

bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

\$5

May 2016

this month in history

May Anniversaries



460 years ago

May 31, 1556

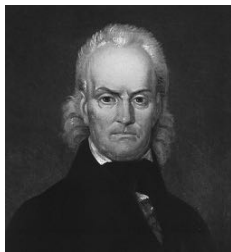
Birth of Jurgis Radvila, a duke of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth who became Lithuania's first cardinal.

Scion of the powerful Radvila (Radziwiłł) family, Jurgis was raised a

Calvinist but converted to Catholicism in 1574. He became Bishop of Vilnius in 1579 at the age of 23, and was installed as a Cardinal in 1586. In 1591, he was appointed Bishop of Krakow and became a trusted advisor of King Sigismund III Vasa.

Radvila authored what is considered the oldest Lithuanian travel text, *Kelione į Italiją: 1575 metų dienoraštis* (A Journey to Italy: Diary of 1575), which documents the two-month-long trip by horseback he took at age 19, traveling from Trakai in Lithuania to Padova in Italy by way of Warsaw, Vienna and Venice.

He died in Rome in 1600 and is buried there at The Church of the Gesù.



255 years ago

May 6, 1761

Birth of Lithuanian natural scientist Stanislovas Bonifacas Jundzilas. A professor of botany and zoology at Vilnius University, he helped create the Vilnius Botanical Gardens and was one of the first to teach veterinary medicine in Lithuania.

He authored several textbooks on botany and zoology and his studies of migratory birds were among the earliest in that area.

Jundzilas was the author of the first scientifically precise description of the flora and fauna of Lithuania, based on the Linnæus system, in 1791, and won accolades for his *Botanika Stosowana* (Applied Botany), published in 1799. He also lectured on geology and mineralogy, and conducted analyses of mineral springs, moors and marshes in Lithuania.

225 years ago

May 3, 1791

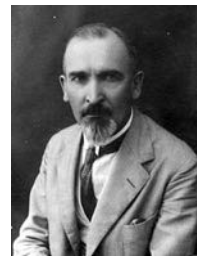
The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth adopted a new constitution, ending its traditional system of "Golden Liberty" and introducing wide-ranging reforms. It was the first codified constitution in modern European history and the second in modern world history, after the United States Constitution.

The unique political system of Golden Liberty had been in effect since the Union of Lublin in 1569. It gave all nobles equal legal status and extensive rights and privileges, regardless of rank or economic status, but excluded peasants and townsfolk from legal rights to freedom and liberty. This failure to protect the majority of the population resulted in slow development of cities and a second serfdom among the peasants.

The new Constitution recast the Commonwealth as a federal state with a hereditary monarchy and provided for a separation of powers among legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. It established popular sovereignty (rule by the will of the people), extended political rights to the bourgeoisie, increased the rights of the peasantry, and preserved religious tolerance. The new constitution also put Lithuania firmly under Poland's domination.

These reforms—designed to strengthen the Commonwealth after a lengthy period of political, military and economic decline—were perceived as a threat by Russia, Prussia and Austria, which invaded rather than chance that the Commonwealth might regain its position as a European power.

In the end, the Constitution was never fully implemented, and the Commonwealth entirely ceased to exist only four years after its adoption.



145 years ago

May 3, 1871

Birth of Vincas Čepinskis, Lithuanian scientist and member of the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania and the First Lithuanian Seimas (parliament). He is considered the founding father of physical chemistry and physics in Lithuania.

Čepinskis was among the founders of the Lithuanian University, later named Vytautas Magnus University. His research documented several previously unreported phenomena, but he never received recognition for the discoveries, as his papers were published in Lithuanian, and were therefore inaccessible to the larger scientific community of the day.

100 years ago

May 8, 1916

Birth of Danutė Nasvytytė-Gabriolavičienė, a pioneer of modern dance in Lithuania.

Nasvytytė introduced modern dance to Lithuania in 1939 when she returned from her studies at the Jutta Klamt School in Germany and held her first show in Kaunas. She opened a studio there, where she taught 200 men and women rhythmic gymnastics and German expressionist dance.

She fled Lithuania in the wake of World War II, first to Germany, then to Australia, where she opened another studio, teaching both modern and Lithuanian folk-based dance.

95 years ago

May 31, 1921

American Lithuanians presented President Warren G. Harding with a million signatures requesting de jure recognition of Lithuania as an independent republic.

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Cover: Kaunas Castle. Photo: ©Aliaksei Kruhlenia | Dreamstime.com

Back cover: On May 21, 2016, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė took part in the farewell ceremony for the first group of 3,000 recruits in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania Butigeidis Dragoon Battalion to complete their nine months of compulsory military service. All had chosen to serve voluntarily. About a third plan to join the professional military service while the remainder will enter the reserves. Photo: R. Dačkus, Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

from the editor

The Fabric of Memory

In our last issue, we focused on the Lithuanian national costume: the precious weavings, the patterns unique to regions, the stories they tell and their meanings to the wearer. In this issue, we focus on a fabric of another sort: a gauze woven of memories that wraps us—sometimes tightly, sometimes loosely—in our Lithuanian identity.

In “Koldūnai, Basketball and Krupnikas,” Rimas Domanskis uses memories of the Lemont-area community’s accomplishments and events to trigger questions about the larger Lithuanian community’s future. As the old causes for which we worked fade into the past, are we to define our legacy by food, drink and sport? Are there other ways to preserve our heritage? Are there new causes to take up? Do we broaden our definition of Lithuanian community?

“Memories Can’t Fade Away,” beginning on page 8, gathers the reflections of six Lithuanian teenagers regarding a topic of which they have no personal memories, but which lives in the collective memory of all contemporary Lithuanians—the armed resistance against the Soviet Union that took place between 1944 and 1953. Like the sturdy cloth that made the partisans’ uniforms, the strength of these memories continues to help shape Lithuania’s resolve to remain independent.

Another piece woven from recollection is “Tending the Memories of the Dead,” by Laima Vincė Sruoginis. Perhaps the most final and finite repository of memory is the graveyard, and Antakalnis Cemetery at the edge of Vilnius holds generations of Lithuanian history. It is where Laima’s grandparents are buried, and is also the resting place of writers, poets and artists who inspire her. This article is also the first of our new literary section, which Laima will curate, bringing us selections of the best of contemporary Lithuanian literature written in English with each issue.

Even our recipe this month serves as a memorial. Our food editor, Jana Motivans, lost her beloved Močiutė earlier this year, just shy of her 100th birthday. Along with Močiutė Sofija’s potato salad, Jana also relates the events that marked her grandmother’s century of life—the events that motivated her to make sure that her grandchildren knew how closely they were connected to Lithuania.

Just as the textiles that make our national costumes require careful tending and preservation, so do the memories that constitute our Lithuanian identity. Let us exercise the same care with these memories that we take with our most fragile fabrics, handling them with respect and sustaining them intact for generations to come.

