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LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

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December 2013

this month in history

December Anniversaries



215 years ago

December 24, 1798

Writer, poet, dramatist, essayist, teacher and political activist Adamas Mickevičius was born.

Mickevičius was born in or near Navahrudak, in what was then the Russian-partitioned territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania and is now Belarus. The son of an impoverished noble-

man and lawyer, he studied at the University of Vilnius from 1815 to 1819 and taught school in Kaunas from 1819 to 1823. He published his first poem in 1818.

Although he wrote using the Polish language and is regarded as Poland's national poet, Mickevičius (Mickiewicz in Polish) is also considered one of the greatest Lithuanian and Slavic poets, and has been described as Polish-Lithuanian or Belarussian-Polish. Mickevičius called himself a "Lithuanian" but many scholars agree that when he referred to Lithuania, he meant a historical region rather than a linguistic and cultural entity, and he often applied the term "Lithuanian" to the Slavic inhabitants of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. However, Lithuanian scholar of literature Juozapas Girdzijauskas writes that Mickiewicz's family was descended from an old Lithuanian noble family (Rimvydas) with origins predating Lithuania's Christianization.

Much of Mickevičius' work served as inspiration for uprisings against the three imperial powers that had partitioned the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth out of existence.

He is best known for the poetic drama *Dziady* (Forefathers' Eve) (1822), which is considered one of the greatest works of European Romanticism, and the national epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* (1834), that draws a picture of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania on the eve of Napoleon's 1812 invasion of Russia. The opening lines of *Pan Tadeusz*, "O Lithuania, my country, thou art like good health ..." were later incorporated into the Lithuanian national anthem.

His other influential works include the subversive narrative poem *Konrad Wallenrod* (1828), a narrative poem describing battles of the Christian order of Teutonic Knights against the pagans of Lithuania that is a thinly veiled allusion to the long feud between Russia and Poland, and *Grażyna*, a poem describing the exploits of a mythical Lithuanian chieftainess Grażyna against the forces of the medieval Order of the Teutonic Knights. The name was conceived by Mickevičius, using the root of the Lithuanian adjective *gražus* (beautiful).

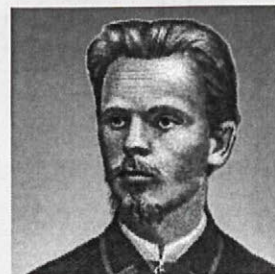
Mickevičius and other ex-student activists were imprisoned in

1823, and he was banished to central Russia in 1824. He was able to leave Russia in 1829, and spent the remainder of his life abroad, first in Rome, then in Paris. He died in 1855, probably of cholera, at Istanbul in the Ottoman Empire, where he had gone to help organize Polish and Jewish forces to fight Russia in the Crimean War. In 1890 his remains were repatriated from France to Poland.

155 years ago

December 31, 1858

Vincas Kudirka (d.1899), poet, physician and author of the Lithuanian national anthem, was born in Paežeriai, in the Vilkaviskis region of Lithuania.



Kudirka wrote both the music and lyrics of the Lithuanian national anthem, "Tautiška giesmė," also known as "Lietuva, Tėvyne mūsų" (Lithuania, Our Homeland), for its opening line. He is considered a national hero in Lithuania.

After graduating from the University of Warsaw with a medical degree in 1889, he worked as a country doctor in Šakiai and Naumiestis. He began writing poetry in 1888 as he became more active in the Lithuanian national rebirth movement. He and other Lithuanian students in Warsaw founded the secret society "Lietuva," which published the underground newspaper *Varpas* (The Bell). In issue 6 of *Varpas*, in September 1898, Kudirka published the text of "Tautiška giesmė," which would officially become the Lithuanian national anthem in 1918. He also published a collection of Lithuanian popular songs and was a noted writer of satire.

Kudirka died of tuberculosis in November 1899, at age 40. The second half of *Tautiška giesmė*, was engraved on his gravestone. There are statues honoring Kudirka in several Lithuanian cities.

65 years ago

December 1948

The founding meeting of the Lithuanian-Canadian Writers' Union was held at the home of Marija Aukštaitė (1896-1987), poet, fiction writer and journalist. Born Kotryna Radkevičiūtė-Navikevičienė, Aukštaitė emigrated to Canada from Lithuania in 1930.

5 years ago

December 9, 2008

Andrius Kubilius (b.1956) began serving as the Prime Minister of Lithuania, a position he held until the 2012 elections. Leader of the conservative political party Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats, he was first elected to Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament) in 1992 and served as prime minister once before, from 1999 to 2000.

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Cover: The TV Tower in Vilnius, Lithuania, is dressed in lights as a Christmas tree and is the site of fireworks displays on Christmas Day and New Year's Eve. Photo: Bokstaz, shutterstock.com



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Dear Members of the Lithuanian American
Community and "Bridges" Readers,

As the holiday season approaches, we would like to express our thanks to you, for your efforts in helping to disseminate Lithuania's good name, thereby reinforcing our shared heritage, and displaying pride in our ethnic roots. In all these small but significant ways, our Lithuanian American community is brought closer together, leaving a footprint in the history of Lithuanians in America.

May the holidays bring you peace, harmony, wisdom and light.
May these feelings travel from heart to heart, uniting us, children
of a shared heritage.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

National Executive Committee,
Lithuanian American Community, Inc.





Chicago's Cinderella

The Fairy Tale Life of levutė Paulekiutė

By Leonas Putrias

The Lithuanian Day Queen levutė Paulekiutė with her maids of honor.

All the tabloids and newspapers had a sensational story on February 18, 1948. "The Fairy Tale Wedding of the Century" was the *American Herald's* headline. A photo caption read "Chicago's Cinderella."

"A coal miner's daughter," "a farmer's daughter" and "an immigrant's daughter" were some of the phrases used to describe this "Cinderella," Barbara Sears. This young, beautiful woman had just married her Prince Charming, Winthrop Rockefeller of the wealthy Rockefeller family, founders of Standard Oil. Winthrop had been considered "America's most eligible bachelor." It was fairy tale come to life.

Recently, the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center received the Antanas Vaivada archive. Mr. Vaivada was an active member of the Lithuanian-American community. In the 1930s, he worked at the Lithuanian weekly *Naujienos*, and was press secretary for the trans-Atlantic pilot F. Vaitkus and a committeeman for the Darius and Girėnas memorial. Mr. Vaivada's archive is filled with photographs, letters and documents of that era. One of the most interesting parts of his archive are photos

and news clippings of levutė (Eva) Paulekiutė, Miss Eva Paul, aka Barbara Sears, who went on to become Bobo Rockefeller.

Barbara Sears was born levutė Paulekiutė in Noblestown, Pa., on September 6, 1916 to Lithuanian immigrants Julius and Eva Paulekas. To support the young family, Julius worked in the coal mines. When levutė turned 4, Julius decided to take the family, which by then included younger sister Isobel, to the newly independent Lithuania to try his luck in farming. After six years of hardship in Lithuania, the Paulekas family returned to the United States, this time to the "Back of the Yards" district of Chicago.

By this time, Julius, who worked as a fireman for the New York Central Railroad, became dissatisfied with their modest life and forced his wife, Eva, to augment their income with a job at a mattress factory. After much tension and "extreme cruelty," Julius left the family.

Because of their financial adversity, the young Paulekiutė sisters had to assist their mother with the chores. They learned how to cook and sew. The girls had to adjust to their Ameri-

can life and learn English. Ievutė developed a self-reliance that would become very beneficial in the future. The young Eva baby-sat and housecleaned for neighbors and gave dancing and acrobat lessons to less gifted girls for 25 cents an hour.

Eva used her natural charm to win over her classmates. They gave her a nickname “snow shoes” because of her green floppy sneakers. She became involved in acting and dancing in the Lithuanian community and had shown talent.

Her big break came in 1932 when she entered a nation-wide contest for the Lithuanian Day Queen pageant for the Lithuanian-American showcase at the 1933 Chicago’s World Fair—“A Century of Progress.” From 300 hundred hopeful entries, 35 girls were chosen for the pageant judges. The judges studied the many faces looking for a group of girls who would not only be beautiful but would also be “typically Lithuanian with charm, poise and naturalness.”

Eva was the youngest contestant at 17 and “outshone her rivals, not only with her radiant beauty, but also with her quick-witted replies to questions designed to test voice quality,” according to a later *Chicago Herald-American* report. She apparently charmed Mr. Vaivada, who managed her for the pageant and picked out her dress.

At the Queen’s Ball, held at the Knickerbocker Hotel on July 12, the Lithuanian Day Queen was crowned. According to the Lithuanian Day Program Guide, “Just a few moments before midnight, the orchestra struck the Lithuanian anthem; the huge crowd separated excitedly leaving an aisle up the middle of the ballroom floor to the stage. Suddenly there appeared a golden haired, blue eyed maiden smiling demurely and clutching an immense bouquet of roses—the Lithuanian Day Queen! —Eva Paulekiutė.”

After the crowning, Eva was “wined and dined.” Miss Paul (her name now shortened) said in an interview with her childhood friend, journalist Laura Berquist, “It opened a new world for me. It was the 1st time in my life I’d been pampered.”

She admitted she was, however, “confused by a wish to go on the stage and a desire to win a college degree as a doctor of chemistry.” She modeled during the day and appeared in feature shoots for *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*. At night, she attended Northwestern University from 1934 to 1935, then quit. In a newspaper interview, Miss Paul pointed out that she “didn’t flunk out of school, but wanted to leave.”

At 19, Miss Paul left for New York for drama school. She appeared in theater productions. She changed her name to “Barbara Paul” because of another actress named “Eva Paul.” While appearing in Boston production of “Tobacco Road,” she met John Sears Jr. of a wealthy East Coast family. They quickly married while Mr. Sears became a diplomat and worked overseas during WW II. The now Barbara Sears moved to Washington and continued her acting career. She was given the name “Bobo” by her father-in-law.

