

# bridges

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july/august 2008

LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

*Letter from the Editor*

*As we prepare for July 4th festivities in this country my mind always seems to travel back to visiting Lithuania in the late 70's and through the 80's. Visitors who made their first trips after independence cannot really understand what life was like during the earlier times. Just returning to your hotel was an ordeal trying to get by the often surly doormen. Everything seemed so gray and dismal, especially the soviet style architecture. This is one case, where the past was not always better.*

*Because I was a history teacher for many years I believe that to know where we're going, we have to know where we came from. Many of us never had the opportunity to attend Lithuanian schools and so very often our knowledge of Lithuanian history, culture and traditions has gaps. This is especially true for those of us descended from the first group whose parents or grandparents often did not have much formal education.*

*Fortunately, Bridges has been blessed with writers who are there to fill in many of those gaps. In the all the history courses I ever studied or taught, Lithuania was never mentioned except to list it as one of the republics of the former soviet union. Yet each month so many talented writers offer their knowledge and expertise so that we can learn about all things Lithuanian both past and present. To all of you - thank you!*

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*Thank you for sharing your homes with us this month.*

*Jeanne Shalna Dorr*  
 Jeanne Shalna Dorr



The Lithuanian Foundation applauds organizers of the 13th Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, dedicated teachers and dancers from all corners of the world!

Join us in ensuring that, through your donations and bequests, the dancing and festivals we all enjoy today are there for future generations!



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\*Cover: The photo is by Vilma Balnytė of Lithuania. More beautiful Lithuania landscapes photos can be seen on pages 14-15.



## Returning Home

LGAVO “SUGRIŽUS” (Returned) is not yet officially a couple of years old, but has already achieved a lot as an organization. After being incorporated in February 2007, the *Lietuvių, gyvenusių Amerikoje, visuomeninė organizacija* “SUGRIŽUS” (LGAVO - a Public Organization of Lithuanians - Ex-Residents of the USA) originated unofficially the August of 2006, when a small group of 19 Lithuanians, mostly friends, met for the first time in a Lithuanian restaurant “Čili Kaimas” in Vilnius. Everyone was brought together by the idea of sharing experiences, including the great joy and relief of being back in their native land. The small group was united by the idea of building a bridge to Lithuania for those who dreamt of returning home, but for some reason were a bit scared. The ‘godfather’ of LGAVO “SUGRIŽUS” was Mindaugas Kazlauskas, who has since also returned to Lithuania. He was on his way home after 12 years in the United States and felt there were many others thinking of doing the same thing. He started an internet chat site on [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) after a peaceful Thanksgiving evening in 2005 in Chicago when he was thinking of home. Giedrė Šipailaitė, vice-president and PR coordinator of LGAVO “SUGRIŽUS”, was the first member of that online group. “It started as just a circle of friends helping each other,” Giedrė said, “and since then we have been maintaining links with our friends and Lithuanian communities in the US, and our organization has grown to about 83 members currently. LGAVO “SUGRIŽUS” is a non-political, non-profit organization initiated by Lithuanians who have returned from the USA. It is open to Lithuanians from all over the world. We know exactly what it means to come back from America. You find yourself in the situation where you have to start from the very beginning again - to create a whole new life, circle of friends, daily routines, new job, new interests and even new rules. You feel a

bit like a baby, especially if you have been away for 10 years or more. The friends you left behind might have moved away and made new lives. And you have to understand a whole new way of living as well, which is not the same as in the US. “After first just meeting as a group of friends, we then found ourselves having to address the real problems that were affecting us all, and step-by-step we gained the competence to support those who followed us home.” Giedrė is keen to point out that the biggest mistake would be trying to stop those who want to leave for other countries. This is not an option. “Our organization is not about making people stay. In fact we think that it is very important to have a look at the world and see what it is like, to broaden your outlook. It is completely senseless to be scared of letting people go, because the harder you make it for them to leave, the harder it will be for them to return. What you have to do is to wait until they are ready to come home and then welcome them. Then they are bringing international experience and knowledge, improved social and communication skills, they are full of optimism because they know how to build a better quality of life. Voluntary returnees are the perfect tools for creating energy in our economy. Exploring the world gives you the precious chance to review your own system of values. And if you are then ready to come back, there is no doubt about sincere will and motivation to be there for your own country’s sake. Still there are people who look at us as if we are aliens: ‘What would you want to come back here for?’ they ask. But I strongly believe this attitude will slowly disappear, it is just a matter of time. The more people see, the more clearly they understand that there is only one motherland.”

Another returnee is Dr. Daumantas Matulis, the President of LGAVO “SUGRIŽUS” (and also a former president of the LAC Philadelphia, PA chapter before leaving this country), Laboratory Head at Biothermodynamics and Drug Design at the Institute



LGAVO "SUGRIŽUS" members enjoy themselves in Antalakaja

of Biotechnology and an advisor to the President of Lithuania on emigration. Daumantas' story is a bit different. He had been living and working in the US for 10 years and came back in 2005. "Two of us left but four returned", he said of his wife Jurgita as well as two sons, eight and three years old, who were born in the USA. "I am happy they went through the adaptation process smoothly." I asked Daumantas what it is that he found best about being back home. "Parents, family, friends, but it is not any one thing in particular. The history of our country, the fact that so many people gave their lives for our freedom. For me the work here is also more interesting and challenging, with more responsibility and greater variety. While in the US I was overseeing teams of two to five, here we have a staff of nineteen. I have to say I like America and its people a lot, but you are in their country, and you have to fit in with them. Here you can have a hand in shaping the future. I got to re-evaluate Lithuania and I saw what our country had managed to achieve in a few short years of independence. We complain about the constantly changing government and the economic climate, but if you look beyond that, you see the great advances that were made here. And then I saw that there were many foreigners living here, and they liked it, so what was I complaining about? Of course there is still a lot that needs to be improved, but when you sit back and rethink that since 1991 we have emerged as a free nation after almost 50 years of dictatorship, and then managed to join the EU and NATO, then you realize that it is actually an incredible achievement. We have to remember that every country has its own problems, and there will always be room for improvement. Just as there are people who go away and will never

return for any number of reasons," Daumantas said.

Giedrė's motivation for returning was a little bit different. "I felt as if I had been living on credit or for somebody else, not for myself. And it was true. As the wife of a green card holder I had no right to work or even live in the United States as a permanent resident. All I had was the status of a tourist and I had to apply for a visa extension in order to be with my husband. Later on, when our marriage failed, I saw my situation in a completely new light. I finally understood that I was terribly tired of trying to prove to myself that this was a normal life. Feeling frustrated and seeing all my dreams left so far behind woke me up. I wanted to be home. Lithuania is rich in art and culture, nature's beauty and it was what I was longing for so badly during those three years in the US. When I returned I saw that it was much more beautiful than the image I'd kept in my memory, the people were smiling more. Lithuania is a beautiful country and not only because it is home. It truly is, and I'm proud I am Lithuanian. And ironically, I discovered my passion for Lithuanian national dancing in the USA! I was involved in cultural, public, education and communication activities over there and now I can't stop. I feel I am in the right place now, as part of LGAVO "SUGRIŽUS" folk dance group – I am dancing in it, working as a project manager at the Institute of Biotechnology, and living in my own apartment in "Šiaurės miestelis" (Northern village) makes me



Members enjoy sun and fun at the Baltic seashore

\*Photos: Courtesy of LGAVO "SUGRIŽUS"

truly happy. And most importantly, I am able to do what I truly want - helping other Lithuanian optimists to come home."

Apart from sitting around and discussing problems, "SUGRIŽUS" have undertaken a variety of community activities. In our first year LGAVO "SUGRIŽUS" became acquainted with the activities of the Information Centre for Homecoming Lithuanians, the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad, organized a working bee to clean up litter near the Vilnelė River, participated in the conference 'Pasilik Lietuvoje' (Stay in Lithuania), presented two reports, 'Tarp netekties ir atradimo: pilietiškos asmenybės brandos kaina' (Between loss and discovery: the price of civil identity maturity) and LGAVO "SUGRIŽUS" at the conference 'Šiuolaikinės lietuvių migracijos ypatumai: pasaulio lietuvių migracijos diskursai' (Peculiarities of contemporary Lithuanian migration: discourses of world Lithuanian-hood) organized by the Lithuanian Emigration Institute. LGAVO "SUGRIŽUS" participated in the World Lithuanian Community conference in Kernave where we had a chance to meet and communicate with Lithuanians from all over the world, listened to the lecture by Dr. Elona Vaišnienė 'Visuomeninis kapitalas' (Public Capital), took a tour of the Royal Palace that is being reconstructed, and met with representatives of the older generation of post-war Lithuanians.

Months ago H. E. Ambassador of USA to the Republic of Lithuania John A. Cloud was conferred the Honorary membership of LGAVO "SUGRIŽUS" in this way expressing his grace to the work being done. He wished Lithuanians all around the world to bring the skills back to Lithuania.

LGAVO "SUGRIŽUS" is involved in co-operative projects with the organizers of 'Vilnius - Europos kultūros sostinė 2009' (Vilnius – cultural capital of Europe in 2009), the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science and *Vilniaus Vytauto Didžiojo Gimnazija* (Vilnius' Gymnasium of Vytautas Magnus), and organize musical, cultural and entertainment events.

"It is important for us to maintain ties with American communities, and remember that the new wave of migration can also be of benefit to them because their organizations are generally older and the addition of new people from Lithuania helps rejuvenate them. In Philadelphia, PA where I lived we helped with the organization of celebrations, dance events, and generated greater activity, which in turn gave the entire community a shot in the arm. So you can see that it can work both ways," said Daumantas.

Overall LGAVO "SUGRIŽUS" are glad to see more and more people returning and being happy in Lithuania. There are still not nearly enough, but Daumantas added that there are less people leaving as well, and it is certainly a turn for the better.

"There is a real feeling of camaraderie among us, even though we are all from very different backgrounds. There are even members living in Kaunas and Klaipėda who organize their businesses and private commitments around attending our meetings in Vilnius."

"There are more well-paid jobs here now, which is always a strong incentive to stay or to return. And even though the standard of living is undoubtedly still better in the US, it is constantly getting better here as well, and if we keep working at it, before we notice it will be higher than any of us could ever have imagined. I believe this will happen very soon."

