

# bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

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# this month in history

## July/August Anniversaries

### 615 years ago

#### August 12, 1399

The Battle of the Vorskla River, one of the largest and bloodiest battles in medieval European history, was fought between the Tatars and the armies of Tokhtamysh and the Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania. Tokhtamysh, dethroned khan of the Golden Horde, had enlisted Vytautas' help to retake the Horde in exchange for sovereignty over Ruthenian lands.

Vytautas conducted three campaigns into Tatar territories, in 1397, 1398 and 1399. He prevailed in the first two, reaching the Black Sea and Crimea, where he built a castle. Many captured Tatars were resettled to Trakai, where their descendants live today.

In August 1399, Vytautas again moved against the Horde. At Vorskla, the Horde feigned retreat, then closed in from behind when the Lithuanians pursued, resulting in heavy casualties. Vytautas' loss weakened his influence in the region and forced him to re-ally with his cousin Jogaila and reaffirm the Polish-Lithuanian union.

### 445 years ago

#### July 1, 1569

The Union of Lublin was signed, passing direct rule of Lithuania to Poland, and transforming the two sovereign states into a single confederation. Lithuanians needed the union to secure their eastern boundaries from the strengthening Russians while the Polish kingdom sought new lands. Lithuania maintained certain rights but transferred the entire Ukraine to Polish rule. Immediately after the Union, Poles and Lithuanians conquered Livonia, and the German-ruled duchies of Courland and Prussia became Polish-Lithuanian fiefs.

### 115 years ago

#### August 13, 1899

Elžbieta Mikalauskaitė (d. 1970), linguist and pioneer of the science of phonetics in Lithuania, was born in Kelmaičiai. A Lithuanian dictionary editor and professor, her contributions include a history of the Baltic languages, a standard Lithuanian phonetics course and research into phonetics of Lithuanian dialects.

### 105 years ago

#### July 2, 1909

Jonas Balys (d. 2011), considered the premier Lithuanian folklore scholar in the U.S., was born in Krasnavas. He wrote more than 600 articles and 35 books, and collected hundreds of thousands of folk songs, proverbs, riddles and legends, as well as wedding customs and burial traditions. Balys was head librarian for the Slavic and Central European Division of the Library of Congress.

### 90 years ago

#### August 23, 1924

The first Lithuanian national song festival took place in Kaunas, with 3,000 performers in 86 choirs. This year, more than 37,000 singers, dancers and musicians from 14 countries performed in the 2014 Dainų šventė in July.

### 75 years ago

#### August 23, 1939

German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav M. Molotov signed the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, also known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Publicly, the treaty stipulated that neither party would attack the other or ally with the other's enemies.

The treaty also included a secret protocol that divided territories of central and eastern Europe into Nazi and Soviet "spheres of influence." After signing, Germany and the Soviet Union invaded different parts of Poland, and the Soviets annexed Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and parts of Finland, Ukraine and Romania.

### 70 years ago

#### July 5-13, 1944

The Red Army launched the Vilnius Offensive, part of Operation Bagration, against the Wehrmacht, resulting in Soviet occupation of Vilnius. The Soviets took Kaunas on July 31.

#### July 26, 1944

Rimantas Stankevičius (d. 1970), Lithuania's first astronaut, was born in Marijampolė. A test pilot with more than 4,000 hours of flying experience, Stankevičius became a cosmonaut in 1982. He was pilot and commander of the space shuttle Buran.

### 25 years ago

#### August 23, 1989

On the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, approximately 2 million people, including 1 million Lithuanians, joined hands in a 373-mile-long human chain across Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Known as the Baltic Way, the demonstration sought to draw the world's attention to how the three countries suffered under the pact and to call for independence from the Soviet Union.





# bridges

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**Back cover:** Storefront along Gedimino prospectas in Vilnius. Photo: Teresė Vekteris



from the editor

## Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner of Champions



Photo: Rimas Gedeika

Juratė Krokys Stirbys, winner of the Philly Kugelis Cook-Off, with her pans of prize-worthy potato goodness

If you've ever been to an event where fine Lithuanian souvenirs are sold, you've probably come across the T-shirt that proudly proclaims, "Kugelis. Breakfast of Champions."

I would have to agree. The grated-potato casserole with its bits of bacon was a childhood favorite that my grandmother made for special occasions. Right out of the oven, with a scoop of sour cream on top, it was delicious. I thought it was even better the next day, eaten cold, with my fingers, for breakfast.

After my grandmother died, there was a prolonged kugelis drought in our family. It wasn't for another 15 years that I acquired a Lithuanian cookbook and got up the guts to try. Over the last dozen years, I've honed the recipe to a point that I'm proud to share the product with friends, family and co-workers. My best moment came one Easter, when my nephew's friend saw it on the table and asked hesitantly, "What is it?" and Andrew just said, "You gotta try it. It's the best!"

This year, Philadelphia's Lithuanian-American community held a Kugelis Cook-Off Contest as a fund raiser for the Lithuanian Music Hall, which badly needs some restoration and renovation work. I was looking forward to going, and tasting how other people made theirs. I made a note of it on my calendar, and didn't give it another thought.

One evening, I came home to a message from Angelė, one of the Lithuanian Music Hall board members. She said she had a question for me.

I called her back. The question was innocent enough: "Do you make kugelis?"

"Yes, I do." Suddenly, I realized where this was going.

"Wonderful. We need more contestants for the Kugelis Cook-Off."

"Uhhh..."

So, because I found it impossible to say no to Angelė, I found myself shopping for two aluminum pans of regulation measurements in which my kugelis was to be baked and then cut into exactly 100 uniform squares.

World-renowned French chef and restaurateur of Le Bec Fin fame, Georges Perrier, was one of the three judges. Normally, a chef of that caliber would invoke serious jitters. However, he happens to be a friend of the Honorary Consul in Philadelphia, Krista Butvydas Bard, so I've seen her drag him around the floor as he tried his hand (and feet) at Lithuanian folk dancing.

The evening of the event, Georges came around as we were setting up, inquiring about ingredients and filching morsels from our trays prior to the official judging. Once the doors opened, people poured in, some from the concert upstairs, many others just for the kugelis. It turned out to be one of the most successful fund raisers in the Music Hall's recent history.

Although I didn't win the competition, I had a number of people return for seconds, thirds and more, and tell me that my kugelis was their favorite. Juratė Krokys Stirbys, who did win the blue ribbon, told me that she had never made kugelis before, but had been experimenting, with her family as willing guinea pigs, for the entire week before the contest. I'll let you in on a couple of her secrets: Pennsylvania butter potatoes and ham in addition to bacon. Check out her delicious recipe at [lithuanianmha.org/lithuanian-recipes/kugelis-krokys/](http://lithuanianmha.org/lithuanian-recipes/kugelis-krokys/)

A shout out goes to Fr. Peter Burkauskas of St. Andrew's Lithuanian parish, for winning the "people's choice" vote, as well as the "best with beer" category. Though he enjoys a direct connection with the Big Guy, it was really his grandmother who helped him take the day with her recipe. Another nod goes to Kes and Joyce Lukas, who took the "best decorated" award for dressing as Grand Duke Kęstutis and wife Birutė at their Trakai-themed table.

As you peruse the pages of this issue, it might be time to once again contemplate what a great addition a steaming pan of kugelis would be to your fall table.

Happy grating,

Teresė Vekteris, Editor





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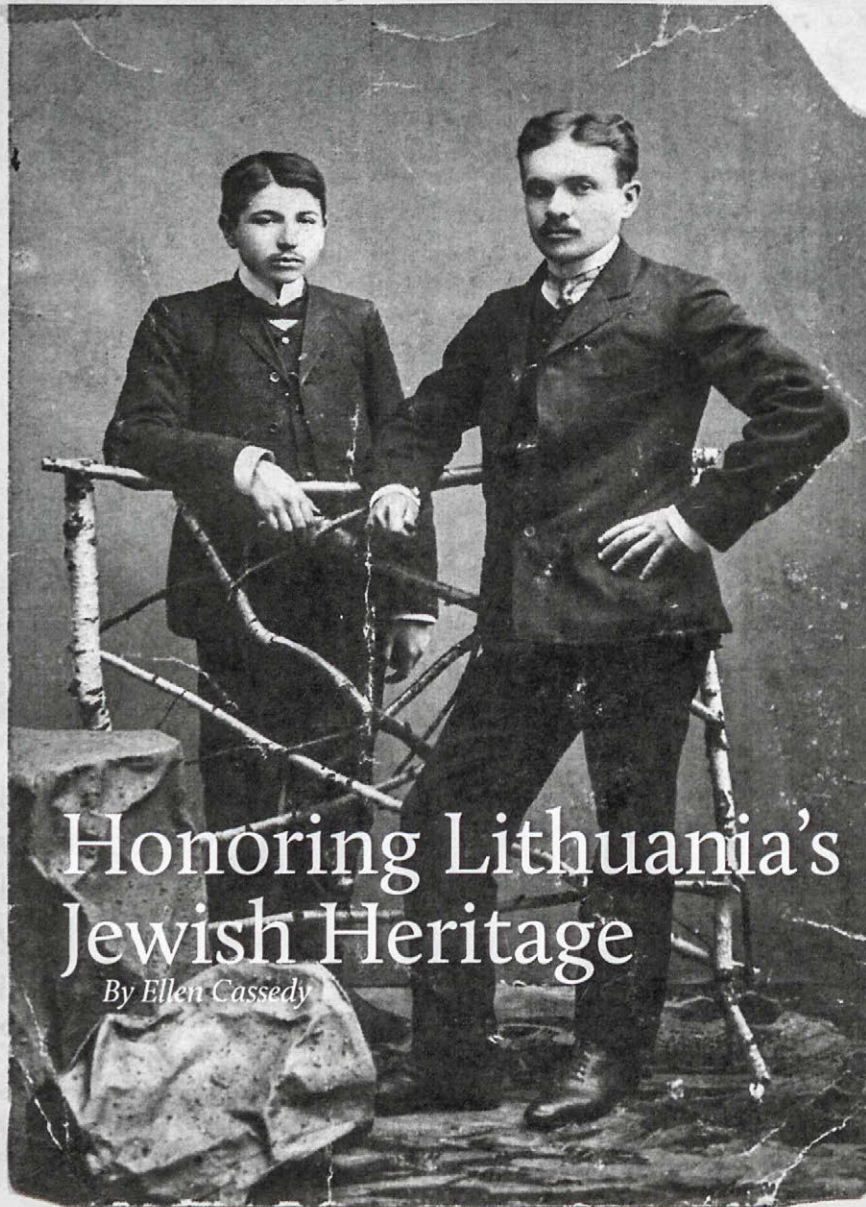
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## Honoring Lithuania's Jewish Heritage

By Ellen Cassedy

Yankl Levin (left), Ellen Cassedy's grandfather, and an unknown young man.

My grandfather, Yankl Levin, came to America from Lithuania in 1911 as a young man, fleeing the Tsarist draft.

When my mother was alive, I could count on her to keep hold of my grandfather and all those who came before. But when my mother died, my family past seemed to be slipping out of reach. And so I set out on a journey to Lithuania. I had no living relatives there—some had died in the Holocaust, some had survived, some had emigrated. I simply wanted to walk the streets where my forebears had walked, to breathe that air.

But what began as a Jewish family roots journey soon expanded—into a historical and a moral exploration of how Lithuanians today are engaging with their country's Jewish her-

itage. It's an exploration I don't think I'll ever be done with—one that has changed my view of the past, changed my view of the future, and changed me.

My book, *We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust*, tells not only about the secrets I uncovered within my own family past, but also about the Lithuanians I was privileged to meet—Jews and non-Jews who are exhuming the truths of the past in an effort to build a more tolerant future.

Last year, when my book was published in Lithuanian, as *Mes esame čia*, I traveled to Lithuania again and met a new generation of educators, activists and students who are wrestling with some challenging questions:

- How does a country scarred by genocide take an honest look at its past?
- Can people honor their diverse heritages, and remember their dead, without perpetuating the fears and hatreds of the past?
- What do we gain, and what do we lose, when we seek to overcome mutual suspicions and reach out to “the Other?”