Mrs. Sears adapted well to the upper class. “It’s easier to go from the bottom to the top and skip the whole middle class,”

she said. “My mother was a strict, old-fashioned European. She wasn’t too different from the correct Bostonians I hobnobbed with during my (Sears) marriage.”

During the years 1944 to 1945, she appeared in seven Hollywood films. They were mostly bit parts in westerns and romantic comedies. Her last movie, “That Night with You,” was her highest-profile film. By then she was approaching 30 and had been acting for 10 years. “If you’re not a raving, tearing success by then, you never will be,” she said. After the war, Mr. and Mrs. Sears amicably split up after six and a half years.

Her first encounter with Winthrop Rockefeller happened at a New York restaurant. It was love at first sight. The couple was married in Palm Beach, Fla., in 1948 at the mansion of Winston Guest to a tremendous amount of publicity. The happy couple assembled in front of the press and answered all questions. Barbara showed poise and charm and dutifully posed for the cameras. She answered all question in her plain-spoken way. Their son, Winthrop Jr., was born seven months later.

The marriage fell apart in 1950. She and her son, “Winnie,” moved to her mother’s farm in Lowell, Indiana. She allegedly pawned her \$30,000 wedding ring so she could live off the proceeds until the divorce was settled. She cooked three meals a day for four people, included her stepfather. She would talk to the press about her settlement battle. “I want him to suffer the way he has made me suffer; as he has humiliated me before the world,” she said. Barbara studied divorce law and went through many lawyers. Finally, there was an agreement. A world-record



Eva Paulekiutė, Lithuanian Day Queen of 1933.

divorce settlement of \$5.5 million was announced. This put Bobo Rockefeller back in the media. She gave interviews, and volunteered one night a week as a dental assistant at a free clinic in New York.

Laura Berquist in her 1954 *Life* magazine article describes a moment when Bobo and Winthrop Jr. are visiting the Rockefeller Center in New York. "Winnie" is pulling the flowers from the Lower Plaza garden. Bobo scolds him in Lithuanian, "Sustok. Klausyk. Nedaryk." These commands translate to "Stop. Listen. Don't do that." Bobo backs off and says to her friend, "I give up. What are they going to do, call security on us?"

Bobo maintained an apartment in New York and Paris and did the typical socialite activities, even commissioning a portrait of herself by the artist Salvador Dali. However, she never forgot her beginnings and lived her life with that self-reliance. She studied finance, trusts and tax laws. "If you're going to have any money at all, you might as well know how to handle it intelligently," she said.

Winthrop Rockefeller Jr. followed his father's footsteps in Arkansas politics, serving as Lieutenant Governor from 1996 until his death from leukemia at the age of 57 in 2006. Having moved to Little Rock, Ark. to be with her daughter-in-law and grandchildren, Bobo Rockefeller passed away there two years later at the age of 91.

levutė Paulekiutė Rockefeller led an amazing life. From simple beginnings as a poor Lithuanian-American girl to her reinven-



Mrs. Lytle Hull and Mrs. Winthrop "Bobo" Rockefeller (levutė Paulekiutė) at a New Year's fancy dress ball, New York. Photo courtesy New York Social Diary

tion as a Rockefeller, she constantly strived to better herself, to be self-reliant and to stay down to earth. Through all of this, she never forgot her Lithuanian roots.

Leonas Putrius is a researcher at the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center in Chicago.

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Lithuania this
Christmas!

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A Journey Into Lithuania's Ancient Past

Part 2: Reading Runes By John Vytautas Dunčia



Mr. Juozas Šeimys standing to the right of the runic boundary stone together with the discoverers of the stone (left of stone) in Marijampolė, Lithuania. By permission of Sūduvos Gidas (suduvosgidas.lt). Photo: Birutė Kurtinaitienė

This article is the second in a three-part exploration of ancient Lithuanian history and language.

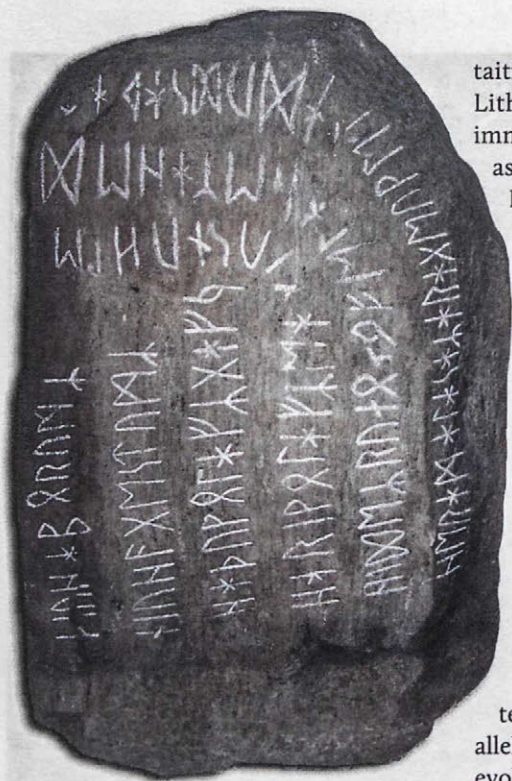
Ancient Europe at one time communicated using the “runic” alphabet. This alphabet consisted of angular letters and is related to the Etruscan alphabet. The Etruscans lived in Italy between the 7th and 4th centuries B.C. and were eventually conquered by the Romans. The “runes” are well known to the Scandinavians, Germans and descendants of the Anglo-Saxons, all of whom have in their possession preserved runic manuscripts

and stones etched with runic letters. Oxford professor, J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* series, knew of runes and used them symbolically in his books (for example, in *The Hobbit*, wizard Gandalf made a runic inscription on Bilbo Baggins’ door that led to an unbelievable chain of events).

The Balts, and Lithuanians in particular, were no different. They also wrote using runic letters. Unfortunately, the

Church ordered all ancient writings in the runic alphabet throughout Europe to be destroyed, as many of the ancient manuscripts dealt with the worship of pagan gods and the performance of pagan rituals.

The name “rune” in Gothic means “secret” or “whisper.” In Finnish, “runo” means “song” or “poem.” In Lithuanian, “runoti” means to “speak” or “to cut with a knife” (as, for example, cutting runic letters into wood). It is believed that long ago all of Europe possibly spoke one language, Proto-Indo-European (PIE), and all of Europe’s tribes used the runic alphabet.



Rune-stone "Stentoftastenen" from Sankt Nicolai Church, Sölvesborg, Sweden, attributed by Mr. Juozas Šeimys to Lithuania's Archduke Daumantas. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Miraculously, a few runic inscriptions have survived. The art of reading runes, unfortunately, had been lost in Lithuania for centuries. However, in the town of Marijampolė, Mr. Juozas Šeimys has dedicated his whole life to uncovering the secrets of these mysterious texts. According to Mr. Šeimys, only with a solid knowledge of Lithuanian can one properly translate runic inscriptions found anywhere in Europe, as Lithuanian is Europe's oldest Indo-European language. Thus, texts that were previously only partially translatable in the British Museum, in various German museums and elsewhere can now be fully translated by Mr. Šeimys and his school of followers. Medallions in German museums have been found to be inscribed by Archduke Vytautas the Great himself. A stone erected in Sweden has been found to contain a letter by Archduke Daumantas addressed to Knights of the Livonian order.

Going back even further in history, a stone used as a boundary marker was recently excavated in the village of Gus-

taitis, in the township of Liudvinava, Lithuania. Mr. Šeimys was able to immediately read its runic inscription

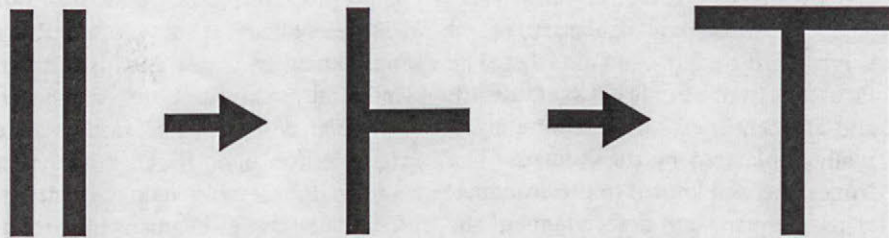
as follows: "MIDU IDULINTU YLA I LITUNĖLA MIDU LINTU YLA I LITUNĖLA." Reading in one direction, this inscription states that if a member of a German tribe (Midu) armed with a spear (yla) would cross into Lithuania (Litunėla), then the German would experience the thrust (lintu) of a spear (yla) by a Lithuanian (Litunėla). Read backwards, the meaning is the opposite: a Lithuanian would experience the thrust of a spear by a German if a Lithuanian armed with a spear would cross into German lands. Thus, this is an ancient agreement respecting each country's boundaries. The runic letter "T" on the rock appears as two parallel lines. Historically one can trace the evolution of the letter "T" from a set of parallel lines (either horizontal or vertical) from Egyptian hieroglyphs, originally meaning or depicting a "bridge." Later, one of the parallel lines became perpendicular to the other, namely "┆-." Eventually, the perpendicular line ended up as a cap on the other line, forming the modern letter "T." Because of the parallel line nature of the letter "T" on this rock, one can date this rock as going back several thousand years, perhaps to 1000 B.C.! Thus, there were written laws and agreements in place showing that the ancient Lithuanians were not the uncivilized and illiterate barbarians that some historians of other nations have portrayed them to be. This particular runic inscription can be read in two directions. There are other runic inscriptions that can be

read in multiple directions with multiple meanings!

