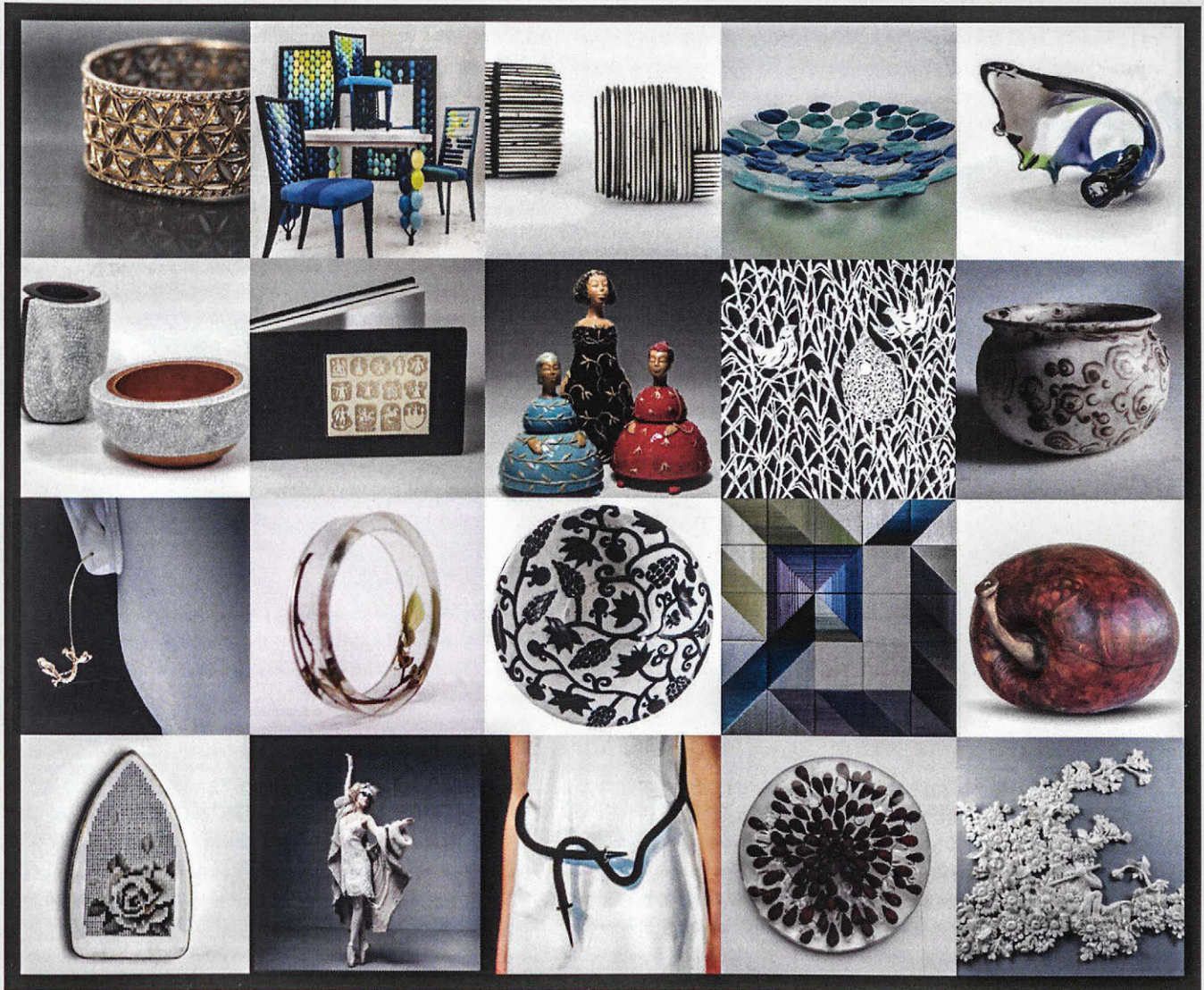


bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

\$5

January/February 2014

this month in history

January/February Anniversaries

585 years ago

January 9-29, 1429

Vytautas hosted the European Congress of Lutsk, bringing together Lithuanian and Polish rulers Vytautas and Jogaila with Sigismund I of Luxembourg, who was also Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, along with other European rulers to discuss political issues in Central and Eastern Europe. During the Congress, Lithuania was declared a sovereign state and Sigismund offered to crown Vytautas as King of Lithuania, with the agreement of the Teutonic Knights and other rulers present. Although crowns were made, the ceremony never took place, because the Polish Council of Lords forced Jogaila to revoke the consent given.



360 years ago

January 10, 1654

Russia's Czar Alexander announced a war against Lithuania and Poland, beginning a period referred to as "the Deluge," a series of Russian and Swedish invasions from 1654 to 1667. During the wars, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lost an estimated 40 percent of its population as well as its status as a great power.



300 years ago

January 1, 1714

Writer Kristijonas Donelaitis was born in the district of Gumbinnen, East Prussia. He studied theology and classical languages at the University of Königsberg and in 1743 became the Lutheran pastor of the village of Tolmingkehmen, in Lithuania Minor, where he remained until his death in 1780.

Donelaitis' main work, the epic poem "Metai" (The Seasons) is the first significant piece of Lithuanian literature written in the Lithuanian language. Written in hexameters, which were never before used in Lithuanian verse, it depicts realistically and in their own dialect the life of the serfs and the countryside of 18th-century Prussian Lithuania. The poem and his other literary works were all published decades after his death.

Donelaitis is considered one of the greatest Lithuanian poets and one of the first to be appreciated outside his country. Lithuania has declared 2014 "The Year of Kristijonas Donelaitis" and plans a number of events around the theme.

135 years ago

January 3, 1879

Steponas Kairys, one of the 20 signers of the February 16, 1918, Act of Independence and first chairman of VLIKAS, was born in Užnevėžiai, near Ukmergė. A Lithuanian engineer, nationalist and social democrat, he died December 16, 1964, in Brooklyn, N.Y.

95 years ago

January 5-6, 1919

During an invasion of Lithuania, the Bolsheviks took over Vilnius after the Germans withdrew. On February 27, 1919, the Bolsheviks took the rest of Lithuania and joined it with Belarus as a single Soviet republic. The short-lived "Litbel" (the Lithuanian-Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic) lasted until June 25.

80 years ago

February 8, 1934

In an effort to quell anti-state activity in the Klaipėda region, Lithuania passed a Law on the Protection of Nation and State, providing penalties for those who would insult and harm the Lithuanian nation, the Government of Lithuania, national symbols and the flag, or who would collaborate with a foreign power against the interests of Lithuania. Klaipėda was slipping from Lithuanian control as Germans in the local government began aligning with Germany and two Nazi organizations ran a propaganda campaign against the Lithuanian government, terrorized Lithuanian meetings and attacked Jews.

75 years ago

January 10, 1939

Lithuania ratified a statute of neutrality in an attempt to avoid involvement in military conflict. As relations between the larger countries intensified, Lithuanian diplomats were instructed that Lithuania would observe strict neutrality "in every situation and on every question."

55 years ago

February 2-22, 1949

The first and only congress of all Lithuanian partisan commanders took place in a bunker between Radviliškis and Baisogala. The congress approved the organization's new name as the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters (ULFF) and united the political and military activities of resistance organizations. Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas, a professional military officer, was elected as Presidium Chairman of the ULFF and was awarded the highest rank of Partisan General.

bridges

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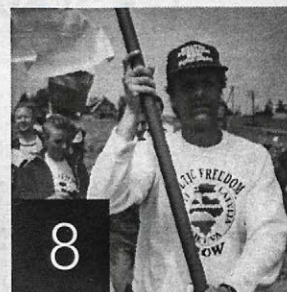
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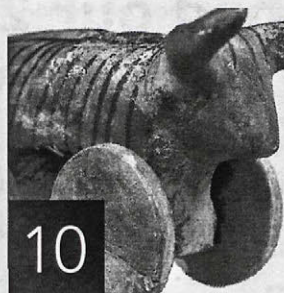
contents



**Reflecting on
Contemporary Lithuanian
Craft and Culture**
By Danutė Gedeika



It Is a Small World, After All
Alex Škirpa and Paulius
Klimas Discover a Bond That
Goes Back Two Generations



**A Journey Into Lithuania's
Ancient Past, Part 3:
Of Wheel Importance**
By John Vytautas Dunčia



a taste of lithuania
**Blintzes: Lietiniai Blynai
(Naliesnikai)**
By Jana Sirusaitė Motivans



sports
**Tobias Wins Citizenship in
Time to Compete at Sochi**
By Rimas Gedeika

And more...

- c2 this month in history
- 3 from the editor
- 17 lac news
 - Kazickas gets medal;
 - Lithuanian Club's 85th
 - year; N.Y. Wins
 - Eidukaitis Tournament;
 - Šokių Šventė 2016
- 22 current events
- 24 subscription form
- c3 calendar

Front and back covers: Examples of the fine craft work created by each of the 23 Lithuanian artists who were featured in the 2013 Philadelphia Museum of Art Contemporary Craft Show.

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Standing in Solidarity

History is destined to repeat itself.

However fortunate or unfortunate that prediction may be, it does, all too often, seem to be true. In this, the time of year that Lithuania commemorates its Defenders of Freedom and its two independence days, we witness citizens of another country—Ukraine—standing up to leadership that would seek to prevent it from joining the European Union.

In EuroMaidan, we see shades of January 13, 1991. On that date in Vilnius, unarmed protesters gathered at the Television Tower to defend against Soviet takeover in an action leading up to re-establishment of independence. In Ukraine today, unarmed protestors gathered on Kiev's Maidan (ironically, their Independence Square) to protest their president's refusal to sign an agreement with the EU at last November's Vilnius Summit (see page 22) because of threats of Russian economic sanctions. In both cases, lives were lost.

We can only hope, as happened more than 23 years ago in Lithuania, that history has the chance to fully repeat itself, and that the will of the majority of the Ukrainian people to align with Europe does prevail. Until then, we stand with them in solidarity.

Elsewhere in this issue, you read about:

- Two Lithuanian-Americans whose collaboration on a video project about the Walk for Baltic Freedom that one of them undertook in 1990 led them to discover the roles their grandfathers played in the newly independent Lithuania of 1919 (page 8)
- The blossoming of Lithuanian craft and culture in the post-Soviet era that reaches our shores today (page 4)
- The final chapter of our three-part exploration of Lithuanian language and history (page 10)
- The athletes that are traveling from Lithuania to Sochi, Russia, to compete in the 2014 Winter Olympic Games (page 20)
- A mouth-watering recipe for lietainai blynai (blintzes) that helped one family weather a snowstorm (page 15)
- And more news and events from your local Lithuanian communities and from around the world. Enjoy!



Teresė Vekteris, Editor

Erratum: In the December 2013 issue, we made an error in the web address for The Brothers Vilgalys Spirits Company. You can learn more about their krupnikas and where to order it at www.brothersvilgalys.com.