A group of 16 members of LGAVO "SUGRIŽUS" will participate in the LA Dance Festival this summer and 6 of them will make a tour from California to the East Coast visiting Lithuanian American Community chapters presenting their organization's mission, goals and encouraging returning processes by representing their own stories and maintaining the dialogue of Lithuanians all around the world – for the own and Lithuania's future. For more info: [www.sugrizus.lt](http://www.sugrizus.lt)

Contact: [gruodzio.ieva@yahoo.com](mailto:gruodzio.ieva@yahoo.com) and/or phone No. 370-603-57776

*Compiled by Laurynas (Larry) R. Misevičius based on Giedrė Sipailaitė's and Ray Vyšniauskas article in "Lithuania today" in 2007.*

*Laurynas Misevičius is a member of the National Executive Committee of the Lithuanian American Community. He serves as the VP of sports. He is currently the chapter president of the Bridgeport, CT LAC and has recently been elected to the Elizabeth, NJ chapter board since his recent move to New Jersey.*



## Sunday, July 27th

at Immaculate Conception Convent

PUTNAM, Connecticut

### ANNUAL PICNIC Lithuanian Friendship Day

11:00

Concelebrated Holy Mass

Main celebrant: Convent Chaplain

**Rev. Arvydas Žygas**

12:00 LUNCH, Activities, Sports

3:00 Neringa Campers PROGRAM

4:30 DRAWING of Gifts

*Please join us in having an enjoyable day -  
and invite your neighbors and friends!*



*Andrius Mazeika and Aurimas Metrikis*  
Photo by Danutė Mazeika

## ACCEPTANCE

*June.... what a glorious month!!!*

Here we see spring turning into summer; enjoy the longest day of the year, see Lithuanians all over the world celebrate "Joninės" (an ancient festival celebrating nature's life cycle), and see thousands upon thousands of college students leaving the confines of the "World of Books" and entering into the challenging "World of Reality"

Today's students graduate from various institutions of higher learning – from public colleges, from private colleges and from military academies. Although each of the institutions is very similar to each other – in that each prepares its students for their future careers; nevertheless, there are some major differences between them. While the college students, during their four years, focus all their energies primarily on "acing" their subjects so that they are better prepared for their future careers, the cadets have to deal with two additional challenges. They have to develop a strong sense of responsibility for they know that after four years they will become responsible for the welfare of hundreds of young men and women under their command. Simultaneously they are preparing themselves that after graduation their lives will be fraught with danger and death. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have made this quite evident. To date, West Point's Class of 2007, has lost fifteen of its graduates and has seen hundreds injured and maimed.

The cadets are very conscious of these enormous responsibilities. They accept them eagerly!! To them General MacArthur's immortal words, "DUTY, HONOR, COUNTRY" are real.

West Point's Class of 2008, had 972 graduates, three of them were Lithuanians – one from Lithuania and the other two from the states.

**Aurimas Metrikis**, who was born in Kaunas, Lithuania always wanted to be a soldier. Upon graduating from high school he was accepted into Lithuania's Military Academy. This was great, but still, his life long dream was to graduate from West Point. Two years after he entered the Lithuanian Military Academy his application to West Point was finally accepted. In June of 2004 Aurimas Metrikis became a plebe at West Point. (His two completed years in Lithuania did not count).

At West Point he majored in civil engineering graduating with a 3.5 GPA while being a member of Army's rowing team for four years.

Since Aurimas was not an American citizen, he could not be commissioned at West Point. He had to wait until he returned to Lithuania to receive his commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Lithuanian Army. His first assignment was as a platoon commander of the prestigious Scout Platoon.

**Ryan Hodgson** is a third generation Lithuanian from Shirley, Long Island, NY. As a youngster he was actively involved in Lithuanian sports – especially basketball. His father, Bob Hodgson, for many years coached many different Lithuanian basketball teams. In 2005 his Lithuanian American team won the basketball championship at the Sporto Šventė in Lithuania.

Ryan played basketball for fours and in his senior year was selected to be its Captain. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers and will be stationed at Ft. Bliss, Texas.

**Andrius Mazeika** is also a third generation Lithuanian from Los Angeles, California. For four years he played on



*Ryan Hodgson* Photo by Rimas Gedeika  
the army's football team. He is the great grandson of Mykolas Brižiškis one of the signers of Lithuania's Independence Proclamation.

Andrius was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Field Artillery. His first assignment will take him to Ft. Bliss, Texas. After completing the Officer's Basic Course, he will begin the tough, very challenging RANGER training.

From their first day as plebes, the 972 graduating cadets knew the tough challenges that they will be facing at West Point and the even greater challenges that they will face upon graduation. They readily accepted them. They accepted them so that you and I will continue to be able to enjoy, "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness."

*Rimas Gedeika*

*Rimas Gedeika lives in New Jersey and is a member of the National Executive Committee of the Lithuanian American Community. He is also active in the Lithuanian Sports Community.*

## Christmas in July

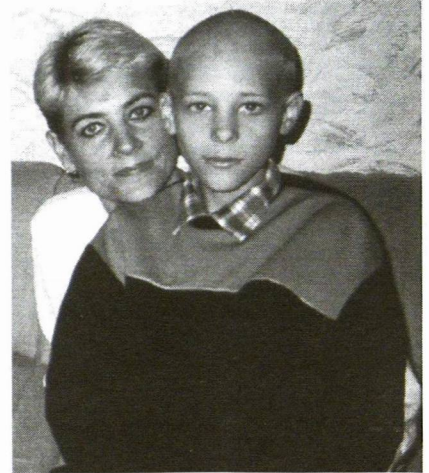
Old habits die hard and I seem to do the same thing every year. Without fail I start writing this article on the first day of a heat wave. Today's temperatures are predicted to be 97 degrees so it isn't easy to think about snow, Christmas trees and presents. But every year you come through with your generosity and there are many smiling faces in Lithuania. It doesn't happen on Christmas Day as the greeting cards portray. There won't be a colonial house with decorations on the outside and a glossy page magazine style Christmas tree with decorations inside. It will happen in small out of the way schools, tiny, drab city apartments that were built in the soviet era, and small wooden houses in the countryside. Are these uncarving parents? Absolutely not. They are parents who love their children beyond everything. But there are times difficult choices must be made - food and heat or Christmas presents. Just like here at home everything in Lithuania is going up in price. This is true especially for energy.

For the first time in years I contemplated not writing this article. The American economy is not the greatest so I understand that you are also feeling the pinch. This week Mrs. Landsbergis and I discussed the fact that at this writing the dollar is worth only 2.20 litas. When I started writing the "Christmas in July" articles the dollar was worth 4 litas. But I just couldn't quit on these children and I know you won't let them down. You and I will never see them, we will never meet them or see their faces, but we can make their Christmas a little brighter. I also thought that if the volunteers are willing to do the work in Lithuania and if we could help as many children as the donors can provide for, then this was not my decision to make.

What will be the average gift? We're not talking a bicycle, a computer, or an expensive video game. The reality is the gifts will be a small toy car (dollar store variety), toothbrushes, combs, pretty barrettes, crayons, magic markers, a candy bar and that sort of thing. I guess you can say that by our standards they will be stocking stuffer variety. But for many of the children it will be their only Christmas gift.

### *How it all started*

It started when I saw how excited six year old twins became when Mrs. Landsbergis visited the apartment where they and their mother had one room and shared a kitchen and bathroom with other families. The alcoholic father was finally out of the picture and the mother was cleaning offices at night. She was grateful for the job but had to bring the twins with her while she worked. As you can imagine, this was not the best area where they lived and she worried about leaving them alone. As we were leaving the twins began tugging on Mrs. Landsbergis' sleeve asking her if she was going to have the Christmas tree party again. My mind went blank. Why were these children worrying about a Christmas tree in July? The mother whispered that it was the only present each of her children received that Christmas. Mrs. Landsbergis smiled graciously and said she would try very hard to have the party. When we left the house she explained that she had started a tradition of inviting the poorest children to visit a hall with a Christmas tree. They sang, danced, ate and each child received a colorful bag with gifts. This was no free ride. Everyone had to do something. Since she is a professional pianist she had a definite advantage. If Prof. Landsbergis was available then he also joined the festivities. But all the



*Artūras and his mother*

*Photo by Jeanne Dorr*

children were applauded like they were star performers when they finished. They could recite a poem, sing or dance. They would receive some cookies and a small gift bag. As we continued to talk she worried that there would be a shortage of money for the next Christmas.

The next day, Dr. Regina Svoba of Countryside Children voiced the same concerns about Christmas and her visits to the village schools. Somehow Christmas never entered my mind in July.

I told both of them I would relate my experiences to you, the Bridges readers, but I could make no promises. Your response was overwhelming and thus "Christmas in July" was born as well as a new tradition.

### *A change was in the air*

I had been hearing about a young village boy who was suffering from leukemia. The principal of his small school is a dear friend and in every letter and phone call I heard about Artūras. I learned that he was diagnosed in second grade, his mother was a widow and he had a younger brother. But because of his courage and inner strength the entire village and the school were involved. I asked if I could meet this young boy. The first visit was cancelled because



Artūras was rushed back to the hospital in Kaunas, about a thirty minute drive from his home. His mother didn't have a car so everyone with transportation was pressed into service. The neighbors would take turns taking care of his younger brother while his mother spent days and nights at Artūras' side while he was in the hospital. Two weeks later my one and only meeting with Artūras took place. I assumed we were going to his house but his mother wanted to meet at the school. Although they lived very close, someone would drive them. I later found out that she was too embarrassed to let me see their house. It was only after we became friends and that I visited the house often was she able to understand that nothing I see in Lithuania shocks or embarrasses me.

As we entered the school a very thin and fragile young boy greeted me. He was wearing a baseball cap and seemed quite embarrassed because of the loss of his hair. Sitting next to him was his young mother who herself was gaunt and exhausted. I wish I could describe the pain in her eyes while she held her son's hand during the interview. It was almost like she was afraid to let go or take her eyes from him. Artūras handed me a red rose and we started talking. Although we kept the conversation light we both knew this would be a one time meeting. We talked about sports, school and the antics of his younger brother. For some reason, and I still don't know why, I asked him what he would like on my next trip to Lithuania. He never hesitated for a moment when he said he would love to have a used blue bicycle. He stressed the word "used" because he could never imagine having something as beautiful as a new bicycle. I gave him my word he would have it. He was getting tired and as he stood to leave he hugged me and thanked me. I could feel his ribs and

before he was out the door the tears were streaming down my face. So many of you have read this story year after year so you know the parts I'm leaving out.

The following fall Artūras was carried into the school so he could be included in the class picture. There would be no class pictures after that one. Instead his classmates would carry his casket to his grave.

