

# bridges

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march 2007



LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

*Letter from the Editor*

*This morning I was able to contact Gema as she was going out the door to mail Bridges. I felt I had to rewrite the editorial. I can't remember being this angry or disappointed since seeing the photo many years ago of the young Lithuanian with blood streaming down his face. He was in a Red Cross building as a safe haven from the soviets. The photo sickened and revolted me. Now as I sit here with the New York Post in front of me, I have the same feeling. Just as the Red Cross building should have been a safe haven, so should the church be a safe haven. Lithuanians have suffered greatly for the Catholic Church and no sacrifice was too great, including the ultimate one. Lithuania and Lithuanians have paid their dues. We thought the days of our churches being closed ended. They did end..... in Lithuania. Now we are facing an uphill battle in our own country. We have to take some of the blame ourselves for our complacency.*

*I am not disputing the authority of the Archdiocese of New York to close Our Lady of Vilnius. But I have to wonder if every avenue was explored before this was done. Why wasn't the roof repaired when request after request fell on deaf ears? Why was it closed in this abrupt manner?*

*According to the February 27th edition of the paper while Cardinal Egan was meeting with Father Eugene Sawicki, the pastor of Our Lady of Vilnius, security guards permanently locked the doors to the church. The paper reported that while the meeting with the pastor was taking place three security guards were changing the locks on the doors of the church. This happened right before a scheduled meeting with Lithuanian Consul General Mindaugas Butkus. Cardinal Egan met with the Lithuanian Consul General who hand delivered a letter from President Adamkus asking that the decision to close the church be reconsidered. The Consul General declined to comment about the action taken earlier in the day. But he stated that the Cardinal was dissatisfied by the way the issue had been handled by the media.*

*Just last week a spokesman for the Archdiocese said the church was slated to close because of low attendance at Mass, a crumbling roof, and the fact that Mass was no longer offered in Lithuanian, but that no closing date was set. What happened in less than a week? How can it go from no closing date to locks being changed?*



*Jeanne Shalna Dorr*

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\*Cover: Woodcut by Vytautas Ignas "Lithuania", 1968.

## THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

**1972**

**May 14** - The 19-year-old student Romas Kalanta immolates himself in the public gardens in Kaunas to protest against the Soviet system.

**1988**

**June 3** - Foundation of the Reform Movement "Sajudis."

**October 7** - The tricolor flag of pre-war, independent Lithuania is raised on Gediminas Castle.

**February 16** - Lithuanian Independence Day is officially commemorated.

**August 23** - Some two million Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians join hands in a human chain, stretching from Vilnius to Tallinn, to protest the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

**December 20** - The Lithuanian Communist Party declares itself independent from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

**1990**

**January 11/13** - Mikhail Gorbachev visits Lithuania

and is greeted by 300,000 independence demonstrators.

**March 11** - The Supreme Council restores Lithuania's independence. Vytautas Landsbergis is elected parliamentary chairman.

**April 17** - Moscow imposes an economic blockade on Lithuania.

**1991**

**January 13** - Soviet troops assault the TV tower in Vilnius, killing 14 unarmed civilians.

**February 9** - In a nationwide referendum, 79.39% of Lithuanian residents vote in favor of independence.

**February 12** - Iceland becomes the first country to recognize the newly independent Lithuania.

**July 31** - Seven people, border guards and policemen, are killed at the Medininkai border checkpoint.

**August 11** - The Moscow putsch collapses. Soviet troops leave the buildings

occupied since January.

**September 17** - Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are admitted into the UN.

**1992**

**February 8** - Lithuanian athletes participate, for the first time since 1928, under their own colours at the Olympic games in Albertville.

**July 28** - At the Barcelona Olympic Games, Lithuanian discus thrower Romas Ubartas wins a gold medal and the Lithuanian basketball team brings home the bronze.

**October 25** - General elections to the "Seimas" (Parliament) see a landslide victory of the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (LDDP).

**1993**

**February 14** - Algirdas Brazauskas becomes the first freely elected president of Lithuania.

**May 14** - Lithuania is admitted into the Council of Europe.

**June 25** - The "Litas", Lithuania's prewar currency, is introduced.



**August 31** - The last Russian military unit leaves Lithuania.

**September 4/5** - Pope John Paul II visits Vilnius & Kaunas.

**1994**

**January 27** - Lithuania joins NATO's Partnership for Peace.

*From booklet "KAUNAS In Your Pocket". Statue of Liberty in Kaunas, Lithuania. Sculpture by J. Zikaras*

## 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.

Dalia Rimkute Kairiukstiene

# At the Beating Heart of Lithuania

## Part Two: The Night of January 13, 1991, The Day

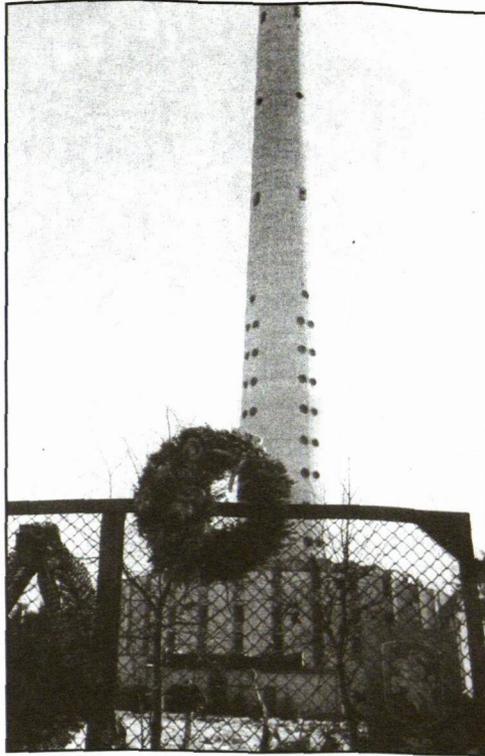
*Editor's Note: In Part 1 Dalia wrote of the events that NIGHT OF JANUARY 13. she concludes with the following morning.*

After it became clear that "they" were not coming that night, I suddenly realized how cold and tired I was. I was exhausted because of the sleepless night that I spent on my feet. I was tired of the tension and of everything I saw and went through that night. Once "they" were not coming, there was no need for me to stay at the square any longer. I had to save my energy for the coming nights. So I left the square and went to Lukiskiu public transportation stop. After a short wait, I boarded one of the trolleys that already started its usual early morning route. It was still dark outside...

I slept for maybe three or four hours. When I woke up, my room was filled with daylight. I glanced through the window. Buildings and trees were bathing in sunlight. It was so still and quiet outside. No snow, no wind. The air seemed clean and crispy. The day, January 13, 1991, a Sunday, turned out to be a sunny and cold, bright and beautiful day. A joyous winter day, one would say.

A joyous day, of course, it wasn't. On that day, our newspapers did not get published. Our radio stations were silent. I turned on my TV set, "our" channel. On the screen, an unfamiliar face of a Brezhnev-style announcer came up. In a strict, commanding voice, she was reading the news. "Soviet people restored the order. Nationalistic groups of Lithuanians were taken under control," Soviet-style propaganda was being transmitted. The way the announcer looked, the way she read the news, the content of the "news" - everything indicated that the Soviet "iron fist" times were coming back. Clearly, "our" channel was no longer "ours"... It was awful to watch, it was disgusting to hear. I shut my TV set off.

All the truth and the real news were at the square, at the Supreme Soviet building. How were things out there? It was possible that something had happened while I was sleeping. Maybe, "they" attacked - later, after I left the square. What was going on there? Was the Heart of Lithuania still beating?



*The TV Tower has become a memorial.*

My dorm friends had no news at all. I had plans for that Sunday. However, not knowing what was going on with the independence movement, I could not concentrate on anything else. I had to find out. So I got into my clothes, and my feet carried me out of the dorm to the trolley stop. From the stop, I got to Lukiskiu Square. As I got out of the trolley and looked around, the Square looked as usual. It seemed as if the city, the central part, was living its usual life. It was good news. Still, as I turned to Gedimino Street and was getting closer to the other, Supreme Soviet Square where I spent the night, I felt I was walking faster and faster. I wanted to make sure that the Square was in the same state as I left it last night.

Finally, in front of my eyes, the view of the Square opened up. The façade of the Supreme Soviet building was brightly lit with the morning sun. No signs of destruction (what a relief!). Still... I

remember myself staring and staring at the building... I could not believe it was the same building that was there four or five hours ago.

The entrance of the building was obstructed with rigid metal mesh. The building was wrapped in that mesh from all sides. There were other objects that obstructed the façade... My jaw dropped open... A couple of strong young men passed me. On their shoulders, there were parts of metal scaffolding... The men were carrying that stuff to the building. The faces of the men, red from hard work, radiated with joy and determination. I looked around again. Now I could see small groups of men all over the square. In groups of two, three or four, they carried, pushed or pulled all kinds of construction materials - boards, pieces of metal, mesh, brick pads - all and everything they could only find and were able to carry from the nearby construction site. All this stuff was being brought to the Supreme Soviet building where our Parliament resided. At the building, some strange structures were being erected. It looked unusual, it looked odd... I glanced at the odd structures again. "Hey, it's barricades!" - finally, it came to me. - "We are building barricades! We are going to defend ourselves!"

## reflections

At this point, a wave of pure joy and pride for my nation overcame me. Hey, we were not only alive. We were not only unafraid. After the tragic night, we still stood tall as before. No, after the night, as a nation, we emerged even stronger and more determined than before. We were to continue to stand for our ideals, for our freedom and independence, against the brutal power. Our enemy was armed to the teeth, and we were without arms. The odds were uneven, so what? Even in the face of death, we were strong and firm, doing what we believed was right. We were Lithuanians, so we were with Lithuania, we were for Lithuania. This was the only way.

