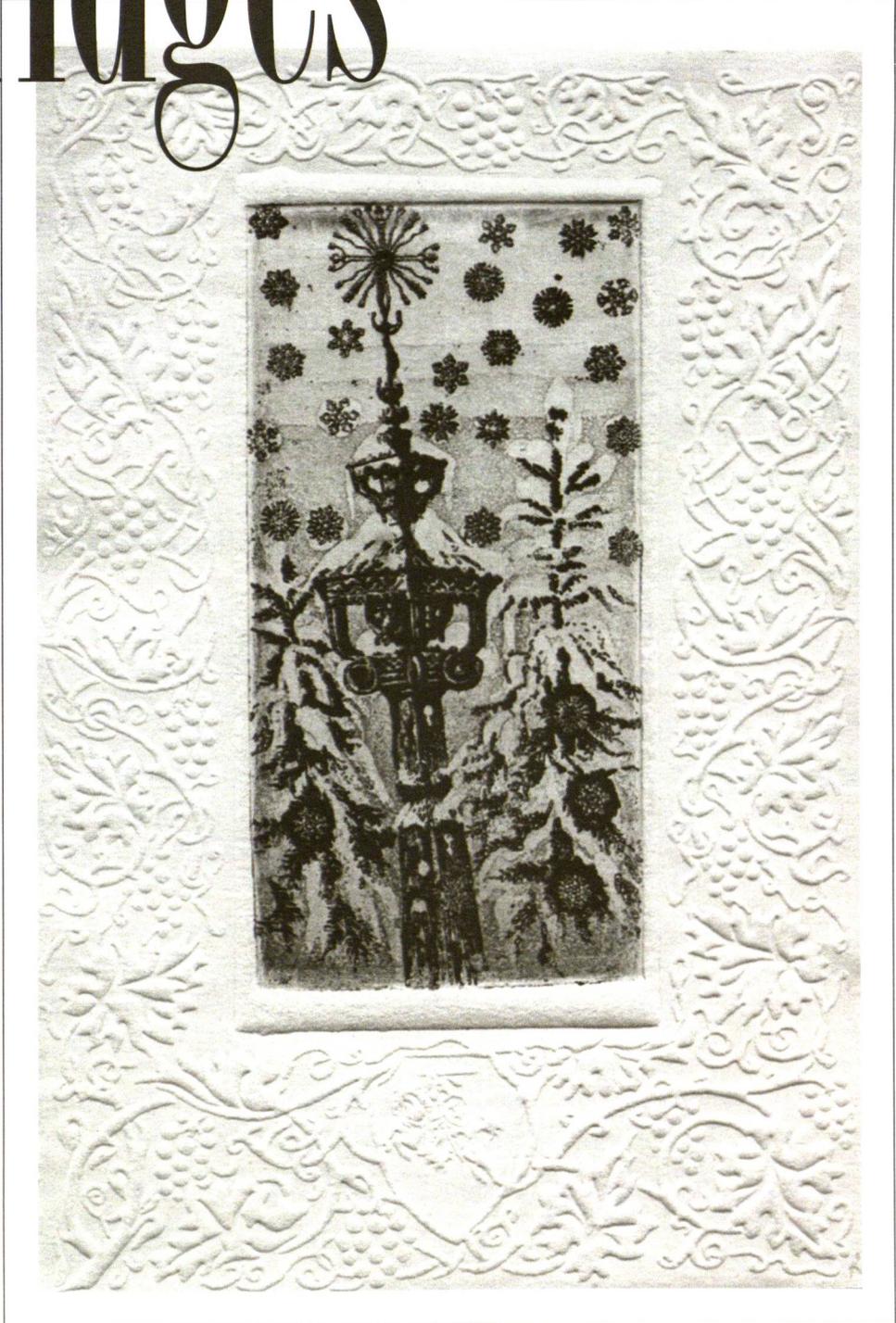


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LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

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Letter from the Editor

As we approach the end of another year it is a time to reminisce about the past and have hope for the future. I'm sure all of us have faced joy and sorrow during 2006. Hopefully, the joys weighed the sorrows.

One of our sorrows is the closing of Lithuanian parishes. We must do all we can to assure these churches remain an active part of our lives. That means that each and every one of us must take responsibility to do as much as we can to stay active. Yes, often the church is in an inconvenient location, the Mass is at an inconvenient time, or something else is on our calendar. These churches are our ancestors' legacy to our children. It's up to us if they are to survive. Attending at Christmas and Easter won't keep the doors of the church open.

In a similar situation are the Lithuanian Clubs and Halls. They need our help. The buildings are often old and need repairs. Please volunteer your time and skills. Everyone has something to offer; help with a website, give out flyers, prepare food. There is a job for everyone. One has only to look at statistics and ask ourselves, "Is it our goal to become an 'endangered species'?" If not, volunteer. Only we can help ourselves and preserve the legacies that were left to us.

I receive many comments about how much readers enjoy Gloria O'Brien's translations. This month you are in for a very special treat. Gloria has written an original story. Thank you, Gloria, for sharing this heart warming story with the BRIDGES readers.

For those of you who make New Year's resolutions consider making 2007 the year you will make your first trip to Lithuania. Make this the year you will become more active; join an organization, attend a Lithuanian Fair or scour the genealogy sites to find your roots.

I'm always so grateful to the writers of BRIDGES and to the subscribers. Many of you send me articles and letters. Thank you for taking the time to do so. Thank you to Gema for the many, many hours she works to pull the entire magazine together each month and to Ramas Pliura for getting it into your homes each month. I appreciate the hours my husband, Tim, spends reading and rereading each article every month until we are able to recite them all from memory. Special thanks to the Lithuanian American Community for their financial support. I encourage more of you to write and to send your organization's events.

I wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year. May the year 2007 bring you peace and happiness.



Jeanne Shalna Dorr

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**THE INFORMATION CENTER FOR
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*Cover: The artist unknown.

Lithuanian American Community's Board of Directors



Lithuanian-American Community, Inc., Eighteenth Board of Directors, first session in Philadelphia, PA.

In his acceptance speech, the newly elected Lithuanian American Community's (LAC) Executive Committee's president, Vytas Maciūnas, stated that LAC's future depends on actively involved Lithuanian youth – American born and recent immigrants. During the LAC's XVIII Board of Directors' first session not only was a president elected for the next three years, but also the Presidium of the Board, the Honorary Court, the Audit Commission, as well as the LAC contingent to serve on a Joint Republic - LAC Commission. The Board of Directors met in small group meetings to set the goals for next year's work that Maciūnas and his appointees would be completing.

The board meeting was conducted on September 29, 30, and October 1 in Philadelphia, PA, at the Embassy Suites Hotel. Evening programs – Friday's initial cocktail party and Saturday's banquet – were held in the Lithuanian Music Hall.

On Friday's roster, LAC's XVII Executive Committee president and members gave presentations about their completed work and fielded questions and opinions from the directors. The cocktail hour at the Lithuanian Music Hall allowed all members and area Lithuanians to not only get to know one another, but also understand each other's successes and worries.

On Saturday morning, the first of a series of elections took place. The LAC's XVIII Presidium of the Board was chosen: Danguolė Navickienė (Chair), Jurgis Joga (secretary), Angelė Nelsienė, Violeta Gedgaudienė, and Rimtautas Marcinkevičius, MD. All belong to the Los Angeles chapter in California. The former Presidium Chair, Regina Narušienė, J.D. welcomed the new board and gave over the reins to Navickienė

The next election was held for LAC Executive Committee Chair. Vytas Maciūnas was elected president of the Lithuanian American Community's (LAC) Executive Committee. The pre-

vious Executive Committee Chair, Vaiva Vebraitė, welcomed Maciūnas and bid her goodbyes to her fellow committee members and the members of the Board of Directors. During her three-year term, she helped to strengthen relations between Lithuania and Lithuanian-Americans. In addition, her committee worked hard to meld the recent immigrants into LAC's volunteer workforce and active involvement in the different chapters. An obvious result was the fact that 20 board directors of the total 70 were recent immigrants. The following people were elected to these commissions:

- * Honorary Court (to settle disputes if necessary) – Teresė Gečienė, Rimantas Bitėnas, Laima Šileikytė-Hood, Jonas Stundžia, and Birutė Litvinienė.
- * Controllers (audit board) – Bronius Abrutis, Rimvydas Tamošiūnas, and Antanas Polikaitis.
- * Lithuanian Republic's Seimas and LAC Commission (addressing issues relevant to both countries) – Dalia Puškorienė, Romualdas Kašuba, Ph.D., Angelė Nelsienė, Elona Vaišnienė, Ph.D. and Dr. Rimantas Marcinkevičius.

Time spent until the evening program was allocated for Board Committee meetings. They had the task to discuss relevant issues that would be vital for the new Executive Committee to address during the next year. They also drafted resolutions and recommendations to be accepted or rejected by the plenary session of the Board.

Saturday evening's banquet included music, song, and a belated celebration of the 25th anniversary—the "Embassy 18". Juratė Krokytė-Stirbienė emceed this particular presentation with an historical background and photos. She explained that in 1980 eighteen Lithuanian-American students protested Soviet occupation in Washington, DC in front of the Soviet Embassy by chaining themselves to the fence. They

were promptly arrested and were brought to court. During the hearings, the judge explained that he empathized with their cause and fully understood their moral plight.