### History of Harmony

Jews arrived in Lithuania in the 13th or 14th century, at the invitation of Grand Dukes Gediminas and Vytautas. By the 18th century, the area was renowned as a flourishing center of religious and cultural Judaism. Vilnius was known as “the Jerusalem of the North.”

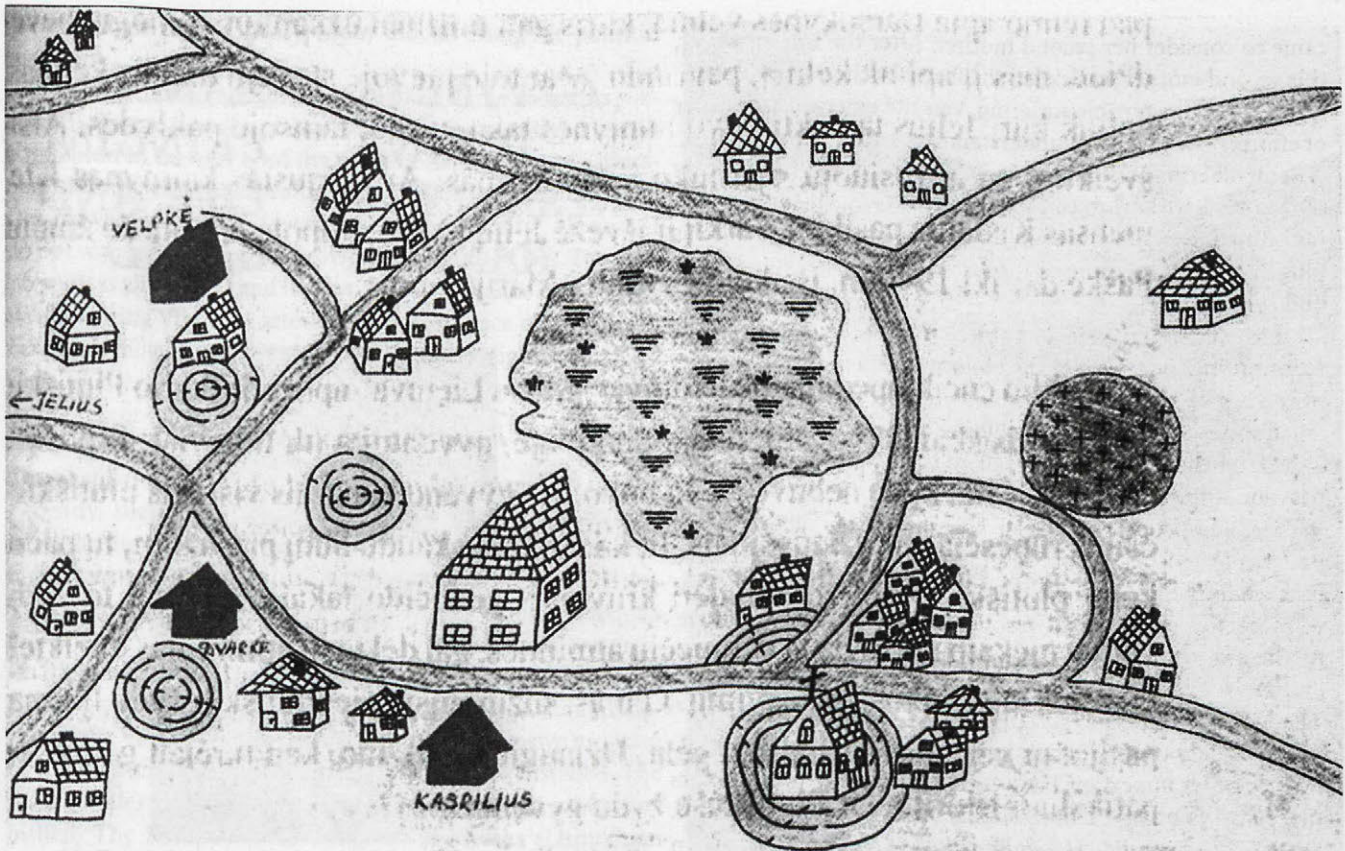
For centuries, Jews and non-Jews lived side by side relatively peaceably. Pogroms

were rare. On the brink of World War II, Lithuania's Jewish population totaled more than 220,000. Jews made up one-third of the population in the cities and about one-half in small towns.

But relations between the Jewish and the non-Jewish culture were never particularly warm. For Lithuanians, Jews were “others.” For Jews, Lithuanians were “others.” By the mid-20th century, tensions that had been simmering for many years began to increase. Nazi sympathies began to rise. And that helped to lay the groundwork for what happened next.

In 1940, Soviet tanks arrived, rolling into Lithuania in what turned out to be a futile attempt to prevent a German invasion. In 1941, just weeks before the German army did invade, Soviets authorities arrested thousands of Lithuanians and Jews and deported them to Siberia.





Schoolchildren draw maps of the old Jewish world.

Then the German army rolled in. And a multi-cultural place became a place of ghettos and a place of mass murder. Lithuania's Jews were massacred with a swiftness and thoroughness unusual for even that bloody time.

During the Nazi occupation, the political and religious leaders of Lithuania either collaborated with the Nazi regime or failed to oppose it effectively. Some Lithuanians risked their lives to help Jews. Some moved into the Jews' empty houses and took their property. Many did nothing—either they were too scared, or they couldn't figure out how to help, or they were glad that the Jews were going. And some helped to kill their Jewish neighbors.

By the end of the war, after seven centuries, Jewish life in Lithuania had been decimated. Only 6 percent of Lithuania's Jews remained alive.

Nor did the end of World War II bring peace to Lithuania. The incorporation of the Baltic nations into the Soviet Union was not an easy transition. Between 1940 and 1952, historians say, hundreds of thousands of people in Lithuania—Jews and non-Jews—were lost to massacre, war casualties, deportations, executions and emigration. Today, only 4,000 Jews live in Lithuania.

During the Soviet era, for the most part, the Jewish history of Lithuania and the reality of the Holocaust went underground.

#### New Discourse

As Lithuania moved toward independence from the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, a new public discourse began to take hold. The facts of the Holocaust began to emerge. In the words of Markas Zingeris, head of the Tolerance Center in Vilnius, there came an "awakening from...a long slumber of mind, spirit and conscience."

New plaques went up, about the Holocaust and about prewar Jewish culture, in both Lithuanian and Yiddish.

In the Tolerance Center, Jewish artifacts that had been saved all through the Soviet years by Lithuanian curators were proudly put on display.

At the Choral Synagogue, the one synagogue remaining in Vilnius out of a former one hundred, daily services began to be held.

"We are a tiny remnant," says Faina Kukliansky, chair of the Vilnius Jewish Community. "But it is thrilling to be heirs to such a magnificent, world-famous Jewish community. We want to work hard to maximize what we can, so that together we can build a community that one hundred years from now will be more substantial than it is today."

Irena Veisaitė, a survivor of the Kaunas (Kovno in Yiddish) ghetto, is one of Lithuania's most important tolerance leaders. During the war, she was rescued by a non-Jewish woman she



came to consider her second mother. After the war, however, this second mother was exiled to Siberia by the Soviet regime.

Yet out of this terrible suffering, Veisaitė emerged as a leader of efforts toward mutual understanding.

Remembering Lithuania's Jewish heritage, she believes, "is not simply a Jewish project. It is important equally for Jews and for Lithuanians, because as long as you are hiding the truth, as long as you fail to come to terms with your past, you cannot build your future."

Linas Vildžiūnas, another tolerance leader, believes that "confronting the reality of the Holocaust is a most serious test of the moral values and civic maturity of modern-day Lithuanian society." He created The House of Memory, a project that aimed to help schoolchildren talk to their elderly family members about the lost Jewish world.

These old people may never have talked about the Jewish past with their children or grandchildren. Vildžiūnas trusted that when the generations were brought together in a spirit of respectful remembrance, something good would emerge. As the old people began to remember and to talk, both generations found the Jewish world becoming vivid and personal. They began to question and to change.

The Gallery of the Righteous at the Jewish museum in Vilnius, another important Holocaust education project, honors more than 3,000 Lithuanians who rescued Jews during the war. Several volumes called *Hands Bringing Life and Bread* have been published in English and Lithuanian.

The International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes, established by President Valdas Adamkus in 1998, carries out research and education.

The Commission has sometimes been embroiled in controversy. For several years, the Holocaust division was shut down after some members resigned in protest, stating that while the Lithuanian prosecutor's office had failed to bring former Nazi

## GYVYBĘ IR DUONĄ NEŠANČIOS RANKOS

## HANDS BRINGING LIFE AND BREAD



Documenting Lithuanian rescuers.

collaborators to justice, it instead chose to point the finger at several elderly Jews who had been anti-Nazi partisans, accusing them of war crimes over the killing of civilians during the partisan skirmishes.

Recently an agreement was reached, and the Commission was reconstituted with a proclamation explicitly emphasizing the uniqueness of the Holocaust.

A current initiative at the Commission, led by Ingrida Vilkienė, is a network of tolerance centers that involves teachers and students all over the country.

Laima Ardavičienė, a teacher in the city of Kedainiai, walked me through the corridors of her high school to show me the school-wide curriculum on the Holocaust that was being carried out.

Audra Čepkauskaitė, a young tolerance leader in Vilnius, told me how she and fellow activists had made yellow stars—like those that Jews were forced to wear during the Nazi occupation—and brought them to the halls of Lithuania's parliament, the Seimas. Elected members were encouraged to wear the stars in an act of



Members of Seimas, Lithuania's parliament, honor Holocaust victims by wearing yellow stars.



remembrance and solidarity. Many did, all along the political spectrum.

Valdas Balčiūnas, a businessman, talked to me about his successful effort to install a plaque honoring the murdered Jewish population in the center of the town of Žagarė, one of Lithuania's oldest Jewish communities. The plaque, he said, is "a small step forward to explain the truth to local residents." He said, "I do not want my children to grow up in a world of lies. The Jewish spirit is alive, and I and my family want to make it stronger." While visiting Vilnius, I attended a performance of a powerful new play, called "Diena ir naktis," ("Day and Night"), by Daiva Čepauskaitė, which interweaves the Holocaust past with scenes from present-day Lithuania.

### Restitution

Recently, the Lithuanian government allocated \$50 million in restitution funds to support Lithuania's small Jewish community. Needless to say, there can never be full compensation. The restitution initiative is symbolic, underscoring Lithuania's moral burden. It is also practical, as it will actually support Jewish life and social services in Lithuania.

This past fall, to mark the 70th anniversary of the liquidation of the Vilnius ghetto, the city hosted an extensive program of commemoration. New memorial stones were installed. The mass murder site in the forest of Ponar (Paneriai) was refurbished. The Fourth World Congress of Litvaks (Lithuanian Jews and their descendants) drew participants from around the globe. And Lithuanian citizens gathered at museums and community centers to read out, one by one and hour by hour, the names of Holocaust victims.

Is anti-Semitism on the rise or on the decline in Lithuania today? It's hard to say.

In Lithuania as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, a call has arisen for greater recognition of Stalin's crimes, and that call sometimes seems bound up with an attempt to deny, diminish or distort Hitler's crimes.

In 2012, there were accusations of insensitivity to Lithuania's Jewish heritage when the Lithuanian government honored Juozas Ambrazevičius-Brazaitis, a World War II-era leader who had signed orders forcing Jews into the Kaunas ghetto.

And every year, on Lithuania's two independence days, a couple of thousand people, including neo-Nazis, parade through the streets of Vilnius and Kaunas. These demonstrations, and the defacing of Jewish sites, have drawn criticism both outside and inside Lithuania.

"It depends on you."

Last year, I was honored to speak about my book and my journey to students from the Sholem Aleichem Jewish high school in Vilnius and to non-Jewish students at high schools and universities in several Lithuanian cities.

I showed the students a picture of a billboard I saw in Vilnius, which said: "Who, if not you, will determine the future of



This billboard asks, "Who, if not you, will determine the future of Lithuania? Become socially active!"