No, I didn't get the chance to buy him a used blue bicycle. On my next trip I bought the monument that marks his grave.

But in my mind I promised myself that I would not let this young boy's spirit die and so "Christmas in July" is dedicated to his memory. Children who live in poverty will have something for Christmas. It takes so little to brighten the day for these children.

#### **Why so early**

The money has to be collected and sent to Lithuania. The volunteers buy and wrap the gifts. There has to be a determination of how many children will receive gifts and where they will be distributed.

#### **If you can help**

No gift is too small and everything is appreciated. A very sincere thank you on behalf of myself and the children in Lithuania.

If you are able to help please send your tax deductible check to:

#### **Lithuanian Orphan Care**

2711 W. 71st Street  
Chicago, Il 60629

*Please make a notation on the check for Christmas Gifts.*

Christmas began in the heart of God. It is complete only when it reaches the heart of man.

#### **Anonymous**

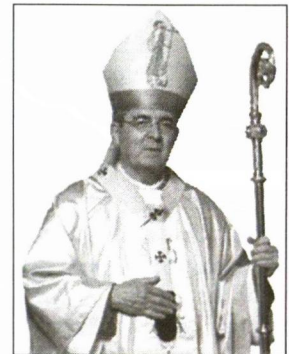
*Jeanne Dorr*

*Jeanne Dorr is the Editor of Bridges and is a member of the Board of Directors of Lithuanian Orphan Care, a branch of the Human Services Council of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc.*

*Celebrate in  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
the apparition 400 years ago*



*of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
in Šiluva, Lithuania!*



His Eminence  
**Cardinal Justin Rigali**  
Archbishop of Philadelphia  
will be the Principal Celebrant of a  
Solemn Holy Mass



**St. Andrew's  
Lithuanian Church**  
1913 Wallace Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19130

**Sunday,  
October 12, 2008 at 10:30 am**

*Philadelphia's Lithuanian Choir  
"Laisvė" singing*

Don't miss this opportunity to  
celebrate the first approved  
apparition of Our Lady in Europe!

## Losing Lithuania: The end is near for Brockton's Village

Maria Papadopoulos  
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

Published with the permission of  
The Enterprise of Brockton, Mass. Updates on the church  
closing may be found at: [www.enterpriseneews.com](http://www.enterpriseneews.com).

Photos: Courtesy of The Enterprise, Brockton, Mass.

Special thanks to  
Marilyn Hancock, Enterprise city editor

Nearly a century after she was born in Brockton's Lithuanian Village, Helen Savilonis Giovanello still remembers the aroma of Lithuanian bread baking at Kilkus Bakery.

She remembers the lush flower gardens grown by Lithuanian immigrants. She remembers her family's well-tended home at 18 Albert Street and her days at the neighborhood's Franklin Elementary School.

But most of all, she remembers the solidarity of the people who lived in that northeast section of Brockton.

"It was a cluster of Lithuanian people that were all friendly with the church," says Giovanello, now 98.

Those days are over. The Lithuanian Village is but a shadow of the once-vibrant enclave, and the expected closing later this month of the venerable St. Casimir Church may mark the end of the Lithuanian community in Brockton.

It's a community that also drew Lithuanians from across Massachusetts and beyond.

On Labor Days past, for example, the Rev. Stephen P. Zukas would trek with his family from Norwood to Brockton to attend the annual Lithuanian picnic on Thatcher Street.

The picnic would draw Lithuanians from Lowell, Lawrence, Cambridge, South Boston and New Hampshire.

"It was viewed to be a big reunion," said Zukas, 48, pastor of St. Peter Lithuanian Church in South Boston.

Now, businesses and social clubs catering to the Lithuanian community have closed, people from other

backgrounds have moved in as Lithuanians moved out, St. Casimir Catholic School has shut down and the Franklin school is slated to close as well.

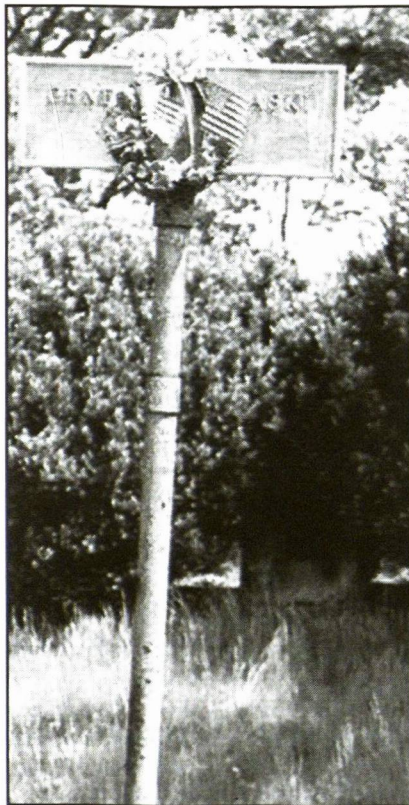
Today, "the Lithuanian Village" is called simply, "the Village."

"Everything's gone. The church was the only thing we had left," said lifelong parishioner Veronica Bizinkauskas, 77, of Brockton.

### A rich heritage

Emigrating from their native land in Eastern Europe, Lithuanians began arriving in Brockton in the late 1800s. Many found work in the city's famed shoe factories, and settled in the Village, bordered by Montello, Field, North Cary and East Ashland Streets.

The Catholic parish was first known as St. Rocco's, established in 1898 on Webster Street by the Rev. Kazimieras Matulaitis and the Lithuanian immigrants.



The overgrown memorial for Revolutionary War veteran Casimir Pulaski on the corner of Howard and Montello Streets in Brockton.

St. Casimir Church on Sawtell Avenue was built in 1952, its rectory in 1957 and a convent in 1962.

Over the decades, social clubs in the Village and cultural celebrations held during the year in the parish hall and at Romuva Park, off Claremount Avenue, helped bond the community.

"They had a polka band every Sunday and everybody went," Bizinkauskas said.

Giovanello, like many Lithuanian children, attended the Franklin Elementary School at 59 Sawtell Ave. The school was built in 1898.

In 1919, when she was in the fourth grade, the school had two separate entrances – one for girls, and one for boys.

By the early 1950s, many children of Lithuanian immigrants were enrolling in St. Casimir School, which started in a parish hall that was later renovated. The Sisters of Jesus Crucified taught them religion and academics, some in the Lithuanian language.

For years, Brocktonians would go to

the Village with their plastic jugs to get water from the Blue Hill Spring at the eastern end of Arthur Street. The spring closed in later years.

Numerous businesses – such as the now-defunct Zinkevic’s Market and Montello Baking Co. – catered to the tastes of “home.” Other businesses with Lithuanian ties were the Yakavonis Funeral Homes, Foot Joy, and Kilkus Bakery.

### *The Village fades*

By the mid-1960s, many Lithuanian families were moving to other communities or parts of Brockton. More non-Lithuanian parishioners enrolled children at St. Casimir School.

Now that school has closed, and the Franklin School is slated to shut down as well, with students transferred to other schools in the city.

Most of the Lithuanian businesses are gone, except for The Lit, a neighborhood bar on Ames Street.

“It’s really sad, you know, because there were so many (Lithuanian people) down here and now they’ve moved out or passed on,” said Susan Lawcewicz, owner of The Lit.

“There’s not much we can do to bring it back to what it was,” said Lawcewicz, 75.

Even as the Village neighborhood evolved, community celebrations kept the culture alive for Lithuanians in Brockton and beyond.

Children would decorate Easter eggs in one Lithuanian custom. Teens would folk-dance in traditional dresses to celebrate Lithuanian Independence Day, Feb. 16.



*The fourth grade class in 1919 at the Franklin School, a neighborhood icon of the Lithuanian Village in Brockton. The school is now slated to close, and St. Casimir Catholic School has shut down as well.*



*The former St. Casimir School in Brockton's Lithuanian Village.*

Lithuanians would flock to the Christmas celebration known as “Kūčios,” a 12 course traditional meal to represent the Twelve Apostles.

Now, with the church expected to close and its buildings perhaps sold to other groups, the future of those events is uncertain.

Dave Voitasek, owner of Piano Revival, has lived in the Village for more than 30 years.

Voitasek, 53, recalls the Lithuanian businesses and the close-knit neighborhood where “you used to go over to (Zinkevic’s Market) and get a sandwich for \$1. They’d give you a pickle for 5 cents.”

“That’s gone,” he said.

For 98-year-old Giovanello, now living in the Campello section of Brockton, memories of the Lithuanian Village are just that – memories.

“The Village is not the Village anymore,” she said.

Maria Papadopoulos can be reached at [mpapadopoulos@enterpriseneews.com](mailto:mpapadopoulos@enterpriseneews.com)

## **TRIVIA QUESTION**

(No.23)

What percentage of electricity in Lithuania is derived from nuclear power?

(a) None (c) 56 (b) 12 (d) 70

**Answer to Trivia Quiz  
on page 26**



**14th World Lithuanian Symposium on Arts and Sciences**  
 XIV PASAULIO LIETUVIU MOKSLO IR KURYBOS  
 SIMPOZIUMAS

Lemont, Illinois, USA, 2008-XI-26-30



The organizers of the World Lithuanian Symposium on Arts And Sciences (WLSAS) take great pleasure to extend you an invitation to participate with learned contributions at the symposium's 14th proceedings. The symposium will take place in Lemont (Chicago suburb), Illinois, USA on November 26-30, 2008.

### I. The 14th World Lithuanian Symposium on Arts and Sciences

The organizers of the symposium in this call for papers are inviting presentations by Lithuanians and individuals of Lithuanian heritage, residing throughout the world. To share in their accomplishments in arts and sciences. The symposium intends to address worldwide developments in arts and sciences and their potential impact on Lithuania regarding advancements in sciences, technologies, environmental protection, public health, information technologies, and many other disciplines as well as their developmental directions in the foreseeable future. Plenary sessions intend to address the most important survival issues of Lithuanians living in the diaspora, such as teaching children Lithuanian language skills, as well as their cultural and historical heritage. Other topics will include presentations on preservation and maintenance of archives of Lithuanian communities outside of Lithuania, their libraries, museums and art galleries. Topics of interest are summarized at the end of this call for papers.

The 14th XIV WLSAS is being organized by the National Executive committee of the Lithuanian American Community in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Lithuania, the Department of Minorities and Emigration, Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, and Lithuania's Science Council.