Yours faithfully,



Teresė Vekteris, Editor

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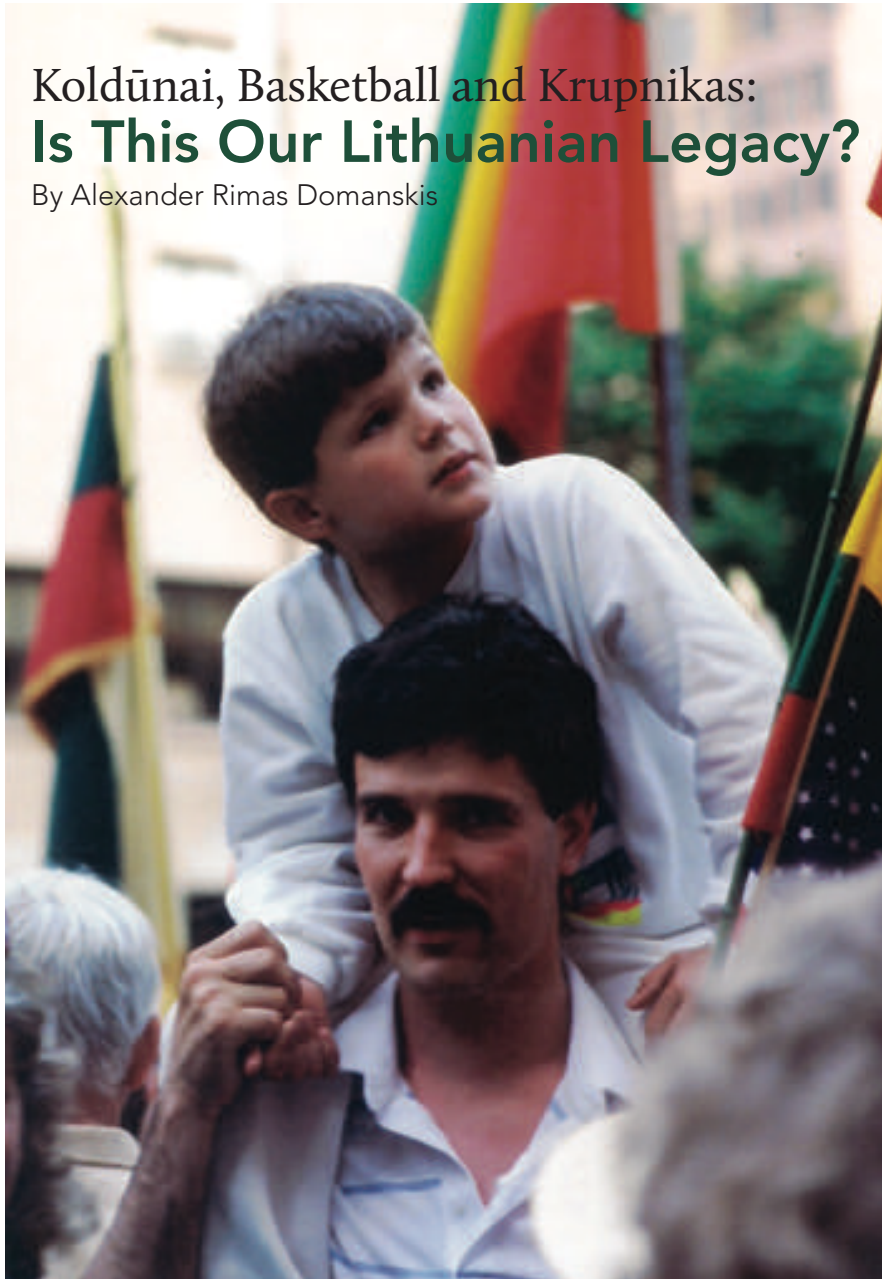
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Koldūnai, Basketball and Krupnikas: Is This Our Lithuanian Legacy?

By Alexander Rimas Domanskis



George Riskus of the Lithuanian Hotline holding his son, Justinas, at a Chicago demonstration in 1990. George is currently chairman of the board of the Lithuanian World Center. Justinas is a history teacher at York High School in Elmhurst, Illinois and author of *Lithuanian Chicago* (2013).

On February 16, 1918, Lithuania's founding fathers gathered as volunteers and proclaimed independence. They did not know what the future would bring. After many years of being a small part of czarist Russia, they declared that Lithuania would again be restored as a nation and country. My grandfather told me that, at that time, Lithuanian children spoke Russian amongst themselves just as many of us speak English amongst ourselves. Although Lithuania's future was uncertain, some returned to Lithuania from America, Russia and from other parts of Europe, hopeful for a bright future.

And yet others, like my wife's mother's family, did not return to Lithuania. Why did they remain in America? Because here, they had already created their lives and established their families. They succeeded and stayed, but they continued to celebrate and treasure their Lithuanian heritage. They are part of that first wave of immigrants who established the Lithuanian churches, parish schools and organizations that the second and now third wave of Lithuanian immigrants rallied around and built on for their own futures.

After a short period of independence, Lithuania's freedom was once again extinguished, and Lithuania became part of the Soviet Union. On March 11, 1990, Lithuania's leaders—men and women—reaffirmed Lithuania's independence and fought a singing revolution until Lithuania's freedom was restored.

We here in America joined in and did what we could to assist. In this intense time at the Lithuanian World Center in Lemont, Ill., we set up the Lithuanian Hotline and Lithuanian Mercy Lift. We organized Lithuanian Freedom Day, an event that CNN broadcast throughout the world. That day, here in Lemont, United States Senator Simon, then-Congressman and now Senator Richard Durbin, as well as representatives of other ethnic groups joined thousands of Lithuanians to support freedom in Lithuania. We became so active and were so frequently in the news that even Jesse Jackson contacted us. He came to the Lithuanian World Center to show his support for Lithuanian independence. Our friends, the Gulbinas family, rushed home to get a Lithuanian folk costume for their 5-year-old son to greet Jesse Jackson.

We joined with our Lithuanian brothers and sisters in seeking political help in any way possible. Today, we celebrate that Lithuania won out, and it is now a country fully recognized throughout the world and is a part of the United Nations, European Union and NATO.

However, did we Lithuanian-Americans return to live in independent Lithuania after 1990? As was true in 1918, most of us did not. After regaining their independence in 1990, some Lithuanian citizens immigrated to the United States while others immigrated throughout Europe and throughout the world.



Diana Gulbinaitė and Lina Lendraitytė at a Daley Plaza rally.

They exercised their new-found freedom to travel and seek a better life.

How are things now that Lithuania has been independent for 25 years? Where are we? We are still in America, and Lithuania, which had 3.8 million people then, has become a country with slightly less than 3 million people. Although Lithuania's situation is not as critical as it was when we banded together to support Lithuania's reassertion of its independence, there are still dangers to an independent Lithuania. There is always the concern of Russia wanting to exercise its power against Lithuania. Russia is not happy that Lithuania, which had been forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union, is no longer part of its empire. How do we maintain and preserve our Lithuanian heritage in this 21st century when the threat to Lithuania's existence is less palpable than 25, 50 or even 100 years ago?