Aš prisimenu,
kodėl esame
laisvi

Lithuania has adopted the neužmirštuolė (forget-me-not flower) and the quote, "Aš prisimenu, kodėl esame laisvi" ("I remember why we are free"), to commemorate Defenders of Freedom Day, January 13.



Reflections on Lithuanian Contemporary Craft and Culture

Week-long focus on art, cuisine and heritage during Philadelphia's Lithuanian Festival

By Danutė Gedeika, Photos by Rimas Gedeika

Left, Danguolė Brogienė speaks with a show-goer about her silk weavings. Right, Dainius Strazdas with the ceramics he patterns with grain and vegetable dyes.

Lithuania, from November 7 to 10, 2013, was on display in Philadelphia, Pa., as the featured country at the 37th Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) Contemporary Craft Show, held at the Pennsylvania Convention Center.

Twenty-three Lithuanian artists showed off their ceramic, glass, jewelry, furniture, leather, paper and textile crafts. This international achievement showed a cooperative and cultural aspect of the language of art.



Remigijus Kriukas's decorative glass objects.

The PMA Craft Show is one of the world's largest and most esteemed professional craft shows. Funds raised benefit the museum.

At the show's opening gala, November 6, 2013, it was noted that Lithuania was being honored during its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, during the second half of 2013.

The Lithuanian Ambassador to the United States, Žygimantas Pavilionis, acknowledged the honor, saying, "We are delighted to work with the Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Show organizers, as they are giving us an extraordinary opportunity to introduce the best of Lithuanian culture to the U.S. The Craft Show not only connects artists with collectors, but serves as a stellar example of how art is a powerful, peaceful bridge uniting nations."

At the ceremony, the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Lithuania to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Krista Bard, was honored for her exceptional work in bringing about this extraordinary project, which was approved in 2011. Bard thanked Craft Show Director Nancy O'Meara and Craft Show Committee members, and acknowledged the efforts of Saulė Mažeikaitė, director of Lithuania's International Cultural Program Center. The Craft Show also recognized the many who participated in and worked hard at this event.

Of the 23 Lithuanian guest artists, Indra Marcinkevičienė, an interior artist, received the award given by the Bajorunas/Sarnoff Foundation for "Best of Lithuania." Her integrity in combining colors and textures that vibrate creates an invita-



Left to right: Glass artist Viktoras Dailidenas; a fiber artist from the Baltos Kandys group; Indra Dovynaitė helps a customer try on one her natural-fiber creations.

tion for you to sit down and relax in that particularly designed armchair. Her art screens envelop you with soft brilliance. Both her artwork and her furniture energize any space.

Visitors entering the PMA Craft Show were greeted by a smiling representative from Lithuania, offering information about the country and a guide to each artist's location. Translators and volunteers from the Lithuanian-American Community assisted the Lithuanian artists.

Each artist enjoyed talking to admirers, onlookers and buyers. Quite a few people identified themselves as having Lithuanian roots. Visitors were amazed how modern and varied the art was. It was as if the culture, history and folklore of Lithuania revealed itself through each piece.

Each artist's showpiece displayed limitless individuality in concept, artistry, integrity, design, aestheticism and function.

Enhancing the Lithuanian theme, each artist wore a Lithuanian pin. One of the photographers commented that he could see himself in Lithuania, since the pin was a tiny mirror of the country. A smile showed the pride of the wearer and she welcomed him to come for a visit. Pleased at the open invitation, the photographer wanted to talk and know more about Lithuania.

It goes without saying that, after a day on their feet finalizing their set-ups and perfecting their displays, the artists were ready for nourishment.

With a cheerful song, on a glorious evening, Lithuanian Honorary Consul Bard led the way to an acclaimed restaurant

in the heart of Philadelphia, Sbraga, for a special Lithuanian-themed dinner.

The restaurant's manager, Ken, delightfully greeted the guests and directed them to their tastefully set tables. The



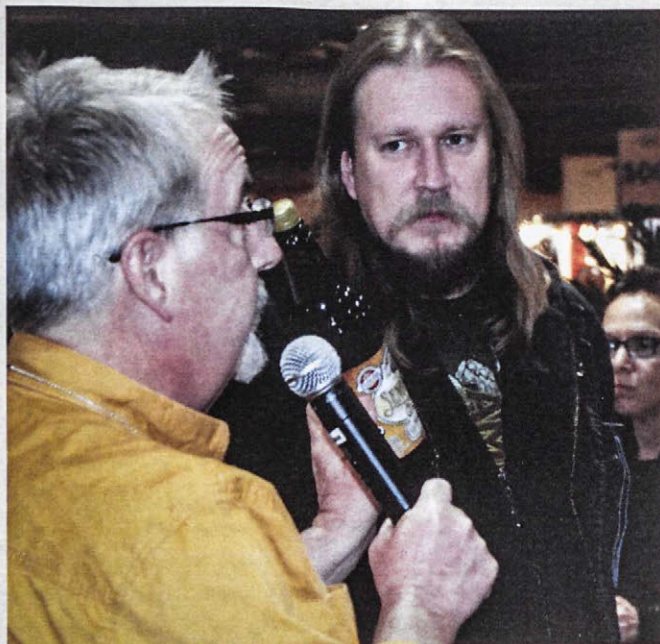
Chef Michael Laiškonis greets patrons at Sbraga's Lithuanian-themed dinner.



Left to right: Traditional paper-cutter Klaidas Navickas and his wife; Rūta Sipalytė with her playful ceramics; Virginia Ginionytė with her handmade wood vessels.

hospitable and gracious owner, Kevin Sbraga, made sure that everyone was happy.

In a short while, the six-course meal was served, each course accompanied by a complementary wine. The first dish was “textures of borscht” (šaltibarščiai), followed herring (silkė), minia-



“Joe Sixpack” (left) introduces Lithuanian beer expert Vidmantas Laurinavičius and Lithuanian brew Biržų Senovinis during a special beer-tasting event.

ture potato dumplings (cepelinai), duck (antiena), beignet (špurgos) and apple confit (obuolys). Each dish was accompanied by delicately delicious side dishes. To top off the meal, a special cocktail, “On the Rye,” created with krupnikas and rye whisky, served as a warm send-off for the guests.

The meal’s presentation was as ravishing as you see on some gourmet magazine covers, and yet, these guests were pleased to actually smell, taste and enjoy each dish. The invited Lithuanian chef orchestrating the feast was Michael Laiškonis.

Laiškonis has been creative director of New York City’s Institute of Culinary Education (www.ice.edu) since 2012. Well-known internationally, he has appeared on various television and radio shows, on many websites and in numerous magazines. Starchefs.com declared him a Rising Star in 2006. His most recent consulting project is advising major food companies and independent restaurants. As a chef-blogger, he is documenting his work on Notes from the Kitchen and Workbook. Laiškonis and owner-chef Sbraga are acquainted through various culinary events.

After nearly 20 years in the kitchen, Laiškonis says he is happy to give back to the culinary community. Each guest certainly appreciated his craft that evening.

Laiškonis came out and greeted everyone, “gero apetito” (“good appetite”) and then disappeared back into the kitchen. However, at the end of the meal, he graciously autographed the evening’s souvenir menus and posed with each guest for photos.

In another Craft Show special event, guests were treated to a



Left to right: Severija Incirauskaitė-Kriaunevičienė with an embroidered metal piece; glass and jewelry artist Sandra Malaskevičiūtė with author Danutė Gedeika; "Best of Lithuanian" award-winning furniture designer Indra Marcinkeviene.

tasting of a pair of Lithuanian beers that have never before been served in America, courtesy of *Daily News* columnist Don Russell, aka "Joe Sixpack," one of America's foremost experts on the world's beers. He arranged for Lithuanian beer expert Vidmantas Laurinavičius to fly in the day before with some Biržų Senovinis from Lithuania's oldest brewery, which is normally only available in Lithuania because it is unfiltered and unpasteurized and would not survive normal shipping methods. Russell also debuted a home-brewed, Lithuanian-style countryside ale that he and a microbiologist friend created with yeast they isolated from a bottle of Jovary Alus that Russell brought home from an earlier beer-tasting tour of Lithuania.

Later in the week, to introduce the Lithuanian artists to Philadelphia's Lithuanian-American community, Honorary Consul Bard gave a reception on their behalf at the Philadelphia Lithuanian Consulate.

The semi-annual Lithuanian Honorary General Consul Meeting also took place in center city Philadelphia.

The week's activities concluded on Sunday, November 10, 2013, with the Lithuanian Jewish Heritage Symposium. The international event took place at the National Museum of American Jewish History. More than a dozen speakers addressed topics within three sessions: "The Early History of the Lithuanian Jewish Community," "The Holocaust in Lithuania" and "Preserving and Reviving Litvak Heritage." The experts represented the Jewish community, the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian-American community.

As Honorary Consul Bard, in her closing statement, offered, "We all know the world doesn't always work the way it ought to. This, the first Lithuanian Jewish Heritage Symposium, is however an extraordinarily beautiful example of what is indeed, without question possible. We created a true partnership – AJC, the Israeli General Consul, the National Museum of American Jewish History and the Lithuanian Embassy – and we co-created this event. This is the way the world ought to work, in partnership, and we have proved it is achievable, by everyone."

Danutė Gedeika was a volunteer at the Philadelphia Museum of Art Contemporary Craft Show, assisting the Lithuanian artists. She lives in New Jersey and is an active member of both the Philadelphia and Central New Jersey Lithuanian communities.



Audience members at the Lithuanian Jewish Heritage Symposium.

It Is a Small World, After All

Two Lithuanian Americans work on a video project and discover a personal bond that goes back two generations.



Paulius Kilmas and Alex Škirpa (second row, fifth and sixth from left) at the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, D.C., in 2011.

Activist Paulius Klimas helped publicize Lithuania's struggle for independence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Alex Škirpa recently moved from the East Coast to the West Coast to seek funds to launch a software startup called TweezerBox in Silicon Valley and is also searching for a Lithuanian or Lithuanian-American programmer to partner with to help launch the startup.

When these two Lithuanian-Americans' lives crossed paths, it revealed an uncommon history of a past friendship that enkindled their sense of brotherhood.

Tell us a little about yourselves as Lithuanian Americans.

Paulius: I grew up in a Lithuanian family and learned to love Lithuania from an early age. My father is the co-author of the book *Introduction to Modern Lithuania*. I attended Lithuanian school and our family spoke the language at home.

Over 20 years ago, I had the unique opportunity to help free a Lithuanian dissident. My 500-mile walk for freedom led me to the White House, and eventually the dissident was freed. Following that, I walked another 400 miles for Baltic Free-

dom in 1991. These walks were my way of demonstrating my unwavering faith in Lithuanian independence.

Alex: At an early age I was able to learn some basic Lithuanian from my grandparents and parents. My Lithuanian improved later in life after I teamed up with a native Lithuanian and started a property maintenance business in the early '90s, which I sold to pursue my love for technology

Our company sponsored Lithuanians through the H2b visa program and was able to help many become U.S. citizens. I am happy many got to live the "American Dream" by eventually owning their own homes and running their own successful businesses. The company of about 10 to 12 people was fairly high tech with a large web presence, GPS vehicle tracking and so on; I also received a patent for a web-based automated bidding system that used real-estate data to create automated bids.