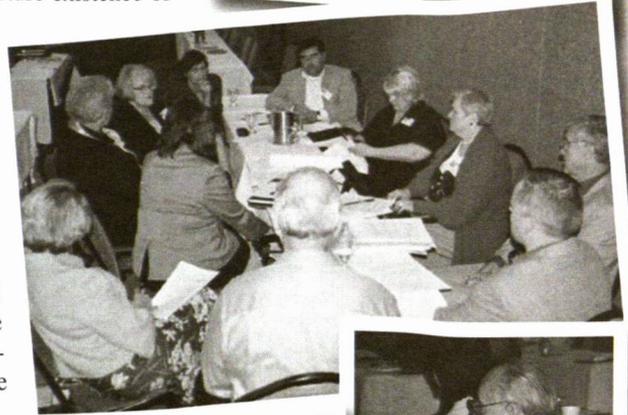
During this time period several American senators and congressmen came to the forefront in support of Lithuania's struggles. One such congressman, now former Cong. Charles Dougherty, a Republican from the North Philadelphia area of PA, worked to have the US Defense Department declare that the US does not recognize the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States. Dougherty, along with Cong. Brian Donnelly, Democrat from MA, combined their efforts to establish the "Baltic Caucus for the Baltic and the Ukraine". Dougherty went on to help augment the financing and future existence of Lithuania's Embassy in Washington, DC. For these accomplishments, the President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus, on July 6, 2006, Lithuania's Day of Statehood, bestowed on former Congressman Dougherty the Republic of Lithuania Cross of the Commander. Dr. Kornelija Jurgaitienė, Minister Plenipotentiary and Deputy Chief of Mission, presented this special medal to him. Algimantas Gečys, who headed the LAC's national Executive Committee at that time gave a brief glimpse into the accomplishments of Mr. Dougherty.

The final day of the session, after Mass at the hotel, all the Board members gathered to present, discuss, and either accept or reject the resolutions determined by individual commissions. These resolutions will then be factors for Mr. Maciūnas and his staff to complete and enhance until the next board meeting next year to be held in Chicago, IL.

*Rasa Ardys-Juska
All photos by Rimās Gedeika.

Rasa Ardys-Juska is a former editor of Bridges. She is currently concentrating on Lithuanian youth, specifically college students. Rasa is an advisor/teacher at private school.

Editor's Note: To view more photos please visit www.phillylac.org. You can locate the nearest chapter of the Lithuanian American Community at www.lithuanian-american.org



1 Vaiva Vebraitė, outgoing president of LAC National Executive Committee hands over a wood carving of Rupintojelis (pensive Christ) to Vytas Maciūnas, president-elect of LAC, Inc. V. Maciūnas started the tradition of passing Rupintojelis on to president-elect twelve years ago at the end of his first term as president of LAC.

2 Directors of the Board serve on various commissions to set annual priorities and guidelines for the National Executive Committee. Small group meeting of the Commission on Organizational Concerns.

3 Danutė Gedeika (Philadelphia) on the right translates from Lithuanian into English for Kate Porterfield (Kansas City), chair of the

Crossroads region of LAC.

4 Juozas Ardys, representing Ohio District of LAC.

5 Board of Directors at work.

6 President-elect Vytas Maciūnas interviewed for a documentary on the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. by Vaidas Misiunas from Lithuania.



#1 Rev. Ricardas Repsys, pastor of Holy Providence Lithuanian Parish in Southfield, MI delivering his homily during Mass for the LAC Directors at the Embassy Suites Hotel.

#2 The newly elected presidium of the LAC Board of Directors from l. to r. (seated) Danguolė Navickas, chairperson of the Board, Violeta Gedgaudas, Angelė Nelsas, (standing) Dr. Rimtautas

Marcinkevicius and Jurgis Joga, Secretary of the Board.

#3 President-elect Vytas Maciūnas in consultation with S. Algimantas Gečys, former president of LAC..

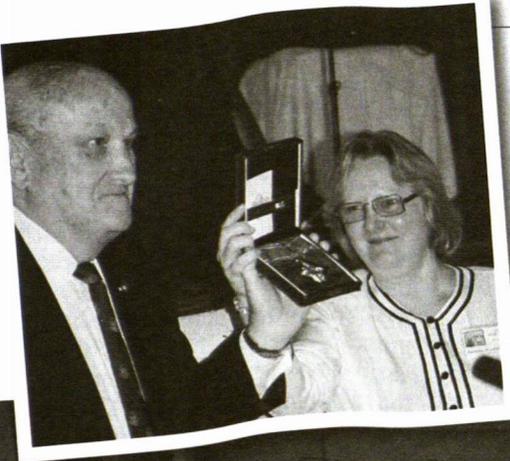
#4 The CLOCK to remind everyone to be brief in their comments.

#5 Discussions go on during a coffee break. Otonas Balciunas, Indianapolis, IN, Rimtas Samis,

New Haven, CT and Birutė Vilutienė, East Chicago, IN.

#6 Jonas Stundzia, Lawrence, MA, Kestutis Miklas, Palm Beach, FL and Gediminas Leskys, Los Angeles, CA.

#7 Marija Remienė, LAC Cultural Council Chairperson presents to Juožas Ardys the Council's most recently published book "Lithuanian Footprints in America"



1 Former congressman Charles F. Dougherty receives the Cross of the Commander for Meritorious Service to Lithuania from Dr. Kornelija Jurgaitienė, Charge d'Affaires of Lithuanian Embassy in Washington.



2 At the banquet, from l. to r. Dr. Kornelija Jurgaitienė, Charles F. Dougherty, Teresė Geciienė, Algimantas Gecys ir Vaiva Vebraitė.
3 During the Board of Directors session, scene of the Saturday night banquet at Philadelphia's Lithuanian Music Hall which will celebrate its 100 year jubilee in 2007



4 Philadelphia's "Smagumelis", an instrumental and vocal group entertains at the banquet.

5 President-elect Maciunas takes time out to relax at the banquet as Gaja Stirbys serves him dinner.

6 Members of Embassy 18 with former congressman Charles F. Dougherty from l. to r. Vytenis Gureckas, Linas Kojelis, Juratė Stirbys, C.F. Dougherty, Ašta Banionis, Rimantas Stirbys and Vidmantas Ruksys with a sign they used in anti-Soviet demonstrations at the Soviet Embassy Washington, D.C. 25 years ago.

Linksmų Šv. Kalėdų! Merry Christmas!



Christmas Eve is more important than Christmas day in Lithuania. Dec. 24th is the shortest day of the year. All traditions are related to it. CHRISTMAS EVE The house has been cleaned the whole week. Preparations for Christmas Eve take all day, food prepared not only for the special supper (Kūčios) but also for the first day of Christmas. People fast and abstain from meat. It is vitally important that the Christmas Eve supper include no meat dishes because it could then no longer be called Kūčios but an ordinary meal prepared for any other evening.

On Christmas Eve the house must be thoroughly cleaned, all the bed linens changed and all family members must bathe and don clean clothes before the evening meal. For the Christmas Eve dinner, the table is prepared as follows: a handful of fine hay is spread evenly on the table. This is a reminder that Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger on hay. The table is then covered with a pure white tablecloth, set with plates and decorated with candles and fir boughs. A small plate with as many Christmas wafers as there are persons present is placed in the center of the table. In some Lithuanian regions these wafers were called God's cakes (Dievo pyragai) for they were

obtained from the parish and were imprinted with Biblical scenes of Jesus' birth. Although plotkelė was the popular and better known term, the word is borrowed from the Slavic

Supper on Christmas Eve is special and traditional. The whole family gathers together. All family members make an effort to come home for the Christmas Eve supper, even from a distance. Perhaps not so much for the meal as for the sacred family ritual which draws the family members closer, banding everyone and strengthening warm family ties. If a family member has died that year or cannot attend the meal (only for very serious reasons) an empty place is left at the table. If you know that there is a person alone anywhere, you must invite him/her to Christmas Eve supper. Eating together and sharing with others is the most important thing.

Twelve different dishes are served on the table because Jesus had twelve apostles. All the dishes are strictly meatless: fish, herring, sližikai with poppy seed milk, kisielius (cranberry pudding), a dried fruit soup or compote, a salad of winter and dried vegetables, mushrooms, boiled or baked potatoes, sauerkraut (cooked, of course, without meat) and bread. In keeping with Lithuanian Christmas tradition, only the dishes as they were prepared in Lithuania for this meal should be eaten and fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, exotic seafood should be left for another meal. It must not be forgotten that Lithuania is a northern European country where cucumbers, tomatoes, grapes, etc., do not grow in winter. The people whose lifestyle produced the Kūčios traditions made do with foodstuffs prepared in the summer and fall: dried, pickled and otherwise preserved for the winter.

