston

March 21, 2006 - 7 pm

Amber Roots Heritage Club Meeting - Culture Center
Discussion:
"Our Name Days and Meanings".
Lithuanian Music Hall
2715 E. Allegheny Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19134
All are welcome.
Milliemarks@aol.com
610-497-5469

April 2006

April 1 and 2, 2006

The 2006 men's senior basketball tournament (age 35 and older) is being organized by Chicago ASK Lituanica and Chicago LSK Zalgiris in Chicago.
Info: Dr. Donatas Siliūnas
5116 Illinois Ave.
Lisle, IL 60532-2014
Tel: 630-852-3204
Fax 630-852-4026
E-mail: dsiliunas@aol.com
Website: www.lituanica.org

April 8, 2006

Lithuanian Egg Coloring
San Diego, CA
Saturday - 10:00 am
Location to be announced!
www.lithsd.org

April 9, 2006 - 2 pm

Lithuanian Easter Egg Dyeing Workshop
Seattle, Washington
www.lithuanian-american.org/seattle

April 9, 2006 - 2 pm

The Daughters of Lithuania invite the ladies to their annual Lithuanian Easter Egg Dyeing Workshop, hosted by Nomedda Lukosevicene in Brier.
Info.:
emailseattledukterys@hotmail.com.
www.lithuanianamerican.org/seattle

April 18, 2006 - 7 pm

Amber Roots Heritage Club Meeting
Culture Center of the Philadelphia Lithuanian Music Hall
2715 E. Allegheny Ave.
Philadelphia, Pa. 19134
Milliemarks@aol.com
610-497-5469

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

BLp(LKA)1195 2006, Iss.3

Journal of Lithuanian Culture of
Washington, DC
The school will celebrate its
45th anniversary.
More information to come later.
www.javlb.org

May 2006

May 13-14, 2006 - 11 am - 6 pm

Baltimore Lithuanian Festival
Catonsville Armory
130 Mellor Ave., Catonsville, MD.

May 16, 2006 - 7 pm

Amber Roots Heritage Club Meeting
Culture Center of the Philadelphia Lithuanian Music Hall
2715 E. Allegheny Ave.
Philadelphia, Pa. 19134
All are welcome.
Milliemarks@aol.com
610-497-5469

May 19-21, 2006

The 56 North American Lithuanian Sports Games Chicago Organized by Chicago ASK Lituanica and Chicago LSK Zalgiris. Competition in basketball (men, women and junior A class) volleyball (men, women and mixed teams), swimming, table tennis and chess.
Info.:

Dr. Donatas Siliūnas,
5116 Illinois Ave.,
Lisle, IL 60532-2014
Tel: 630-852-3204
Fax: 630-852-4026
E-mail: dsiliunas@aol.com
Website: www.lituanica.org

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