

# bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

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NEWS JOURNAL

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**Cover:** To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the January Events of 1991, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė and local schoolchildren light the giant word "Laisvė" (Freedom) in front of the Presidential Palace. Photo: R. Dačkus, courtesy of the Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania

**Back cover:** Bonfire in at Independence Square in Vilnius commemorating the Defenders of Freedom who died in January 1991 defending the Parliament and TV Tower. Photo: Alfredas Pliadis, pliadisfoto.com

from the editor

## In Defense of Freedom

In January 1991, while the world had its eyes on the Middle East, the Soviets attempted to forcibly suppress Lithuania's drive for independence. While the world was distracted, they increased their demands that the new government step down and backed their threats with heavy machinery.

But the Soviet plan backfired.

Perhaps they thought that a show of force would intimidate the Lithuanians into capitulating to Soviet rule. After all, the country's latest bid for freedom had been conducted in a completely nonviolent manner—what resistance would they encounter that their tanks and paratroopers couldn't handle quickly and efficiently?

As it turns out, they underestimated the resolve of the people. There would be plenty of resistance, and still none of it would be violent—at least on the Lithuanian side.

The USSR's actions served to mobilize the entire country. Men and women, young and old, from cities, towns and villages across the republic answered the call to defend their new government and public buildings. Organizing by region, they poured by the thousands into Vilnius, standing watch day and night in the cold and rain, with only their bodies between the bullets and the buildings.

In this issue we have perspectives on the January Events, as they are known in the history books, from those who lived them, both native Lithuanian and Lithuanian-American. They are the stories of those who left the comforts of home to help build and defend an uncertain future, of ordinary people who sacrificed income and safety—and self—to throw off the yoke of oppression.

Though information was hard to come by, Lithuanian communities around the globe also did their part, disseminating what little news they could glean, mobilizing their government officials and maintaining awareness in their regions of the world. The Lithuanian-American Community, for example, maintained active information and communication centers in several major U.S. cities, and local communities staged public demonstrations. Meanwhile, mothers and fathers in the U.S. worried about their children who had gone to Lithuania to assist in reestablishing schools and services, and who were now caught up in the unfolding drama.

Today, we commemorate the January Events by wearing forget-me-not flowers on our lapels, joining in memorial runs, building bonfires and lighting candles that signify the flame of freedom. But we can't let these ceremonies become purely symbolic and lose their meaning.

The posturing, propaganda and aggression from the north are troubling today. If history were to repeat, what would happen? One of our writers asks, "if our government and our freedom are in danger now, will crowds of people come up to defend it?"

Would you?

With wishes that the flame burn bright in us all,

  
Teresė Vekteris, Editor

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Mes prisimename,  
kodėl Lietuva  
yra laisva

# We remember why Lithuania is free

Special section commemorating the 25th anniversary of the January Events of 1991





# The Singing Revolution

## Lithuania's Bloody Sunday

Article and photographs  
by Rasa M. Tautvydas



Two girls pay tribute to the victims of January 13, 1991.

The Soviet tanks pushed through the night down the narrow streets of Vilnius, Lithuania, on January 13, 1991, rolling by gray, stucco apartment buildings and shops with empty shelves. They announced their approach to Parliament Square with a low rumble that shook the ground beneath our feet. We stood together, 20,000, armed only with our voices. Men and women pressed in around me, and the vibrations from the heavy tanks rose into our bodies. The temperature hovered near freezing. The slushy rain that had fallen earlier in the day stopped. The singing stopped as well. We waited in the semi-dark. We were there using our bodies to protect the Supreme Council (Parliament) building from Soviet occupation.

Tall lamps in the square cast a harsh yellow light that illuminated those nearby and left others in dark shadows: a sea in moonlight, heads bobbing like small waves as people milled about. There seemed no end to this sea. I stood close to the main entrance of the Parliament building far from any potential exit. I realized that I could die this night: suffocated by a stampede, crushed by a tank or shot by Soviet Special Forces. I was 22

years old, an American citizen and accepted to medical school in the United States. Tonight, my passport would not protect me. Did I believe enough in this cause to die for it? Would my death be of value or would I be another number soon forgotten? Chairman Vytautas Landsbergis stepped up to an open window that overlooked the square. His voice was amplified by loudspeakers, and he asked that the women and children leave. We linked arms. No one left.

My father, Kęstutis Tautvydas, was born in Telšiai and my mother, Birutė Penkiūnaitė, in Kaunas—World War II babies. They spent the first five years of their lives ducking into bomb shelters and the next four as “dipukai,” displaced persons, living a refugee childhood in displaced persons (DP) camps in Germany. In 1949, their families found a new home in the United States. Returning to Soviet-occupied Lithuania was not an option.

In the U.S., their families found refuge in the Lithuanian-American communities of Chicago and Baltimore, where my parents attended Lithuanian schools and churches, and par-

ticipated in Lithuanian folk dance groups. My three sisters and I grew up in Wisconsin and Minnesota, far away from these Lithuanian-American hubs.

We learned to speak Lithuanian by listening to our parents. In the evenings, snuggled up on my parents' bed, my mother read us Lithuanian folk tales and myths like "Eglė, Žalčiu Karalienė" and "Jūratė ir Kastytis." Our first spoken language was Lithuanian and it has remained the language I most associate with intimacy, family and love.

We also maintained many Lithuanian traditions. We ate 12 meatless dishes and left an empty place setting on Kūčios, a traditional Christmas Eve meal. We felt a kinship to Lithuania's pagan, nature-centric roots and wove dandelions into flower crowns for Rasos šventė, summer solstice. We maintained a booth at the Annual Holiday Folk Fair in Wisconsin and later in Minnesota, and recited poetry or performed music during Vasario 16-ta (February 16th, Independence Day) commemorations. We learned to add a boiled potato to cepelinai to keep the potato dumplings from falling apart and to grate the beets in šaltibarščiai to bring out the sweetness of the summer soup.

During dinner conversations we discussed Lithuania's history and felt proud that Lithuania had once been a great empire that had stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. We felt proud that Lithuanian was considered the oldest spoken Indo-European language.

The Cold War and the lack of human rights and freedoms in Soviet-occupied Lithuania were very real to us, too. We had family living in a land where political opposition led to disappearances; where people had to hide western books; where frank conversations were had only when walking in the park with a trusted friend; where people wondered if their friend was not really a friend, but an informant.

My mother received censored letters from relatives in Lithuania—whole sentences whited out. What were the Soviets so afraid of, I wondered? We mailed jeans and didn't know if our relatives would receive them. When an uncle traveled to Lithuania in the 1970s, he was trailed by KGB agents and was not allowed to leave Vilnius.

We discussed Hitler and Stalin and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and felt outraged by the injustices. Our family believed that they would return, that their flight was temporary. My parents learned that the fate of those who had also been on "the lists," but had not escaped, was a knock on the door in the middle of the night, 30 minutes to pack for a grim journey in cattle cars to desolate lands above the Arctic Circle. In Siberia, the deportees, 70 percent women and children, faced temperatures well below freezing, poor shelters, severe vitamin deficiencies, starvation and slave labor. Many died. The men were sent to gulags or simply shot.

Our education was not complete without folksongs. When we sang "Stoviu aš Parymus," we mourned the Partisans who died fighting for freedom, waiting in vain for the West to rally. When we sang "Norečiau aš Keliauti" (I Would Like to Travel),

we too felt a longing for the homeland we had never visited. We believed that someday, when Lithuania was free, we would return.

However, as the years wore on and we grew older, we wondered what was the point of learning Lithuanian. No one but our family spoke it. How useful was a language that only 4.5 million people spoke worldwide? It seemed a land somewhere existing apart from reality. We found our names cumbersome, drawing too much attention, making us different when as teenagers we wanted to fit in. We wanted to be American. We were American, weren't we? We often felt that we were neither Lithuanian nor American but rather citizens of some limbo land that existed only in our minds.

1985 changed all that. Gorbachev, in an attempt to revitalize the stagnant Soviet economy, promoted perestroika and glasnost, restructuring and openness. The Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were the first of the Soviet Union-occupied nations that recognized the opportunity to pursue sovereignty through legal means. In 1988, Lithuania's Sąjūdis officially came on the scene and the leaders of that movement went on to reshape Lithuania's, and subsequently the world's, history. On March 11, 1990, Lithuania's Parliament, under the chairmanship of Vytautas Landsbergis, voted to restore Lithuania's independence. It was the first republic of the Soviet Union to take this brave step.

Far away in Minnesota, we felt the earth tremble as if the Soviet tanks had rolled down the streets of Minneapolis. Early that morning, on March 11, 1990, my youngest sister Milda and I, undergraduates at the University of Minnesota, flung open our apartment window and waved Lithuanian flags at the passing cars. We made posters that announced that Lithuania had declared independence and hung them up all over campus to the bewilderment of fellow students. Nobody around us seemed to get it. The iron curtain had been muscled open by Lithuania. This was monumental. A change in the world order. A high-magnitude political earthquake. But in Minnesota, we only felt the tremors.

That same spring I was accepted to medical school at the University of Minnesota. It was one of the few medical schools at that time that offered deferred enrollment, and I took it. My intent was to work abroad for a year and travel, so when an opportunity turned up to help re-establish Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) in Kaunas, Lithuania, I took it without hesitation. That same spring, the Soviets imposed an economic blockade on Lithuania in an attempt to end the push for sovereign rule. I knew that living conditions would be difficult in Lithuania, that Lithuania was politically unstable, and that the Soviets could act mercilessly, but these factors did not deter me. I was going.