When Lithuania needed help 25 years ago, and also before that, many of us joined in American political life so that the United States would stand up for Lithuanian independence. We need to continue to do so. Lithuania is a small country and continues to need support, especially from the United States. We can help. For that reason, even though I am a reluctant participant, I actively participate in American politics. I continue to have ties with Senator Durbin, whose mother was born in Lithuania. He is a good man and a good friend to Lithuania. When Senator Durbin's assistance is sought to support Lithuania or, for example, to assist with cultural exchanges, he helps whenever he can. Over the years he has greatly helped in having the United States support Lithuania. I also support others of both parties who support Lithuania, and I encourage all Lithuanian-Americans to actively support all politicians who support and understand the importance of a free and independent Lithuania.



Congressman (now Senator) Dick Durbin at a Daley Center Rally in Chicago.

Defining Our Legacy

What is our legacy as Lithuanian-Americans? Our lives revolve around our work and families, and our families are becoming more American than Lithuanian the longer we live here. Do we have a desire or duty to remain Lithuanian?

Here in the United States, there are many more people of Lithuanian descent than those who participate in Lithuanian-American affairs. What can we do that we, our children and our friends continue with a desire to preserve and live out our Lithuanian heritage? Is our legacy *koldūnai*, basketball and *krupnikas*? Or is it something more? How can we use these tangible and perhaps mundane aspects of our culture to maintain connections among ourselves as well as

with Lithuania? How can koldūnai, basketball and krupnikas help us highlight the significance of Lithuania's existence as an independent state?

Let us begin with koldūnai. When we established the Lithuanian World Center, we pursued all means to bring people together as well as to raise money to sustain the Center. We invited the late Bronė Nainys to organize a women's club that Mrs. Karaliunas led for many years after Mrs. Nainys. One of the first things they did was to join together to make and sell koldūnai. Just like McDonald's advertises how many hamburgers they have sold, we thought that we should advertise how many koldūnai were made and sold. Over the last 27 years I would say that number is more than several million. Who paid these women? No one. Why is that important? It is important because it underscores that volunteers, working together, give sustenance to the existence of our Lithuanian institutions. But just as importantly, these volunteers enjoyed coming together, shared their common love of Lithuania and bonded with one another while helping us all. They formed a base for further action in sharing our common heritage.

My brother's children cannot wait when they come to Chicago to eat Lithuanian koldūnai. Now, Lithuanian food is not what I would call world-class cuisine, but we as children of a small country are proud of what we have. Why not? Everyone has to eat, and whether it is koldūnai, kugelis, cepelinai, sausage or sauerkraut, this is part of our being Lithuanian that can remain with us and our families everywhere.

Maybe we should resurrect the making of koldūnai or other Lithuanian specialties as a pleasurable and beneficial Lithuanian-American activity. Gathering together around food is always a pleasant experience. Vida Kosmonas just led a group of volunteer women who organized a Shrove Tuesday pancake dinner. Koldūnai and other foods provide a connection to richer aspects of our Lithuanian heritage.

Now let's turn to krepšinis, or basketball. Where was Lithuania's start with basketball? It came from the United States. Lithuanian-Americans, Frank Lubin in particular, were key figures in establishing Lithuania as a world-class basketball powerhouse. Thanks to them, Lithuania won the European Championships in 1937 and 1939. Today, throughout the world, people know that Lithuanians are good basketball players. During the Olympics, did we not all stand proudly and sing the popular song "Trys Milionai" (Three Million) whenever our Lithuanian basketball team played, even against the United States?

An American friend told me about his 10-year-old son who plays basketball well. The child made it on a select team where he was the only white player among African-Americans. At a tournament where he was playing well, the opposing team's coach assumed that this lone white player had to be Lithuanian and kept yelling to his team to "stop that Lithuanian." The boy did not understand why he was being called a Lithuanian. But his father knew and shared the story of Lithuanian basketball prowess with his son.



Algis and Milda Tallat-Kelpša with their krupnikas.

Why are Lithuanians so well-known for basketball here in Chicago? We need to look no further than Rimas Dirvonis, the father of Lithuanian basketball in Chicago. He was my brother's coach, my coach, my children's coach. He is always full of energy to do all that he can to preserve and promote Lithuanian heritage through basketball as well as many other activities in the Lithuanian-American community. Who pays him to do so? No one. Why does he do it? He, like so many other volunteers, does it to preserve our Lithuanian heritage.

Growing up I did not live in a Lithuanian neighborhood, and I did not have Lithuanian-American friends. I was not a Lithuanian scout or a member of the Lithuanian Catholic organization, Ateitis, but I played basketball and formed connections with my Lithuanian teammates. Later, as a parent, I became a volunteer basketball coach for Lituanica. We accepted everyone who wanted to play—children where one parent was Lithuanian; some who spoke Lithuanian, others who did not; some who played basketball well, others who played basketball poorly. We took in all so the children could participate and make connections with other Lithuanians. It is too bad that now, though our Lituanica teams may be more successful, the emphasis has shifted to players with high levels of skill. This approach overlooks the opportunity to bring in players of various skill levels to keep them connected to our Lithuanian heritage. Is it not time to again bring all together through basketball, invite parents as volunteers and to have more boys and girls teams so that even the less competitive players can participate? Would this

not be a way to help young people maintain a connection to their heritage?

Now, what about krupnikas? Where would we find better Lithuanian krupnikas than that of my relative, Algis Tallat-Kelpša, who makes it here in Lemont. When we drink Krupnikas together, do we not celebrate our Lithuanian heritage? Lemont as well as other cities have organized krupnikas competitions and many families have their own special recipes. When we share a bottle of krupnikas with our non-Lithuanian friends, is that not an opportunity to share a story about Lithuania and our roots there?

Will this suffice for us to preserve our Lithuanian heritage here in the United States? No, there are many other ways to promote our culture and history, but koldūnai, basketball and krupnikas offer an easy connection across generations and waves of immigration. Is it important for us to preserve our Lithuanian heritage? I believe it is! As I said earlier, think about how many people are of Lithuanian descent in the United States and how few actually participate in the community. Should the number of participants be much higher? Absolutely!

An Open Door for All

How can we encourage greater participation and ensure the preservation of our Lithuanian heritage? Certainly we bond through speaking Lithuanian; attending Lithuanian religious services; joining music, dance, art and folk groups; reading Lithuanian newspapers and journals; participating in sports, scouts, Ateitininkai, Knights of Lithuania and other organizations. However, where can the unconnected individual interested in the Lithuanian culture go to become connected? We need centers and communities that provide a central meeting place and opportunities to bring everyone together.



Former Lithuanian President (and former Lithuanian World Center Board Chairman) Valdas Adamkus at a Lithuanian Foundation banquet in 2009.

