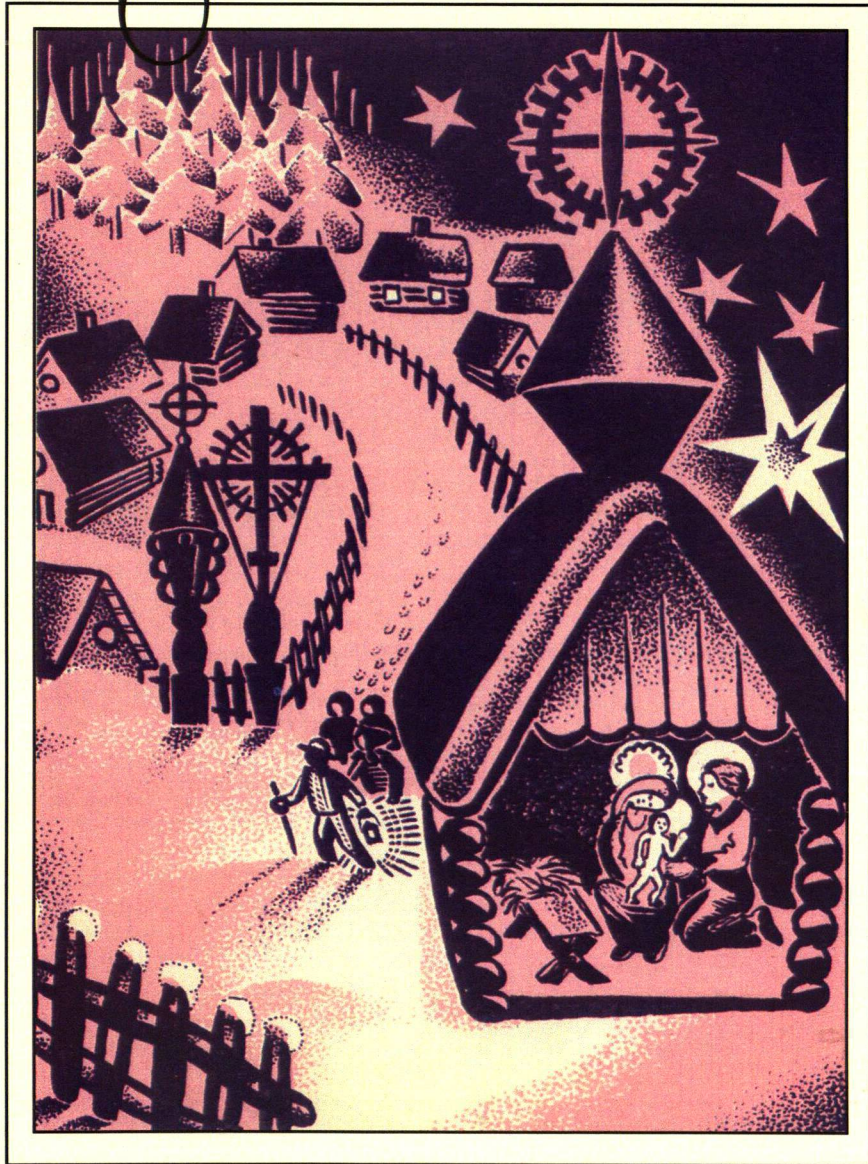


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december 2008

LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

Letter from the Editor

I can't believe I'm sitting here writing the final editorial for 2008. Where in the world did the time fly?

Before I lose any more time I would like to offer congratulations to the Lithuanian Music Hall in Philadelphia on its centennial. May the Grand Old Dame of Allegheny Avenue celebrate her bicentennial in a hundred more years. Congratulations also go out to "Žilvinas", the Lithuanian dance group in Philadelphia marking their 45th anniversary. Keep those dancing shoes in good shape - only five more years until your golden anniversary. Lithuanian Orphan Care marks its 15th anniversary this year and Child's Gate to Learning is celebrating its 10th year. To all our readers who made the Lithuanian Orphan Care "Christmas in July" such a success with your donations, sincere gratitude not only from the children in Lithuania but from me as well.

For this Christmas season we have a beautiful Christmas translation from Gloria O'Brien and Aldona Page shares her wonderful memories of Christmas many years ago in Lithuania. In this issue we welcome first time writer Laima Pacevicienė from Lithuania. Laima reminds us that Christmas to all people is not like a greeting card Christmas and that the realities of life don't take a holiday. The ending to her story is startling so don't take a peek before you finish reading it.

Before this year ends I want to thank all our very talented writers who share their talents with the Bridges readers. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for sharing your articles and thoughts with us.

I am also grateful to you, our readers and sponsors who have helped Bridges complete its thirty first year. Many of you have sent news articles, events, and kind words. I appreciate all of you. To Gema and Rimas, special thanks for going the extra mile. My sincere gratitude to the Lithuanian American Community, Inc. for their support of Bridges. And I can't forget my husband, Tim, who reads, rereads, and rereads again all the words that go into Bridges each month until he can recite the issue by heart.

Gema, Rimas, and I wish each of you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with peace, good health and happiness.

Christmas gift suggestions:

To your enemy, forgiveness.

To an opponent, tolerance.

To a friend, your heart.

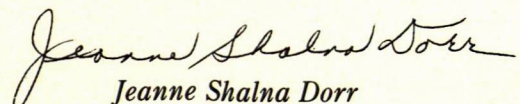
To a customer, service.

To all, charity.

To every child, a good example.

To yourself, respect.

OREN ARNOLD


Jeanne Shalna Dorr

BRIDGES

Lithuanian American News Journal
USPS 017131 – Published 10 times per year
(Jan./Feb. & Jul./Aug. combined).

Address of publication is:

LAC, Inc./BRIDGES,
3906 Lakeview Dr., Racine, WI. 53403

BRIDGES

is the official publication of the
Lithuanian American Community, Inc.

National Executive Board

2715 E. Allegheny Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19134
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**THE INFORMATION CENTER FOR
HOMECOMING LITHUANIANS**

Collects and provides information from Lithuania.

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78 Mark Twain Dr.
Hamilton Sq., NJ 08690

Subscription rate is \$20.00 annually, 2 full years
for \$38.00 (US Mail serviced subscribers).
Subscriptions to other addresses are (US
\$35.00), payable in advance (US funds).
Periodicals postage paid at Racine, WI & additional
locations.

Contact us on the Internet at:

<http://www.lithuanian-american.org>

Postmaster:

Send any address correction &/or changes to

LAC, Inc./BRIDGES,

78 Mark Twain Dr.
Hamilton Sq., NJ 08690

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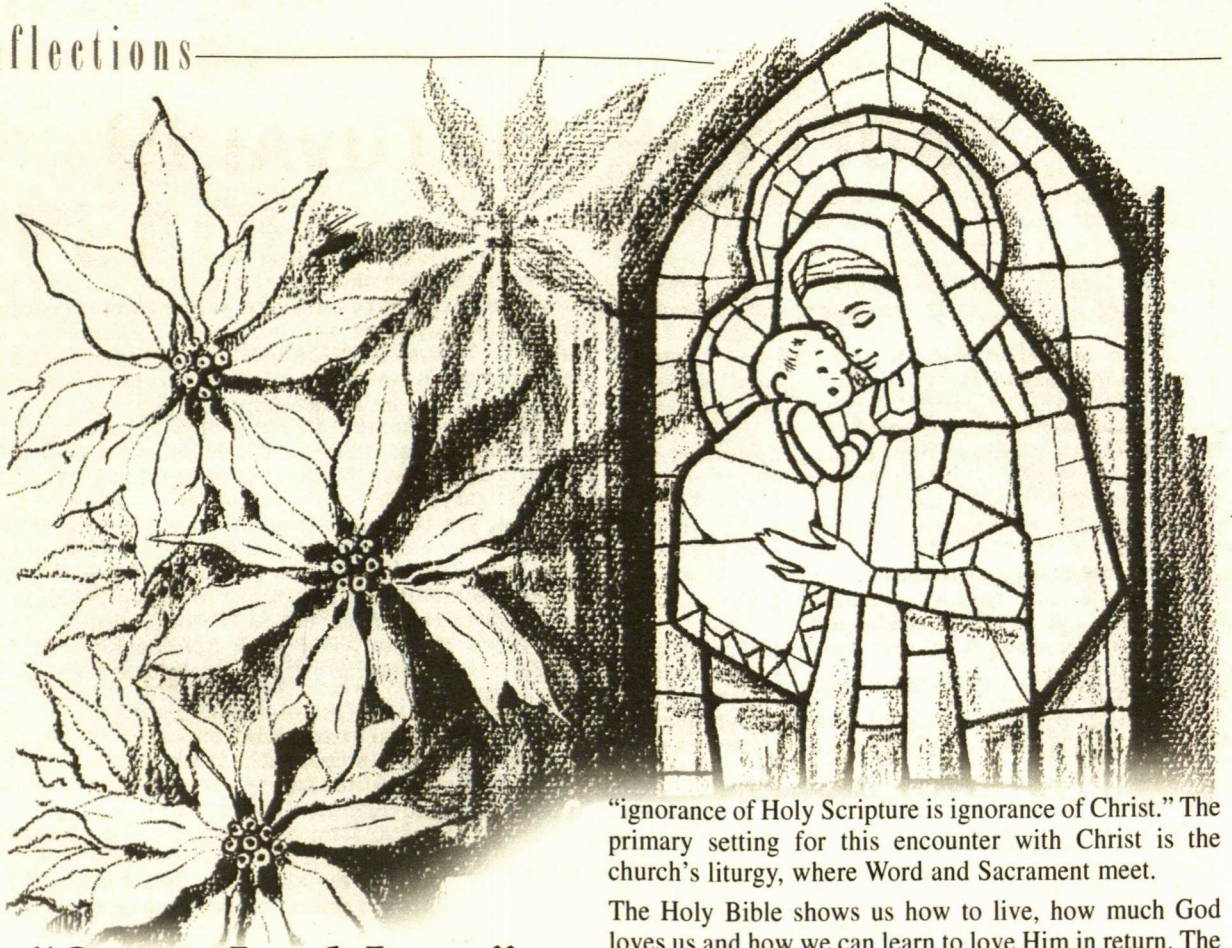
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*Cover: Is from a Chrism's card printed by "A teitis" Foundation.

This graphic art is by Paulius Augius-Augustinavicius. He was born on September 2, 1909 in Zemaičių Kalvarija, Lithuania. He died on December 7, 1960 of brain cancer in the United States. Paulius was sincere and engaging as a person. His distinguished place in Lithuanian graphic arts was acknowledged by his peers during his lifetime.