Language Complexities

Our ancestors were quite sophisticated in their language and inscriptions. And it seems that the older the language, the more complex it can be. Let's look at the ancient word for Lithuania—"LITUNĖLA"—that Mr. Šeimys deciphered. The word is reminiscent of a dialect that is presently spoken in Lithuania. Bread in standardized Lithuanian is *duona*. The diminutive or "little bread" would be *duonele*. In the Kupiškis dialect it would be *duonala*. Just a mere 30 km east in Svedasai, you will hear *duonėla*, which rhymes with "Litunėla." However, the meaning in these dialects is not so much "little bread" but more like "endearing, precious bread." Thus "Litunėla" most likely has the connotation of "endearing, precious Lithuanian." The root of the word, namely "Litu," thus means "Lithuania" or "a Lithuanian," reminiscent of what Jewish people at the turn of the century used to call Lithuania, namely "Lita" or what Estonians nowadays call "Leedu." Note that there is no ending on the noun "midu" because their German neighbors were not so endearing to the inscriber of the stone, who was most likely Lithuanian.

The Lithuanian language has an endless array of endings that are placed on nouns to slightly alter their meanings. English-speaking audiences will have difficulty in understanding this, as these suffixes do not exist in the English language. To create these subtle changes in meaning in English, one might sometimes have to write a whole sentence, whereas



Evolution of the modern letter "T" from parallel lines in Egyptian hieroglyphics (Juozas Šeimys).

only one word is required in Lithuanian! Thus our ancient Lithuanian language is extremely powerful in its ability to capture the essence or nuance of an idea. And it is imperative to preserve Lithuania's ancient dialects, which are quickly dying out, as they are a bridge to Lithuania's distant past.

Letters of the Law

Juozas Šeimys recently translated old Prussian wooden tablets written in runic letters that contain laws that our pagan ancestors followed. Prussian, being a sister Baltic language, became extinct about 300 years ago. Only four Prussian laws survive and they are quite illuminating of our ancient Baltic past.

The first law states: "KAS KITU VARA KOLADA ASĖS." Translation: if anyone steals ("vara"; Lithuanian—"vagia") from another (kitu), he will have his head or hand cut off ("kolada asės"—sit on a chopping block; Lithuanian—"atsisėsti ant kaladės").

The second law states: "DRAKUKĖ ITI BUS LIPISERUKU VIRVA." Translation: if anyone starts a fight ("drakuke"; Lithuanian—"drakas"), then to the devil ("lipiseruku"; Lithuanian—"kipčiukui") be a rope ("virva"; Lithuanian—"virve"). Or in other words, if anyone starts a fight, he will be hung.

The third law states: "CHALASO GALO KARTULI ADUSOJIS VARO RILA IKAS GYVU." Rough translation: if one makes vodka ("rila"; Lithuanian—"arielka") like one from Odessa ("Adusojis"), then one will be buried alive ("ikas gyvu; lithuanian—"pakastas gyvas"). The Balts only allowed mead and beer, nothing stronger. They believed getting drunk linked them to the netherworld. Our forefathers knew the importance of self-control.

Fourth law: "VAKUS ALIJA RAS VOTI GUZA JURAN IKIŠKI I DUGNA." Translation: Mistreated children ("vakus alija"; Lithuanian—"vaikus nualinti") found with pain ("voti"; Lithuanian—"votis") and swollen lumps ("guza"; Lithuanian—"guzas") will merit one's placement to the seabottom ("juran ikiši i dugna"; Lithuanian—"jūran įkišti į dugną"). Or in

other words, those who inflict pain and suffering on children will be drowned in the bottom of the sea. This is reminiscent of what Jesus said: "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea than for him to cause one of these little ones to stumble" (Luke 17:2).

These ancient Baltic laws are in some ways similar to the Ten Commandments, for instance "thou shalt not steal." The ancient Balts apparently had a very strict moral code. This strict code of ethics helped them to survive as an intact community over the millennia. Coupled with the story about our ancient distant cousin Uriah the Hittite, and King Tut's wife's letter implying that Hittite men were better husbands, we are starting to get a glimpse of what our ancestors were like—a highly stubborn, conscientious and moral people.

Bridge to Christianity

Another reason I quote the Scriptures and mention the Ten Commandments is that some missionaries believe that God implants in every non-Christian culture "bridges" to Christianity. For example, early Jewish converts readily saw the connection between their traditional Passover sacrificial lamb and Jesus being the "Lamb of God." In the 1960s, Don and Carol Richardson for the longest time could not convert the Sawi people, cannibal headhunters in New Guinea. Then one day they witnessed the inter-tribal "Peace Child" ceremony in which the leader of one tribe donated his newborn son to the other tribe as a peace offering to stop a war. The Richardsons immediately realized that Jesus is the "Peace Child" that came into this world to die on behalf of sinners to bring them reconciliation with God and man. When they shared that knowledge with the natives, they immediately began converting by the hundreds.

So why did the Lithuanians so peacefully convert to Christianity and not put up much of a struggle when archduke Jogaila ordered the country's mass baptism in 1387? Perhaps the strict moral code of the Balts was a natural bridge that

From the author:

I am neither an archeologist nor a linguist, and there will most likely be mistakes in my narrative. I leave it up to linguists, archeologists and other professionals to determine how ancient are the Lithuanians, exactly how old is the Lithuanian language, and what role, if any, did the proto-Balts have in the discovery of the wheel. However, as a nonprofessional, I am very much open to all new theories, especially to those of Mr. Juozas Šeimys, who is definitely challenging the current dogma. A people without a history have no identity and therefore will easily be conquered or assimilated into other cultures. On the other hand, a people who possess a strong historical identity and moral backbone will assimilate their conquerors into their own culture. After centuries of occupation and after having their history written and rewritten by foreigners, Lithuanians living in the modern era are only now beginning to discover who they really are and where they have come from. Our ancestors were a very noble, honorable and stubborn people who abided by a strict moral code, and thus were able to survive for millennia. In more recent times, when the Russian czar outlawed their language, book runners risked their lives to illegally smuggle Lithuanian books into the country. Their "gut feeling" told them that it was important to preserve the language of their forefathers for future generations, but they probably did not know 90 percent of the things discussed in this article. They were a stubborn lot, though, and thanks to them and others throughout the millennia, the Lithuanian language and people still exist today. Let us proudly continue the culture, traditions and language handed down by our ancestors by following in their footsteps. I hope that as President Toomas Hendrik Ilves of Estonia inspired me to take this personal journey into Lithuania's past, you too may be inspired to see Lithuania's history, language, culture and people in a new light.

permitted them to quite readily accept Christianity. Another bridge could have been the runic symbols for various Lithuanian gods and their feast days. All of these runes contain the symbol of a cross (see figures below). Amongst the collection of Lithuanian gods were Perkūnas, the god of thunder, and Mother Earth, known as Žemyna, as well as others. To the Lithuanians, Perkūnas being the mightiest of the gods could have been easily replaced by God the Father of Christianity. Ancient Lithuanian folk tales actually portray Perkūnas as a powerful, but very benevolent, old man. Or Perkūnas could have been readily replaced by Jesus, who just so happened to be crucified on a cross. He then “conquered the cross” by rising from the dead, thereby signifying greater power than Perkūnas.

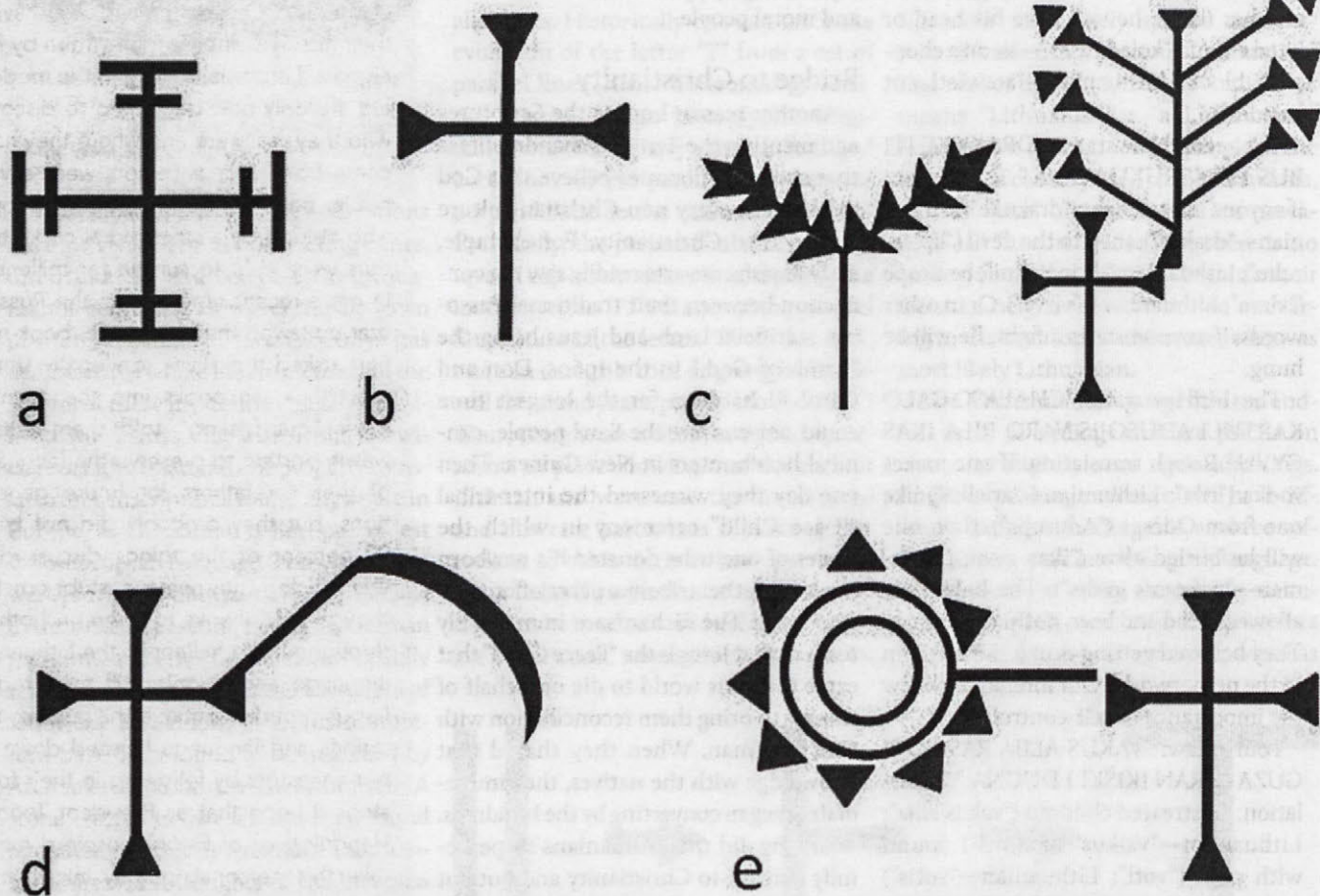
Žemyna could have been readily replaced by the Blessed Virgin Mary, as she was the earthly mother of Jesus. There was also the god “Prašmžius” or the “god of the ages” who could have also been readily replaced by God the Father. There is much speculation on this topic.