We as a Lithuanian-American community need to have an open door for all those who would like to participate. We need to be open and accepting of all of those of Lithuanian descent, whether recent immigrants or those whose parents, grandparents or even earlier ancestors came to the United States.

My own family ethnicity is not only Lithuanian but also French, Tatar and Polish, but I consider myself a Lithuanian and I am accepted as a Lithuanian in my community. Do we accept one another's family members less because they are not 100 percent Lithuanian, or if they don't speak Lithuanian well or if they are involved with the gay community? Will my children and your children marry other Lithuanians? Maybe, but here, in America, that will happen less and less.

Our children speak less Lithuanian than they did before, they



Lithuanian World Center Gegužinė, a springtime event, in 2006.

participate less, and their friends and spouses are more likely to be other Americans rather than Lithuanian-Americans. This is a normal process, and we should always provide them opportunities to express and to live out their Lithuanian heritage amongst us. We need to always be open to how they can participate and continue to enrich our community. We need all Lithuanians to preserve our Lithuanian heritage here in the United States now, in 20 years and in the future. We cannot remain insular but need to reach out to those less connected to us so that we can continually expand our Lithuanian-American community and preserve our Lithuanian heritage here in the United States.

For many years, Lithuanian Catholic and evangelical churches and even synagogues (there are synagogues named after Telšiai, Lithuania, in Chicago and Cleveland) were major centers for Lithuanian heritage participation. Now there are fewer Lithuanian ethnic parishes and centers, and we need to preserve those that we still have. We are fortunate in Lemont to have the Lithuanian World Center. We named it this way so that there would always be a home for Lithuanians where they could do whatever might be helpful to preserve and to grow our Lithuanian-American community. Valdas Adamkus, former chairman of the board of the Lithuanian World Center, became president of Lithuania. When I meet people who tell me that they are part Lithuanian, it is a great opportunity to share our heritage by inviting them to come to the Lithuanian World Center or to come to one of the many events at the center.

My own participation in the Lithuanian-American community came through an invitation from my father-in-law to join him on the board of the Lithuanian-American Council. I joined him more from a sense of duty than actually wanting to participate. However, that invitation led to my involvement in other organizations and to my joining with others to establish the Lithuanian World Center. Then, we all worked together not only locally but across the U.S. and in Lithuania for the restoration of Lithuanian independence. With Lithuanian independence, travel to Lithuania became more frequent but, unfortunately, our own activities here decreased. Our activities increased again with the latest wave of Lithuanian immigrants. Although integration was not easy at first, we now work together and, in some cases, the most recent immigrants lead our organizations, as they do at the Lithuanian World Center and the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

Now that Lithuanians can freely travel and live throughout the European Union, and because of restrictive American immi-



Lithuanian Mercy Lift helped fund a camp for diabetic youth that was organized by DiaBitė, a division of the Lithuanian Diabetes Association. They also facilitated visits by U.S. doctors to present lectures on neonatal care, autism and dentistry, and by optometrists to provide eye exams and glasses.

gration statutes and anti-immigrant attitudes in the United States, fewer and fewer Lithuanians are coming here to live. However, among the reportedly 11 million immigrants in the U.S. without legal documents, there are many Lithuanians. Do we support their struggle for legalization or not? I think that we should support efforts toward a lawful path to legalization, as they are part of our community. When we push them away from us, the less likely it is that they will join with us. We need them.

What can we do now and in the future? We all need to continue to participate in Lithuanian-American activities. We need to respond when there are calls for help and we need to participate and lead where needed. We need to donate to support Lithuanian-American activities here and in Lithuania. We need to be open to accept all who want to participate. We need to support Lithuania and attract other Lithuanians and Americans to support Lithuania. We need to reach beyond our immediate circle of friends to invite others to attend cultural events such as movies, song and dance performances, opera, sports and religious events. Like my father-in-law, we need to invite others to participate. Each of us has an obligation to support and to improve our own Lithuanian-American communities.

So yes, let us play and watch Lithuanian basketball; let us eat Lithuanian koldūnai; let us drink our Lithuanian krupnikas. Let us use all ways possible to connect to and to preserve our heritage. Let us work together to ensure that there will always be an independent Lithuania and a vibrant Lithuanian-American community. Long live Lithuania and our Lithuanian heritage.

Alexander Rimas Domanskis is a lawyer in Chicago. This article was adapted from a speech he gave during the Lithuanian Independence Day Celebration at the Lithuanian World Center in Lemont, Ill., on February 14, 2016.

Memories Can't Fade Away

Young Lithuanians Reflect on Post-War Resistance Against the Soviet Occupation of Lithuania



Lithuanian partisan leader Adolfo Ramanauskas (alias Vanagas, meaning hawk), at left in 1947, and at right with his fellow Forest Brothers. Photos courtesy of LGGRTC Museum of Genocide Victims.

The Alytus-Rochester Sister Cities Committee organized an essay contest for the A. Ramanauskas-Vanagas High School students in Alytus, Lithuania, to be written in English about the post-World War II armed resistance movement against the Soviet occupation of Lithuania.

The topic is especially apropos for students of this school, which is named for a prominent partisan leader, Adolfo Ramanauskas-Vanagas. Ramanauskas was born in the United States in 1918, and moved to Lithuania in 1921 when his family returned there during the interwar period. He was a mathematics teacher in Alytus from 1941 until 1945, when he joined the partisans to wage guerilla warfare against the occupying Soviets. Following the cessation of the armed struggle in favor of passive resistance in 1953, Ramanauskas remained in hiding until he was betrayed by a former classmate. He was arrested on October 11, 1956, taken to the KGB prison in Vil-

nius (now the Museum of Genocide Victims) and tortured. He was sentenced to death on September 25, 1957, and executed on November 29, 1957.

The essay contest, titled "Memories Can't Fade Away," offered prizes of \$300, \$300 and \$100. The panel of judges from Rochester, N.Y., consisted of committee members Jan Naujokas, Bernadette Mack, Judy Harris, Jolanda Chesonis and panel chairman Justin Murphy, who is also a journalist with the Democrat and Chronicle newspaper in Rochester, N.Y. Winners will receive their prizes during Alytus City Days in mid-June.

We are proud to present the winning essays, plus a selection of the other entries, in this issue of Bridges. We present the essays as written by their authors, with just the barest editing to correct spelling. We're sure you will agree that despite an occasional awkward phrase, these students have shown an admirable mastery of the English language.

This sacrifice won't fade away

I sometimes feel so privileged to have some spare time after school, when I can carelessly sit on a bench and watch strangers. I love how lively the park is: small kids and their grandparents are enjoying the beautiful weather, teenagers, just like me, resting after school and of course adults, rushing home after work. I catch myself thinking that life a few decades ago was very different from the one I am used to. It seems out of this world that nearly seventy years ago my peers had sacrificed their lives for the independency of our homeland.