Everyone gathers at the dinner table as soon as the first star appears in the sky. If the night is cloudy, the meal begins when the father or grandfather announces it is time to eat. When everyone is assembled at the table, a prayer is said. The father then takes a wafer and offers it to the mother wishing her a Happy Christmas. "God grant that we are all together again next year", the mother responds and breaks off a piece of wafer. She offers the father her wafer in return. The father then offers his wafer to every family member or guest at the table. He or the oldest member of family wishes the best wishes for everyone. The mother does likewise. After them, all the diners exchange greetings and morsels of wafer. If apples are placed on the table, the mother takes an apple after the wafers have been shared, cuts it into as many pieces as there are diners and gives the father the first piece. This symbolized the fall of the first parents when Eve gave Adam the apple which he took and ate. Then, the apple pieces are distributed to those at table.

The order of eating the other dishes is not established, everyone eats what he wishes, but it is essential to at least taste every food. Whoever skips a Kūčios dish will not survive until the next Christmas Eve. The meal is eaten solemnly, there is little conversation or joking and alcoholic beverages are not served. If anyone needs to drink, water, homemade cider or fruit juice is served.

For a hot meal, I usually prepare dumplings, shaping them into ears, with dried boletus inside. These dumplings are served with hot broth made from red beet roots and boletus broth. It is particularly tasty.

As soon as we eat the main dishes, we pause to wait for the coming of Christmas Man (your Santa Claus).

Bookmarked to Die

Author: Jo Dereske

Reviewed by : Ramune Kubilius

Another book in the Miss Zukas mystery series.....

Published by Avon Books in 2006, Bookmarked to Die is another of the mystery novel series by Jo Dereske, featuring Washington state public librarian Wilhelmina (Helma) Zukas. Miss Zukas, of Lithuanian descent, grew up in Spoon River, Michigan, and has fond memories of her family and its roots:

"Helma thought of her overly loud, overly emotional, oversensitive - that is, sensitive to what was said to them but not what they said-family. Uncles and aunts and cousins and brothers, clinging to the comfort of their Lithuanian heritage, resistant to being totally merged into the Great American Melting Pot. How many times had they looked at her in puzzlement and said, "You take after..." dwindling off in bewilderment."

The author, Jo Derske, has familiarity with Lithuanian American culture, sprinkling her book with occasional Lithuanian phrases ("myliu teva", instead of "myliu tave" in one spot), mention of dishes like "kugelis"...The inside back cover doesn't give much information, except that she

grew up in western Michigan and is a former librarian who now lives in the northwestern corner of Washington State. However, the author does maintain a Web site, <http://jodereske.com/>, where in the biography section, she writes:

"I've drawn heavily on my Lithuanian background and my love for the oddities of the Library world for the Miss Zukas series". The 10th Miss Zukas book, Catalogue of Death is due out April 2007. The author also has a series of books for young readers. The Web site includes links to Jo Dereske's newsletter issues, and also features a kugelis recipe, among other things.

The Helma Zukas mysteries are light, and particularly amusing for the Lithuanian American or the librarian who likes to find familiar threads woven into relatively light mystery reading text...

Ramune Kubilius is an academic medical librarian by profession. She has served in the Lithuanian-American Community's Executive Committee in the past, is currently active in several other Lithuanian organizations and she dances with the Lithuanian folk dance ensemble, "Grandis". She writes for the Lithuanian language press in North America and has contributed to "Bridges" over the years.

When the children were small, he used to come with a big sack full of gifts.

Now that our family are all adults, he "leaves" the sack behind the door. Everyone gets many gifts which we have prepared for each other.

Everyone is very pleased. After this large dinner, we eat special sweet courses: very sour thick cranberry kissel (jelly made with potato flour), mixed, stewed fruit compote, and a special Christmas Eve dish of with poppy seed milk, poppy seed milk with very small dumplings (lumps) sližikai.

In earlier times, the man of the house always took food from the Christmas Eve table for the animals to the cattle shed. The belief was that people and animals would be friendly in the year to come, doing nothing bad to each other.

This night is always mysterious. Even the animals begin to speak in the cattle shed at midnight. You can go and listen to them.

Christmas Eve is rich in prognostications. The night is very full of

lots. It is a tradition to cast lots. As soon as the family has supper, the mother pours grains of wheat on the table. The more you pick up, the richer you will be next year.

The girls draw straws from under the tablecloth. The shortest straw means the girl will marry, the thickest means the girl will be happy. If you are angry with someone on Christmas Eve, you will be angry in the New Year.

If it is a starry night after supper, it means the New Year will be good. Hens will lay many eggs, forest mushrooms will be plentiful, the apple and nut harvests will be large next year. If it snows after supper, the cows will give lots of milk. There are lots of other lots that night.

After presents were changed, the children usually went to bed while the adults went to Midnight (which is still called Bernelių mišios - Shepherds' Mass).

It should be mentioned here that at Christmastime Lithuania is already

in the grip of winter.

The fields are covered with sparkling snow, streams, rivers and lakes are under ice. Country roads were also snows covered and the people usually traveled in sleighs. On Christmas Eve night bells were attached to the horses' harnesses: sometimes one or two or an entire string of bells. Sometimes small, high-pitched handbells or a good-sized bell. From all sides on Christmas Eve night resounded with the chiming and tinkling of bells: near and far, soft and loud . . . The mysterious, quiet night air of Christ's Birth resonated with endless ringing, the murmur of sliding sleighs and Christmas joy.

With help of Danutė Brazytė Bindokienė.

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<http://www.geocities.com/bituke/Christmasseven.html>

<http://www.lietuvostautodaile.lt>, webmaster



On 17 October, 2006 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II visited the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.

On 17 October, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland delivered a speech at the Seimas:

Thank you for your warm welcome and for the opportunity to address the Seimas. The exhibition I have just seen has reminded me both of Lithuania's long history as a European nation and of the drama of your country's recovery of Independence some fifteen years ago. It is an honour to stand here where so many risked their lives in the struggle for freedom. Prince Philip and I begin today in Vilnius our first visit to the Baltic States to mark the achievements of all three nations in these recent years. You have emerged from the shadow of

the Soviet Union and blossomed as sovereign states, taking up your rightful places in the international community and as respected members of the European Union and NATO. It is a transformation - political, economic and social - for which there are few parallels in the history of Europe.

But we should never forget what Lithuania has suffered along the road to freedom. The years of murder, torture, deportations and exile during much of the twentieth century are amongst the darkest passages in the history of our continent. Here in Vilnius we cannot forget the tragedy of the holocaust. There are many in the British Jewish community whose families lie buried in Lithuania and I

pay tribute to all who stood up against tyranny, so often making the ultimate sacrifice.

During the years of occupation contacts between the United Kingdom and the Baltic States were limited. But before 1939 our relationship stretches back to mediaeval times so in the last fifteen years we have been rediscovering each other. We value the great diversity that is a defining characteristic of Europe and you enrich our continent with your distinctive language, culture and experience.

I am pleased that the relationship between Britain and Lithuania is developing at such a pace. We face many of the same challenges and opportunities as we work together in



the European Union and NATO. Despite our different histories we see many things in the same light. We share an interest in building a Europe which is outward looking, open and confident. We are not afraid of change and reform. We are committed to ensuring that the benefits of freedom, democracy, and the benefit of open markets which we enjoy in the EU and NATO are extended to our neighbours who are ready and willing to join. We both believe that we have a duty to help resolve conflicts in the wider world. Trade and investment is growing in both directions and new opportunities are being created by the freedom of movement of labour.

Above all I am delighted that contacts between our people, especially the young, have flourished in recent years. Many Lithuanians are now visiting Britain and the number of British people coming to Lithuania is increasing rapidly. Hundreds of years ago it was the Scots and the merchants from the North East of England who established themselves in your country. Today too people from these parts of Britain are again notably active in exploring new partnerships with Lithuania - it was a particular pleasure to welcome your President to Edinburgh in July this year.

Lithuania has a fresh and energetic spirit, born out of your struggles and achievements, to which British people respond. And I believe Britain has



much to offer Lithuanians. In the future I hope young people will continue to travel between our two countries, learning about each other, whether working, studying or as tourists. Lithuania's millennium in



2009 and Vilnius' term as a European Capital of Culture that year offer new opportunities, including collaboration with Liverpool which will be a Capital of Culture in 2008. We also look forward to welcoming Lithuanians to London for the 2012 Olympic Games, as competitors and spectators.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my visit will demonstrate the importance we attach to the relationship which now exists

between Britain and Lithuania. We welcome Lithuania as a new partner and ally and want to see our relationship flourish in every sphere. We admire the speed with which you have moved from being a recipient of international aid to being a generous donor, from an importer of security to a country contributing materially to the security of others. We salute your dynamism, your creativity and your commitment to freedom and democracy which has so much to offer to your partners and to the world. And Mr. Speaker, if I may quote from your national anthem as we walk together down the challenging path into our new century, "May the light and the truth accompany our steps".