What is definitely known is that some ancestors quite readily converted to Christianity even before Jogaila’s ordered baptism of the entire country. For example, in the first western historical record mentioning Lithuania (Annals of Quedlinburg), Lithuanian king Netimer was readily converted by St. Bruno in 1009. For him, Christianity was, again, a natural extension of his pagan belief system and thus a “no-brainer.” Not everyone, however, saw it that way. King Netimer’s own brother, Zebeden, ruler

of the now extinct Baltic nation of Yotvingia, vehemently refused to be converted and ordered St. Bruno’s beheading and the hanging of all 18 of his companions. Is there a moral to this tale of two Baltic brothers? Did Lithuania survive because King Netimer made the right decision and his brother didn’t, causing the downfall of Yotvingia? The Scriptures actually teach that only nations that put their trust in God will prosper. Can the converse also be true?

To be continued...

John Vytautas Dunčia is a senior research fellow in medicinal chemistry at a major bio-pharma company. He and his family live in southeastern Pennsylvania and are active in Philadelphia’s Lithuanian-American community.

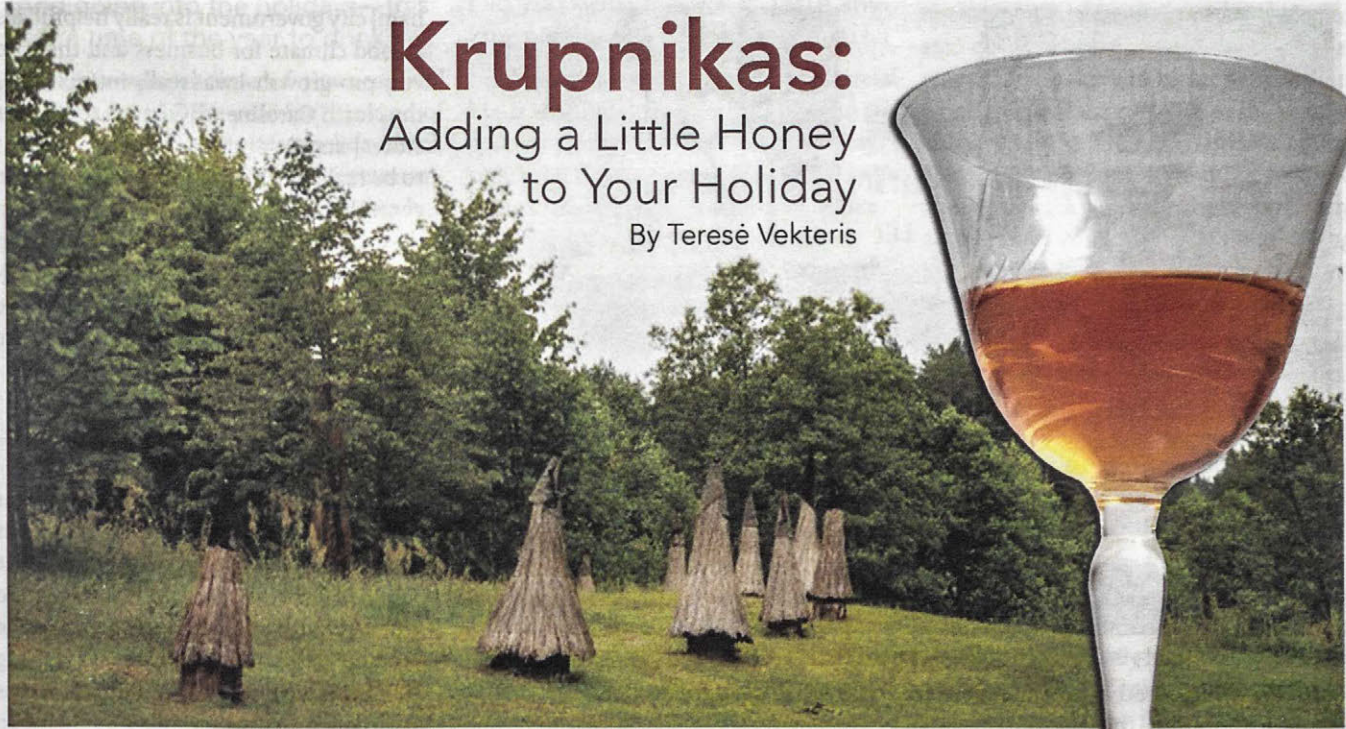


Runic symbols for a) Perkūnas (source, Juozas Šeimys) and for calendar days dedicated to b) Žemyna, October 18; c) Raudonasis (Red) Perkūnas, July 15; d) Perkūnas, July 22; and e) Perkūnas, May 15 (source: calendar of Lithuanian pagan holy days dating from early 1600s, Mažosios Lietuvos Istorijos Muziejus/Lithuania Minor History Museum, Klaipėda). Note: Due to the destruction of earlier runic manuscripts, no one is certain whether runic symbols b through e contained the cross motif before the national baptism of Lithuania in 1387. Perhaps they had their crosses inserted after the Christianization of Lithuania, reflecting a hybrid religion of paganism and Christianity. However, if the former is true, then the symbols are in fact a true bridge to Christianity for Lithuanians.

Krupnikas:

Adding a Little Honey to Your Holiday

By Teresé Vekteris



Above, old-style beehives at the Museum of Ancient Beekeeping in Aukštaitija National Park. Photo: Rimas Vilgalys. Right, krupnikas honey liqueur ready for consumption. Photo: Elena Bouvier

The first time I had krupnikas, it came in a repurposed Tabasco bottle with a homemade Christmas greeting pasted on the side and a simple instruction to serve warm. The contents were a liquid amber of a proprietary family recipe made by a member of our local heritage club.

Alternately called *viryta* (Baltimore) or *boilo* (upstate Pennsylvania), krupnikas is a Lithuanian honey liqueur made from an infusion of a dozen or so spices plus honey blended with neutral grain spirits, vodka or whiskey. The number and choice of spices vary by the maker—remember, these family recipes have been perfected and passed down for generations—but think nutmeg, allspice, ginger, cardamom, caraway, saffron, allspice, cinnamon, vanilla, pepper, cloves, turmeric, mace, lemon zest and orange zest.

The drink, which legend says originated with Benedictine monks, first became popular among nobility in the time of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It's easy to imagine why, once you experience the sweet, fragrant—and potent—liquid warming your insides. The recipes eventually made their way into the farm-

houses of the common man and, fortunately, to us today.

Once upon a time, you'd need to know someone who made krupnikas in their kitchen, or you could venture into a Lithuanian bar in Baltimore for some house-made spirit. These days, you can search for recipes on the Internet and find one to make your own. But if you didn't have a connection or didn't want to expend the effort, you were out of luck.

Until now, that is. Enter Rimas Vilgalys, a 29-year-old Durham, N.C. native, who is bottling the first commercially available krupnikas in the United States out of The Brothers Vilgalys Spirits Company he founded for just that purpose. I encountered Rimas' product when I won a bottle in a raffle at our Lithuanian Fair this year.

Rimas, tell us a little bit about your childhood, growing up in a Lithuanian family.

My dad's family is from Lithuania. His parents came over in the '40s, fleeing the Soviet Union. He grew up in New York on Long Island. Then he was a professor at Duke University, so I grew up here in

Durham. I've learned a little bit of the language and we grew up watching Lithuanian basketball. I've been back to visit a couple of times, we have Lithuanian gatherings in the small Lithuanian community here in North Carolina and of course there's always going back to Great Neck, where my dad grew up. So it's definitely been a big part of my identity growing up. And of course having to explain to everyone why my name is Rimas, especially to Americans.

So when did you first learn about krupnikas?

My dad made it. He found a recipe in an old cookbook and made it for a Lithuanian party and it was a big hit. My parents had maybe four or five parties a year and would have it around for those and I saw how much people liked it. Then as I got a bit older and started trying it myself, I really thought it was something special



Freshly bottled Krupnikas at The Brothers Vilgalys Spirits Company, ready to be boxed. Photo: Rimas Vilgalys

and something pretty good. At that point it was something that was just brought out on special occasions.

When did you first make it on your own?

The first time I made it on my own was out at UC Santa Barbara over Thanksgiving break for a couple of my friends. I got my dad to send me his recipe. I remember in the recipe we had, we measured the honey by the number of bears that he used from the grocery store.

So what inspired you to commercialize it?

We started bringing it to parties and people just really liked it. And the thing that started to become a trend was that people would try it for the first time and they would go, "This is delicious. Where can I get it?" And that just seemed to happen over and over and over again. Once they found out that I made it, they would ask if they could buy some from me. That kind of planted the seed.