“Come, Lord Jesus”

Once Jesus said to his disciples: “Be watchful! Be alert!” This is a reminder to all of us as we begin a new liturgical year. We do admit that all of our life is an advent, a waiting for something we are not completely sure of. Advent is a wonderful joyful hope for the coming of the Lord. It teaches us as no other experience can, that there is more to life than material wealth. “What does it profit a person if he gains the whole world and loses his immortal soul?” (Matthew 16). Many people keep asking what are we to do? The answer is simple; we should click to the Word of God every day, not only during Advent season, but all the time.

Pope Benedict XVI said that “knowledge of Sacred Scripture is essential to the Church’s evangelizing the world. Only the Word of God can profoundly change the heart of each man.” That’s why the Bible is so important to each of us. God’s Word is inspired by the Holy Spirit, is a message from God mediated through Jesus Christ. We have to admit that God speaks in it to people as a best friend. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the center of the Scriptures and as St. Jerome puts it in his words, that

“ignorance of Holy Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” The primary setting for this encounter with Christ is the church’s liturgy, where Word and Sacrament meet.

The Holy Bible shows us how to live, how much God loves us and how we can learn to love Him in return. The Sermon on the Mount is universally admired by Christians and non-Christians alike, but seldom embraced in practice. The letters of St. Paul are an important part of the New Testament. They are there because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. St. Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians was the first book of the New Testament to be written until after Paul’s death. He wrote letters to answer questions and solve problems and remind his readers of the Gospel message.

We can also recall the words of Jesus in the Gospel of St. Matthew where He tells us that in caring for a person in need, we are actually caring for Him. “For I was hungry, you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me (Matthew 25). In closing let me say, Peace on Earth, goodwill to men – all praise to the newborn King-Jesus.

Sister Margarita Bareikaite

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

KŪČIOS & KALĒDOS

According to the ancient folk calendar, Kūčios and Kalėdos were celebrated to see off the old year and greet the new one. The night of December 24th was the longest, and from December 25th the sun returned, and the days grew longer.

Lithuanians celebrated Kūčios long before the establishment of Christianity. This holiday's name arose from the name of a ritual dish.

The food was so named - Kūčios. It was prepared from wheat or barley grains, beans and poppy seed milk, and was also a treat for the souls of the forefathers.

The day of Kūčios was special; everyone tried to finish all of their most important jobs. Most work fell to the women - they had to prepare the food for Kūčių dinner and for Kalėdos, and to straighten up the house. All the foods for the Kūčios table were prepared from vegetables, plants and fish. Everyone made preskūčius (kūčiuokus). These were hard cookies made from yeasty wheat-flour dough. They were eaten with poppy seed milk, which was poured over them. Kisielius, or cranberry pudding, was also eaten with preskūčius.

Cleanliness and purity were necessary when seated at the Kūčios table. One could not be angry, and had to forgive neighbors or relatives for any offences, and most important -- it was essential to repay all loans. During the day of Kūčios, very little was eaten, in anticipation of the ritual dinner. In olden times, people would sit at the table when the Evening Star appeared. The master of the house brought in an armful of hay and covered the table with it. The mistress would then spread her best white tablecloth over it, and begin serving the meal. There were usually twelve dishes - as many as the year has months. The eldest member of the family, or the master, greeted all assembled, gave thanks for the year's good crop, then broke bread and passed it around. Everyone ate quietly, composed and serious.

When the meal was finished, the table was left as it was, uncleared, because they believed that the souls of departed family members would visit during the night. Special honor was felt and shown to the departed during Kūčios.

The master would bring some of each dish from the meal to the animals in the cattle-shed. This was meant to demonstrate the similarity between humans and animals. The hay beneath the tablecloth, as well, was to show that people and animals are worth the same. The next day, that hay is given to the animals. In Christian times, the spreading of the hay beneath the tablecloth became connected with Christ's birth in the hay.

The night of Kūčios was interesting for its fortune-telling. During the meal each family member pulled a straw from beneath the cloth. Whoever pulled out the

longest straw would live the longest. The young girls would run outside to hear the dogs barking: whatever direction dogs were heard barking, from that direction a girl would get a husband. They would grab an armful of wood from the yard and bring it into the house to measure the sticks: if there was a matching pair, the girl would be married in the coming year. But if there was no pair, she would have to wait. They tried to kick their shoes off, over the fence or the roof of the house: whatever direction the shoe's toe would point, in that direction the girl would marry.

It was said that the night of Kūčios was full of curiosities: animals began to speak among themselves at midnight, but people were not allowed to listen to their talk -- if you heard them speak, you would die. It was said that water turned into wine, but for such a short time that it was impossible to get a taste.

Kalėdos morning, everyone rose early, and cleared off the table. The family usually stayed home on the first day of Kalėdos, and each told what they dreamed of that night, as it was believed that the dreams of Kalėdos eve would come true.

Lithuanians, from earliest times, believed in the magical power of salutations, compliments and greetings. For that reason, everyone impatiently waited for the Kalėdotojai. The most important purpose of the Kalėdotojai was to visit each homestead, greet the master and mistress, and wish them health and good harvest in the coming year.

Young men and ladies of the village were the Kalėdotojai, wearing odd costumes, and sometimes wearing masks. In thanks for their good wishes, the master and mistress treated them to food and drink, and sometimes gave them little gifts. Sometimes Kalėdų senis ("Kalėda") went from house to house, bragging that he carried a bag full of wealth, good harvests and good fortune. When Christianity was introduced, the ceremonies of "kalėdajimas" were taken up by the parish priests.

Kalėdos were full of various beliefs, guesses and suppositions about weather, for example: "If Kalėdų morning is clear and bright, the flax will grow well"; "If it rains on Kalėdos, the cows will give lots of milk the coming year"; "One must not break anything on Kalėdų morning, otherwise that year, animals' legs would break".

The rebirth of nature begins during Kalėdos: The days grow longer, and the dark nights shorter. The old year ends and the New Year begins.

Author: From "Lietuviškai Apie Lietuvą" By Evalda Jakaitienė

English Translation by Gloria Kivytaitė O'Brien

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



Remembering Childhood Days

As I sat by the window last Christmas Eve cleaning the mushrooms for a soup for Kūčios supper, my eyes kept wandering to the sky outside which I searched for gray clouds. I was looking for signs of snow, my mind going back to Christmases past when the ground was white and the evening air was bitterly cold and absolutely silent. In my childhood in Lithuania many years ago, Christmas Eve was a magical time when the whole family went over to my grandmother's house to celebrate with aunts and uncles, cousins and the young farmhands that helped work the farm for my grandparents.

From sunrise onward, my grandmother made sure that no one broke the day's fast before Christmas supper. With the women chopping, cutting, cooking, and baking, the kitchen was filled with their chatter, but most of all, such delicious smells that we children could not take it anymore and had to escape into the snowy fields and busy ourselves by the barn.

In the cold air we played games, threw snow balls at each other, and waded through the knee-deep drifts to the large wooden barn where we tried to sneak up unnoticed on the sheep, geese and piglets in their stalls. We were trying to listen in on the animals' conversations because, as everyone knows, on such an evening just before Christmas, all the farm animals talked in human voices. After crouching on

*On top of haywagon with cousins in summer
(Aldona is the 2nd from left)*

the straw floor a long while and failing to catch their special conversation, we would dash into the fir tree grove nearby to look for some evergreen branches to bring home. My grandfather didn't believe in the city ways and he didn't allow anybody to cut a Christmas tree in the woods and drag it into the house.



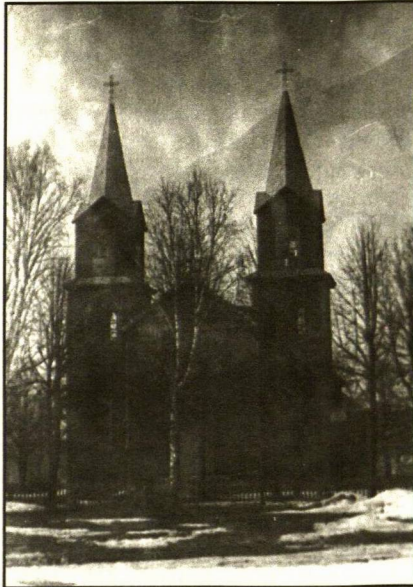
*In front of grandfather's house in Kirdeikiai,
Lithuania*

Stiff from cold, with feet and hands frozen despite our wool socks and mittens, we would return home in the evening dusk with the stars twinkling brightly in the sky. The little wooden farmhouse windows would be lit, a stream of smoke rising from the chimney and the dogs and

cats patiently waiting at the doorstep. The magic smells would meet us long before we opened the door, and there would be grandmother throwing the door wide open and scolding us for being so late and for bringing in all that snow into the house. And there, right across the kitchen in the parlor, stood the longest table clad in whitest linen cloth and ready for supper. Two massive kerosene lamps blazing atop the cupboard and tall beeswax candles on the table lit up the unbelievable variety of food in bowls and platters full of all sorts of amazing delicacies.

There were mushrooms, parsnips and carrots, baked trout, grilled pike and perch, marinated herring, fish soup, beet and bean salad, potato sausage, sour cream dumplings, poppy-seed milk, baked apples, cranberry pudding... and much more. Most importantly, there was a big overflowing bowl of little poppy-seed nuggets. You would eat the little crispy bread balls with soup or fish or with anything you liked. Grandfather would brew the tea in a big samovar and the evening supper would begin.

But before a single dish was tasted, grandfather



St. John's church in Kirdeikiai

would clear his throat and ask for silence. After a moment he would bow his head and say a prayer, then he'd reach for the Christmas wafer in the middle of the table which had been placed upon a handful of fragrant hay in a gold-rimmed dish. Breaking off a piece, he would offer it to grandmother, and then to his oldest son. At that point, everyone got to break a piece of the Christmas wafer he held. We children were very careful not to take too big of a piece in our excitement because it signified the start of the bountiful supper and our hungry little stomachs could barely wait another

moment to taste the other dishes.

I don't remember exactly which of the foods was best, but they all were very special and extraordinarily delicious. Before long, the evening would turn into night and my eyelids would become very heavy with sleep. All I can recall now is stuffing my pockets with the poppy seed nuggets so that when I woke up the next morning I wouldn't have to wait another full day for dinner which wouldn't be served until the evening.

I remember falling asleep with the moon watching over me through the little windowpanes of the cozy farm house full of family laughter and love.

As I finished preparing the mushroom soup, I saw that snow clouds would not be forming in the sky and snow never came to Philadelphia this past Christmas Eve. But I made a delicious mushroom soup, topping it with clouds and clouds of sour cream, reminding me of snows of yesteryear.

By Aldona Page

Aldona Page is a radio presenter in Philadelphia where she hosts the Lithuanian-American Radio Program on WNWJ-AM. She is also the director of the Lithuanian Folk Art Institute in Philadelphia, teaches the Lithuanian language to private students, and is an active member of the Lithuanian-American Community.