How did you meet and become friends?

Alex: We met at a Lithuanian friend's party and Paulius mentioned his walks across the Baltics for the Lithuanian free-

dom movement. Paulius ended the last mile of his walk in Vilnius accompanied by Professor Vytautas Landsbergis, who was elected president of the Supreme Council of Lithuania in 1990, and by Andrius Kubilius, who eventually became the Prime Minister of Lithuania.

Being inspired by Paulius' story and learning that he still had lots of old video clippings, radio interviews and songs recorded about his walks, I offered to put together a video for him.

I had learned some video editing skills while producing a couple of concept videos I presented to The Fraunhofer Center for Experimental Software Engineering at the University of Maryland about a software project which eventually became a reality.

One of those videos stirred up interest, indicating that parts of the envisioned software could be used within an existing Fraunhofer project or be useful for IARPA [Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity], a then newly formed DOD [Department of Defense] agency. Though interested, Fraunhofer lacked the necessary funds. Realizing we had something unique, my father, Kazys K. Škirpa, and I invested over two years of hard work and over \$250,000 to bootstrap the project ourselves.

After spending a great deal of time together working on our film, Paulius and I became very good friends. One day, toward the end of the final edits to the film, Paulius came in to my office and told me that during the evening he learned from his father that his (Paulius') grandfather on his mother's side and my grandfather were also very close friends. It turns out that my grandfather, Kazys Škirpa, and his grandfather, Raimundas Liormanas, were initial founders who created the new Lithuanian volunteer army in 1918!

What do you want to accomplish with your video?

Paulius: I feel the video is an accurate portrayal of someone who fervently believed that Lithuania would regain its independence. It also shows how true

friendship can have remarkable results. I'm so happy Alex put it together for me.

For many years, Lithuania was forgotten. Its identity was held captive as were its people. This movie has the spirit of the Lithuanian and Baltic people in mind; it is a clear expression of faith and determination.

I think others could benefit from seeing the video. Positive thinking is contagious and other Lithuanians could learn about my efforts. Maybe it would inspire them to try some interesting effort of their own. Sometimes it takes a little push to get someone to put ideas into action. I hope our video will provide that stimulus.

Alex: Our video was nothing professional, but we both feel it was definitely a spirited, patriotic video. We recently decided to submit the video to the Vilnius International Film Festival; we figured why not?!

I feel it would be great to have an independent film producer create a professional version similar to my video about Lithuanian-American activists like Paulius who helped play a part in Lithuania's struggle for independence.

We were invited to the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, D.C., in 2011 to show the film, and following was a roundtable discussion to try and figure out how to get media attention for the Lithuanian Siberian deportations by the Soviets. The end result was a lack of funds to create such a film.

Paulius' grandparents on his father's side were sent to Siberia. In Lithuania, his grandfather was a matchmaker and after being deported took on the job of marrying people. Paulius' grandparents were fortunate because they eventually returned to Lithuania while many others did not survive or were sent to foreign lands far from home. It is interesting that Paulius chose a similar path in life as his grandfather, working as a Marriage and Licensing officer in Maryland.

What's next for you?

Alex: I am looking for a co-founder to help me launch my first series of Tweezer-



Professor Vytautas Landsbergis (left), who would be elected president of the Supreme Council of Lithuania, accompanied Paulius Klimas at the end of his 1990 Walk for Baltic Freedom.

Box software products, which everyone I have met thus far recognizes as a new, disruptive way of sharing web content.

I fell in love with computers as a kid after being thunderstruck when my father took me to see Stanley Kubrick's "2001 A Space Odyssey." In college, I was introduced to the Apple 512k computer, which led to an epiphany that solidified my passion for technology.

Ever since I can remember, I had this gut feeling that programming could be boiled down to a handful of simple visual elements that could eventually allow people to (in a sense) program without coding. After selling my former company, I devoted full time to pursuing that concept. Complexity eventually gave way to simplicity and I developed several related patented products, some of which I'm using in TweezerBox.

After participating in a startup event on the East Coast, I was unambiguously told to pack my bags and move to California if I wanted funding. I took the advice, sold my home and moved to California. Luckily, I found a vibrant Lithuanian community there run by Ms. Diana Plačiakienė, who is Silicon Valley's representative for Enterprise Lithuania and is working hard to help bridge the gap between Lithuania and Silicon Valley. Through Diana, I met

Dr. Agnė Bakanovė, who heads the Technology Entrepreneurship course at the Kaunas University of Technology. Her pioneering work is helping ignite the next generation of Lithuanian startups in Lithuania.

I am excited to witness Lithuania, as the center of Europe, fusing itself into the world's epicenter of technology, Silicon Valley. Lithuanians are launching great tech companies like YPlan, GetJar and Pixelmator as well as satellites into orbit. I am hoping to play my part in the adventure.

Because of my positive working experiences with Lithuanians in my previous company, I would like to find a Lithuanian or a Lithuanian-American programmer to be my co-founder or chief engineer. I'm looking for someone who is skilled at Java, JavaScript, JSP and SQL to help launch the company and join me in the funding process. I have interested investors and have had some offers that I have not taken. I feel I will have better leverage after a small team is formed. Having a teammate that shares my love for Lithuania will help make the journey more meaningful and worthwhile. I am willing to provide vested equity for the right candidate.

continued on page 24

A Journey Into Lithuania's Ancient Past

Part 3: Of Wheel Importance

By John Vytautas Dunčia



A temple ratha in India. Photo: Bernard Gagnon, wikipedia.org

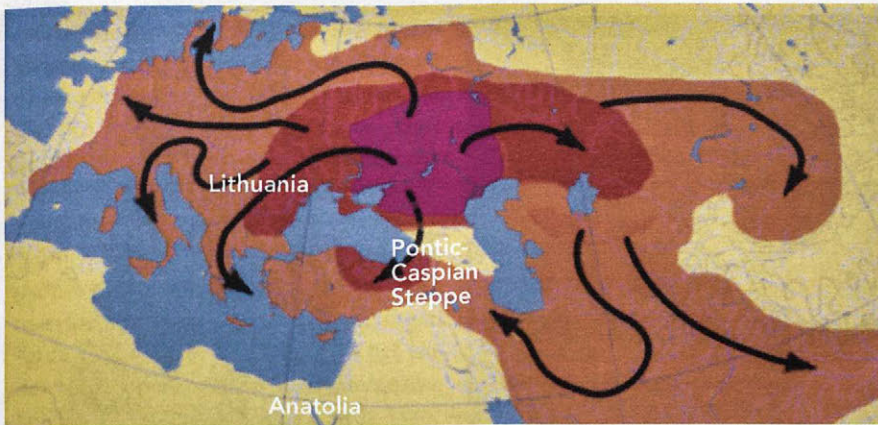
This article is the third in a three-part exploration of ancient Lithuanian history and language.

Where were the Lithuanians when the Hittite civilization was a major power in the Middle East in 2000 B.C. and onward?

The Hittite word for wheel is "hurkis." The Lithuanian word is ratas. As ratas is different from hurkis, we know that the Lithuanians were already far away, most likely home in Lithuania or thereabouts, practicing agriculture and teaching the ancestors of the Estonians and Finns about the wheel, axe, pig and other things. Thus the Lithuanians had to migrate from either the Pontic Steppe or Anatolia to the Baltic between 4000 B.C. (or earlier) and 2000 B.C. If we draw a straight line from points A to B, we see that they migrated through the modern countries of Ukraine, Belarus and Poland (see map opposite). Of course, the line was probably more crooked than straight, but nonetheless, the Lithuanians wandered through those countries and possibly others as well.

The oldest wheel in human civilization is found in a toy unearthed in southern Ukraine dating back to 3950-3650 B.C. belonging to the Cucuteni-Trypillian civilization (4800-3000 B.C.) that lived in southern Ukraine, Moldavia and Romania. It is a bull on wheels, the bull possibly an extinct auroch (Lithuanian: tauras), the ancestor of domesticated cattle. There is not much known about this civilization, the genetics of its people or the language they spoke. However, they did have the wheel, and were master pottery craftsmen.

The Cucuteni-Trypillian people practiced agriculture and lived in cities with houses built of wood, arranged in concentric circles that they ritually burnt to the ground every 60 to 80 years. No one knows why they did this or what happened to them. The arrangement of buildings in concentric circles suggests that the wheel or the concept of a circle was an important part of their culture. Were they conquered by the Kurgans (proto-Balts/Lithuanians),



Map of Indo-European migrations from the Pontic-Caspian Steppe north of the Black Sea from around 4000 B.C. onward, according to the "Kurgan Hypothesis" put forth by Prof. Marija Gimbutas. Source: wikipedia.org



Cucuteni-Trypillian toy, "auroch on wheels," dating to 3950-3650 B.C. Photo: Alfredo Corrao, FotoBeni-Culturali.com, reproduced with permission.

the people from the Pontic Steppe as Professor Marija Gimbutas believed? Or did they peacefully intermingle with the Kurgans as the famous Professor J. P. Mallory believed? No one really knows.

First Wheel Pictures: Bronocice

The first picture of a wheel in human civilization is found on an unearthed pot depicting a wagon with two axles and four wheels. It was discovered in southern Poland (Bronocice) in 1976 by State University of New York at Buffalo anthropology professor Dr. Šarunas Milišauskas. It has been carbon dated to about the year 3500 B.C. This ancient cart was most likely pulled by aurochs, whose buried remains were found with the pot. The last auroch in Europe reportedly died in 1627 in Poland even though King Jogaila (then King of Poland and Archduke of Lithuania) earlier had ordered their protection. The horns of the buried aurochs were worn, suggesting that they were tied with a rope, possibly in a yoke. Thus the

aurochs were used by ancient Europeans to aid them in various agricultural activities, and apparently were highly revered. They stood 6 to 7 feet high at the shoulder and weighed more than a ton.

To Lithuanians, the auroch or tauras was also highly revered. The names of several towns in Lithuania have their roots in the word tauras: Tauragė, Tauragnai, Taurakiemis, Tauralaukis, Taurapilis and Taurai. The deepest lake in Lithuania is Tauragno ežeras (the Horn of the Auroch Lake). It is thought that the word taurė, meaning goblet or wineglass, also has its origins in the word tauras, most likely referring to the horn of a tauras used for drinking and prized for its length—some reaching 3 feet. The tauras appears on the coat of arms of several Lithuanian towns, including Kaunas. The zodiac symbol and constellation taurus most likely comes from the Lithuanian word tauras.