I wonder if those tiny kids would be the same at the time of occupation. I hardly imagine their joyful laughter, echoing through the park. Rather their faint cry, while packing various stuff, after discovering the relation between their families and partisans. Or would they be smart enough not to dispense the partisans to KGB officers and spies, masqueraded as partisans. Would they be broken-hearted seeing their older relatives, in the middle of the darkest night, heading to the nearest forest to join the fight against the totalitarian nation? Would they?

I wonder if my classmates, driving lavish cars, bought by parent, would sacrifice personal happiness for the sake of independence of Lithuania. Would they be the ones resisting or the ones helping the occupants, taking pictures of dead bodies? Would they give up during the ambush or bravely die fighting with a prayer in their hearts and hope that their death and the tears of their mothers are not worthless. Even though we know a lot about the resistance, it is hard to imagine how terrifying it was in real life.

I wonder if adults still remember those bed time stories about partisans and songs, sang by their grandmothers. Growing up in communism, it was forbidden to talk about the resistance, partisans used to be called names. The Soviet Union intentionally tried to make the younger generation to forget that partisans existed, however they failed miserably. Even though adults know the history

it's fairly questionable if these grown-up men would fight nowadays? Or would they rather keep silently living their conformist lives?

I wonder if the older generation still remembers the fight against the Soviet Union. My grandmother still remembers how frightening it was to come home from forest where they were hiding from the red army. They would find heads of poultrys lying around, smashed windows, desolated houses. My grandfather, who was deported to Siberia, has upheld a songbook, written by partisans. Oh, how heart warming it is. The purest feelings of gratitude and appreciation, love and kindness, patriotism and devotion are eternalized. Our grandparents, who survived those horrible times are the heritage of partisans and their moral beliefs, which are fading away as materialism takes over.

I sometimes feel scared that the memory of armed resistance is fading away, that the blood spilled is becoming worthless. The thought of sacrifice becoming a matter of fact breaks my heart. It seems to me that people fail to understand how those fights are tremendously big part of our national identity. My pessimism is destroyed where civil initiatives start: various walking-tours through partisans' routes, partisans song contest, jubilees near memorials. The bravery and wish of partisans to live in the independent country remained up till now. The draftees were not needed simply because the number of volunteers overcame all the expectations. That reflects how young people value the independence and if needed, they would fight for Lithuania with as much fierceness and devotion as partisans a few decades ago did. They left us not only our national mentality but a wish to be free and independent, too. Small things, that have a noble idea won't let to forget the ones, who died fighting. This sacrifice won't fade away as long as Lithuanians will maintain the moral values and value those people, who gave their lives for our freedom.



First Prize

Eimantė Arbutavičiūtė, 18 years old

The reflections of resistance and post-war struggle



Second Prize

Rugilė Sadauskaitė, 17 years old

These days, while many Lithuanians are determined to look for a better life to themselves and their relatives abroad, Lithuania is abundantly facing the problem of people leaving their native land which leads to a loss of Lithuanian nationality. Current situation makes us remember impressive and inspirational history of our homeland and one of the greatest examples of our united, resolute nation is the partisan resistance movement in the middle of twentieth century. Despite poor chances of winning, freedom fighters did not give up and revealed such features of the Lithuanian character as self-sacrifice for their native land, determination and impressive courage.

Post-war partisans were extremely significant for their motherland, revealing the braveness of Lithuanian men and their willingness to sacrifice. They showed that Lithuania would not get occupied by any country without a relentless fight. So-called Forest Brothers were determined to leave their loved ones—parents, wives and children, in order to resist people who were determined to subdue Lithuanian nation. Not only partisans but also their relatives were often interrogated and tortured in order to repress the anti-Soviet resistance groups. According to partisan commander of Kęstutis district Visvydas, “Lithuanians loved fields of their homeland and their ancestral homes too much to abandon them” and this genuine love

inspired freedom fighters not to be afraid to sacrifice everything, including the most precious thing—their lives.

This courageous fight required inconceivable braveness and determination. The Soviet Union had more weapons, equipment and a larger number of warriors which meant that the partisans had poor chances to defeat the far stronger opponent. However, despite seeing members of the resistance getting tortured and murdered in horrible ways, more and more Lithuanian men were determined to join the resistance movement because the willingness to fight for the freedom of their beloved country was constantly increasing in the reflections of brutal historical incidents. Although Lithuanian partisans were not able to banish the repressive Russian authority, they represented Lithuanians as a courageous, resolved nation that was not frightened and fought fearlessly against the threatening enemy.

All things considered, the partisan movement in Lithuania revealed its people as brave and not afraid of sacrifices while fighting for the rights of their native land. The members of the resistance exalted patriotism and homeland love as the main values, being a great example for future generations how to appreciate exclusive features of our nation, such as unique language, traditions and nationality.



Lithuanian partisans Kazys Kontrimas and Pranas Končius from the Kretinga district.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

The patriotic thunder of Lithuania

Hundreds of years of war and peace. First, a handful of pagan tribes. Later, a grand duchy. Lithuania, even though a small and perhaps relatively insignificant country now, is impressively rich with its history and traditions. Of course throughout the history of Lithuania, many hardships have arisen, yet the attempts to destroy the Lithuanian culture were to no avail. Such a rich experience kept in our hearts thanks to the patriotism burning in many of brave Lithuanians' hearts. Such a case of patriotism was showcased from 1944 to 1953, when Lithuanian patriots attempted to stand up against the might of the Soviet Union. Who would have been mad enough to try and face off against the dragon that was the Soviet Union?

A young man chooses to fight for the independence of his country. Outgunned, outnumbered, seemingly on a suicide mission with just a desperate wish to save the nation from an inevitable death. I think many foreigners would think of such an act as suicide. Yet I feel such bravery is what kept the nation alive. In the years 1944 and 1945 around 30,000 equipped men gathered in the forests of Lithuania, later on joined about 20,000 more. What followed was almost 10 years of constant fighting. One after another the young men were killed, locked up in gulags and sent to Siberia. What is shocking, I think, is the fact that it was known, that one

could end up dead or in jail. Even though the war was lost, I think, the resistance was not just a spark, but a great thunder, showing how patriotic the Lithuanian nation is. It kept the wish of liberty alive and well in our peoples' minds.

It is mindboggling how hard one can love his country and how unconditionally one can fight for it. Unfortunately I feel today Lithuania would not have as many brave people wanting to step up for their home nation. It is true that there are many patriotic young people, yet I think many still ought to learn from the past and dedicate at least a small piece of their heart to their own country. It is immensely important to love the nation you are born to, to speak your own language, to love your people. It is the basis for any country. The post-war resistance, I think is the ultimate example to draw strength from for us, Lithuanians.

Every Lithuanian, even a young one, feels a certain pain when thinking of the Soviet occupation in the 20th century. But not even once did the nation stop fighting in the past. The partisans in Lithuania not only tried to keep it free, but have kept the nation breathing. Perhaps it was their single dream to see Lithuania as it is now—free. A true Lithuanian should never forget the partisans. It is to be hoped that one will always feel respect to the fathers of our liberty.



