

bridges

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april 2007

LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

Letter from the Editor

As you can see from the contents many pages of this issue are dedicated to President Adamkus' trip to the United States. The President and First Lady had a demanding schedule that kept them busy throughout their visit. The President visited the White House, took part in conferences and galas, and attended a celebration of Lithuanian Independence Day. We were fortunate to have so many readers offer articles and photos of events they attended. Thank you one and all.

We are very happy to welcome Ambassador Bruzga to the United States. The ambassador was the keynote speaker at the Feb. 16/ March 11 commemoration sponsored by the Lithuanian Community in Philadelphia. Despite the threat of an impending snow storm he took the time to stay and greet everyone who wanted to meet him. BRIDGES wishes him well.

For those who are interested in humanitarian projects in Lithuania you will notice that Sister Ignė accepted the award given to the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception by the US Baltic Foundation. I spent time with Sister Ignė last May in Lithuania and you will be reading more about this project in Bridges as it progresses. It is a two fold plan in that an old monks' refractory will be restored and will be used to house six young women who leave the state run orphanages. Here they will learn the skills they need to go into the real world and an architecturally preserved building will be restored. As the girls are ready to live on their own, new girls will take their places.

Ramune Kubilius also wrote how you can help children and Dr. John Duncia has written how to brighten the day of Lithuanian soldiers far from home. Next month's issue will carry an article of a special project, "Soldiers' Angels," that the Knights of Lithuania have adopted to help the American military.

Many of you have written that Bridges is reaching your homes very late. Please know that I have no control over that situation. Once Gema takes the disc to the post office it is out of our hands. We are aware of the problem and hopefully the magazine will again be delivered to you on time. We do take responsibility for the April issue as there were computer problems and it took a very long time to get all the information and photos together of the President and First Lady's visit. I sincerely thank you for your patience.



Jeanne Shalna Dorr

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HOMECOMING LITHUANIANS.**

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*Cover: The illustration of "Margučiai" is from the book
"LITHUANIAN EASTER EGGS" by Antanas Tamošaitis

here at home

Ambassador Andrius Brūzga

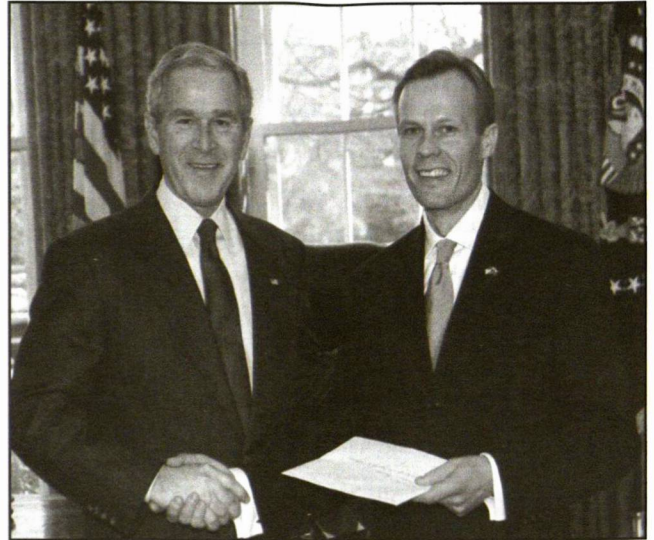
Audrius Brūzga has been named the new Ambassador to the United States. The new ambassador was born in Kazlų Rūda, in the Marijampolė region of Lithuania. Mr. Brūzga graduated from Vilnius University with a degree in English language and literature. He later studied at Union College in New York. Audrius Brūzga has worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1991 and acquired the status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary on 24 April 2004. Mr. Brūzga worked in the State and Diplomatic Protocol Service, in Lithuanian embassies in Israel and the United Kingdom and headed the Lithuanian embassy in Finland. Audrius Brūzga was an Ambassador-at-Large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania to the Americas, Africa, Asia and Pacific department.

As regards to relations with the United States, Lithuania places a special emphasis on strengthening transatlantic cooperation between Europe and the USA and exploring possibilities to apply a visa-free regime to the citizens of Lithuania.

On 27 February the Lithuanian Ambassador to the USA, Audrius Brūzga, presented his credentials to the President of the United States of America.

During the conversation with President Bush, the Lithuanian Ambassador remarked that present diplomatic relations of Lithuania and the USA had been the best and warmest since their establishment 85 years ago.

“With the USA we advocate the protection of freedom, human rights and dignity, strengthening peace and developing welfare in the whole world. Our soldiers stand together on the front line fighting against terrorism and defending freedom of choice in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our politicians and diplomats jointly seek solutions for the global tensions, lack of security and tolerance, said Ambassador Brūzga.



President Bush congratulates Ambassador Brūzga.

Photo is courtesy of the Lithuanian Embassy

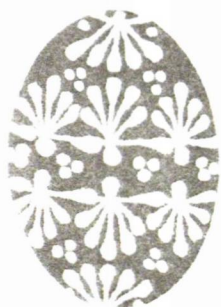
President Bush welcomed the goals that the Lithuanian ambassador poses for his tenure.

Ambassador Brūzga noted that together with the US administration and legislators he would seek the abolishment of the hurdles impeding our people's travel and communication as soon as possible.

On 26 February Ambassador Brūzga met with the Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte. The Lithuanian Ambassador assured the US diplomat that Lithuania honoured its commitments in Iraq. However, Lithuania will pay more attention and allocate more resources for the successful implementation of the mission in Afghanistan.

Ambassador Brūzga is married to the former Imsre Darija Sabaliunas. The couple are the parents of a son and a daughter.

Editor's Note: BRIDGES wishes Ambassador Brūzga a successful tenure in the United States.



Margučiai

LITHUANIAN Easter Eggs

The art of Easter egg decoration frequently marked the young peasant's initiation into the folkloric tradition. Because of the variety of possible forms, patterns, and colour combinations, the decoration of Easter eggs provided an ideal opportunity for testing one's creative abilities.

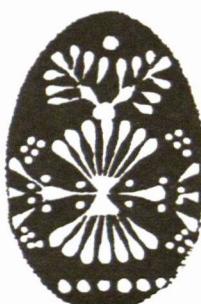
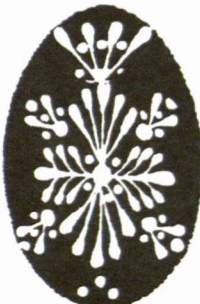
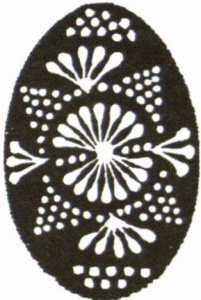
Most of these young Easter egg decorators, while they adhered to the patterns and designs handed down by their ancestors, contributed their own innovations, and in this way helped to enrich the Easter egg tradition.

The Easter egg art was widely practiced in Lithuania until the end of the 19th century. Rare indeed was the home where this art was unknown. Over the centuries the Easter egg decoration has grown and developed gaining variety in its form, composition and colour combination. It is important to note that until the end of the 19th century, printed material was not available and contact with other countries almost non-existent. This fact explains why the Lithuanian Easter egg tradition was little influenced by outside or foreign sources and managed to retain a certain purity of style. The Lithuanian Easter eggs stood out because of their lyrical composition, originality and pattern variety. In compliance with the Lithuanian custom, they were given as gifts, used as playthings and as decorative ornaments. But with the advent of the 20th century, due to changing econom-

ic and cultural conditions in Lithuania, coupled with greater international co-operation and the prospering of industry, the Easter egg art began dying and with it a whole folkloric tradition. The peasants themselves having lost faith in the egg's mystical powers, decorated fewer and fewer eggs, and contented themselves with coloring them only. In the days of independent Lithuania an attempt was made to revive the national culture, and it is from this period that the first museum Easter egg collections are dated. One of the first directors of these museums, Tadas Daugirdas, assembled a sizeable collection of Easter eggs which were later displayed in the Kaunas City Museum. Subsequently, other museums and individual artists took an interest in collecting the original Easter eggs or the printed patterns which had inspired them. Today, intellectuals, both in Lithuania and abroad, strive to organize national festivals in order to provide opportunities for demonstrating the Easter egg art. While it is true that the original Lithuanian Easter eggs are prized acquisitions, facsimiles of these may also be found in wood, plastic or porcelain imitations.