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*Photos used in this article are by
Alfredas Pliadis of Vilnius, Lithuania.
www.pliadisfoto.lt

Kūčios in Lithuania in 2005



It is evening. A thick darkness has fallen on the ancient countryside, and with it has brought a heavy sleet. We can see candles flickering in the dark graveyard, and flashlight beams darting through the trees. We hear kids laughing up ahead and the loud crunch of boots on frozen snow. My parents walk hurriedly, huddled together with the other adults, as my sisters and I link arms with our friends, shielding our faces from the freezing rain. We finally reach the warmth and light of "Senelių namai" - the nursing home. Twenty of us crowd around a table where eight old folks sit quiet and subdued. In between singing carols and hymns, we break the traditional plotkelė, as during every Kūčios. It was not the first time we had sung and broken bread together. My family had spent several summers at Rumbonys in the countryside of Lithuania organizing mini-camps for orphan children. On this occasion, however, we came without a set agenda, simply to be in the company of the friends we had made in summers past.

After we wished the old folks *Linskmų Kalėdų*, our large group of nuns and young people returned across the snowy graveyard to the Rumbonys parish rectory for Kūčios.

The scene at my Lithuanian Kūčios was crowded. The room was tightly packed. About twenty-five of us snuggled cozily around a long table that extended across the entire room. Many of the grown-up kids that had previously been under the Sisters' care had returned home for Christmas: one young woman from working in England, another young man from the Seminary. It felt like a large family reunion; my family took the role of the visiting aunts, uncles and cousins who hadn't seen their extended family in quite some time. As such, we caught up with one another's lives. There were new additions to the house: running water, complete bathrooms, and a new kitchen. This was a big deal as they replaced the old-fashioned firewood stove and the outhouse without plumbing that we had used just a year ago. Some teenagers reported that they were learning French in school. Other very shyly tried to practice an English word or two with us. There were new faces at the table. A seventeen year old young man from the orphanage (*Internatas*) had asked Sister Danutė to please let him come to Rumbonys for Christmas, so that he too, would have a place to go. He was a polite young man, who relished every bite of food. Some faces were missing: a young girl of seven, had returned to live with her mother, gotten sick with tuberculosis and was now hospitalized. Sister Danutė and Sister Sonata served food to everyone and did not accept much help. They wanted to give these youngsters a warm, happy holiday - a *Šventė*. As we ate the staple foods of Kūčios (fish, bread, *sližikai* in poppy seed milk, and of course, *plotkelės*), we played word games, listened to stories and jokes. We pulled straws from under the tablecloth to determine who would live the longest. Finally, my family had the pleasure of surprising the Rumbonys family with presents; they sat in a circle on the edge of their seats for the new winter pants, gloves and coats that we had brought for them.

The next day, Kaledos, we attended Mass at the Rumbonys Church,

presided by Father Jakimavicius. The Church was a several hundred year-old wooden building. It wasn't heated, but the Church was packed with people. Everyone was wearing many layers of clothes under their winter coats; even Father Jakimavicius wore his coat under his priestly vestments. The altar boys looked like dough boys with their coats under their altar boy garb. You could see puffs of breath in front of everyone with every prayer and hymn.

The congregation was eclectic. My family and I had the pleasure of standing in the balcony, next to the choir. Most of its members were older, with farmers' faces that had been hardened with toil and sun; but they sang with great earnestness. The grandmothers, each adorned with a colorful babushka, sat with the women and children in the pews. My mom whispered to me, "These are your roots." My grandparents had seen scenes similar to this many Christmases past; however, I saw a modernized image; next to the members of the older generation stood women with orange hair and young men in black leather coats. Even Santa Claus and his angel helper sat in the front pew, and handed out previously-owned and loved stuffed animals to children at the end of Mass.

Despite the usual snowfall, familiar Lithuanian Christmas tunes and bread breaking, this Christmas was unlike any other that I had ever experienced. It resembled the Christmases I had read about in my Lithuanian school-books that coincided with the stories my grandmother told me. There were no flashing lights, no blow-up Santas, no Christmas sales at department stores. The humble, Charlie-Brown type Christmas tree that the Rumbonys children were so proud of had been chopped down from their woods and decorated with a few simple ornaments. Some things were absent, but I felt that nothing was missing. In other words, Christmas was stripped down to its no-frills core: a celebration of Christ's birth, a joyful thanksgiving to God for the blessings in this life, and the company of those you love and about whom you care. Surely, everyone appreciates receiving presents: it is a way of remembering someone, and people like to be remembered. However, gift-giving isn't the only way to accomplish this. My family and I remembered the Rumbonys family by traveling a long distance just to be with them. It may not have been the easiest present to send but the trip was the most meaningful present we could give them. And we were honored that they let us visit. Kūčios, after all, is a time for family.

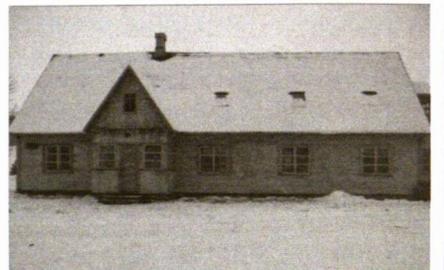
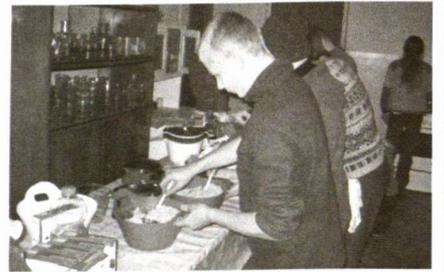
Rima Sestokas

Rima Sestokas is a student at Duke University.

Editor's Note: Any help you can give to the Sisters in Rumbonys would be greatly appreciated. All donations will be sent to Sister Danute for her work with the children and the elderly.

Please write your tax deductible checks to Lithuanian Orphan Care and write RUMBONYS in the memo of the check.

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



News and Views

US visa processing time reduced

Vilnius, (ELTA) - Beginning October 10, the processing time for a US visa will be reduced. All US embassies and consulates worldwide will require people applying for nonimmigrant visas to complete their application forms online before arriving for the visa interview.

The Electronic Visa Application Form (EVAF) form is available online at <http://evisaforms.state.gov> or via a link on the website of the US Embassy to Lithuania, www.usembassy.lt.

This form allows applicants to complete their application forms online and then print them out. In doing so, the form provides a third page containing a barcode, which encodes the information in their applications. The barcode will then be scanned at the embassy on the day of the visa interview, thus reducing processing time, the US Embassy claims.

The EVAF has been available for several years and many Lithuanians have already used it. Starting this fall, all US embassies and consulates worldwide will require that applications brought to the visa interview be filled out and printed using the EVAF format.

Moreover, in August, the Lithuanian Postal Service, in cooperation with the US Embassy in Vilnius, began offering a special service to visa recipients. The Postal Service delivers the passports of visa applicants after the visa application process has been concluded. If applicants do not wish to return to the US Embassy in person the day after the application process has been completed, they can have their passports delivered within Lithuania by simply filling out a short form giving their name and address on the morning of the interview at the embassy. When Lithuanian Post delivers the passport they will be charged a special rate of 9 litas (2.6 euros) for the service, payable upon delivery. In most cases, the passport is

received 1-2 business days after the visa was issued (the day after the interview). Some applicants are already taking advantage of this time and potentially money-saving service.

EU launches scholarships for Belarusian students for studies in Lithuania and Ukraine.

Brussels, (ELTA) - The European Union launched a scholarship program Monday for Belarusian students kicked out of their home universities for opposition activities, offering to support their studies in neighboring Lithuania and Ukraine.

The 4.5-million-euro program will pay scholarships for 205 students at the European Humanities University in Vilnius and for a further 100 students at universities in Ukraine, the European Commission said. "I hope that those who study under this scheme will take home with them a greater understanding of life in a free society, and that they will maintain their hope and optimism that their country may one day enjoy these freedoms," said EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

Hundreds of students were expelled from their home universities for opposing Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's authoritarian regime and taking part in anti-government rallies after he won a third term as president in March.

The EU program follows similar projects by Poland and the Czech Republic, which have launched courses for Belarusian students banned from studying in their home country.

The EU is also funding independent radio and TV broadcasts into Belarus to support the opposition movement, the European Union portal reports.

Information Center for Homecoming Lithuanians

SALARIES IN LITHUANIA UP 6.8 PCT IN 2005

The real monthly salary (including individually owned companies) in Lithuania increased 6.8 percent last year compared to 2004. This increase stood at 7.1 percent in the state sector and at 7.2 percent in the private sector.

The average gross monthly salary (including individually owned companies) in Lithuania last year amounted to 1276 litas (370 euros), an increase of 11

percent year-on-year.

The average gross monthly salary amounted to 1,414 litas (410 euros) in the state sector, an increase of 11.2 percent compared to 2004. This figure stood at 1,194 litas (346 euros) in the private sector, advancing 11.6 percent year-on-year, the Lithuanian Department of Statistics reports.

The speediest growth in salaries in 2005 was recorded in the construction (19.8 percent), healthcare and social work (19.4 percent), and real estate, rent and other business (15.4 percent).

The increase in the average salary in 2005 mainly resulted from an increase in the minimum salary and an increase in the salaries of employees in the fields of healthcare and social work and construction.

<http://www.omnitel.net/ramunas/>

Info. Center for Homecoming Lithuanians

SHORTAGE OF MANAGERS AND SELLERS HIGHEST IN LITHUANIA

A total of 101,000 job proposals, of which 55 percent in the cities, were recorded in Lithuania over the first nine months of this year. Shortage of different specialists is calculated by hundreds and that of workers -- by thousands in Lithuania.