Then I moved back to North Carolina, and the whole pattern repeated itself. At that point I was thinking, maybe there's actually something to this. I had studied creative writing in college, so business wasn't really on my mind until this

started to germinate. I ended up taking a business class at the local community college here. It was taught by—and it just happened by coincidence—by a guy who used to work at Miller Brewing Company. I brought some for him to try and he really liked it, and that was where everything really catalyzed. He was somebody who used to work in this industry as an executive and he had a lot of enthusiasm for it and he stayed on as a mentor. So that was where I started to realize that this was not only a good idea, but something that I could do myself.

I know you had a few hurdles to overcome.

The main obstacle is the tax and trade bureau, the federal guys who regulate alcohol. It's not that their permits are very extensive, but it's just that they're complicated and they take a very long time to process. In order to get one of those approved, you need to have a commercial space already and you need to have all your equipment purchased and you need to have all your finances straight and then you can apply for that permit. The whole red tape process for us took seven months.

Fortunately, at the local and state level they were very helpful to us. The [Dur-

ham] city government is really helpful, it's a good climate for business and they are very pro-growth. I was really intimidated by the North Carolina ABC [state-run liquor stores] starting out ... but it turned out to be really simple. We just deliver to one central warehouse in Raleigh and then they do all the other distribution. Then the local ABC stores are much more willing to listen to us and give us shelf space and help a smaller brand out just because we're local to them.

Your Krupnikas went on sale about a year ago, right?

Yeah, just about. December 29, 2012 was the first time we got product on shelves and that was in a local ABC here in the Triangle. They went out of their way to get it on the shelves during that time because we had been waiting and waiting and waiting. By that time it was Christmas and the central warehouse was closed so the local Orange County ABC said, "Don't worry, just bring it by and we'll put it on the shelf and we'll handle the extra paperwork to take the direct shipment from you." So we got it on shelves on December 29th and they sold out their first order in about five hours.

How large was that first order?

It was only six cases, so it was only 36 bottles, but it just flew off the shelves. I had been maintaining a social media presence and we had a big Founder's Club, so there were a lot of people waiting to get a hold of those. I had been fielding e-mails for months asking, "When is it going to be out there?"

How are sales so far?

They started out really, really well. Summer was a little up and down ... but November was outstanding. And even though it's still early, December has already been our best month. We have already sold 160 cases (960 bottles) so far, so it's definitely been really strong for the holidays. I'm happy just to have the doors open. It's the first year we're in business and we are still here, so that's something significant.

And going into the holidays—this is the time of the year to drink it...

This is a special time of the year and the best time of the year for this kind of product. Traditionally it is a holiday drink among Lithuanian and Polish communities, as you know. It was a thing we had to deal with over the summer because we would give samples to people and they would say, "This tastes like Christmas."

I read a little bit about your grandfather and it seems you have a connection to honey and honeybees in your past.

The last time I was in Lithuania was in 2010, and I did a bicycle trip around the country. It was the first trip I had done on my own and the first time I had done a bicycle tour. So I did a three-week trip there, which was kind of funny. People just thought I was weird—this crazy American on a bicycle.

I went to Aukštaitija National Park and I visited this beekeeping museum while I was there. They had these wooden sculptures, like a giant statue of a bear that is also a beehive, and they also had a number of old-style beehives that were these little logs with a straw hat—it looked like a wizard hat—placed over the top. I was showing those to my grandfather when I got back. He grew up outside of Klaipėda, I think it was in Palanga, and he was telling me about his grandfather's farm that he grew up on, where he had beehives almost exactly like that except the straw was sort of curved in this cone, wrapped around in a spiral. It was a cool thing just to find out from him that he recognized those and could remember when that was what people had for beehives.

So how did you like Lithuania?

It was really, really pretty. I was there in July, which was a great time to visit. I really liked the pace of a bike tour because you see so much more than you do from a highway and you get to take back roads. So I had a great time travelling around and camping and meeting people, and I got to see some really interesting stuff.

Did you get a chance to taste any krupnikas while you were there?

I did get a chance to try the commercial kinds that they offer on the shelves in the grocery store there, and that was okay. I only tried the major brands. There may be others that I didn't encounter.

Tell us a little about what goes into your Krupnikas that makes it distinctive.

We have really special honey here in North Carolina and that is something that I have been really proud of. There are other honey-flavored spirits out there now, but to my knowledge we are the only ones using wildflower honey, where you get a taste that it is distinctive to this region. Larger companies often use a single nectar source for their honey, so it is very broadly consistent but it doesn't have distinctive flavor. We're getting native plants from North Carolina like tulip poplar and sourwood and other things, so the result is that it's a little less consistent but it has a lot more complexity and a lot more depth of flavor to it. So it was always unique and interesting but when we came back and started using the local honey from beekeepers in the state here, it really changed the product a lot and made it really complex and really flavorful.

Without giving away any secrets, can you talk about the other ingredients that you use?

I'm pretty transparent about what goes in there. There are no artificial colorings or flavorings at all. Just like we did at home, we use whole spices. There is cinnamon,

nutmeg, cardamom pods, caraway, cloves, star anise, allspice, whole peppercorns, ginger, coriander and turmeric and then whole vanilla beans as well as the orange and lemon zest. We are essentially taking the recipe that we used to make at home and just making it as good as we possibly can. I'm not compromising on anything just to make it faster or make it cheaper.

On your website it was interesting to read about your business values. Can you talk a little bit about them?

Sure. You want to define what your brand represents and what you want people to identify with it. And when I thought about what I want to do, of course I want it to be about things like sustainability, something that is really important to me, and I think it is really important to a lot of customers. And of course there are things like responsibility and craftsmanship.

And then my two favorites



Rimas Vilgalys (right) with his brother, Gabe.

Krupnikas Recipes

Whether you use a homemade or a store-bought krupnikas, be sure to try one of these drinks on a special occasion. Remember to always drink responsibly and never drink and drive. | sveikata!

Frosted Honeybee

(aka White Lithuanian - Rimas' favorite)
Combine 1.5 oz. Krupnikas with 1.5 oz. Kahlua (or other coffee liqueur). Top with milk or cream.

Lithuanian Coffee

(Lietuvių Kavinė)
Add 1.5 oz. Krupnikas to a 5 oz. cup of fresh coffee. Optionally add cream.

Hazel Honey Bear

Mix equal parts Krupnikas and Frangelico in a shaker with ice. Shake to chill, and pour into shot glasses.

Lithuanian Mudslides

Combine 3 oz. Krupnikas, 3 oz. Kahlua and 3 oz. Baileys in blender with enough ice to fill. Blend well and split among four glasses coated inside with chocolate syrup.

Scottish Spiced Snowballs

Mix equal parts scotch and Krupnikas in a serving bowl or glass and add a scoop of vanilla ice cream. For the bold and adventurous, add fresh ground black pepper and/or cayenne.

Spiced Honey Margarita

Mix 1.5 oz. Krupnikas, 1.5 oz. good tequila (100% agave) and 1.5 oz. sour mix (preferably homemade) in a shaker. Shake, pour on the rocks. Salt the glass if you want to.

Berry Patch

Mix 1.5 oz. Krupnikas, 1 oz. rye whiskey and .5 oz. Chambord in a shaker with ice, shake three or four times and strain into a martini glass. Add either cherries or pomegranate seeds.



Buckets of the spices that flavor Krupnikas.

are adventure and revelry. I really think those are important to maintain perspective about why I'm doing this. I started doing this to make something that my friends would like ... and then everything else fell into place. This is something I had never imagined myself doing, but it was an opportunity and I was going to pursue it and I was going to try my best to make it fun and interesting and keep going at it.

Can you talk a little bit about the brothers in *The Brothers Vilgalys*? Sure. We were just beginning to work on the business plan and ... we were coming up with names for the company and my brother at that time was talking about moving back to North Carolina—he was living in San Francisco. Instead of that, what he ended up doing was going to New Zealand to study archaeology. But at that point we had already made the Facebook page and printed the t-shirts and everything else, so I just stuck with the name because I liked it, and went after it on my own.

You're getting a little exposure in the local bars and restaurants. Yes. During the time that I was working on the business plan, I was working in restaurants around the area so I have a lot of good connections to service folks and bartenders and I know a lot of bar owners. There is a lot of support for local products, which I guess is probably a similar story anywhere. But especially here in Durham, there has been a huge explosion of these local restaurants.

I grew up here and there was nothing happening downtown when I was a kid, but in the past maybe three years, suddenly downtown became the new place to go, and it was never a destination before that. I realized with all the things that were changing in Durham that I wanted to be here instead of trying to find somewhere else that maybe we would get direct sales or maybe we would get a bigger market.

Of all of the drinks that the bars are making and the recipes that are on your website and blog, what's your favorite?

Well, besides drinking it straight up, which I still recommend as my favorite, I guess the one called the Frosted Honeybee—among my friends I call it the White Lithuanian—which is Krupnikas and coffee liqueur and half and half. It's just outstanding, and is a very dessert-y cocktail. It has a lot of good creamy texture to it and it's really just delicious.

We're also working on a recipe book—warm-weather cocktails and cold-weather cocktails and there will probably be a cooking section as well. We're going to have it printed but we will also have a PDF on our website that people can download.

Well, I guess the final question is, how can people get it?

Well, 95 percent of our sales are still here in North Carolina but there are ways outside of the state to get it. There is the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board specialty store, finewineandgoodspirits.com. There is also an online liquor store in Washington, D.C., federalspirits.com [ships to most states]. And we have a distributor in the Chicago area that is a Lithuanian specialty item company called Food Depot International (food-depot.us), so we're in about six or seven stores in Chicago right now.

For more recipes or more information about Krupnikas, or to schedule a tour and tasting, visit brothervilgalys.com or [facebook.com/BrothersVilgalysSpirits](https://www.facebook.com/BrothersVilgalysSpirits).