A visit in 1998 with family in Kirdeikiai

THE SILENT EVENING

At first she popped into the cattle-shed. This place was the most comfortable for her. She got calmed down by the sleepy warmth of the cattle and the ranting of the drunken husband seemed so far away. She always thought that cattle understood everything, only animals couldn't speak. But now the cattle-shed was empty. It was silent and soundless. She looked around and couldn't believe her eyes. Only the empty walls. She had such a great hope to talk to her cattle. All the walls of the cattle-shed were soaked with cattle feelings, their little joys and big fears. Where are they all now? Her cows and calves and heifers? They are sold, aren't they?

Somebody scratched and clanged outside, near the cattle - shed's wall. It was Rūdis, her dog, in his dog house. "Rūdi, Rūdi, ša ša ša" – called she, but the dog just bristled his fur and silently growled "Go away. You don't belong to this place. I don't know you." She replied: "Rūdi, you surely know me. Have you forgotten me?" Rūdis stopped growling and started whining: "I'm only a dog. I can't do otherwise. Please, go away." – and he slipped back into his dog house.

She was going down the path. The snowflakes were softly falling on the ground. "Surely, a silent evening" – she thought. Now she had time to enjoy snowflakes, but sometime ago, when the daughter was showing her a snowflake, melting on her palm, she rudely scolded her. At that moment she was nervously hurrying somewhere, perhaps she was troubled about un milked cows and uncooked lunch and all these snowflakes and her daughter seemed so absurd to her...

The path to the cottage. How many times she hurried down it without any stopping and looking back. All the time she was made to run after something, to hurry, to chase. Perhaps it was her disappointment, that her life wasn't going like she wanted and planned.

The door handle. How often she pressed it down with trembling fingers: What is waiting here, behind the door? Is everything in order? Maybe the husband is drunk again? Maybe again grasping her child she will have to run into the darkness of the night, into the snow, into the rain, into the nowhere? Run in order to come back after some time and listen to his repentance and believe in his words? Sometimes there, behind the door was silence and loneliness, and sometimes, though very seldom, there was a joyful atmosphere, a festival. The human heart tended to remember only the brightest moments

The porch was always welcoming. The first thing which was felt entering this place was THE SMELL OF THE HOME. Every home smells differently. And what about small flats in big cities? Maybe there you could smell carpets and furniture, and washing powder, and air fresheners but is it really THE SMELL OF THE HOME?

She wrapped herself into the warm darkness of the porch and tried to calm down. How many years passed since the last time she was there? One, or two, or maybe three years? Time now meant nothing to her. The familiar things in the porch now looked messy, sad and old.

It was silent at home. The sacred evening. Christmas Eve. The most wonderful evening and night. Their family always sat down for Christmas Eve supper after the first star appeared in the sky. They were always silent for a moment, thinking about that family member who has gone forever, who will never come back and only an empty plate will be put in his place. From father's hand they each broke a piece of sacred bread, the communion-in her language it was called "plotkelės", and accepted the words of blessing. Later on "plotkelės" were turned by the linguists into the "kalėdaičiai" but she liked the old word better. She tried to bring the light and solemnness of Christmas Eve evening into her family, but she failed. Maybe she wasn't so deep in her belief

as her parents. Of course there were twelve dishes on the table and these special tiny poppy cakes with poppy milk and more other tasty things to eat (she liked the cranberry jelly). But she wasn't a child any more – she couldn't believe any longer that animals can talk and that water can be turned into wine. She was simply a grown up and tired woman and she couldn't feel the mysterious light of Christmas Eve any longer.

One more door. This is like the thin wall between the dark porch and the warm world of the kitchen. She silently slipped in.

Silence everywhere. In the kitchen, on the table, on the gas stove, wherever there was a place left, there were piles of dirty dishes, corners were full of empty bottles and litter. Her lovely and clean kitchen world was destroyed, her castle was flattened to the ground. It seems there are long lasting parties every day. She couldn't stand this. She wanted to clean everything, but she knew she couldn't do this. She could only remember how she cleaned all the house before the festivals. In her opinion, the festival is not only the joy, the rest, the tastier food or drink, it is also the changes in the house. And now, in this cold and messy kitchen she couldn't feel any festival.

There wasn't any white as snow table cloth in the room. There wasn't any table cloth at all. All of the table was covered with ashes, there were two dirty forks and a piece of old bread.

After Christmas Eve supper her parents didn't allow the dishes to be removed. Everything was left on the table for the souls of the dead ones. When she was a small girl she wished to see these souls, and she always tried not to fall asleep. She imagined how all these souls, like thin shadows, come into the room, how they sit down round the table and eat. More and more of them are coming, the room is full of souls, they only eat and whisper to each other that there live good people who need to be happy and she, listening to their talk, gets sleepy

News and Views

Scarves knitted by Lithuanian pupils to warm children of Afghanistan

Vilnius - The soldiers of the eighth

Lithuania-led Ghowr Provincial Reconstruction Team (PAG-8) in Afghanistan presented about 500 scarves, knitted by Lithuanian pupils, to the schools of Chaghcharan. Afghan pupils also received notebooks and pencils.

During the preparation for mission in Ghowr province at the beginning of autumn, the soldiers of PAG-8 organized the action "Scarves of Lithuanian pupils to children of Afghanistan" in schools of Klaipėda, Telšiai and Tauragė counties and invited pupils to knit scarves for schoolchildren in Afghanistan.

The Lithuania-led mission in Ghowr province started its activities in June 2005. PAG-8 mainly consists of the soldiers of the third team of the Samogitian District of the National Defence Volunteer Forces.

Sample commemorative coin dedicated to Lithuanian nature approved

Vilnius (ELTA) The board of the Bank of Lithuania approved the 50 litas sample commemorative coin dedicated to the nature of Lithuania.

The graphic design of this coin was created by Vldas Oržekauskas and the plaster model was made by Alfonsas Vaura. The sample was minted by the company Lietuvos Monetų Kalykla (Lithuanian Mint).

The issue of this coin into circulation is planned for December 2008.

E-voting may be legalized in 2009 - Masiulis

Vilnius - The legalization of e-voting by the time of the elections into the European Parliament in 2009 is one of the most important suggestions of the Liberal Movement to the Government programme, Eligijus Masiulis, leader of the Liberal Movement, underlines.

He has become worried in the light of the reports appearing in the media claiming that one will have to wait for a long time for e-voting.

"Previous elections have clearly shown that everything should be done to encourage people to participate in elections. E-voting would be one of the most effective measures," Masiulis claims.

The politician thinks that Lithuania is technologically ready for the legalization of e-voting, all needed legal projects have been prepared. "Only political determines is missing, hopefully it will be demonstrated by the coalition partners."

In the same report, the leader of the Liberal Movement reminds that his party has been coherently striving to legalize the possibility of e-voting.

The worries that e-voting in the European Parliament, the Seimas, municipality councils elections and referendums will not be introduced for a long time were raised by the permission of the Public Tenders Council to cancel the tender on the purchase of experimental equipment for e-voting issued to the committee on the development of information society.

According to LTV "Panorama", the reason for this is the fact that no finances are foreseen in the budget for 2009 for the continuation of this project.

Information Center for Homecoming Lithuanians

and falls asleep. In the morning, awake, she always tried to find any signs left by the souls. It seemed to her that maybe the cup was overturned or the plate was moved from its place.

Having her own family she always left the dishes on the table after the Christmas Eve supper – maybe her daughter is waiting for the souls to come?

But now the table was empty. Really it is the time for her to leave, but she wanted to stay one minute longer, to have a look at the faces of the sleeping ones and to see what dreams they are dreaming.

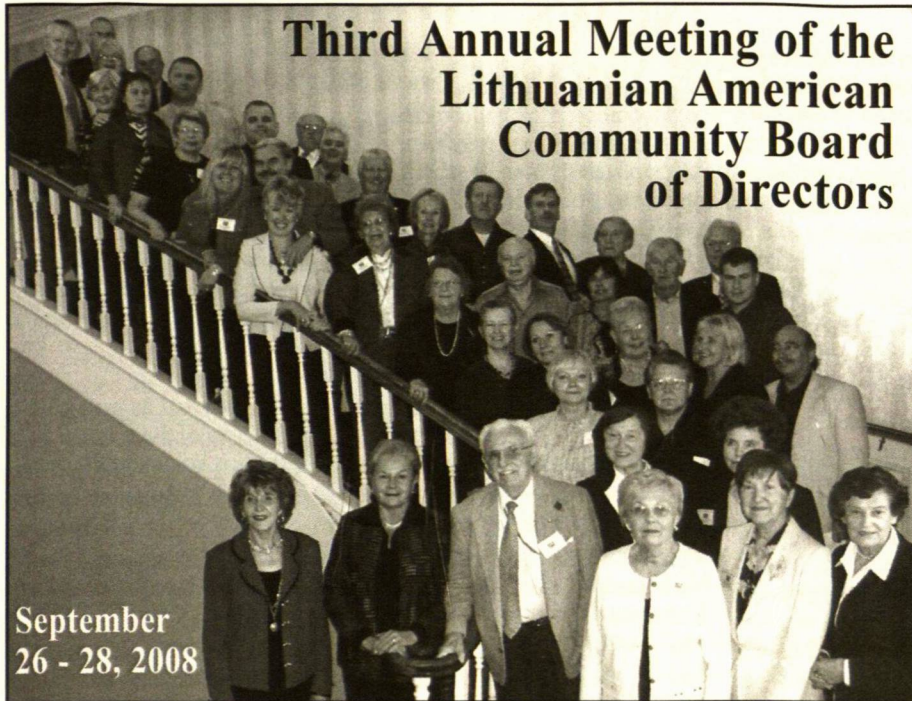
Her husband's face is angry and tired. It has been like this for several years already. The collective partnership was destroyed, the more cunning ones distributed the assets among themselves. Even earlier he wasn't interested in village life, he wanted to live in the city, but he couldn't find a place or a job there and he couldn't get adapted to the village as well. More and more often he found friends with whom he could share a bottle. And then at home everything was bad for him. Now looking at this so familiar face she couldn't feel any hatred for the sleepless nights, for the bruises and humiliation. If only she could understand earlier that with his fists he was trying to cover his weakness...

There was a young red head sleeping besides her husband. She wasn't seeing any dreams at all. Abuse of alcohol has already washed her dreams away. She attentively looked at that young woman but again she couldn't feel neither jealousy nor hatred.