### II. Historical Background

The Lithuanian Symposium on Arts and Sciences was first organized in 1969 at the initiative of the Lithuanian American Community. Since then, they are being held on a rotating basis every three years between locations in the United States and Lithuania. Their purpose is to provide a joint forum for learned Lithuanians in arts and sciences. In the symposium they would become acquainted, and could share and compare their skills, knowledge, and accomplishments in a friendly environment of common heritage.

The Iron Curtain prohibited attendance of participants from Lithuania during the first five symposia as late as 1988. The symposiums were mainly attended by participants living in the western part of the world. Only the lifting of the iron curtain resulted in a massive attendance from Lithuania at the 1989 symposium. It is a pleasure to note that the restoration of the nation's independence in 1990, brought about significantly increasing attention and support by numerous academic communities in Lithuania as well as those in other parts of the world. The last XIII WLSAS, which took place in Lithuania in 2005, was attended by well over 350 participants. The organizers hope that the 14th symposium in Chicago will also be well attended.

### III. Registration

Individuals desiring to attend and make presentations at the 14th WLSAS are invited to register on or before August 15, 2008 via the MKS website <http://www.mks14.com>. All received entries will be confirmed by return e-mail.

### IV. Proposal submissions

Proposals for presentations must be submitted within the space limitation shown in <http://www.mks14.com>, and contain the following data:

1. *Title of the proposed paper;*
2. *Names of all authors;*

3. *Name of employer, if any;*
4. *Primary author's postal address, e-mail, telephone number including the country code, and FAX number, if available),*
5. *The primary author's CV in Lithuanian and English*
6. *An abstract in Lithuanian and English*

Submitted proposals, excluding addresses, must not exceed 450 words, fit within one page (21,5x28), and be written in Word format using New Roman or Arial characters. More detailed information about the

symposium, special topics, and other symposium related events are shown in the above noted internet portal. In case of questions that can not be resolved by the information in the MKS website, please write to [mks.xiv@att.net](mailto:mks.xiv@att.net).

We hope to see you at the symposium!

The organizing committee of 14th World Lithuanian Symposium on Arts and Sciences

**Registration extended to  
08/15/2008**

*Continued on page 24*

Aleksandras Radzius

# Lithuanian Troops in Our Midst!

Wow, what an event - having a platoon of Lithuanian troops and their officers here in the US training with the Pennsylvania National Guard, and having the opportunity to meet them a number of times! This is only the second time since 1991 that Lithuania sent such a large number of soldiers to the US to train and participate in field maneuvers. The first was in 1993, when our troops went to Michigan to train.

Thanks to the work of Major Christopher Ferrara of Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania and his counterpart Major Michael Levitsky of the US Embassy in Vilnius, Lithuania and the Pennsylvania National



In Philadelphia Col. A. Plieskis receiving welcome from V. Duncia



Afghanistan veteran Sgt. Julija Mišinaitė receiving flowers from Vincas Krėvės student Darius Volertas



Pennsylvania National Guard and Lithuanian soldiers. Second row, third from the left Maj. General Wright, Lithuania's Ambassador Andrius Bruzga, and Col. Plieškis (Beret and Mustache)

Guard Partnership Program with the Lithuanian Armed Forces, a platoon of Lithuanian soldiers came to the United States to train with the Pennsylvania National Guard.

The Lithuanian soldiers arrived on May 8, 2008 and flew back to Lithuania the evening of May 24, 2008. Most of the troops were members of the 'Krašto Apsaugos Savanorių Pajėgos' (KASP) in English, the 'National Defense Volunteer Force'. Though there were also at least two members of the 'Iron Wolf' unit.

On Sunday, May 11, the Information Personnel of the Lithuanian platoon, E-7 Lina Daugirdienė and E-3 Julija Mišinaitė and the commander of the platoon Captain Vaidas Sepkus, came to Philadelphia specifically to thank the children of the Vincas Krėvė Lithuanian Saturday School for writing to the Lithuanian soldiers in Afghanistan and for sending them hand drawn pictures which arrived in Afghanistan in time for the Christmas of 2006 and Easter of 2007.

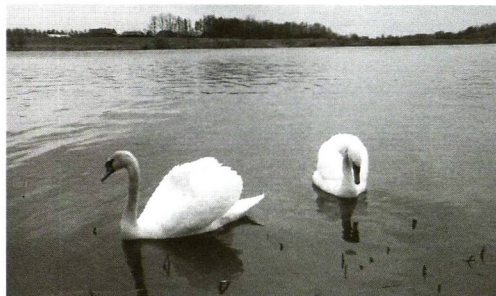
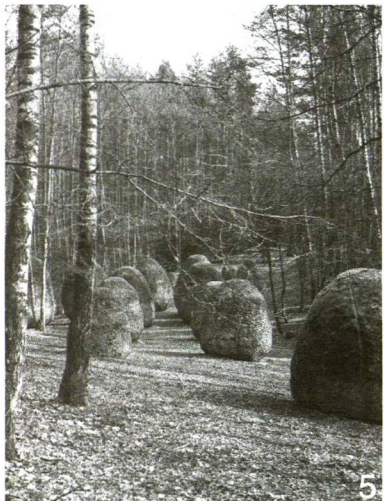
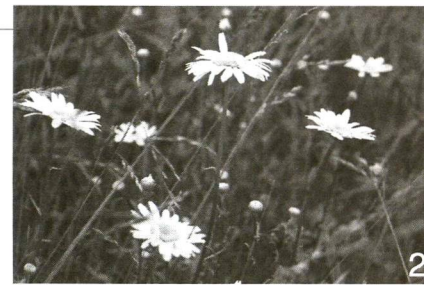
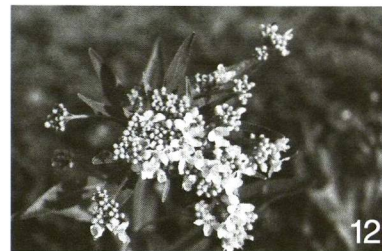
The three visiting soldiers met with the teachers and the pupils in their Saturday School classroom and each spoke to the children telling them how much their letters and drawings were appreciated by the Lithuanian

troops in Afghanistan. Julija Mišinaitė was stationed in Afghanistan when the letters and drawings arrived. A similar letter writing and drawing effort by Lithuanian Saturday School pupils of Los Angeles had also been undertaken. The soldiers met with the children and their teachers at 10:00 am, just before the 10:30 am Sunday Lithuanian Mass at St. Andrew's Lithuanian R.C. Church.

After Mass, the three Lithuanian soldiers were received at the St. Andrew's Parish Hall. When everyone had enjoyed refreshments, Julija Mišinaitė gave a report on the structure, mission and various functions performed by KASP. Of particular note is that all of the KASP military districts use the same names Lithuanian partisans used to name their organizational subdivisions and their areas of operation. Julija further reported on the children-to-children program whereby children in Lithuania were exchanging drawings with children in an orphanage in Afghanistan.

With formal presentations concluded, groups formed around each soldier and lively discussions on various topics followed. Naturally, numerous individual and group photos had to be taken.

*Continued on page 16*



*Photo Album of  
Beautiful Nature  
of Lithuania*



Photos by:  
Vilma Balnytė - 9, 10, 12  
Dovilė Joniškienė - 3, 4

Algirdas Kazlas - 1, 2  
Indrė Urbonaitė - 5, 6, 7, 8

Continued from page 13



Lithuanians soldiers praying for their fallen comrade

At the end of their visit, sausages and a bit of bacon smoked Lithuanian-style by Rasuole Melingienė-Meeks of Baltimore were given to Julija and Lina by Aleksandras Radzius of the Lithuanian Partisan Living History Group. Julija and Lina were most appreciative of the aroma as the bag with the meats was opened. It was later learned that the meats were shared with the rest of the platoon.

A week later, on Saturday May 17, 2008 Colonel Antanas Plieškis, Commander of KASP; his Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Vilmas Šatas and Captain Vaidas Sepkus, Commander of the Platoon currently training in the US, were guests of the Pennsylvania National Guard at the annual Armed Forces Day on City Island, near Harrisburg. Major General Jessica Wright hosted the Lithuanian officers with Major Christopher Ferrara as their escort.



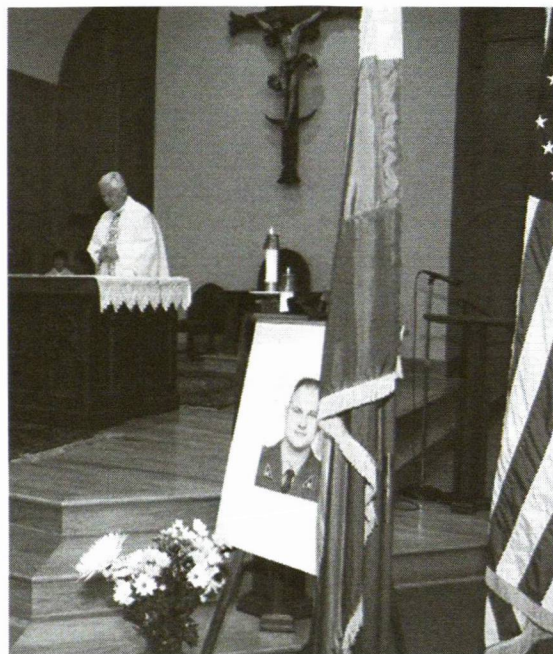
Lithuanian Honor Guard leaving after Mass for Sgt. Arūnas Jarmalavičius

After the formal opening ceremonies were concluded, the Lithuanian officers had a long conversation with Brigadier General Jerry G. Beck. Later, while touring the military displays, the Lithuanian officers talked with the Mayor of Harrisburg, Steven R. Reed.

The Lithuanian officers visited all the military vehicles on display as well as booths set up by the Pennsylvania National Guard. Of particular interest to Colonel Plieškis was the mobile water purification system of the US Army.

Of special attraction to the Lithuanian officers were American motorcycles. They had to have themselves photographed next to one whenever a cycle belonging to a Pennsylvania Guardsman was encountered.

On seeing the Lithuanians in their distinctive woodland camouflage uniforms, many, young and old, civilians and military, inquired as to their nationality. On learning that they were Lithuanians, many acknowledged their third and fourth generation Lithuanian heritage, mostly from the coal mining areas of Pennsylvania. A couple of Pennsylvania National Guardsmen with Lithuanian surnames on their uniforms stopped to talk with the officers. Most who stopped to talk knew of the annual 'Lithuanian Days' festival in Frackville,



St. George Lithuanian Church, Msgr. Joseph Anderlonis offering Mass for Sgt. Arūnas Jarmalavičius killed in Afghanistan  
Photo by Lina Daugirdienė (KASP)



KASP Commander Col. A. Plieškis, Assistant Military Attaché Col. E. Armalys

PA and all were invited to attend this event August 16 and 17, 2008.