Stuffed Eggs: A Traditional Kūčios First Course

By Jana Sirusaitė Motivans



It is December and everyone is busy preparing for Christmas. For us Lithuanians, that means planning our 12 meatless dishes for Kūčios.

My mother has been hosting our family Kūčios dinner for many years now. When my brothers and sister and I started getting married and having children we could no longer fit into my grandparent's upper duplex in Richmond Hill, N.Y. My parents have a bigger house in New Jersey where we can all gather. Last year there were 26 of us!

We are blessed to still have Močiutė Sofija with us, at 97 years of age. Unfortunately my Močiutė Elena is no longer with us, so we honor her memory by making one of her specialties: įdaryti kiaušiniai (stuffed eggs).

This is a very unusual way of preparing eggs. Whole hard-boiled eggs, still in their shell, are cut in half. This requires a steady hand and a good knife, and a bit of courage the first time you try. Over the years, I have found that a bread knife works best, sawed back and forth rather than pressed, as you want the shells to remain as intact as possible. The insides are then scooped out, leaving the shells. I usually leave a thin layer of the white to help hold the shell together, making sure to remove any stray bits of shell.

The egg whites and yolks are chopped up, mixed with onions, seasoning and mayonnaise, and then stuffed back into the

empty shells. Finally, the tops of the stuffed eggs are dipped in bread crumbs and browned in butter. Quite different than the deviled eggs most of us are used to, but an authentic Lithuanian way to prepare them.

In addition to įdaryti kiaušiniai, our first course for Kūčios includes the typical traditional dishes: some herring, smoked salmon on home-baked Lithuanian bread, balta mišrainė (mixed vegetable salad), fish in tomato sauce with onions, and usually a beet salad. Sometimes we may add a bean salad or potato salad, but we try to keep it traditional and, of course, meatless. As somewhat of a purist, I believe that Kūčios should be a truly Lithuanian meal where we serve traditional foods that we share only once a year. Kūčios should be a special time to remind us of our Lithuanian heritage.

Our second course, the hot dish, varies from year to year. One year we served naliėsninkai (cheese blintzes); another year we enjoyed mushroom and potato koldūnai (dumplings). Finally, last year we succeeded in choosing the perfect dish to serve—kugelis! Of course!!

I had never considered kugelis before because of all the bacon involved, but while researching recipes, I found a version made without bacon. My family was skeptical—how can you have kugelis without bacon? We sauteed some mushrooms and caramelized onions to serve with it, and, of course, some sour cream. It was delicious, every bite was eaten, and no one missed the bacon!

After our Kūčios dinner, we exchange gifts. Afterwards, we enjoy our dessert of šližikai (Christmas eve biscuits—see the November 2013 issue) and kisiėlius (cranberry pudding). Last year, for the first time, I made the grandest of Lithuanian desserts—a Napoleonas (a very rich torte).

Does that add up to 12 dishes?

I wish you and your family a joyful celebration. Try to keep it traditional to honor our heritage. Linksmų Kalėdų!

Jana Sirusaitė Motivans grew up in New York City and New Jersey and spent many happy summers at Camp Neringa in Vermont. She now lives in Montreal with her Latvian husband and three children. She is an active member of Aušros Vartų Parish. To share her love of Lithuanian cooking, she has taught some cooking classes in Montreal as well as volunteered in the kitchen at Neringa. She is thrilled to be your new food editor and hopes to encourage you to try these recipes at home.

a taste of lithuania

Įdaryti Kiaušiniai

Stuffed Eggs

- 12 eggs
- 1 small onion, chopped and sauteed in butter
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- 3 tablespoons dry bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup breadcrumbs
- 2 tablespoons butter

1. Hard boil eggs.



2. Place unpeeled eggs on a cutting board, placing a towel underneath to prevent slipping. Cut eggs lengthwise with a sharp knife, making sure to keep shell intact.



3. Carefully remove white and yolks. Set shells aside.



4. Chop eggs. Mix with sauteed onion, chopped dill, 3 tbsp bread crumbs and mayonnaise. Season to taste with salt and pepper.



5. Carefully fill each eggshell with egg mixture, filling slightly higher than the edges of the shells.

6. Pour 1 cup of breadcrumbs into a shallow bowl. Melt 2 tablespoons butter in a large skillet. Press the flat surface of each stuffed egg into the breadcrumbs.



7. Place the eggs, flat side down, into the skillet with the melted butter. Lightly brown the tops over medium heat for a minute or two.



Arrange on a platter and garnish with fresh dill. Serve cold.

Highlights and Thoughts From the LAC 20th Leadership Session

By Rūta Pakštas Cole with Irena Nakienė-Valys and Loreta Timukienė



LAC National Executive Committee and LAC chapter representatives at the 20th Leadership Session in Detroit.

Lithuanian American Community Mission Statement: *To maintain our Lithuanian identity while living outside of the boundaries of the Lithuanian Republic, and to pass it on to future generations. The U.S. Lithuanian American Community invites all individuals of Lithuanian heritage and their spouses to participate in our organization and its sponsored events.*

As a daughter of WWII-era Lithuanian immigrants, I spent my early years fully immersed in the life of the Lithuanian American Community (LAC). Years later, having achieved many of my career goals and having raised (through concentrated efforts) bilingual children in an "integrated" family, I emerged a strong advocate for maintaining cultural identity, with a special place in my heart for second- and third-generation Lithuanian Americans who have a passion to hold on to their ethnic birthright.

Clearly there is a challenge for the LAC as it advocates for the spoken language and cultural understanding, simultaneously extending a warm welcome to those who identify themselves as Lithuanian Americans, but who may no longer have a full grasp of the Lithuanian language. These same conundrums existed when the "first-wave" immigrants met the "second-wave" WWII immigrants. They found various organizations with similar aspirations, among them the prolific and admirable "Vyčiai" (Knights of Lithuania), who just celebrated 100 years of service in the U.S.

I'd like to share with you a summary of the highlights, accomplishments, challenges and concerns of the 2013 annual meeting of the Lithuanian American Community (LAC) 20th leadership session, which took place near Detroit in Novi, Mich., October 11-13, 2013. Fifty-two chapter representatives from 10 organizational regions gathered to summarize and evaluate their 2013 activities. Looking back on the meeting, it is clear that the needs of cross-cultural families and individuals are being

addressed more frequently than in previous decades; I encourage the broader community to celebrate the steps we have taken toward creating an all-inclusive society, and through participation and expression of your needs and concerns, to help us work together toward an organization that creates space for all generations of Lithuanian Americans.

Several guests of honor attended the annual meeting. Lithuania's ambassador to the U.S. and Mexico, Dr. Žygimantas Pavilionis, spoke of the importance of LAC involvement while Lithuania's global visibility is expanded during their six-month EU Presidency term. He also anticipates significant increases in trade agreements over the next three years, the opening of a new consulate in Los Angeles and the making of a film based on Rūta Šepetyš' novel *Between Shades of Gray*, an accounting of a family's exile to Siberia during WWII.

Guests, as well as LAC council members, spoke on the topic of double citizenship for those who had left Lithuania since the end of WWII, a hot topic in Lithuanian parliamentary debate, and of paramount importance to the most recent emigrants from Lithuania.

Detroit native Gintė Damušytė, who is in charge of diaspora affairs at the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry, emphasized the importance of strengthening ties between Lithuania and U.S. Lithuanian organizations, and the new "Globali Lietuva" (Global Lithuania) program, which seeks to promote closer ties between Lithuania and emigrant communities, create solidarity



2013 Lithuanian International Student Services interns with LAC president Sigita Šimkuviėnė-Rosen (center left) and LISS director Rasa Ardys-Juška (center right).

and information sharing between Lithuanian World Community (LWC) countries, and encourages networking with local government officials to support Lithuanian culture and interests.

Other notable guests included Ministry Advisor Artūras Vazbys, Lithuanian Consul-General in Chicago Marijus Gudynas, Consul-General in New York Valdemaras Sarapinas, Chairman of the Lithuanian Foundation Board of Directors Marius Kasniūnas, Board Chairwoman of the Canadian Lithuanian Community Joana Kuraitė-Lasienė and the Board Chairwoman of the Lithuanian World Community Danguolė Navickienė.

Presidium chairman Juozas Polikaitis emphasized the importance of translating the LAC articles of organization into English. Daiva Barzdukas has completed a first draft of the translation, currently being reviewed by LAC representative Tomas Girnius; several further reviews are anticipated before a final draft is published.

LAC National Executive Committee (NEC) President Sigita Šimkuviėnė summarized an active and productive first year; meetings with numerous chapter and region members, as well as parent committees and students from Lithuanian schools across the country encouraging them to strengthen their relationship with the LAC, as our children are the future leaders of the organization. Several lifetime service awards have been presented to dedicated LAC members, who received the **Battle of Žalgiris commemorative medal** at formal events. Sigita has also had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with Lithuania's President Dalia Grybauskaitė.

The first issues of the LAC's newest publication, "Naujienos" (Tidings), were presented to the attendees by editor Loreta Timukienė, the LAC NEC VP for information. The newsletter is published bimonthly and highlights the LAC's initiatives, special events and school news, also profiling the activities and accomplishments of the organization's members and leaders. Subscription information can be found at www.lithuanian-american.org/main/lt/naujas-jav-lietuviu-bendruomenes-leidiny/.

To see Loreta's daily updates on LAC activities, please search "JAV Lietuvių Bendruomenė / Lithuanian American Community, Inc." on **Facebook**.

NEC **Social Services** Chair Gražvydas Supronas announced

a **crisis hotline** (866-438-7400) available for Lithuanian immigrants, which provides counseling and intervention support for non-English speakers.