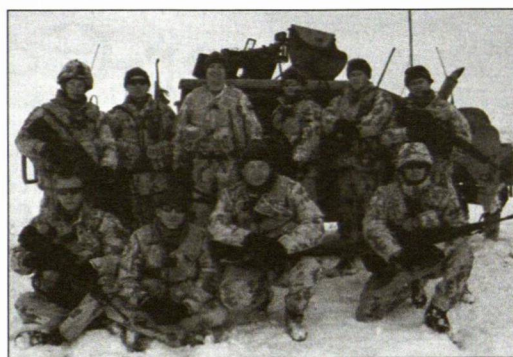
* From the book:

"LITHUANIAN EASTER EGGS"
by Antanas Tamošaitis
Lithuanian Folk Art Institute
Toronto, Canada
1982

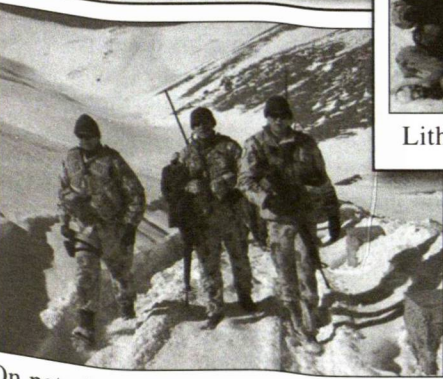


humanitarian

REMEMBERING Lithuanian Troops in Afghanistan and Iraq



Lithuanian soldiers serving in Afghanistan



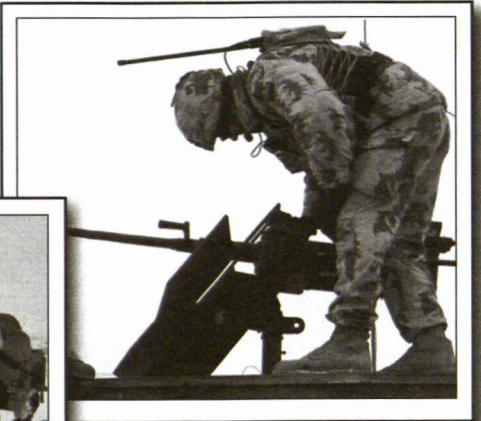
On patrol in the mountains of Afghanistan



Helping stranded travelers



On patrol in Afghanistan

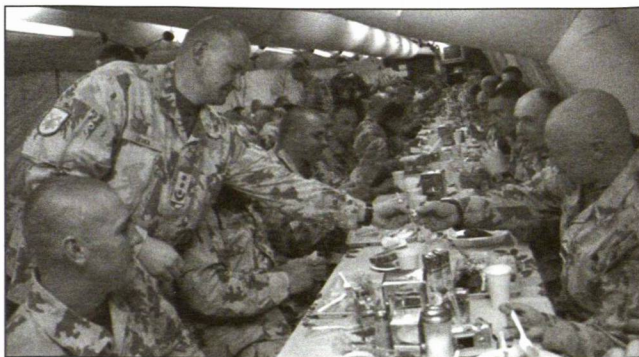


located in an extremely rugged area, the Hindu-Kush mountain region. During the winter, they are completely snowbound since the mountain roads are almost impassible. The temperature can dip down to -30°C . Believe it or

Daily we hear about America's involvement in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. How many of us, though, know that there are Lithuanian troops stationed in both of these countries as well? There are about 120 Lithuanian soldiers in Afghanistan and 50 in Iraq. The Lithuanian troops lead the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). They are joined by other NATO troops from Denmark, Croatia, and Iceland. They are located in Chagcharan, 350 km west of Kabul in Ghor Province, which is half the size of Lithuania with a population of 670,000. It has 383 schools of which only 20 have a working infrastructure. Their duties include peace-keeping, providing mobile surveillance, strengthening ties with local government officials, arranging security for contractors, finding and destroying mines (of which there is no shortage), and providing health-care, not only for fellow soldiers, but for locales as well. The contractors they are protecting are charged with drilling wells and building roads, bridges, hospitals, and schools. The Lithuanians are

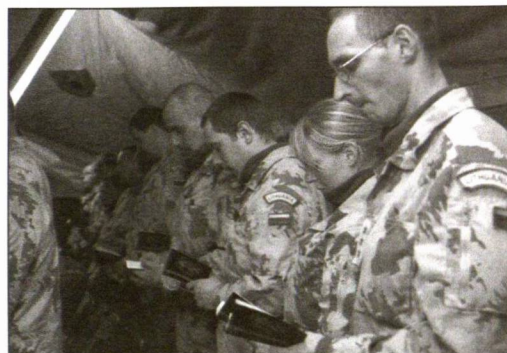
not, they live in heated tents under those conditions. In the past they have been hit by rocket fire, but during the winter, it is very quiet. During this time, they have opportunities to act as Good Samaritans to the local population. Recently, they saved a group of frozen, stranded travelers in the mountains. A small confrontation occurred between the Afghan police and illegal poppy growers which escalated into a shoot-out. The Lithuanian troops were called in to bring about a peaceful resolution. Lithuanian soldiers also found time to bring fruit and candy to an orphanage. The little children were overwhelmed by their kindness that they lost all sense of self-control. In a "feeding frenzy" each one grabbed as much as they could handle and ran off with their bounty. The soldiers refer to it as one of those "surreal moments" in Afghanistan.

Lithuanian soldiers in Iraq are part of the Multi-National Division (South-East) under the command of British forces. It is comprised of 7,200 British soldiers, 1,400 Australian, 865 Rumanian, 515 Danish, 100 Czech, and 50 Lithuanian. The Lithuanian contingent is located in Danevang, a suburb of Basra, a dangerous hotbed of unrest. Here they go out regularly on patrols and escort civilian contractors. They have *encountered enemy fire* on several occasions. In July of last year, one Lithuanian soldier was slightly wounded, and required shoulder surgery.



“Kūčios”, sharing of the Blessed Christmas Wafer “Plotkelė”

One can get very lonely when he/she is stationed far away from home in the middle of war-torn countries. Fortunately, there are Good Samaritans living here in America who remembered the Lithuanian troops during Christmas. Mr. Rimas Gedeika from New Jersey together with Ms. Marytė Newsome from Los Angeles came up with the idea of sending Christmas cards and packages to the Lithuanian troops in Afghanistan. Mr. Gedeika made a deal with the students of Vinco Krėvės Lithuanian School in Philadelphia: if they would write cards and letters and prepare gift packages for the troops, then he would find a way to ship them over there. The same was done by Ms. Newsom, principal of St. Casimir Lithuanian School in LA. Everyone responded enthusiastically and in the spirit of Christmas organized several packages full of goodies and letters. And the story has a happy ending--the packages miraculously reached the troops right before Christmas! Colonel Almantas Leika who is in charge of the Lithuanian brigade wrote an E-mail from Afghanistan saying that his troops were thoroughly surprised and that they really appreciated the kindness and moral support shown to them. The soldiers also sent back pictures of how they spent Christmas. Apparently, Lithuania hadn't forgotten them too, having sent not one but two priests to conduct traditional Christmas Eve services for them. The troops also responded by sending 50 letters to the students of St. Casimir's School. It was now the students' turn to be surprised and overwhelmed



“Christmas Eve” Midnight Mass in Afghanistan

by actually receiving letters individually addressed to them. To commemorate February 16th, *Lithuanian Independence Day*, St. Casimir's students have also sent out 50 letters to Major Bukus, leader of the Lithuanian troops in Iraq. The students and teachers of both schools are planning to send packages and cards for Easter. Anyone wishing to send letters and/or presents to the Lithuanian troops in Afghanistan/Iraq can do so to the following addresses:

Colonel Almantas Leika, Lithuanian Contingent
Chagcharan PRT, APO AE, 09354

Major E. Butkus, MNC-I C2 Red Cell
APO, AE 09342

Cards and letters are most welcome, but most importantly, please keep all of the troops in your prayers.

Dr. John Vytautas Duncia

Dr. John Vytautas Duncia works as a research scientist at a major pharmaceutical company in New Jersey. He is a member of the organizing committee of *Balticum Organicum Syntheticum* (www.BOS06.ttu.ee) which hosts biennial international organic chemistry conferences in the three Baltic states. Dr. Duncia and his family are members of St. Andrew's Lithuanian Roman Catholic Church in Philadelphia.

*Photos sent to Philadelphia from Lithuanian military.



Philadelphia Lithuanian school children and teachers.
Photo by Rimas Gedeika



Sharing the cards and letters from America with local Afghan orphans.

Celebration of Independence on CAPE COD

Winter relentlessly refusing to relinquish its icy grip, found the American Lithuanians of Cape Cod gathering to celebrate Independence Day. The commemoration took place on a sunny, Sunday, February 11, 2007. It was 754 years ago that Lithuania became a State, and 89 years ago the proclamation of Independence on February 18, 1918 was made, while 17 years ago on March 11, 1990 great jubilation swept the land for the break away from Soviet domination. Thus, this is a triple celebration which commenced with Lithuanians and their guests attending Mass offered for Lithuania at Our Lady of Assumption Church in Osterville, MA. Representing the 44 gathered Lithuanian community members, Regina Petrutis and Aurelia Borges brought the offerings.

A program followed in the downstairs Church hall, which was colorfully decorated by the American and Lithuanian flags and the Lithuanian "Vytiis" (red and white emblem with dashing steed and knight).

As the people gathered, Algimantas Gustaitis, treasurer, accepted Lithuanian American Community, Inc., dues and other contributions from those who wished to do so.

LAC Cape Cod Chapter president, Algirdas Dapkus officially began the commemoration by greeting those in attendance and requesting a moment of silence for those who perished in the fight for freedom.

After singing the American and Lithuanian national anthems, an invocation was read by Aurelia Borges. It was a prayer composed by Rev. Prof. Stasys Yla to the Almighty Lord of Freedom of all nations.

The new Governor of Massachusetts Deval L. Patrick sent a Proclamation, declaring February 16, 2007 as a day of celebrating Lithuanian Independence, which was read by Algimantas Gustaitis.

Then the vice-president, Eugene Uzpurvis, presented resolutions for this year sent by the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., governing board. The resolutions were unanimously accepted by the assembly and will be sent to the President of the United States, Massachusetts representatives and senators, as well as to the Embassies of Lithuania and Russia.

Algimantas Gustaitis read the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., National Executive Committee's letter addressed all Lithuanians and the Lithuanian government concerning Lithuania's Constitutional Court's interpretation of the Constitution regarding dual citizenship. This ruling not permitting dual citizenship affects many Lithuanians and their children living abroad. A prepared petition of the National Executive Committee requesting modification of this ruling



Lithuanian American Community, Cape Cod Chapter Board with Lithuanian Consul General Dr. Mindaugas Butkus and his wife Jurate. (F-L) Aurelija Borges, Algirdas Dapkus, Jurate Butkiene, and Consul General Dr. Mindaugas Butkus. (B-L) Eugenijus Uzpurvis, Algimantas Gustaitis, and Deimante Vilcinskaite

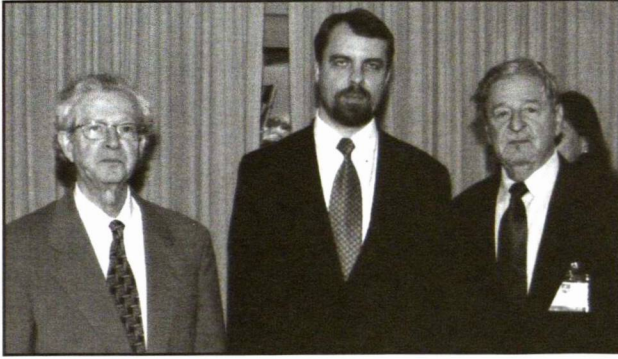
was signed by those attending.