During the following week we were all saddened to learn that on Thursday, May 22, 2008 a Lithuania soldier was shot in Afghanistan. He was Sergeant Arūnas Jarmalavičius, 35 years of age and a member of the Lithuanian Army for the past 15 years. Sergeant Arūnas Jarmalavičius is survived by his wife and two children.

On Saturday, May 24, 2008 the entire platoon and their officers



*Aleksandras Radzius presenting gifts to Col. Plieškis*

Lithuanian Community at the Lithuanian Music Hall on Allegheny Ave. at 11am. However, due to the untimely death of Sergeant Aranas Jarmalavičius, the venue was modified and the soldiers first went to St. George Lithuanian R.C. Church, a few blocks north of the Music Hall.

Most of the soldiers arrived in their civilian clothes, since all their military gear had been packed and delivered to the airport. Only the officers who were to remain for additional interaction with the American military were in their Lithuanian dress uniforms.

At the end of the Mass, the beloved Lithuanian hymn 'Marija, Marija' was sung by the Philadelphia "Laisvė" Choir, under the direction of Ilona Babinskienė, for Sergeant Aranas Jarmalavičius. All present in the church joined in the singing of the hymn.

Then, all gathered at the Music Hall for a buffet and fellowship. One Lithuanian officer we had not met before was Lieutenant Heroldas Grigalionis. Present also, both at the Mass and at the Music Hall, was Lieutenant Colonel Egidijus Armalys, Assistant Defense Attaché from the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

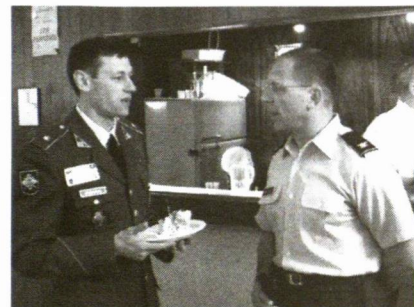
Rimas Gedeika offered a word of welcome to the soldiers, their officers and Major Ferrara and Major Levitsky. Lieutenant Colonel Armalys further extended greeting to the soldiers and the Philadelphia

Lithuanian Community. Colonel Plieškis then spoke linking us on this side of the Atlantic with our countrymen in the homeland. Next, a few words were spoken by Aleksandras Radzius, dressed as a Lithuanian partisan. From a small arms ammunition box with Cyrillic lettering and a label with a 1952 date, held by Howard Koontz, also dressed as a Lithuanian partisan, gifts were given to Colonel Antanas Plieškis: Issues of the Lithuanian Numismatic Association's newsletter 'The Knight' going back to 2005, in the event the colonel or some of his troops have an interest in Lithuanian coins and banknotes; copies of clippings from Baltimore newspapers about the statue of Frank Zappa which the Frank Zappa Fan Club in Lithuania is donating to the City of Baltimore; a copy of a pre-WWII Lithuanian officer's dress uniform belt buckle. The copy was made, thanks to Kęstutis Chesonis, Henry Gaidis and Algimantas Grintalis, from the buckle of Colonel Kazys Pranskonis, who lived in



*"Vincio Krėvė" Lithuanian Schools student entertaining the troops*

Baltimore until his death in 1971. A copy of Colonel Pranskonis's biography published in the September 1971 issue of "Karys" was also given to Colonel Plieškis. Then a copy of "The Bear Finally Died" by Stanley Usačkas, uncle of the former Lithuanian ambassador to the United States, was presented to the Colonel.



*KASP platoon commander Lt. H. Giedraitis and USA Col. J. Bartasius*

However, it was when the US Marine Corps K-Bar fighting knife was presented to the Colonel, that all in attendance sighed and the Colonel's pupils visibly enlarged. Of course, another packet of meal smoked by Rasuole Melingienė-Meeks was given to the Colonel. The crowd of onlookers, especially the Lithuanian soldiers, vigorously "oohed and awed" at the sight of the meats.

Major Christopher Ferrara was also presented with a copy of "The Bear Finally Died" as well as a 6 inch 'Rūpintojėlis' (The Dear Worrier). Thanks to the work of archeologist Marija Gimbutas, we know that similar figurines dated from the Stone Age had been excavated in Bulgaria and have survived in, at least, the Lithuanian, Polish and German cultures to this day. Though made politically correct with the addition of the crown of thorns, one can not wonder if the original symbolism wasn't meant to convey the essence

*Continued on page 24*



# THE LEGACY OF THE LITHUANIAN NOBILITY

Over the years, I have found it rather remarkable the number of Lithuanian Americans who have sought to find their ancestral roots. Historians and sociologists have documented that arriving immigrants seek to assimilate and try to forget their former lives. The second generation having reaped the rewards provided by their wise parents' decision to migrate to America had little or no interest in their family's past. It's only with the third generation, usually after their grandparents have passed away, that the quest to find one's lost past begins. Such quests have led many Lithuanian Americans to join genealogy groups, make pilgrimages to Lithuania, and to devour anything that they can find to read about their ancestral homeland. I have taken part in such a quest myself wanting to know of the bravery and hardships of my ancestors.

Still for many Lithuanian Americans such a quest for their roots has produced a rather disturbing trend. I doubt that any one reading this article recalls their grandparents in any other way than having been some totally enamored by the freedom and classless society they found in America. Here there was no fixed social class as had existed in Lithuania and all were free to pursue



*Traditional Lithuanian Freeman farmer of the medieval period*

their own destiny. For this reason, few succumbed to promised reward of socialism, communism, or fascism. I doubt that any one reading this article can say that their grandparents were not proud defenders of American freedom and liberty. One of the main reasons our grandparents came to America at the turn of the century was to rid themselves of the fixed social system imposed upon them by their own Polonized Lithuanian and Russian imposed nobles. I regret to report that many among us have forgotten their grandparents' American realized dream of living in a classless society and seek some type of connection to the Lithuanian nobles that suppressed them for centuries. I have written this brief article to provide our readers with a little insight to

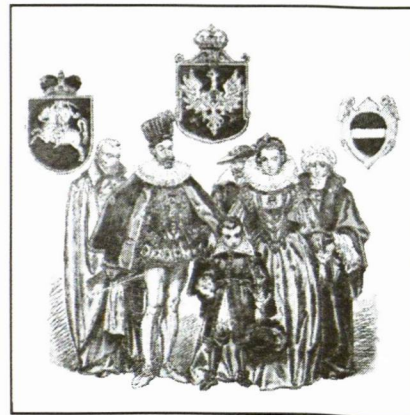
why our grandparents would be ashamed of those seeking to establish some actual or imaginary connection to the ancient privileged class of Lithuanian nobles.

Although slavery and a caste system existed in Southern Europe during the Bronze Age and spread to Western Europe during the early medieval period in the form of serfdom, religious establishment, and a hereditary ruling class, the ancient Lithuanians lived in total freedom. The main reason for a Lithuanian nation appearing so late onto the maps of Europe was there was no reason to have a ruler and the government class that came with such a system.

Our ancestors lived in individual family log and thatch



*Traditional Lithuanian Freeman Warrior with Polish nobleman counterpart with his aides*



*The nobility and their coat of arms*



*King Sigmundus Augustus and Treaty of Lublin document uniting Poland and Lithuania and bringing serfdom to Lithuanian with Polish nobility rights to chosen Lithuanians*



*Wood block print of the Baptism of Lithuania*

roofed cabins built around a center fireplace. Around the homestead were often found granaries and barns for the preservation of grains and stalls for the cultivation of animals. The only tools needed were small farm implements such as knives and scythes, which in the event of an emergency could be used for weapons. Spears and occasionally bows and arrows were also kept for hunting in the large nearby forests. Such self sufficient homesteads were generally composed of the head of the household, his wife, and children, and maybe an extended single family member. Nearby homesteads in the district were generally composed of parents, siblings, and various extended family members. The family unit and family ties were considered to be the main stead of Lithuanian society. The people believed in an after life wherein they would be rewarded or punished based on their lives on earth. For the most part, they worshiped pagan deities based upon the nature around them. Death was not an end, but just a transfer to another world. They had no temples or idols and worshiped in the primeval forests that surrounded their lands. This idyllic like society was first changed when such isolated homesteads came under attack from raiding nomadic Vikings from the coast and Slavs from the north and west.

When under attack, many families started coming together and a respected elder or proven capable warrior was elected to command their common defense. From such leaders the concept of a local chief came into existence. Over time, central places of defense were established where all could seek safety when under attack that eventually became forts and later castles. To be close to their place of safety many homesteads relocated around such fortifications that became small villages. Still each maintained his own fields, orchards, and animal stock. Over time, such elected chiefs (kunigas) evolved into a full time warrior or soldier class (Bajoras). These leaders had no authority over their people other than in a time of emer-

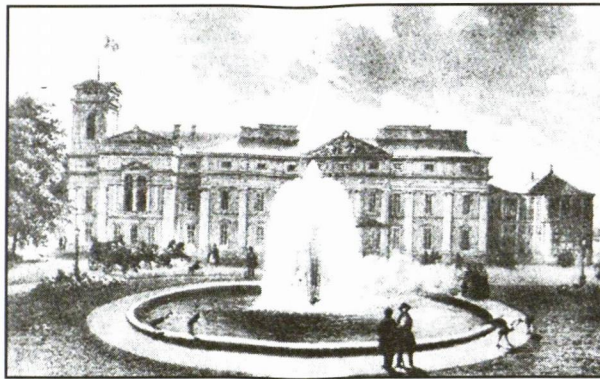
gency. More capable leaders built progressively stronger fortifications and started to amass fortunes. The better provided protection in turn caused more and more people to seek his protection. All small homestead families remained the property of their freeman (Ūkininkas) owners. Eventually these freemen were required to provide work towards the common good which eventually evolved into paying taxes. All were still required per-

form certain civic duties such as reporting with their own provided weapons in a time of war. There was no caste system in Lithuania and one's status did not remain permanently fixed. One's wealth and status within the community remained solely dependent on his ability to successfully farm or fight in combat. Though there were rich and poor farmers, no hereditary caste system existed in Lithuania.