According to the Lithuanian labor exchange, the shortage is the highest for those specialists and workers for whom the demand is also the highest. Specialists and workers of the same professions are needed in all towns.

The demand is the highest for sales managers in cities. Shortage for accountants, teachers, work managers and insurance agents is also very high.

A total of 7,500 free work places for sellers were recorded in the country before September. Cargo transport drivers, cooks, painters, waiters, sewers and builders are also needed.

As on November 1, 68,200 unemployed people were recorded in Lithuania. Unemployed in Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipeda account for almost one third of this sum. A total of 12,400 jobseekers were recorded in Vilnius. This figure stood at 6,300 and 4,200 people in Kaunas and Klaipeda respectively. <http://www.omnitel.net/ramunas/>

20th annual Lithuanian Fair in Los Angeles



Antanas (Tony) Mažeika and
Ms Rūta Lee

20th annual Lithuanian Fair in Los Angeles features first Lithuanian basketball tournament in 15 years and a MVP player from the Windy City.

Festival

This year on the last Saturday of September/first Sunday of October the annual Lithuanian Festival was held in Los Angeles at St. Casimir's Lithuanian parish. The hosts, Victor and Diana Ralys, began the program by inviting everyone to sing the American and Lithuanian anthems, and both countries' flags were presented. Honorary guests were announced and among them was the Hollywood actress of Lithuanian descent, Rūta Kilmonytė-Lee. On October 10th Rūta's personal "star" was memorialized in Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood alongside other actors. Also Mr. Aras Mattis, the head of the 2006 LA Festival's committee, arrived from Chicago.

All weekend long the crowd was entertained by the Los Angeles Lithuanian dance group "Spindulys", another folklore group from Hamilton, Canada "Gyvataras", accompanied by an ensemble "Žagarai" and dancers from Toronto "Gintaras". There was a folk music capella from Chicago "Sodžius", new comers from Lithuania dance group, situated around LA called "Retro", three singer-sisters Grikavičiūtės. The legendary singer from Lithuania Vytautas Kernagis literally brought the audience to its feet. Before Saturday's closing announcements the Lithuanian band "Delfinai" sang a few well known Lithuanian disco songs. Those attending the festival had the opportunity to enjoy the delicious Lithuanian food, ice-cream, and beer. They could shop and purchase a variety of Lithuanian souvenirs, including amber, linen, CDs, books and other items. During the evening several hundred guests came to see the performance of yet another pop group from Lithuania "SKAMP", that was held by the Lithuanian scouts association "Rambynas" in the Glendale Hilton hotel hall.

Sunday began with the Lithuanian Mass at the St. Casimir's church. Everyone enjoyed the LA Lithuanian Saturday School children's singing and dancing. The other ensembles repeated their Saturday program. This year's Lithuanian fair featured an exhibit of authentic, museum-quality Lithuanian folk art and costumes researched and produced by students and faculty of Lithuania's only Folk Art College. The College, located in Vilkija, Lithuania, was founded fifteen years ago by Dr. Zigmantas and Dalia Kalesinskas, and is dedicated to preserving and promoting Lithuanian folk and heritage. Also there was a lottery with the grand prize of \$1,000. The

St. Casimir Lithuanian Church Choir closed this wonderful event.

Basketball

I should mention that along with the festival there was a Lithuanian basketball tournament going on which had started on Friday night. This event was hosted by the local Lithuanian sports club "Banga", led by its president Mr. Vilius Žukauskas. There were 7 Lithuanian teams participating in this journey: LA's "Banga", "Krupnikas" from San Francisco, Chicago's "Lituanica-I" and "Lituanica-II", "Rambynas", "Panevėžys", and also a team from Orlando, Florida, who brought their cheerleaders as well. Semifinals and finals took place on day 3 of the tournament – Sunday, October 1st. "Panevėžys" fought hard against Orlando, losing by 52-41 while LA's "Banga" took on Chicago's "Lituanica-I". "Banga" led the entire game, at one point by a 12-point margin, but made some errors at the very end that led them to fall short 65-64. "Lituanica-I" went on to defeat Orlando in the finals 55-45, and walked away with the tournament trophy, with their uncontested leader Derek Molis scoring highest (37 points) for his team. The awards ceremony took place Sunday afternoon on the main Lithuanian Fair stage. The tournament MVP award, granted by its sponsor Dr. Nijolė Glaze, was presented to none other than D. Molis, and an award for "player with most potential" went to LA "Banga's" Deirūnas Visockas. Basketball games in LA were also sponsored by loyal "Banga" sponsors www.bidz.com as well as the "Red Lion Tavern" (www.RedLionTavern.net). Everyone had a wonderful time at the tournament and the festival and we are all looking forward to next year's events. In the next issue of BRIDGES I will introduce you to the tournament's MVP Derek Molis.

Eugenija Misevičius is a graduate of the University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT. Eugenija is a member of the Bridgeport Chapter of the Lithuanian American Community and is also a member of the Knights of Lithuania. She was recently elected secretary of the Lithuanian Journalist Association. Eugenija also participates as a court interpreter. She belongs to the Lithuanian Sports Club of Connecticut and enjoys participating in amateur sports such as martial arts. She and her husband, Laurynas, participate in many Lithuanian events.



CATHOLIC DIGEST
March 2006

Running with Kristina*

*Mercy Home for Boys and Girls*

Kristina's blond pigtails flopped from side to side as she raced across the grass in her sky-blue overalls. The wind whizzed alongside her, urging, *faster, faster!* Kristina grinned. Playing on the lawn of the abandoned Kaunas Castle in her home country of Lithuania, with its apple trees and squat, russet-colored tower, was one of Kristina's favorite things to do.

"Come on, Mom! Race you to that tree!"

"You're making me work off breakfast, aren't you, *zuiku?*" panted Edita, following behind. "If you go any faster, little bunny," she warned playfully, catching her daughter by the waist, "you're going to lift right off the ground like an airplane."

Kristina laughed, wriggling free. She flung out her arms and spun - around and around and around - watching the blue and white sky pinwheel above her.

Just run. Kristina's sneakers pounded the Chicago pavement. Each step sent the tears sliding down her cheeks and dribbling under her chin. *Why did Mom send me to Chicago to live with Dad? Things aren't better for me in America at all. I hate it here.*

That's not all true, Kristina admitted as her feet took her around a corner. There were her girlfriends at Maria High School, and track team, and her pet gecko, Lizardo. But living with Dad... The tears fell faster as Kristina thought of how excited she had been on the plane from Lithuania. Her hands had been trembling as she unbuckled her seat belt, her heart pounding as she thought: Finally, after 14 years, I'm going to meet my real dad!

Concentrate, she told herself firmly, brushing tears and blond hair away from her face. *Just run.*

"Kristina, can you stay a moment, please?" Ms. George, seated at her desk, looked up from a pile of papers as Kristina walked toward the door of the English as a Second Language classroom. Her voice sounded unnaturally high and strained.

Kristina's brow furrowed. "Sure." She thrust her hands into the pockets of her camouflage cargo pants, hunched her shoulders, and rocked on her heels, trying to look casual as she waited for everyone else to leave. Am I in trouble?

Ms. George shut the door quietly after the last student. "I just finished reading your journal entry from our last class."

Kristina stopped rocking abruptly. A rush of heat bloomed across her face. Why did I write that story? I don't want Ms. George to find out. She glanced furtively up at Ms. George; her lips were pressed tight with concern. Do I?

"What I read," Ms. George continued gently, "was a story about a very lonely girl with a dad who says very mean things to her, a dad who is very angry."

Kristina's stomach lurched. *Dad would be so mad if he knew I wrote*

about him drinking and hitting Stepmom. Or about the things he yells at me. Suddenly Kristina felt the urge to go running - now. One foot shifted nervously toward the door.

Ms. George must have noticed, because she spoke quickly. "I'd like to ask you a question, and I hope that you'll answer me honestly." Then she paused for what seemed like forever. "Was this story fiction?"

Kristina looked hard at the floor. "No," she whispered.

"Come on, Kristina! One more lap!"

Kristina groaned. She'd been practicing every day on the track for weeks; to her sore legs, however, it felt more like months. Still, she turned down every opportunity to complain. So much had changed for the better since she left her dad's to live at Mercy Home and had applied to college. A grin spread across her face as she remembered her friends and mentors from the home crowding around as she tore open the large white envelope from the college. She's been sure that if she had to wait another moment, her heart would burst out of her chest. Then: We are pleased to inform you that you have been awarded the Dean's Scholarship....

The very thought of it sent a sizzle of adrenaline shooting through her body. Kristina's feet, thankful for the boost, pushed away the pavement with renewed energy.

"That's great, Kristina! Keep it up!"

Erica was perched on a nearby bench with a stopwatch. Kristina had to grin as she looked from her loose-fitting running gear to her friend's fitted jeans, high heels, and blue cashmere sweater.

"How about you give it a go in those high heels?" Kristina joked as she ran past.

"Very funny. We've got to get you ready for the spring tryouts."