On a cold night in December 1990, with a worker's visa in my hand, I climbed off an Aeroflot jet, descended a rolling stairway and stepped onto a snowy tarmac in Riga, Latvia. Soviet soldiers, with large black guns slung across their bodies, policed





Vilnius TV Tower, morning of January 12, 1991.



Outside of the TV Tower on January 12, 1991, the gathered crowd sings.

the small customs area, but I passed through without difficulty. Relatives I was meeting for the first time greeted me with a bouquet of carnations. They spoke to me in Lithuanian. It felt like going home.

After eating sandwiches of butter, cheese and cured bacon fat, we crowded into an old van and crossed the border into Lietuva on our way to Kaunas. Inside the van, conversation hummed along with the van's engine. Outside my window, the blackness of night hugged the snow-covered rolling hills and rustic farms. As we drove further south, the snow changed to rain. We passed through silent and still small towns of huddled buildings, illuminated by a whitish glow from the streetlights. I was moved when I saw the monotone of black, gray and white broken by the yellow, green and red of the Lithuanian flag projecting from posts on the sides of the buildings. Independent Lithuania. This was real.

In Kaunas, I was employed by VMU and worked under the guidance of Lucija Baškauskaitė from California, who was acting rector of VMU. By the time I left Lithuania in August 1991, I had helped establish a nonprofit professional exchange program. Following the Soviet crackdown in January, a month after my arrival, I translated Lithuanian newspaper articles from Lithuanian to English and read them on TV to Swedish viewers and beyond; I hosted a VMU TV program that featured interviews in English. Still later, I moved to Vilnius and worked for the Lithuanian government in the Information Bureau alongside Rita Dapkutė from Chicago and Daiva Venckutė from Santa Monica, Calif.

When I arrived, the Soviets were pressing hard to squelch the independence movement. Everyone felt the pains of the economic blockade. As part of my monthly salary, I received ration tickets for items like sugar, flour and even toilet paper, a paper

akin to sandpaper. Many people were worried and afraid, but my generous relatives often brought me jars of mushrooms or fruit, like gooseberries, items that could not be found in stores. These they had collected in the forests or grown in their own gardens in the summer and then canned in the fall. Food store shelves were nearly empty by the end of the day. I also discovered open markets where I could purchase small apples and other food items not found in stores.

In the meantime, the newly independent government continued the difficult process of extricating itself from the Soviet economy. They cut formal fiscal ties with the Soviets in early January and the government led by Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskienė raised food prices. This led to protests and panic and the Supreme Council, led by Vytautas Landsbergis, suspended the price hike. On January 8, 1991, Prunskienė, along with the government, resigned. The stability of the newly independent republic was now threatened from within.

To add to the chaos, on January 8, Jedinstvo (a pro-communist, anti-Sajūdis movement) protestors tried to storm the Supreme Council building, but unarmed Lithuanian security forces held them back with water cannons. The Soviet defense ministry announced that it was sending troops to the Baltic region to enforce compliance with the military draft. Paratroop units were instructed to seek out draft evaders. That same day, more than 100 Soviet military units entered Vilnius.

Tensions ran high and rumors circulated. Reliable information was hard to come by as there was no Internet and no cell-phones, and Lithuanians viewed anything printed or on TV with a cynical eye. On January 10, Gorbachev demanded that Lithuania restore the USSR constitution. He also alluded to possible military intervention if Lithuania did not comply.

Earlier in January, I, along with brothers Darius and Linas





Outside TV Tower, January 12, 1991. Vijolė Arbas with striped umbrella looking at camera.

Kalvaitis, had been in Palanga on the western coast of Lithuania exercising our freedom of movement, a right restricted under Soviet law. We were unaware of the degree to which political tension was building in Vilnius when we left. We swam in outdoor heated pools, warmed ourselves in hot saunas and wandered the pine forests and snowy Baltic beach. In the evening, after watching the news hour summaries on a small black and white television, we felt that Lithuania's fight for independence could be reaching its darkest hour. While the U.S.-led coalition military forces began their assault in Iraq in retribution for the invasion of Kuwait, we learned of the growing Soviet military threat in Lithuania. The Soviets knew the world's eye had turned away from the Baltics, and they were planning interventions of their own. On January 10, we watched Landsbergis ask citizens to gather around communications buildings and the Parliament to protect them from occupation.

On January 11, while Soviet troops stormed the Vilnius Lithuanian press office headquarters and primary printing facilities and the National Defense Department building, we joined the mass movement of whole villages. We took a bus back to Kaunas. Along the way, we passed other busloads of people heading to Vilnius to stand guard. Whole towns emptied out. The country was mobilized.

At that time, rumors were often as good a source of information as any. Disinformation became a regularly used word. Would the Soviets take the Parliament by force? We did not know, but we were determined to protect it. I joined Vijolė Arbas from California, her cousins Kęstutis Arbačiauskas and Bronė Zibalaitė, and a friend Gintaras. We drove to Vilnius to stand guard outside the TV Tower and outside of Parliament.

On the afternoon of January 12, 1991, the sky was gray, a perpetual overcast light at that time of year when there were only

seven and a half hours of daylight. The temperatures hovered near freezing and a slushy rain fell. The damp air seeped into my bones, and I could not feel warm no matter how much I wore. We parked near the TV Tower in the neighborhood of Karoliniškis and walked up the grassy slope to join the crowds milling around. Many sang folksongs and their voices reached us before we reached them. At the TV Tower some demonstrators waved large, bright Lithuanian, Estonian and Latvian flags, some held black umbrellas and still others held the hands of small children.

We stopped to listen to musicians play, one on accordion, another on fiddle. A nearby group of young and old, dressed in thick woolen coats, danced traditional folk dances to the music. We merged with a larger group singing folksongs. I joined

in the singing when I knew the words or hummed along when I didn't. We sang songs of harvest, of rebellious brides. We sang Partisan songs. We sang songs of humor, loss and longing.

As I looked around, I did not see fear, but rather hope and strength: a people gathered and united in purpose. I felt profoundly moved to be a part of something so much larger than any one person. As the crowd linked arms and began to sway to the tune of "Lietuva Brangi," even the stoutest of men had damp eyes.

That night, after warming up indoors, we returned to stand guard throughout the night, this time outside of the Parliament or, as it was called, the Supreme Council Building. We knew lit-



Outside Parliament on the morning of January 13, 1991. The Lithuanian militia is seen assembling.



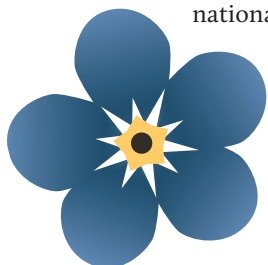
The Kaunas TV and radio station at Vytautas Magnus University, the only functioning station after the Vilnius occupation, was created in haste the night of January 13, 1991. Lucija Baškauskaitė assisted in getting the station up and running during the night.

tle of what was actually happening inside, but rumors circulated that they were prepared to fight to the end.

The slushy rain had let up and a rock band blared music from the steps of the National Library, a grand neoclassical building. The Seimas itself, contemporary in design, faced a long row of grey stucco apartments, Gedimino Prospektas and a large, open square dotted by tall streetlights that looked like overturned pyramids.

Thousands of people milled about. Couples strolled arm in arm. Others huddled around bonfires. Some dressed in national folk costumes and danced folk dances;

others formed circles and linked arms, swaying together while they sang. Still others balanced large trays with paper cups of steaming broth and coffee and others carried trays with small sandwiches—drink and food they had prepared in their nearby apartments and offered



Inside the Supreme Council (Parliament) looking out toward Parliament Square. Cement blockades surround the square and grating protects the inner square of Parliament building against the Soviets.

freely to anyone who needed it. I felt in awe: I was one small person, but together we had become bigger than all the oceans and seas.

Periodically, parliamentarians stepped up to an open window several stories above us to address the crowd below. When they weren't speaking, the Vilnius Radio and TV station broadcast over the loudspeakers above the din of folksongs, accordions, rock music and conversations. A Russian woman, who spoke very little Lithuanian, offered us broth in a small cardboard carton. We thanked her and drank some of the warm liquid, then joined the voices of others around us singing folksongs.

In the early hours of January 13, 1991, the temperatures dropped further. Rumors rippled through the crowd that tanks had been seen leaving their base. We felt the ground tremble and grow still again. And then, the distant boom of firing tanks. Then more booms. Then the rat-a-tat-tat of rapid machine gun fire. I felt horrified. The TV Tower was under attack as was the Radio and TV office building.

We held our breaths collectively and listened to the voice of announcer Bernadeta Lukošūtė crackle over the radio. She gave us a minute-by-minute account. She told us that Soviet paratroopers were storming the tower, and we could hear the guns fire in the background. She got up and locked the doors of her broadcast room, then announced that the paratroopers were in the building, that they were banging on her door. We could hear the banging.

“Mes studijoje. Čia Lietuvos radijas ... Aš užrakinau duris ... girdite šauksmus ... Mes čia, mes gyvi. Kalba Lietuvos Respublikos radijas. Mes čia, tranko mūsų duris. Visur bėgioja, šauda ... Mes kalbėsime tol, kol būsim gyvi, kol mūsų iš čia neišmes. Mes studijoje. Visi prieš langa sustoje, visi, kurie dabar dirba, jie apar...”\*

Then silence. She was off the air.

Where there had been song and music and conversation and





Morning of January 13, 1991, Parliament Square, facing the apartments across from the Supreme Council building.

chants of “Lithuania will be free,” now 20,000 people stood silent. Landsbergis stepped up to the window and asked that women and children leave. I knew my passport wasn’t bullet-proof, but I also knew I was part of something bigger than one small life. I knew then that I was Lithuanian and American. I linked arms with a Russian woman to my left and a Lithuanian to my right and I joined in the shout that grew to a roar: “Lietuva bus laisva!” (Lithuania will be free!)