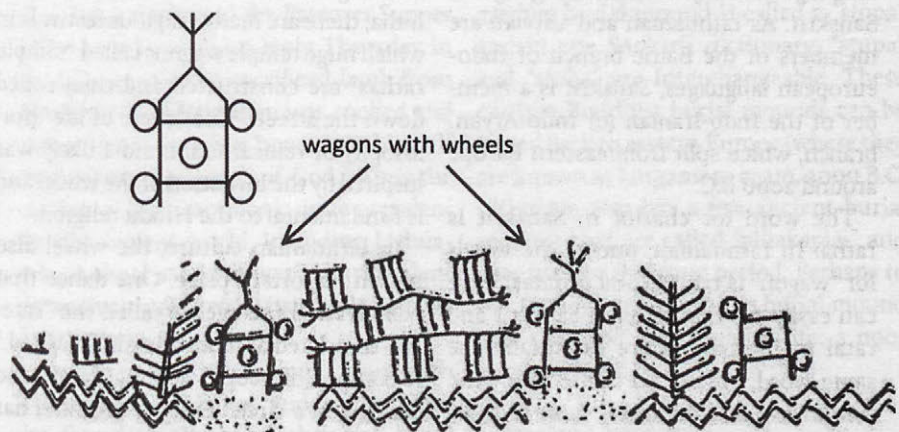
The Poles who now occupy Bronocice, Poland, are Slavs whose language and culture took root only within the last 2,000 years. Therefore, another culture had to be living in southern Poland 5,500 years ago. It was about this time that the proto-Balts were migrating to Lithuania and Latvia according to the Kurgan hypothesis. Could the ancient Lithuanians have learned about the wheel from these people in Bronocice? Or were these people in some way related to the ancient Lithuanians? No one really knows. Most history textbooks teach that a Mesopotamian culture invented the wheel in about 3500 B.C. The Bronocice pot and the Cucuteni-Trypillian toy bull on wheels are evidence that Europe also had the wheel, possibly even first. And how the Balts were related to them, if at all, remains a mystery.

Ratha - Ratai

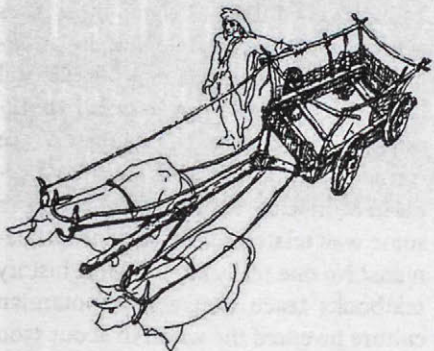
In addition to teaching the Estonians and Finns, our Lithuanian ancestors also taught the ancestors of the people of



The "Bronocice Pot." Photo by Prof. Šarunas Milišauskas, reproduced with permission



Illustrations found on the Bronocice Pot. Reproduced with permission of Muzeum Archeologicznego w Krakowie; ma.krakow.pl/wystawy/wozy_z_bronoci



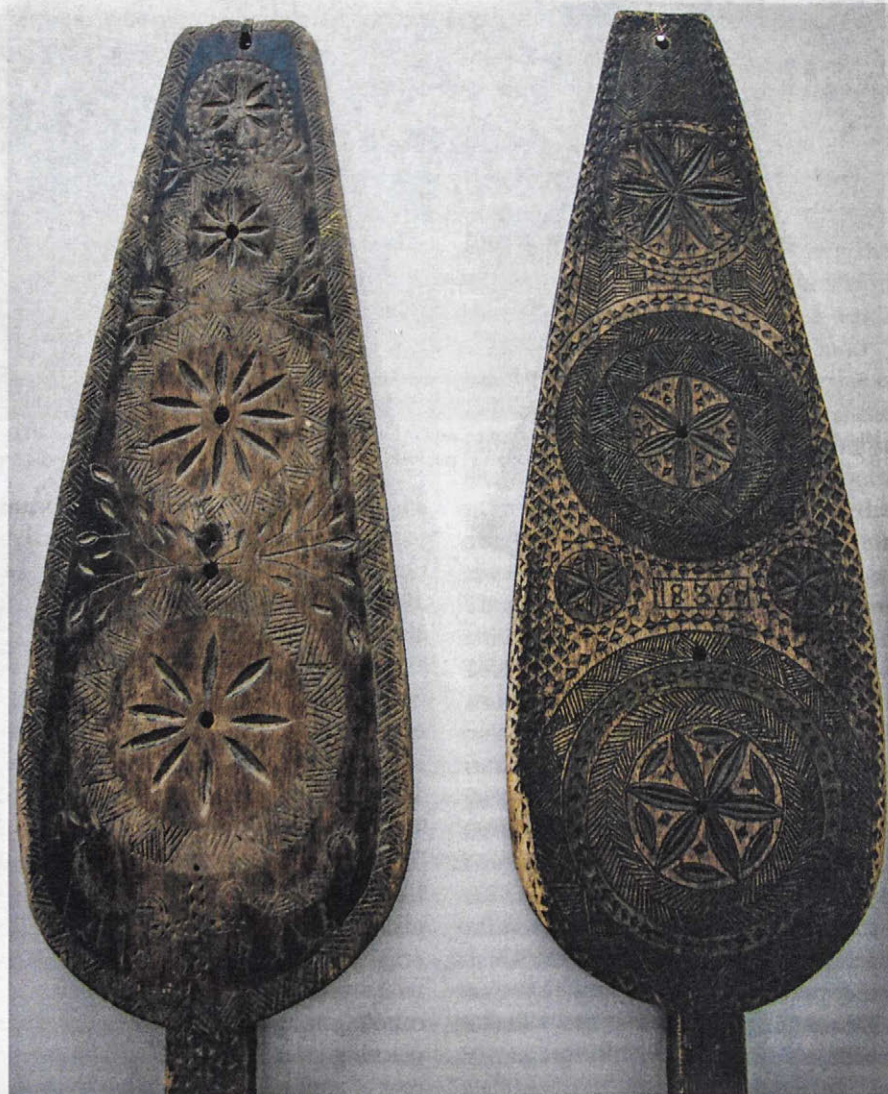
Artist's rendition of aurochs pulling the "Bronocice" wagon in 3500 B.C. Reproduced with permission of Muzeum Archeologicznego w Krakowie; ma.krakow.pl/wystawy/wozy_z_bronoci



Coat of arms for the city of Kaunas featuring a taurus or an auroch.

India about the wheel. The ancient proto-language of many of India's languages is Sanskrit. As Lithuanian and Latvian are members of the Baltic branch of Indo-European languages, Sanskrit is a member of the Indo-Iranian (or Indo-Aryan) branch, which split from eastern Europe around 2000 B.C.

The word for chariot in Sanskrit is ratha. In Lithuanian, one of the words for "wagon" is ratai (plural of ratas). One can easily see that ratha in Sanskrit and ratai in Lithuanian are essentially the same word, having the same root. And it is known that the wheel came to India from Europe. The invention of the wheel was considered so important that most



Lithuanian spinning wheel spindles with engraved circles. The one on the right is dated 1836. Utenos Kraštotyros Muziejus, photo: J. Dunčiča

gods in the Hindu religion are portrayed as riding chariots or rathas. In present-day India, there are many religious festivals in which huge temple wagons called "temple rathas" are constructed and then rolled down the streets. The "circle of life" philosophy or reincarnation most likely was inspired by the invention of the wheel and is fundamental to the Hindu religion.

In Lithuanian culture, the wheel also has an important place. One dance that has survived the ages is called the "ratalis," translated as "endearing little wheel." It consists of people holding hands and dancing in a circle. Every Lithuanian has danced this dance in their lifetime, especially in his/her childhood or at interna-

tional Lithuanian folk dance festivals. Circular images are also found throughout Lithuanian folk art.

Proto-Baltic-Egyptian Connections?

In addition to India, there also might be a proto-Baltic-Egyptian connection. Mr. Juozas Šeimys has deciphered the inscriptions on flint arrowheads from the Marijampolė area of Lithuania. Besides being carefully carved to be very sharp, they have also been carefully carved at their base with the side profile of a face where the wooden shaft attaches. Thus the arrow portion looks like a pointed hat on the head of a person.

On one arrowhead there are hieroglyphic inscriptions as follows: a picture of an axe (Kirvis), followed by a boat oar (Arklas), followed by a flag (Vėliava), thus depicting the word "KAV," otherwise known as the ancient Lithuanian war god Kavas or Kovas.

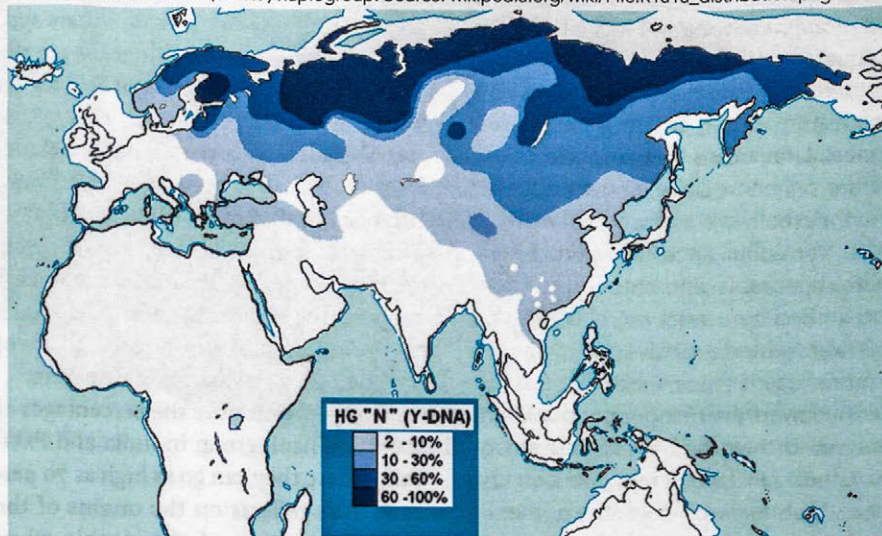
On another arrowhead, one sees the profile of the head of a dog. There is an inscription in runes to the Egyptian god Anubis, the god of the dead who has the head of a dog. On one side of the arrowhead, the inscription states "avis Anubum" (a lamb offering for Anubis) and on the other side "būna šiva." Mr. Šeimys translates this as "death for the recipient of this arrow." Shiva in Hindi is the god of destruction and therefore another translation would be "to Shiva you go." If this arrowhead can be authenticated by other experts, this could be an extremely important archeological discovery—a link between ancient Egypt to India through Lithuania. "Anubis" is perhaps related to the Lithuanian word anapus meaning "on the other side." Anapus is often used today to refer to the afterlife.

Ancient peoples communicated with one another and copied each other's religions. That is a constant theme in the Old Testament in the Bible, where the Jewish people were often assimilating the gods of their neighbors. Could the ancestors of the Egyptians have taken the god Anubis from the Balts/proto-Balts or vice versa? There are several arrowheads that have been found in Lithuania with the head of Anubis. The use of flint arrowheads goes back to the neolithic (new stone age) period, dating somewhere between 6000 to 3000 B.C. That makes the Lithuanian people very old indeed!