Lithuania? Become socially active!" I asked students: Is Lithuania destined to be a place where neo-Nazi voices grow louder, or a land where people take Holocaust remembrance seriously and dedicate themselves to ensuring that such a tragedy cannot happen again? Will it be a place where people stand by, or a place where people can stand up and speak up?

I said, "It depends on you."

*Ellen Cassidy is the author of We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust (Mes esame čia), which has received several literary awards. She lives near Washington, DC.*



# The Flag of Lithuania in Marc Chagall's "White Crucifixion"

By Romualdas Kriauciūnas



"White Crucifixion," 1938, by Marc Chagall, oil on canvas, 154.6 x 140 cm (60 7/8 x 55 1/16 in.), gift of Alfred S. Alschuler, 1946. Photo courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago; reprinted with permission.



## Pope Francis once described Marc Chagall's "White Crucifixion" as one of his favorite pieces of art.

During my recent stay at a rehabilitation center, I was visited by a lady from nearby Catholic parish. Before departing she gave me a small booklet, "The Little Black Book," that contained six-minute meditations for the Lenten season. This publication also contains a variety of quotes and general information. Noteworthy is the fact that annually some three million copies of this booklet are distributed worldwide. I will not review the booklet here, but I want to share my new discovery about one famous painter and his well-known picture.

On the page set aside for March 28, 2014, was the following story: Pope Francis once described Marc Chagall's "White Crucifixion" as one of his favorite pieces of art. The subject of Jesus' crucifixion had long held a fascination for Chagall. He was a son of Lithuanian Jewish parents, and frequently painted the subject. Chagall painted "White Crucifixion" in 1938, on the eve of World War II. He portrays Jesus as a practicing Jew who wears a prayer shawl as he dies on the cross. One art critic noted that Jesus appears as a Jewish martyr. His crucifixion occurs in the midst of the burning of synagogues and other violence against Jewish people.

Now comes the unexpected discovery, as further described in "The Little Black Book": "In the corner of the 'White Crucifixion' are a Lithuanian flag on one side and Communist flags on the other. Chagall later added a swastika armband on one soldier, and placed a placard reading 'Ich bin Jude' ('I am a Jew') on another man."

This picture can be seen at the Art Institute of Chicago. Over the years I have been to the Art Institute a number of times, but do not recall seeing that painting. If I knew about the Lithuanian flag in the picture, I am sure I would have made a special effort to find the painting.

Coming home from the rehabilitation center I had to catch up with unread

newspapers and magazines. In the section of "Dates and Anniversaries" in the March 25, 2014 issue of *Draugas*, I noted a brief mention that on this date in 1985 died Marc Chagall, "a famous Russian-Jewish postimpressionist."

This only increased my interest to learn more about the famous artist's heritage. The Internet is full of all kinds of information about Marc Chagall. I jotted down some specific facts pertaining to his ethnic roots. The Andre Weiss Gallery website indicates that Chagall was born in 1887 in Liozna, near Vitebsk, Belarus, with the name of Moishe Shagal. This source noted that he was a son of Jewish family from Lithuania that lived in Belarus when Moishe was born. In another Internet source there is a brief mention that in 1935 the artist visited Vilnius and was interested in the issues of Jewish culture. At that time Vilnius was occupied by Poland. Another source ([www.shtetl.lt](http://www.shtetl.lt)) Lithuanized Marc Chagall's name to Markas Šagalis. At that website, Vytautas Toleikis noted that in 1922 Chagall decided to leave Russia. A Lithuanian diplomat named Jurgis Baltrušaitis helped the artist to ship his pictures to the West. For a while Chagall stayed in Kaunas, where he had a personal art exhibit. While visiting Vilnius with his wife, he was invited to lecture on Jewish art at the YIVO conference. During this visit he painted pictures in the interior of the Jewish synagogue in Vilnius. I was not able to learn more about this particular project. Is that synagogue and are the paintings still there? This source also noted that in 2006 there was an exhibit of Marc Chagall's paintings in Vilnius. Chagall died in France in 1985.

I tried to find something more on the meaning of the Lithuanian flag in "White Crucifixion." I was able to find only one reference, pertaining to a sermon given by Andy Braunston, delivered on August 21, 2011. The speaker offered his interpre-

tation of the various objects or symbols portrayed in the picture. Describing the flag of Lithuania, he indicated that it symbolizes the Lithuanian persecution. It's not clear, but I suspect he means persecution of Jews by Lithuanians, not persecution of Lithuanians by someone else. We need to remember that the picture was painted in 1938, about three years before Germany invaded Russia and the Nazi-led persecution and execution of Jews in Lithuania and other occupied territories took place.

Another article on the Internet states that the burning synagogue shown under the Lithuanian flag was done by Nazis. Up until now I have never heard that in 1938 or earlier Nazis were burning synagogues in Lithuania. Could this be another example of where events that eventually took place are placed ahead of their historical chronology?

I briefly touched on a possible relationship between world-famous painter Marc Chagall and his possible connection with Lithuania. This is a very fitting topic for an art historian who could study Chagall and the influences on his creativity, inspired by religion, ethnic and cultural traditions, and the events around him. I would not be surprised if a more intense relationship would be uncovered.



*Dr. Romualdas Kriaučiūnas is a clinical psychologist, formerly affiliated as a clinical professor at the College of Human Medicine, Michigan State University. After retiring from Community Mental Health in*

*Lansing as a chief psychologist, he has been a psychological consultant to the Social Security Disability Program. He is active in the Lithuanian-American Community and other ethnic and professional organizations.*



# In the Footsteps of a 100-Year-Old Writer: Danutė Lipčiūtė-Augienė's Life

By Irena Nakienė-Valys



Virš miškų, virš miestų, girių  
Varpas gaudė ir nutilo.  
Šventas rytas ima aušti:  
"Jau Velykos!" gieda paukščiai...

The bell echoed above  
Forests, cities and woods  
The holy morning dawns:  
"It's Easter!" birds start their song...

From D. Lipčiūtė-Augienė's poetry selection for younger school-age children, "Eilėraščiai mažiems nedideliems" ("Poems for Little Ones Not Big Ones"), published in 1992.

We recently commemorated a 100-year anniversary of our emigrant erudite and respected poet, the preserver of our national spirit, playwright, children's writer, social and cultural activist, Danutė Lipčiūtė-Augienė. She is a close relative of our great classical poet, priest and professor Jonas Mačiulis-Maironis. Danutė is the 13th child of Maironis' sister Kotryna Mačiulyte and Juozas Lipčius. She is also the wife of the painter and book illustrator Paulius Augustinavičius-Augys, his inspiration and muse, and the mother of his children.

Back in "Aušra" girl's high school in Kaunas, Danutė wrote a play for Vytautas Magnus University's anniversary commemoration. The play was put on stage and was very successful. Danutė continued her studies at Vytautas Magnus University, majoring in Lithuanian language studies, French language and literature. Her professors were prof. V. Mykolaitis-Putinas, V. Krėvė, P. Skardžius and others. Danutė was a member of "Šatrija" society, sang in a choir and wrote poems. Since 1932, Danutė collaborated on the magazine *Naujoji Vaidilutė*.

In 1944, Lipčiūtė-Augienė's family left to Austria, later to Germany. She contin-

ued to create and write in exile, and her husband continued to paint. They moved to the United States in 1949. Since 1951, Danutė worked for the children's magazine *Eglutė*, for which she wrote poems, sketches in prose and fairy tales. She dedicated 50 years of her life to this magazine.

Danutė never attributed much prominence to her creativity; she said that she "wrote only for one purpose—that kids would not become Americanized in this foreign land." The following stories were published as separate books: "Pupos pasaka" ("Bean Tale"), "Močiūtės dovanėlė" ("Grandmother's Present") and "Močiūtės pasakos" ("Grandmother's Tales"). Quite a few poems and plays in verses for children were written but were not published. They were put on stage in Lithuanian emigrant communities: "Užburti vaikai" ("Children Under the Spell"), "Velykos" ("Easter"), "Kalėdų žvaigždė" ("Christmas Star"), "Meškos mokykla" ("Bear's School"), "Ropė" ("Turnip") and other works, filled with love for Lithuanian words and the writer's homeland.

In 1966, in Chicago, after the death of her husband and while raising four children, Danutė published a monumental album—the monograph "Paulius Augius."

The writer also collaborated on various emigrant publications and wrote about diverse literature and art subjects for *Draugas*, *Šv. Kalėdų aidai* and magazines *Aidai* and *Ateitis*.

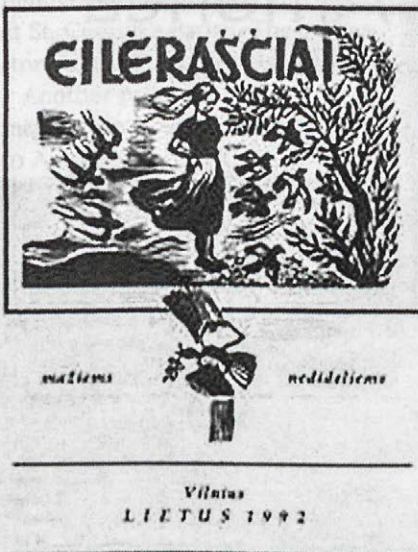
In 1976, when there was a hope born to visit Lithuania, the great part of the writer's library arrived to her homeland and



A younger D. Lipčiūtė-Augienė. Photo courtesy Maironis Lithuanian Literature Museum



## Danutė Lipčiūtė-Augienė



D. Lipčiūtė-Augienė's book "Eilėraščiai mažiems nedideliems" ("Poems for Little Ones Not Big Ones") featuring her husband, Paulius's, illustrations.

joined museums, schools and relatives' bookshelves. The new stage of Danutė's mission began with the newspaper *Atgimimas*, when she started participating at literature events in Maironis' birthplace, museums and schools. She developed a special bond with teachers and students from Pikčiūnai (her hometown) school, some Kaunas city schools, and schools, kindergartens and foster homes from other cities and towns. Danutė invested all her heart, thoughts and ideas into these activities. Bonding was one of the biggest values for Danutė, it gave joy and meaning to her life. Following the footsteps of her uncle Maironis, Danutė constantly urged to go forward to the independent future.

Danutė took care of her husband's works of art and heritage and gifted a collection of his works to the Vilnius art museum. In 1992 she published a poetry book in Lithuania. It was a poetry book for children called *Eilėraščiai (Poems)* and it had her husband, Paulius's, illustrations. After a year she published nine reproductions of his work. Danutė took care that the following lovely books with her husband's illustrations would be published and reach their audience: *Pupų*

*pasaka (Bean Story)*, *Eglė žalčių karalienė (Eglė, Queen of Serpents)* by Salomėja Nėris, and *Žemaičių vestuvės (Samogitian Wedding)* by bishop Motiejus Valančius.

After her children in the United States created their own families, Danutė did not want to be lonely. She moved to Putnam, Conn., to the monastery of the Sisters of the Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception. Back then, it was an active Lithuanian center. There were many cultural events that were enthusiastically attended by Lithuanians. Here the poet wrote more poems and texts in verses that became songs and chants. Danutė gladly taught people how to make ethnic Lithuanian Christmas ornaments out of straws. The motive for all this activity was the love of people, the wish to make people happy, and to express gratitude.

Danutė's endless diligence, kindness and modesty was inspired by her mother, who was a simple woman, a farmer, but set a beautiful example with her life and call for holiness. Creativity for Danutė was a refreshment from the whirlpools of mundane life and rut, and also was a possibility to realize her patriotic calling to preserve the greatest values of our nation—native language, family, children, religion, love, art and science to form a core of each Lithuanian's life. Danutė wanted to serve Lithuania and help the country, and she worked hard, sparing neither her health, nor strength, like a true Lithuanian patriot, loving Lithuania with all her heart. A few years ago, when interviewed by me, Danutė said: "I understood that a human is only human when they give themselves completely to others. I understood that the real love is serving others."