Prof. Dr. Stasys Gostautas introduced the guest speaker, the Lithuanian Republic's Consul General in New York, Dr. Mindaugas Butkus, who has worked in the diplomatic field for fifteen years. Beginning his speech with a summary in English then continuing in Lithuanian, Dr. Butkus invited the listeners to remember and cherish Lithuania's glorious past, to adequately evaluate the present, and glance optimistically at the future. Much has been accomplished during the seventeen years since March 11th. Today Lithuania is a member of the European Union and NATO. This entails not only privileges, but also demands many responsibilities that are common to all democracies. Presently the influence of globalization elicits many challenges in the economic infrastructure and national safety. For many centuries Lithuanians, in general, were a very mobile society. Today the massive exodus of people from their native land is a negative factor. The numerous departures of qualified, talented, educated citizens is detrimental to Lithuania. What is strange is that unemployment today practically does not exist for those wishing to work. However, Lithuanians eager to expand their horizons, and at times dissatisfied with political and economic issues at home, seize the opportunity to travel and rush to seek happiness and a better way of life abroad.

The formerly criticized citizens, who had left Lithuania as emigrants, or as politically displaced persons, are beginning to be more appreciated by the native land residents for their immeasurable contributions, moral and financial, in the regaining of independence.

Now, what is expected of Lithuanians living abroad? According to Dr. Butkus, it would be ideal for them to nurture awareness of their nationality, proudly uphold traditions and language, keeping ties with their roots and those living in Lithuania and above all to be like ambassadors and represent Lithuania.

Expressing gratitude for coming to Cape Cod, the Lithuanian



Prof. Stasys Gostautas,
Consul General Dr. Mindaugas Butkus and
LAC. Cape Cod Chapter Board President Algirdas Dapkus.

American Community Chapter members of Cape Cod presented an illustrated book of "Cape Cod and Islands" to Dr. Butkus. Hopefully, the Consul and his wife, after enjoying the picture tour of our Old Cape Cod, will be tempted to visit again.

The entertainment segment of the day was provided by Edita Orlinytė, an accomplished violinist from Lithuania. She has played with the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra and has toured in Europe, Japan and the United States. To begin, Nida Janulaitis, a young girl studying violin and a member of LAC Chapter of Cape Cod, and Edita Orlinytė performed a patriotic duet by playing "Lietuva, Tėvynė mūsų...". Then Nida fearlessly executed a Minuet by Bach. Edita Orlinytė masterfully performed Bach's "Giaccona". At the conclusion of the concert, both performers were presented with lovely bouquets of lilies.



Violinist Edita Orlinytė and Violinist Nida Janulaitis

Refreshments followed. All were invited to partake of the well prepared dishes of sandwiches, cakes and other goodies brought by the generous and talented female participants. Deimante Vilcinskaitė lent a patriotic touch with her creation of yellow blossoms, green leaves in red goblets that decorated the long tables laden with food. The celebration ended with friendly socializing among members and guests and the opportunity to speak with Consul Butkus and his wife, Jūratė. Everyone was pleased and looking forward to next year's event.

Continued from page 12

ANOTHER YEAR FOR "CHILD'S GATE TO LEARNING": WORKING FOR LITHUANIA'S CHILDREN

work at universities, hospitals, and in the field.

Perhaps like children everywhere, those attending the "Child's Gate to Learning" supported centers may not appreciate or realize in what historical and special places they live. Lithuania's writers, poets, and artists did not all grow up in large cities. The character building programs of "Child's Gate to Learning" provide methodologies for center directors and workers in large and small cities, towns and villages to inspire children-to strive for success in school, to appreciate their families (immediate or extended) and their lives, to resist some of society's bad habits- smoking, excessive alcohol drinking, and substance abuse. Most importantly, it is hoped that the children become proud of their roots and are hopeful about their futures.

"Child's Gate to Learning" appreciates funding received in 2006 from the Lithuanian Foundation and Seneca House, from its support-groups around the United States. Thanks also go to many individuals on both sides of the Atlantic, who have given from their pockets and of their "spare" time.

Professionally conducted formal follow-up studies could probably determine if the children and youth attending the "Child's Gate to Learning" supported after-school centers have better school and life achievements as a result of the centers' intervention. Anecdotal evidence and stories from the centers seem to confirm that all of our efforts are worthwhile. Some former center attendees have stayed in touch with their former mentors, returned to the centers as student volunteers, and followed the career paths of their role models, the adults at the centers, by choosing teaching and social work as their professions. As long as there are projects to do, and volunteers to do them, "Child's Gate to Learning" is committed to continuing its effort on behalf of Lithuania's children.

Ramunė Kubilius

Ramunė 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.

**Photos were taken by center co-director, Gintautė*

TRIVIA QUESTION

(No.13)

Who is the American born Lithuanian originally from Norwood, Massachusetts that coined the expression, "PLEASE DON'T SQUEEZE THE CHARMIN", that was used on TV by Mister Whipple.

- (a) Vin Kasauskas (b) Joe Kudirka
(c) John Chervokas (d) Bill Gorski

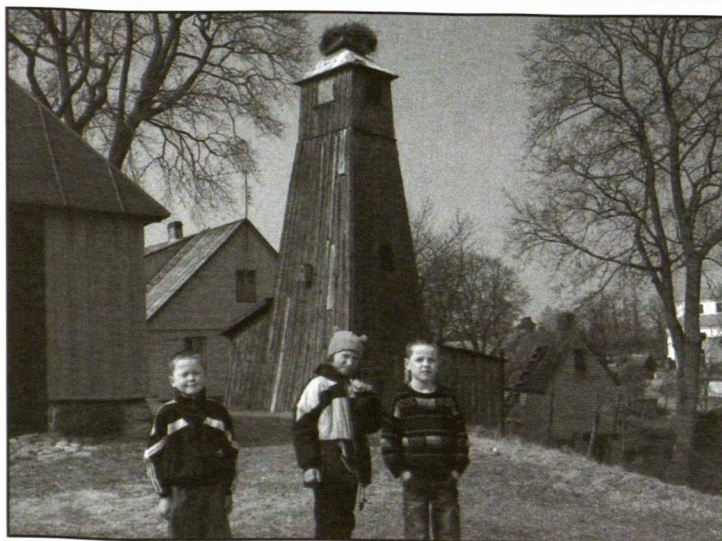
Answer to Trivia
on page 14

ANOTHER YEAR FOR “CHILD’S GATE TO LEARNING”: WORKING FOR LITHUANIA’S CHILDREN

(In the past few years, more than one article in “Bridges” has highlighted milestones from the projects of “Child’s Gate to Learning”. This is another installment in the continuing saga... The work is not completed yet, so the organization continues its projects and efforts.)

“Child’s Gate to Learning” (“Vaiko vartai į mokslą”) is a Chicagoland-based organization of about 100 members that has been working on various projects for Lithuania and its children since 1998. The group has individual supporters throughout the United States, conducts fund-raising events in the Chicagoland area, and has support groups in Detroit, Cleveland, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and in Florida- St. Petersburg and Sunny Hills. The focus of the organization’s attention? Ten after-school and temporary shelter centers in Lithuania which the organization has committed to supporting financially, with practical assistance and regular visits, through continuous contact with the centers’ directors, and through the character building programs created by the organization. The goal of “Child’s Gate to Learning” and the centers it supports in Lithuania? Ensuring that these centers’ children and youths, Lithuania’s future, almost without exception from disadvantaged families, continue to attend school. After school, they receive meals, obtain assistance with homework, are provided with the school supplies they need (and sometimes do not receive from parents). At the centers, the children and youth are respected, made to feel safe. Additionally, they are kept productively busy with crafts and activities, and they learn some life skills that they perhaps are not learning at home. Just as in many countries of the world, there are dysfunctional families in Lithuania that are affected by economic and substance abuse problems. Parents in these families may be unwilling or unable to responsibly care for all of their children’s needs at home, but they have not (yet) lost their parental rights. The children live at home, but often in less than ideal circumstances. Some of the “Child’s Gate to Learning” supported centers also try to work with the mothers of the children and youths, and sometimes with the younger preschool siblings as well.

It’s hard to believe that another year has gone by. “Child’s Gate to Learning” activities ebbed and flowed throughout 2006. Some projects were group efforts, some were individual efforts. Some were short-term projects. Some projects were in development for several months. The organization’s officers feel a certain sense of accomplishment when they



A few of the boys pose in front of the scenic backdrop of Žemaičių Kalvarija.

remember the road already traveled, but they also feel a sense of urgency to do more. Some of the following highlights will also appear in the Lithuanian language press and on the organization’s Web site: <http://www.childgate.org>.

The Web site also features highlights of previous years’ activities and contact information.

STORIES OF VOLUNTEERS AND CENTERS

Here are some stories of “Child’s Gate to Learning” accomplishments and projects in 2006...