Her daughter's sleep was jittery. It seemed as if she wanted to talk in her sleep. She was rolling from one side to the other. She noticed that her daughter's face is not washed properly, that her thin neck is dirty and her hair is uncombed and greasy. She wished so much to pat her head, to embrace her. When her daughter was rolling onto the other side, a dirty piece of paper fell down from under the blanket. There was an angel drawn here. She looked at the angel and whispered: "Please, take care of my daughter". For the last time she had a look at her child and saw how the tear slowly rolled down from the closed child's eye leaving a clean, rosy path on her dirty cheek. If she could, she would have dried that tiny tear with her lips, she would have hugged her only child. But she had neither lips nor hands. Only there was something left deep down in her heart. She even was not "she" any longer. She was IT – a lonely SOUL, which came back to her home on Christmas Eve evening....

Laima Pacevičienė

Laima Pacevičienė is a teacher in Lithuania. Her interests include writing poetry and stories.



Third session delegates preparing to depart after the final meeting

The Boston chapter of the Lithuanian American Community (LAC) hosted the Third Annual Meeting of the 2006-2009 LAC Board of Directors on the weekend of September 26 through 28, 2008 at the Sheraton Braintree Hotel. Lithuanian greetings and conversations echoed through the public areas, leading an easy path to the registration table. In spite of the heavy rain brought by a string of hurricane warnings in the Northeast, the required quorum was reached and the meeting started almost on time.

The first session on Friday afternoon was opened by the chair of the LAC Board of Directors, Danguolė Navickas. After the singing of the American and the Lithuanian national anthems, Father Stephen Žukas read the invocation. As part of a remembrance of departed members, Marija Remienė read a eulogy in honor of Dr. Petras Kisielius, a longtime activist in the LAC and former member of the Board of Directors who died on May 4, 2008, after which a moment of silence was observed for all departed members. Rima Girmius, the president of the Boston Chapter, and Mindaugas Žukauskas, the Boston District chair, warmly greeted the delegates.

Among the attending dignitaries were the Consul General of Lithuania in New York Ambassador Jonas Paslauskas and the Chairman of the Board of the Lithuanian Foundation Arvydas Tamulis. A pleasant surprise was the attendance of nine presidents of local chapters, each of whom gave a brief description of their chapter's membership and activities.

Third Annual Meeting of the Lithuanian American Community Board of Directors

Regina Narušis, president of the World Lithuanian Community (WLC), could not attend due to illness, but sent reports on the year's activities and the official position of the LWC on dual citizenship. Their reports were followed by the approval of the 2008 agenda and the minutes of the 2007 meeting in Philadelphia, PA.

In her report on the tasks and accomplishments of the LAC Board of Directors Presidium over the last year, Chairman Danguolė Navickas spoke about the commitment of the Presidium to follow the dictates of the resolutions and goals of the LAC by actively practicing what we preach. In addition to fulfilling the duties required of the Presidium, its members were actively involved in producing the

XVIII Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, the 400 year commemoration of Our Lady's apparition in Šiluva and work in a variety of charitable and community organizations.

A summation of the issues covered during the Fall 2007 and Spring 2008 meetings of the Lithuanian Parliament/WLC Commission was presented by commission co-chair Dalia Puškorius. The first meeting ended with a question and answer session.

The second meeting on Friday began with a discussion by LAC Executive Committee president Vytas Mačiūnas and Dr. Rimantas Vaitkus, VP of the LAC Executive Committee for Organizational Affairs on a plan to reconfigure the Board of Directors in such a way that local chapters would have better representation. Vytas Mačiūnas suggested reorganizing the Board into two Houses, the first a traditional Board of thirty elected directors, the second consisting of the presidents of the local chapters. It was agreed that there was not enough time to enact such a major change during this session and that it would be left for future Boards to perfect and enact.

Since the Seimas of the WLC is due to meet July 8-10, 2009 in Vilnius, Lithuania, the election of the U.S. delegation was addressed. It was decided to prepare a resolution allowing for a democratic election of 35 candidates in addition to two automatic representatives, the president of the LAC and the president of the U.S. Lithuanian Youth Association. The Organizational affairs committee undertook the task of

defining the rules of the election for the approval of the directors.

The last part of the second meeting was a comprehensive presentation by Algis Rugienius of modifications to the Rules and Regulations of the LAC prepared over the past year by the Bylaws commission. The areas covered were: LAC District Bylaws, LAC District Rules and Rules governing the election of the LAC Board of Directors. There was some controversy regarding the configuration of the Western District. One half of the committee presented a plan for the division of the Western District into three smaller districts, while the dissenting group proffered a Western District comprised of three electoral regions, similar to that of the Southeast District. After intense discussions, some of them heated, it was decided to present a single plan during the Bylaws Commission presentation on Sunday for approval by the Board.

After the second meeting it was time to take a breather from the day's work. The Boston chapter committee efficiently seated the delegates into a bus and some volunteer vehicles and transported them to a Welcome Party at the St. Peter's Lithuanian Parish Hall. There the delegates were treated to an evening of good food prepared, according to rumor, by Daiva Navickas (Does the woman ever sleep?) and music, including Lithuanian karaoke, a truly novel idea. Jurga Vidugirienė, the only candidate to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania from Lithuanians living abroad, introduced herself and gave a short summary of her platform. The tired but contented delegates were driven home to rest before another day of intense work.

On Saturday morning, the delegates jumped into a long and difficult day, for there were many issues to ponder and decisions to be made. The day started with the Third Meeting, dedicated to reports by Vytas Maciunas and the various members of the Executive Committee on the accomplishments of the past year. Since comprehensive reports were provided to all delegates before the meeting, the main focus was on difficulties encountered in accomplishing or failing to accomplish tasks assigned to the committee.

It was announced that the Executive Committee is organizing the XIV World Lithuanian Symposium on Arts and Science. The event will take place on November 26-30, 2008 in Lemont, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago.

Ramute Žukas read a report by Algis Lukas, who could not attend due to illness, on our required commitment to the preservation of our cultural heritage sites in the United States. This was followed by a question and answer session



Chair of the Board Danguole Navickas explains voting procedures to delegates

regarding all of the announcements of the current meeting.

The Fourth Meeting began with a comprehensive report on the huge success of the XIII Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival held on July 6, 2008 in Los Angeles by Jurgis Joga, one of the three co-chairs of the event. With over 1,100 dancers from the US, Canada and Lithuania participating and with more than 3,000 spectators, the festival exceeded expectations for an event never before held on the West Coast. The

delegates gave Jurgis and the festival committee a standing ovation for a task well done.

Following the financial reports, the Audit Committee evaluation and the proposed budget report was the presentation of the ruling by the Honor Court on the case regarding the alleged violation of rules during elections held by the local chapter in Philadelphia. The Honor Court ruled in favor of the Philadelphia chapter executive committee, finding no grounds for censure.

Arvydas Tamulis, Chairman of the Board of the Lithuanian Foundation, presented two proposed amendments to the LF bylaws: that provision be made for voting for the Board of Directors and the Audit Committee by mail or electronically and that transfer of offices are to take place at the first Board meeting of the fiscal year upon the approval of the Board. These amendments were voted upon and accepted by the LAC Board of Directors.

The Fifth Meeting began with a symposium on the subject of dual citizenship, which has been the main issue of the past year. Regina Narušis was to present the WLC position and give a report on her activities on behalf of dual citizenship over the past year. Due to illness, she could not attend, but Vaiva Vebraitė spoke on her behalf. Vytas Mačiunas and Liuda Rugienius presented their views. While all of the delegates are in favor of Lithuanian citizenship for persons of Lithuanian descent living abroad, even for those who have acquired the citizenship of the country to which they emigrated, some worries were expressed of what this could mean in the light of the invasion of Georgia by Russia. Unless the conditions are very strictly defined, there could be undesirable long term consequences.

After a discussion period, the delegates broke up into their respective groups to discuss religious, public, educational, bylaws, financial, cultural, sports, youth, social and organizational affairs. These separate meetings resulted in resolutions and guidelines for future activities, as well as requests or suggestions to the government of Lithuania regarding common issues.

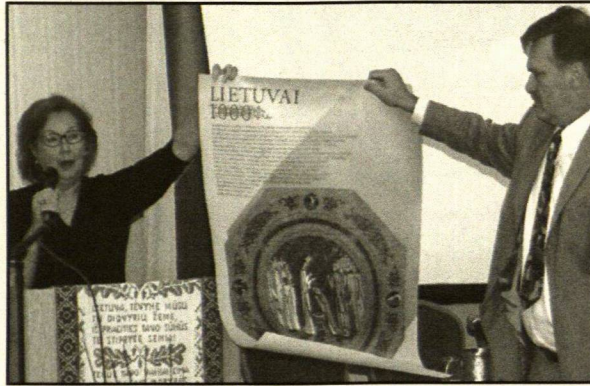
Saturday evening the delegates were again driven to St. Peter's for Mass said by Fr. Žukas, then to the South Boston Lithuanian Club for dining and entertainment. The evening's festivities, again organized by Rima Girnius and the Boston chapter of the LAC, started with a banquet attended by delegates, their spouses and guests from the Boston area. After an excellent dinner, Vytas Mačiunas presented short testimonials to renowned members of the Boston chapter of the LAC and thanked the Boston chapter for hosting the Annual Meeting. Danguolė Navickas also thanked the Boston hosts on behalf of the Board of Directors. Entertainment was provided by the Lithuanian folk music ensemble "Jaunų Sirdzių (Young Hearts)" directed by Rima Girnius and made up mostly of the Boston LAC executive committee members. A highlight of their program was a memorial to the intensely popular Vytautas Kernagis, the great Lithuanian entertainer who died this year of cancer. The friendly, cozy evening ended much too soon, but duty called and duty required a good night's sleep.

The sixth meeting on Sunday morning began with the approval of four members of the LAC Executive Committee, some new, some replacing retired members: Elona Vaišnys, Chair of the Public Affairs Council, Birutė Bublys, Executive Vice President and Daina Krivickas, Treasurer.

The various commissions presented their resolutions for approval. Among the major approved resolutions were the following:

The Organizational Affairs commission presented a resolution that the suggested restructuring of the Board of Directors into two Houses be presented as a survey to the various local chapters for approval. It also presented a method for the election of the 35 delegates to the WLC Seimas, starting with nominations from the roster of the Board of Directors, then of Chapter Presidents, then of open nominations from the entire LAC via the usual informational channels. The members of the general public would have to fill out an information sheet and collect ten nominating signatures. The contract with the nonpartisan public affairs group Santalka in Lithuania was approved. This group fosters greater information and transparency for the election process in Lithuania.