Apparently the ancient Lithuanians made lamb sacrifices to their gods. Once again, the notion of sacrificing lambs is also found in the Old Testament where Moses ordered the Jewish people to smear the blood from an unblemished lamb over the door posts of their homes in Egypt so that the angel of death would "pass over." After having done that, they cooked the lamb and ate it. This marked the first Jewish Passover, which occurred around 1500



Occurrence of the R1a1a (R-M17) haplogroup. Source: wikipedia.org/wiki/File:R1a1a_distribution.png



Occurrence of the N1c1 (N-M231) haplogroup. Source: wikipedia.org/wiki/Haplogroup_N-M231

B.C. Jesus celebrated the Passover Supper (The Last Supper) on Holy Thursday in 33 A.D., in which a sacrificed lamb from the Temple of Jerusalem was cooked and eaten. Jesus in a few hours was himself to become the "Lamb of God." Thus the notion of lamb sacrifice is quite prevalent in the ancient world, including Lithuania. Animal sacrifice was also prevalent in ancient India before its people became vegetarian.

Another potential connection with the culture of Egypt and India might be found in the old Lithuanian word for house, "stuba." In India, a Buddhist

earthen burial mound is called a "stupa" and in one Sanskrit dictionary, "stupa" and "stuba" are interchangeable. These earthen Buddhist burial mounds can be traced back to eastern Europe (where they are known as kurgans) to again, 2000 B.C. Lithuania also has a few ancient burial mounds that are called "piliakapiai" and date back to the same period. Perhaps to our forefathers, an earthen burial mound was a "house" for the after-life: a poor man's pyramid?

Genetic Origins

We can learn much about history of a

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 conquerers 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.

people from its genetic makeup. Important to the Balts are the R1A1a (R-M17) and N1c1 (N-M231) haplogroups, both found on the Y-chromosome and thus carried by male lines. 45 percent of Lithuanians, 35 percent of Estonians, 50 percent of Belorussians, 50 percent of Ukrainians, 56 percent of Polish and 38 percent of Russians share the R1A1a gene. In some areas of Russia, the percentage goes up to 58 percent. These percentages reveal that the Russians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Latvians and Lithuanians are closely related genetically and reminds us where the boundaries of Lithuania existed during the time of Vytautas the Great (1400s), stretching from the Baltic to the Black seas. And perhaps these percentages also reflect how the Balts occupied these same areas of Europe 3,000 to 4,000 years ago.

In addition to the genetic maps are the names of rivers all throughout this region which have Baltic origins: Oka (Russia), Vysla (Poland: Wisla), Buga (Poland, Ukraine, Belarus), Narevas (Poland: Narew, Belarus: Narai), Pripetė (Belarus, Ukraine: Pripyat), Desna (Ukraine, Russia), Sula (Ukraine), Berezina (Belarus) and others. It supports the Kurgan hypothesis in which the Indo-Europeans originated north of the Black Sea and migrated from there.

Most interesting are the percentages of the R1A1a haplogroup in India and Pakistan, where they can go as high as 70 percent. This reflects on the origins of the Indian languages and of its people, when their ancestors migrated from eastern Europe in 2000 B.C. taking with them the word for chariot, ratha.

There is yet another large population of this gene found west of Lake Baikal in Siberia. This tragically reflects the thousands of Lithuanians, Latvians, Belorussians and Ukrainians deported by the Russian czars and Soviets. Many intermarried and their descendants are still living in the region today.

In addition to the R1A1a haplogroup, 45 percent of Lithuanians, 60 percent of Finns and 75 percent of Nenets and Yakuts share the N1c1 haplogroup. Here we see the interaction of various northern peoples with those who lived in the Baltic region.



Prof. Antoine Meillet and German linguist Georg Julius Justus Sauerwein recognized the importance and the beauty of the Lithuanian language.

Protecting Our Inheritance

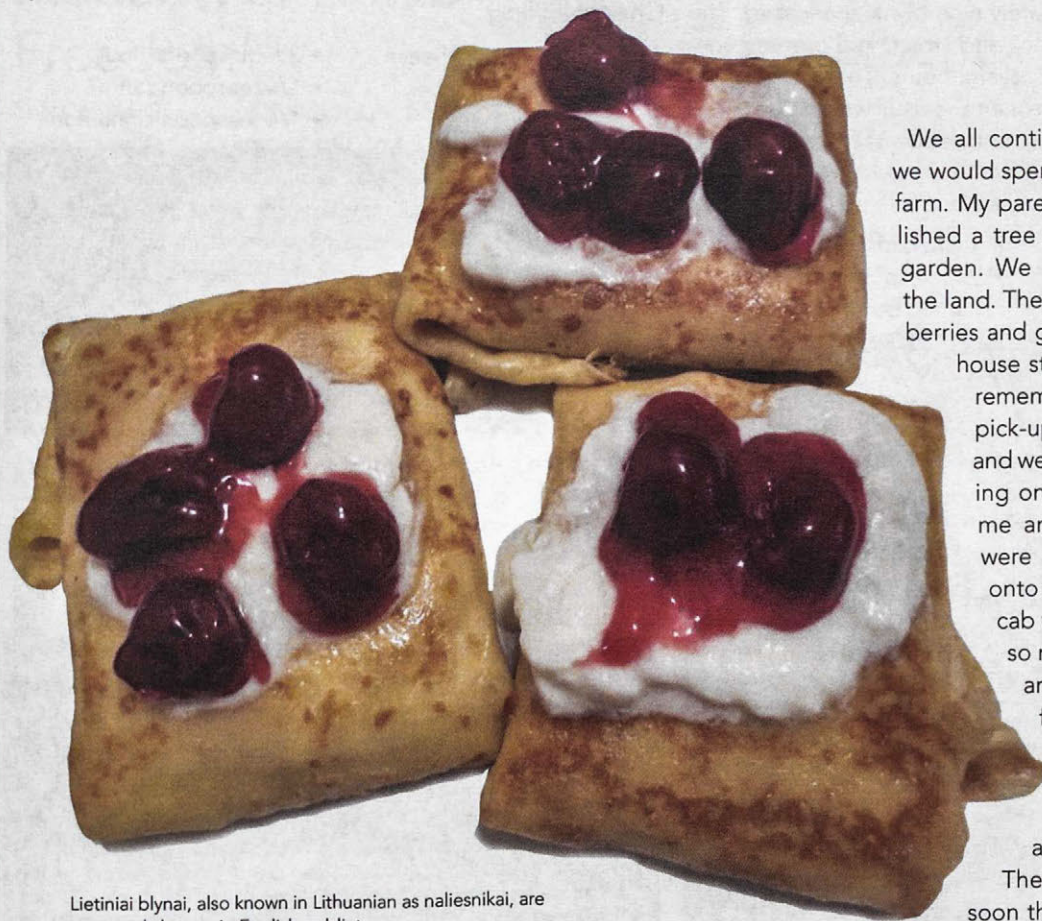
We have inherited an unbelievable gift in our language and culture from our forefathers and we thus have an awesome responsibility to preserve it for our children and for the rest of the world. Lithuanian could be one of the world's oldest spoken languages and certainly is the closest to Proto-Indo-European (PIE), a hypothetical language that once united all of the tribes of Europe.

Foreigners have long recognized the importance of the Lithuanian language. Linguist and professor at the Collège de France, Antoine Meillet (1875-1936) once noted, "If you want to know how Adam and Eve communicated in paradise, go to a Lithuanian village and listen." German linguist Georg Julius Justus Sauerwein (1831-1904), who spoke 75 languages fluently, considered the Lithuanian Samogitian dialect to be the most beautiful language in Europe. He fell in love with the language so much that, even as a non-Lithuanian, he unbelievably wrote more than 300 poems in Lithuanian and published the famous Lithuanian anthem "Lietuvinkais esame mes gimė!" (Lithuanians we are born!) in the newspaper *Lietuviška Ceitunga* in 1879. Finally, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves of Estonia knows how old and how significant are the languages of his Baltic neighbors.

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

Blintzes: Lietiniai Blynai (Naliesnikai)

By Jana Sirusaitė Motivans



Lietiniai blynai, also known in Lithuanian as naliesnikai, are commonly known in English as blintzes.

Food memories are some of the most vivid we possess. When I eat naliesnikai, I am immediately transported back to a winter snowstorm from my childhood.

We were living in Woodhaven, New York, sharing a three-family home with my paternal grandparents. The painter, Juozas Bagdonas, lived on the third floor. My senelis (grandfather) was a man-of-the-land. Back in Lithuania, he had been a teacher and director of a Žemės Ūkio Akademija (agrarian college). In New York, he worked with a landscaping company and helped plant the trees at both Lincoln Center and Kennedy Airport. Like most Lithuanian immigrants, my grandfather was not afraid of hard work. In addition to his full-time landscaping job, he also did extra work on the weekends. He managed to save up enough to buy a small patch of land in New Jersey to plant the trees and shrubs needed to run his own landscaping business. After several years, he was able to sell that small plot and, together with my parents, invest in a larger farm a bit further out in New Jersey.

We all continued to live in the city, but we would spend most weekends out at the farm. My parents and grandparents established a tree nursery and planted a large garden. We also enjoyed the bounty of the land. There were fields with wild strawberries and grape vines. Right behind the house stood two large cherry trees. I remember my father parking the old pick-up truck right under the trees and we would pick cherries by standing on the truck. It was thrilling to me and my brothers because we were actually allowed to climb up onto the hood and on top of the cab to reach the cherries. We had so many cherries that my mother and grandmother had plenty to freeze for the winter.

While we were out at the farm one weekend in the late winter, we were hit by an unexpected snowstorm.

The snow came so quickly that soon the long driveway was impassable and we were snowed in. The snow

was so deep that we could not even open the front door and had to go in and out of the house through a window. My parents had only packed enough food for a weekend away, and we had eaten most of it already. Not to worry though—we had all those cherries! We also had some flour and eggs and a few other pantry staples. My grandmother and mother made pancakes and blintzes with cherries and we survived the storm.

What a happy memory—being snowed in at the farm with my family, sitting by the fireplace and eating blintzes with cherries!

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 Varty 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 food editor and hopes to encourage you to try these recipes at home.

a taste of lithuania

Lietiniai blynai

Naliesnikai/Blintzes

This recipe makes approximately nine blynai (pancakes). The batter can be made in advance and stored in a covered container in the refrigerator for several hours. The cooked pancakes can also be stacked between sheets of waxed paper and placed in the refrigerator for up to three days, or can be frozen.

Pancake

- 3 large eggs
- 1 1/3 cups milk
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons oil or melted butter
- 3/4 cup white flour



1. Combine everything and beat well. (You can do this in a blender—it works perfectly.)
2. Heat a pan (omelette or crepe pan, or a regular frying pan) over medium heat and melt some butter.
3. Pour in a small amount of batter—just enough to cover the bottom surface of the pan—and tilt the pan until the batter is spread evenly (I use 1/3 cup of batter in a regular 12-inch frying pan).
4. Cook over medium heat until the edges of the pancake begin to pull away from the sides of the pan, about one minute.
5. Give the pancake a quick flip and lightly brown the other side, about 30 seconds.
6. Slide the pancake out onto a plate to cool, and continue making the rest of the pancakes.