Three Lithuanian American mothers of adolescent and young adult children in the Chicagoland area offered to coordinate a Christmas gift-donation project in the fall of 2006 at their Lithuanian Catholic church in Lemont, IL, the Archbishop Jurgis Matulaitis Mission (Arch. Jurgio Matulaičio misija). They decorated a Christmas tree with cards listing children’s and youth’s first names and ages. The result? Good-hearted parishioners selected cards and donated 231 age-appropriate presents (supplemented by more gifts that were collected during a members’ meeting), that were shipped to “Child’s Gate to Learning” centers in Lithuania to ensure that children and youths at the centers receive something special at Christmas even when their parents or family members are unable or unwilling to provide the children and youths with presents. (A number of the centers also celebrated communal Christmas Eve dinners, “Kūčios”, with the children and youths.) Thank you for your initiative and support, Dr. Ona Daugirdas, Dr. Pranutė Domanskis, and Grasilda Reinyš!

The mother of a young toddler, a fluent Lithuanian-language speaking educator with a drama background, was to accompany her husband on a trip to Vilnius in the fall of 2006, where he was to spend his teaching sabbatical at a university there. Before her trip to Lithuania, she contacted

“Child’s Gate to Learning” officers to offer her services as a volunteer at a supported center. Result? For several months, children at the “Vilties Angelas” (“Angel of Hope”) after-school center in Vilnius received expert drama coaching and an opportunity to act in skits and plays (after homework was done, of course). Drama is often considered to be good therapy. Thank you for sharing your talents, Audre Budrys Nakas!

Some “Child’s Gate to Learning” centers are located in small towns and villages of Lithuania that are not easily reached by bus and train service. It takes planning and coordination. Two officers happened to both be going to Lithuania for short visits in the summer of 2006 during which they wanted to visit with some of the supported centers’ directors and staff. They knew that one of the recent additions on the supported center roster, “Žaliakalnio centras”, located in Kaunas, would be relatively easy to visit. They grappled with the logistics of planning a joint trip to the newest supported center, “Vilties verineliai” (translated, it means “Strings of hope’s pearls”), in Žemaičių Kalvarija, located in the northwest corner of Lithuania. A series of coincidences made a visit possible. One of the officers has been a pen pal for years with an English language teacher who lives outside of Kaunas. Somehow it came up in their correspondences that the teacher not only recently purchased a new (used) car, but also stays in touch with and often visits her college roommate, a teacher, who lives, where else? Žemaičių Kalvarija, a well-known Roman Catholic pilgrims’ destination. The result? A “field trip”, with a volunteer chauffeur and arranged housing. It was a memorable few days’ visit to a scenic corner of Lithuania, featuring useful meetings and on-site guided tours of the “Child’s Gate to Learning” newly supported (and newly renovated) center and its environs. Thank you, Vilija, Milda, Bronius, Ginte, and Jolanta, all of the people who help make the center function and made a visit there possible!

The importance of music in children’s lives was one of the topics presented by music educator Dr. Emilija Sakadolskis in the 2005 organization-sponsored seminar in Kaunas. At that time, seminar attendees were impressed by the new information they learned about music- the physiology of the brain, how early children can and should be first exposed to music... Experience with economically and socially disadvantaged children in the United States, Venezuela and elsewhere has shown that music improves young people’s self confidence, their language and social skills, and music positively affects school performance. In 2006, “Child’s Gate to Learning” officers learned from the co-directors of the center in Žemaičių Kalvarija, that in the 2006/2007 school year, they planned to found a Lithuanian folk (ethnographic) ensemble at the center, to teach the children Lithuanian folk songs and dances. Teachers from the nearby school had already been recruited as volunteer



After school snacks are prepared in the kitchenette equipped with funding from “Child’s Gate to Learning”.

consultants and teachers to sew costumes, teach the dances and songs. Meanwhile, in the United States, recent donors agreed to designate their donation to “Child’s Gate to Learning” as a start-up fund to buy the needed folk music instruments for the ensemble in Žemaičių Kalvarija.

The world is often a small place, full of common threads. In “Bridges” (December 2006), Rima Sestokas described her family’s connection with the farmstead home in Rumbonys, a small village in the Dzukija region of Lithuania, where children and youth from dysfunctional or disintegrated families live in a family-style environment under the care of Sisters Sonata and Danutė and others. The home, called “Paguoda” (“Comfort”), is special to “Child’s Gate to Learning” as well. The organization has been supporting the center through financial donations and various supplies for several years now and stays in regular touch with the sisters. The center uses themes from the organization’s character building programs. Officers visit the homestead in Rumbonys if they are in Lithuania. Young volunteers from the Rumbonys area who have helped out at “Paguoda” have attended “Child’s Gate to Learning” organized seminars in Kaunas, along with adults who work at the home.

Lithuanian American high schoolers, Lina Jarasius from Colorado and Nida Vidutis from Virginia, visited Rumbonys for St. John’s Day celebration (“Joninės”) in June 2006. The young ladies were month-long volunteers at another “Child’s Gate to Learning” supported center, in Marijampolė, where they worked with the small children brought to that temporary shelter by police, rescued from chaotic family situations. (The sisters who run the supported centers in Marijampolė and Rumbonys belong to the same religious order.) “Child’s Gate to Learning” programs in Lithuania coordinators, Rita Venclovas and Aldona Kamantas helped with the young Lithuanian-language speaking volunteers’ preparations for their trip, from the moment Lina and Nida first contacted “Child’s Gate to Learning”,

to coordinating with the Lithuanian center at which they would be based, to suggesting appropriate games and toys to bring to the center for work with the young children. (The organization also has policy guidelines regarding young volunteers.) Another young volunteer at the Marijampolė center, Audrė Kapacinskas, wrote in a 2003 issue of "Bridges" on her experiences as a summer volunteer in Marijampolė, working alongside her friend, Žiba Saulys. One young volunteer, Marius Pakalniskis spent several post-college months in Vilnius in 2005, volunteering as a big brother at the "Vilties Angelas" supported center.

"Child's Gate to Learning" commissioned Agne Marcinkeviciute to create two Lithuanian language documentary films, "Dievo vaikai" ("Children of God") in 2005 and "Žingsniai į prasmingą gyvenimą" ("Steps Towards a Meaningful Life") in 2006. The films have been shown, largely in Lithuanian American communities around the United States (the first can also be seen at the bernardinai.lt Internet newspaper's Web site). They visually depict the supported centers, the children and youth who attend them, and feature short interviews with the directors and staff who work at the centers.

SUPPORTED CENTERS AND PROGRAMS

The ten "Child's Gate to Learning" supported centers are located in various areas of Lithuania—cities, towns, and villages: Vilnius (2), Kaunas, Kazlų Rūda, Marijampolė, Naujoji Akmene, Obeliai, Rumbonys, Uzpaliai, and Žemaičių Kalvarija. The organization's coordinator in Lithuania, Zdrunė Liobikaitė, is a social worker by profession, who works full-time with the mothers of one supported center's children. She maintains contact with all of the organization's supported center directors and staff, as well as with the U.S.-based "Child's Gate to Learning" officers. She collects reports from the centers about their activities and disburses the sums "Child's Gate to Learning" has allotted for the support of each center.

The circumstance of each center's founding was unique, and the number of children attending the centers is varied. Some centers are relatively small, attended by about one to two dozen children. Some centers cannot accommodate all of the children (60-100) at once and have to designate what days children will attend the center and its after-school activities. Some centers are based in parish centers, others in "Caritas" organization-provided facilities, a few are free-standing, and one center is located in a school. The directors and staff in some centers are nuns, in others they are lay people-teachers, social workers, psychologists and retirees. "Child's Gate to Learning" did not found the centers, but the agreement to support them was based on mutual goals. The organization is also not the only source of financial support for the centers since local and federal government support as well as European foundation sup-

port is sought. Still, more than one supported center director has confirmed that "Child's Gate to Learning" financial support is consistent, and its character building programs and their methodologies offer something special that centers don't receive from any other source.