Third Prize

Kasparas Valatkevičius, 16 years old



In 1948, Lithuanian partisans of the Kazimieraitis military district receive medals. Sofia Budėnaitė (alias Ramūnė) receives an award from Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas while Lionginas Baliukevičius (alias Dzūkas) reads the order. Photo: Wikiwand

Memory can't fade away

By Rugilė Staniulytė, 18 years old

It is a well-known fact that each country has inspiring events in history, which foster a sense of unity between people. One of these meaningful moments in Lithuania's history was the partisan war. But what people tend to forget when talking about the resistance movement, is an active participation of women, whose struggle has yet to be acknowledged. Not only they acted as nurses, fighters and liaison agents but also supported partisans wholeheartedly. Therefore, their input and sacrifice for Lithuania's sovereignty should not be forgotten.

It is important to remember that women were responsible for communication between different partisan districts. They would pass messages and accomplish other tasks as liaison agents. Often they had to travel long distances and spend many sleepless nights walking in unfavorable weather conditions. Even more, their life was always at risk. Many female supporters of the partisan war were persecuted by MGB. Even after they had been arrested, women faithfully kept the secrets of partisans. Some even committed suicide, because death was considered to be a better fate than betrayal of their own country. An example of one of these loyal acts is the story of a liaison agent Monika Plytnikaitė-Turskienė. Surrounded by Soviets, she tried to shoot herself, but the attempt was a failure. However, later in hospital, after the guards had left her, she drank mercury from a thermometer and embraced her death. Such actions show an extraordinary dedication of women to the resistance movement.

What is more, there were women, who took an active part in the partisan movement and fought battles together with men. Being aware of the fact that a horrible fate hung over their heads, many women retreated to the forests and bunkers with a hope for freedom. A desire to help their brothers, fathers and husbands also led them to the active side of partisan war. Bravely, female participants chose to take a gun and stand their ground against Soviets alongside their loved ones. A good example could be Albina Neifaltienė, who was the wife of the Kalniškės partisan leader Jonas Neifalta-Lakūnas, retreated to the forest with her husband. She fearlessly fought Soviets during the biggest partisan battle of Kalniškės against the Red Army in 1945. Sadly, partisans lost the battle and during their defeat Albina was brutally killed. Many women felt it as their duty to join the active part of the resistance, because Lithuanians cherished their nationality.

Women, whether mothers, sisters or wives fostered hope of freedom and strength of the forest brothers. They were a symbol of home and a source of emotional stability to partisans. Women took care of injured fighters, treated their wounds and brought medication. In spite of the hardships of partisan life, partisan marriages were common. Love was so powerful that no war or army could stop it from blooming. These marriages

were performed in secret, usually by a trustworthy pastor or a liaison agent. For instance, a liaison agent performed the marriage between the partisan leader of South Lithuania Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas and Birutė Mažeikaitė. According to their daughter, during her parents' arrest Adolfas still managed to tell Birutė that he loved her. Even facing death, women still provided moral support to partisans.

Unfortunately, the partisan movement was extinguished in 1953. The whole movement had lasted for nine years and it would not have survived as long as it did without the input of women. They united the forest brothers as well as inspired them to fight. Their remarkable dedication and bravery played a big role in the partisan war. That is why the memory of women's sacrifice and their exceptional performance in the resistance movement cannot fade away.



Dainava military district partisan Albina Neifaltienė (alias Pušėlė), killed in the Battle of Kalniškės on May 15, 1945. Photo courtesy of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.

The reflections of resistance and post-war struggle

By Justina Paušaitė, 18 years old

War had had a major effect on people's lives around the world. Shootings, unfairness to ethnic minorities, deportations and exiles, food and other products deficiencies—all of these posed an enormous threat to everyone's health and well-being. Many countries had been occupied and lost their independence during World War II. One of them was Lithuania. Lithuania had had a difficult past and many threats to its freedom throughout the history. However, our nation has always been known as very militant and determined to protect Lithuania. Actions after World War II proved that we have these qualities. Many people risked their lives by not losing the hope of Lithuania being free: some hid in the woods and fought with arms, some promoted ideas about independence of Lithuania in literature, others illegally taught our language, but we all know that Lithuanians did everything they could to make it possible to Lithuania separating from USSR and they succeeded.

A huge contribution to our independence was made by partisans—a part of resistance movements. Partisans were regular civilians, usually men, who were commanded by soldiers to fight with occupants. Their main aim was freedom of Lithuania. Partisans usually lived in the woods or hid in people's, who supported their ideas, houses. Many of them were caught, arrested, imprisoned, exiled or even assassinated for their activity against government of USSR. Partisans divided themselves into regions, areas, districts, so they were one of the most organized resistance movements, which helped them succeed. One of the most famous partisans and the commandant of Dainava region was Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas. He was not only a partisan, but an educator and a journalist. He significantly conducted to fights of resistance and sacrificed his life for Lithuania's future. Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas was given various awards after

Lithuania finally got its independence. One of the ways he was honored was by giving his name to a school in Alytus, which is a heart of Dainava region. I am happy that I attend this school; it helps me remember what difficult situation Lithuania was in a few decades ago.

Our nation not only immersed in armed fight but in a verbal one as well. Harsh regimen in the country during occupation was depicted in literature and other forms of inscriptions. Many talented Lithuanians tried to portray everyday life of ordinary people and torture or suffering of Lithuanians who did not get on with government of USSR in fiction books. Because of press censorship writers risked their well-being by telling the truth in their creations. Other people tried to lessen the impact occupants were doing to people by cherishing our language and highlighting distinctive features of Lithuania. This inspired many people not to give up and continuously fight for our freedom. By fostering idea of Lithuania's independence and not letting people forget how to talk in their mother tongue these people hugely contributed to Lithuania regaining autonomy in 1990. That is why these authors and public figures are respected and widely talked about nowadays. Their heritage is used to raise public spirit and nationality.

All in all, Lithuania definitely had had an extremely difficult past and our nation had to go through a lot until we finally became independent. Stories about partisans and soldiers who immolated their lives by trying to defend Lithuania represent how hard people had to fight for their country. These and other sacrifices are delineated in fiction books or diaries, which once again show the difficulties of Lithuania during World War II and promote the idea of loving your country.



Names of the Lithuanian partisans who were imprisoned, interrogated and killed in the KGB headquarters in Vilnius are inscribed on the walls of their former prison, now the Museum of Genocide Victims. Photo: Phillip Capper

Memory can't fade away

By Kamilė Bazevičiūtė, 17 years old

Freedom is something that could be described in many different words by different people. For some it might be ability to behave and act in a way they like without any restrictions, a chance to express their opinion freely with no fear of being criticized and for others it is simply knowing that you are not dependent on anyone and have a completely free will when it comes to controlling and managing life in general. But along with that, freedom for a lot of people associates with memories. Memories that hold tough and difficult battles, variety of emotions and experiences. Memories that never, ever fade away. A great example to this is Lithuania's partisan wars. However, are those wars enough to actually stay in people's minds and country's history as something that will never be forgotten?