Cheese Filling

- 1 pound cottage cheese
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1 beaten egg
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon



1. Drain the cottage cheese over a sieve to remove excess water.
2. Add remaining ingredients and mix well.

To Fill Blintzes



Use approximately 1/4 cup of cheese filling for each pancake.

1. Place the filling in the middle of the pancake.
2. Fold over two sides, then fold over the remaining two sides to make a square bundle.

To Fry Blintzes



Use about 1/2 tablespoon of butter for every four blintzes and fry on both sides in a heavy skillet until brown and crisp.

Serve right away with sour cream and cherries!

Dr. J.P. Kazickas Receives Medal "For Homeland's Freedom"

The Consul General of the Republic of Lithuania in New York Valdemaras Sarapinas presented Dr. Joseph Peter Kazickas with the medal/order "For Homeland's Freedom" in November 2013. The award letter, signed by the Chairman of the Board of the Union of the Lithuanian Freedom Fighters, Jonas Burokas, reads: "For his tireless efforts for re-establishment and strengthening of the Independence of Lithuania, patriotic work while organizing relations of the heads of the State of Lithuania with the heads of the State of the United States and Europe, for his philanthropic work in Lithuania and around the World. Vilnius, November 6, 2013."



With Dr. Kazickas (seated, center) during the ceremony are (from left) Alexandra Kazickas Lithuanian School Director Neila Baumilienė; Kazickas Family Foundation Administrator Elena Naujikiėnė; Sister Margaret Bareika of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Putnam, Conn.; Dr. Kazickas' daughter and President of the Kazickas Family Foundation, Juratė Kazickas; and Lithuanian Consul General from New York Valdemaras Sarapinas. Photo: Pranas Valys

Pa. Lithuanian Women's Club Celebrates 85 Years

The Lithuanian Women's Club of Wyoming Valley in Pennsylvania celebrated its 85th anniversary in September 2013. The club was founded in 1928 with 200 members. Today, there are still more than 20 active members involved in the club. They meet monthly for lunch at the Boscov's in Wilkes-Barre to discuss their Lithuanian heritage. Once a year they make a donation to a charitable organization. Anyone of Lithuanian ancestry, is married to a Lithuanian or is interested in the Baltic republic may join the club. Contact President Martha Warnagiris at 570-654-1941.

New York Team Wins Vytas Eidukaitis Basketball Tournament

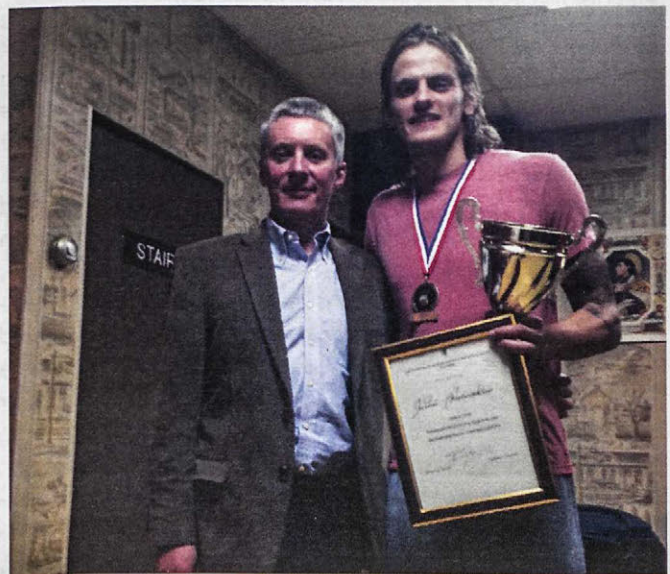
The third Vytas Eidukaitis Basketball Tournament took place on Saturday, November 16, 2013, in Waterbury, Conn. For the third consecutive year, it was organized by the Connecticut Lithuanian Athletic Club (Vaiva Gelazauskaitė, president).

Partaking in the Tournament were seven teams from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. The games were very exciting, some going to the last minute before the winning shot was made. In the finals, New York's LAK (Lietuvių Atletų Klubas) defeated Connecticut's "Ažuolas" for the championship. LAK's Julius Kacinskas was named the Tournaments Most Valuable Player. Third place was won by "Geležinis Vilkas," the other team from New York.

After the games, all of the teams and their fans gathered at the Knights of Lithuania Hall for refreshments. There, Consul General of the Republic of Lithuania in New York, Valdemaras Sarapinas, presented the championship trophy to LAK and the MVP Award to Julius Kacinskas.

In his remarks, Sarapinas stated that this tournament is a perfect setting for remembering a friend, an athlete and a very active member of the Lithuanian community—Vytas Eidukaitis.

As with previous Vytas Eidukaitis Tournaments, this year's event was well attended. Among the fans were Sigitas Simkuvienė, president of the Lithuanian American National Executive Committee; Diana Norkienė, president of Connecticut's Lithuanian American Community; and the Eidukaitis family, Onutė and her two sons, Arūnas and Arvydas.



Consul General Sarapinas with MVP Julius Kacinskas.

Coming to Baltimore: Šokių Šventė 2016

By Deanna Howes and Algis Šilas



Linas Orentas, Chairman of Šokių Šventė 2016 planning committee (left) with Tomas Mikuckis, Šokių Šventė 2016 Artistic Director, visiting the Baltimore Arena, the site of the 15th Tautinių Šokių Šventė. Photo: Ramunė Kligyte

On Saturday, October 19, 2013, the planning committee for the "Šokių Šventė 2016" Lithuanian folk dance festival met in Baltimore, Md., to tour venues and receive first-hand advice on planning the festival from the previous year's "Šokių Šventė 2012" organizers in Boston, Birutė and Marius Žiaugra.

More than 1,500 dancers from around the world are expected to perform at the Baltimore Arena on July 3, 2016. Located in downtown Baltimore, the arena, formerly the 1st Mariner Arena, was named the #1 Arena in the United States by *Billboard* magazine and *Venues Today* in 2009 and 2011. The arena is located approximately two blocks away from the official "Šokių Šventė 2016" hotel, the Hilton Baltimore, the popular downtown Inner Harbor neighborhood, the historic Lithuanian-founded St. Alphonsus Church and the Baltimore Lithuanian Hall.

In the past, the arena has welcomed famous musical performers and groups such as The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Bruce Springsteen, Led Zeppelin, Prince, U2, Baltimore Blues Festival, Michael Buble, Usher and Bob Dylan.

Upcoming events include the Trans-Siberian Orchestra and the 2014 Colonial Athletic Association Men's Basketball Championship.

After the morning program, which included a presentation by Birutė and Marius Žiaugra, the committee members had the opportunity to meet with Hilton Baltimore and Baltimore Arena representatives for personal tours to get a first-hand understanding of the venue facilities. The organizing committee, chaired by Linas Orentas, comprises Washington, D.C., and Baltimore Lithuanian American Community, Inc. members.

The afternoon portion of the meeting included a presentation by Tomas Mikuckis, the "Šokių Šventė 2016" artistic director. Mikuckis stated that the planning for the artistic element of the folk dance festival program has already begun.

"In developing the festival's program, we want to keep true to three main goals," Mikuckis said. "First, keep and continue our folk dance festival traditions and uphold its originality. Second, to create a performance whose story and expression will pull in



Šokių Šventė 2016 organizing committee visiting Baltimore Arena. Photo: Algis Šilas

and amaze not only Lithuanians and Lithuanian-Americans, but also American members of the audience. And third, all of this will be accomplished with cheerful dances, which the performers will enjoy, encouraging them to practice more, and thereby increasing the number of folk dance festival performers. Having had the ability see the performance venue in person, naturally we were able to not only envision the opportunities for lighting and decorations, in the interest to strengthen the folk dance festival production, but also to see the logistics and the area of the arena, which will be comfortable and spacious for the dancers to perform."

Marius Žiaugra added that he and Birutė enjoyed getting together in Baltimore with the group of people who will be going through a similar experience to theirs in Boston in preparing the groundwork necessary to make a Lietuvių Tautinių Šokių Šventė (Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival) happen.

"All of us from the previous folk dance festival's organizing committee are more than happy to share our experiences and lessons learned and to help out in any way we can," Žiaugra said. "With the great location of hotels, the comfortable arena, its short walking distance from hotels and the fact that everything is located in a vibrant part of downtown Baltimore, we left having full confidence that the next šventė will be a fun-filled event, one not to be missed. More than anything else, however, the passion and dedication of the organizing committee members that we met with, left us with no doubt that the XV Lietuvių Tautinių Šokių Šventė in 2016 will be a great success."

Linas Orentas, the "Šokių Šventė 2016" organizing committee's chair, concluded the meeting by saying, "The work of organizing the 'Šokių Šventė' 2016 festival has already begun. I am very elated that the Boston 'Šokių Šventė 2012' organizing committee members Marius, Birutė and Tomas were very gracious, helpful and did not hesitate to fly to Baltimore to spend

a whole day with our organizing committee, and to share their past experiences and insight. Most importantly, having listened to their observations and suggestions for our three-year production plan, this type of invaluable information sharing strengthens the organizational continuity in the attempt to perfect the Šokių Šventė program. We are all ready and waiting for the dancers and participants to show up to Baltimore in 2016!"

Over the course of the next three years, the committee will work closely with Mikuckis and other representatives from the national Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. to plan the 15th Šokių Šventė. So put your dancing shoes on; we'll see you in Baltimore in 2016!

Deanna Howes and Algis Silas are members of the Šokių Šventė 2016 organizing committee.



Šokių Šventė 2016 organizing committee members at the Hilton Baltimore this past October (left to right): Ramunė Kligytė, Rytis Grybauskas, Vaiva Meižienė, Jonas Howes, Birutė Žiaugrienė, Marius Žiaugra, Artūras Vorobjovas, Tomas Mikuckis, Izabelė Laučkaitė Howes, Algis Šilas, Rūta Skučienė, Tomas Skučas, Vilija Kirvelaitienė and Deanna Howes. Photo: Ramunė Kligytė

sports

Tobias Wins Citizenship in Time to Compete at Sochi

Ice dancers Isabella Tobias and Deividas Stagniūnas will represent Lithuania in 2014 Winter Olympics *By Rimas Gedeika*



Isabella Tobias and Deividas Stagniūnas try on their Lithuanian Winter Olympic Team uniforms. Photo: Alfredas Pliadis, pliadisfoto.com

On December 2, 2013 a historic event took place in Vilnius, Lithuania. It was on that day that Lithuania's President Dalia Grybauskaitė granted Lithuanian citizenship by exception to American skater Isabella Tobias. Tobias became the first person since 2008—and the first athlete—to receive Lithuanian citizenship by exception. The two other individuals who received their Lithuanian citizenships by exception were artist Jonas Mekas and priest Stasys Žilys.

In order for the President to grant a person Lithuanian citizenship by exception, a person has to earn it through meritorious achievement and show that he/she is integrated within the Lithuanian community.

Isabella Tobias, now 22, was born and raised in New York City. Her dream was to partake in the Olympic Games. She started

skating at the age of 8. By the time she was 10, she discovered that her real passion in skating was ice dancing, thus she proceeded on that road.