Among the Public Affairs commission resolutions was one



Chair of the Cultural Affairs Council of the Executive Committee Dalė Lukas and LAC Executive President Vytas Mačiunas unfurl a poster proclaiming 2009 as the 1,000th anniversary of the name of Lithuania

calling for the institution of a work group of Board members and experts in the field of citizenship who, based on the observations regarding dual citizenship during this meeting, would recommend a unified position on this matter. Also on this subject, the Board urges the Lithuanian Parliament to present amendments to laws on dual citizenship which would enable Lithuanian citizens living abroad to preserve their Lithuanian citizenship without having to give up the citizen-

ship of their country of residence.

The Bylaws commission presented a compromise resolution which would create three electoral districts in the Western District for the election of the Board of Directors. All of the rules and regulations amendments presented by the commission were approved.

The Cultural resolutions consisted of making the 1,000 year celebration of the existence of the Lithuanian nation the primary focus of cultural events in the year 2009. The resolution to mark the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Zalgiris was among others approved.

Resolutions by the Financial, Educational, Religious, Social, Sports, Youth commissions were also approved by the Board. All of the approved resolutions will be published in the press and on the LAC website. Those which address relations between Lithuania and Lithuanian Americans will be sent to the appropriate branches of the Lithuanian government.

The last session on Sunday afternoon started with an attempt to select the site of next year's meeting. The destruction to the Houston area by this year's hurricanes resulted in the Boards' reconsidering of the invitation from the Houston chapter to hold the 2009 meeting there. This matter is still undecided, but the Presidium will work on finding another location.

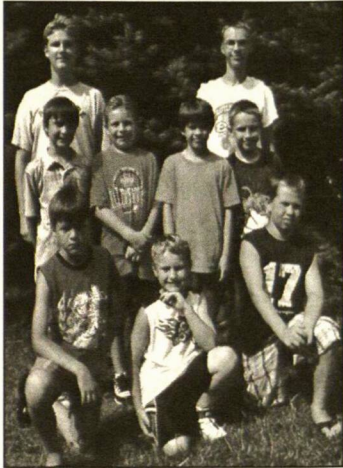
After a final discussion period, the delegates sang "Lietuva Brangi" before heading home on a dark and stormy afternoon.

Danguolė Navickas

Photos by Rimas Gedeika

Danguolė Navickas is the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Lithuanian American Community, President of the Los Angeles chapter of Lithuanian Children's Hope, Vice-president of the XIII Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival which took place in LA in July 2008 and served as a member of the Los Angeles committee for the 400 year commemoration of the apparition of Our Lady of Šiluva. She has been active in the Lithuanian American Community since she was a young adult, as the LA Chapter president, a member of the Western District executive committee and a member of the National Board of Directors.

MEET OUR YOUNG WRITERS...



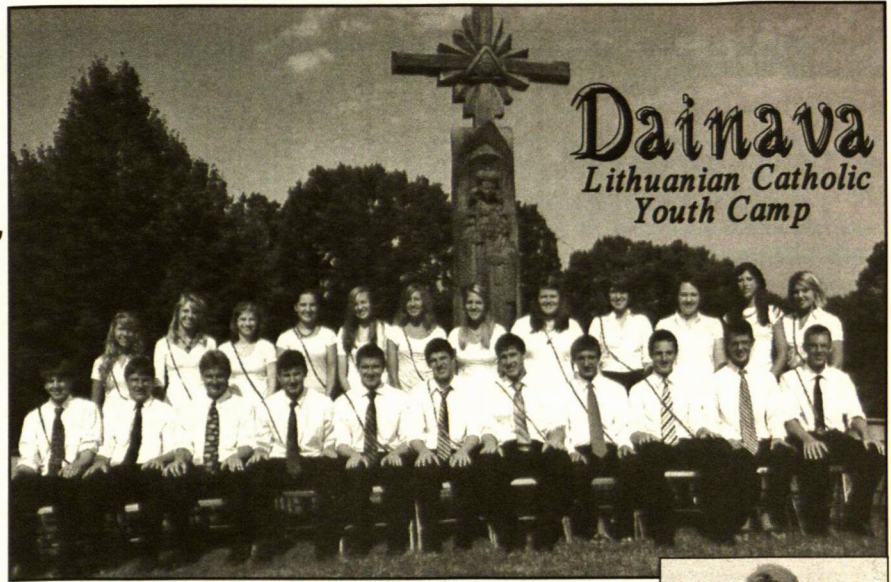
My little men



Future leaders of America



Friends forever!



The young camp counselors

Every year I look forward to the end of school, and the beginning of summer vacation. Besides family vacations to places like Ocean City, New Jersey, Mexico, and Hawaii, I have been attending Lithuanian Catholic youth camp for "Ateitininkai" as Camp Dainava since I was in fourth grade. This camp is located in Manchester, Michigan and recently celebrated 50 years of existence. This year (2008) I became a counselor for the "jaunučiai" or grade-school age campers.

My boys came from Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland. I was assigned to take care of seven boys who were eight years old. My partner also assigned to this group was Kristijonas Vaitkus from Cleveland, Ohio. During the camp's entire week we played sports, learned Lithuanian traditions, songs, and dances. Evening campfires let us organize our groups for plays and talent performances. I taught my group about fishing and helped them try it in Lake "Spyglys". At times the boys got into mischief but overall they were a good group. Being a counselor was much harder than being a camper. You always have to be aware of where your campers are and what they are doing. When a camper gets homesick you have to figure out a way to cheer them up and get them back into enjoying camp's activities. I enjoyed being a counselor and hope to have the privilege of doing it again in future years.



Alex cheered up this young camper

Aleksandras Kučas

Aleksandras is a junior at St. Joseph's Preparatory School in Philadelphia, PA



Fun time!



I feel confident!



Class work for all!

CHILD'S GATE TO LEARNING COMMEMORATES ITS 10th ANNIVERSARY

PART I

"Bridges" has featured articles about the U.S.-based humanitarian aid organization, "Child's Gate to Learning"... Now commemorating its tenth year of work for Lithuania's children, the organization recognizes that support is still needed...

"Life is a fairy tale" (Gyvenimas kaip pasaka). That is a suitable theme for a summer camp, but real life isn't a fantasy. There are some harsh realities. Still, for the campers from Vilnius, Lithuania at-risk families, the 2008 fairy tale-themed one week camp was a welcome escape. For a week, they and the counselors immersed themselves in arts and crafts, sports and games, acted in plays, were visited by good witches who read them stories about interesting people and magical places. The campers didn't know or care that the organizers of the camp spent many months preparing activities and training the counselors, so that all would meet the campers' special needs. Similar camps were organized for at-risk families' children in other areas of Lithuania. For example, in Užpaliai, the camp was called "Perkūnas", named after the mythical god of thunder. Those camps were primarily run by Lithuanian after-school centers attended by the children during the school year. The directors of the centers expended considerable energy to find funding so that the camps could take place. In some cases, the camps took place at the centers themselves, or, as in the case of the camp organized by the Vilnius "Angel of Hope" (Vilties angelo) center, campers



"Child's Gate to Learning" coordinator in Lithuania, Žydrūnė Liobikaitė (center, back row in dark baseball cap), another counselor, and the children who attended the 2008 summer camp "Life is a fairy tale" (Gyvenimas kaip pasaka).

actually "escaped" the city to a quiet area outside of the city, rented specifically for the center's camp. In all cases, after a short respite, the children and youths returned to their familiar settings, to home lives filled with their ups and downs, to families that have social challenges, in many instances complicated by parental alcohol abuse. In the fall, the children and youths returned to school and to after-school school centers that they attend.

Tenth anniversary

In human years, reaching the age of 10 is not particularly noteworthy. That age is just another pre-adolescent year, an age for youthful discovery and anticipation. In an organization's life, especially that of a humanitarian aid organization, reaching a 10th anniversary can be a stop at the crossroads. An organization's officers and members can't help but ask themselves: Is the mission of the organization still valid? Are those being helped still in need? Does the organization still have supporters and persons to do the work? Some organizations don't last that long, others continue on for 50 years or more...

The organization, "Child's Gate to Learning" (Vaiko vartai į mokslą), was founded in 1998. The organization was started by a small group of Lithuanian-American educators and social workers who were concerned about reports they were hearing from Lithuania about the numbers of children who were not attending school. The initial group grew into an organization whose stated mission is to help the neglected children of Lithuania - by creating an appropriate environment for the pursuit of education and character building. The group and its activities evolved through the years. Vocabulary changed and evolved, even in describing the children ("street children", "asocial children", "problematic children", now "children from at-risk families")... What does the group presently do? Members in the Chicago-



"Child's Gate to Learning" officers at a meeting in Lemont, IL.



Rita Venclovas, coordinator of programs for Lithuania (right), with 2008 Kaunas seminar attendees from the supported center, "Aušrinė" in Naujoji Akmenė.

based organization, along with support groups in various U.S. cities, do fund-raising, send packages of supplies that are expensive or not easy to acquire in Lithuania. The group's officers visit supported centers (some are able to spend a month or more in Lithuania each year) and keep in communication with the organization's coordinator in Lithuania. The organizations' editorial group in the Chicago area has prepared five character-building programs that are used in the supported after-school centers and the organization has invited sponsored center directors and volunteers to seminars held in Kaunas to introduce the new programs – more about that later.

Here are examples of fund-raising events in September-December 2008. The group's officers in the Chicagoland area sent 28 boxes of playground and crafts supplies, shoes, clothing, and knapsacks to supported centers in Lithuania. (These are often hard to find or expensive to acquire in Lithuania). A November fund-raiser at a private home, and a 10th anniversary information session in early 2009 are planned. A Sunny Hills, FL support group member wrote that plans are underway to again organize an annual December fund-raising luncheon (the 40+ retirees are loyal and supportive!). The coordinator of the Philadelphia group wrote that a "Child's Gate to Learning" table will be set up at the annual Lithuanian Music Hall Fair (Mugė) well attended by locals of non-Lithuanian heritage. A coordinator of the Detroit group wrote that plans are underway for a pre-Thanksgiving informational session/luncheon during which the first organization documentary film, "Children of God" (Dievo vaikai) will be shown, while in September, Lithuanian school children and their families were asked to donate knapsacks and crafts supplies. (In Washington, D.C. fund-raising takes place usually at the annual Lithuanian scout bazaar, "Kaziuko mugė". Last year, one young scout donated his Confirmation money gifts to the

organization. In Cleveland, an annual fund-raising luncheon is usually held in the Lithuanian parish hall sometime after Easter. Members of the Lithuanian Catholic Youth Association, "Ateitis" donated the proceeds of their t-shirts sold at their winter camp in Michigan (Dec. 26 - Jan. 1). In 2008, the organization sent approximately \$50,000 to its supported centers, through its coordinator in Lithuania. Financial support for the new year will be transferred to the Lithuanian centers in December 2008 and each center is expected to send regular reports of how the funding is used, how the character building programs have been implemented.