The writer, who lives at the Matulaitis Nursing Home, was paid a respectful visit by LAC's Connecticut district chair, Eastern Connecticut chapter board members, and children with their families and grandchildren.

The writer received many congratulations via mail. One of them was from Eugenijus Urbonas—the chair and initiator of Lithuanian Maironis Society. I



The poet, who now lives at the Matulaitis Nursing Home in Putnam, Conn., received many greetings and congratulations on the occasion of her 100th birthday.

will remind readers that the society was established in 1989. The society has been active for more than two decades in the areas of culture and ethnic education. This is one of the biggest student organizations in Lithuania. They publish the newspaper "Sandraiva," which they mail to the writer Danutė. The society organizes camps of Lithuanian ethnic studies in various Lithuanian cities. They organize the Baltic Unity Days, basketball tournaments, artistic readings and bard competitions. This society not only protects the memory of the profound Lithuanian poet Maironis, but also cultivates the patriotism of Lithuanian youth, love to majestic Lithuanian history and language, country's nature, its people. Meaningful activities encourage many students to love their homeland and language.

And the writer Danutė, having walked a 100-year road and having accomplished so much, modestly repeated, "I am not worth that much of attention."

*Irena Nakienė-Valys is a member of the Lithuanian World Community and serves on the Board of Directors of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. She is also chair of the LAC Eastern Connecticut Chapter.*



# How My Family Came to America

L.A. Students Tell Their Family Migration Stories *By Algis Bliūdžius*



The poster at left tells the story of the Jarašūnas family, part of the second wave of immigration following World War II. At right is the story of the Pakuckas family, part of the third, and most recent, wave of immigration. The poster below is the story of the Konstantinavičius family.

This year is the 70-year observance of the mass refugee migration from Lithuania during World War II. To commemorate the event, the students at the St. Casimir Lithuanian Saturday School in Los Angeles created posters depicting "How my family came to America." The posters were displayed in the Parish Hall during the "Vasario 16" (February 16) Lithuanian independence observance. Each poster is the history of a family; the combined

posters reflect the history of our community. The project confirms our existence as unique and distinct people.

It was amazing how the young students were able to articulate their family's journey to America. The children enrolled in the school come from two distinct migration groups. One group consists of the grandchildren from families who came from the Displaced Persons camps in West Germany after World War II. The

other group comprises the children of recent immigrants.

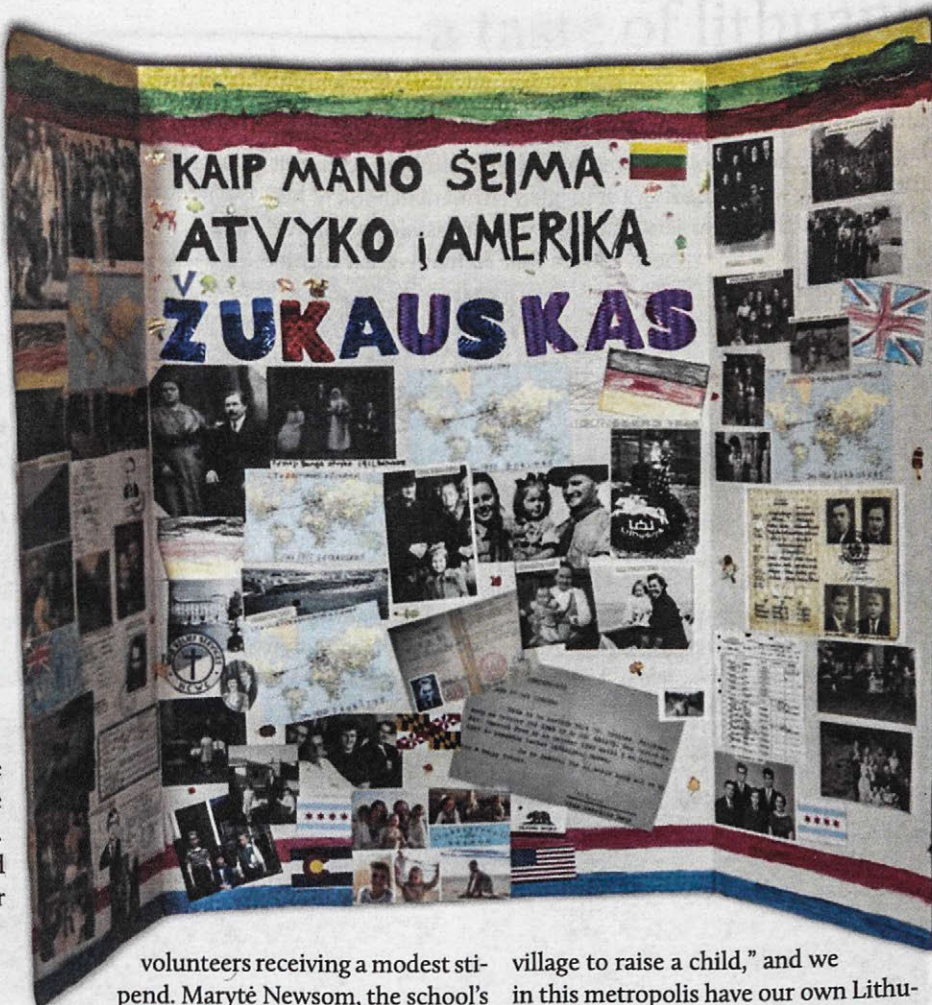
A poster created by the children of the Jarašūnas family is a tale shared by so many families who come to America as a result of World War II. In 1944, they were forced to leave Lithuania in a horse-drawn wagon because of the advancing Red Army. Just after the war, in 1946, the family found shelter in a Displaced Persons camp set up in occupied Western Germany. As the Iron Curtain descended across Europe, all hope of returning to Lithuania vanished. It took years for the family members to get permission to immigrate to America, as a sponsor was needed to provide support upon arrival. In 1949 it took seven days by ship to cross the Atlantic Ocean from Germany to New York City. From New York, the family members traveled by railroad to the industrial cities of the Midwest. Later, as the family established itself, it arrived in California on an airplane. In the old days, it was a long and arduous journey to get to Los Angeles. Upon arriving in





Los Angeles, the family joined other immigrants to help build the church at St. Casimir's Parish. The cornerstone of the church was laid in 1951.

Another poster is the story of so many recent immigrants who came to America. It is the history of the Pakuckas family and its travel to America. It is a young family with two small children. They were living in Punsck (Punskas), Poland, an enclave of Lithuanians. The town has a population of 1,050, of which 75 percent are Lithuanians. The fall of the Iron Curtain provided an opportunity to emigrate. It is not so easy to move to a distant land leaving family and friends behind. The daughter, Daria, was only 6 years old when she said goodbye to her cousins. In 2005 the family traveled from Punsck to Warsaw, where they boarded a plane for a flight to Los Angeles. In 2008 the son, Andrius, was born in Los Angeles. The new immigrants have embraced St. Casimir's Parish and revitalized our Lithuanian-American community.



#### Thriving Lithuanian School

The St. Casimir Lithuanian Saturday School is a real success story. The school has been serving the community for 65 years. All of the staff members are

volunteers receiving a modest stipend. Marytė Newsom, the school's director, has 34 years of service. There are 25 teachers from new and old immigrant families and 170 students enrolled in the school. There is a saying, "It takes a

village to raise a child," and we in this metropolis have our own Lithuanian-American village.

The school is thriving. Every Saturday the parents drive long distances to bring the children to school. There is energy and excitement in the schoolyard as the children run to the assigned activities. Time is allocated for singing, dancing, class study and school lunch. Attendance at this school requires an extra day in the weekly schooling. However, the benefits of the school are enormous, as children of the two groups associate and learn from each other. The new families assimilate into the new surroundings and the old families reconnect with their roots. It is a "head start" for all the students, and it is the dedicated teachers who make it possible.

For Lithuanians, education is a national obsession. It was fitting to note that the school project of "How my family came to America" was exhibited at the Lithuanian Independence Day. Before the rebirth of the nation in 1918,



Teachers at St. Casimir Lithuanian Saturday School. Marytė Newsom, in the center in a red jacket, is the school's director.



Lithuanian books and schools were banned by tsarist Russia. Lithuanian language and culture survived in the farms and villages. Here the school was "motulė prie ratelio" (a mother at the spinning wheel) reading a smuggled Lithuanian book to her children. At the larger land estates, it was possible to employ a teacher. It was from these estates that so many great Lithuanian writers emerged to revive this ancient language. Who can forget the opening lines of our most beloved song by Maironis, "Lietuva brangi mano tėvyne, Šalis kur miega kapuos didvyriai" ("Lithuania my dearest homeland, a Nation where in the graves sleep great heroes"). Countless generations have kept this ancient language alive and so will many more. The Los Angeles Lithuanian School has been following the tradition of parental education to raise well-developed children and keep our ancient language alive.

*Algis Bliūdžius was born in Alytus, Lithuania, became a Displaced Person, and an immigrant to America, as a child. In 1950, his family settled in Detroit, Mich., where he joined KOVAS basketball team*

*and graduated from Wayne State University. He found employment with the Army Corps of Engineers as a hydraulic engineer and worked on water resources projects all over the country. In 1969, Algis moved to Los Angeles. He is now retired, and lives with his wife and a cat, and grows tomatoes*



Students of the Los Angeles Lithuanian School.



## A Simple Meal, a Memorable Stay

by Jana Sirusaitė Motivans

Twenty-five years ago, in 1989, I spent the summer attending language and culture classes at the University of Vilnius. It was an exceptionally exciting time to be in Lithuania. The events of 1988 and 1989 prompted the collapse of communist governments in Eastern Europe and eventually led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. As I was preparing for my trip, Solidarity had won government elections in Poland and Hungary had removed its border fences with Austria, putting a big hole in the Iron Curtain.

In Lithuania, Sąjūdis had formed in June 1988 and during that summer there were huge freedom rallies in Vilnius. There were also protests at the Baltic seacoast to protest pollution and protests at the Ignalina nuclear power plant to demand safety inspections. In October 1988, an immense crowd gathered in Vilnius to witness the raising of the Lithuanian flag to replace the Soviet flag on Gediminas Hill and to celebrate the return of the Cathedral to religious use (it had been an art museum during Soviet times).

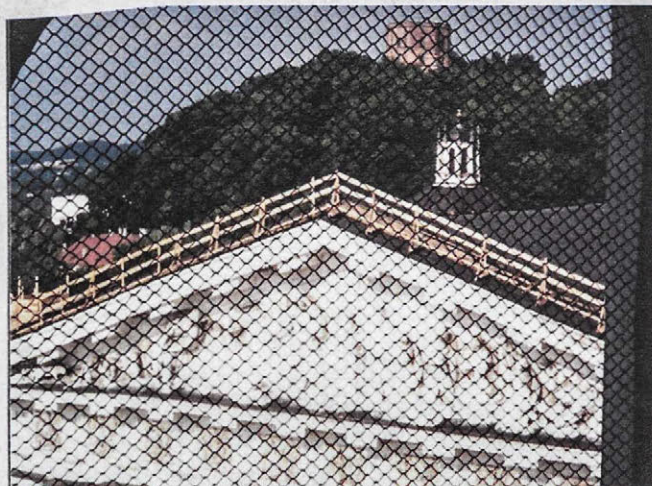
The freedom rallies continued throughout 1988 and 1989. In January 1989, Lithuanian was declared the official language of Lithuania, replacing Russian. On February 16, 1989, the Freedom Monument in Kaunas was re-dedicated and calls for independence became louder and louder.

In July 1989, just as I arrived in Lithuania, the Supreme Soviet had laid out a plan for Lithuanian economic independence. I was in Lithuania witnessing the end of communism. Never did we think it would happen this way. My whole childhood I had heard, "kai Lietuva bus laisva..." (when Lithuania will be free...). It was hard to believe that it was actually happening.

The six-week summer course at the university consisted



Poster for a concert to protest pollution reads, "We want to swim in a clean Baltic Sea" in the languages of the three Baltic States.