The NEC has been a financial supporter of two unique social action projects. "**Misija Sibiras**" (Mission Siberia) sponsors journeys to various Siberian regions for Lithuanian youth, to help them foster patriotism and historical awareness related to the Soviet deportation of Lithuanian citizens and their heroic struggle for survival. The expedition's goals include meeting Lithuanian exiles and their descendants who have remained in the region, care and maintenance of abandoned Lithuanian cemeteries, and each participant's pledge to present the results of the mission to the public in schools, universities and community centers, to both Lithuanian and native audiences of their home countries. To date, 12 expeditions have been completed and 100 cemeteries have been respectfully restored. Information in English on the expeditions, their goals and information for potential participants can be found at www.misijasibiras.lt/2013/apie.

The LAC-sponsored project "**Kaimo fondas**" (Village Foundation) has supported seven projects in village locations. Projects have included direct support of rural schools, day care centers, educational excursions for students and support for a local library that provides mentoring and enrichment programs for children. Those interested in contributing can send a check to Lithuanian American Community, Inc., with Kaimas in the memo, and address it to Žydrūnas Gimbutas, 3455 Table Mesa Drive, Apt.C-118, Boulder, CO 80305.

The LAC representatives heard several updates from other NEC committees: Liepa Boberienė, the VP for **Youth Affairs**, organized two major events, "Juventus," which included an informational seminar for youth as well as a mini dance festival in Cleveland, and an informational seminar followed by a dance and folk music concert in Baltimore, Md. Eleven U.S. representatives attended the Lithuanian Youth Congress (LYC) in London, and there are plans for these young leaders to organize conferences preparing our younger community members for participation in the next LYC, and developing leadership skills for local and regional activities throughout the year.

Education Council Chair Daiva Navickienė of Boston organized teacher in-service seminars in Los Angeles and Chicago. A one-week intensive workshop at Camp Dainava in Manchester, Mich., was attended by teachers across the country; simultaneously a one-week course in Lithuanian language basics was held at the camp. Attendee feedback was tremendous—we hope to see the program repeated next year, and we encourage *Bridges* readers to attend. Daiva is also pleased to announce the opening of a new Lithuanian school this year in Charlotte, N.C. A frequent topic of discussion in various organizational circles is the need for textbooks that are well suited to children who are not native Lithuanian speakers, or beginner language students. Steps have been made toward achieving this goal.

Now operating in its fifth year, **Lithuanian International Student Services** (LISS) provided internship opportunities for 32 students in Vilnius. Programs are provided for both English- and Lithuanian-speaking students. The program provides professional experience in the student's desired field of study, an opportunity to learn or improve their language skills, as well as group activities and outings. More information can be found on the program at www.lithuanianinternships.com.

Angelė Kavakienė, VP for **economic development**, described her initiatives for strengthening ties with Lithuanian institutions in the U.S., and developing contact lists to encourage networking with Lithuanian businessmen and entrepreneurs in both the U.S. and Lithuania. Angelė is eager to hear from Lithuanian business owners of all generations for inclusion in the network.

VP for Archives Dalė Lukienė emphasized the need to save the **cultural archives** in the U.S. for historical documentation and future research projects, many of which are subject to deterioration from aging and lack of ideal storage conditions. "**Klausimynas**" a current project co-sponsored by the Lithu-

anian National Archives and the LWC, will work to create a searchable electronic file archive that will incorporate the materials from Lithuanian emigrant archives globally. This includes books, press clippings, correspondence, music, film, sound recordings and more. Please contact the LAC if you would like to volunteer your time in any archive-related projects.

As chair of the NEC **Cultural Affairs Council**, I have organized a series of concerts called the Heritage Series presented in English to mixed audiences, in which the North American folk music duo Mustard's Retreat teams up with Lithuanian folk music duo Eastlande. Songs of love and courtship, love of country, mystical songs and community songs are performed, while folk symbolism, tradition and historical context are explained in a casual setting. In January 2013 we created a Facebook page (search **LT Arts JAM USA**), which presents profiles of artists, actors and musicians of Lithuanian descent, and posts notices of upcoming programs throughout the country. All notes and postings are presented in both languages. Numerous concerts, plays and art exhibits were funded across the country, most recently an award-winning Lithuanian alternative rock group "Liūdni Slibinai" (Melancholy Dragons), which visited Los Angeles, Chicago, Rochester, N.Y., and New York City.

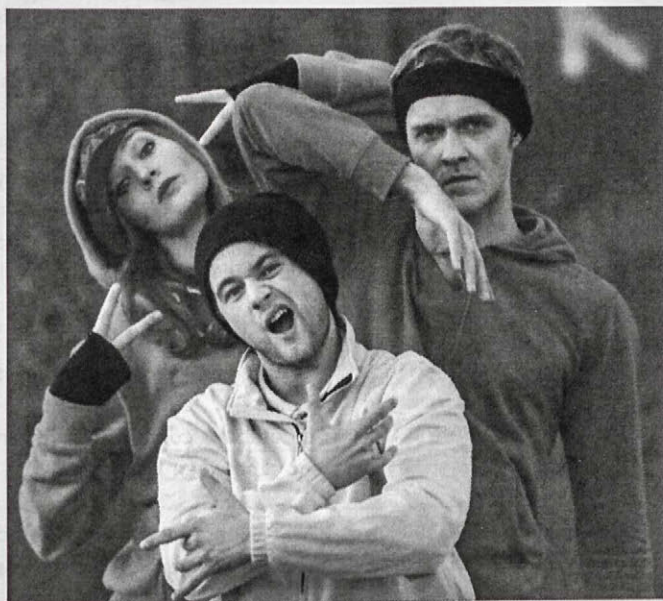
Danelė Vidutienė, chair of the **Public Affairs Council**, assures that close ties are maintained with both U.S. and Lithuanian public figures.

Los Angeles was nominated and approved as the location for the 2014 LAC annual meeting.

Saturday evening meeting attendees traveled to Providence of God Church in Detroit for a Mass officiated by pastor Rev. Gintaras Jonikas, the NEC VP for religious affairs. Mass was followed by dinner and a toe-tapping performance by the Los Angeles men's *cappella* octet, "**Tolimi Aidai**" (Distant Echoes), the audience demanding encore after encore. This ensemble, composed of first and second generation Lithuanian-Americans, has unfailingly carried on the torch of tradition, picking up where their fathers left off. The parish hall was bursting at the seams with about 350 attendees from the Detroit area, and family and friends from as far as Cleveland and Chicago.

For additional information about any of our activities or services, or to volunteer for one of our executive committee teams, please email admin@lithuanian-american.org. I also encourage all *Bridges* readers to become members of the Lithuanian American Community, to make sure that our programs benefit you, your families and your individual communities. Our hope is that we can continue to be a unifying force for Lithuanians of all generations, and that working as a unified community our efforts continue to make strides.

Rūta Pakštas Cole is LAC National Executive Committee Cultural Council chair. Irena Nakienė-Valys is LAC eastern Connecticut chapter president. Loreta Timukienė is LAC National Executive Community vice president for Communications and Information.



LAC sponsored Liūdni Slibinai's U.S. concert tour.

current events

In the EU

...At the October halfway point in its EU Council presidency, Lithuania has made significant progress. Among measures approved so far are the EU's 2014 budget, 2014-2020 public health program, Common Agricultural Policy, Trans-European Telecommunications Guidelines, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Still in negotiation are the multiannual budget, Cohesion Policy, Internal Energy Market, Digital Agenda and Service Directive. Political agreement with Canada has been reached; negotiations with Japan, the U.S. and China are in progress.

...Lithuania hosted Europe's largest information and communications technology event, "ICT2013: Create, Connect, Grow," on November 8. It had more visitors (5,000) than any other event of the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council.

...A new website and mobile app, Via Lithuania, highlights historical, cultural, political, economic and lifestyle similarities with other EU countries and allows users to suggest their own connections. The vialithuania.eu website is available in both Lithuanian and English. The app may be downloaded free from iTunes or Google Play.

International

...Lithuania was elected to the United Nations Security Council, the organization's most powerful body, along with four other non-permanent members whose two-year terms begin January 2014. They join permanent members China, France, Russia, Britain and the U.S., and five other non-permanent members. The Council has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, and all member states are obligated to comply with its decisions. Though Lithuania has not served on the Security Council previously, it is set to preside over the body beginning on January 1.

...Lithuania has some of the highest numbers of 15 to 24 years olds of any country who have grown up surrounded by the Internet—nearly 14 percent—according to the UN's International Telecommunication Union. Only four countries boast more "digital natives."

...Lithuania has filed an international lawsuit against its sole gas supplier, Gazprom, seeking more than \$1.87 billion in damages. It claims that the Russian energy company failed to respect its commitment to a fair gas price, which has increased from \$84 dollars in 2004 to \$497 in 2012 per 1,000 cubic meters of gas.

...Lithuania began limiting the import of Russian electricity over the summer in accordance with an agreement among Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to limit importing electricity from third parties. As of mid-October, Lithuania ceased to import electricity from Kaliningrad.

...Lithuania is among the world's most business-friendly countries, according to World Bank report "Doing Business 2014," which ranked 189 countries on 10 categories. In the EU, Lithuania ranked sixth.

...Lithuania is again seeking bidders for shale gas exploration rights, just weeks after Chevron pulled out, complaining of regulatory and tax changes. Polish energy company Lotos, which currently controls most of Lithuania's oil production, has expressed interest.

...Lithuanian company ART21, with Kaunas University of Technology, introduced the world's first mobile e-nose designed to determine freshness and quality of meat, poultry and fish. The device, about the size of a USB flash drive, will transfer data to a smartphone, which will let the user know if the food is safe to eat.

...Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia signed a memorandum of understanding to form a Baltic Medical Tourism Cluster designed to improve services, develop tourist routes and attract a greater number of medical tourists from around the world.