In an article in the March 10, 1999 issue of the Lithuanian language newspaper, "Draugas", one of the organization's founders, Aldona Kamantas, started an article by pointing out how common it is to hear that help is needed to support Lithuania's senior citizens, orphans, families with many children, former partisans, those who returned to Lithuania after being deported to Siberia, etc. We help however much we can, she wrote, with financial donations, packages, our work, although it all seems that this is only a drop in an ocean... At the time of the group's founding, people asked - why another humanitarian organization? Isn't it possible to join all of the efforts "into one big pot"? A. Kamantas contended that the work of the group did not duplicate the work of other (Lithuanian-American) organizations, and it should also be noted, that the field (to be plowed) of humanitarian aid work is big... (or as it is said in the Bible, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.")

So, in 2008, "Child's Gate to Learning" officers and members continue their work and presently support nine after school centers in eight different Lithuanian cities, towns and villages, attended by approximately 400 children annually. Where are these centers? Vilnius (2), Kaunas, Marijampolė, Kazlų Rūda, Užpaliai, Rumbonys, Žemaičių Kalvarija... Will adequate funding and support ever be found for such centers in Lithuania? Will alcoholism and other social problems decrease in Lithuania? That will be up to Lithuania's government and social agencies, and Lithuania's people. Presently, center directors, many of them social workers or educational psychologists by profession, maintain the centers in their communities. They fill out paperwork - forms and requests to funding agencies in Lithuania and elsewhere, seeking to ensure that the centers will have adequate funding to maintain the centers, feed the children, provide them with occasional outings and activities. "Child's Gate to Learning" did not found these centers, nor is it the only source of financial support for the centers, but as more than one center director has indicated, the group's constant and unceasing moral and

human interest

financial support provide a great sense of comfort and a guarantee that when other funding is not forthcoming because of bureaucratic paperwork or other reasons, centers can continue to function and pay their bills, not having to shut their doors to the children and youths they serve. Additionally, the organization's character building programs help centers creatively plan additional, meaningful activities for the children...

"Child's Gate to Learning" maintains a website, www.childgate.org, which contains more information and a photo gallery. At the XIV Lithuanian Symposium on Arts and Sciences, to be held in Lemont, IL, November 26-30, 2008, group officers will share the organization's experience and hope to continue a dialog with Lithuanian and Lithuanian-American professionals. The paper is entitled, "Five" educational programs and collegial support of Child's Gate to Learning "for its supported after school centers and temporary shelters in Lithuania".

More about the children, volunteers, the character building programs & the continued need for our efforts in Part 2.

The children and youths who attend the center are sometimes stigmatized at school, called "stinky", because their home lives are not always conducive to good hygiene, so centers, as soon as they can afford to do so, install shower facilities and washing machines, provide toothbrushes and combs...

"Child's Gate to Learning" formed an editorial committee that since 2000 has produced five character building programs for use in the centers. The committee's members, primarily teachers and social workers by training, have pro-



Washington, D.C. support group coordinator, Teresė Landsbergis (right), with volunteers, Audronė Pakštys and Algis Reventas, who helped her staff the humanitarian aid table at the Kaziuko mugė (Lithuanian scout bazaar).

duced thematic programs ("lesson plan ideas") that can be used for activities with the children, after they complete their homework, eat, do arts and crafts, sing or play in the fresh air outside...

Continued next month....

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.



REMEMBERING Father Albin Gurklis, M.I.C. *"A diamond in the eyes of God"*

God called Father Albin J. Gurklis M.I.C., 90, of Chase Road, Thompson, CT home on October 31 2008, where he was convalescing at the Matulaitis Nursing Home in Putnam, CT. Born in Waterbury, he was the son of the late Dominick and Barbara (Breidies) Gurklis.

Father Gurklis graduated from Marianapolis Preparatory School in Thompson, CT. After completing the novitiate, Father Gurklis entered the order of the Marians of the Immaculate Conception. He professed his first vow on July 16, 1940. After his third year of theology, he professed his final vows on July 16, 1943. On August 8, 1943, he was ordained a priest at Marianapolis College. Following his ordination, Father Gurklis completed his fourth year of theology.

Father Gurklis was assigned to Marianapolis Preparatory School to teach and dedicated his life to teaching mathematics.

From September 1950 to January 2008, Father Gurklis was a Provincial Councilor, a House Councilor, Assistant Headmaster, a resident prefect, and house secretary.

After teaching math all week, on Friday afternoons Father Gurklis would leave for Holy Trinity Church in Hartford (57+ miles each way) where he celebrated Lithuanian Masses for more than thirty three years. He was dedicated and dependable. He also assisted the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Putnam, CT. He is survived by a brother, John Gurklis of Columbus, OH.

A Mass of Christian burial was held November 4 in the school chapel of Marianapolis Preparatory School. A Memorial Mass was celebrated on November 5 at the National Shrine of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, MA. Burial followed in the Marian Cemetery in Stockbridge, MA. Memorial donations may be made in Father Gurklis' memory to the Marian Seminary Fund c/o Marianapolis Preparatory School, 26 Chase Road, Putnam, CT. 06260.

*Submitted by Leona E. Swaka,
Vytis Correspondent, Knights of Lithuania*



Lithuanian American Community of Cape Cod

ALL SAINTS AND ALL SOULS DAY



Members followed a Lithuanian tradition and left candles on the graves.



Members of the Cape Cod Lithuanian American Community gather at St. Francis Xavier Cemetery to honor loved ones and deceased members of their community.

Members of the Lithuanian Community of Cape Cod gathered at the Cemetery of St. Francis Xavier in Centerville to remember loved ones and other countrymen who are buried there. November the first was a beautifully sunny day and twenty one people came together to place candles at the grave sites.

Regina Petrutis spoke a few words about this solemn occasion, how we are following a hallowed Lithuanian tradition in this commemoration. After saying a few prayers four other members read lists of people buried in various parts of the cemetery. We all went to different sections where former members were buried and lit candles placing them at the grave sites. Glowing and flickering candles gave up smoke to the heavens asking for light and peace to those resting eternally.

On Sunday, Nov. 2, at Our Lady of Assumption Church in Osterville, MA, a Mass was held for the departed souls at 12 pm. A group of us attended praying for deceased friends and relatives. After Mass we gathered at Wimpy's, a restaurant near the church, for brunch and fellowship.

Aurelia N. Borges

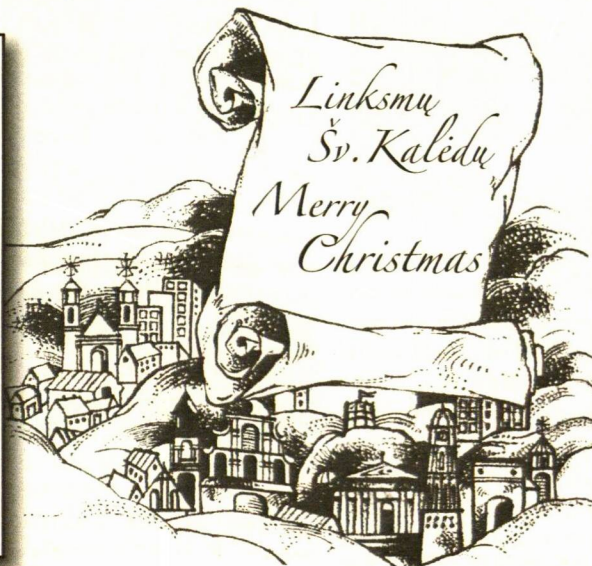
TRIVIA QUESTION

(No.25)

Parliament

How many members are in the Lithuanian Parliament?

- (a) 275
- (b) 141
- (c) 50



The unicameral Lithuanian parliament, the Seimas, has 141 members who are elected to four-year terms. 71 of the members of the legislative party must receive at least 5% of the national vote to be represented in the Seimas. Edward Shakalis represented in the Seimas. Edward Shakalis is a retired Electrical Engineer and a ham radio operator. He and his son Rick run "The Lithuanian Open" golf tournament.

Source-Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

ANSWER TO TRIVIA QUESTION



Žilvinas Celebrating 45 Years of Lithuanian Folk Dances In Philadelphia, PA

At the 2008 Beijing Olympics, athletes from around the world competed for medals and broke records for the glory of their country. We marveled at their dedication and the

intensity of their training for the last four years to reach the Olympics.

Closer to home in Philadelphia we also marvel at years of dedication and enthusiasm – in this case 45 years – as the “Žilvinas” group of Lithuanian national dancers has persevered to not only keep alive but to share the art of national dancing to a wide audience. Through more than four decades of dedication, they have brought the art of Lithuanian folk dancing not only to our Philadelphia community, but also to other cities and states, and to the worldwide audiences through their travels and appearances on television.

Founded in 1963 by two passionate supporters of Lithuanian culture Genovaitė Maciūnienė and Irena Bendžiūtė-Lapurkienė, the Lithuanian National Dance Group “Žilvinas” of Philadelphia was first directed by Irena Bendžiūtė. At that time, Lithuania was still under Soviet occupation and the Lithuanian exiles were cut off from their home country in the years when free travel to Lithuania was impossible. During this period, the performance of national dances connected exiles to the native country and preserved and expanded the culture and the traditions while also marking an intense longing of the lost homeland.

Soon after being founded, the “Žilvinas” Dance Group participated in the Lithuanian National Dance Festivals in Chicago; first in 1963, then in 1968 and 1972. The festivals were widely attended and appreciated by Lithuanians and Americans alike. Many Chicago government officials participated at the Festivals and, in 1976, First Lady Betty Ford attended the Lithuanian Dance Festival in Chicago and forwarded encouraging words from President Ford regarding Lithuania’s freedom.

The National Dance groups located in various countries either at their local performances, at festivals, or at various celebrations have always brought attention of Lithuanian people, offered visibility of Lithuanian culture and put the

Lithuanian nation’s plight in focus. The dancers were the individual messengers of faith in future freedom.

After Lithuania regained its independence in 1991, the “Žilvinas” group reorganized into a veterans group, Estera Bendžiūtė-Washofsky became the new director, and Lynn Cox agreed to accompany the dance group on the accordion. The newly reorganized and revitalized group widened its activity space.

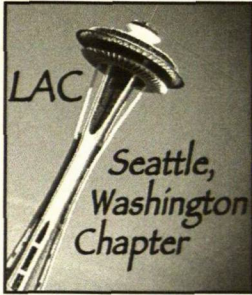
Ever since 1993, the group has participated in the annual Lithuanian Arts and Crafts Fair organized by The Lithuanian Music Hall, and, in the same year “Žilvinas” danced at the 70th Jubilee Celebration of St. Andrew’s Church. They danced at the “Lithuanian Music Festival” in Sergeantsville, NJ, Lithuanian Picnic in Polanka Park, PA. It also organized a Mini Dance Festival at the Lithuanian Music Hall, participated in “Living Arts Theatre” in Westmont, NJ and danced at the Lithuanian Days festivities in Frackville, PA.