Kristina winced as a stitch began to form in her side. "Great," she grumbled, though it sounded more like a gasp. But you can't stop now, she told herself. *This has got to be your best time all week.*

I can do this. Kristina forced her mind off her tired limbs and, instead, onto all the things she would do when she graduated. *Maybe I'll go to Australia and explore the outback. Maybe I'll join the Air Force and become a nurse. Right now, anything seems possible.*

Slap-slap-slap-slap. Kristina's feet were flying across the pavement. Erica was looking at the stopwatch in growing excitement.

"Run!" she blurted. "Run!"

Run. Kristina anchored her gaze forward and sped up in one final burst, her legs striding hard and strong toward the imaginary finish line. CD

**Based on the story of Kristina. Last name withheld to protect child's privacy.*

Julie L. Rattey is associate editor at *Catholic Digest*.

HELP FROM MERCY HOME

Kristina's story took a happy turn because of the support she received from the Chicago-based Mercy Home for Boys and Girls, which since 1887 has been providing residential and mentoring programs for children who need hope, healing, and a place to call home. For more information, or to help, call 312-738-7560 or visit www.mercyhome.org.

One of Kristina's favorite foods in Lithuania was her mother's

shlyzikai. To introduce a bit of Lithuanian cuisine into your home see the recipe for shlyzikai.

Bake your own Lithuanian biscuits

Kristina, a native of Lithuania whose story is told in the "Love Your Neighbor" column on page 80, enjoys shlyzikai, a traditional Christmas time treat her Lithuanian grandmother used to make. Known as Christmas Eve biscuits, the dish commonly is served with poppy seed milk.

FOR SHLYZIKAI

1 cup milk
1 oz. yeast
1 tablespoon sugar
one half teaspoon salt
one and one half cups
all-purpose flour

Cream yeast with sugar. Add warm milk and salt: Sift in flour. Stir thoroughly. Put in a warm spot to rise a little. If necessary, add more flour to roll. Roll with rolling pin on floured board. Cut into finger-width strips, then into bits of a half-inch or less. Bake at 350 degrees till edges are light brown.

FOR MILK

One half lb. poppy seeds
2 cups boiling water
10 almonds
2 cups milk
sugar to taste

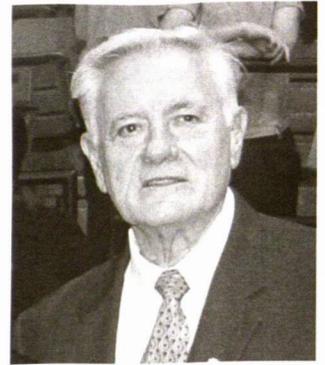
Pound the seeds fine. Cover with boiling water. Blanch, peel, and chop almonds. Stir into seeds. Add sugar to taste. When cool, pour into the milk. Pour over biscuits just before serving.

WWW.KNIGHTSOFLITHUANIA.COM/ILITHUANI.HTML

Editor's note: Very special thanks to Julie Rattey for her assistance when I "lost" part of this article.

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Happy Birthday

Belated

birthday greetings to
President Valdas Adamkus
on the occasion of his
80th birthday.

The President was born on
November 3rd.

BRIDGES

wishes him good health,
good luck
and a continuation of
his successful career.



TRIVIA QUESTION

(No.11)

Who was the greatest Lithuanian scholar in the field of historical and comparative linguistics?

- (a) Jonas Jablonskis
- (b) Vincas Kudirka
- (c) Casmir Buga

Answer to Trivia Quiz
on page 22

ROSELLA'S LITHUANIAN ADVENTURE

Rosella Kutaitė is 15 years old. Her parents are Joseph and Mary Kutas, Lithuanian-Americans. Rosella is named after her beloved Močiutė, her father's mother, Rožė, who patiently taught her to speak Lithuanian. She misses her Močiutė, who passed away last year. She and her parents, and her bratny 10-year-old brother, are visiting Lithuania for the first time, for the Dainų Šventė.

Rosella is interested in all things Lithuanian, while her brother, Juozukas (he prefers to be called Joe), spends most of his time complaining that everything is boring, and that he misses his friends and his Little League baseball games.

Vilnius is as busy as an anthill, and full of people wearing the colorful national dress. Bus after bus disgorges endless groups of people, some of whom have come to perform, and others who have come to watch and enjoy. The many hotels are almost full, and cafes and restaurants busy.

The family has dinner in an old-style country restaurant, where they have potato pancakes and cepelinai, with Lithuanian beer for the parents and apple juice for the kids. Musicians move from room to room, entertaining the diners with folk music. Juozukas prefers to listen to rap on his iPod.

They go to Sereikiškių Park for the Folklore Day. Rosella is wearing her Lithuanian national costume, a beautiful ensemble made in Lithuania, a gift from her grandmother. The park is filled with people who belong to folklore ensembles in cities, towns and villages throughout the country. Each group is dressed in festive national costume and, carrying their musical instruments and identifying banners, claims their assigned bit of territory along the greensward of the park.

It's a sunny day, and spectators stream in, stopping here and there to enjoy a dancing group or listen to a song, many even joining in with obvious pleasure. Over to one side, a blacksmith has set up his temporary smithy, and demonstrates his skill by forging a sword while spectators observe and question him and his assistant. Here, finally, is something that Juozukas thinks is interesting.

A woman is telling a tall tale from Žemaitija about a courtship to an attentive audience, and is pleased by their laughter and applause when she finishes the joke with a double punch-line.

Another man has placed his bench against a fence and is playing a musical instrument similar to a cimbalom, which he says he made himself. A couple of women have set up a loom and are demonstrating sash weaving. A man walks around on stilts, and encourages people in his audience to try it. A few brave souls do; everyone falls off, laughing.

After a while, Rosella finds that she has been separated from her family, but she feels no anxiety, because according to a strict long-standing family custom, her parents had designated a time and place they should meet in just such a case. They

were to meet at the park entrance in a little more than two-and-a-half hours, so Rosella has time to wander around as she likes. She heads towards the Vilnele River, as she has heard about the "Bohemian" section of Vilnius and is curious to see the so-called Angel of Užupė.

She finds herself in a densely wooded area on the riverbank, near an ornamental little bridge. There is a peculiar hush in the air, nothing heard but birdsong and the rush of the Vilnele's waters. She sees a small house nearby and walks toward it. There are three horse-drawn carriages parked at its doors, and as she approaches, the scene bursts into life.

Several young men dressed in national costume carry a large, heavy chest out of the house, and, singing a playful ditty, place it in one of the wagons. Some young ladies, also dressed in festive costume leave the house, carrying wreaths and garlands of ruta. Each is picked up and swung in the arms of the young men, and seated in the wagons. All are singing and laughing. An older woman rushes out of the house, and admonishes Rosella in Lithuanian: "Rožele" Kur buvai? Mes visi taves ieškojome. Where have you been? We've all been looking for you. You know you must help us carry the presentation linens. If we don't rush, we will be late! Come now, get up into that wagon and don't wander off again!" One of the young men, whom the others call Anicetas, scoops her up and deposits her in the wagon, with a smile and a wink. She is taken by surprise and concludes that she has been mistaken for someone else. She decides to "go with the flow" and see what happens further.

Soon a very pretty young lady, finely dressed, and wearing a wreath of ruta, steps out, accompanied by an older couple who can only be her parents. She kneels before them, and they give her their affectionate blessing. The three are helped into the lead wagon, and the entire party starts forth. They travel through a rustic neighborhood that looks strange to Rosella - the houses seem smaller than she expected, and spaced farther apart. There are no sidewalks, no paved streets, no traffic, just packed earth and rocky paths. They stop at another, slightly larger house, where another group of people are waiting, all in festive garb. A handsome young man comes forward and helps the young lady down from her seat; the older couple step down as well. They are welcomed by the young man and his parents, and Rosella learns that she is to join the other girls in displaying the gifts of beautifully-woven and embroidered linens to various members of the welcoming party.

She realizes she has stumbled into a traditional Lithuanian wedding!

Several of the young men ceremoniously lift the large, heavy chest from its wagon and deposit it at the doorstep. Rosella now recognizes it as the bride's *kraitis*, her hope chest, containing her dowry and all the fine things she has made and

collected through the years, in anticipation of her new life as a bride and mistress of her own home.

The chest is left indoors, as the wedding party and guests head for the church.

The jewel like St. Anne's Church has been made ready - the heavy doors are swung wide, and fragrant flowers are everywhere. Every bench and pew is filled, and the priest, in his long, swinging cope, waits to join the couple in Holy Matrimony. Rosella is excited to discover that she is expected to walk down the aisle with the other young ladies, and blushes as a handsome young man offers his arm with a smile and a wink. Wasn't he the same fellow who seated her in the wagon, and didn't he bear a striking resemblance to some old pictures of her grandfather, Rožė's husband, Anicetas?

Rosella has no time to ponder, as the bride and groom are already standing at the altar. Their voices ring with sincerity, affection and religious awe as the priest leads them in their vows and instructs them about their new responsibility to each other and to the future. The organ breaks forth in a triumphal march as they walk down the aisle, husband and wife, to be deluged with flower petals.