With the onslaught attacks from their neighbors, first the Vikings from the coast, then Slavs from the north and west, and later Germanic Teutonic Knights from the east seeking to spread Christianity, the Lithuanians had to form a nation state. The Teutonic Knights proved to be the most formidable as they did not just seek to just plunder and take captives, but sought to eliminate all those who refused to accept Christianity. They soon occupied and virtually annihilated the nearby Prussians and ancient people akin to the Lithuanians. Seeing the death and destruction caused by these raiding knights first hand, the Lithuanians began to gather together for mutual protection. At first protective fortifications were built on high ridges or at the intersection of rivers. As time passed, many began to settle closer to these established fortifications which evolved into villages and later small towns. When even these small village fortifications were not sufficient to protect the people from a large marauding force, several adjacent villages began to group together for even a larger and stronger common defense. At first village elders were elected as the selected fortress defensive commander, but ever increasing raids, all realized the need to have a trained warrior class with a fixed rigid command to be able to coordinate a common defense. The evolution of such a warrior class with its leaders being the most proficient in combat eventually led to a permanent military ruling class.

By the second half of the 12th Century the Lithuanians

had acquired sufficient military expertise to not only withstand hostile incursions, but to retaliate in kind against their enemies. Though little is known about the early military leaders of Lithuania, surviving historic documents identify Mindaugas (Mindowe, Mendowe, Mindovg) as unifying the many local princely families that had evolved into a nation state. Under his



Wood block print of a Polish-Lithuanian nobleman's manor

leadership the historic agrarian Lithuanian farmer became known as a warrior and spread his realm to the north and west. On several occasions, the Pope called for crusades against the heathens. Though a few villages started to grow into cities there was no permanent Lithuanian capital. The capital of the nation was wherever the King happened to reside on any given occasion. King Mindaugas is known to have once resided at Voruta while it was under Teutonic siege, a successor Traidenis at Kernavė, and Gediminas at Trakai. Legend holds that Gediminas eventually established the nation's capital at Vilnius in 1323. Under such military leaders as Kęstutis, Algirdas, Vytautas, and Jogaila, Lithuania eventually defeated the Tartars, Mongols, Russians, and the Teutonic Knights became the most powerful nation in Eastern Europe.

The pagan Lithuanians eventually became Catholic through the marriage of Grand Duke Jogaila (Jagiello) to the widow Polish Queen Jadwiga (Hedwig) in 1386 and the two sovereign nations were soon joined together as one. Although many Lithuanians had already adopted



Print illustration of Lithuanian peasants carrying the weight of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility

Christianity through the efforts of religious German missionaries many still considered the religion to be foreign and imposed at the point of a sword. The peaceful spread of the Catholic religion through the Poles was eventually embraced and Lithuania became the "most faithful daughter of Rome" in northern Europe. Still the Polish-Lithuanian union soon

brought with it a totally new destructive social system.

Not long after the union, the existing Polish class system was formally introduced into Lithuania. In February 1387, Jogaila issued the first written Lithuanian law or state writ detailing a prescribed manner for the operation of internal affairs. Under the Act of Endowment, Jogaila officially established the rights and privileges of the Church, clergy, and nobles. Although the act changed little for the Lithuanian freeman and peasants, the nobles were still required to continue their traditional military duties and to maintain roads and castles, they were granted the same privileges held by hereditary Polish nobles.

Though Jogaila, seated in Krakow, claimed to be the ruler in both Poland and Lithuania, the vast majority of the Lithuanian nobles recognized Vytautas the Great as their King. He and his successors paid no great respect for the cited hereditary rights of existing nobles and continued to rule in the traditional manner. They endowed productive ordinary farmers with land and continued to create numerous new nobles with no claim to any previous hereditary rights.

To resolve the issue of two rulers, the two cousins agreed to the Acts of Horodle in 1413 which set forth procedures for the election of rules after their death. Under the terms of the agreement, the Lithuanians would consult with the Polish King and the Poles would not elect a King without consulting with the Lithuanians. Both nations remained separate and each ruler remained in power. In addition, the Polish noble rights set forth in the 1387 Act of Endowment were reconfirmed upon the Lithuanian nobles. This portion of the act greatly appealed to the Lithuanian nobles and they soon gained increased prominence and eventually developed into a significant hereditary social class.

The Poles further used the Acts of Horodle to gain favor among the Lithuanian nobles by conferring Polish coats of Arms upon 47 senior Lithuanian nobles establishing a kinship with the corresponding Polish lord. Although

Lithuanian nobles had used coats of arms for a long time prior to the Acts of Horodle they were only used as a personal seal to identify the individual. With the receipt of such privileges, the Lithuanian nobles gradually succumbed to the allure of all things Polish and soon began to consider Lithuanian culture to be inferior. Although Vytautas had recognized the Polish right granted to his nobles, the act did not curtail the rights of the nation's freeman or peasant class. When Vytautas died with a male heir, Jogaila became the official ruler of Lithuania and the two nations grew progressively closer during the rule of his decedents.

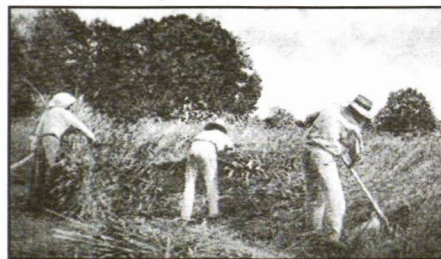


*Print illustrating Lithuanian peasants during the Czarist period*

The death toll of ancient Lithuanian freedom came during the reign of King and Grand Duke Sigismund Augustus. Sigismundus Augustus is considered to have been an enlightened ruler and frequently championed Lithuanian causes. He was greatly influenced by trends in Western Europe and eventually sought to introduce agrarian reform into Lithuania. He first concerned himself with the elimination of ineffective farming methods and the introduction of new farming practices to increase production.

Though personal serfdom was not actually introduced, any peasant leaving his land lost his rights to the same and the abandoned land allocated to others. All peasants were required to pay fixed taxes in cash or produce and to work on his local estate a certain numbers of days a year in exchange for a parcel of land allotted for his personal use. Soon the peasant even lost his right to appeal to courts as the administering of justice was placed totally in the hands of his lord. As a result, the peasants were totally at the mercy of their masters for both their economic and social well being with no chance of changing their assigned lot in life.

Due to the new methods of farming introduced by Sigismund Augustus, Lithuania soon developed a thriving grain export. With the ever increasing market for Lithuanian grain, many noblemen were exempt from paying import duties and became involved in the grain export trade. The nobles soon found they needed more and more labor to work on their ever enlarging estates. As a result, the time required by a peasant to work on his lord's fields progressively increased. Whereas peasants had



*Lithuanian peasants laboring for the monarchy imposed ruling class*

only been required to work between 4 to 20 days per year for his lord during the 15th century, their work day requirement had increased to 53 days by the 16th century, and between 156 to 208 days by the 17th century creating ever increasing hardships upon them and their families.

On April 1, 1557, Sigismundus issued a series of decrees ordering all public estates and boundaries surveyed and marked, and all peasants settled in villages. Whereas in the past, peasants had the right to hold individual homesteads, they were no longer able to freely move away. Taxes were ordered to be paid by the "chimney" regardless of the size of

their land. Thereafter new decrees were issued equalizing the size of parcels of land to one "hide" (valakas) per family as existing in the various German states. He further demanded proof of ownership from nobles and sequestered land that could not be satisfactorily established. Church holdings were separated from nobleman owned estates. All undocumented land was officially declared to be property of the king. Later nobles were required to show proof of nobility and the privileges of those unable to provide such proof lost their claim. Land ownership by non-nobles was abolished and peasant farmers became fixed tenants paying taxes for the land allotted to them. The idyllic individual homestead of the ancient Lithuanians quickly disappeared and noblemen's estates established on the best sites. Freemen and peasants were forced to resettle in small villages surrounding their farm land divided for use into a three fields system. Whereas the Lithuanian peasant had originally only been required to help his master a specific number of days per year for planting and harvesting, he virtually became a slave in all but name.

Through such royal decrees, a Polish like caste system became firmly entrenched in Lithuania. This exclusive caste of prelates, lords, and gentry soon virtually destroyed the traditional freemen or peasant class of citizens. With the great wealth, privileges, and power that came with this Polish class society it is not hard to understand why the Lithuanian nobility turned their backs against their own people and embraced the new system.

It was not long before the Lithuanian "Polonized" nobleman became more Polish than the Poles and looked down upon their Lithuanian heritage. They adopted Polonized names and coats of arms and even spurned their native tongue as just being something used by the peasants. Though they continued to take great pride in the deeds of the ancestors for political purposes, the Lithuanian noblemen became totally assimilated into Polish culture. They subscribed to the popular political adage of the time, "gente Lituania, natione Poloni" or "Lithuanians by origin, Poles by nationality." It was only among the petty noblemen in the extremely rural areas that a class of Lithuanian freeman continued to exist. Such peasants preserved our nation's ethnic heritage and language. I am proud to say that the Lithuanian peasant even under the oppression of their Polonized Lithuanian nobles and later Prussian and Russian military commanders, remained loyal to the traditions established by their fathers. On the other hand, most Polonized Lithuanian noblemen embraced the exploitation of the people to ensure their own privileged status was not in danger. The establishment of serfdom soon stagnated the economic growth of Lithuania and the nation was relegated to being a perpetual agricultural society. The noted Polish author, Christopher Opalinski wrote "God does not punish Poland for nothing, but chiefly for the harsh oppression visited on the serfs."

Loving their religion and country above all things, the Lithuanian peasant came to the defense of his country during the successive partitions of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, Napoleon's 1812 Russian Campaign, and the 1831 and 1863-64 Insurrections. During all of these epic struggles, the nobles enticed peasant support with promises that the peasant's ancient liberties and rights would be restored with victory. Based upon this dream, thousands upon thousands of Lithuanian peasants followed the established Polonized noblemen into battle and died vainly trying to free themselves and their country from the despised existing privileged caste system.