Nation

...Officials in Lithuania announced symbolic reparations of \$622 to each of nearly 1,800 Jewish Holocaust survivors this year for "suffering during the Soviet occupation." In 2011, the parliament voted to offer compensation for assets seized during the Holocaust.

...Standard & Poor's has raised Lithuania's credit rating outlook on the "increasing likelihood" it may adopt the euro in 2015. Outlook on the BBB rating, the second-lowest investment grade, was lifted to positive from stable. It was the first ratings increase since 2009.

...Lithuania's BNS news agency reported that Russia was examining Soviet-era archives to try to find information to discredit Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, citing a Lithuanian secret service report. The Lithuanian government obtained a court order to compel the agency to reveal the source of the leak. Investigators have interrogated journalists on the news agency's domestic politics desk, searched the home of its editor-in-chief and seized company computers. The actions prompted protests from journalists, and BNS has refused to comply with the court order.

...Lithuania is revoking privileges for graduates of national minority schools in the Lithuanian-language and literature graduation exam. All graduates will have to take the same exam starting next year, no matter what school they attended. National minority graduates will still be permitted more mistakes.

...The recently launched Internet database e-kinas.lt now provides access to an extensive archive of newsreels, feature films, animations and much more online. The database contains Lithuanian documentary and feature films created between 1919 and 1961.

...Lithuanian basketball club Žalgiris Kaunas fired its Greek head coach, Elias Zouros, following a bad season start. Zouros was replaced by assistant coach Saulius Štombergas.

...According to the Lithuanian Migration Department, 206 people lost their Lithuanian citizenship over the first half of 2013. The report said 22 individuals gave up citizenship and 184 lost it after acquiring passports of foreign countries. In 2012, 445 persons lost citizenship, compared to 614 in 2011 and 579 in 2010.

...Beginning in January, Lithuania will ban energy drink advertising to people younger than 18 in schools; at concerts, sports and other events; in theatres and cinemas; and on television.

...Lithuania has begun blocking telephone calls from prisons to reduce the number of telephone fraud cases that are planned in and carried out from prisons.

People

...Lithuanian-American economist Robert J. Shiller was one of the recipients of this year's Nobel Prize in Economics for "empirical analysis of asset prices." A professor at Yale University and fellow at the Yale School of Management's International Center for Finance, he is ranked among the 100 most influential economists of the world. His grandfather, Ignas Szileris, arrived in the U.S. in 1908.

...Lithuanian Minister of Defense Juozas Olekas visited Scranton, Pa., in October to see where his grandmother was born in 1904 after her parents moved to the United States from Lithuania. The family moved back to Lithuania when she was 10 years old. In 1922, her family was deported to Siberia, where Olekas was born.

...Four Lithuanians were among 192 skaters who took part in a recent short-track speed skating European Cup in Sanok, Poland. Nine-year-old Danielius Čechas took first place in three distances—500 meters, 333 meters and 222 meters—becoming the overall winner of the competition. Salvijus Ramanaukas, 14, took fifth place in the 500 meters and was eighth in the 777 meters. Sisters Medeina and Normantė Janušaitė fared less well.

...Alex Spirikaitis, former Taupa Lithuanian Credit Union CEO who had been on the run since July 16, was captured by FBI agents in October on Cleveland's east side. He is accused of embezzling more than \$10 million. Authorities found ammunition and semi-automatic weapons at the credit union after the institution's collapse, as well as a "go bag" packed with blank identification cards, cash cards and personal hygiene items in Spirikaitis' office.

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- Mindaugas, Ona Sudimantaitė-Vytautienė, Laurynas Stuoka-Gucevičius, Martynas Jankus, Darius and Girėnas, Lithuanian Foundation, Lithuanian Orphan Care, Russia withdraws troops,** *July/August, c2*
- Our Lady of Šiluva, Ben Shahn, interwar census, Pope John Paul II visit, International Commission for Evaluation of Crimes of Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania,** *September, c2*
- Vytautas baptized, St. Casimir, Augustus III, Simonas Daukantas, Rev. Mykolas Vaitkus,** *October, c2*
- Kazys Binkis, Kražiai Massacre, VLIK, Bishop Mečislovas Reinys,** *November, c2*
- Adomas Mickevičius, Vincas Kudirka, Lithuanian-Canadian Writers' Union, Andrius Kubilius,** *December, c3*
- Trivia**
- Where Did the Baltic Pagans Conduct Their Worship,** *Edward Shakalis, January/February, 20*
- The Cossacks,** *Edward Shakalis, March, 6*
- God of the Underworld,** *Edward Shakalis, October, 3*
- From the Editor**
- What Price Freedom?,** *Teresė Vekteris, January/February, 2*
- The Lithuanian Diaspora,** *Teresė Vekteris, March, 3*
- The Season to Renew,** *Teresė Vekteris, April, 3*
- She Was 'Mano,'** *Teresė Vekteris, May, 3*
- The Boy Who Almost Wasn't,** *Teresė Vekteris, June, 3*
- Because It's Important to Know,** *Teresė Vekteris, July/August, 3*
- Reviewing Our ABCs,** *Teresė Vekteris, September, 3*
- S'more Campfire Memories,** *Teresė Vekteris, October, 3*
- Attitude of Gratitude,** *Teresė Vekteris, November, 3*
- LAC Holiday Greeting** *December, 3*
- Current Events**
- January/February, 21*
- March, 20*
- April, 16*
- May, 16*
- June, 22*
- July/August, 22*
- Lithuania Assumes EU Presidency,** *September, 22*
- October, 22*
- November, 22*
- December, 20*
- Copies of some 2013 back issues are available. Please contact rgedeika@aol.com for availability and pricing.**

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

DECEMBER 2013

December 31, 7 p.m.
New Year's Eve - Philadelphia
 Lithuanian Music Hall
 Info: 215-739-4831

December 31, 8 p.m.
New Year's Eve - Los Angeles
 St. Casimir's Parish Great Hall
 Info: 323-360-7786

December 31, 8 p.m.
New Year's Eve - Lemont, Ill.
 Lithuanian World Center
 Info: 630-257-8787

December 31, 8 p.m.
New Year's Eve - Central N.J.
 Latvian House, Freehold
 Info: lietuviskabendija@yahoo.com

JANUARY 2014

January 3-5
North American Ateitininkai Conference
 Renaissance DuPont Circle,
 Washington, D.C.
 Info: saak@ateitis.org or
 rasakas@aol.com

January 12
"A Lithuanian Christmas" Concert
 St. Peter's Church, South Boston
 Soloist Jūratė Svedaitė-Waller
 and Sambūris dancers. \$20.
 Info: monadnock-chorus.org;
 Herb Motely, 617-943-5657

January 15-19
Opera "Have a Good Day"
 by composer Lina Lapelytė and
 librettist Vaiva Grainytė
 145 6th Avenue, New York
 \$25. Info: prototypefestival.org

January 31 - February 2
Winter Šventė/Celebration
 Camp Neringa, Marlboro, Vt.
 Info: www.neringa.org

FEBRUARY 2014

February 8
**KC Lithuanian Community
 Texas Hold 'Em Poker Night**
 Info: facebook.com/KansasCity
 LithuanianCommunity

February 9, 12:30 p.m.
**Child's Gate to Learning Annual
 Activity Report**
 Lithuanian World Center, 14911 E
 127th St, Lemont, Ill.

February 16, 8 a.m.
**Lithuanian Independence Day
 Celebration**
 Wyandotte County Museum
 Info: facebook.com/KansasCity
 LithuanianCommunity

MARCH 2014

March 13-15
**Yale Conference on Baltic and
 Scandinavian Studies**

Yale University, Linsly-Chittenden
 Hall, 63 High St., New Haven, Conn.
 Second Joint Conference of the
 Association for the Advancement
 of Baltic Studies and the Society
 for Advancement of Scandinavian
 Studies. Register by March 1.
 Info: yale.edu/macmillan/
 balticstudies/ybss/index.html

March 15, 1-3 p.m.
Amber Roots Heritage Club
 Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E.
 Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia
 Info: milliemarks@aol.com

March 15-20
**Annual ŠALFASS/ALGS
 Lithuanian Ski Trip**
 Jackson Hole, Wyo.
 Info: Ed Mickus,
 edmickus@aol.com

APRIL 2014

April 25-27
Neringa Women's Weekend
 Camp Neringa, Marlboro, Vt.
 Info: www.neringa.com

MAY 2014

May 30 - June 1
**"Eugene Onegin" directed by
 Rimas Tuminas**
 New York City Center, 130 W 56
 Street, New York
 Info: cherryorchardfestival.org

JUNE/JULY 2014

June 28 - July 6, 2014
Dainų šventė (Song festival)
 Vilnius and Kaunas, Lithuania
 Info: dainusvente.lt

June 30 - July 13, 2014
**KofL 100th Anniversary Tour
 of Lithuania and Rome**
 \$3,850 per person, incl. airfare
 from Chicago, Boston or Newark
 Info: knightsoflithuania.com

AUGUST 2014

August 16-17
100th Annual Lithuanian Days
 Schuylkill Mall, Frackville, Pa.
 Info: kol144.weebly.com

JULY 2015

July 3-5
**X North American Lithuanian
 Song Festival**
 Chicago
 Info: dainusvente.org/en

JULY 2016

July 3
**North American Lithuanian
 Dance Festival**
 Baltimore Arena, Baltimore, Md.
 Info: lithuanian-american.org

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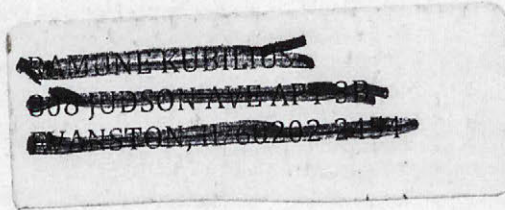
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AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