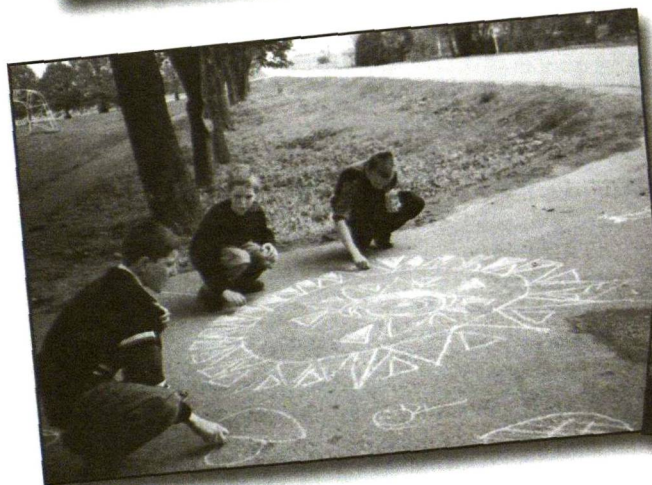
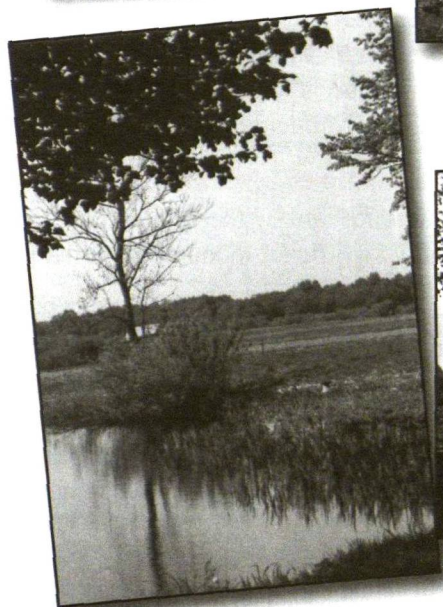
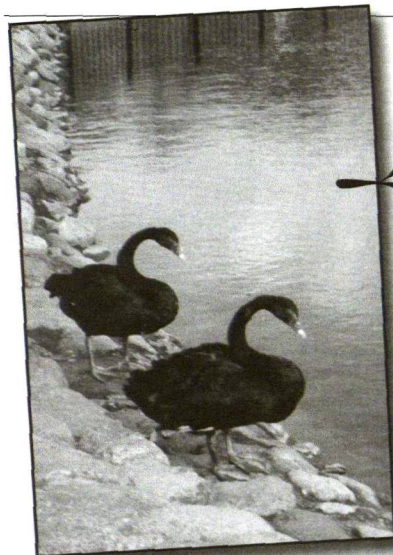
A specially formed, hardworking editorial group, met in the suburbs of Chicago for several months (and many hours) throughout early 2006. The fruit of their labor? The "Žingsniai į prasmingą gyvenimą" ("Steps Towards a Meaningful Life") character building program, the fourth in a series of Lithuanian-language programs, methodologies designed for use in the 10 organization-supported centers and other centers that receive permission to use them. The methodologies focus on life skills, desirable personality traits (generosity, good citizenship, responsibility). They give center directors, staff, and volunteers ideas and guidelines on how to teach and flesh out various positive life skills and character traits through games, discussions, art projects, songs, and stories, but not lectures! Sources of inspiration for the editorial group included American, Lithuanian, and international professional and Christian literature and folk culture. The newest program is geared towards adolescents, ages 13-17, emphasizing various professional and personal life attainments that can and should be planned. In the program manual's introductory comments, editorial member, Sister Pranciska Neringa Bubelytė FDCJ reminded readers that love is the most sought after thing in life... Going towards the kind of love, that reaches its shape and form and colors in being with others, is achieved not in leaps and not through hopes that remain dreams, but in realistic and firm steps. Those steps require time, patience, forgiveness, a weighing and consideration of another person's experience and feelings... One of the group's founders and member of the editorial group, Rita Venclovas, a retired teacher, spent several months in Lithuania in spring of 2006, volunteering at various centers, helping coordinate the Kaunas seminar, and, perhaps most importantly, introducing center directors to the new program, its themes and techniques.

Directors, staff and volunteers from all of the "Child's Gate to Learning" supported centers have joined "Child's Gate to Learning" representatives at spring seminars the organization has sponsored in Kaunas over the last few years. (The 2005 seminar was described in "Bridges".) In 2006, the seminar highlighted the newest character building program and attendees had the opportunity to become familiar with and try out some of the targeted exercises that highlight themes in the program. Seminar attendees viewed and discussed the popular French-language film "Les Choristes" ("The Chorus", when showed with English-language subtitles). During the weekend seminar, attendees from the various centers also had the opportunity to network. They shared experiences of real-life cases and their discussions were led by invited professionals who

Continued on page 9

Spring in Lithuania

By Jeanne Shalna Dorr



here at home

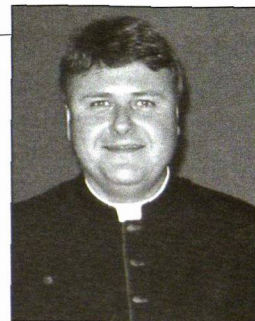


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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

RE: Our Lady of Vilnius Parish in the Archdiocese of New York

For Lithuanian Americans, the Catholic Church has always been at the centre of community religious, cultural and social life. Our Lady of Vilnius Parish is a living symbol of many generations of Lithuanian Americans' commitment to their faith, their Lithuanian heritage and their identity. The closure of a church is for many, similar to the death of a much loved family member.

The Lithuanian Bishops' Conference has appointed me as intermediary between Catholics of Lithuanian descent outside of Lithuania and the local dioceses. As intermediary, my mission is to acquire and relay pertinent information from local dioceses regarding imminent decisions to the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference. I am not neutral when the fate of Lithuanian parishes is in question.

Despite our best efforts, including those by the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference and by the Lithuanian government to have Our Lady of Vilnius Parish designated as a historically significant monument, to date, we were unsuccessful in stopping its closure.

We deeply regret the closure of Our Lady of Vilnius Parish and we share the disappointment and bewilderment of many Lithuanian Americans. However, we must not let this sorrow cloud our judgement and diminish our resolve. Rather, we should consider this an opportunity that challenges us to renew our involvement in our churches and missions and in our Lithuanian communities, revitalizing our parish life and strengthening our cultural heritage for future generations

Edmundas J. Putrimas

ANSWER TO TRIVIA QUESTION

Trivia Quiz
on page 9

Years ago, you may have seen on TV where Mr. Whipple would say, "PLEASE DON'T SQUEEZE THE CHARMIN", Norwood, Massachusetts native son, John Chervokas, coined that expression when he was working as an advertising executive.

After a 35 year career in advertising, he launched a new career in politics. He's now in his 5th term as Supervisor of the town of Ossining, New York, a

Hudson River town of 35,000 people. John also has written four books; Pinstripe Prayers, How to Keep God Alive from 9 to 5, God Lives in the Suburbs and Patient Prayers.

Submitted by Edward Shakalis

Ed Shakalis is a retired Electrical Engineer and ham radio operator. He and his son Rick run "THE LITHUANIAN OPEN" golf tournament, an annual event.

Sister Ignė Accepts Award

The following are Remarks by Sr. Ignė Marijošiūtė at the US-Baltic Foundation Gala held February 9, in Washington, D.C., in accepting that organization's Humanitarian Award, on behalf of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Sister Ignė is the Mother General, currently living and working in Lithuania. Also attending was Sister Eugenia Lukošiūtė, Provincial from Putnam, Connecticut.

Following these remarks, the 500 attendees rose to their feet and gave a prolonged applause. Many in the audience knew the sisters personally from their work in the US at Camp Neringa in Vermont, the Matulaitis Home for the Elderly in Putnam, and their work in Lemont, IL and in Toronto.

Mr. President, Mrs. Adamkus - Distinguished ambassadors and guests, Members of the Board of the US Baltic Foundation, Chairman of the Gala, Friends...

On behalf of my community, I am deeply honored, to accept this First Humanitarian Award given by the US Baltic foundation.

Truly, this award acknowledges the work of my religious community, since its founding in Lithuania at the close of the First World War in 1918. This is the first award ever given to us.

It honors the scores of women who experienced deep in their conscience the call to give themselves fully and totally to others, as a sign of their choice of the Other, who chose to live their lives having taken the three vows, who chose to strive to live the motto of our founder, Jurgis Matulaitis, as fully as human frailty allows, to "overcome evil with good".

In the United States, for over 50 years, we innovatingly assisted the Lithuanian immigrants helping them uphold religious and cultural values - which perhaps explains why we seem to know quite a few participating in this gathering.

During those same 50 years, our community continued to assist our sisters in Lithuania helping them maintain their hope and viability as they continued to live their religious commitment in the underground. Now, since the regained independence of Lithuania, we continue to assist them reconstruct their religious community life, as they are once again public and visible and help them undertake organized ministries as the needs of the Lithuanian people emerge and are recognized.

Our "modus operandi" amazes the Lithuanian populace, it being totally incomprehensible, that one works for no recompense, with no financial assurance, only on the basis of "donation" and faith. And miracles happen. They have happened in several locations where we have homes for children, or the elderly, or engage in other social services.

Lithuania has come a long way in reconstructing her social system, in recognizing the social ills and looking for ways to grapple with various dilemmas.



Sister Ignė accepts the Humanitarian Award from USBF officer Krista Butvydas-Bard.

But, as Pope Benedict XVI said in his first encyclical: *Deus Caritas Est*: "Love will always prove necessary, even in a most just society. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbor is indispensable. The State can provide for everything - but it is not capable of guaranteeing the very thing which every person needs: loving personal concern". So we see our mission: to continue to overcome evil with good and to incarnate Love.

In Vilnius, a miracle has already taken place. We women can witness to what can be done on faith, never, never knowing where the next Litas will come from. The reconstruction of the convent and the 16th c. chapel, on Daukanto aikštė 1 is complete!

But, once again, in Vilnius we aspire to do the impossible and transform the remaining building on the premises - a dilapidated 17th building into a home for girls, who come to the capitol city of Vilnius, in order to assure them safety and guidance as they take their first steps of independence, especially those, who do not have a family to lean on to.

This is a challenge and once again a test of faith.

This award is like a sign, yes, a sign from God, to encourage us to continue - to continue to be for the other.

Thank you.

*Submitted by: Ernest Raskauskas
Photo by Eugenija Misevicius*

In honor of the presentation of this award by USBF to The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, the Ernest and Catherine Raskauskas Family of Potomac, MD have made a challenge grant of \$50,000.00 to the Sisters toward the construction of the new Girls Students' Home in Vilnius. Contributions to help meet this challenge grant may be made payable to: Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, memo: matching grant fund, and mailed to them at: 600 Liberty Highway, Putnam, CT 06260

here at home

National Press Club President Adamkus Speaks at the National Press Club



President Valdas Adamkus & Joseph Vadus



President Adamkus and
NPC moderator Peter Hickman

Washington D.C., February 13: President Adamkus spoke and then responded to questions from the Press. I will paraphrase some of his answers from my notes.

Lithuania's Exports' 15 years ago all products went east to Soviet Russia, and now about 60% goes to the west.