As night gave way to dawn, the sounds of tanks and machine gun fire faded. The tanks did not return. The Lithuanian parliament remained unoccupied. Later I learned that the crowd outside of the Supreme Council building was too big, even for Soviet troops. As the USSR was learning, the world was watching. Years later my mother told me that she wished she could have been there that night. I told her that she had been right alongside me, as were all of you who continued to believe that Lithuania would again one day be an independent nation.

Gorbachev unlocked the iron curtain, Lithuania’s Sąjūdis pushed it open, and the people of Lithuania held the curtains back and eventually tore the whole stage down. On Lithuania’s Bloody Sunday, Bernadeta Lukošiuūtė, the radio announcer, and her companions, survived, but 14 peaceful, unarmed demonstrators died that night and more than 1,000 were wounded. January 13, 2016, marks the 25th anniversary of that pivotal night.

This year, Lithuanian communities across the globe joined those in Vilnius in hosting “On the Road of Life and Death,” an annual commemorative run to remember those who died. On Sunday, January 10, 2016, Seattle Lithuanians will run at Green Lake, while New York Lithuanians will begin their run in Central Park at Columbus Circle at 12:30 p.m., and the Wash-

ington, D.C., Lithuanian community will hold a run/walk along the Capital Crescent Trail. If you can’t make one of the runs, give those who died life again by reading their names aloud and wearing a forget-me-not in their honor.



Mourners to the victims who died outside of the Radio and TV Headquarters. Lucija Baškauskaitė in the beige coat.

*Rasa M. Tautvydas, M.D., currently finds home in Seattle, Washington, with her husband, David J. Weidig, M.D., son, Gediminas Tautvydas Weidig, and dog, Waggy.*

\* Translation: “We are in the studio. This is Lithuanian Radio ... I have locked the door ... you hear the shouting ... We are here, we are alive. Republic of Lithuania radio is speaking. We are here, they are banging on our door. Everywhere there is running, shooting ... We will speak as long, as long as we are alive, until we are taken from here. We are in the studio. Everyone is standing in front of the window, everyone who is working now, they are ...”



Remembering those who  
gave their lives on  
January 13, 1991



Loreta Asanavičiūtė  
24, crushed by a tank



Virginijus Druskis  
22, shot in the chest



Darius Gerbutavičius  
18, shot five times



Rolandas Jankauskas  
22, hit in face by an  
explosive device



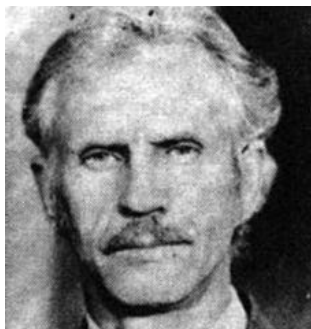
Rimantas Juknevičius  
25, shot



Alvydas Kanapinskas  
39, shot



Algimantas Petras Kavoliukas  
52, shot January 11;  
hit by a tank January 13



Vytautas Koncevičius  
50, Siberian deportee, shot



Vidas Maciulevičius  
25, shot



Titas Masiulis  
29, shot



Apolinaras Juozas Povilaitis  
54, shot four times



Ignas Šimulionis  
18, shot in the head



Vytautas Vaitkus  
48, shot



Alvydas Matulka  
36, heart attack

# We Were Together

By Laima Pacevičienė

When I start remembering the events of the bloody January 1991 in Lithuania, first of all I see in my memory the gloomy, grey daylight. Then I hear again the trembling, distressed voices of the radio and TV commentators, the voice of Vytautas Landsbergis calling people for defense. Then I feel the sharp pain in my throat and I feel heat, as those days I was lying in bed with

tonsillitis and running a high fever. But the radio and TV were on all night, till the last words of our commentators. Then, in the morning, terrible silence... And then—the so-called “KASPERradio” and “KASPERvision.”

But first, let's put all of the events in chronological order, and then relive those days in the memories of those who were there.

## Chronicle of the Bloody January, 1991

### January 2

The military unit of the USSR ministry of internal affairs occupies the archive of the Lithuanian Communist Party. The guards will not let the Lithuanian minister of internal affairs come inside, and the Lithuanian militiamen are told to go away.

### January 5

The Soviet government announces that beginning February 1, the internal military units of the USSR army will patrol the cities together with militia.

### January 7

Baltic District Commander Lieutenant General F. Kuzminas telephones Chairman of the Supreme Council Vytautas Landsbergis to tell him that, by the order of Soviet Minister of Defense Dmitry Yazov, the forced recruitment of young people into the Soviet army has started in Lithuania, and that a special paratroop division will be used to enforce it. At about 9 p.m., a Soviet paratroop unit moves from Alytus in the direction of Panevežys.

### January 8

Pro-Soviet organization Jedinstvo organizes a rally against food product price hikes and their protestors try to attack the Supreme Council building. Chairman Landsbergis takes to radio and Television to invite the Lithuanian people to come to Vilnius to defend the government.

At 10:23 a.m., 100 Supreme Council deputies vote to repeal the food price hikes.

At 4:35 p.m. more than 100 Soviet military and armored vehicles arrive in Vilnius.

Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskienė and her cabinet—the first government of the Lithuanian republic—resign over the political tensions.

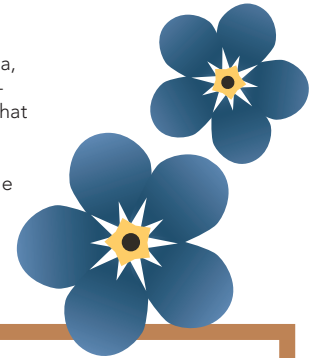
More than 30 Soviet military planes land at Šiauliai airport.

### January 10

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev issues an ultimatum to the Supreme Council of Lithuania, demanding that it restore the Soviet Constitution and cancel all “non-constitutional” laws that had been enacted.

A list is made stating when and from which regions, towns and villages of Lithuania people would guard the Supreme Council during the forthcoming days.

The Supreme Council names Albertas Šimėnas the new prime minister.



### January 9

Since early in the morning, Soviet military helicopters fly around Vilnius, dropping leaflets with propaganda against the Lithuanian Parliament and government.

At 2 p.m., a military plane with 50 paratroopers and a group of high Soviet military officers lands in Vilnius; later on the special KGB Task Force “Alpha” lands.

At 4 p.m., the members of Jedinstvo start moving up to the Supreme Council, asking for Soviet presidential rule. On the other side of the square, thousands of Vilnius residents gather, loudly shouting “Lithuania” and “Landsbergis,” and singing national songs. Russian Orthodox Archbishop Chrysostom addresses citizens by radio in support of the Lithuanian government. The radio commentator asks people to come to the defense of the TV Tower in Vilnius and at 5:30 p.m. requests people come to defend the Radio and TV Commission on Konarskio Street.

At night, armored Soviet military vehicles block all the bridges in Vilnius.

### January 11

At 11:45 a.m., the officer of the Soviet military unit in Vilnius, General Vladimir Uschopchik, informs the Supreme Council of Lithuania about the start of military “exercises” in Vilnius and says they are searching for Lithuanian soldiers who deserted the Soviet army.

At 11:50 a.m., Soviet military forces occupy the National Defense headquarters in Vilnius and at noon seize the Press Palace. The military uses their weapons against unarmed civilians and some people (women among them) are brought to hospitals with bullet wounds. Shortly afterward, the state buildings in Alytus and Šiauliai are occupied as well. Military vehicles start moving down Vilnius streets; one of the tanks causes a serious traffic accident.

At 1:30 p.m., Landsbergis calls Gorbachev, but no conversation takes place, as the Soviet president is “having lunch.”

At 3:20 p.m., volunteers swear allegiance to the Republic of Lithuania and swear to defend the Supreme Council. They are blessed by Rev. Robertas Grigas.

At 4:30 p.m., more military vehicles start moving toward Vilnius. Other governmental offices are occupied.

At 4:40 p.m., Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Algirdas Saudargas sends a protest note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, expressing concerns about the violence of the Soviet army.

At 11 p.m., a military vehicle unit invades the Vilnius railway dispatch station; train traffic is suspended.



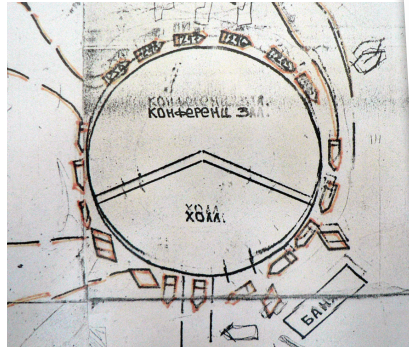
## January 12

Several different military attacks are going on throughout Lithuania. Border posts are being attacked. Military vehicles cause more traffic accidents.

A temporary defense leadership is formed. Vytautas Landsbergis continues to try to contact Mikhail Gorbachev, unsuccessfully.

Journalists from the 13 newspapers that were thrown out of the occupied Press Palace join together and issue the first edition of "Laisva Lietuva" (The Free Lithuania).

At midnight, a huge mass of Soviet military vehicles, together with the KGB Alpha Group, start moving toward the Karoliniškės district, where the TV Tower is located.



Soviet attack plans for the Vilnius TV Tower.



## January 13



Man with Lithuanian flag in front of Soviet tank. Photo: Lithuanian Ministry of National Defense



Fortifications inside the Supreme Council (Parliament) building. Photo: Lithuanian Ministry of National Defense

At 1:25 a.m., tanks start arriving at the TV Tower, firing blank rounds. At 1:50 p.m., the tanks drive through lines of people, crushing some. Soldiers advancing in front of the tanks shoot first into the ground, then open fire on the unarmed civilians around the TV Tower. The attack against the defenseless group of people continues for two hours.