The young people are all talking at once, anticipating the fun of the wedding reception, where the young ladies will dance and sing, and enjoy the swings that have recently been built just for this occasion. The young men are looking forward to "hanging the matchmaker", and other jokes and tricks customary at a country wedding celebration.

As the wedding party and guests make their way back to the wagons and other conveyances, Rosella glances down the street and sees a flash of color that attracts her. She steps away from the group of wedding guests, and immediately finds herself in the middle of a crowd of tourists heading towards the Cathedral, and Sereikiškiu Park. She joins them, and soon stands at the park's entrance, ready to meet her family, who are approaching. Her father calls to her:

"Well, Rosie, where did you go off to? What did you see?"



"Daddy, Mom, you won't believe what a great thing I just saw!" And she relates her experience in detail, while her parents smile and her little brother smirks, offering his opinion:

"You're crazy, Ro! People don't get married like that anymore, even in Lithuania! The bride wears a big fancy white gown, and the groom wears a tux, and so does everybody else. And the girls have those fancy hairdos that look like somebody glued them in place. And who would drive a horse and wagon in Vilnius now, especially on a festival day? You must've had a daydream! - Or - Ha! Ha! - maybe somebody was shooting a movie!"

But her father has a different opinion:

"You know, my parents lived just around that area in the old days, right near the river Vilnele. Mama and Papa were neighbors, and I'm sure they could have met in just that way. Let's hail a cab and try to find the places you saw". They pile into a taxi and drive all around for an hour or so, but Rosella recognizes nothing. They finally give up and declare the incident a mystery. "Perhaps, Rosella, you stumbled across the threshold of time for just a little while. Be glad you had such a wonderful adventure!"

Gloria Kivytaitė O'Brien is a frequent contributor to Bridges. She grew up in Brooklyn, Annunciation Parish. Gloria can be contacted at Senaboba@aol.com.

* The art work is by Antanas Kucas

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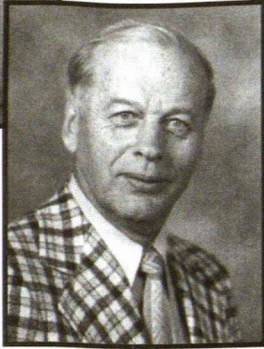
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L I T H U A N I A N A M E R I C A N N E W S J O U R N A L



Dr. Antanas "Tony" Musteikis



Dr. Antanas
"Tony"
Musteikis,
University
Professor,
Writer.

*After a long and joyful life,
Antanas passed away October 2, 2006.*

Antanas Musteikis was born January 11, 1914 to Vincas and Teofile (Miskinyte) Musteikis on a farm near Zarasai, Lithuania, the third of four brothers. Though very poor, he was determined to become educated. The first time he was an editor was in 1936 when he edited a student magazine. He first taught in 1940 in Pasvalys, Lithuania. He attended Vytautas the Great

University, and then the University of Vilnius, earning an MA in Philology (Lithuanian, Russian, German) in 1941.

Antanas married his beautiful wife Akvilina Luomonaite in 1943. They feared for their lives, and together they tried to flee from the oncoming Nazism and Communism in June of 1944, but were captured and separated by the Nazis, and sent to forced labor camps in Germany until the end of WWII. He attended the University of Heidelberg in Germany thru 1949, studying English and Russian literature, as well as Sociology. The couple was reunited by the International Red Cross in 1949 and emigrated to New York City. Antanas worked for Voice of America, started a family, and earned his PhD in Sociology at NYU in 1954.

Antanas and his family moved to Buffalo NY around 1955, worked as a research analyst for Catholic Charities, and joined the D'Youville College faculty. For 15 years Dr. Musteikis chaired the Sociology department. He coached ladies' volleyball. Antanas found time to publish three books, as well as academic treatises and newspaper articles too numerous to mention, in many languages and various countries, about topics such as culture, acculturation, communistic

imperialism and Lithuanian folklore, Encyclopedia Lituanica submissions, over 200 articles in all. Several of his scripts were broadcast behind the Iron Curtain by the Voice of America. He was fluent in 5 languages: English, Lithuanian, German, Russian and Latin. Antanas taught in many countries, and in many languages, and was an interpreter. He was elected into Who's Who in the East and American Men of Science.

After his beloved wife's Akvilina's death in 1989, Antanas stayed with his son Rimas in Buffalo. Antanas was active in the Lithuanian-American Community all his life, and continued the fight for Lithuania's freedom as an officer of the Lithuanian Club of Buffalo. He was a master chess player and tennis player, regularly beating opponents thirty to forty years his junior, well into his 80s. When the World University Games came to Buffalo in 1993 Antanas was the manager of the Lithuanian Ladies Basketball Team. He was a volunteer for the Shea's Buffalo Spotlight Committee, and especially enjoyed working the organ concerts. He attended St Rose of Lima church for some 40 years.

In 1991, Antanas returned to newly free Lithuania with his son Rimas, ironically witnessing a return of war with the attempted Yeltsin coup of Gorbachev. In his retirement, Antanas was invited to teach Sociology in his newly freed country, a dream fulfilled, and off he went. In 2001 Antanas moved to Olympia Washington to live with his daughter Danute Rankis, son-in-law Andy Rankis, and three granddaughters Julija, Raminta and Vera Rankis. Antanas became a member of the Seattle Lithuanian community, as well as participating in Olympia's Senior Stars program. His twinkling blue eyes and his raising a glass to get us all through life's disappointments will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

The following was written by Rimas Musteikis, the son of Dr. Antanas Musteikis.

Editor's note: We offer our condolences to the family of Dr. Antanas Musteikis.

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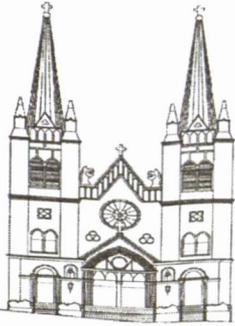
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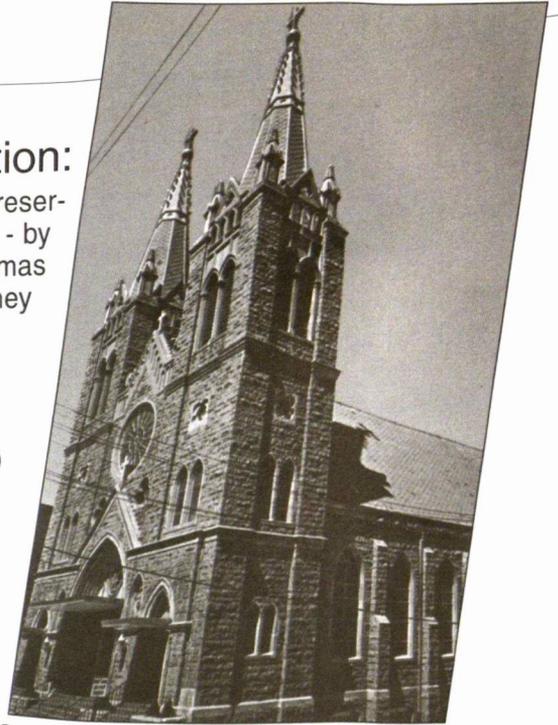


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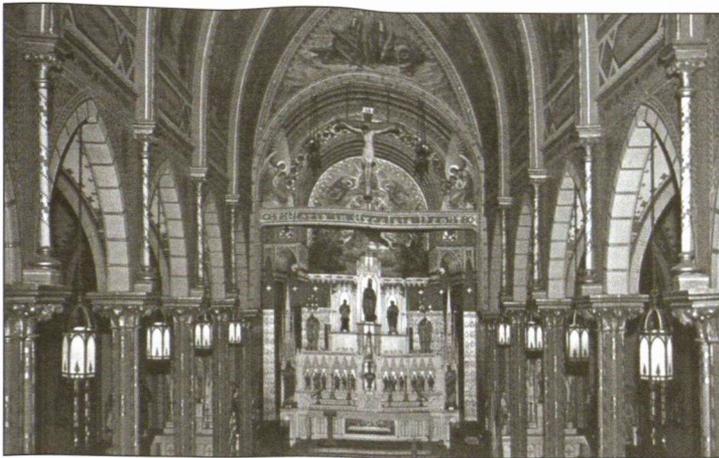
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Bjella returns from stint in Lithuania

Issue date: 10/20/06 Section: Arts & Entertainment

Earlier this month, Concert Choir and Chorale lacked a conductor for almost two weeks. Rick Bjella, Director of Choral Studies, had flown to Lithuania.

He was there to guest conduct Polifonija, a professional choir based in Siauliai, one of the larger cities in Lithuania.

The conductor of Polifonija, Gediminas Ramanauskas, heard Concert Choir and Women's Choir perform in Omaha this spring as a part of the American Choral Directors Association division convention.

He was blown away and approached Bjella to invite him to conduct his choir.

"At first I thought it was a joke," laughed Bjella, remembering how strange he thought the request was at the time. But Ramanauskas was serious, and soon they had some tentative dates planned for the visit.

Ramanauskas had recently begun conducting Polifonija, replacing the previous conductor who had been there for nearly 25 years.