First of all, in my estimation, these wars showed an undeniable unity of Lithuanians. Lithuanian partisan wars, also known as resistance wars or simply resistance, took place in 1944-1953 years. The aim of these wars was highly wanted freedom—Lithuania was under control of Soviet Russia which led our nation into wanting to be independent. It all started with small groups of people gathering together until those small groups eventually formed big squads—partisans. Almost one hundred thousand of them, along with other volunteers and supporting forces, stood up to fight the intruders from the East. Lasting for almost ten years, Lithuanian partisan movement proved that even the biggest setbacks that happened during the resistance were not powerful enough to result in partisan squads separat-

ing. They gathered voluntarily and fought as one until the very last minute, showing the world what real unity is.

Another aspect that makes resistance stand out is what a massive effort from partisans it required and what happened after the war. Considering the fact that partisan wars, sadly, were not successful when it comes to the goal—freedom was not won—most people would say that, if so, these wars did not do any good at all. On top of that, most would also point out that they resulted in twenty thousand of victims the deportations, repressions, executions and other violent actions from Russia towards Lithuania. However, resistance provoked Lithuanians to fight even harder to reach independence and sped up the actual process of achieving it greatly. It is also worth mentioning that Lithuanian partisans fought against Soviet Russia in a ratio of forces completely unfavorable to them, that not only shows the hard conditions that Lithuanians had to face, but once again puts into light their courage and unbreakable strength.

All things considered, I believe there is no hesitation why Lithuanian partisan wars will always be remembered. Along with its brave heroes—partisans—this resistance is something no other state has ever showed. For the rest of our and our country's existence, we will always remember how massively partisan wars contributed to getting closer to the independence of Lithuania, what great qualities of our nation it revealed and how it made us—Lithuanians—even stronger, more patriotic and inseparably united as a nation.



Partisans of the Kretinga district. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Tending Memories of the Dead: Antakalnis Cemetery

From *The Snake in the Vodka Bottle: Essays From a Post-Soviet Lithuania*
By Laima Vincė Sruoginis



Photos by Teresė Vekteris

Established in 1809, Antakalnis Cemetery is built on a hillside shaded by tall swaying pines, in the shadow of the forest that was once the Sapeigine hunting grounds of the medieval Grand Dukes.

On a humid day in late May, I had the pleasure of meeting Teresė Vekteris at the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies conference in Philadelphia. Teresė and I were both attending a panel on Lithuanian writers who write about Lithuania in English, when we were both suddenly struck with a brilliant idea—why not start a Lithuanian Literature in English section in *Bridges*? And so, as they say, great minds think alike... The rest will be history, a history that you, our readers at *Bridges*, and we, the steadily growing contingency of Lithuanian writers writing about Lithuania and our Lithuanian heritage in English, will build together.

As contributing editor of the “Lithuanian Literature in English” section, I will be introducing you to a range of

contemporary North American Lithuanian writers who are working in English. In each upcoming issue, you will read about a new writer, and then will read a sample of their work. Ordering information will be provided, so that you could continue your reading in book form, if you so choose.

I am thrilled that Teresė has requested that I go first... And so, I hope you enjoy my piece from my book of essays about Lithuania 20 years after independence, *The Snake in the Vodka Bottle*. These days we are celebrating 25 years since Lithuania’s independence, and already Lithuanian society has grown and changed so much in just those additional five years. So, who knows? Maybe there will be another book on the subject forthcoming ...



The remains of Polish soldiers who fought to annex Vilnius to Poland in 1919 to 1920 rest in diagonal sweeping rows marked with identical stone crosses that plummet and dip across the sloping valley.

Death is the great equalizer. History, like the bones of the dead, mingles in unexpected ways in Antakalnis Cemetery. The cemetery's incongruous monuments and grave markers reflect varying points of reference—religious, political, cultural, ideological—as they have played out over the centuries in Lithuania. From its hilltop location, Antakalnis Cemetery (the name literally means “on top of the hill”) bears witness to overlapping strata of human life, and strife, in this northern European country of three million. This is a land that has known little peace, a crossroads between Eurasia and Europe, a tiny country surrounded by three giants, Russia, Poland, and Germany. The earth of Antakalnis Cemetery holds the remains of foreign

occupying armies and armies just passing through; the peacemakers and the traitors; the priests and the atheists; the artists and the pragmatists. My grandparents, Ambassador Anicetas Simutis and Janina Čiurlyte Simutienė, are buried here. I am the family caretaker of their grave. I am the keeper of their memory.

In the spring of 2007, according to their wishes, my mother and I had my grandparents' remains cremated and their ashes packed into a small metal container about the size of a jewelry box, something shiny and decorative my grandmother would have liked. We flew from New York across the Atlantic Ocean with the box tucked deep inside a quilt carrying bag, each of us holding one handle, as we negotiated American, and then European, airports.

My grandparents' burial took place on one of those May days when the sky is aquamarine and crowded with cumulous clouds; when the northern sun draws out the deepest purples and the brightest yellows from the wildflowers creeping up the cemetery's hillsides. As my brothers and their wives, and my sister, and my children, our close friends, and my grandfather's colleagues, walked the cemetery path flanked by tall pines, behind an honor guard sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, my mother whispered to me, “If she can see us, Bobutė would be proud.” My grandmother liked formalities. I could not remember eating a meal at my grandmother's table, even a casual one, when she did not set out the silver and the cloth napkins. My grandfather was more modest, preferring to ride to United Nations sessions by subway rather than in a limousine at his struggling country's expense.

To reach Antakalnis Cemetery from my apartment in the Old Town, I exit the building's gated cobblestone courtyard and step onto Saint John's Street, into the shadow of the bell tower of the baroque Church of Saint John. I enter the flow of pedestrian traffic on narrow winding Pilies Gatvė, or Castle Street, a medieval cobblestone street that wends from the Gates of Dawn, where Catholics pray on their knees on the street below the miraculous painting of the Virgin Mary, to where it ends at the foot of Gediminas Castle, situated on a forested hill towering over Vilnius.

Vilnius is a city built on a dream. As legend goes, in the early fourteenth century, after a weary day of hunting in the hills, Grand Duke Gediminas lay down to sleep on the ground in the forest and had a vivid dream of an iron wolf howling at the top of the forest's tallest hill. The wolf instructed the Grand Duke to build a great city nestled between these hills and protected by three rivers. Centuries before Jungian dream interpretation, the Grand Duke sought out the help of the pagan shaman, Lizdeika, who instructed



The remains of the 14 peaceful demonstrators killed during the Soviet attack on the Vilnius TV Tower on January 13, 1991, rest in graves laid out in a sweeping arc, nestled against a hill, with a marble Pietà in the center.

him to heed the iron wolf's message and to found the city of Vilnius. Vilnius is first mentioned in the letters of Grand Duke Gediminas as the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1323.