At 2 a.m., tanks and armored vehicles in another location surround the Radio and TV Commission building and start shooting before they occupy the building. The soldiers don't permit removal of the bodies of those wounded or killed.

More than 500 people are injured and 13 are killed in the bloody attacks.

At 2:30 a.m., the small TV station in Sitkūnai (near Kaunas) starts broadcasting, and is able to get word out to the world about what is taking place before it is shut down.

At Parliament, the Soviet forces don't risk opening fire on the huge crowd of 20,000 people guarding the building; people are praying and singing religious songs. At 2:22 a.m., all those who are inside the building receive gas masks. At 3:20 a.m., 60 deputies come to the

Supreme Council. At 3:26 a.m., Rev. Grigas confers universal absolution to everyone and invites people to make confession. Unable to locate prime minister Šimėnas, the Supreme Council replaces him with Gediminas Vagnorius.

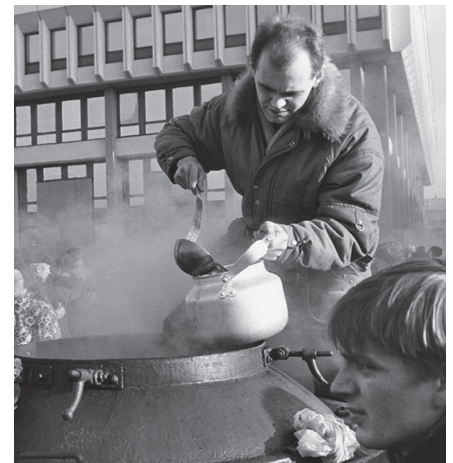
Lithuania is supported by Norway, Poland, Latvia and Ukraine.

At 5:35 a.m., the Supreme Council decides that if the legally elected government of Lithuania is impeded from functioning, Minister of Foreign Affairs Algirdas Saudgardas is entrusted with forming a government in exile.

At 11 a.m., the Soviet military announces a curfew that will last from 10 p.m. until 6 a.m. Burning cars, broken glass and blood stains fill the streets. In the places where killings took place, people bring flowers and light candles. At midday, all the church bells ring, signalling Masses being said for those who were killed.

At 1:37 p.m., the delegation of the USSR National Council arrives. The members watch recorded material, talk with witnesses and visit the "north town" where the military forces are headquartered.

Barricades are erected around the Supreme Council building, and more people come from



Ladling out hot drinks for those defending the Parliament Building. Photo: Vytautas Daraskevičius

all over Lithuania to keep watch.

At 9:15 p.m., Landsbergis announces that per an agreement with the military, there will be no more military actions overnight.

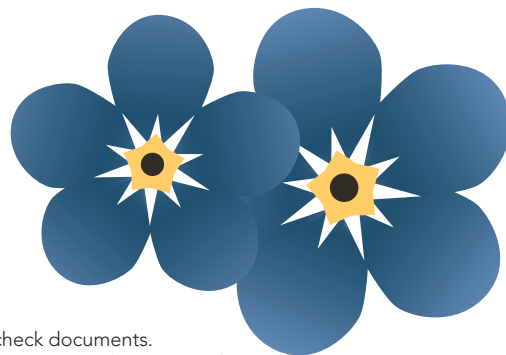


### January 14

The collaborator radio station starts broadcasting from Vilnius. It is later nicknamed "KASPER-radio" for Edmundas Kasperavičius, its main commentator.

At last the telephone conversation takes place between Landsbergis and Gorbachev, who promises to give orders to let the health defense minister into the occupied offices to see if there are any injured people left.

The bodies of the TV Tower victims and Radio and Television Commission defenders are laid out in the Vilnius Sports Palace. January 13, 14 and 15 are declared days of mourning.



### January 15

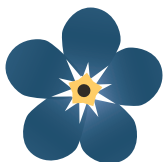
At night, the military patrols stop cars and check documents.

Thousands of mourners come to the Vilnius Sports Palace to pay their respects to the victims of the TV Tower assault.

The newspapers whose buildings were occupied earlier in the week begin publishing again.

### January 16

The funeral of the January 13 victims in Vilnius' Antakalnis Cemetery



The coffins of those killed on January 13 are lined up in Cathedral Square before they are taken to Antakalnis Cemetery. Photo: Armed Forces of the Republic of Lithuania archives



Burying the victims of January 13. Photo: Vytautas Daraskevičius

Independent Lithuanian TV starts broadcasting from the Supreme Council building, where barricades and anti-tank ditches are still being built.

The members of Jedinstvo, through the military radio station, announce a civil war.

The Supreme Council applies to the United Nations asking for help in defending the democratically elected government.

The personnel of Lithuanian TV refuse to collaborate with the administration assigned by the military forces. The collaborator TV (dubbed "KASPERvision," again for collaborator Edmundas Kasperavičius) starts broadcasting from the Radio and TV offices ravaged by the Soviet soldiers.

The situation remains very tense through the beginning of February, as Soviet military patrols injure and kill more people throughout the country.



Erecting barricades around the Supreme Council (Parliament) Building. Photo: Vytautas Daraskevičius



# January 13, 1991 in the Memories of People From the Villages

Translated by Laima Pacevičienė



**Nijolė Navikienė**

*Then a farmer and now a librarian, Molėtai district, Levaniškiai*

Early in the morning of January 13, I switched on the radio, because I had heard about the tense situation in Lithuania. Usually we got up early to feed up the cattle but those days at first we listened to the radio. We heard the announcement about the shooting, about the military forces and the victims. I remember myself crying and cursing the bloody occupiers who killed the innocent, unarmed people. My daughter was only 2



Outside Parliament, a shrine to the victims of January 13, 1991 (April 1991). Photo: Rasa Tautvydas

years old, so I couldn't leave her and go to Vilnius. In the daytime, I got connected with another patriotic acquaintance and we started thinking of how to help. He advised that we supply the defenders with food. So I gave him all my home-made butter and bacon, and he brought these products to Vilnius. We were only a family of simple, poor farmers. When they started collecting donations for the restoration of the state, we transferred all the money for the cattle we sold to the announced account. To this day I keep the newspaper copies of those days ... those terribly tragic days.

I even heard that there were no criminal offenses. It is a pity that the criminals awoke soon again—those who were stealing, started stealing again. Later events showed that some government members had only personal desires. So that's why there is some taste of disappointment that the victims of January 13 gave their lives for those who without any regret pulled the worn blanket onto themselves by stealing, robbing, manipulating, by seeking for personal profit.

Eternal glory to those who placed the greatest sacrifice on the altar of the homeland's freedom! Acknowledgement for their families...



## Algimantas Kazakauskas

*Farmer and teacher at Alanta School of Technology and Business, Uosipiai, Molėtai district*

On that terrible 13th of January, the telephone rang at about 2 o'clock at night. Only some minutes ago I had gone to sleep, as at about midnight we came back from Vilnius (all the day we had spent by the Parliament). My neighbor Kęstas Gelažanskas called and told me that his brother Algimantas had called and informed him that the military forces tried to perform a coup d'état. He told me to switch on the TV. I did so and heard the trembling voice of TV commentator Eglė Bučelytė and—after some minutes—only noise and no broadcasting at all...

Without any delay, I phoned my neighbor Kęstutis Pangonis, who at that time was the chairman of the Molėtai Sąjūdis board (we were together with him in Vilnius). Soon we planned our joint actions—I collected the people who had expressed patriotic feelings and he got a bus (the driver was Ričardas Zimka) from the director of Alanta Technology and Business School Vladas Pusvaškis. Egidijus Katinas, Virginijus Lukošiušas, Gintautas Jatautis and Valdas Vilutis came to me. After some minutes Ričardas drove up with a microbus "Latvia" and Kęstutis came, too. (Kęstutis, a leader of Sąjūdis, was a local doctor). At Molėtai municipality we rang to Vilnius and got an order to collect more people for defense. At that time the bus driver came back to school and got a better, bigger bus. There were some empty but ready buses at the municipality as well. We phoned to the small radio station in Sitkūnai and the radio broadcasted our invitation to people. Soon people carrying national flags started to appear and the buses (all five of them) moved to Vilnius. Some of the Sąjūdis members stayed in Moletai and organized a meeting, after which they came to Vilnius as well.



Standing atop the barricades by the Parliament Building. Photo: Vytautas Daraskevičius

## Elena Grajauskienė

*Former teacher at Alanta School of Technology and Business and a leader of ecological farming, now runs an ecological farm*

That was a restless day... A.M. Brazauskas [Algirdas Brazauskas, former leader of Lithuania's Communist Party who formally severed the party's links with Moscow in 1989] made enough efforts to calm down the military people, but... A day ago, on the 12th of January, our friends from Riga called us and invited us to come to them. They told us there would be a meeting in support of Lithuania at the monument to freedom in Riga. Our friend Aija spoke for a long time, persuading us to come. We were not ready for such a journey, so we refused. Ivaras said straightforwardly that we must come, that it would be safer for us in Riga. We didn't listen to them, but it was quite clear that they knew more about the situation in Lithuania than we did. In the evening we got some information about the shooting at the Press Palace. My eldest brother, Stasys, and my mother lived in that district. We phoned them, but nobody answered. We were worried about my mother, who already had managed to take part in the meeting by the Mickevičius monument together with A.Terleckas and N. Sadūnaitė.\* Later we found out that she was in St. Michael's church and successfully came back home. There were constant announcements on TV and by radio about the painful events and we understood that this was the start of something very terrible, of something which we couldn't name yet. After midnight our daughter Ramunė called us from Trakai. She asked if we knew anything about her husband, who in the evening had driven to Vilnius. Taking care about the younger children who were asleep, we watched TV till 4 o'clock in the morning. We had already found out what had been happening at the TV Tower, we saw the panic of the commentator Eglė Bučelytė and we heard her words that TV was already occupied. As far as I remember it was a terrible Saturday night. Later on we listened to the broadcasting from Kaunas, from Lapės station, but before 6 in the morning—silence again.