It seemed that the group was unstoppable. In 1997 they danced at the Whitemarsh’s St. Tomas Parish accompanied by carillon bells, in 1998, and ’99 danced at St. Peter and Paul parishes in Elizabeth, NJ; the Villa Joseph Nursing Home in Holland, PA; entertained the wedding guests in New Holland, PA; participated in the Washington D.C. Lithuanian Festival, and so on and so forth...

But undoubtedly the greatest experience they had was when they danced in Lithuania in 1998 at the worldwide Lithuanian Dance Festival in Vilnius. A multitude of dance groups arrived from all over the world to participate in the Dance Festival, and I was one of the lucky ones visiting Lithuania at that time and had the opportunity to witness the joy and pride on the dancers’ faces when they marched in the parade on Gediminas prospect, beaming great happiness in being able to feel their country’s earth under their steps.

Upon returning to Philadelphia, “Žilvinas” didn’t stop their activities. The following years until the present were full of performances, tours, and guest appearances. Some of the highlights include the performance in the Dragon Boat World Championship Races at the Schuylkill River in 2001, and the participation in the Pennsylvania University Archeology and Anthropology International Festival at the University Museum in 2004. Here we might stop, but it is important to mention that all through these years, since the inception in 1963 even though the times and the dancers changed, the leaders of the group faithfully held on, and

Continued next page →



St. Martin's Eve

Last year Seattle's three Baltic communities put together a family-oriented St. Martin's Eve party for the very first time. In many ways St. Martin's Eve is the equivalent of America's Halloween. Most children and adults came in masks and costumes. The event which included

a silent auction, a pork roast dinner, entertainment and dancing was so popular it was repeated again October 25th at 6:30 pm at the Latvian Center at Northgate. Proceeds from the event were donated to the Baltic Studies Program at the University of Washington.

Historical meaning of Mardipäev

For centuries, Mardipäev (St. Martin's Eve or Martinmas) has been one of the most important and cherished days in the Estonian folk calendar. Celebrated on Nov. 10, it remains popular today, especially among young people and the rural population.

Originating in France, the tradition of celebrating Martinmas spread to Germany in the 16th century and later to Scandinavia and the Baltics. In Estonia Western European customs merged with the local Balto-Finnic pagan traditions. It also contains elements of earlier worship of the dead as well as certain year-end celebrations that predate Christianity.

Martinmas marks the end of field work and the beginning of the harvesting period. Following these holidays, women traditionally moved their work indoors for the winter, while men would proceed to work in the forests.

Customs

St. Martin himself was considered the patron of beggars and this has contributed to the custom of begging for charitable gifts on this day. In Estonia, children often go from house to house singing their Martinmas songs and wishing households good luck for crops, cattle and for the household in general.

Martinmas is a male holiday, since it honors a male saint. When men went singing and dancing door-to-door, one of the men was disguised as a woman. Masks of animals, such as bears, goats and rams are common.

with a great dedication and endurance every year they brought out "Žilvinas" dancers on stage!

For the countless hours spent in rehearsals, for their resolute determination training the dancers, the directors of the "Žilvinas" group Irena and Eštera Bendžiūtės without a doubt deserve the highest rank of gold medals on reaching this remarkable landmark.

In addition to their usual performances the group is planning an excursion to Australia in December 2010 to participate in the Lithuanian Days Dance Festival in Melbourne.

The customary culmination of the holiday is the Martinmas supper, which involves the eating of many rich foods, especially meat products. The food traditionally eaten on St. Martin's day is goose. According to legend, Martin was reluctant to become bishop, which is why he hid in a stable filled with geese. The noise made by the geese betrayed his location to the people who were looking for him.

The tradition of eating goose on this holiday was mainly enjoyed by the wealthy. Most Estonians instead ate other types of birds, such as chicken. Some also ate pork and lamb.

A St. Martin's Night Party, filled with traditional folk dances, musical performances and games, has traditionally culminates the activities. And the commonly gathered St. Martin's harvest is shared and used. In some districts of the country, such as in Läänemaa, the evening also includes the theatrical St. Martin's Wedding, an imitation wedding with a couple costumed as bride and groom.

*Rimvydas Miksys
Lithuanian American Community
Washington State (Seattle) Chapter*



Congratulations to
"Žilvinas"
on their 45th year Jubilee!
And may the dancing never end!

Aldona Page

Aldona Page is a radio presenter in Philadelphia where she hosts the Lithuanian-American Radio Program on WNWR-AM. She is also the director of the Lithuanian Folk Art Institute in Philadelphia, teaches the Lithuanian language to private students, and is an active member of the Lithuanian-American Community.

** Illustration is from "The 5th Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival" book.*



BOS2008 IS Back in Vilnius

This summer, from June 29th to July 2nd, BOS2008 (Balticum Organicum Syntheticum 2008), I returned once more to Vilnius where 300 organic chemists from around the world heard experts in

the field talk about topics ranging from cutting-edge pharmaceuticals research to the use of catalysts to put complex molecules together. A total of four Nobel laureates have appeared at BOS from its inception. This year was no different with a lecture given by prof. Jean-Marie Lehn from Paris. At the age of 68, prof. Lehn drove a rental car from St. Petersburg, Russia, to Estonia, Latvia, and finally to Vilnius. He complained about the need for four different currencies along the way and hoped that the euro would soon become the denomination in the Baltics. The professor is unbelievably full of energy and he spoke about several avenues of research that his international group of postdoctoral associates is pursuing. His favorite topic is the self-assembly of molecules to form exquisite macrostructures by the same principle that nature uses to build the "rungs of the ladder" of DNA. The Lithuanian newspaper "Respublika" published a whole page interview with prof. Lehn while he was in Lithuania.



BOS2008 Conferees at the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences Auditorium

Other famous professors included Sir Jack Baldwin from Oxford University in England, and professor Dieter Seebach from the Eidgenösische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zurich, Switzerland, both institutions intellectual powerhouses in organic chemistry. These two professors kicked off BOS2008 in the newly renovated Lithuanian Academy of Sciences Hall on Gediminas Prospect, a block away from Vilnius Cathedral. The hall is



BOS2008 Organizing Committee (from l to r) Dr. Jaan Pesti (Bristol-Myers Squibb, Estonian), Dr. Janis Upeslacis (Wyeth, Latvian), Professor Eugenijus Butkus (Vilnius University, Lithuanian) and Dr. John Duncĳa (Bristol-Myers Squibb, Lithuanian).

reminiscent of the von Trapp family ballroom in "The Sound of Music." Both professors were truly class acts speaking about outstanding groundbreaking research. One can see why Sir Jack was knighted by the Queen and why prof. Seebach had a special position created just for him at the ETH where he still maintains an "army" of postdoctoral fellows even though he is officially "retired." Professor Seebach's research will in the near future enable new types of medicines to be brought to the marketplace.

Having spent the first day at the Academy of Sciences, the conference changed venues to the newly built International School of Management's auditorium, located on Arklių Street, about five minutes walking time from Our Lady's Chapel at Aušros Vartai (The Gates of Dawn). Here for the next two and a half days, lectures were given by practitioners of chemistry from all around the world, including one from each of the Baltic States. This year's Lithuanian representative was prof. Sigita Tumkevičius from Vilnius University who gave a very nice lecture on metal-catalyzed coupling reactions which allow one to snap molecules together. Latvia's and Estonia's representatives came from industry: Merck, Inc. and The Bristol-Myers Squibb Co., both in the USA.

The chairman of the BOS organizing committee is prof. Victor Sniečkus, from Queens University in Kingston, Ontario. Prof. Sniečkus is world famous for inventing a type of reaction used by many chemists in the pharmaceuticals industry. As a result, he consults for many of them, and is constantly on the road. On one of his consulting trips about fifteen years ago, he met the author and Dr. Jaan Pesti (Estonian) at DuPont Pharmaceuticals. All three wanted to uplift the level of organic chemistry and to bring the best practitioners of the art to the Baltics, since it was too expensive for Baltic chemists to travel abroad to international conferences at that time. Together they enlisted

the help of Dr. Janis Upeslācis at Wyeth Laboratories (Latvian, and the inventor of the ground-breaking anticancer drug Mylotarg), and prof. Eugenijus Butkus at Vilnius University. After securing donations from major international pharmaceutical and chemical companies and from the American Chemical Society, BOS2000 was born. Prof. Sniečkus' father was Lithuanian and his mother Estonian. He speaks both languages fluently as well as a few others. For his efforts in organizing BOS and for his world-famous standing as a scientist of Lithuanian descent, he was awarded by President Adamkus during BOS2002, the Order of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas. It is professor Sniečkus' and the organizing committee's dream to set up scholarships for needy Baltic chemistry students. The budget was extremely tight for this summer's BOS conference because of the dollar's slump versus the euro/litas earlier in the year. In addition, prices have skyrocketed in Lithuania (food can be somewhat more expensive than here in the U.S.) and it was not clear if the conference would break even this summer. However, with tight cost control by professor Butkus in Lithuania, the conference was a success and scholarships for the students are definitely on the agenda for later this year.

To attract participants to the Baltics, the BOS conferences have become famous for their opening ceremonies and closing banquets. This year the closing banquet was held at Belmontas, a large estate with rustic buildings built along the Vilnelė river, in the countryside outside of Vilnius proper. The citizens of Vilnius gather there either for a beer after a hard day's work or for business and wedding receptions. It is a very nice place to visit even for tourists. The conferences were entertained by Sutaras, a folk music group who with the aid of an English translator got all of the guests involved in dancing, singing, and participating in various contests that one experiences at festivals accentuating Lithuania's peasant roots. For example, two people were blind-folded

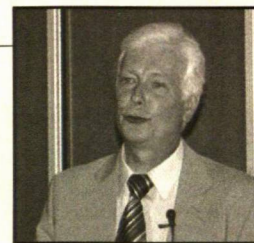
and each held a beer for the other to drink—fortunately they wore bibs! There was also a race to see who could pound nails into a stump the fastest. There was also a contest to see who could measure 5 meters without a meter stick, and onlookers were drafted into the band to play instruments such as spoons and washboards. The guests were having such a great time that one could never tell that they were a bunch of “nerdy chemists.” The food was also delicious with three courses of Lithuanian delicacies being served.