On their way back, the two men stopped, turned around, and with great pleasure, looked at the work that they just did. As one of them noticed the admiration and the question in my eyes, he started joyfully explaining: "As soon as we realized that "they" were not coming tonight, we... we just couldn't stay here and do nothing... Our hands and bodies were asking for something to do. And... look! Here is the result!" - he glanced at the barricades. I wanted to find the very best words to praise the night laborers - and just could not find any. There were no words good enough to express my admiration and gratitude for the men and for what they did...

I walked around the building. On the other side of the Supreme Soviet building, a powerful automobile crane was at work. Foundation blocks and reinforced concrete slabs were being downloaded from a platform truck and laid down at the building. The time was only 10 AM, or so. Still, the amount of work that's was being done was astonishing. With good news and my heart full of joy, I almost flew back to my dormitory.

At my dorm, there was more news. A father of one of my coworkers was hospitalized. Last night at the TV tower, a shell exploded close to the man. A shrapnel badly disfigured his face leaving terrible marks for life. My other coworker, a woman, spent the night at the Tower chasing after her teenage son in the crowd to bring him home. My other friend was at the Tower with her Mom. They stayed together. When the shootings started, they got lost in the crowd. The women searched for each other all night long, with no success... fearing the other might be dead. In the morning, at home, they embraced each other with cries of joy because both survived the night without an injury... A woman who lived close to the Tower considered herself to be very lucky as windows of her apartment remained intact while windows of all her neighbor's shattered...

I called my parents in Siauliai to let them know that I survived the night. I told them about the barricades in Vilnius.

I can only wonder how people in other cities of Lithuania must have felt that morning when they realized that Lithuanian Radio was silent and that the newspapers of



*Every city in Lithuania mourned the victims of the Vilnius Massacre.*

Sajudis, the Independence movement, were not published. People must have been shocked to discover that the TV channel that only a day ago was "ours", now was broadcasting a Soviet style program... That was an indication that something awful happened in Vilnius overnight.

It indeed was awful. It was awful that we, peaceful and without arms, were brutally attacked by armed forces. The attackers were drugged, they fired their automatic weapons to where people were. The enemy soldiers drove tanks into the crowd. Attackers crushed people with the tracks of the tanks, they were hitting men and adolescent boys with butt-stocks of their automatic guns... They did not stop before women and adolescent girls... The hardest fact to take was that that night, at the Tower, Lithuania lost twelve of her sons and a daughter. Thirteen lost lives, thirteen hearts that were no longer beating - these were the first victims on our way to independence (a hard to contain sorrow in everyone's heart...). In the hospitals all over the city, there were hundreds of injured. Thousands were dealing with their smaller injuries at home. Both TV tower and the building of TV and Radio Committee were occupied by the enemy forces. Spaudos Rumai (Publishing House). were controlled by the same... TV studios and editorial offices were all ravaged, radio and TV equipment broken to pieces, crushed and destroyed. These were the workings of Satan. It was the same Satan that many older Lithuanians knew from their past...

"There are always victims. There is always destruction. There is no other way", I remembered my Mom's words. A political prisoner of Soviet times, she knew this from her own experience. "Mom, what if I were killed? I asked. "Save God, my dear", my Mom responded. "Still... if this was the case... we would bury you. What else could we do?" By Mom, I wasn't told, I wasn't asked - it wasn't even suggested - to spend my nights at home...

January 13, 1991 every couple of hours, CNN was broadcasting

the latest news from Vilnius, Lithuania. The world was being shown the same famous tape over and over again: the night, the TV tower, the crowd, the approaching tanks, shootings, a man squeezed under the tracks of the tank... men and women trying to get the injured man from under the tracks... blood on the driveway, man's clothes soaked with blood... people shouting, waving with all their might in attempts to get attention of those inside the tank... trying to make the Satanic forces stop of what they were doing... all followed by professional unemotional comments of the announcer... a statement of the bare facts: that what is happening at the outskirts of the Soviet Empire.

The world saw, the world knew what was happening - and did nothing about it. The world was just observing the tragic events as it did a few times before in the history of Lithuania.

January 13, 1991, Lithuania realized that she was facing the heavily armed enemy alone. The country survived the tragic night. The night did not make the country weaker. Lithuania did not break down. Just the opposite happened. From that night, Lithuania emerged stronger and even more determined to continue on the chosen path.

The same day, in the afternoon, a new radio station made its entrance into the air. "Good day, everyone! This is a new radio station of Independent Lithuania broadcasting from a temporary radio station in Vilnius, Lithuania." For people, it was like a gust of fresh air. It was the best and the most desired news of all. It was the proof that despite the uneven odds and whatever the circumstances, people in the capital were tirelessly working for independence.

Before dawn, I went to the Supreme Soviet Square again. It was unbelievable how much was accomplished during the day. Barricades, strong reinforced concrete slabs and blocks, surrounded the building. On the ground, here and there, bags of sand were piled up. The entrances to the building were reinforced. The square reminded me of clips of war movies. Windows of the multistory houses all around had diagonal tape to protect against shattering glass from artillery explosions.

In the square, there were many people. Some had flags, some carried handmade posters for the country. Groups of people gathered around those who had portable radios. People chatted with each other and shared the news. In small groups, men and women sang Lithuanian national and patriotic songs.

Before the sun set, the square was full of people. Again, there was a large crowd, even larger than the night before. Many more people came from other cities and towns. People from all over came to Vilnius, to the Parliament, the heart of the country. Dressed for a cold winter night, with thermoses full of hot coffee and sandwiches in their bags,



*Lithuanians pay tribute to their heroes.*

people were ready and prepared to face another challenging night.

From time to time, I hear an opinion that the Soviet Union crippled people and transformed them into the drones of the system. I can't understand if this is the opinion of those who spent many long nights at the Supreme Soviet building, risking their lives for the independence. Those were ordinary people of Lithuania. In January of 1991, there were thousands and thousands of them. Despite all the dangers, they stood there knowing that they wouldn't step back, no matter what. I admired my nation, so strong and determined.

*Dalia Rimkute Kairiuskiene*

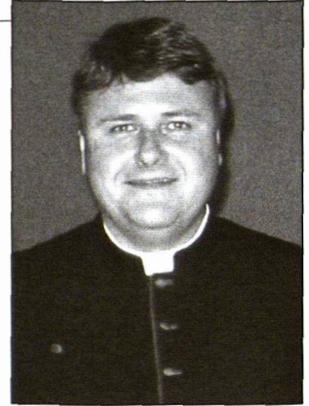
*Dalia Rimkute Kairiuskiene is a native of Siauliai, Lithuania. She is from a family of "dissidents". As young people both her father and mother served their terms as political prisoners in Stalin's times. Dalia received several college degrees in the former Soviet Union, the highest being that of a Ph.D. in Architecture. She worked as an assistant professor at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University for several years before coming to the United States for a graduate program in Lighting. She and her family currently reside in Pennsylvania.*

\*Photos are from the book "LIETUVA 1991.01.13". Vilnius 1991



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## **Church Closings – a Problem for the Lithuanian Faithful**

**Written by: Msgr. Edmundas J. Putrimas, Lithuanian Bishops Conference Delegate for Lithuanian Catholics Living Outside of Lithuania**

The closing of Lithuanian Catholic parishes in various countries outside of Lithuania is a sad phenomenon affecting émigrés and their descendants worldwide. It not only deprives them of spiritual centers, where they can hear Masses in their own language, but also hinders cultural activity, for parishes also sponsor meetings, numerous social events, art shows, concerts and national commemorations.

Ending an era of long-standing tradition, church closings sever connections to a heritage that is close to every Lithuanian heart. The process itself has provoked a vast and largely emotional discussion regarding the fate of our parishes. Many opinions are constructive and show a clear understanding of the underlying issues.

It is not the first instance of dioceses deciding to close some of their parishes, especially in the US. At one time, there were as many as 13 Lithuanian parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago. About 15 years ago, St. Andrew's parish in Philadelphia was saved from closing by a committed parish – a council that participated in meetings with the leadership of the Archdiocese, a congregation that attended Mass regularly at the parish and even filled the cathedral on special occasions, attracting the attention of the media.

Not all parishes meet the same fate. For example, the parishioners of St. Peter's Lithuanian Church in Boston succeeded in keeping the parish open because the pastor, parish committee, parishioners, the local Lithuanian Community chapter and the Lithuanian Bishops Conference worked together, and established a fund to help finance their campaign. St. George's parish in Bridgeport (CT) stayed open, with the help of the Argentinian Brothers who now care for it and are very supportive of their Lithuanian parishioners. The parish was not closed because the deed stipulates that upon closure, ownership of the property passes to the city. Municipal or state government designation of the church as a heritage site may also help save older parishes from closing.

According to a press release from the Archdiocese of New York, Our Lady of Vilnius parish in Manhattan is scheduled to close. I was informed by parishioners that insurance funds for structural damage repair have been withheld for several years now, and that is why parishioners have been forced to attend Masses in the church basement. No further details on the situation in this parish are available. The oldest Lithuanian church in Shenandoah, PA, in the diocese of Allentown, is being demolished because it, too, is beyond repair. The diocese of London, Ontario in Canada is also reconfiguring its parishes. The parish committee is awaiting information from the diocese regarding the expense of renovating the Lithuanian Our Lady of

Šiluva Church. The new administrator for this parish is Msgr. Jonas Staškevičius, who is working with the parish committee to ensure the continuation of pastoral care for the parishioners until matters are resolved.