On Sunday my husband, Stasys, and my son Marius together with other men from Naujasodis went by bus to Vilnius. My youngest son Julius and I went to Alanta church. I remember a crowd of people going to the church; all our birch alley was full of people. Mingailis Sabaliauskas was carrying a small radio and, while walking to the church, we listened to the latest events, but this was already "KASPERradio." The church was full of people. The priest Jonas Balčiūnas tried to calm us down, asked us to believe in God's help, to be peaceful and to think that everything would end well.

In the evening the men came back and others went in their place to Vilnius. The place for people from Molėtai was by the Parliament. We got connected with my family in Vilnius and found out that my brother was by the TV Tower, and mother in church. On the next day we all went to Vilnius. At first we lit candles at the TV Tower. Then we went to Konarskis Street to the Radio and TV Commission. Everywhere there were young





Pictures drawn by school children depicting the storming of the TV Tower.  
Photo: Rasa Tautvydas

soldiers with tommy guns. In the middle of the street fire was burning. I wanted to ask the soldiers why were they armed if nobody touched them. I approached them but my son Raimondas pulled me back by the sleeve. And a soldier, a young one, with a childish face, seized his gun, but I wasn't afraid of him. Then we went to the Sports Palace, to the funeral of the victims who were killed at the TV Tower. There were endless queues of people. While we were waiting in the queue for entrance, an armored vehicle went by and shot from the gun. The bullets went low, almost by our legs. I saw the cartridge cases and smelled the odor of gunpowder. Julius with other children grabbed a few cartridge cases; he still has them. There was no fear at all, but now I understand—they could shoot the children.

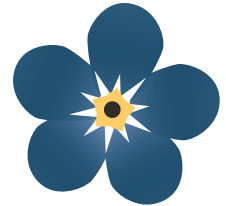
We felt very badly without Lithuanian radio and TV. The programs by Kasperavičius and Jaramalavičius we called KASPERvision. Our friends from Latvia came to us and we visited all the places and the graves of the victims. Everywhere we could feel the unfamiliar smell; there were still many soldiers and wire barricades. Aija and Ivars Tamsons didn't know that after some months there would be the same "bloody night" in Latvia, only with fewer victims. The next summer they showed us the place of death of their people, right in the very center of Riga, by the ponds.

Other family members—my husband, Stasys, my son-in-law Jaroslavas, my mother and my brother—who that terrible night were by the TV Tower and by the Parliament—cherish their own memories.

\*Antanas Terleckas, an economist, and Nijolė Sadūnaitė, a nun, were social activists in the freedom movement and were active in the underground press. Each had been imprisoned and exiled for dissident activities.

Antanas Pivoras

Retired teacher, writer. An extract from his story, "How grandpa was late for history":



During the January events we went to Vilnius. I wasn't a hero; I didn't come to Vilnius on that night when the tanks crushed fighters for our freedom. I went only sightseeing later on. We went round the TV Tower fence, where we saw tanks and their tracks left in snow, through bushes. I still remember banners on that fence. On one it was written: "Beware of angry animals! Don't feed and don't tease them!" and our farm manager cried to these soldiers in the tanks: "Hey, you, soldier, will you, a stranger, shoot at your father or mother?" What could a soldier answer? He was brought here by force. He only turned his back. We drove past the Radio and TV offices. And now I don't know if I had to be ashamed of one childish gesture: I opened the bus window and pointed two fingers at the guard. And then I saw the soldier lifting up his gun... It meant nothing to him to kill anybody.

We found out about the funeral of the victims in the Sports Palace. Standing in a long queue, we stamped onto ground covered with snow and maybe with blood. The coffins were put close to each other and it seemed they were brothers, lying in them talking about their death for freedom. The young girl, Loreta, you were the first to be killed for our freedom. You are the symbol of our young Lithuania.

Twenty five years have passed since that terrible winter. A new generation has grown up. We are free, but with lots of problems. I miss something in my heart, as if something had gone wrong. Again we feel lots of aggression and propaganda from the Russian side. And I wonder: if our government and our freedom are in danger now, will crowds of people come up to defend it?



TV Tower wall with bullet holes and barbed wire, after the morning of January 13, 1991. Photo: Rasa Tautvydas

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## Students: Sign Up Now for LISS 2016!

LISS—Lithuanian International Students Services—is now taking applications for its summer programs in Lithuania for college and high school students.



“An excellent balance between gaining work experience, enjoying a great summer and getting more in touch with the county of my ancestry.”

Eduard Hessels, LISS 2013 and 2014  
Kasiulis Museum and Valdovų Rūmai, Vilnius

### Student Internship and Studies Program

This program allows students to work in a field of their chosen profession, improve their Lithuanian language skills and become familiar with daily life and culture in Lithuania.

- This program will be held from July 6, 2016, to August 12, 2016.
- Applications will be accepted from December 15, 2015, to March 15, 2016.
- Only students who have declared their major or area of concentration will be accepted.
- The application consists of a cover (motivation) letter responding to the question “Why do I want to participate in the LISS program?” and a curriculum vitae. The application may be submitted in either Lithuanian or English via email at [liss@lithuanian-american.org](mailto:liss@lithuanian-american.org)
- On March 15, 2016, all applicants will be notified individually if they were accepted as participants. Students are selected by the Program Coordinator and the LISS Committee.
- Students who are accepted into the program must pay the \$500 administrative fee and fill out and submit the Medical Form and Release Form by April 15, 2016.
- At the end of the program, students meeting all program requirements will get five (5) university credits from Vytautas Magnus University ([www.vdu.lt](http://www.vdu.lt)). Every student should contact their own university to check if they will honor these credits and inquire what form, if any, must be filled out.
- LISS students are provided LISS-sponsored dorms/apartments for free. The program will provide opportunities to engage in cultural trips around Lithuania. Based on the type of internship and availability, students will live in Vilnius, Kaunas or Klaipėda.
- Students are responsible for their own expenses, including flight tickets, food, personal trips and other entertainment.





"It granted me the opportunity to become immersed within my Lithuanian culture, strengthen my language skills, learn to live on my own and also allowed me to explore and find myself along the journey."

Aleta Juozelskis, LISS 2015  
Vilnius University Hospital



"LISS is an awesome opportunity to gain experience, learn new things and boost a resume—all while earning college credit in the process."

Caroline Birsner, LISS 2012  
Environmental Center for Administration and Technology,  
Kaunas



"I made some fantastic friendships and professional relationships that will enrich both my life and my professional and academic career in the future ... This has been the experience of a lifetime."

Samantha Grigas, LISS 2015  
Vilnius University Anthropology and Histology Laboratory

### Volunteer Program "Students for Lithuania"

This program was developed for high school students who want to get acquainted with Lithuanian daily life and culture and benefit Lithuania through their volunteer work. During this program, students will have the opportunity to socialize with peers, study the Lithuanian language and support their Lithuanian teachers.

- This program will be held from July 10, 2016, to August 6, 2016.
- Applications will be accepted from December 15, 2015, to March 15, 2016.
- Students must be at least 16 years old.
- The application consists of a cover (motivation) letter responding to the question "Why do I want to participate in the LISS program?" and a curriculum vitae. The application may be submitted in either Lithuanian or English via email at [liss@lithuanian-american.org](mailto:liss@lithuanian-american.org)
- On March 15, 2016, all applicants will be notified individually if they were accepted as participants. Students

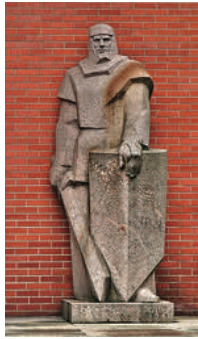
are selected by the Program Coordinator and LISS Committee.

- Students who are accepted to the program must pay the \$400 administrative fee and fill out and submit the Medical Form, Release Form and Parents' Approval by April 15, 2016.
- LISS participants are provided LISS-sponsored dorms/apartments for free. The program will provide opportunities to engage in cultural trips around Lithuania. Based on availability and location of volunteer opportunities, students will live in Vilnius, Tauragė or Klaipėda.
- Students are responsible for their own expenses, including flight tickets, food, personal trips and other entertainment.

For additional information about either program, please contact LISS via email at [liss@lithuanian-american.org](mailto:liss@lithuanian-american.org)

# this month in history

## January Anniversaries



### 755 years ago

**January 22, 1261**

The army of the pagan Old Prussians, led by Herkus Mantas, defeated the Teutonic Knights at the Battle of Pokarviai during the Great Prussian Uprising. The Knights later took the area, naming it Brandenburg and building a castle there in 1266. Pokarviai is now Ushakovo, a village in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad Oblast.

### 615 years ago

**January 18, 1401**

Vytautas and the Lithuanian nobles signed the Pact of Vilnius and Radom. The agreement strengthened the Polish-Lithuanian union and instituted Vytautas as Grand Duke of Lithuania, fully in charge of Lithuanian affairs, while Jogaila, King of Poland, retained the rights of an overlord. The pact was confirmed by the Crown Council in Radom, Poland, on March 11, 1401.