The BOS committee is already planning BOS2010 in Riga, Latvia. Dr. Peteris Trapencieris, who helped organize the last BOS conference in Riga in 2004, will be doing it again in 2010. He overwhelmed everyone last time in Riga with an unbelievable opening ceremony celebrating St. John's Eve (the BOS conferences are always held near the end of June. St. John's Eve is celebrated throughout the Baltics and Scandinavia). Imagine 300 chemists dancing and holding each other's hands and forming chains that went round and round the auditorium, all the while singing and chanting Latvian songs. The closing banquet was in Birini castle, out in the Latvian countryside on a lake. It couldn't be nicer. Dr. Trapencieris most likely didn't want to be outdone by the previous two BOS conferences held in Vilnius where both memorable closing banquets were held in Trakai castle.

For more information on the international BOS conferences and for more pictures, please visit www.BOS2008.eu, www.BOS06.ttu.ee, and other websites listed therein.

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 Organic 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, PA.



Prof. Sigita Tumkevičius, Vilnius University



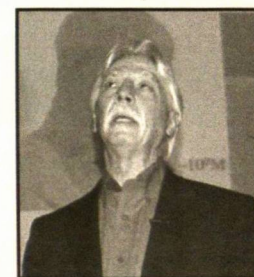
Organizing committee chairman, Prof. Victor Sniečkus, Queens University, Kingston, Ontario



Prof. Eugenijus Butkus, Vilnius University



Dr. John Duncia introducing lecturers during BOS2008



Prof. Paul Wender, Stanford University speaks on three potential new drugs for cancer, TB, and AIDS.

Calendar of Events for December 2008 – January/February, March 2009

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

DECEMBER

December 7, 2008 - 12-3 pm

Christmas Party,

Davis Hall, Wyandotte County Lake
91St.& Leavenworth Rd., Kansas City, KS
Lithuanian food will be provided. Please
bring a side dish to share. "Aidas" folk
dance group will perform. Santa Claus will
make an appearance, gift shop for kids.
All are welcome www.kclith.org

Dec. 7, 2008 - 2:00 pm

Lithuanian Traditional "KUCIOS"

McKeon Center, Mission San Luis Rey
4070 Mission Ave., Oceanside, CA 9205
<http://www.lihdsd.org/>

December 7, 2008 - Christmas Party & Andrius' Mamontovas Concert

2:00 pm - Christmas Party - \$5
(seniors \$3, students under 18 free)
5:00 pm - Concert - \$30 Adults
\$15 for children (15 and under)
Concert Location
Fraternal Order of Eagles Hall
1151 S. Galena Street
Denver, CO 80247
Info: Romas Zableckas
<http://www.coloradolithuanians.org>

December 9, 2008 - 7pm to 9 pm

(Tuesday) - "KUCIOS"

Please bring a meatless Lithuanian dish.
Lithuanian Music Hall
2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia, PA
(Use side door on Tilton St.)
Lithuanian Amber Roots Heritage Club
Info. milliemarks@aol.com

December 12, 2008 - (Friday)

Holiday Shoppers' Lasagna

Take-Out Dinner 4pm-6pm (pick up only)
To place your order,
call 412-885-7232 by Monday, Dec 8.

Sts of St. Francis of the Providence of God
3603 Mc Roberts Road,
Pittsburgh, PA 15234 www.osfprov.org

December 13, 2008

Traditional "KUCIOS" Following 5 pm Mass
St. George Church
Salmon & Venango Sts. Phila., PA
For reservations: 215- 426-6762
Sponsor: Knights of Lithuania, Council 3

December 14, 2008

"KUCIOS" - TRADITIONAL
CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER
Following 10:30 am Mass
St. Andrew's Lithuanian Church Hall
19th and Wallace Sts. Philadelphia, Pa.
For advance reservation tickets calling:
Maryte 215-969-2117 Laima 609-268-8045
Adults \$15, Children \$5 to age 12.
Sponsor: Lithuanian Scouts of Phila., PA

December 14, 2008

"KUCIOS" Following 10 am Mass at
Annunciation Church
St. Ann's Center, 167 N. 6th Street, NY
(formerly St. Vincent's Church), a short
walk from our church. Tickets on sale
soon. This event sells out, so buy your
tickets in advance. Want to help? E-mail
P. Sidas at SID100@AOL.COM.
Sponsored jointly by Annunciation Parish,
Maironis School, and the Lithuanian
Scouts Association

December 20, 2008 - 3:00 pm - ???

"KUCIOS" - University of St. Thomas
4000 Mt. Vernon, Houston, Texas 77006
Jerabeck center - Scanlon Room
Fir event contact: Evelina 832-275-9946
A sales booth of Lithuanian goodies. Pay
by cash or check. Registration & RSVP
Inf. <http://www.houstonlithuanians.org>
Houston Chapter of the Lithuanian

American Community

DECEMBER

December 31, 2008 - 8 pm

2009 NEW YEAR & 100 YEAR JUBILEE of
LITHUANIAN MUSIC HALL
Info. & ticket 215-739-4831
lmha@verizon.net

JANUARY

January 22, 2009 - 7:30 pm

Vilnius String Quartet
Performances of Schubert and
Balakauskas string quartets as well as a
Brahms piano quintet featuring pianist
Dainius Vaicekonis.
Latvian Hall
11710 3rd Ave NE, Seattle, WA.
Reception will follow. For more info.
about Vilnius String quartet go to their
website <http://www.vilniusquartet.com/>

January 25, 2009

Annual LAC Meeting - Hartford, CT
After the 9:00 am Mass
(do come to Mass also)
Holy Trinity Parish Hall
53 Capitol Ave., Hartford, CT
Sponsor: Hartford LAC Chapter
Info. Viktoras Kogelis, Chair
danuteg@juno.com

FEBRUARY

February 7, 2009 - 4:30 pm

Lithuanian Independence Day Celebration
Details to be announced - Seattle Chapter
of the Lithuanian American Community

MARCH

March 1, 2009 - 12-3 pm

Lithuanian Independence Day Celebration
Potato Pancake light brunch
Speaker, Dancing
Wyandotte County Museum in

Wyandotte County Park,
126th & State Ave., Bonner Springs, KS
Sponsor: Kansas City Chapter of the
Lithuanian American Community

March 8, 2009 - 1 pm

Lithuanian Independence Day Celebration
St. Elizabeth Seton Parish Hall
9728 Palmeras Drive, Sun City, AZ
Info. Mark Shoban - mashoban@yahoo.com
Arizona Chapter of the Lithuanian
American Community

March 8, 2009

Lithuanian Independence Day Celebration
St. Elizabeth Seton Parish Hall,
9728 Palmeras Drive, Sun City
(few blocks north of Bell Road on 98th Ave)
Info. Mark Shoban 480-802-3765,
mashoban@yahoo.com).

March 21-28, 2009 - Ski Trip

Siaures Amerikos Lietuviu Fizinio
Auklejoimo ir Sporto Sajunga (SALFASS)
aka Lithuanian American Athletic Union
of North America & Amerikos Lietuviu
Gydytoju Asociacija (ALGS)
Heavenly Mountain Ski Resort in South
Lake Tahoe, California. The Lithuanian
World Ski Championships, organized by
Pasaulio Lietuviu Kalnu Slidinejimo
Federacija (PLKSF), are being held
during that same week in conjunction
with SALFASS and ALGS.

For Info: Ed Mickus edmickus1@aol.com
Jonas Prunskis jvp@illinoispain.com
Dr. Vytautas Saulis vsaulis@sbcglobal.net
Inf.ski race - Race Chairman
Algis Juodikas @ 408-893-2650.

March 21, 2009

Ethnic Enrichment Diplomatic Ball
Muehlbach Hotel,
KCMO Kansas City

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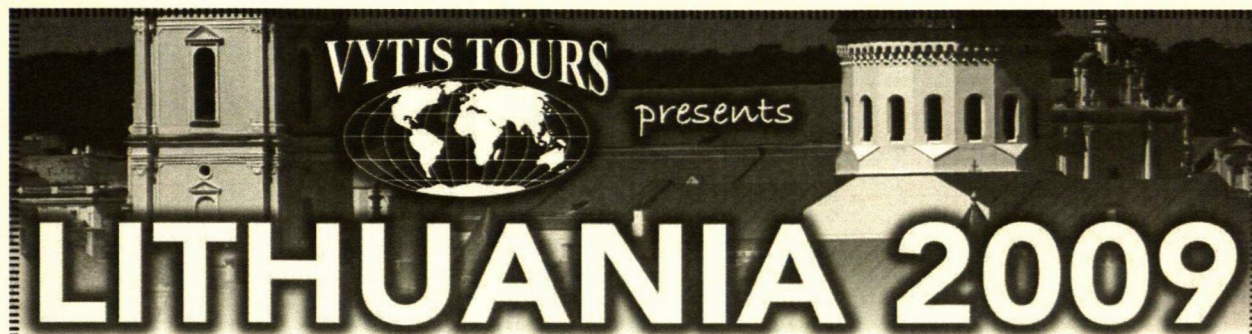
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Lithuanian-American Community



CONTACT INFORMATION:

WEBSITE

WWW.LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN.ORG

TELEPHONE

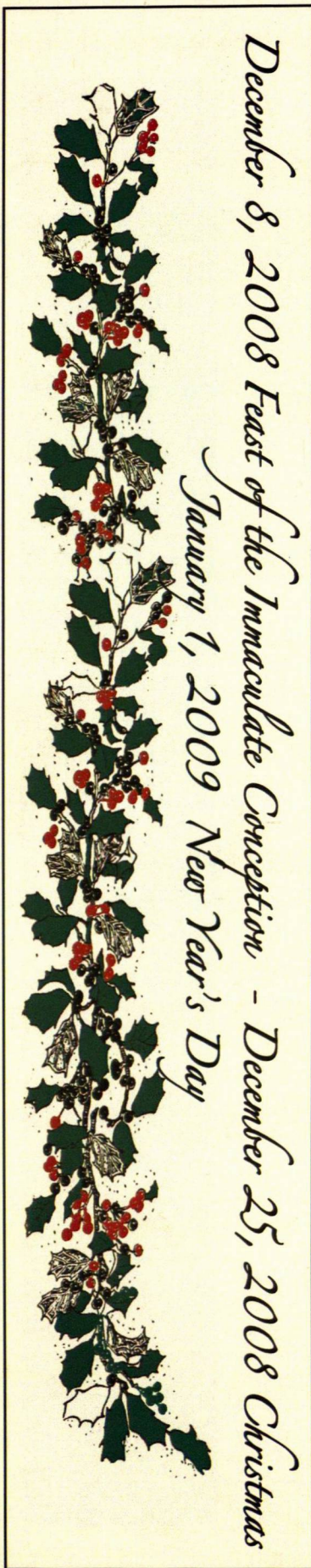
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LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

bridges
VOLUME 32 ISSUE 10

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE

SUBSCRIPTIONS:
Rimas Gedeika
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*December 8, 2008 Feast of the Immaculate Conception - December 25, 2008 Christmas
January 1, 2009 New Year's Day*