The 1863-1864 Polish Lithuanian Insurrection was bru-



*Prince Radziwill and his wife pre - World War I*

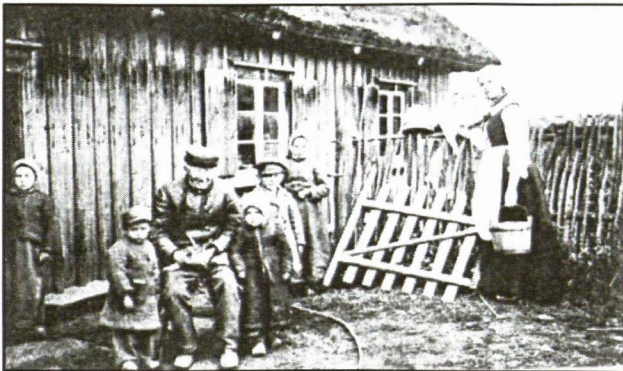
tally suppressed with thousands being killed, executed, and deported to Siberia. The Russians sought to finally end the Lithuanian fixation with all things Polish and instituted an extreme "Russification" program upon the country. The Catholic religion which came from Poland was persecuted with many churches and schools being closed. Preference was given to members of the Russian Orthodox Church and any Lithuanian desiring advancement was assigned to other parts of the empire. The Latin alphabet was prohibited and the teaching and printing of books in the Lithuanian language outlawed. Though the Russians were successful in curtailing Lithuanian unity with Poland, they caused a revival in Lithuanian nationalism. Under these harsh conditions, not only was the teaching of the Lithuanian language increased, but Lithuanian language book smuggling became common place and everywhere there was a desire to learn about Lithuania's past.

Unlike the freedom movements in the past, the leaders of the Lithuanian revival movement came from religious leaders and a new class of educated peasants. This revival movement, which lasted from 1863 to 1905, eventually caused the Czar to rescind the failed Russification policy and sparked the desire for Lithuanian self-rule. Traditional Lithuanian noblemen were encouraged to take part in the new national movement, but virtually all chose to remain loyal to the Russian Czar and later to those seeking to reestablish a Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was only among the petty gentry, particular in Samogitia, that the national freedom movement was embraced. By the time of the Lithuanian War for Independence (1918-1920), the traditional Lithuanian nobleman had largely become irrelevant to the nation. Only a few petty nobles fought for Lithuanian independence and the vast majority not only joined, but led Poland's quest to reestablish the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with its privileged class system. Field Marshal Joseph Pilsudski the Commander of the Polish Army, Gabriel Narutowics the first President of Poland, and General Lucjan Zeligowski who occupied Vilnius



*Typical peasant school house of the Czarist Russian period which became the birthplace of Lithuanian freedom*

and established a puppet Polish state, were all Polonized Lithuanian nobles. The names of many Polonized Lithuanian nobles can be found in the ranks of the new Polish government such as Prystor, Meysztowica, Radziwill, Skirmunt, etc. All chose to be Polish when called upon by their homeland to defend their ancestral homeland. It was only in the ranks of the Polish military that a significant number of Lithuanian noblemen played a part in the nation's struggle for independence. For such reasons, the Polonized Lithuanian nobles came to be thought of as being foreigners and irrelevant by the new emerging national vanguard.



*The poverty imposed upon the Lithuanian homestead by the nobility*

Those who established the Republic of Lithuania in 1918 came from the nation's traditional peasant class. Their great accomplishments came with little or no support from the Lithuanian nobles. As a result, the Lithuanian nobleman was looked down upon by the Lithuanians who established the Republic of Lithuania. These peasants and the sons of peasants vividly recalled the pain, humiliation, and suffering endured for centuries at the hand of

these Lithuanian nobles. During the 1918-1939 period of Lithuanian independence, the Lithuanian nobleman found no respect among the Lithuanian people.

Time has dimmed the memories of the atrocities committed by the Lithuanian nobles. Today the restored Republic of Lithuania for historical, cultural and tourist reasons glorifies the nation's ancient past. There is no doubt that the centuries old struggle of the Lithuanian people that eventually led to establish a free and democratic society is one that should be told and retold. Still many are trying to use the glorification of Lithuania's past to resurrect the status of the Lithuanian noblemen. A simple search of the internet will reveal a number of Polish web sites where Polish nobles are trying to glorify their privileged ancestors.

As in the past, these Poles seeking to derive support from Lithuanians and material is always present concerning their Polonized Lithuanian cousins. I have only touched upon the historic abuses of the Polonized Lithuanian noble, but it is obvious why our grandparents spurned the concept of a hereditary noble class and totally embraced democracy. For a Lithuanian patriot to do otherwise would be akin to an American taking pride in being related to Benedict Arnold or some other Tory leader who fought to suppress the American people. No American takes pride in having had a slave master ancestor, but for some reason there are Lithuanian Americans who are presently doing that exact thing. For anyone who truly believes in the principles of democracy there is no place for the glorification of a caste system that enslaved the Lithuanian nation longer than did the communists.

*Henry Gaidis*

*Henry Gaidis is a contributor to Bridges. He is a member of the Board of Directors of JBANC and among his many interests is military history.*



*Traditional Lithuanian peasant homestead made of logs and thatched roof*

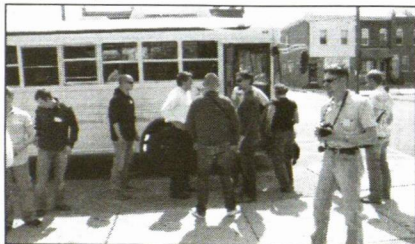
Continued from page 17

## Lithuanian Troops in Our Midst!

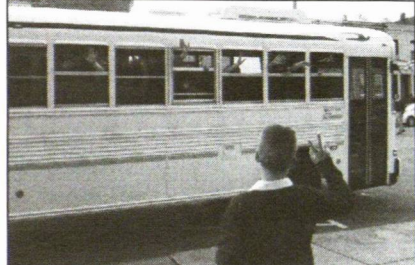
of masculinity - worrying about the well-being of his family and his tribe.

Major Levitsky was also remembered for all his work in Lithuania for the Partnership Program with a copy of Stanley Usačkas's book.

The Philadelphia Lithuanian Choir "Laisvė" sang a number of songs, all well known by most Lithuanians. It was most touching to see the soldiers join in the singing and really enjoying themselves.



Soldiers preparing to depart for the airport



Waving goodbye

Continued from page 12

### List of Topics of Interest

Presentations are solicited, but not limited, to the following subject areas

1. Environmental protection, Ecology, radiological impact
2. Architecture, Urban studies & fine arts
3. Archives, libraries, museums, art galleries in diaspora
4. Energy and related technologies for a green planet
5. Natural sciences (biology, chemistry, pharmacology)
6. Physical sciences (physics, mathematics, and numerical modeling)
7. Technologies (engineering, materials, construction, and information sciences)



Lithuanian soldiers with Philadelphia's and Baltimore's Lithuanians

With formalities completed, fellowship continued. The Lithuanian soldiers spread out some souvenirs for us: Note pads, decals, pens, etc. Most were with the emblem of KASP, but some had the emblem of the 'Iron Wolf' unit.

Finally, it was time for the bus to take the troops to the airport. The soldiers boarded, but not without last minute photos being taken on both sides. With arms waving from the bus windows, and all of us waving back, they left for the night flight home.

We were all spiritually enriched by meeting them, and they were enriched by their experiences here in the States. Hopefully, Major Ferrara and Major Levitsky will be able to

continue working in the Partnership Program, for it is a win-win proposition for all. Sure, we can read about other cultures, or see all the photographs or films that are available, but it is only when you interact on a person-to-person level, that real trans-cultural growth is possible on both sides.

*Aleksandras Radzius*

*Aleksandras Radzius is Director of THE LITHUANIAN NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION (LNA). The Knight is the official publication of the Lithuanian Numismatic Association. Membership in LNA which includes five issues of The Knight is \$25 a year.*

*To subscribe please contact:*

Alex Radzius  
Lithuanian Numismatic Association  
PO Box 22696, Baltimore, MD 21203

*\*Photos by Rimas Gedeika*

8. Arts (Lithuanian culture and literature, music, linguistics)
9. Health Sciences (medicine, health services, geriatrics, nutrition)
10. History and Anthropology
11. Pedagogy for and in Lithuanian studies
12. Economics (industry, business, finances, management, marketing, economic controls, tourism, export/import)
13. Psychology and Social sciences (theory, application, needs of the population, governmental actions, NGO's, demographics)
14. Law and Justice (Lithuanian citizens outside the country, double citizenship, family, children's rights, adoption,

international laws, jurisdiction, policing powers and enforcement)

15. Transportation (autos, railroads, water, air, infrastructures and their development, international transit, regulation, safety, timeliness)
16. Agriculture and Forestry
17. Philosophy and Psychology
18. News media (printed, TV radio, internet communications, influence on population, accountability)

**The organizing committee of 14th World Lithuanian Symposium on Arts and Sciences**

Registration extended to 08/15/2008

*Stasys Bačkaitis, Ph.D.*

Gloria Kivytaite O'Brien

## A KING'S FUNERAL

Translation from Old French to Lithuanian by  
A. Kasperavicius

Translation from Lithuanian to English by  
Gloria Kivytaite O'Brien

Philippe de Meziere, writing in the French chronicles c. 1364, told about some noble travelers who had made their way from Russia to the borders of Tartar lands, finding themselves in the Lithuanian Kingdom. He describes this land as lacking writers or clergy, but having an exceptionally fierce warrior class, as witnessed by Christian Prussia's Knights of the Cross.

He says that the group of courtiers learned that the Lithuanian people were pagans, and that when their king died, his barons dressed him in bright armor and placed him on a white horse, similarly arrayed in armor. Then, they erected a "cage" of strong standing logs around the king and his steed. Next, they chose from among themselves, the dead king's best friend. This person would have eternal friendship with the king, by allowing himself to be burnt along with him, so that their souls could enter the pagan heaven together. They consider this to be the greatest honor possible, and with a ready will, would voluntarily enter the enclosure to stand beside the dead king, seated on his horse as though still alive. The barons, with great devotion, prayers and lamentation, light the flames to devour their king and his best friend.

The following story was told to him as the absolute truth, though he seems to repeat it tongue in cheek.

Not so long ago, there was a battle between some Prussian nobles and the Lithuanian king's men. Among the combatants was a brave young Prussian knight of strong Christian faith, who survived with the loss of one eye, and became the Lithuanian king's prisoner. This knight's courage, personal integrity and ethical behavior so impressed the king, that he kept him close, showed him great affection, and even showered him with costly gifts. All this, in spite of the fact that the knight was a Christian.

When the king died, the barons met to decide which of them would be the king's escort on his trip to heaven. There was

great competition amongst them; each candidate did his best to persuade the rest that he was the right man, the first among friends. Eventually, after much argument, they unanimously decided that the honor really belonged to the Prussian knight, the king's most beloved friend. They had no doubt the knight would be overjoyed that he was chosen to go with the king.