The roof of the Vilnius Cathedral before the return of the statues of Sts. Casimir, Helena and Stanislaus, which were removed by the Soviets in 1950. Gediminas Hill is in the background.

of language and cultural lessons. All of our instructors were excited to speak to us, because they told us it was the first time they could speak to foreigners openly without censorship or fear of reprisal.

We had a wide range of speakers—all eager to discuss topics ranging from politics to pollution to farming. We went on a field trip to protest the environmental pollution left behind at a former Soviet air base and another field trip to attend a funeral procession for the remains of Siberian exiles that had been brought home for ceremonial reburial. All of this would have been unthinkable even a year earlier. I had been to Lithuania during Soviet times so I understood well the difference.



Protest against environmental pollution at a former Soviet airbase in Lithuania in 1989.



## a taste of lithuania



Funeral procession for the remains of Siberian exiles brought home for ceremonial reburial in Lithuania in 1989.

Unfortunately I left Lithuania just before the Baltic Way. On August 23, 1989, approximately two million people joined hands to form a human chain across the three Baltic countries to mark the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. This pact divided Eastern Europe into spheres of influence and led to the occupation of the Baltic States in 1940. The Baltic Way showed solidarity among the three Baltic nations and a common desire for self-determination. Within seven months, on March 11, 1990, Lithuania declared independence.

So, what does all of this history have to do with food?

Well, while I was in Vilnius, I often ate lunch with relatives who lived near the University. Vladas and Regina Sirusas invited me to their home several times a week and always asked me to bring along some of my classmates. Vladas and Regina had a son, Arunas, who was a few years younger than me and they wanted him to meet some young Lithuanian Americans to learn about the outside world from people his own age. I think that their ulterior motive was for him to find an American girlfriend! My friends and I would arrive to a beautifully set table in the dining room and a delicious meal. I did not realize at the time how much time and effort Regina must have spent to make that possible.

Even though the political situation was changing, the Soviet market system for consumer goods was still in place, meaning that the food supply was unpredictable and shortages were still



From left: Regina Sirusienė, Arunas Sirusas and Jana Sirusaitė.

a part of everyday life. For example, one of my mother's cousins took me up to Latvia to meet my husband's relatives. While walking in the old town of Riga, we passed by a small food shop that had jars of mayonnaise displayed in the window. My relative went into the shop and excitedly burst out clutching an armload of jars. He explained to me that there was a mayonnaise shortage in Vilnius!

In spite of these shortages, Regina managed to prepare lunch for us several times each week, usually consisting of soup, followed by a main dish of meat and vegetables. She often ended the meal with coffee or tea and occasionally fruit or dessert. I found out later that she spent many hours each day searching the shops for groceries to prepare these meals.

One day I arrived for lunch alone and found just two places set in the kitchen. Regina apologized because all she had for me was a simple meal that day. She served a baked potato with a creamy mushroom sauce. The two of us sat together in her cozy kitchen and ate and talked. Of all the meals I ate at her home, this is the one I remember most.

### Grybai grietinės padažė

#### Creamy Mushroom Sauce

Recipe from Omaha Lithuanian Women's Club

*Family Favorite Recipes*, Morris Press Cookbooks, 2011

- 8 ounces mushrooms, sliced
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon flour
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- dash of pepper
- fresh dill, chopped

Melt butter in a large frying pan. Add mushrooms and sauté until browned. Stir in the flour. Cook and stir 1 minute. Stir in the sour cream, add salt and pepper to taste. Heat, while stirring, until warmed through. Take off the heat and stir in the dill. Serve over baked or boiled potatoes.





## K of L Mid-America District Dedicates Permanent Shrine to Our Lady of Šiluva in Chicago

By Regina Juška-Švoba

In April 2013, the Knights of Lithuania (K of L) organization began its 100th anniversary celebration with a memorial service at the gravesite of its founder, Mykolas Norkūnas, at Sacred Heart of Jesus Cemetery in Andover, Mass., followed by an anniversary mass of thanksgiving at Corpus Christi parish at the Holy Rosary Church in Lawrence, Mass.

Each K of L district also planned and held its own local commemoration. After almost two years of planning, discussing, fund raising, hosting lunches/dinners, construction delays and a little red tape, the Mid America District's

project came to fruition—a permanent shrine to Our Lady of Šiluva at St. Casimir's Cemetery in Chicago, Ill.

On a cool and cloudy Sunday, May 4, 2014, more than 100 joyful participants gathered at the chapel in St. Casimir's Cemetery for special prayers led by Mid-America District Spiritual Advisor and Our Lady of Šiluva Fund President, Rev. Anthony Markus. After concluding with the hymn "Pulkim ant kelių," those in attendance proceeded from the chapel to the shrine singing "Sveika Marija, Motina Dievo" and "Per kiekvieną naktį dieną" behind a banner depicting the Blessed Mother with the Christ Child, a gilded icon of Our Lady of Šiluva and the centennial anniversary wooden cross carved by George Mikalauskas of Council 96.

The shrine is a monument carved in the shape of the Basilica in Šiluva, Lithuania. In "windows" on either side of the main image of Our Lady are smaller religious images. On the left are the Divine Mercy as revealed to St. Faustina when she was in Vilnius; Mother and Child of Žemaičių Kalvarija; Mother and Child of Pažaislis; and Hill of Crosses. On the right side are St. Casimir, patron saint of Lithuania and the Knights of Lithuania, who is buried in Vilnius Cathedral; Madonna of the Gates of Dawn in Vilnius; Blessed Mother of Trakai; and Rūpintojėlis (the worried Christ). The monument is flanked by two imperial gray granite angels, hand carved overseas, that are smaller copies of the angels at the chapel in Šiluva. The monument is topped by



a nickel-plated, cast iron Lithuanian cross brought from Lithuania by Rev. Markus.

The inscription on the shrine's jet-black granite base reads, "On this auspicious occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Knights of Lithuania, 1913-2013, its Mid America District dedicates this shrine. We are forever grateful to all those who have contributed both large and small, to its fruition." The inscription lists a number of special remembrances. The history of the Apparition at Šiluva is inscribed on the back.

Rev. Markus offered dedication prayers and blessed the shrine with holy water. The emotional ceremony concluded with the "Hymn to Our Lady of Šiluva," composed by our very own Faustas Strolia.

The celebration continued with a luncheon and raffle at the Double Tree Hotel in Alsip, Ill. Each guest received a frosted glass votive holder with votive candle depicting the image of Our Lady of Šiluva. Event proceeds will be used for landscaping and upkeep of the shrine.

The Our Lady of Šiluva shrine was designed by Maurice Moore Memorials of Chicago Ridge, Ill. The approximately 2½-ton monument measures 72" x 16" x 84". The total cost of this monumental undertaking was in excess of \$23,000.

*Regina Juška-Švoba is national president and public relations chair of the Knights of Lithuania.*



## our community

# Lithuanian Foundation Not Resting on Its Laurels

By Laima Apanavičiene



Members of the Lithuanian Foundation Board of Directors and Audit Committee (from left): Marius Kasniūnas, Juozas Kapačinskas, Vytautas Narutis, Dana Rugienius, Almis Kuolas, Rūta Stropus, Dalius Vasys, Dalė Lukas, Saulius Čyvas, Rimantas Griškelis, Šarūnas Griganavičius, Audronė Karalius, Rita Kisielius, Arvydas Tamulis. Not pictured: Antanas Razma, Jr., Alina Akulic, Donatas Siliūnas, and Raimundas Silkaitis. Photo: Arūnas Klibas

The Lithuanian Foundation is well known not only for its name but for the good works it has accomplished. Without the Foundation, it is doubtful whether heritage schools, wide-ranging cultural activities, newspapers and magazines, song and dance festivals, and scholarships would have been able to survive.

The Lithuanian Foundation, having celebrated its golden anniversary a few years ago, is not resting on its laurels. Its activities are expanding as we heard at the Annual Meeting May 3, 2014, at the Lithuanian World Center in Lemont, Ill.

The meeting was opened by Board Chairman Marius Kasniūnas. Father Algis Baniulis gave the invocation, and Lithuanian Foundation founder Dr. Antanas Razmas lit a candle to commemorate members who are no longer with us. It was truly a touching moment when the first graders of the Chicago Lithuanian School, dressed in their national costumes, sang the national anthem.

Marijus Gudynas, the Consul General of the Republic of Lithuania in Chicago, greeted attendees, praising the foundation for including new members and for promoting the importance of maintaining the Lithuanian culture.

The Lithuanian American Council Education Committee

awarded a commendation to Faustas Strolia, the initiator of the U.S. song festivals and a long-time active participant. Because of F. Strolia's poor health, the award was accepted by his son Povilas Strolia, who brought a recorded thank-you from his father.

Audronė Karalius presented the Nominating Committee report. Candidates for three-year board terms were Rita Baras-Kisielius, Šarūnas Griganavičius, Dalius Vasys, Donatas Siliūnas and Juozas Kapačinskas. Candidates for one-year terms on the Audit Committee were Alina Akulic, Danas Rugienius and Rūta Stropus. All candidates were approved by acclamation of the members.

Board chairman Kasniūnas said he was pleased the activities of the last 50 years are being handed forward from generation to generation. He announced that the Foundation is standing on a firm base. The 7,000 members who joined the Foundation over the last 52 years show that a trust has developed with the community. Trust is not easy to achieve and it is our duty to continue working to maintain that trust.

Foundation President Arvydas Tamulis stressed that an organization is composed of people, not of money. He said that



## 90 Years for DC Embassy

On April 29, 2014, the Lithuanian embassy to the United States celebrated 90 years of continuous diplomatic presence in Washington, D.C. The embassy is the second oldest in D.C. and Lithuania's oldest. In 1920, the U.S. was among the first to recognize Lithuania's independence, and never recognized occupation. The embassy dates to 1924, when Lithuanian Minister Kazys Bizauskas purchased a large house in D.C., for \$90,000.

## LFAl Seeks Folk Costumes

The Lithuanian Folk Art Institute is seeking to photograph Lithuanian folk costumes that were woven outside of Lithuania. If you own a folk costume that was woven in the United States, Canada or South America, please contact Aldona Page at 215-248-3049 or at [aldona.page@mindspring.com](mailto:aldona.page@mindspring.com).

## NY Sports Club Turns 110

America's oldest Lithuanian sports club—the New York Lithuanian Athletic Club—celebrated its 110th anniversary on March 10, 2014. Members, fans and friends joined Lithuanian Consul General in New York Valdemaras Sarapinas, New York Lithuanian-American Community President Rasa Sprindys, Club President Jonas Jankauskas and former presidents Juozas Milukas, Aldona Augylienė and Stanislovas Kavaliauskas to mark the occasion. After remarks that lauded the club's meaningful traditions and numerous accomplishments, participants enjoyed an acoustic concert by well-known Lithuanian songwriter and performer Donatas Montvydas.

## Remembering J. Kazickas

Prominent Lithuanian-American businessman and philanthropist Juozas Kazickas, 96, died on July 9, 2014, in New York. Born in Russia where his grandparents had been exiled, he returned to Lithuania as a young boy but was forced to flee in 1944. He came to the U.S. on a fellowship to Yale University.

Kazickas worked in academia, as advisor to the U.S. Departments of Defense and State, and as director of the Lithuanian Foundation. He also established several companies, worked as a business and government consultant, and was a shareholder and director of investment funds and banks.

Kazickas worked tirelessly for Lithuania's freedom and after independence founded its first private capital and telecommunications company. His Kazickas Family Foundation still supports education in Lithuania. He received numerous honors from universities, organizations and the Lithuanian government.



Students of the Chicago Lithuanian School singing the Lithuanian national anthem. Second row, from left, Chairman of the Board Marius Kasniūnas and President Arvydas Tamulis. Photo: Arūnas Klibas

each person who contributes is equally important and we are grateful for each donation, no matter what size. Each donation shows support for our goal of maintaining the Lithuanian culture. All members who donated more than \$1,000 were given a lapel pin with the Foundation's logo.

Foundation finances were presented by the treasurer, Saulius Čyvas. Rimas Griškėlis, chairman of the Investment Committee, reported on the state of Foundation investments. The major function of the Foundation is handled by the Grants and Scholarship Committees. Vytautas Narutis, chairman of the Grants Committee, reported that Foundation grants and scholarships for 2013 totaled \$391,533. Aušrelė Sakalaitė presented the Audit Committee report.