Parish closings, consolidations and reassignments typically occur in cities experiencing a changing demographic. Communities once clustered in the inner city move to the suburbs, church attendance becomes minimal, and statistics showing few baptisms, weddings, decreased catechization and diminishing donations to the diocese contribute to the determination whether a church is closed or reassigned to a new segment of the population.

In considering these and other cases, we must understand that there are various factors at play in the decision-making process, some of which involve Canon Law. First of all, we must acknowledge the hierarchical structure of the Church itself. This is not a democratic process, but a system based on explicit rules – Church laws. Almost all churches belong to a diocese, headed by a bishop or archbishop who is solely responsible for decision-making in his diocese.

Does the Vatican have any influence on church closings? The second Vatican Conference and 1983 changes to Canon Law underlined the so-called principle of collegiality between the Pope and the bishops of the Church. This principle curtails the earlier influence of the Vatican Curia on the activities of bishops. Bishops also refrain from interfering in matters pertaining to another bishop's territory, whether in a neighboring diocese or another country.

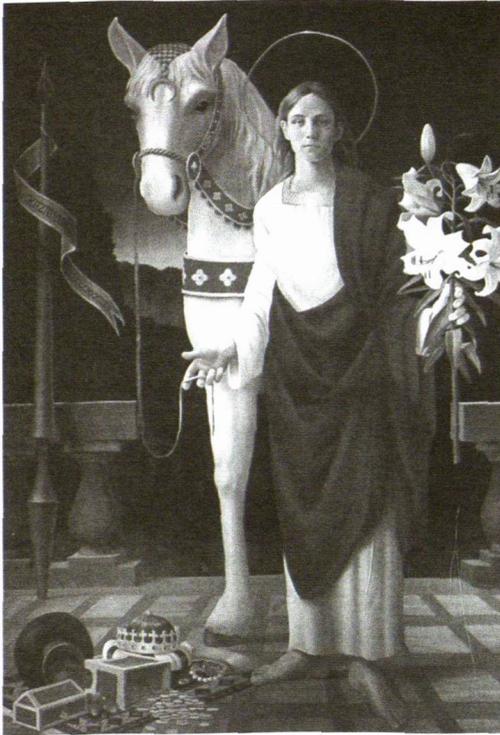
As mentioned in previous articles in other publications, parish closings result from a lack of priests. With secularization spreading, there are fewer vocations, especially in Lithuania, which is still suffering the consequences of Soviet repression. Unfortunately, during those 50 years, the number of vocations to the religious life from the Lithuanian Diaspora has also been inadequate.

It is important to understand that I have been delegated by the Lithuanian Bishops Conference for the pastoral care of Lithuanian Catholics outside of Lithuania. This means that I am authorized to present the religious needs of Lithuanians living abroad to the Lithuanian Bishops Conference; I can offer suggestions for their resolution; I can mediate and facilitate dialogue between local bishops and Lithuanian bishops; but, like many representatives of organizations or institutions, I am not empowered to make unilateral decisions.

How best to make parishioners' needs known and forestall negative outcomes for these and other churches? Letters and petitions to the diocese, resolutions submitted to and by appropriate institutions can certainly be effective. A unified effort of parish committees working together with pastors in presenting one voice to the diocese, with the support of local organizations, is essential. Heritage site designation by state or municipal authorities is also a very important avenue to explore.

Parishioners can help by encouraging one another - their families, friends, and acquaintances, to attend Mass regularly. Regular attendance indicates that there is a real need for a Lithuanian house of prayer. The single most effective means of keeping a parish open is to demonstrate that it is an active one!

*Rev. J. Staškevičius.*



Sv. Kazimieras - St. Casimir  
1458-1484  
Patron Saint of Lithuania  
Feast Day March 4

Painting of St. Casimir by  
artist James Aponovich.  
Dedicated at St. Patrick Parish in  
Nashua, New Hampshire 2003

\*\*\*\*\*

This is the story of a beautiful prayer card dedicated to St. Casimir. Our beloved St. Casimir's Church in Nashua, NH was closed. The final Mass was celebrated on September 15, 2002. The parishioners were merged with the St. Patrick Parish in Nashua. The two churches have had a long association. St. Casimir's was the former Immaculate Conception Church which served the Irish Community. When the Irish outgrew their church, they sold it to the Lithuanian Community. The Irish built a new church, naming it St. Patrick Parish. The two churches have always shared priests, so, it was natural that they should merge with the Irish church.

## Church Closes, But St. Casimir Lives On!

After St. Casimir closed, the pastor at St. Patrick, Fr. Martin Kelly, wanted the Lithuanian community to feel welcome. So he commissioned artist James Aponovich, originally from Nashua and of Lithuanian decent, to paint a portrait of St. Casimir. Aponovich is a nationally recognized artist. At first he thought Fr. Kelly wanted a painting of the St. Casimir Church building. Fr. Kelly explained he wanted a painting of the Saint and not the building. Aponovich researched the life of St. Casimir and came up with the painting depicting his life as you see it on the prayer card. Though St. Casimir came from wealth and riches, he lived a very meager life. When the painting was finished there was a special service at St. Patrick's blessing the painting.

Fr. Kelly and I came up with the idea of making a prayer card out of the portrait. I, being a professional photographer in Nashua, photographed the painting digitally. At first I had a difficult time finding a prayer to St. Casimir. Searching online and with the help of Joe Utka, we came up with the prayers on the back of the card. I believe he contacted some nuns in Chicago for assistance in finding the prayers. After the prayers were found, I had the card printed locally. The cards have been distributed within St. Patrick Parish and now with the help of Joe Utka, finding their way to Lithuanians around the country.

If you need more information or would like some cards, you may call me at work, 603-880-8558, anytime. If I'm not there leave a message and I will call you back.

On another note: With the closing of St. Casimir's the Lithuanian Community in the Nashua area had become fragmented. A few of us, namely Pauline Gailunas, Frank Ulcickas and the writer have started a social group called LABAS, "Lithuanian American Brothers and Sisters." We have about fifty members and are still growing. We have held a pot luck supper with many Lithuanian delicacies, a Christmas party, and a Lithuanian Mass among other events. The Lithuanians are still alive in New Hampshire! If you are in the area, come and join us. If you have questions about the prayer card or about LABAS, please call me.

Jodie Andruskevich

Jodie Andruskevich is a professional photographer in Nashua, New Hampshire.

Editor's Note: Many thanks to Jodie for his emails and phone calls.



## Lithuanian Catholics restoring Hill of Crosses damaged by fire

Catholics have begun restoring the Hill of Crosses which was damaged by a fire on December 28, 2006. Bishop Eugenijus Bartulis of Siauliai said most of the crosses damaged were small crosses, but some of the larger crosses were charred.

It is estimated that at least 200,000 crosses of all sizes were on the hill at the time of the fire. A crucifix that was donated by Pope Benedict XVI was not damaged.

Four fire brigades extinguished the blaze. It was believed the fire was started by candles which are not permitted on the hill.

The hill contains crosses, statues and rosaries. It is believed the placement of crosses began on a mass scale after the 1831 uprising against Russian rule and was revived in the 1950's. The site was bulldozed many times by the Soviets but they could not stop the faithful from placing crosses on the hill.

Pope John Paul II celebrated Mass at the hill in 1993 and donated a large crucifix. More than a million tourists and pilgrims visit the site each year.

*Photo by Aleksandras Ostašenkovas from the book "KRYŽIŲ KALNAS".*



## Lithuanian Director is Nominated for Oscar

Lithuanian director Arūnas Matelis is in California for screenings of his Oscar-nominated documentary "Before Flying Back to Earth". The film is a moving and poetic glimpse into the lives of children living with leukemia at Vilnius Pediatrics Hospital in Lithuania.

"Before Flying Back to Earth" focuses on the hopes and resilience of children with leukemia in Lithuania. It is based on the observations of its director, Arunas Matelis' five year-old daughter who has

leukemia. It portrays her struggles with leukemia.

Dr. Edward Domanskis of Newport Beach, California, who provides charity services in the same children's hospital in Lithuania where it was filmed states the film's nomination will spotlight cancer, which is the second most common cause of death in young children.

Arunas Matelis is thrilled that his film is even being considered for such an honor as an Academy Award. "To win a nomination would be a miracle, but for me, less important than having my young actors recover from their illnesses," concluded the director.

## THE LITHUANIAN LEGACY OF NORTH KITTITAS COUNTY

Part II

*Editor's Note: For readers who missed Part I several paragraphs at the end of this article have been reprinted for clarification of why the author visited these places and the need to preserve this cemetery.*

### The trip to Roslyn-Cle Elum

On Aug. 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of 2006 I decided to visit Roslyn WA which is home to a small Lithuanian Cemetery. I had read about this cemetery some years ago in the Seattle Lithuanian community newsletter "Tulpe Times"

It's possible that this is the only Lithuanian cemetery west of the Mississippi. There are other cemeteries which contain Lithuanian sections or groupings but not one that's owned by Lithuanians for Lithuanians.

Prior to making my trip I wrote to the Roslyn Museum telling them of my upcoming visit. My purpose was to collect information on the Roslyn Lithuanian cemetery and its descendants for an article that I wanted to put in the Lithuanian American press. Nick Henderson, the Museum President, sent me a contact number for the Lithuanian Cemetery commissioner board member Mrs. Teresa Kloss (Sestokas). I called Teresa and she agreed to spend some time with me. A week before my visit to Roslyn I found a web page listing the names of people buried in the Lithuanian cemetery. I began looking up the names from the list on the various census years. I found many, but not all of them. Lithuanian names in the early census are almost never spelled in today's standardized Lithuanian so I tried all sorts of possibilities. While locating the people listed as buried in the cemetery I also began finding more Lithuanians.