Electric Power --- Now there is enough electric power supplied by the remaining Nuclear Reactor located in Ignalina and built in Soviet times. Some of its power is exported to the west including e.g. Southern France and Italy. There is concern about sufficient power, when this remaining reactor is decommissioned in 2009 for safety concerns; per agreement with the EU. There are plans for building a new Nuclear Plant to go on line in 2012, but there will be a 3 year power deficit from 2009-2012. Some have expressed desire to obtain EU permission to allow this old reactor to bridge these 3 years. The three Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, as well as Poland offered their support for building a new Nuclear Plant in Ignalina. Lithuania sold their gas processing terminal to Poland and expects to maintain coupled to Poland's Network. The Swedish Electric Company (SWECO) is also being considered as a supplier.

Concerns about environmental problems in the Baltic Sea and sustainable development -- Lithuania and other Baltic Nations are very concerned about the gas pipeline between Russia and Germany that will transit along the Baltic Seafloor; and also about the chemical weapons that were dumped on the seafloor after WW II, with some of them emitting mustard gas. I reinforced the President's reply by saying there were two US-EU-Baltic Symposia in Klaipėda, Lithuania with major emphasis on the Baltic Sea's environment problems and addressed those concerns.

Lithuanian Emigration

There are signs that some of the families who left are returning to invest in Lithuania's future.

Conversion of Litas to Euros

I asked about the planned conversion, and the President

replied that the initial goal was to begin the conversion in January, 2007. However, EU budget balancing requirements were missed by less than 1 percent, and now the projected date is for 2010.

After the presentation, I mentioned our symposia in Klaipėda and the summary articles in BRIDGES, and he said that he reads BRIDGES.

Joseph R. Vadus

**Mr. Vadus is Vice President, Oceanic Engineering Society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, and authored an article in the November Issue of BRIDGES.*

JBANC

Baltic Oil and Blood in Washington

The seventh JBANC (Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc.) Baltic conference took place on February 9-10, 2007 in Washington, DC. This time, the agenda focused primarily on energy security, which is becoming a hot topic in East-West relations.

JBANC has organized conferences every two years, with the first five conferences centering on NATO enlargement. Following the successful lobbying effort by the Baltic-American communities across the United States, teamed with other national organizations from the Central and East European Coalition, the goal of NATO enlargement ratification was achieved in 2004. JBANC's sixth conference in 2005 looked at the future after NATO membership' what's next?

It didn't take long for the answer to appear. The response came from Moscow.

While supply of energy from Russia to the Baltics has not always been dependable over the past fifteen years due to occasional political pressures, it was the temporary January 2006 shutdown of gas supplies to Ukraine that finally raised alarm signals throughout Europe, as much of the energy

supply to EU countries travels transits via that route. Oil and gas have brought Russia massive profits, which president Vladimir Putin has used to enrich his retinue and to bring back to life Soviet-like repressions throughout the Russian Federation. It

wasn't difficult to read between the lines to see that the restoration of the Russian empire is underway with the targeted broadening of the so-called "Near Abroad." It isn't surprising then that the theme of JBANC's seventh conference was "Oil and Blood: Baltic Energy and the Legacy of Communism." The energy experts at the conference confirmed that Moscow no longer needs boots to cross national borders, as today it benefits from controlling gas and oil valves and supplies.

The Friday conference day began with the traditional overview of U.S.-Baltic relations with White House and State Department officials. It was affirmed that relations are very good. The Baltic countries were thanked for their troops participation in Iraq and Afghanistan. Baltic concerns regarding Russian energy policy are also very well understood. Vice President Cheney had warned Moscow about this last May during a conference in Vilnius.

The one problem area in U.S.-Baltic relations currently is the question of visa freedom, but developments towards solving this issue are nevertheless already evident. President Bush made a special point during his November 2006 visit to Tallinn that his administration would work with Congress to change the visa situation. One reason that a visa waiver has lingered is because some visitors overstay their permits to the United States. This factor is ultimately related to the rate of refusal in granting visas at U.S. embassies abroad. Refusal rates are presently decreasing for Baltic citizens traveling to the U.S. and goodwill is growing, as evidenced by current legislation offered in both the Senate and House which seeks to solve this issue.

The second part of Friday's conference program was dedicated to films documenting the legacy of communism. Imbi Paju's "Memories Denied" was shown and the Estonian director was herself present. Other films screened were the Estonian-themed U.S. documentary film "The Singing Revolution," along with "Once There Was Siberia" from Latvia, and the Lithuanian "June Ice" (Birželio Ledas).

Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus opened the main conference day on February 10 as the keynote speaker. In his speech (which is available, along with other conference materials at <http://jbanc.org>) he emphasized the dangers to the energy sector emanating from the East. On February 12 he met with President Bush to also discuss this and the visa waiver issue. It was rumored that the Lithuanian president is considering forming a new "Vilnius-10" after the NATO enlargement-era V-10 model. This time the objective is to form a union of those countries that are threatened because of Moscow's energy policies.



Energy security politics were discussed during two panels. The participants included Jamestown Foundation journalist Vladimir Socor, NATO consultant Joseph Bader, former U.S. ambassador to Lithuania Keith Smith, and Hudson Institute energy expert

Zeyno Baran, who has recently published a report on Lithuania's energy issues. Vytautas Nauduzas, the Lithuanian Vice-Minister of Economy spoke on the second panel, along with Anderis Kesteris from the European Energy Commissioner's office, and Raul Mälk from the Estonian Foreign Ministry.

The luncheon speaker was Baltic friend and influential Republican Senator Richard Lugar, who spoke about his experiences with Russia and who recommended diligence in exploring potential energy alternatives. The JBANC Board honored the senator with its Baltic Democracy Award. Senator Lugar was introduced by the Estonian ambassador Jüri Luik.

The final two panels dealt with the outlook for democracy's development in Russia and the legacy of communism.

The first panel featured American author David Satter, well-traveled as a journalist in both the Soviet Union and Russia, and who is now a specialist at the Hudson Institute. His books "Age of Delirium: The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Union" and "Darkness at Dawn: the Rise of the Russian Criminal State" have been well-received. The first has been translated into Estonian and Latvian and Satter is hoping for a Lithuanian translation as well. Together with Russian film director Andrei Nekrasov, the two are completing the film version of "Age of Delirium" with filming scheduled in Lithuania in April. Conference participants were treated to the showing of Nekrasov's just-completed documentary "My Friend Sasha" about Alexander Litvinenko, likely poisoned in London by Russian agents in November. It was the first screening of the film in the U.S. and Nekrasov, honored at the Cannes Film Festival for his previous cinematic work, complimented this by adding his own views on the Kremlin's still very dangerous KGB ties.

The fourth and final panel was an overview of various remembrance projects related to the legacy of communism. Included were summaries of the Baltic Oral History Project, which is being spearheaded by Ina Navazelskis of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and of the recent "Mission Siberia" (Misija Sibiras) undertaken by young Lithuanians to locations in Russia's Komi Republic to trace the ordeals of Lithuanian deportees. This was covered by Justin Riskus from Chicago. The panel was moderated by another young Lithuanian-American grad school student from Chicago, Rima Kuprys. Lee Edwards, chairman of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, also spoke during that panel and gave the good news that the memorial to the victims of communism will be dedicated in Washington, DC on June 12.



President Valdas Adamkus is introduced at the conference by United States Ambassador to Lithuania John A. Cloud.

Photo by Joseph Vadus

He emphasized the great support for the project by the Baltic-American communities.

By the capacity crowd, it was evident that JBANC has not disappeared anywhere and that it has, as before, issues which are still worth getting involved with. JBANC deserves the continued support of Baltic-Americans also in the future. Although the Baltic-American communities are relatively small, their cooperative work is relevant and recognized by Congress, the White House, and elsewhere in Washington, DC.

JBANC represents the Estonian American National Council, the American Latvian Association, and the Lithuanian American Council. Its current president is Saulius Kuprys, with Dr. Ramunas Kondratas serving as chairman, along with Henry Gaidis also on the Board of Directors.

Summarized by Karl Altau, JBANC Managing Director, and with Vello Ederma, Former JBANC chairman.

US Baltic Foundation Gala

The U.S. Baltic Foundation (USBF) was organized in 1990 after Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia regained their independence. In the period of the first 6-7 years of its existence Mr. Linas Kojelis from California and other American Lithuanians, together with their Estonian and Latvian counterparts, have successfully raised a total of 6 million dollars for its charitable programs to help the 3 Baltic countries' young economies, free press, and higher education institutions. Please visit their website at www.usbaltic.org for more information. In the spring of 2005, marking its 15th anniversary, USBF put together its first Gala celebration held at a hotel in Washington, D.C. The late Lennart Meri, the Estonian president was among the most prominent guests. The next year (March of 2006) it was Latvia's turn. Its president, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, attended the independence anniversaries of both of Lithuania's Baltic neighbours celebrated in the U.S. capital. This year it was Lithuania's turn as Dr. Jonas Prunskis (one of almost 40 USBF directors) from Chicago was selected as the host of the third annual Gala event, held at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 10. The USBF celebration was scheduled to coincide with



JBANC's Baltic Democracy Award is presented to Sen. Richard Lugar (holding plaque). L-R Lithuanian American Council president Saulius Kuprys, Estonian American National Council president Marju Rink-Abel, former JBANC chairman Peteris Blumbergs, Sen. Lugar, American Latvian Association president Martins Duhms.

Photo by Anders Brownworth

President Adamkus' visit to the United States. The Lithuanian President's journey began with His Excellency visiting San Francisco, CA (Feb. 7-th).