### 435 years ago

**January 14, 1581**

The city of Riga became part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth under the Treaty of Drohiczyn. Riga had been a free imperial city of the Holy Roman Empire for 20 years, since the demise of the Livonian Order in 1561. It remained part of Polish-Lithuanian Livonia until it came under the rule of Sweden at the beginning of the Polish-Swedish War (1621–1625).

### 280 years ago

**January 27, 1736**

Stanislovas Leščinskis I (Stanisław Leszczyński) gave up the Polish-Lithuanian throne for a second time.

Leščinskis became King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania for the first time following the Swedish invasion of Poland, when Charles XII of Sweden forced the Polish nobility to depose Augustus II the Strong and elect Leščinskis as his replacement. However, after the Swedes were defeated by Peter the Great at the Battle of Poltava in 1709, Augustus II regained the throne.

Leščinskis settled in France, where his daughter Marie married Louis XV. When Augustus II died in 1733, Leščinskis returned to Poland and was again elected king. Russia and Austria sought to annul his election to prevent him from uniting Poland in the Swedish-French alliance. He was deposed once more and Saxon Frederick Augustus II was elected to the Polish throne as Augustus III in 1734. Leščinskis retreated to Danzig

(now Gdańsk, Poland) and then Königsberg in Prussia, where he waged guerrilla warfare against the new king.

He finally abdicated the throne on January 26, 1736, but received the Duchy of Lorraine and Bar in France as compensation.



### 165 years ago

**January 2, 1851**

Pranas Dovydaitis, one of the founders of Catholic youth and student organization Ateitis, was born in Runkiai, Lithuania. A signatory of the February 16, 1918, Act of Restoration of Independent Lithuania, he served as the independent republic's

third prime minister, but resigned in April 1919 after only one month in office.

Dovydaitis was one of the founders and leaders of Ateitis (Future), Pavasaris (Spring) and the Lithuanian Catholic Union of Teachers. He contributed to The Lithuanian Encyclopedia and headed the Department of History of Religions at the University of Lithuania (now Vytautas Magnus University).

He was imprisoned and executed by the Soviets along with 30 other intellectuals for supposed espionage.

### 165 years ago

**January 25, 1851**

Lithuanian industrialist and philanthropist Peter Vileišis (1851–1926) was born in Mediniai. An engineer with a specialty in designing and building railway bridges, Vileišis was able to amass a fortune, much of which he donated to Lithuanian social organizations.



Vileišis is considered one of the founding fathers of the Lithuanian national revival movement. He engaged in book smuggling during the Lithuanian press ban as a student and later utilizing Lithuanian railwaymen. After the ban was lifted, he established the first legal Lithuanian-language daily newspaper, Vilniaus žinios (The News of Vilnius), in 1904. He sponsored the First Lithuanian Art Exhibition in 1907.

### 135 years ago

**January 1, 1881**

Birth of Danielius Alseika, Lithuanian physician and activist (1881–1936). He attended the 1905 Great Vilnius Seimas and co-founded the Lithuanian Peasant Union. As a military doctor during World War I, he worked with Lithuanian exiles and

refugee organizations.

Following the war, Alseika established a clinic in Vilnius that eventually became the first Lithuanian city hospital. He is the father of noted anthropologist Marija Gimbutis.

## 125 years ago

### January 6, 1891

Birth of Lithuanian diplomat Jonas Julius Bielskis in Padekšyns, Lithuania. Bielskis came to the United States in 1908 and returned to Lithuania in 1916 as part of an American Lithuanian fact-finding mission.

Bielskis was director of the Lithuanian Information Bureau and later president of the Lithuanian National Council in Washington, D.C., from 1917 to 1919, when he was appointed chief organizer of an American-Lithuanian Brigade to provide military aid to the new government of Lithuania.

The Brigade's officers arrived in Kaunas on December 31, 1919. Approximately 10,000 enlisted men had been readied but only a small number ever arrived in Lithuania, mainly due to objections of Lithuania's foreign minister, Augustinas Voldemaras. Voldemaras wanted the Brigade broken up among the units of the Lithuanian army while Bielskis argued they would be more successful as an intact unit. Bielskis later hypothesized that Voldemaras feared a military force as individual and distinct as the American-Lithuanian Brigade might induce more American Lithuanians to follow, settle in the cities and demand an active share in government, forcing Voldemaras and others with less political experience out of office.

Bielskis served briefly in the Lithuanian consular service in the U.S. in the 1920s and became Honorary Consul in Los Angeles in 1939.

## 110 years ago

### January 29, 1906

Birth of Ona Halina Lukauskaitė-Poškienė (1906-1983), a poet and political activist who was one of the founding members of the Lithuanian National Committee and the Lithuanian Helsinki Group.

Prior to World War II, Poškienė was a teacher and member of a left-wing writers' group in Šiauliai. After Soviet occupation, in 1946, she helped establish the Lithuanian National Committee, an anti-Soviet underground organization, with Lithuanian military officer Jonas Noreika, engineer Stasys Gorodeckis, partisan leader Zigmas Serksnas-Laukaitis and others. The LNC's main goal was to prepare and lead a future uprising and restore an independent, democratic Lithuanian state. Poškienė wrote to the Pope about the situa-



tion in occupied Lithuania and crafted an appeal to the peoples of the world on the organization's behalf. Arrested in 1946, she spent several years imprisoned in forced labor camps in Siberia.

She returned to Šiauliai in 1955 and, in 1976, helped establish the Public Group to Promote the Implementation of the Helsinki Accords in Lithuania (Lithuanian Helsinki Group) with Catholic priest Karolis Garuckas, Jewish "refusenik" Eitan Finkelstein, former political prisoner Viktoras Petkus, and poet and translator Tomas Venclova. The group was the first human rights organization in Lithuania. Despite intense harassment from Soviet authorities, the group became a symbol of Lithuanian dissent during its active years of 1976 through 1981.

## 105 years ago

### January 30, 1911

Birth of writer and publisher Stepas Zobarskas. Zobarskas was born in Pamaleišys and became one of the most popular authors of children's and young adult literature in interwar Lithuania. In 1944, he went to Germany, where he established the publishing house Patria, which reprinted a number of books published in Lithuania.

He emigrated to New York in 1947 and established the publishing house Manyland Books, which published English translations of Lithuanian books. He edited the children's magazine Eglutė and also wrote psychological novels for adults. His works have been translated into German, French and English.



## 70 years ago

### January 8-9, 1946

The Baltic Camp University, also known as the Baltic University in Exile, was founded in Germany by 40 Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian scientists in Hamburg and Pinneberg. Classes began on March 14, 1946, and continued until the university closed its doors on September 30, 1949.

## 25 years ago

### January 1991

Pro-Soviet demonstrators and Soviet troops attempted to occupy public buildings, and the Lithuanian nation responded by gathering in Vilnius to protect the buildings and government. The January 13 assault on the Vilnius TV Tower, known as Bloody Sunday, claimed 14 lives, but failed to quash the independence movement.

See our special section on the January Events beginning on page 3.



# a taste of lithuania

## Kibinai

By Jana Sirusaitė Motivans



Karališka Senoji Kibininė (The Old Royal Kybyn Inn), located on the A1 (Vilnius-Kaunas Highway) 23 km outside of Vilnius in the Trakai district, specializes in kibinai and other traditional Lithuanian foods. It even has a drive-through. Photo: Teresė Vekteris

Kibinai are a traditional food of the Karaim (also known as Karaites), an ethnic minority who have lived in Lithuania for more than 600 years. Vytautas the Great brought the Karaim from the Crimea to Lithuania in the 1390s and settled them in Trakai. The men served Vytautas as his personal bodyguards, and also protected the town of Trakai and the castle itself.

The Trakai Castle museum contains exhibits and information about the Karaim. There is also a separate Karaites museum in the town of Trakai that documents their fascinating history. No trip to Trakai is complete without a history lesson and a kibinas for lunch.

A kibinas is a crescent-shaped pastry filled with meat, similar to a Cornish pasty. A traditional kibinas contains chopped lamb, although beef, pork and vegetable kibinai are also popular. Kibinai are usually eaten in Trakai at Karaites restaurants and served with *kmyņų arbata* (caraway tea).

I first ate kibinai during one of my earliest trips to Lithuania, during Soviet times. I have to admit that it was not very

appetizing—the dough itself was buttery and flaky and quite tasty, but during those days meat was often of questionable quality. I remember biting in and getting a mouthful of gristle and fat, which I had to discreetly spit into a napkin so as to not offend the relative who had treated me. Luckily, the situation has improved greatly and the kibinai available now are delicious. Most kibinai are now made with pork, not lamb, to reflect Lithuanian taste. There are also some delicious mushroom fillings.

Kibinai are mainly associated with the town of Trakai, but there are several places to eat them in Vilnius as well. We found a gourmet version available at the lively *Pinavija* bakery and cafe on *Vilniaus gatvė*. Locals queue up for a choice of fillings including traditional pork or lamb, along with cheese and mushroom, cottage cheese and spinach, mushroom and onion, and chicken and mushroom. My recipe calls for a pork filling, but feel free to experiment with different fillings and create your own favorite.