The day I arrived at the Roslyn Museum I was greeted by Nick Henderson, a native of Roslyn. He was very helpful and patient. I spent almost 5 hours there. Shortly after my arrival to the museum Marcy Bogachus came in to see me. Teresa Kloss (Sestokas) had told her about me coming to town. Marcy was very nice and helped me go through names and stories from the past. As with everyone I was to meet, I collected some new information from Marcy.

Just before Marcy left the Museum a telephone call came in from Teresa asking if I was still there as she just spoke to another person of Lithuanian descent and was sending her my way. It was Mrs. Judy Tokarsyck (Mickus/Micus). Judy works for the Chamber of Commerce of Cle Elum/Roslyn and was very excited to meet with me as I with her. As soon as Judy came through the door there was no question that Judy had Lithuanian ancestors, she definitely had "the look". Judy was so happy to



*Blanche Larrigan (Zakevicius), Teresa Kloss (Sestokas) and Dick Larrigan (son of Blanche) at the Roslyn Museum.*

share her family history and answer anything I asked. Time flew and before I knew it 5 hours had passed. Meanwhile Nick Henderson, the Museum President, had a visit by his brother who suggested that I speak with Mick Mankus (Mankevicius). Nick called Mankus and we agreed to meet later that evening. Mick picked me up from my motel room and took me to his house. I don't remember how many hours I was there but Mick had lots of stories and information that I took down. Mick also had a log book of a Lithuanian Fraternal Society called "Fraternal Aid Society of Lithuania Grand Duke Vytautas". This was a great source for me as the book covered the years of 1918 and 1919 and listed 50 plus names. These types of fraternal societies were popular within the Lithuanian American communities at this period of time sending help to Lithuanians in need during WWI and then for post Independence helping the new nation with needed funds. Lithuania had been occupied since 1795 mostly by Czarist Russia and the last few years by Kaiser Germany during WW I.

The newly founded Lithuanian nation did not have capital and the money being sent by various American Lithuanian groups like the one Mick Mankus's grandfather belonged to was making a difference. Mick allowed me to take the book and look at it that evening. He also allowed me to photocopy the pages which contained the names. The valuable part about the names listed in the book is that they are written in Lithuanian unlike legal spellings used in this country.

The next day I met with Teresa Kloss (Sestokas) at the Lithuanian cemetery. When I presented her with some Lithuanian chocolates and Lithuanian beer that I had purchased in Vancouver, WA. she had tears in her eyes and right away I could see her passion for her Lithuanian heritage. We talked about her family history

and the cemetery. We both walked the cemetery and wrote down all the statistics; the names on the headstones, the location of burials, those marked with headstones and those with no marker at all, the distance between the graves and the distance between the fences. I gathered this information in order to map the cemetery. Teresa and I looked at the fence that is in need of repair, I showed her a monument base that looks like it was holding up one of the fence posts. Where did it come from or where does it belong? We walked the unused parts of the cemetery. When we finished I told Teresa I needed to return the lodge book to Mick Mankus and we both agreed to meet one hour later at another Lithuanian's house.

The time passed quickly and soon I was meeting with Teresa once again, this time at the house of Frances Stermetz (Kurtinaitis). Frances was one of four children born in Washington. Her father and mother, Juozapas and Mary Kurtinaitis, arrived in the US in 1900 and 1906. Frances is one of two last known Lithuanian speakers from the times gone by. Born in 1917 she hardly looks her age. Her sense of humor is probably no different then when she was a teenager. The first thing I said entering her house was the standard Laba diena (good day) and she answered in Lithuanian "Oh good, I have to speak Lithuanian, otherwise I will forget it". I thought to myself "when was the last time she spoke Lithuanian?" I asked her what region of Lithuania her parents were from and she said Suvalkija. I could have easily guessed that she was a Suvalkian. No matter what language we spoke, English or Lithuanian, Frances would carry over the long drawn out vowels and the very clear and pronounced words with the same musical ups and downs of the Suvalkian dialect. Through Frances's stories I was able to get a glance of the past. I read off lots of names and Frances commented about them, sometimes she recounted stories dealing with them. She mentioned that many times they would gather and sing so I asked her if she remembers any songs. She said no, but within 30 seconds she broke out singing "Vilnius Kalnele." Later she would sing a cute party song but would stop and with a half broken smile she would say, "I'm not going to sing it further" (as nedainiuosiu toliau). I think she actually was trying to see if I would continue it. I'll be damned, this grandma (Mocute) was playing with me, she really had the typical Lithuanian spirit.

Unfortunately it was time for me to leave as I had a 5 hour trip back to Vancouver, WA. But I remember one of the last things Frances said.



*Ed Zackovich (Zakevicius) & daughter Susan Zackovich at their "Zacklift International" Office in Cle Elum, WA.*

"We were all poor and in the same boat, but we were all happy."

In the end Frances gave me information on five family names that I did not previously have and the most revealing thing was when she told me her sister is buried in the Polish cemetery. I did not see her sister's name on the Polish or Lithuania cemetery list.

#### Second Trip on Sept 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>

My first stop of this trip was to the Cascade Funeral home at their Ellensburg location. I was met by Scott Carver. I was impressed with the funeral home and by its employee, Mr. Carver. Scott showed me the books and I was left to look and read. There were enough records that I could have been there a week and not gone through all of them. I concentrated on those of Roslyn and found approximately 20. Scott photocopied the index of the ones I needed and the actual record of

two burials that gave me the proof I needed to place them in the Lithuanian cemetery.

After looking at the records one comes to the realization that Lithuanians were listed as Russians and shown to be buried in the Polish cemetery even if they were in the Lithuanian cemetery. The later the year the more accurate the records become as to ethnicity.

Following the visit to the Funeral Home I was on my way to the house of Blanche Larrigan (Brone, Zackovich/Zakeviciute). Blanche is 94 years old but jumps around as if she was only 75. She was so helpful with everything I asked. She had a photo album and agreed to let me make some copies. Most important was that Blanche had been secretary of the Lithuanian Alliance of America /SLA and she was the keeper of the records book. This book appears to have been with the Zackovich/Zakevicius family for over 102 years as family members were presidents or secretaries. Blanche's son, Dick Larrigan, took his mother and we all went to the Roslyn Museum where I was able to scan the pictures.

At the museum I met Teresa Kloss (Sestokas) and Mick Mankus (Mankevicius). Teresa had collected and photocopied the 1900, 1910, 1920 and 1930 census records for the mountain precinct. She pulled out anyone listed as Russian or Lithuanian as that's how the Lithuanians were listed. I took these records for later cross references. Teresa Kloss showed me many pictures of Lithuanian children on their first communion that were in a photo album in the Museum. One of the volunteers at the Museum went over and above the call of duty when I was unable to write the pictures to a CD. So she sent the pictures to her home computer and her

husband copied them to a CD and brought them to the Museum. The people of Roslyn and Cle Elum are truly a warm hearted people.

After I finished with the Museum I went to find a room for the night. About this time I received a phone call from another Lithuanian descendant, Ona Youmans (Sawicky/Savickas). She wanted to meet with me and invited me to dinner. First we met at the Lithuanian Cemetery where she showed me her family and family friends, then we went to the Polish Cemetery where other Lithuanian family members were buried. Over dinner I shared with her my plans for writing an article and work on a monument. I shared all the information I had found so far.

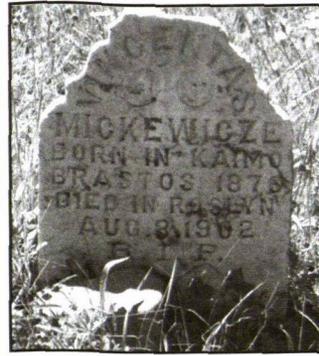
When I mentioned that I had set up an account and will open it after I receive the first \$250.00 she wrote me a check for \$250.00. I found her fun to be with. She was very warm and full of humor. Later that evening I spent over an hour in the local Safeway store using their photocopy machine to photocopy the Lithuanian Alliance Lodge book that I borrowed from Blanche Larrigan.

The following day at 10:00 am I had set up to take a picture of all the Lithuanian descendants that we could find or invite. Ten different families were represented. It was an interesting feeling as if the past had come alive. For the first time in many years Lithuanians gathered for a Lithuanian event even though it was just a photo op. I noticed them talking to one another, telling each other from what family they were from. What struck me the most is that they all looked like they could have come from modern day Lithuania. Most of them were over six feet tall.

One person I interviewed by phone was Virginia Mulvilhil



Grave of Liudvikas Venckus who moved to Roslyn from Throop, PA



Oldest dated grave marker in the Roslyn Polish Cemetery. Lithuanian Vincentas Mickevicius.



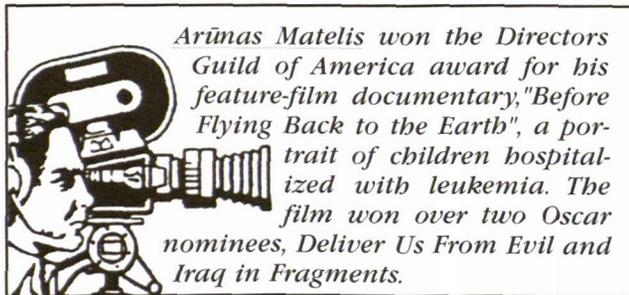
Fenced in grave of Lithuanian in Roslyn Polish Cemetery.

Osborne who comes from the Cernauskas clan. I was able to interview her twice via phone calls. Virginia no longer lives in the Roslyn Cle Elum area so I did not meet her. Virginia supports the work I am doing for the cemetery and the collection of information for a history booklet.