Bjella believes that Ramanauskas' goal in his new role as conductor is to expand the knowledge and ability of the group by introducing international music. The best way to accomplish this goal is to host guest conductors from around the world.

Bjella compiled a repertoire of music from North, Central and South America for the choir to sing. The music represented six languages including Inuit, Portuguese, English and Spanish.

The choir had only three days of rehearsal with Bjella before they performed. They started their tour in Kelme, then traveled to Kaunas and Vilnius, the nation's capital, before heading back to the choir's home in Siauliai.

The concert in Vilnius was one of the more memorable moments for Bjella. "The chorus sang at a very high level," he recalled. "There was an immediate standing ovation, and I think there were three U.S. ambassadors there, and they raving about the concert afterward."

After the performance, the members of the chorus went to a supermarket nearby and bought food to take on the bus home. It was a sort of a "party atmosphere," as Bjella called it.

In conducting Polifonija, Bjella noticed differences in the singing technique and style of the chorus.

"The influence of the Russian culture makes for aggressive, forced music. They do it very well, but the lyricness of Shenandoah becomes more difficult to transmit."

Lithuania declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1990, so the Russian influences are still quite strong.

Bjella had a translator to ease the language barrier but besides that, cultural differences were not that huge.

Half the choir smoked, everyone considered coffee breaks essential and the women dressed a bit classier. They were not extravagant in color or material items, Bjella noted.

He commented that "they are a reserved people. The idea of presenting music which was quite emotional took awhile."

Once back in Appleton, Bjella continued to prepare for the Forgotten Peoples and Kaleidoscope concerts, this Friday, Oct. 20 and Saturday, Oct. 21, respectively.

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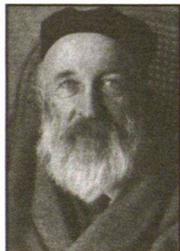
ANSWER TO TRIVIA QUESTION

In the booklet "The Lithuanian Language" by Alfred Senn, he wrote: "Many men have contributed to the creation of the modern standard language, but none more than grammarian Jonas Jablonskis (1861-1930), who wrote under the assumed name of Rygiskiu Jonas and revered as the "father of the modern Lithuanian stan-

dard language". Casmir Buga (1879-1924), on the other hand was the greatest Lithuanian scholar in the field of historical and comparative linguistics Ed Shakalis

Submitted by Edward Shakalis

Edward Shakalis is a retired Electrical Engineer and a ham radio operator. He enjoys playing golf.



Prof. JONAS
JABLONSKIS
(1861-1930)

"Father of the Lithuanian
Standard Language"

Born in Kubiliai, township of Bubleliai, Sakiai County. He wrote under various names but in his later years preferred preferred *Rygiškių Jonas*. Everybody recognized his authority in questions of grammar, students and university professors, as well as the entire Ministry of Public

Instruction with the entire school system of the state. The University of Lithuania bestowed on him its highest distinction, the title of "Honorary Professor" (Lietuvos Unversiteto garbės profesorius). Cf. J. Balčikonis, *Jono Jablonskio Raštai*. 5 vols., Kaunas 1933-1936.



Prof. KAZIMIERAS
BUGA
(1879-1924)

"Foremost Lithuanian
Linguist"

Born in Pažiege, parish of Dusetos, Zarasai County. A list of his publications is given in *Tauta ir Zodis III* (Kaunas 1925), 224-231. His untimely death stunned the whole nation.



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

Calendar of Events for December 2006 - January-February-March 2007

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

B4p(LK4) 1195

DECEMBER

December 2, 2006 - 5:00 pm
Saturday - "JŪRA" Lithuanian Folk Dance Group of San Diego performs at December Nights Balboa Park, San Diego, CA
Info: www.lithsd.org

December 2, 2006
Traditional Christmas Party.
Episcopal Church of St. Peter and St. Paul
1795 Johnson Ferry Road, Marietta, GA 30062.
Info: www.lietuviaiatlantoje.org

December 3, 2006 - 12:30 - 3 pm
Kūčios Table - Kansas City Lithuanian Community Christmas Party. Main Dish and drinks provided. Bring a side dish. Visit from Father Frost. Lake of the Forest Lodge, Bonner Springs, Kansas
Info: www.kclith.org

December 9, 2006
Kūčios - Lithuanian Christmas Eve Supper. Following 5 pm Mass
St. George Parish Hall
Salmon and Venango Sts. Phila., PA
Info: 215-426-6762
Sponsored by: K of L - C.3

December 9, 2006 - 7:00 pm
Annual Holiday Ball "Imperia"
9850 Nesbit Ferry Rd.
Alpharetta, GA 30022
Info: www.lietuviaiatlantoje.org

December 9, 2006 - 2 pm
Children's Eglutė / Christmas Party
Remember to bring a gift-wrapped book for Santa to present to your child; also bring a generous potluck dish to share. <http://seattle.lietuviu-bendruomene.org/events.html>

December 10, 2006 - 12 Noon
Kūčios
St. Andrew's Parish Hall
1913 Wallace St., Phila., PA
Advance reservations required.

Info: 215-969-2117 or
609-268-8045

Sponsored by: Lithuanian Scouts
December 10, 2006 - 3-5 pm
Christmas Party
Admission: \$5 adults (children under 13 are free)
RSVP: Reservations no later than Dec. 3rd.
Location:
Fraternal Order of Eagles Hall
1151 S Galena St.
(just west of Mississippi and Havana) Denver, CO 80247
Info: www.coloradolithuanians.org

December 10, 2006 - 2:00 pm
Sunday
Lithuanian Traditional "Kūčios"
McKeon Center
Mission San Luis Rey
4070 Mission Ave.
Oceanside, CA 92054
<http://www.lithsd.org/>

December 12, 2006 - 7 pm
Kūčios - Lithuanian Music Hall Cultural Center
2715 E. Allegheny Ave.
Philadelphia, Pa. 19134
Next meeting will be
March 20, 2007
Info: 610 - 49 - 5469

Sponsored by:
Lithuanian Heritage Club
December 17, 2006 - 12 noon
Lithuanian Mass
St. George Church
443 Park Ave., Bridgeport, CT
Followed by Kūčios celebration at 1:00 pm
Reservations needed. Contact
pbschmidt@optonline.net
Sponsored by: K of L - C141
Bridgeport, CT

December 31, 2006
New Year's Eve "07"
Starting at 8 pm
Bring in the New Year
In Downtown Cleveland!
Banquet will be held at the

Marriott Downtown Key Center
Ticket prices included Open Bar, Gourmet Meal, an Evening with friends & Dancing.
Info. and to register:
www.clevelandljs.org
Have questions please email:
clevelandljs@gmail.com
or call Regina Motiejunaite
216 - 289 - 5336
Cleveland Lithuanian Youth Association

JANUARY

January 7, 2007 - 2 pm
Annual Christmas Concert
Laisvė Choir
St. Andrew Church
1913 Wallace St., Philadelphia. PA
Info: 215-265-2322

January 14, 2007 - 10:30 am
Mass in memory of the massacred defenders of the Vilnius TV tower on January 13, 1991
St. Andrew Church
1913 Wallace St., Philadelphia. PA

January 26 - 27, 2007
Andrew Mikšys Photo Exhibit & Book Signing. More info at Scala House Publishing Group
<http://seattle.lietuviu-bendruomene.org/events.html>

January 26 - 27, 2007
Baltic Portraits:
UW Special Collections Exhibit of 12 Seattle Baltic Community Members. Photographs by Mary Randlett.
More info at
Scala House Publishing Group.
<http://seattle.lietuviu-bendruomene.org/events.html>

FEBRUARY

February 10, 2007 - 4:30 pm
Annual Lithuanian Independence Day Celebration
Latvian Hall
11710-3rd NE, Seattle. WA.
The scheduled keynote speaker is University of Washington teaching

assistant Ieva Butkute. Her topic will be her visit to deportation camps in Siberia.
<http://seattle.lietuviu-bendruomene.org/events.html>

February 17, 2007
Lithuanian Independence Day Festival
Los Angeles
St. Casimir's Parish Hall
(3855 Evans St.)
www.lalithuanians.com

February 25, 2007
Lithuanian Independence Days (February 16 and March 11)
11am Mass at
St. George Church
Salmon and Venango Sts. Philadelphia, PA
2 pm Program at
Lithuanian Music Hall
2715 E. Allegheny Ave.
Philadelphia, Pa. 19134
Philadelphia Chapter of the Lithuanian American Community
www.phillylac.org

MARCH

March 11, 2007 - 1:00 pm
Lithuanian Independence Days Celebration
St. Elizabeth Seton Parish Hall,
9728 Palmeras Drive, Sun City, AZ
Arizona Chapter of the
Lithuanian American Community
<http://www.lithaz.org/>

March 21, 2007 - 8:00 pm
Vilnius String Quartet Concert in Tucson, concert at the Leo Rich Theater - Tucson Convention Center
General admission \$20, students \$10 with an ID at the door.
The concert is presented by the Arizona Friends of Chamber Music
PO Box 40802, Tucson, AZ 85717
(520) 577 - 3769
www.ArizonaChamberMusic.org
<http://www.lithaz.org/>

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