## Kibinai (makes 10-12)

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 1/2 cups flour
- 1/2 pound butter
- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 medium onion, finely diced
- salt and pepper

1. Put the flour and 1/2 teaspoon salt into a large bowl. Use a hand-held box grater to grate the cold butter onto the flour mixture. Use your hands to mix the butter into the flour, working it until the butter is evenly distributed and the mixture is dry and crumbly.
2. Add the beaten eggs and the sour cream to the bowl. Again use your hands to work the mixture until you have a soft, moist dough.
3. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.
4. While the dough is chilling, prepare the meat filling. Put the ground meat into a medium-sized bowl. Add the finely diced onion, and season with salt and pepper. Mix to combine.
5. Take about 1/4 of the dough from the refrigerator, leaving the rest to stay cool. Roll out the portion of dough on a lightly floured surface until it is about 1/4 inch thick. Use a bowl or other round measure to cut out evenly sized circles. (I used a soup bowl that is six inches across). Tear away the excess dough, to be rerolled in the next batch.
6. Place the filling in the middle of each circle. (For each 6-inch circle I used almost 1/4 cup of filling). Shape the filling into an oblong shape, then pull up the edges of the dough circle and pinch them together at the top. Use your fingers to shape the edge decoratively, just like crimping the edges of a pie. Kibinai in Lithuania have a beautiful braid-like edging, which is a challenge to replicate. Do the best you can to create an attractive edge. Place the kibinai on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Take another 1/4 of the remaining dough out of the refrigerator, and repeat the process until all the dough and filling is used up. Place the kibinai on the baking sheet, using a second sheet if necessary.
7. In a small bowl, beat one egg yolk with 1 tablespoon of milk. Brush this mixture over the kibinai, then bake in an oven, pre-heated to 375°, for 35 to 45 minutes. The baking time will depend on the size of your kibinai, but they are done when they are an even light brown color and feel solid to the touch.



## Kmynų arbata (caraway tea)

Pour one cup of boiling water over 1 tablespoon of caraway seeds in a small pot. Simmer on very low heat for 5 to 10 minutes. Strain into a cup and add honey.



## Lithuanian Forest Fairy Tale on Nantucket Island

By Inga Puodžiukynienė, translated by Gabija Barnard

Every year, on Main Street of Nantucket Island, Christmas spirit shines from the ornate shop windows and the festive Christmas trees decorated by children and grown-ups. Everyone does their best to adorn their trees in as original and interesting a way as possible, as all the trees are entered in the Christmas Stroll Decorating Contest.

For the first time in the history of Nantucket Island, the children and their parents from the Lithuanian school "Banginukas" also decorated a Christmas tree in the town center. Thanks to the joint efforts of the parents, the teachers and Kristina Ralkova, the event organizer, the Lithuanian Christmas tree—as if from a winter fairy tale—delighted both the residents and the guests of Nantucket Island. We are happy to report that among the younger participants of the contest, the "Banginukas" children's Christmas tree was recognized as the most beautiful.



## LAC National Board Members Visit Embassy

The Lithuanian American Community, Inc.'s National Executive Committee and board members visited the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in Washington, D.C., on December 12, 2015, led by LAC President Sigita Šimkuvienė (center in photo). The meeting addressed prospects for closer cooperation in order to intensify relations between Lithuanians living in Lithuania and the United States, more effective information sharing opportunities and other relevant issues.



## An Eventful Fall for the Lithuanians of Portland

By Ingrida Misevičienė and Laurynas R. Misevičius

Translated by Gabija Barnard

Photographs by Darius Kuzmickas, Darius Gruzdžis and Kristina Langaitienė



Portland's Lithuanian Community with its guests of honor from Los Angeles: Consul General Darius Gaidys and Pastor Tomas Karanauskas.

Even though the skies of Portland have long been pouring with rain and a real winter is practically non-existent in this part of the world, the Lithuanian community has been as active as ever. Everyone has found something interesting or close to them, be it a picnic, a theater, a school or a film. The Lithuanians of Oregon and southeastern Washington started the fall with a traditional annual outing in the open. The local Lithuanians gathered in the beautiful Rooster Rock State Park on the shore of the Columbia River in Oregon to spend a pleasant afternoon in the bosom of nature and to share their impressions of the summer. September 2015 marked the second year of the Lithuanian school "Atžalynas," which once again opened its doors to its pupils. Headmistress Inga Sadaunikaitė-Kozhevnikov says that the main goal is not only to work with the children, but also with their parents. She says that "the most important thing is the parents' interest in their children's learning. If the parents aren't involved and don't help their children with the homework, the results will be disappointing—just like in any other school."

Also in September, the Lithuanian Community of Portland was represented for the first time at the congress of the Council of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., which was held this year in Cleveland, Ohio. Newly elected council members Giedrė Babarskienė and Ernesta Ingelevičiūtė set to work immediately on the problems of culture and education relevant to American Lithuanians and especially to small communities like that of Portland, Oregon.

October turned out to be a real theater festival. Having vis-

ited Cleveland a few decades ago, Onutė Pučkoriūtė-Zalensas, a former actress in the "Lėlė" (Puppet) theater in Vilnius, brought her unique play "The Little Mermaid" (an adaptation of the fairytale by Hans Christian Andersen) to the U.S. As the occasion was the beginning of the academic year, the play was performed in the Lithuanian schools of Portland, Seattle



Onutė Pučkoriūtė-Zalensas, a former actress in the "Lėlė" (Puppet) theater in Vilnius, brought her unique play "The Little Mermaid" to the Lithuanian schools of Portland, Seattle and San Francisco at the start of the academic year.

## our community

and San Francisco. Meanwhile, Vitalija Mockevičiūtė from the Lithuanian National Drama Theater and Neringa Varnelytė from the Lithuanian State Youth Theater, along with musicians Darius Mockevičius and Paulius Kovalenko, delighted Portland with a performance of the play "Kas apsakys tas dzūkų linksmybes" (Who Can Describe That Dzūkian Merry-Making). The credit and gratitude for both the organizing and financing of these projects goes to the tireless Rūta Pakštaitė-Cole, who chaired the Cultural Council of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., as well as to the generous sponsor, the Lithuanian Foundation. We are also grateful to the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center and especially to its vice-chairwoman Loreta Timukienė for the preparation of the unique exhibitions "Sport in the Lives of U.S. Lithuanians" and "We Shall Open the Chest of Song Festivals." She also sent the exhibitions to the authors of this article so that the Lithuanians of the northwestern coast could enjoy the exhibits during the aforementioned events. The sports exhibition was also sent to Seattle, where it was displayed on December 20 at a Christmas Eve gathering.

For the first time, the cable TV channel Eurochannel together with the Lithuanian Film Center in America introduced the "Month of Lithuanian Cinema" that left no one in Portland indifferent. On November 8, 2015, in the City of Roses, which is famous for many diverse festivals of alternative art, we organized a cinema afternoon together with our Baltic neighbors from Latvia. The audience had the chance to see the historical film "Kursi" (The Curonians) by Latvian directors Lauris and Raitis Ābele, the Lithuanian comedy "Jau puiku, tik dar šiek



Pastor Tomas Karanauskas from St. Casimir parish in Los Angeles celebrated a special Advent Mass.

tiiek..." (Already great, just a little bit more...) by Lina Lužytė and the feature film "Duburys" (Vortex) by the Lithuanian director Gytis Lukšas. The participants could also donate to a choice of two charities in both countries: one collecting to serve hot food to impoverished children in Latvia, the other fundraising for Christmas presents for Lithuanian children living in difficult conditions through the project "Vaikų svajonės" (Children's Dreams, [www.vaikusvajones.lt](http://www.vaikusvajones.lt)). Portland's Lithuanians, con-



Vitalija Mockevičiūtė from the Lithuanian National Drama Theater and Neringa Varnelytė from the Lithuanian State Youth Theater, along with musicians Darius Mockevičius and Paulius Kovalenko, delighted Portland with a performance of the play "Kas apsakys tas dzūkų linksmybes" (Who can describe that Dzūkian merry-making).



tributing to the charity for the first time, managed to send 33 presents, which went on their way to the port of Klaipėda thanks to the logistics company "Atlantic Express," set up by Lithuanians from Chicago and Tacoma, Wash. Hopefully, the presents will have reached their recipients by the New Year.

The string of fall events culminated in a Christmas Eve and "Kalėdos eglutė" (Christmas tree) event for children. This year, two guests of honor from sunny California were present: Darius Gaidys, the consul general of the Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania in Los Angeles, which only opened this spring, and Tomas Karanauskas, pastor from St. Casimir parish, who for the second time celebrated a special Advent Mass. The participants enjoyed a performance by the youth of the Lithuanian community of Portland and the Christmas program performed by the children of the Lithuanian school "Atžalynas." The parents were also well prepared for the festivities: they surprised both the children and the adults with an unexpected original play, "The Wolf and the Three Little Pigs." At the end of the event, everyone's attention was drawn by the silent auction. Živilė Galiūnaitė, who after many years in Battle Ground, Wash., has moved from the West Coast to live in Louisiana with her daughter, gave the Lithuanian community of Portland two of her own paintings and a vast collection of books by Lithuanian and émigré authors. Part of this collection was auctioned away at the Christmas gathering.

As the year draws to an end, the board of the Lithuanian community in Portland can await 2016 with pride: a lot has been accomplished this year and even more is planned for the next year. We suggest you mark February 27 in your calendars already—that Saturday the Lithuanians of Portland will be invited to commemorate the 98th anniversary of Lithuanian Independence together. As always, more information can be found online at [portlandlithuanians.com](http://portlandlithuanians.com) and on our Facebook page.



Portland's Lithuanians, contributing to the "Vaikų svajonės" (Children's Dreams) charity for the first time, managed to send 33 presents to needy children in Lithuania.



The children of the Lithuanian school "Atžalynas," led by Inga Sadaunikaitė-Kozhevnikov, performed a Christmas program.



During the event the participants enjoyed a performance by the youth of the Lithuanian community of Portland.



The parents surprised both the children and the adults with an unexpected original play, "The Wolf and the Three Little Pigs."