#### Roslyn Lithuanian Cemetery "Monument Fund"

While on my trip to Roslyn-Ronald-Cle Elum I was so struck by the passion and love each and every person of Lithuanian descent expressed that I felt the need to help in more ways than one. I told the descendants that I will attempt to raise funds to put up a granite marker in the Lithuanian Cemetery to immortalize all the Lithuanians buried there, those with and without grave markers, as well as to put the name "Lithuanian Cemetery". This monument will include the names of Lithuanians buried in the nearby Polish Cemetery and could name all the Lithuanians buried in Cle Elum cemetery since the two communities were one big family. I encouraged the descendants to form a local group of concerned citizens to over see the monument project. The group is called "Friends of the Lithuanian Cemetery". Chairperson is Teresa Kloss (Sestokas). Teresa is also on the Roslyn Cemetery board in charge of the Lithuanian Cemetery. The members will be made up of descendants of Lithuanians or their spouses. The group will decide what should be printed on the monument and agree on the design and location of where to place it.

The funds raised will be used to put up a uniquely Lithuanian style monument being drawn up by Vilius Zalpys. Any funds left over will be used to repair the badly needed falling fence and possibly purchase small markers to be placed on the unknown graves if we find family members who can identify the location. Funds are being collected and over seen by the Portland Lithuanian American Community Inc. in an account listed as "Lithuanian Cemetery Fund".



Arūnas Matelis won the Directors Guild of America award for his feature-film documentary, "Before Flying Back to the Earth", a portrait of children hospitalized with leukemia. The film won over two Oscar nominees, *Deliver Us From Evil* and *Iraq in Fragments*.



Photo of Lithuanian descendants taken in 2006, Roslyn, WA Descendants of the following families; Savickas/Zykas, Sestokas, Zakevicius, Kalvickis, Kurtinaitis, Bogacius, Mankus

This account is located in Key Bank ,WA, #476901007098, donations can be made by contacting Vilius Zalpys at zalpiai999@aol.com

The first donation opening up this fund was received by Judy Youmans a descendant of the Sawicky (Savickas) Family. Other donations have been received since for a total of \$1,275.00. The size and uniqueness of this Lithuanian monument will depend on the amount raised. The Seattle and Portland-Vancouver Lithuanian American Communities have pledged a donation in 2007.

### Searching for Records

In order to write the unique history of this Lithuanian colony in the mountains of Washington State much research is needed. As with everything the limit of the research will depend on funds. So far there is no funding for the research, it is out of pocket.

To date I have a file on close to 100 Lithuanian families or singles. The numbers will only grow. I am fortunate that the few remaining descendants are very helpful and continue to give me leads. Descendants that have scattered around the country are yet to be interviewed but I have several names to contact.

The following sources have been used to gather information; Ellensburg Library, Cascade Funeral Home of Cle Elum and Ellensburg, LDS Family History Library which have WA death certificates that are available on microfilm, Washington State Archives, Roslyn Museum, Census records, microfilm of Lithuanian American newspapers and interviews with descendants. Here are a few examples of items found.

Census records are being used as well. Cross referencing the census reports with family stories to follow up on possible burials, or seeing who was living in each house-

hold. The History Librarian at the Ellensburg Public Library, Milton Wagy, has offered to help in any way. The Roslyn Museum has been helpful and I have started a pictorial archive of Lithuanians.

As a result of the research going on for this article a lot of information is being collected. My entire research will be passed on in booklet or book form to the various local libraries and Museums, as well as to Lithuanian Interest Centers.

If you wish to help by making a monetary donations for the cemetery monument please make your check out to; "Lithuanian American Community Inc." or "LAC Inc." for short On the bottom of your check write "Lithuanian Cemetery Fund" and send to;

LAC Inc. Portland or c/o Ramute Cummings  
15509 NE 88<sup>th</sup> St., Vancouver WA 98682

Any questions you can write Vilius Zalpys or send an e-mail to Zalpiai999@aol.com

Contributors and all who helped collect data for this study;

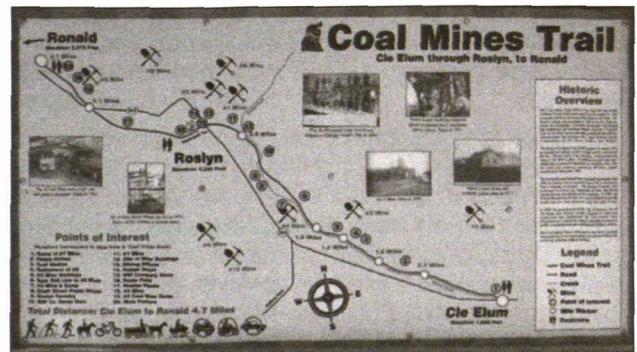
Scott Carver of Cascade Funeral Home  
Teresa Kloss (Sestokas)  
Zackovich (Zakevicius) Ed and Susan  
Larrigan/Zakevicius Blanche and Dick

Vilius Zalpys

\* Photos by Vilius Zalpys

Vilius (William) Zalpys is the president of the Portland Lithuanian-American Community and maintains close ties with Seattle Lithuanians.

Special thanks to Vilius Zalpys & to Zita Petkus of the Tulpè Times. Reprinted with permission from the Tulpè Times.



Trail sign in Roslyn, Washington. Hiking trail of the Coal Mine areas.

## St. George Church Celebrates 100 Years Bridgeport, CT

After months of planning and preparation, the opening tri-lingual Mass for the "full of joy" celebration honoring the 100th anniversary was recently held in Bridgeport, CT. St. George was founded as a Lithuanian parish to serve the influx of immigrants. Over the years, as the Lithuanians began moving to the suburbs their number decreased at St. George, while the number of Spanish speaking parishioners grew. The church is now known as the St. George Community Church. Rev. Julio Lopresti, Pastor of St. George, is anxious to keep as many Lithuanians customs as possible. The statue of St. George, the Lithuanian flag and a wayside shrine are located on the right side of the altar.

For the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary opening celebration the church was filled to capacity. The guests and participants included local dignitaries, members of the Knights of Lithuania, the Lithuanian American Community and other organizations. The Lithuanian hymn, "Marija, Marija" was sung prior to the procession of flags which represented the home countries of the parishioners. They included the United States, Lithuania, Ireland, Guatemala, Cuba, Mexico, Argentina, as well as the territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Msgr. Edmundas Putrimas, the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference delegate for Catholic Lithuanians living outside Lithuania, journeyed from Toronto, Canada to celebrate the Mass in Lithuanian. The Mass was concelebrated by St. George's pastor, Rev. Julio Lopresti, I.V.E., and Rev. Jorge Randle, I.V.E., Parochial Vicar at St. George.

Msgr. Putrimas greeted the congregation and gave the homily, speaking in three languages. He gave homage to our founding Lithuanian ancestors who sacrificed to build the church. Monsignor urged all nationalities to keep their traditions and most importantly their religion. Helen Janiunas participated in the readings and Eugenija Misevicius and Helen Simanis gave intentions in Lithuanian. The Offertory Gifts of Thanksgiving were presented by parishioners in native Spanish dress. Knights of Lithuania President Barbara Schmidt in Lithuanian costume presented flowers at the statue of St. George on the altar. A new humeral veil and monstrance from an anonymous donor were presented. Msgr. Putrimas



*Knights of Lithuania Council 141 members.*

*L-R: Eugenija Misevicius, Paul Schmidt, Barbara Schmidt, Helen Simanis and Nancy Paddock.*

asked the congregation to recite the Lord's Prayer in their own languages.

The Spanish choir performed beautifully throughout the Mass. During Communion, Edita Orlynte, Lithuanian concert violinist, played a melody by Gluck. She was accompanied by organist Mary Grosso, who also plays the organ during the Lithuanian Masses. During the Communion Meditation Edita played Mozart's "Adagio". At the Consecration to the Blessed Mother, a Guatemalan parishioner, accompanied by her children, proceeded down the aisle while balancing flowers in her vase on her head. She then knelt at the altar in adoration.

After Mass the congregation gathered in the church hall, the site of the original church, for a multicultural luncheon. Booths and tables from various countries served their special foods which were enjoyed by all.

Wonderful ethnic entertainment followed. The Lithuanian dance group "Vetra" performed, as did Puerto Rican dancers and the adult and children's Mexican dance group. Music by very talented Spanish soloists was provided.

It was a beautiful clear day - the perfect setting for an impressive Centennial Mass and celebration.

*Florence Zikaras*

*Florence Zikaras is the Vytis correspondent for Knights of Lithuania, Council 141.*

Editor's Note: Bridges wishes St. George parish many more years of God's blessings. A Lithuanian Mass is celebrated the third Sunday of each month.