The clear vision that the founders had in creating the Foundation was evident at the meeting. Today, no one can imagine how the activities of the Lithuanian community could even exist without the support of the Lithuanian Foundation. We remain grateful to the founders of the Foundation and to the current leadership urging those who are not yet members, to become members so that the goals set over 50 years ago are truly passed "from generation to generation."



## our community

# Omaha Lithuanian Women's Club Sustains Lithuanian Heritage and Culture for 40 Years

by Aldona Tanner



Elle Kovas Cotton (left) and Dobilė Mackevičius Rasser (right) selling fund-raising products at the anniversary event.

Forty years ago, Danutė Sulskienė and Virginia Drukteinytė Inglis formed the Omaha Lithuanian Women's Club with the mission, "Sustaining Our Lithuanian Heritage and Culture." On May 18, 2014, we celebrated our 40-year anniversary of upholding that mission.

We are proud of our many achievements, some of which include:

- Fund-raising activities that have supported local and Lithuanian charities through pancake breakfasts, cookbook and product sales.
- Sponsoring weaving demonstrations and straw ornament classes.
- Re-opening the Lithuanian Language Saturday School that had previously closed in 1967. The club supported the school until it closed in 2008 due to declining enrollment.
- Visiting home/facility-bound senior citizens to show them that they are in our thoughts.

St. Anthony's Lithuanian Roman Catholic parish and the Lithuanian community in our city have supported the club over the years. Because the last regular mass at St. Anthony's would be held in June, we wanted to have the celebration in the hall before then.

We served breakfast casseroles including a vegetarian option, fruit salad and fresh salsa. Refreshments included mimosas, Lithuanian beer, coffee and punch. Dessert was a sheet cake with a design created by Nellie Sudavičius MacCallum that incorporated Dalia Sudavičius's artwork from our cookbook, *Family Favorite Recipes*.

The day was a true celebration of lifetime memories created with old and new friends.

*Aldona Tanner is president of the Omaha Lithuanian Women's Club.*



Dalia Sudavičius (left) and Nellie Sudavičius MacCallum (right) getting ready to start serving the casseroles.



Irena Šarka Matz with a display board showing recent fund-raising activities and club outings.



## "Vyčiai" in Connecticut Celebrate 100th Anniversary

By Dalia Dzikas



K of L Council 6 members at their 100th anniversary celebration in Hartford, Conn.

The Knights of Lithuania—"Vyčiai"—was established in 1913 as a youth organization. Today it is an organization of Roman Catholics of Lithuanian ancestry, their spouses and children, with councils throughout the United States. True to the motto "For God and Country," the Knights strive to keep alive Lithuanian language, customs and culture while stressing the importance of Roman Catholic beliefs.

Council 6 of Hartford, Conn., came into being in May 1914. It was and is affiliated with Holy Trinity Church in Hartford. At its peak there were more than 200 members; currently there are 64 from the Greater Hartford and New Britain area.

Council 6 has adjusted along with the age of its members. For many years it encompassed a drama and sports section, which included a baseball team of renown. The council was very active through the 1960s.

After a period of inactivity, Council 6 was reactivated in 2000, with many former members rejoining. With a more senior membership, activities have changed. Meetings include presentations about Lithuanian affairs, customs, books, crafts and special projects. Financial support of religious and Lithuanian cultural groups continues. Social activities include excursions to Connecticut points of interest. The membership participates in a Mass for Lithuania's patron saint, St. Casimir (šventas Kazimieras), on March 4 and then enjoys lunch at a local restaurant.

We are pleased that several students have become members. They have been recipients of Knights of Lithuania scholarships.

On May 18, 2014, Council 6 members, family and friends followed Shirley Musumeci, carrying the 100th year anniversary banner that she designed, into Holy Trinity Church for Mass. The celebrant was Father Charles Jacobs, with Council 6 member Brian Daigle as altar server. After Mass, festivities continued in the church hall. The décor was in the familiar tricolor: yellow tablecloths, little flickering green candles and red carnation

centerpieces, along with small American and Lithuanian flags. While enjoying appetizers of herring and Lithuanian cheese, members and guests socialized and perused Judy Landers' collection of Lithuanian arts, crafts and books printed at the beginning of the 20th century.

After a greeting by Council 6 President Carol Špakauskas, Fr. Jacobs said the blessing, Bette Ann and Joe Liudžius gave a poetic champagne toast and long-time choir director George Petkaitis led members in the all-occasion Lithuanian song "Ilgiausių metų." With delicious aromas wafting from the kitchen, we all were ready to head to the buffet table for a dinner catered by Alviija Kelminskienė and her staff. Coffee, tea and a sip of virita, a liqueur made by Leona Sawka; a piece of raguolis, the Lithuanian celebration cake baked by Joe Liudžius; and an anniversary sheet cake finished off the dinner.

Door prizes included flower baskets, bottles of wine, krupnikas and flower arrangements. Janina Nawarskas presented an autographed copy of her book about her trials in leaving Lithuania during World War II. Council members thanked their president for her leadership and presented her with flowers. Congratulations were given by the president of Waterbury Council 7, Linas Balsys.

The celebration was not over yet, as the Berželis Lithuanian folk dancers took the floor, and twirled and spun in the dance, Suktinis. Two more dances followed. The fourth dance was a demonstration during which director Asta Nenortas and her assistant, Lina Marūnas, urged the dancers to invite new partners from the audience. All had a good time, those who danced and those who watched.

The celebration ended with the singing of the Knights of Lithuania hymn.

After the guests left, Council 6 members stayed on to clean up and share their thoughts about the day. Every member worked on a committee to make this a special celebration.

The council welcomes new members. Come to one of the meetings and find out more about the Knights of Lithuania. Meetings take place every second Tuesday of the month, September through June, at 7 p.m. at Holy Trinity Church hall in Hartford.



Council 6 treasurer Brian Daigle (left) and president Carol Špakauskas (right).



# arts and culture

## Grandis Opens Treasure Chest of Dance

By Ramunė Kubilius



Top photos: Daina Čyvas; bottom photo: Vytenis Lietuvninkas





Artistic director Violeta Smieliauskas-Fabianovich received a proclamation from the Lithuanian government, presented by Lithuanian Consul in Chicago Marius Gudynas. Photo: Vytenis Lietuvninkas



Dancers included pre-schoolers to veterans. Photo: Daina Čyvas

Grandis, the Chicago area's oldest and largest folk dance ensemble, celebrated its 55th anniversary with a concert on May 10, 2014, at Downers Grove North High School in Illinois. The concert, called "Atverkim šokių kraičio skrynią" ("Opening a Treasure Chest of Dance"), celebrated the rich cultural heritage of Lithuanian folk dances.

The troupe's 185 performers—in seven groups ranging from pre-schoolers to veterans—enthusiastically danced selections from the ensemble's repertoire "treasure chest." Laurynas Ivinskis and Rima Birutis emceed the concert, which featured traditional and newly choreographed dances, including one, "Dūktinė polka," created especially for the ensemble by Lithuanian choreographer Vidmantas Mačiulskis. Dancers were prepared by their dedicated teachers Dalia Bilaišis-DeMuth, Rima Birutis, Vida Brazaitis, Daina Matusaitis, Monika Mikulionis, Lidija Polikaitis, Andrėja Varaneckas, Rėda Ardys-Pliūra, teaching assistant Daina Polikaitis and the ensemble's two Lithuania-educated choreographers, Gintaras Grinkevičius (with the ensemble for 18 years) and Vitalija Ivinskienė (with the ensemble for five years).

Grandis was founded in 1953 by the Lithuanian Scouting Association. The group's first teacher, Irena Šilingas, instructed the group until 1958. After she became ill and dancers left for college, the group became inactive until it was reorganized in 1964 under Irena Smieliauskas. She directed the group for 30 years before handing the reins to her daughter, Violeta Smieliauskas-Fabianovich, who has served as artistic director for the past 20 years. On May 10, 2014, Grandis' veteran dancers celebrated their group, Ratelio's, 30th anniversary. One of their dances, "Telšių valsas," celebrated the memory of their founding choreographer, Šilingas.

In opening the concert, Lithuanian consul in Chicago Martynas Gudynas relayed the congratulations of the Lithuanian government and presented Fabianovich with an official proclamation from Lithuania's Minister of Culture in appreciation to the ensemble for promoting Lithuanian culture in the United States (photo this page). Lithuanian American Community, Inc. president, Sigita Šimkuvienė Rosen, presented Fabianovich with LAC's Žalgiris medal.

The 2013/2014 Lithuanian folk dance season continued for 55 Grandis dancers who traveled this summer to Lithuania to participate in the Dance Day of the week-long Song Festival (Dainų šventė) celebration. Fabianovich served as coordinating choreographer for all of the diaspora groups in Lithuania.

For more information about Grandis and its upcoming fall season, please visit [grandischicago.org](http://grandischicago.org).



## current events

### Lithuania Officially Part of Eurozone

After endorsements by the European Commission and European Central Bank, the European Council gave its official approval for Lithuania to become the EU's 19th member state to adopt the euro. The Council set the exchange rate at for currency conversion at 3.45280 litas to the euro.

Approval means that Lithuania has been in compliance with the stringent Maastricht "convergence criteria," meeting (and often beating) benchmarks for annual inflation, government deficit, government debt, price stability and interest rates, and is fully prepared to adopt the euro. Seven other EU countries—Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Sweden and Croatia—have yet to make the conversion to the euro. The U.K. and Denmark are not obliged to do so.

While Lithuania gears up for the currency changeover to begin on January 1, 2015, Lithuanian citizens have expressed some worries. Polls carried out before the announcement showed that only 12 percent of respondents believed there would be no negative consequences. Concerns included rising prices, partial loss of national identity and decline in standard of living. The worries were particularly acute among disabled persons, retirees and residents of rural areas.

Lithuania's president, Dalia Grybauskaitė, said adoption of the euro will eliminate currency exchange fees, reduce borrowing costs, make Lithuania more attractive to investors and enable it to spend more on pensions and other needs. As a member of the eurozone, Lithuania will be an equal partner in decisions on EU monetary policy.

Fitch Ratings has upgraded Lithuania's credit rating to A- from BBB+ and revised its outlook to stable from positive based on its planned adoption of the euro.

### In the EU

...The EU is for the first time allocating Lithuania 350 million litas in support to develop its cultural infrastructure. One third of the amount must be distributed to the country's regional areas. Parliament has begun holding public consultations regarding the application of the 2014-2020 funds.

...The European Commission is recommending that Lithuania introduce pension reforms, including raising the retirement age, saying that without changes Lithuania's pension expenditure will be twice the EU average within 50 years. Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius opposes the recommendation, saying that it is already difficult for older workers to find jobs.

...In the European Parliament's "A Taste of Europe" campaign, held before the European elections, citizens of the 28 EU member states voted for their favorite national dish with Facebook "Likes." Bulgaria's shopska salad beat out Lithuania's second-place saltibarsciai by 19,529 to 6,109. Romania's sarmale cabbage rolls came in third with 1,265 Likes.

...While gross box office income in the EU declined in 2013, the Lithuanian Film Center reported a successful year. Box office income grew by 5 million litas to 45 million litas, tickets prices increased and a quarter million more people visited theaters.

...The European Commission has approved Lithuania's map for state aid between 2014 and 2020. The entire territory of Lithuania will be eligible for aid under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which permits aid in areas with a standard of living below the EU average or with high unemployment. Lithuania has a GDP per capita of 61.33 percent of the EU average. Areas that have a GDP per capita below 75 percent of the EU average receive priority for regional investment aid.

### In the World

...During a May 30 meeting in Vilnius, NATO's parliamentary assembly stripped Russia of its associate member status in the assembly in light of the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, citing "a fundamental breach of trust." While Russia wasn't allowed to vote and isn't a NATO member, its delegates had been permitted to participate in discussions and present their viewpoints.