## current events

... National Geographic Travel named Vilnius as one of the top winter vacation trips for 2016. They highlighted Old Town (a UNESCO World Heritage site) and the free Christmas in the Capital performances of "The Nutcracker" at the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre. They noted the January 6 Three Kings Procession from the Gates of Dawn to Cathedral Square and mentioned the Užupis artist district with unusual shops, fashions and artistic performances.

... Lithuania gained greater energy independence with the completion of two electrical links. Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė with Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia visited Klaipėda as part of a 453 km submarine cable (NordBalt) that links Klaipėda with Næro in eastern Sweden. Additionally, a 163 km cable (LitPolLink) links Alytus with Elk in Poland.

... Thermo Fisher Scientific Baltics opened a new processing research laboratory in Vilnius that will add 100 personnel to its staff of 570 where they are developing "Dynabeads," magnetic beads used in cancer immunotherapy research. The Center of Excellence for Molecular Biology is one of the largest private R&D centers in the Baltics.

... The movie "Persona Non Grata" premiered in Kaunas and later opened in Tokyo. It depicts the life of Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese vice-consul in Kaunas who in 1940, against orders, issued 2000+ transit visas to Jews fleeing the Nazis. Shortly before his death, Israel awarded him the title "Righteous Among the Nations." Sugihara House and Museum is located at 30 Vaizganto Street and is a notable attraction when visiting Kaunas.

... A newly revised 2009 Russian planning document signed by President Putin and endorsed by Prime Minister Medvedev names the U.S. as one of the threats to Russia's national security and specifically calls a threat NATO's expansion and neighboring military-biological laboratories.

... Latvian Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma resigned under pressure of the migrant crisis, teacher strikes, financial aid to the national airline, Air Baltic, and the cost of meeting NATO defense spending goals of 2 percent of GDP in response to Russian action in the Ukraine. The failure of the coalition of three parties—the Unity party, Nationalist Alliance and Union of Greens and Farmers now gives more political power to the pro-Russian Concord Party.

Errata: In the November/December 2015 interview "Connecting Loose Threads" on page 5, author Sandra Baksys called her "Teta" her father's great aunt. Teta was actually her father's aunt and her great aunt. Sandra's bio on page 9 should have said she worked for the Lithuanian Communication Committee, not Information Center.

Also in the November/December 2015 issue, on page 4, the anniversary year in the caption should have been 1996, not 1995.

In the October 2015 issue, the caption on page 11 should have read: St. Andrew's Parish Committee with Bishop Rimantas Norvila from Vilkaiviškis (seated, center), Msgr. Edmundas Putrimas, delegate of the Lithuanian Bishops Conference from Toronto (left) and returning son of the parish, Fr. Dan Staniskis (right). St. Andrew's pastor, Fr. Peter Burkauskas, is standing the bishop.

bridges

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January 2016

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

**ONGOING**

One Sunday a Month  
**Lithuanian Brunch, 12-4 p.m.**  
The Avenue Restaurant, 71-22  
Myrtle Ave., Glendale, N.Y.  
Call 347-725-3853 for dates and  
reservations.  
Info: theavenuebarandgrill.com;

Every Friday, 2-10:30 p.m.  
**Fish Fry Fridays at the  
Rockford Lithuanian Club**  
716 Indiana Ave., Rockford, Ill.  
Open to the public.  
Info: rockfordlithuanianclub@  
hotmail.com or 815-962-9256

**FEBRUARY 2016**

February 13, 3 p.m.  
**Central N.J. Independence  
Celebration and Užgavėnės**  
Estonian House, 4 Cross St. and  
Veterans Hwy., Jackson, N.J.  
Info: lietuviskabendrija@yahoo.com

February 13, 3 p.m.  
**San Diego Independence  
Celebration and Užgavėnės**  
Hall of Nations, Balboa Park,  
2191 West Pan American Road,  
San Diego, Calif.  
Info: lithsd.org

February 14, 4 p.m.  
**Evelina Puzaitė Piano Concert**  
First Congregational Church of  
Greenwich, 108 Sound Beach  
Ave., Old Greenwich, Conn.  
Info: 203-637-1791

February 20, 2 p.m. and  
February 21, 4 p.m.  
**Documentary: The Story of the  
Baltic University**  
Balzekas Museum, 6500 S Pulaski  
Rd., Chicago  
Members free; non-members \$5.  
Info: balzekasmuseum.org,  
773-582-6500

February 20, 3 p.m.  
**Atlanta Lithuanian Community  
Independence Commemoration**  
St. Ann's Catholic Church, 4905  
Roswell Road, Marietta, Ga.  
LAC elections, performances by  
Jievaras folk dance group.  
Info: lietuviaiatlantoje.org

February 20, 6-10 p.m.  
**Independence Day  
Commemoration in New York**  
Annunciation Church, 259 N. 5th  
Street, Brooklyn, N.Y.  
Violinist and pianist Barbora  
Valiukevičiūtė, pianist Miles Mas-  
sicotte, Lithuanian poetry.  
\$20 in advance, \$25 at door.  
Info: director@nymairioniomokykla.  
org

February 20  
**Lithuanian Independence  
Basketball Tournament**  
William Floyd High School, 240  
Mastic Beach Road, Mastic, N.Y.  
Info: rasamaja@gmail.com,  
631-764-1932

February 21, 12:30 p.m.  
**Detroit Lithuanian Independence  
Day Commemoration**  
Divine Providence Lithuanian  
Catholic Church hall, 25335 West  
Nine Mile Rd, Southfield, Mich.  
Concert by Biru Bar. Special  
guest, author Ruta Sepetyš.  
Info: divineprovidencechurch.  
com

February 27, 3 p.m.  
**Portland Lithuanian  
Independence Day Celebration**  
Latvia Lutheran Church  
of Oregon, 5500 SW Dosch Rd.,  
Portland, Ore.  
Info: ingrida@portlandlithu-  
anians.com

February 28  
**San Francisco Lithuanian Indepen-  
dence Day Commemoration**  
Latvian House, 425 Hoffman Ave.,  
San Francisco, Calif.  
Info: sflithuanians.com

February 28  
**Omaha Lithuanian Independence  
Day Commemoration**  
Sts. Peter and Paul School  
gymnasium, 5912 S. 36th St.,  
Omaha, Nebr.  
Info: facebook.com/OmahaLB

February 28  
**Philadelphia Lithuanian Indepen-  
dence Day Commemoration**  
Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E.  
Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia  
Info: lithuanianmha.org

February 28, 9 a.m.  
**Daughters of Lithuania  
Charity Lunch**  
Divine Providence Lithuanian  
Catholic Church hall, 25335 West  
Nine Mile Rd, Southfield, Mich.  
Info: divineprovidencechurch.com

**MARCH 2016**

March 5, 10 a.m.  
**Traditional Lithuanian Easter Egg  
Decorating Workshop**  
Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian  
Culture, 6500 S Pulaski Rd.,  
Chicago  
Members \$10, non-members \$15,  
children under 12 \$5  
Information and registration:  
info@balzekasmuseum.org,  
773-582-6500

March 5, 4 p.m.  
**Aspen Lithuanian Independence  
Day Celebration**  
Aspen, Colo.  
Info: dmb@aspenconsul.com

March 6, 10 a.m.  
**St. Casimir Scout Fair**  
Lithuanian World Center, 14911  
127th St., Lemont, Ill.  
Info: lwc.org

March 6, 1 p.m.  
**Cincinnati Lithuanian  
Independence Day**  
Miami University, Hamilton  
Campus, 1601 University Blvd.,  
200 Mosler Hall, Hamilton, Ohio  
Cincinnati LAC elections, Aitvaras  
student performance and screen-  
ing of The Invisible Front.  
Info: facebook.com/  
groups/376757247896/

March 6, 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m.  
**Kaziuko Mugė**  
Divine Providence Lithuanian  
Catholic Church, 25335 West  
Nine Mile Rd, Southfield, Mich.  
Info: divineprovidencechurch.com

March 6, 2-4 p.m.  
**KC Lithuanian Community Inde-  
pendence Day Celebration**  
Strawberry Hill Museum, 720 N.  
4th Street, Kansas City, Kans.  
Info: facebook.com/KansasCity-  
LithuanianCommunity

March 11-14  
**FLO-XVI: 16th Annual  
Florida Lithuanian Open Golf  
Tournament**  
St. Petersburg, Fla.  
Benefits Child's Gate to Learning.  
Info and registration:  
LTConsulFlorida.com  
Accommodations:  
beachtravel@mindspring.com

March 12, 4 p.m.  
**Vida Bladykaitė's Comedy, Psichai**  
\$5 children, \$15 seniors, \$25  
adults  
Lithuanian Hall, 851 Hollins St.,  
Baltimore, Md.  
Info: 443-296-2555

March 13  
**Day of Restoration of Lithuanian  
Independence Commemoration**  
Sts. Peter and Paul Church, 5912  
S. 36th St., Omaha, Nebr.  
Info: facebook.com/OmahaLB

March 19, 1-3 p.m.  
**Amber Roots Heritage Club**  
Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E.  
Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia  
Everyone welcome. Use side  
entrance on Tilton Street. Bring a  
dish to share.  
Info: milliemarks@aol.com

March 23-30  
**SALFASS/LAUNA/ALGS  
Lithuanian Ski Trip**  
Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel, 4130  
Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake  
Tahoe, Calif.  
Reservations: linda@ski.com,  
800-525-2052 x3329  
General info: edmickus1@aol.  
com or vsaulis@sbcglobal.net

**APRIL 2016**

April 16, 1-3 p.m.  
**Amber Roots Heritage Club**  
Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E.  
Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia  
Everyone welcome. Use side  
entrance on Tilton Street.  
Bring a dish to share.  
Info: milliemarks@aol.com

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