On Saturday evening President Valdas Adamkus participated in the annual festivities of the USBF where Lithuania and the entire Baltic region were presented to the American public, politicians, media members and business representatives. At the event, President Adamkus received the Baltic Statesmanship Award presented by political scientist Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski. Presenting the award, Mr. Brzezinski stated to the Lithuanian President that he met quite a number of Presidents in his life, but he felt a special emotional connection with Mr. Adamkus. Other awards were awarded that evening by USBF officer Krista Butvydas-Bard: Voices of Freedom Award went to the Lithuanian daily "Draugas", weekly "Amerikos lietuvis", also Latvian "Laiks" and Estonian "Vaba Eesti Sona". The Humanitarian Award was presented to the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Putnam, CT (accepted by Sr. Ignė Marijošiūtė), Baltic Growth and Integration Award was presented to Sampo Bank (presented to its CEO Mr. Gintautas Galvanauskas), Corporate Citizenship Award given to SEB Vilnius bankas (accepted by its president Audrius Žiugžda). The Special Achievement in Business Award was to be presented to the American Lithuanian businessman from New York, Dr. Juozas Kazickas, Unfortunately, Dr. Kazickas was unable to attend, so the award was accepted by his daughter, Jūratė Kazickaitė.

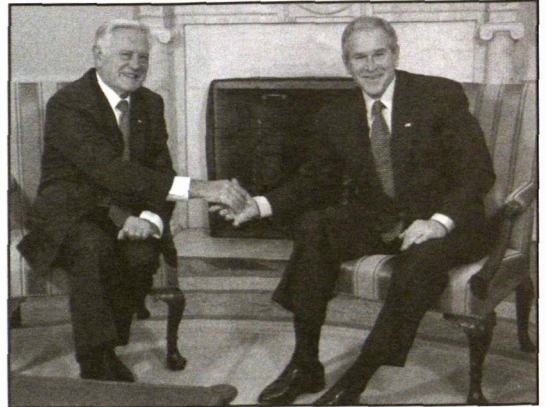
There were numerous unique items donated to the silent auction, among them was an official Lithuanian Olympic team (2004) T-Shirt, autographed by the most accomplished Lithuanian track and field athlete, World Champion in discus throwing, Virgis Alekna. More than 500 guests took part in this USBF fundraiser raising over \$200,000 for the benefit of the charitable programs throughout all three Baltic countries.

On the following Monday, President Valdas Adamkus was welcomed by the United States President G.W. Bush at the White House. During their meeting, the two presidents

discussed ways of strengthening transatlantic cooperation between Europe and the United States, the possibility of applying a visa-free regime to Lithuanian nationals, the current situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the prospects of developing and consolidating democracy in Eastern Europe.

Laurynas (Larry) R. Misevičius

Laurynas (Larry) R. Misevičius is a Financial Analyst at the Union Bank of Switzerland (its Securities division) and is a member of the National Executive Committee of the Lithuanian American Community. In addition, he is an editor for the Lithuanian-American weekly newspaper "Amerikos Lietuvis" northeast edition "Rytų Pakrantėje" and frequently writes for other Lithuanian and English language media.



President Valdas Adamkus and President G.W. Bush.
Photo by: Inga Lukavièiûtë



"Draugas", "Amerikos lietuvis", Latvian "Laiks" and Estonian "Vaba Eesti Sona" representatives receive USBF "Voices of Freedom" awards.

Photo by Eugenija Misevicius



President Adamkus and D. Grybinas-Lee, the LAC San Francisco co-chair during the President's visit to San Francisco.

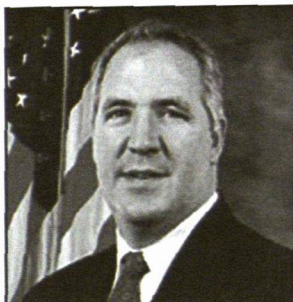
Photo by Patrick Currier - Fairmont, CA



President Adamkus presented awards to the following people: *Jeanne Shalna Dorr*, Editor of the LAC journal, "Bridges" and Lithuanian Orphan Care, *Danguolë Navickas*, President of the Los Angeles chapter of the Lithuanian Children's Hope and currently President of the LAC Board of Directors, *Ambassador Stephen Mull*, Acting Assistant Secretary of Bureau of Political-Military Affairs and former U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Lithuania, *Valdis Pavlovskis*, Baltic American Freedom League, member of the Board of Directors, former Minister of the Defense of the Republic of Latvia and member of its Saeima, *Leszek Kuczynski*, Polish American Congress and National Executive Director, *Leonas Prapuolienis* (posthumously), one of the Lithuanian Freedom Fighters, his son accepted the award, Mrs. Adamkus is pictured on the left.

Photo by Eugenija Misevièius

NEWS RELEASE
from the office of
**CONGRESSMAN
JOHN
SHIMKUS**



website: www.house.gov/shimkus
e-mail: steven.tomaszewski@mail.house.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Steven Tomaszewski

March 19, 2007
618/344-3065; 618/322-9246

**SHIMKUS COSPONSORS VISA
WAIVER PROGRAM LEGISLATION**

Washington, DC..... Congressman John Shimkus (R, Illinois-19) is joining as the lead Republican sponsor of Visa Waiver Program legislation introduced by Congressman Rahm Emanuel (D, Illinois-5). The Visa Waiver Modernization Act of 2007 (HR 1543) is similar to Senator Voinovich's amendment that has already passed the Senate.

"This legislation would update the Visa Waiver Program by combining travel security enhancements with the

flexibility to add countries that meet our security and immigration standards," Shimkus explained.

Currently, 27 countries participate in the programs, which allows citizens of these select nations to enter the United States for business or tourism for 90 days without a visa. Many of our allies would also like to participate in this program.

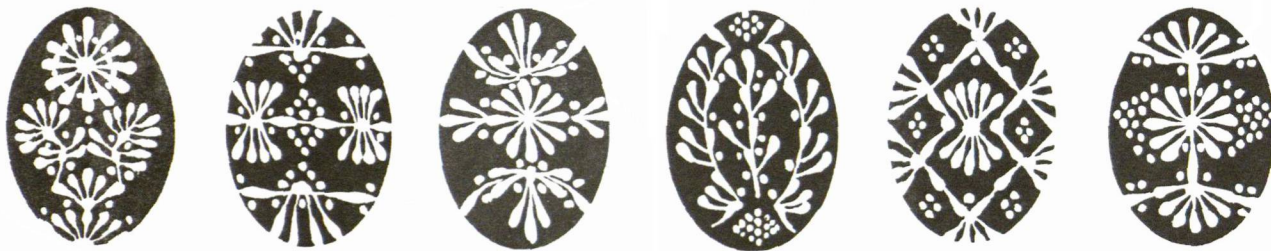
This legislation would require both existing and new participants to:

- *Implement enhanced travel requirement to establish common security standards.
- *Implement policies to limit illegal entry and impede travel by terrorists and transnational criminals.
- *Strengthen passenger screening procedures.

"Our language also requires the monitoring of Visa Waiver Program participants when they leave the country and improves ways to measure overstays," Shimkus said.

"We have also included many other safeguards.

"Expanding the Visa Waiver Program is really a way of both increasing national security through improvements to this program and expanding it to our friends and allies who support our efforts in the war on terror," Shimkus added.



*Camp Neringa
is more than just Vermont wildlife*

As camp alumna and counselor/bunny Kristina will tell you, Neringa is learning about your Lithuanian heritage, nurturing your relationship with God, and taking time to learn about yourself. Neringa offers sessions for children, families, and adults in both English and Lithuanian through various camp sessions. To learn more about Camp Neringa or to register for camping during the 2007 season, visit <http://www.neringa.org> or call Vida Strazdis (Director) at **978-582-5592**. The natural wonders and meaningful experiences of southern Vermont's Camp Neringa beckon. Iki pasimatymo at Neringa!





Ambassador Andrius Brūzga

The fifth Lithuanian basketball tournament "Embassy Cup 2007" was held on March 17th at the Catholic University of America sports facilities. Long Island "Stars" formed from Lithuanians playing at the U.S. colleges won the Embassy Cup. College players defeated U.S. Government team "JAV vyriausybės Žalgiris" in finals 34:33. In a very heated game .

The fifth Lithuanian basketball tournament "Embassy Cup 2007"

March 20, 2007

In a game for the third place Los Angeles "Banga" 39:28 defeated Connecticut "Ažuolai".

Baltimore "Vilkas" won the first place in "B" league, which was formed for people who play basketball occasionally. "Vilkas" defeated New York "Lithuanian Sports Club" 51:44. New Jersey "Liepsna" won a third place in a battle against Philadelphia "Aras" (42:27).

Ambassador Audrius Brūzga invited tournament participants and guests to the reception to commemorate the restoration of Independence Day of Lithuania and to congratulate tournament champions. Ambassador mentioned, "We celebrate two things at the same time: basketball and restoration of independence. Basketball can't be separated from today's Lithuania. Orange ball unites us and inspires to reach for the best. Game in the basketball court and life in

Lithuania has similarities: we try to be the best, have an optimism to win and have lots of energy in order to succeed. I believe that we will succeed if we will play by the rules, work as a team, and have support of our friends and partners."

At the reception performed Lithuanian folk dance group from Philadelphia "Ausrinė".

Total of 17 teams from cities of Boston, New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Washington DC, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and states of New Jersey, Nebraska, Virginia, Connecticut, New York participated in the tournament. U.S. Government team also competed with Lithuanians.

Annual basketball tournament was supported by NBA team "Washington Wizards", Washington DC Lithuanian Community, newspaper "Amerikos Lietuvis", companies "Alita", "Raguolis", "B&B Duplicators, Inc".

From: www.LtEmbassyus.org



Lithuanian Embassy officer and main organizer of the tournament, Mr. Vaidas Tauėius awards the MVP prize to the winners - Long Island (NY) "Stars" forward Valdas Vasylius.



The finalists of the "A" level tournament, the U.S. governmental institution team and the Lithuanians (the champions of the "Embassadors Cup 2007") NY - Long Island "Stars".