In 2010, Tobias teamed up with a Lithuanian ice dancer from Kaunas, Deividas Stagniūnas, after his previous partner retired due to an injury. Stagniūnas had been training in the U.S. since he was 15. They immediately hit it off, and that year they won their first international medal—a bronze. In 2011, at the Skate America Championship, they also won the bronze medal. A year later at the European Championships they took ninth place, and 15th in the World Championships, competing for Lithuania.

The pair had high hopes for Olympic competition, but faced an uphill battle in more than just athletics. In order to repre-



President Grybauskaitė greets Isabella Tobias and Deividas Stagniūnas in her office, congratulating Tobias on becoming a Lithuanian citizen.
Photo: pliadisfoto.com

sent a country at the Olympic games, both partners have to be citizens of that country. Tobias decided to pursue Lithuanian citizenship.

Tobias' journey was not easy. In January 2013, President Grybauskaitė declined to grant an exception to the Lithuanian nationality law for Tobias, as she had with Stagniūnas' previous partner. Lithuanian citizenship may be granted by exception based on great merits to the country, and it was felt that Tobias had not yet achieved that. Future merit is not considered. A candidate must also demonstrate language proficiency and be integrated with Lithuanian society.

This setback did not stop Tobias. She redoubled her efforts to learn the language and to become more knowledgeable about Lithuania. She and Stagniūnas stepped up their training to assure that they would meet the Olympic qualifying standards.

In March 2013 the pair qualified for the Sochi Winter Olympics based on their performance in the World Championships. In addition to their efforts, they received an outpouring of public support, with thousands of Lithuanians signing petitions and using social media to express their support.

Soon it was time to once more petition the Lithuanian government for citizenship. Tobias had passed her Lithuanian language examination, had become more involved with the Lithuanian community, and had shown merit when she and Stagniūnas qualified for the Winter Olympics. This time, President Grybauskaitė concurred that Tobias was worthy of becoming a Lithuanian citizen and that her efforts merited an exception.

When she met with Tobias on December 2, 2013, to grant her citizenship, Grybauskaitė congratulated her and emphasized that citizenship is a commitment to take responsibility for the country's present and future, and loyalty to the country's people, values and traditions. Tobias pledged to live up to Lithua-

Meet Lithuania's 2014 Winter Olympic Team

Lithuania will be represented by nine competitors in six sports at the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia. The Games take place February 7 through 23.

Alpine skiing

Rokas Zaveckas
Ieva Januškevičiūtė

Figure skating (ice dancing)

Deividas Stagniūnas
and Isabella Tobias

Biathlon

Diana Rasimavičiūtė
Tomas Kaukėnas

Short-track speed skating

Agnė Sereikaitė

Cross-country skiing

Ingrida Ardišauskaitė
Vytautas Strolia

Follow the team's progress at www.olympic.org or www.ltok.lt.

nia's expectations. She took her oath in a naturalization ceremony at the Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior on December 12, and was sworn in as a Lithuanian citizen. She received her Lithuanian passport the next day.

Of the nine athletes representing Lithuania, Tobias and Stagniūnas are favored to achieve the highest results. They are expected to place within the top 10.



Isabella Tobias in her Lithuanian Winter Olympics team jacket.
Photo: pliadisfoto.com

current events

Vilnius Summit Witnesses Historic Events

During November's Vilnius Summit, EU association agreements with Georgia and Moldova were initialed and other important cooperation agreements between the European Union and Eastern Partnership countries were signed. The summit also produced a visa facilitation agreement with Azerbaijan and a framework participation agreement with Georgia.

The summit was the most important and largest event of Lithuania's Presidency of the EU Council, with 34 countries attending.

The Vilnius Summit also triggered historic changes in Ukraine. Although the EU and Ukraine initialed an agreement on air services, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich refused to sign an EU association agreement, which would have opened borders to goods and set the stage for easing of travel restrictions. He said the country could not afford to sacrifice trade with Russia, which opposed the deal. His decision brought thousands of pro-EU protesters onto the streets of Kiev and Lviv in an action called EuroMaidan, named for Ukraine's Independence Square, or Maidan, where they gathered.

Prior to the Summit, Lithuania opened an Honorary Consulate in Ukraine's third-largest city, Dnepropetrovsk.

In the EU

...In a December visit to Ukraine, Foreign Minister of Lithuania Linas Linkevicius visited pro-EU protesters in Kiev, bringing "euro-mittens" from Lithuania "to warm up Ukrainian hands and hearts."

...During a December visit to Athens, Lithuania's President Dalia Grybauskaitė symbolically handed over the helm of the Council of the European Union to Greek President Karolos Papoulias and Prime Minister Antonis Samaras. Greece officially started presiding over the EU Council on January 1, 2014.

...According to Eurostat, of the 5 million deaths in the European Union in 2012, Lithuania had the third-highest rate (13.7 percent), exceeded only by Bulgaria (15 percent) and Latvia (14.3 percent).

... Lithuania, the United Kingdom, France and Hungary have agreed to establish a Trust Fund to financially support participation of the Eastern Partnership countries in joint Common Security and Defense Policy activities. The partners are looking for efficiencies that will help reduce costs and operational risks, boost military effectiveness and technological innovations, and create new jobs.

...During December's EU Competitiveness Council meeting, chaired by Lithuania, the EU adopted two major EU 2014-2020 programs – Horizon 2020 for research and innovation and Erasmus+ for education, training, youth and sport. The Council also agreed on management and financing for the space program European Earth Observation Program Copernicus, and on financing for a global collaboration project to build and operate an experimental reactor to demonstrate the scientific and technological feasibility of fusion energy for peaceful purposes.

...The European Commission has approved aid for the construction and operation of a liquefied natural gas terminal at Klaipėda Seaport to help Lithuania diversifying its supply sources. Support for the construction of the terminal amounts to about 448 million euros. Maintenance costs are estimated at 17 million euros a year.

...EU officials have said that new conditions imposed by Lithuania may delay a 26 billion euro rail link project spanning five countries. Lithuania now wants the Rail Baltica line from Tallinn to Berlin to run through Vilnius and not Kaunas as originally planned. The European Parliament says Lithuania's proposal has come too late and the project may lose EU funding if there are further delays.

International

...Lithuania has expressed concern over Russian missile deployment in Kaliningrad. A Russian military source confirmed that the missiles had been deployed "for some time" after a German newspaper said that satellite imagery showed Iskander-M missiles near the Polish and Lithuanian border. Russia says it fears that the Western anti-missile shield in Europe is meant to undermine its security.

...Russia has announced it is preparing to lift a ban on the import of Lithuanian dairy products, saying issues that led to the ban have been resolved. Russia had halted dairy imports from Lithuania on October 7, 2013, citing quality issues, putting pressure on the EU member before the Vilnius Summit. Lithuanian dairy products will again start to appear in Russian markets beginning in January.

...The Lithuanian military contingent serving in the EU's Operation ATALANTA completed its four-month mission in December. The team was protecting a World Food Program vessel delivering humanitarian assistance to Somalia from pirate attacks.

...Former Taupa Lithuanian Credit Union bank teller Michael Rukenas pleaded guilty in December to federal charges that he conspired with Taupa's former CEO, Alex Spirikaitis, to embezzle more than \$481,000. Rukenas' deal calls for him to cooperate with investigators and to testify if any related cases go to trial in the \$16 million embezzlement scheme alleged to be orchestrated by Spirikaitis. As many as six other indictments are pending.

...The first phase of Lithuanian-Swedish power link project Nord-Balt has been completed with the installation of two 1.7 kilometer pipelines. The second phase of the project is scheduled to start in March, and the power link is scheduled to be completed in 2015.

...The Lithuania Tourist Office plans to hold its first London to Vilnius car rally in spring 2014. Proceeds will benefit a Lithuanian charity.

...Lithuanian technology companies UAB Ruptela and UAB NFO Technologies were named among the 50 fastest growing companies in Deloitte's 2013 Central Europe Technology Fast 50.

National

...A Lithuanian court in December ruled in favor of an editor with BNS news agency who had refused to disclose who leaked her a secret report. The court reversed an earlier disclosure order over a BNS report that Russia was planning a campaign to discredit the Lithuanian president. The court, whose decision is final and cannot be appealed, also ruled that the search of the journalist's home, garage and car was unlawful. Prosecutors say they will continue their probe, but would destroy documents seized in that search.

...In early December, severe windstorms left tens of thousands without electricity in western Lithuania, necessitated a restriction on movement of ships in the port of Klaipėda and brought down trees across the country. There were no fatalities in Lithuania, but the storm claimed five lives elsewhere in northern Europe.

...In November 2013, heads of Christian churches in Lithuania signed a joint memorandum to declare 2014 as a Year of Family. Church leaders cited concerns that the concept of the "traditional family" headed by a man and a woman is increasingly under attack.

...A December 2013 ceremony marked the beginning of the reconstruction of the ORT Vilnius Shalom Aleichem Jewish School in Vilnius. The school was closed during the Nazi occupation of Lithuania in 1941 and became a cultural center during perestroika. In 1991, it became a school again with a class of 20. There are currently 315 students. Reconstruction is expected to finish in spring 2015.

...Lithuania's national Christmas tree at Cathedral Square in Vilnius was named among the "world's most spectacular" by a number of news outlets, including CNN and the New York Daily News.

People

...Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel has received the Lithuanian Diplomacy Star "for enhancing bilateral relations and fostering historical memory." Emanuel received the award on November 21, 2013, from Lithuanian Ambassador to the United States Žygimantas Pavilionis and Consul General of Lithuania in Chicago Marijus Gudynas. 2013 marked the 20th anniversary of Chicago and Vilnius as Sister Cities. One of Vilnius' streets will be named Chicago Avenue.

...Lithuania's parliament voted unanimously to award the 2014 Freedom Prize to Metropolitan Archbishop of Kaunas Sigitas Tamkevičius. The 75-year-old Tamkevičius was a member of the unarmed resistance, a political prisoner in the Soviet Union from 1983 to 1988, and founder and editor of the underground publication "The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania."

...The Lithuanian Youth Council presented Lithuania's President Dalia Grybauskaitė with the Person of the Year Award 2013 for her "active support for youth and attention to promoting of youth employment," plus support for social initiatives benefiting youth.

Arts and Culture

...The end of Lithuania's Presidency of the EU Council was marked at the Grand Hall of the Philharmonic with a performance of Richard Wagner's opera Tristan and Isolde. The Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra performed with Nomedas Kazlauskas, Ian Storey, Vilhelma Moncytė, Mindaugas Jankauskas and Liudas Norvaisas, conducted by Maestro Walter Attanasi.

...Actors Donatas Banionis and Juozas Budratis, composers Faustas Latenas and Giedrius Antanas Kuprevičius, writer Vladas Braziūnas and camera operator Jonas Gričius have all been named recipients of this year's Lithuanian National Culture and Art Awards.