*Jurgita Kundrotaitė Sadzevičienė*

*Editor's Note :When I was in Lithuania I met with Jurgita Kundrotaitė Sadzevičienė who is one of our Orphan Care "stars." Jurgita is a "star" because the majority of our Orphan Care children do not have her drive or desire for a better life. Jurgita is now a teacher and sees so many children who need help. When she asked me how she could help them I had only a few words of advice and that was "tell your story to the BRIDGES readers."*

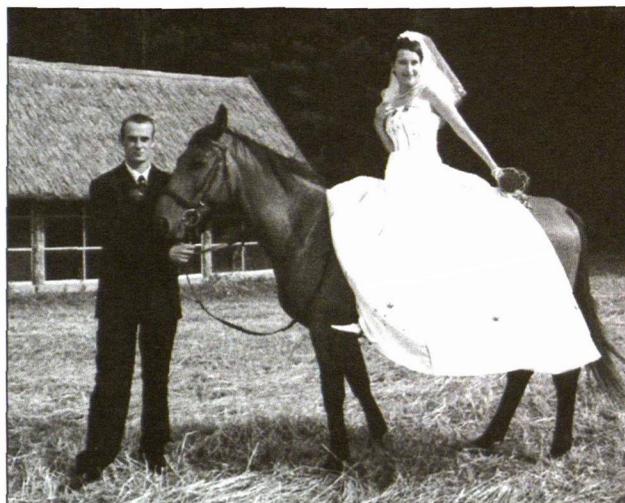
## Jurgita's Story

I am starting my story by remembering the article "A Child's Dreams can be Fulfilled" (BRIDGES, Issue 9, November 1998, Volume 22) which told about a sixteen year old girl, Jurgita Kundrotaitė, who lived with her grandmother and dreamed of becoming a journalist. I remember her history and am saddened by it. From birth she lived with her Grandmother and later went to school, but always had a dream to reach higher in life. But Grandmother, who worked hard all her life, had only a very small pension and could not afford a higher education for her granddaughter. Today I am that girl and am a happily married young teacher, although I had not originally chosen this profession. But perhaps the profession chose me so that I might help to relieve some of the pain and suffering of some of my students. I know that if more than eight years ago I had not met Jeanne Dorr, I would not be where I am today, I would not have the life I am leading today, would not have a university education and would not be working in a job I love. Without her I would not know two fine gentlemen, Vytautas Bartasius or Mr. M. and their families. They not only helped me financially but with advice and encouragement. But I better start at the beginning.

I wanted to write this thank you for a very long time. I am thrilled that my dreams came true. I had wonderful teachers who taught me well: they always made me do my best. But I always felt if I finished high school there would never be an opportunity to go further. I lived with my Grandmother and as I said earlier, there just was no money.

I will always remember that day when Jeanne visited us. From the beginning I always believed the poverty and hardships of the people in the small villages could never be understood by a Lithuanian American. But Jeanne was different. There were no airs about her, she didn't talk much, but the most important thing was that she listened. When you look into her eyes you can see goodness and the ice begins to melt from your heart.

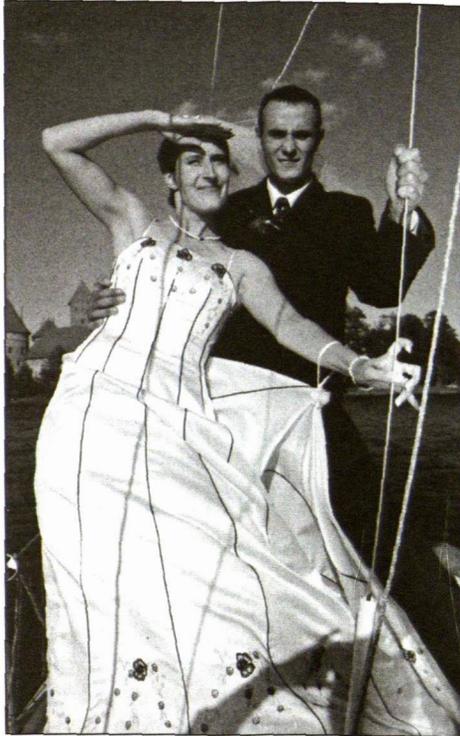
After she returned home I could not believe it when



I started to receive letters from her. The letters were filled with advice, concern and understanding. After a short time Vytautas Bartasius became my Orphan Care sponsor. He not only helped me greatly financially but wrote me letters encouraging me to do my best. When I began the university, Vytautas continued to sponsor me even though I had reached the age of eighteen. I also received a Student Sponsor. Mr. M. helped me with my school and living expenses and also became a part of my life through his letters. These letters were so important to me; I not only had financial help but I was important to someone. They worried about me and encouraged me to be strong and not give up on my dream. How they rejoiced with any good news I had to share with them! They were truly interested in my life and in my plans. Until these people entered my life, I just couldn't seem to get ahead; the worries and problems seemed insurmountable and I could see no end to the problems. From the time I met them, these people will always have a special place in my heart and a place to visit in my home.

They were always there to help me. I had a dream to visit America and an opportunity arose to fulfill this dream through a summer student work program. This had been a dream since my childhood and I was thrilled it had come true with their help. There were problems with the jobs we had been promised and we were in need of help. My classmate and I lived with Jeanne and her husband for a week and then she found us jobs. Vytautas took us to visit Washington and New York and with Mr. M. we visited Atlantic City. They offered me their friendship and an opportunity to share my thoughts with them.

For the first two years after I graduated from the university I taught children in a small country school



in the region of Trakai. Now I am a high school teacher. I enjoy my students so much and I always remember that I would never be here or have this opportunity without the help of others. I will be grateful to them for my entire life. But how I hope and pray that many of my students who live with such hardships could receive the gifts that brought me to this place in my life.

I am grateful to my Grandmother for taking me into her home and raising me. She was my first teacher and taught me always to do the right thing. Now I am married to a wonderful man who understands my strong desire to help the children I teach. Each month I try to work one or two weekends to help them where and how I am able. I am grateful that I am able to do this and that my husband is so patient and understanding. All I ask is for the children to have the opportunity to have a better life, the same opportunity I was given. I am so grateful to Jeanne Dorr, Vytautas Bartasius and Mr. M. because without them I would not be who I am today.

I am writing this letter not just to thank these people and Lithuanian Orphan Care but to ask that people not forget Lithuania's children. I am overjoyed at the road I have traveled and I believe there are many talented and gifted children who can travel the same road with your help and encouragement.

*Editor's Note: This letter was not published for any of us to be praised. I tried to publish it using only initials but it really didn't make any sense. It actually looked more like a confidential report. It was published so that you could see the difference that one person helping another can make. There were many good people who helped Jurgita and her friend when their agency job in America did not deliver what it promised and she is grateful to all of them.*

I am sharing some of Jurgita's wedding photos with you and I know you will enjoy them.

Jurgita and her husband, Andrius, are ecstatic waiting for the birth of their first child. Grandmother recently celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and can't wait to hold her great-grandchild in her arms.

Please consider sponsoring a child and making a difference.

The cost to sponsor a child is \$150 a year. Please send your tax deductible checks to:

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

*Continued from page 19 "Lithuanians and The Bread and Roses Strike of 1912".*

parish that first year.

The birth records from that year list 52 baptisms: little Mecislovas and Kazeliunas, Barbora and Leokadija, and all the little Juozukai and Marijos and the rest. They may have been sent to Lithuanians in other cities during the strike, or marched with their parents. It's a sure bet that some took to the mills when they were old enough.

Eight weeks after the strike began, it was still going strong. Work wasn't being done, factories were empty and no money was being made. So, the mill owners were frustrated, and tempers boiled over in late February. A scuffle broke out at a Lawrence railroad station and police settled it -- by clubbing a group of women and children and putting others in jail. When the news hit newspapers across the whole country, the public went crazy! In March, congressional hearings were held to investigate the strike. Congressmen heard testimony from

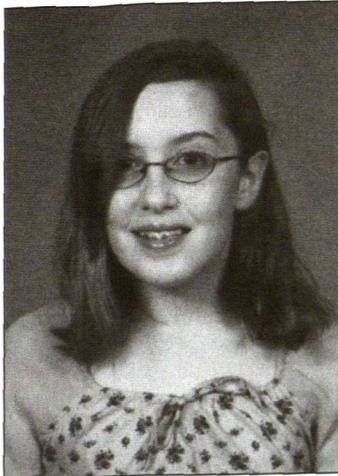
strikers of all ages, even kids. The strike was settled by the middle of the month. The mill owners agreed to wage increases for workers and no retaliation against strikers.

The key to success of the Bread and Roses strike of 1912 was that the workers were able to hold out against the mill owners for as long as they did. They did it by working together for a common cause—something the mill owners never expected. Whether they were Scottish, Irish, Italian, Syrian, or Lithuanian, by standing united in spite of their differences, I think they were acting like true Americans.

*Aleksandra Brittain*

*Aleksandra Brittain is 11 years old and this year's National Geographic Society Bee champion at her middle school. A competitive figure skater, she also sings with the Laisvé Chorus and is active in the Lithuanian Scouts in Philadelphia.*

Aleksandra Brittain



My only visit to Lawrence, Massachusetts was when I was two. My mother tells me I slept through the whole thing! We were on our way home from Salem, MA, and my mom wanted to go to an outlet while my father read a book and I dozed in my car seat. The outlets were in a restored mill building along the Merrimack River. My mom admits that strolling through the subdivided high-ceilinged spaces, she was thinking only about scoring some bargains and not about what went on in those mills one hundred years ago.

As in so many New England towns with a good source of water power, industrialists built textile mills in Lawrence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The working conditions were much less than ideal. Men, women and even school aged children worked long hours in the mills, on their feet all day with no breaks at all, with most of their low salaries paying rent for filthy, cold, cramped, cold-water apartments, owned by, you guessed it, the mill owners. This went on for decades in mill towns all over New England until it finally reached a breaking point in Lawrence...and Lithuanians were part of it!

I found out about all

## Lithuanians and The Bread and Roses Strike of 1912

this in *Bread & Roses, Too* by Katherine Patterson, (Clarion Press, 2006.) It tells the story of the 1912 Lawrence textile strike, one of the most important labor actions in American history, through the eyes of an Italian girl, Rosa Serutti, and a young American boy, Jake Beale. Rosa's family earns extra money by taking in a Lithuanian family by the name of Jarusalis. In the story, Rosa shares her bed with Granny Jarusalis, who stays at home all day taking care of grandsons Kestutis and Jonas, and Rosa's baby brother. Her granddaughter Marija goes to the mills with her mother and Rosa's mother and older sister, and all eventually take part in the strike.