PASAKA APIE JAUSMUS
A TALE
ABOUT FEELINGS

TRANSLATED BY GLORIA O'BRIEN FROM AN UNTRACED
E-MAIL MESSAGE IN LITHUANIAN, FROM SOMEWHERE IN
AUSTRALIA

One day, long, long ago, all of people's sensations had a meeting.

After Boredom had yawned for the third time, Folly suggested: "Perhaps we should play "Hide and Seek"? Intrigue, one eyebrow raised, asked: "Hide and Seek? What sort of game is that"? Folly explained, that one of them would be the game's leader. He would cover his eyes and count to one million, while the others hide themselves. The last one found would be the winner, and the leader of the next game.

Enthusiasm immediately took Euphoria by the hand and began a joyful dance.

Happiness then began a dance that almost convinced Doubts. But nothing was sufficiently interesting to Apathy, who declined to join in the game. Truth decided that she wouldn't hide anywhere, as she would always be found out anyway. Arrogance stated that this game was stupid, and nothing there was at all interesting, except perhaps for himself. Cowardice didn't want to take a risk.

One, two, three Folly began the count. First to hide was Laziness, who simply lay down behind the nearest rock. Faith rose to the heavens, and Envy hid in the shadow of Triumph, who was powerful enough to climb to the top of the highest hill. Courtesy wasn't able to hide for a long time, as each good place he found seemed to be just right for one of his friends. Beauty hid in a crystal-clear stream, and Cowardice, in the hollow of a tree. Freedom hid inside a sunbeam. Egotism found what he considered a particularly warm and convenient spot. Falsehood hid in

the depths of the sea (but in truth – in a rainbow). Passion hid in a volcanic crater.

Forgetfulness couldn't remember its hiding place, but that was not at all important. When Folly had counted 999,999, Love was still looking for a hiding place, but every place was taken.

One million! – said Folly, and began the search. Laziness was first to be found. Then, Folly heard the voice of Faith, arguing with God. Passion was given away by the volcano's tremor. When Folly found Envy's hiding place, she knew she had found Triumph as well. It wasn't necessary to look for Egotism, as he had hidden in a beehive, and the bees themselves evicted him.

Folly was weary, and wanting to drink from a crystal stream, she found Beauty.

Doubts were sitting against a fence, and were still unable to decide, which side of the fence they should hide behind.

All were found: Talent - in a luxuriant green meadow, Boredom – in a dark cavern, Falsehood – in a rainbow (but in truth he hid in the depths of the sea).

Only Love was nowhere to be found. Folly searched for her behind every tree, in each stream, on every hilltop. Until finally, she thought to look in a rosebush. When she moved a branch, she heard a cry – the thorns of the rosebush had painfully pierced Love's eyes. Folly was frightened, didn't know what to do, and crying, apologized profusely. Trying to assuage her guilt, she promised from then on to always be Love's escort.

Ever since that time, when the world saw the first playing of the game of Hide and Seek, Love has been blind and Folly always leads her by the hand.

Translated by Gloria O'Brien

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

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

CHICAGO REPRESENTATIVES

Rita Pencyliene..... tel: 708-923-0280 e-mail: pencylar@comcast.net

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

Calendar of Events for April - May - June 2007

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

BLp(LKA)1195

2007, Nr.3

APRIL

April 13-15, 2007

WOMEN'S RETREAT Weekend of reflection & rejuvenation! We invite all women interested in spending time to nourish mind, body & spirit up to the beautiful hills of Vermont. We are planning a variety of activities ranging from group discussion, exercise, art, cooking, & 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. Gilija Aukstikalnyte, Ona & Emilija Rygeles & Kristofas Staknys
www.neringa.org

April 21, 2007 - 7 pm

LAC Phila. Chapter Spring Concert
Vytautas Babravičius - Simas
Lithuanian Music Hall
2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Phila., PA
Info: 215-938-0783

April 22, 2007

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

April 27th and 28th, 2007

At the Lithuanian Club
Cleveland Lithuanian Youth
Association is hosting the 2nd
Annual Baltic Bash/Cinco de Mayo
Dinner Dance. Enjoy an evening
of dinner and dancing with friends
\$40 Banquet ticket includes open
bar and dinner. Join us while we
dance the night away.
Reverse Raffle Sideboards,
Raffles prizes, & so much more.
For info. & to register check
website www.clevelandljs.org

April 28, 2007

Berzelis folkdance group
35th anniversary program
Hartford, CT.
Contact: danuteg@juno.com

April 29, 2007

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

April 29, 2007 - 2 pm

General Membership Meeting
Lithuanian Music Hall Association
2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Phila., PA

April 29, 2007 - 4 pm

Mother's Day "Kugelis" Dinner
The mothers of our community will be honored with a "Kugelis" dinners. Admission - \$10 adults, free admission for mothers. RSVP: Reservations must be called in or emailed to Arv Jarasius. Fraternal Order of Eagles Hall 1151 S. Galena St. (just west of Mississippi & Havana) Denver, CO 80247 For info: Arv Jarasius (303-439-2089)

April 29, 2007

"Child's Gate to Learning"
Washington, DC chapter will be showing a short film in Lithuanian about their work with children in after school day centers in Lithuania. This film will be shown after the 2 pm Lithuanian Monthly Mass at Epiphany Parish Georgetown, 2712 Dumbarton St. NW, Washington, DC 20007
Info. contact Terese Landsbergis at: Alterland@aol.com

MAY

May 5, 2007

50th anniversary of Lithuanian radio program "Tėvynės Garsai"
Event will be an open house at the University of Hartford.
Contact: danuteg@juno.com

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

35th Annual Lithuanian Festival
Cantonsville Armory, 130 Mellor Ave.
Cantonsville, MD. Food, entertainment, music, Lithuanian dancers, Partisan re-enactment, Lithuanian military exhibits, & many vendors.
Admission - \$3 per person
Info. 410 - 646 - 0261

May 13, 2007

Maironis Mokykla
Mother's Day Fundraiser
Mt. Carmel Parish Lower Hall
(Corner N. 8th and Havemeyer Sts.)
immediately following the
10:00 am Lithuanian Mass at
Annunciation. LITHNY@AOL.COM

May 17-18, 2007

TRADE CONFERENCE
The Los Angeles Sister Cities Trade Conference. In partnership with the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, this conference is designed to help small to medium sized businesses in Los Angeles take advantage of existing sister city relationships throughout the world in view of developing business in those countries. The conference will afford international business networking opportunities and encourage trade between Los Angeles & her sister cities. Los Angeles Chapter of the Lithuanian American Community <http://www.lasistercities.com/07-trade.html>

May 19, 2007-12:00 pm

Saturday - Annual LAC, Inc.
SD Chapter Picnic "Gegužinė"
San Dieguito Park
1628 Lomas Sante Fe Dr.
Del Mar, CA 92014
San Diego Chapter of the Lithuanian American Community
www.liithsd.org

May 20, 2007 - Sunday

LA Sister Cities Festival
25 Sister Cities represented

LA Lithuanian dance ensemble "Spindulys" performs
Los Angeles Chapter of the Lithuanian American Community

May 28, 2007 - 11am

Memorial Day Cape Cod Chapter of the LAC will honor the chapter's deceased members in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery, Pine Street, Centerville, MA
Info: Algirdas Dapkus
alisdapkus@aol.com

JUNE

June 3, 2007 - 1pm - NEW DATE

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

June 8-10, 2007

TALKA WORK WEEKEND
Neringa's handy & hard-working fans are invited to come help prepare the campsite for the summer. In addition to the great company, you will be able to feel good about helping Neringa in a very concrete way. If you will be able to attend, please contact vida@neringa.org or 978-582-5592.

June 10, 2007 - 10:30 am

Mass in memory of Lithuanian Deportees to Siberia
St. Andrew Church
1913 Wallace St., Phila, PA 19130

June 10, 2007 - 10:00 am

Gedulos ir Vilties Diena
Memorial Mass, Commemoration following in Annunciation Parish Lower Hall, 70 Havemeyer St.
Sponsored by the NY Lithuanian American Committee District Council & Apylinkes

June 14, 2007 - 9:00 am

Day of Sorrow & Hope Mass
Our Lady of Victory Church,
Centerville, MA

Girgals. Imlu. Algirdas Dapkus
alisdapkus@aol.com

June 17, 2007 - 9 am

Commemoration of the Deportations
Holy Trinity Church,
53 Capitol Ave., Hartford, Ct.
Mass & short program afterwards.
Contact: danuteg@juno.com

June 17, 2007 - 10:00 am

Party in honor of fathers
following Mass (Parish Lower Hall)
Annunciation Parish 259 N. 5th St.,
Brooklyn, NY 11211
Hall is 70 Haveneyer St.,
Corner of N. 5th.
Sponsored by ladies of the parish.

June 24 - July 1, 2007

Lithuanian Language Courses at
Camp Dainava. Info: Mr. Vytautas
Jonaitis at vjonaitis@juno.com or
call 616-453-7549

June 25 - August 17, 2007.

Baltic Studies Summer Institute.
The Center for World Languages
at the University of California,
Los Angeles, will host the Baltic
Studies Summer Institute in the
summer of 2007 & 2008. Exciting
news! The BALSSI UCLA is pleased
to announce that a limited number
of partial scholarships for Summer
2007 intensive study of Estonian,
Latvian and Lithuanian have been
made available through the
generous contributions from the
UC Consortium for Language
Learning and Teaching and UCLA
Summer Sessions. If interested,
please visit the website for more
information & an application. Note
that anyone age 12 & up is wel-
come to participate in this 8-week
summer program. For info: contact
the 2007 Director, Johanna
Domokos or visit the BALSSI
website: <http://seattle.lietuviu-bendruomene.org/events.html>

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