...At a June 3, 2014 meeting with Baltic and Central European leaders in Warsaw, U.S. President Barack Obama pledged that the U.S. would allocate about 1 billion dollars for the presence of U.S. troops, aviation and naval detachments in Eastern Europe and for enhancing regional security.

...Experts from the United States and Lithuania met in Vilnius in May to discuss ways to further strengthen cooperation to counter nuclear smuggling. The countries have agreed to work together to bolster capabilities to prevent, detect and respond to incidents of nuclear and radiological material smuggling.

...A recent Delfi poll revealed that only 12 percent of Lithuanians surveyed consider Poland to be a "friendly state" while 27 percent saw it as a "hostile state." This is a dramatic drop in trust since 2006, when 53 percent of respondents categorized Poland as friendly. Polish-Lithuanian relations have deteriorated since 2006, largely over squabbles concerning the Polish minority in the country. Lithuanians were most distrustful of Russia, with 72.5 percent labeling Russia hostile. Latvia, Estonia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland were viewed favorably.

...Russia officials were angered when Lithuania's President Dalia Grybauskaitė compared Vladimir Putin's policy with those of Hitler and Stalin in an interview with the German magazine *Focus*. She defended the comparison, saying, "(Putin) uses nationality as a pretext to conquer territory with military means. That's exactly what Stalin and Hitler did." Grybauskaitė accused Moscow of trying to persuade the other Baltic States to leave NATO in exchange for cheaper oil or gas.



...“Saber Strike 2014,” an annual multinational exercise organized by the U.S. Army in Europe, kicked off in the Baltics on June 10. The fourth exercise of its kind pulled together more than 4,500 participants from 10 NATO countries for 10 days. Among the participants were about 200 members of the Pennsylvania National Guard. Russia held military exercises in Kaliningrad in response to the drills, prompting NATO jets to scramble on 13 separate occasions to address unidentified aircraft operating near Baltic airspace.

...Russian analyst Aleksandr Nosovich has said that Russia is redirecting trade flows, particularly oil, away from Lithuania to punish it for outspoken support of Ukraine and opposition to Russian aggression there, costing Lithuanians money and jobs. Statistics show that the flow of goods has increased in the Baltic ports of Riga, Liepāja and Tallinn, but has fallen significantly in Lithuanian ports and in Kaliningrad, which is dependent on crossing Lithuanian territory. He says that Russian authorities are pursuing a divide-and-conquer strategy, seeking to pit one Baltic country against the other in hopes of weakening all three.

...Lithuania has fined the Russian fuel giant Gazprom \$48.4 million for blocking competition in the country. The fine follows the finding that Gazprom had illegally blocked the country's Lietuvos Energijos Gamyba electrical utility from concluding a swap deal with another supplier for cheaper gas in 2013-2015, leading to negative consequences for consumers. Gazprom subsequently put its stakes in Lithuanian gas utility Lietuvos Dujos and gas grid company Amber Grid up for sale.

...Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė attended the inauguration of the newly elected Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko in Kyiv in June, and met with him afterward to discuss constitutional reform, visa liberalization, anti-discriminatory legislation and labor code reform.

#### In Lithuania

...As a result of recent negotiations with Gazprom, the National Commission for Energy Control and Prices approved an average reduction in natural gas prices of about 20 percent that will be in place from July 1 to the end of the year. This is the first time in the history of independent Lithuania that prices for gas are going down and not up.

...Lithuania's Parliament has passed a law recognizing Holocaust-era rescuers of Jews as freedom fighters. The change to Lithuania's Law on the Legal Status of the Participants of the Resistance to the 1940-1990 Occupations could make several dozen people eligible for state pensions. A one-time grant will be paid retroactively to families of Lithuanians who died while saving Jews. The total cost of the pensions and grants is estimated at \$730,000.



Dalia Grybauskaitė on inauguration day. Photo: R. Dačkus

...The inauguration of Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, who was re-elected in May with 58 percent of the vote, took place in Vilnius on Saturday, July 12, 2014. Grybauskaitė (above among the flags of all Lithuanian cities and towns in front of the Presidential Palace) took the presidential oath and delivered her inaugural address during a solemn parliamentary sitting.

Afterward, the President attended Mass at Vilnius Cathedral, and participated in a festive procession to Daukantas Square, the setting for a gala open-air concert.

Grybauskaitė was the first woman elected to lead Lithuania, and the first president to be elected to two consecutive terms.

...Lithuania's Parliament has approved amendments to the Law on Tobacco Control, prohibiting smoking on apartment balconies, on terraces, in galleries, by open windows, outside closer than 5 meters to apartment buildings and in children's playgrounds. The law also prohibits people younger than 18 from smoking or possessing tobacco products. Additional proposals under consideration would prohibit smoking in transport vehicles in the presence of children and increase fines for violating smoking bans.

...A referendum in Lithuania to stop land sale to foreigners has failed. Turnout was only 14.24 percent, far short of the 50 percent needed for the referendum to be valid. Of those who voted, 71 percent backed the proposals, which also would have restricted production of natural resources such as shale gas. The referendum was initiated by the Lithuanian Nationalist Union and the Lithuanian Peasant and Green's Union.

...Lithuania plans to increase the number of professional and reserve troops in its Armed Forces by 100 each as early as next year, according to Defense Minister Juozas Olekas. Active duty professionals in the army will increase to 7,800 and reserve troops to 500. Olekas has also asked that the defense budget be increased by 130 million litas.



## current events

... Major General Jonas Vytautas Žukas has been appointed Lithuania's new chief of defense. Žukas, 52, is currently Lithuania's military representative to NATO and the EU. He served as commander of Lithuania's Land Forces from 2007 to 2012.

...Soldiers of the Lithuanian Territorial Defense Force who were executed 70 years ago by the Nazis were commemorated in Vilnius on June 6. Six living volunteers of the Lithuanian Territorial Defense Force received medals for meritorious civilian service.

...Lithuania's Interior Ministry has reported that state institutions have repelled 234,479 cyber attacks and 244,291 attempts to infiltrate websites in the first six months of 2014. More than 154,000 of the attacks had targeted the Secure State Data Communication Network.

...Lithuania's Minister of Environment has proposed an amendment to the Law on Waters to prohibit privatization of natural bodies of water. If passed, the amendment would declare all rivers and lakes, regardless of size, as well as any body of water or river basin larger than 25 hectares (62 acres), as "surface bodies of water of national importance" to protect public interest and access, and to prevent fencing of those areas.

...Responding to a request from Metropolitan Archbishop of Vilnius, Gintaras Grušas, the Knights of Columbus have established a council in Lithuania. George F. Halcovage Jr., a county commissioner in Schuylkill County, Pa., and fourth degree Knight, traveled to Vilnius in May to install the council's officers in a ceremony at the Cathedral. There are currently 35 men in the Lithuanian council. The Knights are also starting operations in Ukraine. They have had a presence in Poland for six years.

### Business and Economy

...*Foreign Policy* magazine's 2014 Baseline Profitability Index rated Lithuania the most favorable country for investment in the Baltic States and ranks it second in Europe for expected investment returns. Estonia is ranked 18th and Latvia 22nd.

...The Bank of Lithuania released a report stating that the deteriorating economic outlook for Russia and its trading partners should have little effect on Lithuania. Although Lithuania has closer ties with Russia in the transport sector, relationships are weaker in industrial, financial, information and other sectors. Negatives are offset by improving economic confidence in the EU, where Lithuania is increasing exports.

...In the first four months of 2014, local energy production in the Baltics decreased by 20 percent year-on-year when low water levels in the Daugava River forced hydroelectric producer Estlink-2 to abandon expensive local energy production and import cheaper electricity from Scandinavia.

...Recent shale exploration in Lithuania has produced more oil than shale gas, surprising the Ministry of Environment. Analysis from more than 500 studies so far reveals that 70 percent of hydrocarbons in the rocks are liquid (oil) and 30 percent are gas. More study is needed to determine the amount of shale gas and oil that can be extracted, but the discovery is expected to have a significant economic impact on the oil market in the future.

...Litgas, a gas trading arm of state-owned energy group Lietuvos Energija, has signed contracts with seven liquefied natural gas (LNG) suppliers. The agreements will help Lithuania expand its supply sources and reduce dependence on gas imports.

...Poland's biggest oil refiner, PKN Orlen, said it had failed to persuade Lithuanian Railways to cut transport fees for its Lithuanian business, Orlen Lietuva, which it may have to close as a result. The business has struggled since PKN took it over in 2006.

### Sports

...Lithuanians took three medals in the European Rowing Championships held in Belgrade, Serbia, in June. Saulius Ritter and Rolandas Maščinskas took gold in men's double sculls, Milda Valčiukaitė and Donata Vištartaitė won silver in women's double sculls, and Mindaugas Griškonis earned a bronze in men's single sculls.

...Lithuanian professional cyclist Ramūnas Navardauskas, who rides for team Garmin-Sharp, won the 19th stage of the 2014 Tour de France in the pouring rain. He is the first Lithuanian to take an individual stage of the Tour. Italy's Vincenzo Nibali won the Tour with the lowest aggregate time after 21 stages.

...Lithuania beat Finland 1-0 in the semi-finals of the 2014 Baltic Cup soccer tournament, played this year in Latvia, but lost by the same score to the host country in the final.

...Lithuania's team won a seat in next year's EuroBasket Women 2015, beating Great Britain, Belgium and Macedonia in this year's qualifier tournament.

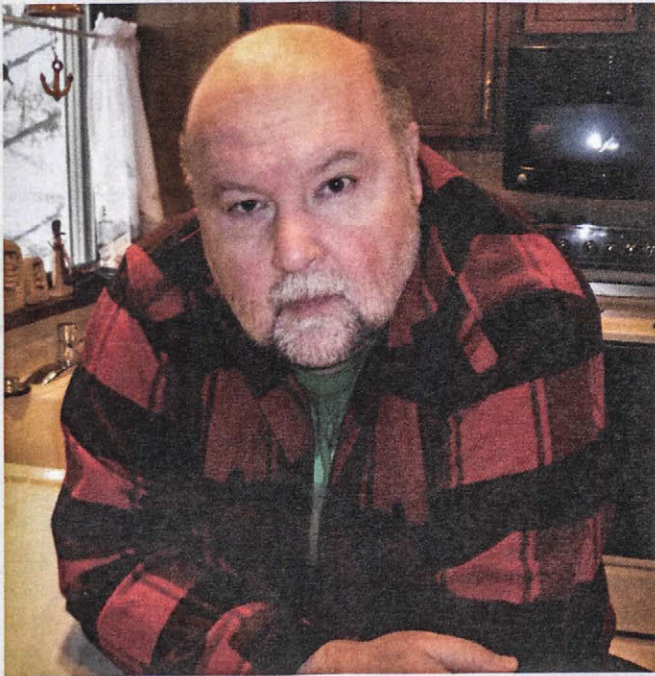
...Lithuania's Rūta Meilutytė raced to a 29.90 win in the sprint breaststroke event at the Sette Colli meet in Italy in June, smashing the 2008 meet record of 30.82, and just half of a second off her own world record of 29.48. She also won the 100-meter breaststroke at the British Gas International Meet.

...The Lithuanian Basketball Federation has officially presented a list of 17 candidates to play for the national team in the 2014 FIBA Basketball World Cup in Spain from August 30 to September 14. U.S. NBA players Donatas Motiejūnas, Jonas Valančiūnas and Jonas Mačiulis are on the list. Robertas Javtokas and Linas Kleiza will not play due to health problems.



## Wendell Mayo's Glorious Fictions

By Daiva Markelis



The characters in Wendell Mayo's fiction inhabit a Lithuania that seems post apocalyptic in nature: wild dogs roam the roofs of broken down houses; spiders occupy half-empty sanitariums; orphaned children appear out of nowhere—phantoms of a troubled past. Liberation from the Soviets has brought with it not only democracy and Coca-Cola, but also Mafia overlords and unemployment. Both *In Lithuanian Wood* (White Pine Press) and *The Cucumber King of Kedainiai* (Subito Press) offer searing portraits of a country in transition, though Mayo's focus is not so much political as it is psychological and moral: how do people deal with major transformations, with rapid shifts in both social and economic status? To this already complex cultural landscape Mayo adds the presence of foreigners who come to Lithuania for a variety of reasons: to discover their heritage, to educate the natives, to buy amber.