The textile mills in Lawrence were dangerous places to work. The looms were large, noisy, and easily caused injuries. In 1860, a factory collapsed, killing 88 workers. But even so, laws didn't change until more than 50 years later. In 1912, a law took effect that the work week would be shortened from 56 to 54 hours a week for women and children. I found out online that 45% of the mill workers were women and 12% were children under the age of 18--more than half of the mill labor force.

Don't think for a second that shorter hours were any break for them. The mill owners sped up the looms, told workers that this would also apply to men, and shortened the pay by two hours. That lost pay could have bought at least 3 loaves of bread at the time. When the first short paychecks went out, the mill workers walked out.

There were more than 25 ethnicities among the 30,000 workers in Lawrence at the time. There were Germans, Italians, Poles, Scots, Syrians, Lithuanians and more. They formed a strike committee with one representative from each nationality. They collected donations from their countrymen in other cities and even sent some children to stay with them to save money. They met in their church halls and ran soup kitchens to feed strikers.

The strikers came up with a slogan, "Give Us Bread and Give Us Roses!" In the book, one of the characters explained it as "Bread to feed the body and roses to feed the soul." The strikers even had their own song. In the book, the Lithuanians were minor characters, but reading it made me want to find out more about what happened in Lawrence.

Now, if people came to America to get a better life, then how'd they end up working for pay that could barely sustain a life? A doctor quoted in one of the histories I read about the strike said that before 1912, health and living conditions were so bad that 36 out of every 100 men and women working in the Lawrence mills died before the age of 25. Yikes! And considering that some kids lied about their age to get to work before the legal minimum age of 14, my middle school grind doesn't seem so bad!

Some of these immigrants saw dishonest advertisements in their home countries. Some mill owners even sent posters showing people carrying bags of money out of their mills. To simple country people without an education, it must have seemed worth it to sell everything they owned to make the long passage to America. When they got to the docks in New York City or Boston or Philadelphia, if they didn't have any friends or relatives to meet them, they were pounced on by "greeters" from the mills. And, before you know it, they're living in a crowded coldwater flat working 54+ hours a week and trying to save a penny here or a penny there for that better life they were dreaming of.

In Lawrence, the Lithuanians put enough of their pennies together to establish the parish of St. Francis in 1903. The marriage and birth records from that first year are online at the Lithuanian genealogy site. ([www.lithuaniangenealogy.org/databases/index.html](http://www.lithuaniangenealogy.org/databases/index.html)) Seeing the names makes the strikers seem more real. And such names! Couples with names like Morta and Stanislovas, Agota and Ambraziejus, Darata and Florijonas. Maybe they met at the mills. Maybe their marriages were shortened by the hard work and hard life. How many of them walked off the job in protest 9 years later? There were 30 marriages in the

*Continued on page 18*

## Freedom has Special Meaning for Essay Contest Winner

David V. Wendell special to the Plainfield Sun

Gerda Kudautaite, a 14-year-old eighth-grader at Timber Ridge Middle School, knows the value of freedom.

Her great-grandparents, grandparents and mother and father lived much of their lives under communism in Lithuania.

The Baltic nation, bordered by Poland and Latvia, was overrun by the Germans in 1941 and conquered by the Soviet Union later in World War II. An estimated half-million Lithuanian nationals were either sent away to prison camps or killed. The fortunate few were able to make it to a displaced-persons holding center, from which they could later emigrate to another nation.

For those left behind, it was a nightmare of fear in which they couldn't freely practice religion or speak out against the government.

Kudautaite, thankfully, knew none of this violence firsthand. She was born in 1992, the year after Russia withdrew from Lithuania.

Nevertheless, the chilling stories told to her by relatives about the atrocities they experienced under communism have had a deep impact on her beliefs.

These have become overtly apparent in an essay she wrote and submitted for the Veterans of Foreign Wars' Patriot Pen contest. The competition, sponsored by Plainfield Post 6869, encourages junior high and middle school students to choose a patriotic topic and to compose a short summary of its significance to the writer. The winner goes on to the state level and then to the national finals in Washington, D.C.

Kudautaite recently won the district contest with her entry, titled "Citizenship." The words were penned last summer as she reflected on the gruesome accounts of terror her ancestors felt in their homeland.

An especially spine-curdling moment came, she said, when her grandmother told her of the day the Russians broke into their house in Vilnius, Lithuania. Everyone ran to a secret underground room and hid in silence. Finally, when they thought all was clear, she (Kudautaite's grandmother) snuck upstairs and peeked out a small window.

"She saw a little boy running down the street, and he was crying, 'God, help me!'" Kudautaite said. "Everybody was so scared."

Her grandmother, whose family stayed together, was one

of the lucky ones. Her great-grandfather was not. He was rounded up by the Soviet Army and banished to a forced labor camp in Siberia. He was never seen again.

Kudautaite felt an obligation to write about the privileges given by freedom and the duty we should feel to assist others.

"Citizenship means people helping each other in times of crisis," she wrote. "It means making your own choices."

She went on to elaborate about her passionate belief in this independence, outlining the fundamental rights that, in her view, human beings around the world should be able to enjoy.

"People should be allowed to believe in what they want to," she wrote. "I hope that (through this essay) people will learn to think about what it would be like to not be able to practice religion or speak about government."

Dainius, her father, knows all about this, as well. He came to the United States intending only to visit, but when he breathed the air of freedom and saw an opportunity for a job, he stayed until enough money had been raised to bring the rest of the family to America. That joyous reunion came in 2000.

Gerda Kudautaite is just as proud of her Lithuanian roots as she is of the liberties provided by her adopted country. She has been a member of the Lithuanian Folkdancers in Lemont since her first day in Plainfield and regularly attends Lithuanian history and cultural classes to maintain the arts and customs of the old country. For her, it's a way of honoring those who suffered for so many years.

"It helps me to appreciate freedom," she said.

Stanley Paulauskas, commander of Post 6869, a fellow Lithuanian-American and a veteran of the Vietnam War, certainly believes she does. He is the leader who helped judge the winning essays and will introduce Kudautaite in the state competition.

Paulauskas said it is great that such a young student grasps the meaning of citizenship so well. He praised her for her insight, and, to thank her for doing such a good job, presented a U.S. flag to Timber Ridge Middle School in a special ceremony this month.

"Citizenship is pride in your country; it's flying the flag. I'm sure Gerda will help raise and lower it every day," he said.

*Reprinted with permission of the Plainfield Sun-Joilet, IL.*

# “Kaziuko Muge”

## Celebrating St. Casimir’s Day in Vilnius

What would you take with you if were fleeing your homeland? These photographs are about 75 years old and are shared with us by Bridges reader, Wanda Jankus. Wanda’s family left Lithuania to escape communism and wherever they lived the photos and the memories were part of their lives.

When Wanda offered them for our use I held them almost reverently. They were taken circa the early 1930’s where every St. Casimir’s Day the city took on a festive air of celebration. Wanda explained that schools were closed and there were crowds of people. What appear to be large pretzels were baked and displayed on strings. Winter was almost over and spring was starting to show her first signs. The farmers



were at the festival with plants, spring bulbs, fresh cheese and anything else they had available

to sell. She spoke of big and little red hearts, some with names on them, that were edible. These were among the biggest hits of the day. It was a time for Lithuanians to proudly display their handmade crafts while eagerly awaiting the emergence of Spring.

*Wanda Jankus as told to  
Jeanne Dorr*

*A very sincere thanks to  
Wanda for sharing her  
photos and her memories.*

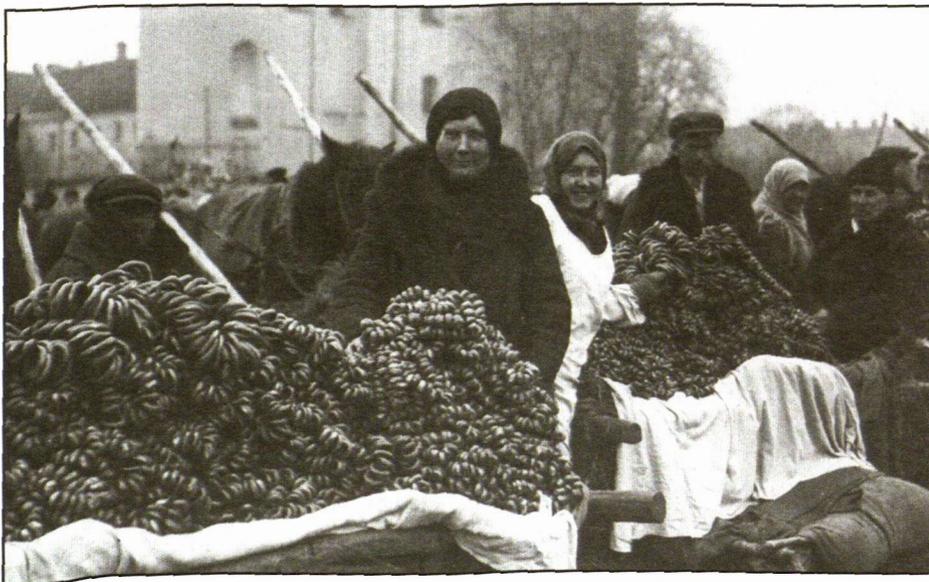
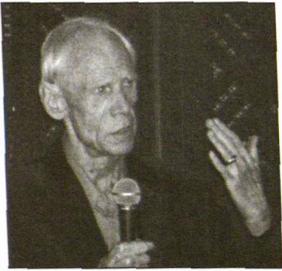


photo album

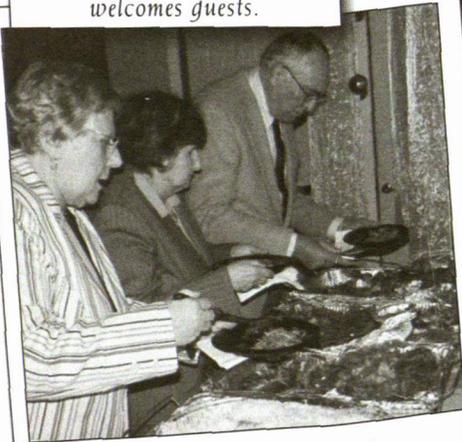
The Lithuanian Music Hall Association of Philadelphia, PA, held a Winter Break Appreciation party for its members and participants. A good time was had by all.