...Lithuanian filmmaker Marija Inesa Luneckaitė received the "Humanity without Borders" award from the New York Youth Video Festival PLURAL+ for her work "All Equal." PLURAL+ is a youth-produced video festival that explores issues of migration, diversity and social inclusion. It a joint initiative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the International Organization for Migration.

...Hunter College in New York honored Lithuanian-born artist Arbit Blatas in October 2013 with a memorial ceremony. Blatas' widow, Regina Resnik, accepted the award on his behalf. Resnik and her son have donated all of Blatas' work and archives to Lithuania, where they are on display.

...Lithuanian film "The Gambler" by Lithuanian director Ignas Jonynas won the Special Jury Prize in the International Warsaw Film Festival and was nominated for two other international awards.

Sports

...Rūta Meilutytė claimed Lithuania's first gold medal at the European Short Course Championships in Denmark in December. She swam to gold in the 100m breaststroke and 100m individual medley finals, setting two new Championship record times, but settled for silver in the 50m breaststroke. The 16-year-old then continued on to earn three gold medals in the World Schools' Championship in Brazil, winning the 100m freestyle, 50m breaststroke and 50m freestyle. Meilutytė won a total of 12 gold medals in 2013. In November 2013, she was named Best European Young Athlete for the second year in a row, receiving the Piotr Nurowski Prize and a 12,000 euro grant.

...The Lithuanian Basketball Federation and online news portal DELFI named Mantas Kalnietis and Lina Pikčiūtė as its two 2103 players of the year. Kalnietis, 27, plays for Russian club PBC Lokomotiv-Kuban, but led the Lithuanian team to its first final in 10 years in Eurobasket 2013. Pikčiūtė, 23, plays for Vilnius Kibirkštis-VIČI.

... Lithuania's President Dalia Grybauskaitė has said she will not attend the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi. She says she is boycotting the games over Russia's foreign policy, particularly human rights violations and economic sanctions.

It Is a Small World After All

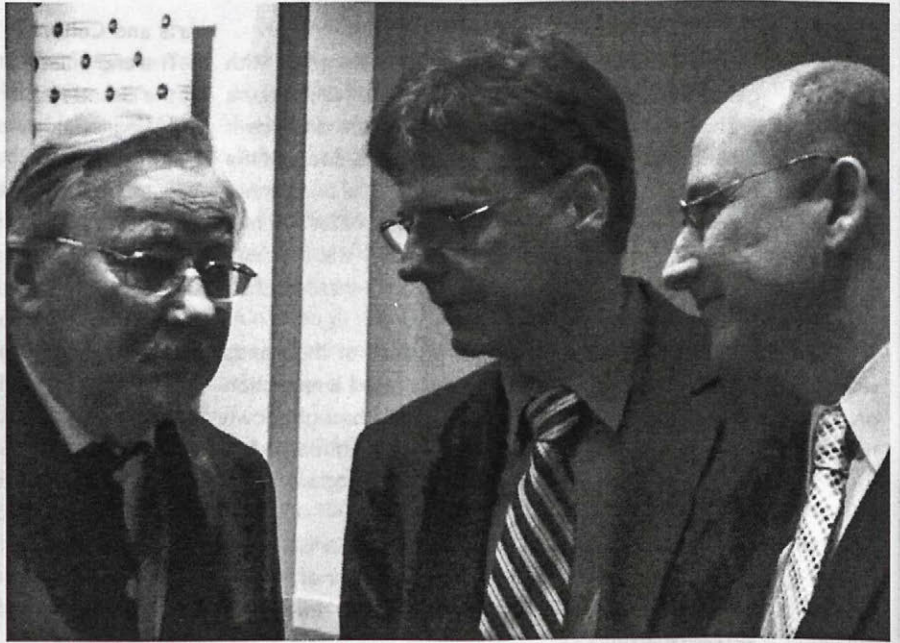
continued from page 9

What's next for you?

Paulius: The Soviets re-wrote history to suit themselves. To date, the Russian Federation still denies knowledge of their 50-year occupation and Siberian deportations. These crimes can't be forgotten.

Lithuanians are very good at explaining the occupation and deportations to other Lithuanians. However, they often fail to explain them succinctly to the rest of the world. These facts won't globally take hold unless individual Lithuanians take initiative and expressly publicize the facts through various forms of media and public relations efforts.

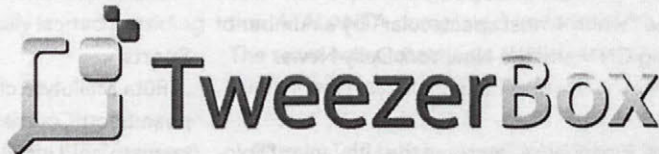
As a former activist who was able to get media attention, I am certain that Lithuanians can get this kind attention for such initiatives. When I walked to the White House in 1988, I walked to free one Lithuanian dissident. I was one man helping a stranger. The media accepted the idea. At that time walking for Baltic independence did not appear logical; however, the media accepted that as well and I was able to publicize my cause. In our "small world," it's often about one person making up their mind to act when a meaningful opportunity presents itself.



Vytautas Landsbergis (left) speaks with Paulius Klimas (center) and Alex Škirpa (right) about their video at the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, D.C., in 2011.

For partnership details or investor inquiries about Alex's startup, TweezerBox, visit [facebook.com/TweezerBox](https://www.facebook.com/TweezerBox) or email alex@tweezerbox.com. To be a part of the upcoming Beta test, please visit www.tweezerbox.com.

To see the video about Paulius' walk for freedom, visit: youtu.be/v_49jEpAxSE or go to YouTube and search for "Paulius Klimas Walks for Freedom."



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January/February 2014

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

JANUARY 2014

January 13
Defenders of Freedom Day

FEBRUARY 2014

February 15, 8 p.m.
Songwriter Nojus in Concert
St. Casimir's Parish Hall, 3855
Evan St., Los Angeles
\$20 in advance, \$25 at the door
Info: Ricardas, 323-360-7786

February 16
Lithuanian Independence Day
Check with your local Lithuanian-
American Community chapter for
events in your area.

February 16, 8 a.m.
**Kansas City Lithuanian Independ-
ence Day Celebration**
Wyandotte County Museum, 631
N 126th St, Bonner Springs, Kans.
Info: facebook.com/KansasCity
LithuanianCommunity

February 16, 11 a.m.
**Chicago Lithuanian Independ-
ence Day Commemoration**
Nativity BVM Church, 6812 S.
Washtenaw, Chicago
Info: altcenter@aol.com

February 22, 5 p.m.
**Vilnius University Girls' Choir
"Virgo" Concert**
Mr. Carmel Church Parish Hall,
275 N. 8th St., Brooklyn, N.Y.
Info: info@nylithuanian.org

February 22, 6 p.m.
Spindulys Pancake Carnival
St. Casimir's Parish Hall, 2718 St.
George St., Los Angeles
Celebrate Spindulys' 65th year.
Info: Danguole Varniene,
spindulys@aol.com, 818-249-7574

February 22, 6 p.m.-12 a.m.
**Kaime Virto Ažuolai (Oaks Fell
in the Village)**
Lithuanian Hall, 851 Hollins St.,
Baltimore
Folk and pop music, dancing,
story telling, flocking champion-
ship and satire. Food and snacks.
Info and tickets: kaime-virto-
azuolai.ticketleap.com

February 22, 7 p.m.
Songwriter Nojus in Concert
Estu Namuose, 4 Cross St. &
Veterans Hwy., Jackson, NJ
\$20 in advance, \$25 at the door
Info: lietuviskabendrija@yahoo.
com, 732-674-7556

February 22, 7 p.m.
**Lithuanian Independence Day
Concert with Iš Rytų Salelės**
Divine Providence Parish, 25335
W Nine Mile Rd., Southfield, Mich.
Special guest Consul Marijus
Gudynas. Admission TBD; 18 and
under free. Info: Daiva Rugienius,
949-735-2779

February 23, noon
**Detroit Lithuanian Independ-
ence Day Celebration**
Divine Providence Parish, 25335
W Nine Mile Rd., Southfield, Mich.
Special guest, Consul Marijus
Gudynas. Free.
Info: Daiva Rugienius, 949-735-
2779

February 23, 1 p.m.
**Commemoration of Lithuanian
Independence**
American Legion Post 66, 132 N.
Wiggs St., Griffith, Ind.
Info: rudzevjo@comcast.net,
219-884-2220

MARCH 2014

Throughout March
**David Garrett and Martynas
Levickas in Concert**
3/12 Minneapolis, State Theater
3/14 Milwaukee, Riverside Theater
3/15 Chicago, Chicago Theater
(two shows: 3 p.m. & 8 p.m.)
3/18 & 3/19 New York, Best Buy
Theater
3/21 Pittsburgh, Benedum Center
3/22 Wallingford, Conn.,
Oakdale Theatre
3/23 Worcester, Mass., Hanover
Theatre
3/27 Atlanta, Woodruff Arts
Center Symphony Hall
3/28 St Petersburg, Fla.,
Palladium Theater
3/30 Coral Springs, Fla., Coral
Springs Center for the Arts
Info: martynasmusic.com or
facebook.com/MartynasOfficial

March 2, 1 p.m.
**Cincinnati Lithuanian Independ-
ence Day Commemoration**
Terwilliger Lodge, 10530 Deerfield
Road, Montgomery, Ohio

March 3
**FLO-XIV, 14th Annual Florida
Lithuanian Open Golf Tournament**
St. Petersburg, Fla.
Info: 727-895-4811, akarnavicius@
LTConsulFlorida.com

March 4
Užgavėnės (Fat Tuesday)

March 2
**Philadelphia Lithuanian Independ-
ence Day Commemoration**
Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E.
Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia
Info: lithuanianmha.org

March 11
Restoration of Independence Day

March 13-15
**Yale Conference on Baltic and
Scandinavian Studies**
Yale University, Linsly-Chittenden
Hall, 63 High St., New Haven, Conn.
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: edmickus1@aol.com

March 23, 12:30 p.m.
**Annual Lithuanian American
Community Meeting**
Divine Providence Parish, 25335 W
Nine Mile Rd., Southfield, Mich.
Info: D. Rugienius, 949-735-2779

APRIL 2014

April 13, 3:30 p.m.
**Toronto Raptors and Jonas
Valančiūnas vs. Detroit Pistons**
Palace of Auburn Hills, 6 Champi-
onship Dr, Auburn Hills, Mich.

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

April 27, 3 p.m.
**"In Memoriam" American Pre-
mier by The American Virtuosi**
German Society of Pennsylvania,
611 Spring Garden St., Philadelphia
Composition dedicated to vic-
tims of Soviet and Nazi oppres-
sion in the Baltic States. \$20.
Info: intermuse@intermusearts.org

MAY 2014

May 10, 4 p.m.
**"Grandis" Folk Dance Group
55th Jubilee Performance**
Downers Grove North H.S., 4436
Main St., Downers Grove, Ill.
Info: grandischicago.org

May 11-12
Baltimore Lithuanian Festival
Catonsville Armory, 130 Mellor
Ave, Catonsville, Md.

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: knightsolithuania.com

AUGUST 2014

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

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PERIODICALS
POSTAGE