*In Lithuanian Wood*, published in 1998, presents us with an array of unforgettable characters. One of them, the American Paul Rood, has come to Lithuania as a visiting teacher, hoping to introduce the country to Walt Whitman. The word rood, from the Old English for pole, signifies a cross or crucifix. Rood's first name, Paul, brings to mind St. Paul, the great Christian apostle and converter. As a crusader, Rood is ineffective; he sometimes comes across as rude, as in the brilliantly funny chapter, "Key Keeper." Rood's rudeness is rooted in a naiveté that prevents him from understanding the people with whom he comes in contact. Throughout the book, he keeps asking Vilma, his

lovely translator, to tell him stories: Rood is looking for a traditional, linear narrative from which to make sense of Lithuania. Vilma confounds his expectations by offering stories about Lithuanian devils, about laughing dogs, about witches who control the rain.

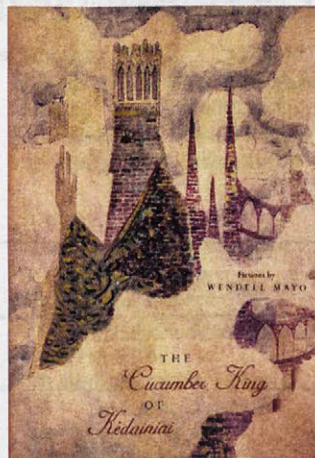
"Why do your stories have no end?" Rood asks Vilma at one point. "Is that a common Lithuanian practice?"

She assures him this is not the case.

One reason Vilma's (and Mayo's) fictions seem to have

no end is because despite their sometimes-magical elements, they are not fables or fairy tales; the characters remain vivid in readers' minds in a kind of literary afterlife. They are "round" characters, to use E. M. Forster's definition, not "flat."

I bring up *In Lithuanian Wood* for several reasons. Although one can enjoy *Cucumber King* without having read its predecessor, both books share a complexity of structure and playfulness of language, not to mention a recurrence of themes, that make reading them in close temporal proximity especially satisfying. In addition, Paul Rood returns in the second book, although his presence is really more of an absence—Mayo is often intentionally ambiguous as to the fate of his characters. If life is already uncertain by the very fact of our humanity, this lack of certitude is magnified in a country like Lithuania.



*The Cucumber King of Kedainiai*, published in 2013, is Wendell Mayo's latest collection of fiction.



*In Lithuanian Wood*, Wendell Mayo's 1998 novel.

The two stories in *Cucumber King* that deal with Rood show Mayo's extraordinary literary range. "Goda," like "Key Keeper" in the first book, is told from the perspective of a character whose life has been adversely affected by this troublesome American. Goda, Rood's landlady, is being interrogated about his disappearance. The story is both funny and dark, though not as disturbing as the chilling masterpiece "Spider Story," where Rood (or a Rood double) is living in an empty sanatorium

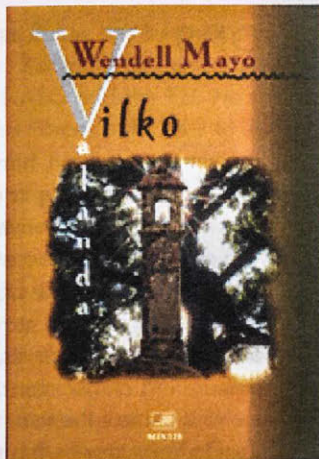


# book review

with two seemingly innocuous spiders. "Spider Story" works on several levels, including emotional and political. The sad American narrator confronts the smart but damaged Lithuanian orphan, and the spiders serve as metaphors for powers seemingly great and small.

Although both *In Lithuanian Wood* and *Cucumber King* are set in post-independent Lithuania, in the latter we see how things have changed in Lithuania over a span of a decade or so. The relatively harmless mafia figure in *In Lithuanian Wood*, the former artist Aidas Astrauskas, is transformed into something much more menacing in the title story of *The Cucumber King of Kedainiai*. Whereas Aidas sits drunkenly behind a table at the Viesbutis Vėtrungė, collecting protection money, the cucumber king welcomes an American couple to what can only be called a mansion, one filled with recording devices, pianos, designer shoes and, most disturbingly, a vat of pickling fluid, otherwise empty but big enough to hold a human. The King, as he's referred to, is borderline insane, though the Americans, especially Valentine, the young woman, aren't exactly glowing pictures of mental health.

Despite the bleakness of setting and the often difficult lives of the characters, I would argue that neither *In Lithuanian Wood*



*Vilko Valanda* (Hour of the Wolf), is the Lithuanian translation of *In Lithuanian Wood*

nor *The Cucumber King of Kedainiai* are ultimately depressing books. Mayo's dark humor, his masterful use of surrealistic elements and his breathtaking prose lift both works to rare literary heights—kingdoms the reader feels privileged to have visited.

*The Cucumber King of Kedainiai* is Wendell Mayo's fourth collection of fiction. Whereas *In Lithuanian Wood* was marketed as a novel, *Cucumber King* is labeled a collection of fictions, a la Borges. While the stories are less connected to one another, all are wonderful. It is beautifully produced book, with a depiction of the spooky, brick-headed king from M.K. Čiurlionis' symbolic painting, "Sonata of Summer," on the cover.

Both *In Lithuanian Wood* and *The Cucumber King of Kedainiai* are available on Amazon, through their respective publishers (whitepine.org and subitopress.org) and in finer bookstores everywhere. *In Lithuanian Wood* is also available in Lithuanian translation under the title *Vilko Valanda* (Hour of the Wolf) at mintis.eu.

*Daiva Markelis is a professor of English at Eastern Illinois University, where she teaches classes in creative nonfiction, rhetoric and women's memoir. Her personal essays and short stories have appeared in the American Literary Review, New Ohio Review, Other Voices, Crab Orchard Review, Oyez, Pank, Cream City Review and many others. Her memoir, White Field, Black Sheep: A Lithuanian-American Life, was published in 2010 by the University of Chicago Press.*



## bridges

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July/August 2014



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

## Opening August 23 and 24, 2014

No Home To Go To: The Story of Baltic Displaced Persons, 1944-1952



Fleeing with family, belongings, friends, and animals. Collection of the Federal Archives, Germany. Picture 183-R64866/Photo: Budulis (8)

*"Fearing bombings and the threat of oppression, thousands of civilians flee daily to neighboring countries by any means available. As fierce fighting continues on both sides, families, many with small children, seek safety in makeshift communities where food and accommodations are scarce or non-existent. The plight of these refugees is creating an unprecedented humanitarian crisis."*

The Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture is opening an unprecedented exhibition drawing on the memories, documents, photographs and memorabilia of families and individuals who lived through the experience of being a Baltic displaced person. Their stories will be presented at two locations in Chicago: at Daley Plaza, August 23 - September 5, 2014, and at the Museum beginning August 24. Exhibits will be augmented by programs exploring the history of those times and encouraging participation of former DPs and their descendants.

For more information, please visit [www.balzekasmuseum.org](http://www.balzekasmuseum.org)

## SEPTEMBER 2014

September 6, 5:30 p.m.  
**Audrė Budrys in "Une Baye"**  
14911 127th Street, Lemont, Ill.  
Info: [ateitis.org](http://ateitis.org)

September 7, 12:30 p.m.  
**God Give Us Wings Meet the Author and Book Signing**  
St. Casimir Parish Hall, 2718 St. George St., Los Angeles

September 13, 6 p.m.  
**Tolimi Aidai a capella Concert**  
Lithuanian Youth Center,  
5620 Claremont Ave., Chicago  
Info: [ritantanas@comcast.net](mailto:ritantanas@comcast.net)

September 18, 7 p.m.  
**Leitātė and Kašubienė Concert**  
St. Peter's Church, 619 Lexington Ave., New York  
Info: [ny.mfa.lt](http://ny.mfa.lt)

September 20, 1-3 p.m.  
**Amber Roots Heritage Club Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia**  
Info: [milliemarks@aol.com](mailto:milliemarks@aol.com)

September 28, 12 p.m.  
**Daughters of Lithuania Fall Lunch**  
Lithuanian World Center, 14911 127th Street, Lemont, Ill.

September 28, 6:30 p.m.  
**Concert "Bring Me a Song"**  
Lithuanian World Center,  
14911 127th St., Lemont, Ill.  
Info: [forsythia6420@att.net](mailto:forsythia6420@att.net)

## OCTOBER 2014

October 4  
**Ateitis Foundation 35-Year Jubilee**  
Ateitis House, 1380 Castlewood Dr., Lemont, Ill.  
4 p.m. Mass, 6 p.m. dinner, 7:30 p.m. performance by Eastland and Friends  
Info: [atnamai.org](http://atnamai.org)

October 4  
**Australasian Baltic Studies Conference**  
Melbourne, Australia  
Info: [facebook.com/aabs.balticstudies](http://facebook.com/aabs.balticstudies)

October 4-5  
**Los Angeles Lithuanian Fair**  
St. Casimir Parish grounds, 2718 St. George St., Los Angeles  
Info: [lithuanianfair.com](http://lithuanianfair.com)

October 10-12  
**Iskyla Walk-a-thon**  
Camp Neringa, Marlboro, Vt.  
Info: [neringa.org](http://neringa.org)

October 10-12  
**XIII International Theater Festival**  
Lithuanian Youth Center,  
5620 Claremont Ave., Chicago  
Info: [lb.kultura@gmail.com](mailto:lb.kultura@gmail.com)

October 10-12  
**LAC Annual Board of Directors Meeting**  
Glendale Hilton, Glendale, Calif.  
Info: [lithuanian-american.org](http://lithuanian-american.org)

October 17-19  
**Lithuanian Scouts Collegiate 90-Year Anniversary**  
Wyndham Lake Buena Vista Resort, 1850 Hotel Blvd., Lake Buena Vista, Fla.  
Info: [akademikai.skautai.net](http://akademikai.skautai.net)

October 18, 1-3 p.m.  
**Amber Roots Heritage Club Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia**  
Info: [milliemarks@aol.com](mailto:milliemarks@aol.com)

## NOVEMBER 2014

November 1-2  
**Mugė: Philadelphia Lithuanian Fair**  
Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia  
Info: [lithuanianmha.org](http://lithuanianmha.org)

November 2  
**All Souls' Day Visit to Roslyn Lithuanian Cemetery**  
Roslyn, Wash.  
Info: [seattle.lithuanian-american.org](http://seattle.lithuanian-american.org)

November 8, 6 p.m.  
**Lithuanian Foundation Annual Fall Gala**  
Lithuanian World Center, 14911 127th Street, Lemont, Ill.  
Info: [admin@lithuanianfoundation.org](mailto:admin@lithuanianfoundation.org)

November 15, 1-3 p.m.  
**Amber Roots Heritage Club Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia**  
Info: [milliemarks@aol.com](mailto:milliemarks@aol.com)

November 30  
**St. Andrew's Philadelphia Lithuanian Parish 90th Jubilee**  
19th and Wallace Streets, Philadelphia

## DECEMBER 2014

December 6  
**Lithuanians in Texas Christmas Kučios**  
Info: [ven.grant@hughes.net](mailto:ven.grant@hughes.net)

December 6-7  
**Advent Silent Retreat**  
Camp Neringa, Marlboro, Vt.  
Info: [neringa.org](http://neringa.org)

December 6-7  
**Lithuanian World Center Holiday Craft Fair**  
Lithuanian World Center, 14911 127th St., Lemont, Ill.  
Info: [reklaitis@lcenter.org](mailto:reklaitis@lcenter.org)

## MARCH 2015

March 29-April 5  
**Lithuanian Ski Trip 2014**  
Snowbird Resort, Alta, Utah  
Info: Linda Crouch, [linda@ski.com](mailto:linda@ski.com), 1-800-525-2052, ext. 3329



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