Tim Dorr, CEO of Lithuanian Hall, welcomes guests.



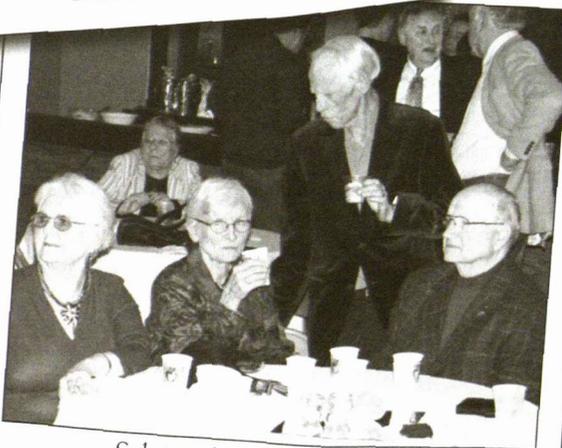
No one was permitted to sit for too long.



Tomorrow the diets start.



Oh, those dancing Lithuanian feet.



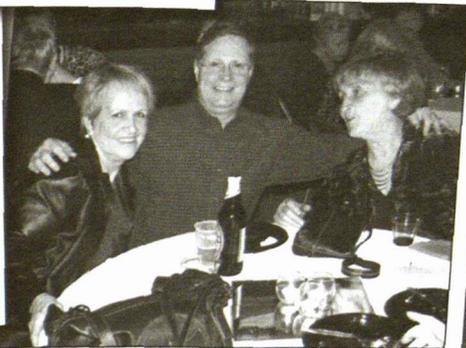
Solving the world's problems.



Is there a way out of this?



Even the youngest guests needed a break.



There's nothing like an evening of merriment.

Photos by Vitalija and Jonas Duncia.

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**For Information about tours to the Song and Dance  
Festival in 2007, please contact Rita Pencyliene**

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Rita Pencyliene..... tel: 708-923-0280 e-mail: [pencylar@comcast.net](mailto:pencylar@comcast.net)

Brone Barakauskiene.....tel: 708-403-5717 e-mail: [mamabar3@aol.com](mailto:mamabar3@aol.com)

# Calendar of Events for March - April - May

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

## BLp(LKA)1195 2007, Nr.2

### MARCH

**February 15 - March 24, 2007**

SUSAN RANKAITIS:  
LIMBICWORK  
ROBERT MANN GALLERY  
210 Eleventh Avenue  
(between 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> Streets)  
New York, NY 10001  
Phone: 212-989-7600  
E-mail: mail@robertmann.com  
Website: www.robertmann.com  
Hours: Tue-Sat (11 am - 6 pm)

**March 3, 2007 - 6 pm**

Independence Day  
Latvian Hall, 505 SW Dosch  
Rd, Portland, OR  
www.portlandlithuanians.org

**March 3, 2007**

Multicultural Festival of  
Cape Cod  
10 am to 4 pm at Cape Cod  
Community College,  
2240 Iyanough Road (Route 132)  
West Barnstable, MA  
The Cape Cod Lithuanian  
American Community will  
display traditional Lithuanian  
crafts, Easter eggs, books,  
information on travel to  
Lithuania, Lithuanian postage  
stamps, currency and amber.  
Contact Algirdas Dapkus at  
alisdapkus@aol.com

**March 10, 2007 - NEW DATE**

Los Angeles Chapter of  
Lithuanian American Community  
www.lalithuanians.com  
Due to singer Jurga  
Seduikyt's  
illness (pneumonia), the  
Independence Day Celebration  
scheduled for Saturday,  
February 17<sup>th</sup>, will be postponed  
until Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup>.

**March 11, 2007 - 1:00 pm**

LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE  
CELEBRATION  
St. Elizabeth Seton Parish Hall,  
9728 Palmeras Dr., Sun City, AZ  
Arizona Chapter of the

Lithuanian American  
Community  
http://www.lithaz.org/

**March 11, 2007**

Knights of Lithuania  
Amber District Meeting  
Amber District St. Casimir's Day  
Meeting in St. Clair, PA  
Hosted by  
Anthracite Council 144.

**March 12, 2007**

Seventh Annual Florida  
Lithuanian Open Golf  
Tournament  
St. Petersburg, Fl.

Tournament net proceeds to  
benefit the Lithuanian Kaimas  
"Countryside" Fund Through the  
US-Baltic Foundation.  
Registration must be received  
by March 5, 2007

For more details please contact  
Al Karnavicius at 727-895-4811  
Fax 727- 822- 2252  
liconsulf@bayprintonline.com.

**March 17, 2007**

Embassy of the Republic of  
Lithuania Basketball Event  
The Embassy Cup 2007 will  
be at Catholic University of  
America sports facilities.  
The basketball tournament is  
dedicated to commemorate the  
seventeenth anniversary of  
Restoration of Lithuanian  
Independence.

Contact Vaidas Taucius at the  
Embassy of Lithuania for  
information to participate in the  
tournament. Email:  
vaidas.taucius@ltembassyus.org  
Telephone: 202 234 5860  
ext. 130

**March 18, 2007 - 2:00 pm**

"Teatriukas"  
Lithuanian Music Hall  
2715 E. Allegheny Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA  
Info: 215 - 938 - 0783

www.phillylac.org

**March 18, 2007**

St. Casimir's Day Celebration  
12 Noon Mass -1pm Luncheon  
St. George Church  
443 Park Ave., Bridgeport, CT  
Luncheon - Parish Hall  
Donation \$16.00

Reservations by March 12  
Knights of Lithuania - C.141  
Reservation deadline March 12.  
Contact 203-878-0519

**March 21, 2007 - 8:00 pm**

VILNIUS STRING QUARTET  
CONCERT IN TUCSON  
Vilnius String Quartet in 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/

**March 31, 2007**

Lenten Day of Recollection  
11am Sacrament of  
Reconciliation followed at noon  
by a Mass in Lithuanian.  
Our Lady of the Assumption  
Church in Osterville  
Organized by the Cape Cod  
Chapter of the Lithuanian  
American Community.  
Contact Algirdas Dapkus at  
alisdapkus@aol.com

### APRIL

**April 1, 2007 - 2 pm**

Annual Lithuanian Easter Egg  
Dyeing Workshop  
Sponsored by the Daughters of  
Lithuania., Seattle WA  
Location to be announced.  
http://seattle.lietuviu-ben-  
druomene.org

**April 13-15, 2007**

WOMEN'S RETREAT  
Weekend of reflection &  
rejuvenation! We invite all  
women interested in spending  
time to nourish mind, body and  
spirit up to the beautiful hills of  
Vermont. We are planning a  
variety of activities ranging from  
group discussion, exercise, art,  
cooking, and individual  
reflection. For more details or  
to register, please visit  
www.neringa.org

**April 15, 2007 - 2 pm**

PUTNAM BENEFIT CONCERT  
Immaculate Conception  
Convent 600 Liberty Hwy.  
Putnam, CT 06260  
for a classical music program to  
benefit Camp Neringa  
Performers are Neringa  
campers or youthful alumni  
Gijlija Aukstikalnyte,  
Ona & Emilija Rytgeles  
Kristofas Staknys  
www.neringa.org

**April 21, 2007 - 7 pm**

LAC Philadelphia Chapter  
Spring Concert (tentative)  
Vytautas Babravicius (Simas)  
Lithuanian Music Hall  
2715 E. Allegheny Ave  
Philadelphia, PA  
Info: 215- 938- 0783  
www.phillylac.org

**April 22, 2007**

NED (New England District)  
Convention for the K of L 2007  
St. George Church  
Bridgeport, CT.  
Sponsored by Council 141.

**April 29, 2007**

Daughters of Lithuania  
Annual Meeting, Seattle  
Location to be announced.  
Info: http://seattle.lietuviu-  
bendruomene.org

2715 E. Allegheny Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA

### MAY

**May 12-13, 2007 - 11am - 6 pm**

35<sup>th</sup> Annual Lithuanian Festival  
Cantonsville Armory  
130 Mellor Ave.  
Cantonsville, MD  
Food, entertainment, music,  
Lithuanian dancers, Partisan  
re-enactment, Lithuanian  
military exhibits, and many  
vendors.

Admission - \$3 per person  
Info. 410 - 646 - 0261

**May 20, 2007 - 1 pm**

LAC Cape Cod Chapter  
Annual Meeting  
Annual elections for the  
current year's chapter board.  
Meeting will begin at 1pm &  
conclude at 3 pm at the  
Old Country Buffet  
Festival Mall, Route 132  
Hyannis, MA 02601  
Contact Algirdas Dapkus  
alisdapkus@aol.com

**June 24 - July 1, 2007**

Note: Lithuanian language  
courses will be offered at  
Camp Dainaiva,  
Manchester, MI  
The one week intense courses,  
operating under the auspices of  
the Lithuanian Educational  
Council of USA are designed  
for beginners, intermediate and  
advanced students, or those  
wishing to refresh their  
language skills.  
Info: Vytautas Jonaitis,  
1332 Sprucewood Dr. N.W.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
Phone 616- 453- 7549 or  
vjonaitis@juno.com

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