This Christian knight, hearing of the barons' decision, and understanding that it meant he would be burned alive next to the king, was overtaken by deep gloom and anguish. But he hid these feelings, outwardly showing great satisfaction and thanking the assembly for offering him such a distinction, for which he was unworthy, being only the king's faithful servant. The barons concluded their meeting, satisfied that they had made a good decision, believing that the Prussian would be a fitting companion for their good king.

And so the knight, putting his trust in God and Christ's True Holy Cross, began his oration by addressing the barons: "My lords, you and I all know well, the king's virtues, courage and refinement. If I am uneasy, it is only that my facial flaws may hinder the progress of our souls. You all can see that I have only one eye, to my regret. Not having all parts of my body, I greatly fear that I am not worthy of escorting such a perfect man as the king. However, if you decide that I am truly worthy, I am entirely ready, as this would be the greatest blessing."

The barons conferred anew, and decided that the Prussian was certainly not worthy of the honor, since he didn't have all his body parts. They chose another of the king's friends, and, thanking the Christian knight for his goodness and loyalty, gave him his freedom.

The Lithuanian king and his friend were burned according to their pagan custom. The knight returned to his own Christian homeland.

The loss of an eye proved fortunate for the knight, as he would certainly have burned with the king, if he had both eyes. This story was told to de Meziere by some old and valiant Christian knights, as the absolute truth.

Gloria Kivytaite 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](mailto:Senaboba@aol.com)

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# Events for July/August, September and October 2008

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

For Neringa events please visit [www.neringa.org](http://www.neringa.org)

## JULY

**July 6, 2008**  
**XIII Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival**  
 Los Angeles, CA  
<http://www.sokiusvente.com>

**July 6, 12, 2008**  
**Neringa** - Family Camp in Lithuanian

**July 13-27, 2008**  
**Neringa** - Children's Camp in Lithuanian - Ages 8-16

**July 19, 2008** - 12 pm - 3 pm  
**Darius and Girėnas Commemoration**  
 Floyd Bennet Field Reception Area (previously Floyd Bennet Naval Air Station)  
 Off Flatbush Ave. in Brooklyn.  
 Sponsor: Knights of Lithuania Council 110, Lithuanian American Community & other organizations will participate.

**July 27, 2008**  
**Putnam Picnic**  
 600 Liberty Hwy., Putnam, CT

**July 27-Aug 2, 2008**  
**Neringa** - Children's Camp in Lithuanian - Ages 13-16

**July 31-August 3, 2008**  
**95th National Convention**  
 Knights of Lithuania  
 Dayton, Ohio

Hosted by Council 96  
 Info: [www.knightsofithuania.com](http://www.knightsofithuania.com)

## AUGUST

**August 3-16, 2008**  
**Neringa** - Children's Camp in English - Ages 7-16

**August 8-9-10, 2008**  
**The Fifth Annual Lithuanian Adoption**  
 Friday evening through Sunday afternoon, including:  
**FRIDAY:** Pizza & Pool Party for Dads & Kids at the Tomalonis Farm Mom's Night Out  
**SATURDAY:** Family picnic, food, fun, crafts & photo galore!  
 Teen Evening Activity  
 Organizational Meeting for LAPAS (Lithuanian Adoptive Parents Association)  
**SUNDAY:** Breakfast on the Farm & Clean Up. Info: Gina Pollock [rmprhp@yahoo.com](mailto:rmprhp@yahoo.com)  
 James Tomalonis  
[cedar-springs@comcast.net](mailto:cedar-springs@comcast.net)  
 Info: LAPAS website: <http://www.orgsites.com/pa/lapas>

**August 9-19, 2008**  
**9th Lithuanian Scout Jamboree**  
 Info: <http://tautinstovykla.com/index.php?lang=EN>

**August 15, 16, 17, 2008**  
 Taste The World at the Kansas City Ethnic Festival  
 Swope Park Pavilion  
 Visit the Lithuanian Booth for

food & fun. Performance by Aidas Lithuanian Dance Group

## August 16-17, 2008

### 94th Annual Lithuanian Days

Ethnic food, entertainment, demonstrations, Lithuanian artifacts, wood carvings & "The Hill of Crosses".  
 Info: Larry Domalakes  
 570-874-4092  
[domalakes\\_ins@hotmail.com](mailto:domalakes_ins@hotmail.com)

## August 16-23, 2008

**Neringa** - Children's Camp in English - Ages 13-16

## August 24-31, 2008

**Neringa-Meno 8 Dienos**  
 Art camp for adults in Lithuanian

## SEPTEMBER

**September 7, 2008** - 3 pm

### Our Lady of Siluva 400 Years

St. Joseph's Cathedral  
 Hartford, CT.  
 His Excellence, Archbishop Henry Mansell  
 Principal celebrant & homilist  
 All are invited to attend  
 Info: Rev. John Rikteraitis  
 860 - 827 - 0444

**September 14, 2008** - 10:30 am

### Mass of Thanksgiving of the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Our Lady's appearance at Siluva, Lithuania.

Celebrant: His Eminence Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.

Nativity B.V.M. Parish  
 6812 South Washtenaw Ave.  
 Chicago, IL 60629

The celebratory Banquet at 3:00 pm - Oak Lawn Hilton.  
 Tickets \$45.00, available from Mary Beth Slakis,  
 708 - 342 - 1093

Nativity B.V.M. Rectory

Info: 773 - 776 - 4600

Sr. Johanna Marie Shainauskas,  
 Rev. Anthony Markus, Pastor  
 or [rob.martin@arcww.com](mailto:rob.martin@arcww.com)  
 All are invited.

**September 27, 2008** - 7:30 pm

### Concert - Dainius Vaicekonis

with Bremerton Symphony will perform Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No.1  
 Bremerton High School  
 Bremerton, WA

**September 18, 2008** (Thursday)

### Autumn Gala

Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God  
 3603 McRoberts Road \*  
 Pittsburgh, PA  
 Dinner, Hospitality reception, silent auction and basket raffle  
 RSVP 412 - 885 - 7232  
 Info: [www.osfprov.org](http://www.osfprov.org)

## OCTOBER

**October 10, 11, 12, 2008**

**12th Lithuanian Theater Festival**  
 Lithuanian Youth Center

5600 S. Claremont Ave.  
 Chicago, IL 60636-1039

Lithuanian language theater is alive in the U.S.

Every four years, the LAC Cultural Council celebrates Lithuanian American theatrical activity by sponsoring a Lithuanian Theater Festival.

**The 12<sup>th</sup> Lithuanian Theater Festival** was scheduled for the capital of American theater, New York, but plans have changed & the 2008 Festival will once again be held in Chicago, capital of the Lithuanian American theater. Six Lithuanian theater groups have registered to participate in the Festival. They are from Chicago, Los Angeles, Florida, Detroit and Toronto.

Special event! Saturday, **October 11**, afternoon "The Emperor's New Clothes" by the Lithuanian children's theater, from Toronto. For all info., contact Dale Lukas, Chair LAC Cultural Affairs Council, 301 - 598 - 6657, [dalelukas@verizon.net](mailto:dalelukas@verizon.net)

**October 11, 2008** - 6:00 pm

### Annual Fall Ball

Saturday - Marine Corps Air Station Officer's Club, Miramar, San Diego  
<http://www.lithsd.org>

## ANSWER TO TRIVIA QUESTION

### Trivia Quiz

on page 11

Answer: **d**

Source: *World-Nuclear Organization:*

"Lithuania has one nuclear reactor generating almost 70 % of it's electricity. In the northeast of the country Lithuania hosted the two large Russian reactors of their type known as RBMK.

These Ignalina reactors were originally 1500 MWe (1380M We net), but later de-rated to 1360 MWe (1185 MWe net).

Construction started in 1978 and they came on line in 1983 and 1987, with 30 year design life Lithuania assumed ownership of them in 1991. They are light-water, graphite-moderated types, similar to those at Chernobyl in the Ukraine. A third unit was planned but not completed and then demolished.

Their location is beside a large lake, which is used for cooling.

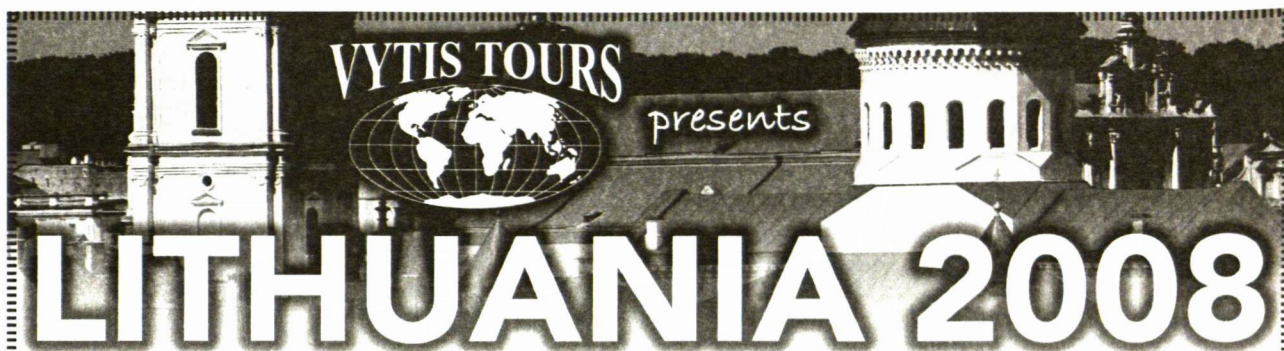
Due to strong EU concerns about the type of reactor, by the time

Lithuania applied to join the EU, it was required to close them both down. Hence unit 1 was closed in December 2004 and unit 2 is to be closed at the end of 2009.

Plans For New Capacity: In July 2006 Lithuania invited Poland to join with Estonia and Latvia in building a new large reactor in Lithuania to replace the Ignalina units being shutdown at EU insistence. Polish participation would justify a larger and more commercial unit such as an EPR. A 2006 feasibility study undertaken on behalf of the three Baltic states, showed that a new plant costing EUR 2.5 to 4.0 billion would be economically attractive and could be on line in 2015."

*Edward Shakalis*

*Edward Shakalis is a retired Electrical Engineer and a ham radio operator. He and his son Rick run "The Lithuanian Open" golf tournament.*



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PERIODICALS  
POSTAGE

July 4 - Independence Day    July 6 - King Mindaugas Day  
July 15 - 75th anniversary of the transatlantic flight by Darius and Girėnas  
August 15 - Feast of the Assumption (Zolinė)