I weave among a myriad of café tables set directly on the street, populated with lingering coffee-drinkers and wine tasters, heads bent together deep in conversation, or tilted back, laughing easily. The usual beggars and con men work the tables, moving their way steadily down the street.

I pause to listen to some street musicians; cross the street to Cathedral Square. Here, in the shadow of classical Vilnius Cathedral, with its tall white columns and statues of saints and angels on the roof, beside the elegant slim bell tower painted white and with a copper bell that tolls across the city every evening precisely at six, I take a brief hiatus to let the local chapter of Hari Krishnas glide across the square on their evening procession, swirling in their scarlet and purple robes, beating drums, and singing hari hari with a distinctly Lithuanian inflection. I stop in my tracks to let the occasional marching band pass, or uniformed school group, or to guard against my shins being run into by teenage skate boarders gliding down the white marble stairs designed five hundred years ago for pause and reflection.

I glance up at Gediminas Castle, tenacious and steadfast. If I climbed the cobblestone road up to the castle, from the battlements I would see Antakalnis Cemetery, and just beyond the cemetery, the forest that extends 33.8 kilometers to the Belorussian border.

I cut through the leafy green park that stretches along the Vilnelė River—perfect for idyllic summer afternoon boating in the style of nineteenth century impressionist paintings—and walk at a brisk pace down Antakalnis Street, dividing the suburb of Antakalnis in half—one side populated by crumbling Soviet-era brick and cement apartment buildings and their similarly crumbling occupants; the other side sporting mirror-image crumbling buildings. Interspersed between the buildings on this side of Antakalnis Street are charming side streets with even more charming names, like Sea Goddess Street (Juratės Gatvė) or Street of the Goddess of Love (Mildos Gatvė), that lead up steep hills towards well-maintained cozy wooden one-family homes that are populated by “new” Lithuanians—young families in their twenties and thirties with West European educations and promising careers.

Once I reach the baroque Church of Saint Peter and Paul, with its ornate interior of pudgy angels and a model of a crystal ship hanging above the altar, I know I am almost at my destination. Situated in front of a precarious (and infamous for fender benders) traffic circle where for some reason the traffic lights have never been switched on, the Church of Saint Peter and Paul is my landmark for the road that leads up the hill and into Antakalnis Cemetery.

Between tall swaying pines, in the shadow of the forest that was once the Sapeiginė hunting grounds of the medieval Grand Dukes, I find my grandparents' grave. Here is my point of ref-

erence. Here, I remember my grandfather, two meters tall and always elegant. My grandfather, who for half a century represented a country that had been wiped off all the maps of the world, who struggled to support a family of four on a symbolic income from the Lithuanian émigré community while hunted by the KGB, badmouthed by traitors and informers, glorified by patriots.

Antakalnis Cemetery is no more than fifteen minutes' drive from the center—providing there is no traffic. At a brisk pace this distance can be walked in forty minutes. Or longer, if thousands are walking in procession together, as was the case on January 16, 1991, when the remains of fourteen peaceful demonstrators (thirteen of them students in their early twenties) were laid to rest in Antakalnis Cemetery in the bitter cold and twilight darkness of a northern European winter afternoon. The demonstrators gathered on the night of January 13, surrounding the Vilnius Television tower in a human chain, to protect the tower from Soviet troops, who were ordered in with tanks and machine guns. They had been singing folk songs when they were attacked and killed. Their graves are laid out in a sweeping arc, nestled against a hill, with a marble Pieta in the center.

My grandparents' grave is located in my favorite part of Antakalnis Cemetery—a hilltop devoted exclusively to dreamers. Here, on this hilltop, creative and intellectual people are laid to rest: artists, poets, writers, actors, musicians, theater directors, and alongside them, émigré diplomats who served as Lithuania's diplomatic corps in exile during the Soviet occupation. They had all grown old together, united by their cause, the fight for independence for Lithuania, and now they all rest together for eternity.



The creativity of the people laid to rest in Antakalnis Cemetery is reflected in the gravestones themselves.



The entire hilltop directly behind the graves of the January 13 martyrs is the Soviet section, with the Red Army monument and graves of Soviet communist aparatchiks, collaborators and military.



The sculptors who design gravestones strive to create works of art.

The creativity of the people laid to rest here is reflected in the graves themselves. There is no “standard” or “uniform” or “traditional” grave stone. Each grave is a sculpture and the sculptors who create them strive to design monuments that are works of art. For example, the grave of an actor is expressed as a stone sculpted tastefully in the shape of comedy and tragedy masks. Another grave, of a writer who committed suicide, consists of a simple circle of stones with a slender linden tree growing gracefully through the center.

Beside my grandparents’ grave, a simple curved headstone of brown marble that reminds me of the headrest of their marital bed, I find the grave of Birutė Pukelevičiūtė, a writer and poet of my grandparents’ generation, also an émigré in America. She corresponded with me, commenting on my poems when I was first learning the craft as an adolescent. When I think of her, for some reason I remember a scene from her memoir when she was a young girl in 1944 escaping the Soviet occupation of Lithuania. In a bombed out city in Germany she builds a chimney out of rubble around herself to hide from soldiers patrolling the area.

In 1992, before I gave birth to my first son, Birutė wrote me a letter in which she described the dichotomy between birth and death. “When a woman gives birth, death hovers close by,” she had written. She enclosed this poem about her own birth, which I translated into English.

Bird-Cherries

*My mother was slender, like the bird-cherry.
Heavy with me, her misfortune ripened.
Wide bowls filled with wild flowers—
The yellow painted shutters remained
Closed: she was waiting for me.*

*I came during the very Consecration—
When all the roads are empty, the organ still.
Throughout the night my cradle filled
With jagged, fallen, harvest stars.
And my mother cried out bitterly
For the first time.
Because I had broken away,
Like a land-slide, and will rush
Down. Without her.*

*Really—
She holds my hands from slipping out of hers.
Autumn orchards burn red.
Wild drakes fly south; their wings
Smolder bronze.
Then I say good-bye.
The path through the rushes hunches in.
The sedges are like sharpened knives.
Toothless trunks gape at me;
My joints shake.
But I do not turn back.*

Antakalnis Cemetery was established in 1809. In the early nineteenth century mostly soldiers—Russian, German, and Polish—were buried here. On the left side of the sandy footpath that divides the cemetery the remains of Polish soldiers from Józef Klemens Piłsudski's army are laid to rest in diagonal sweeping rows marked with identical white stone crosses that plummet and dip across the sloping valley. They fought to annex Vilnius to Poland in 1919 – 1920. Vilnius and its environs remained under Polish control until 1939, when Stalin returned the historic capital and surrounding areas to the Lithuanian republic in exchange for permission to station Soviet troops on Lithuanian soil.

Every year on All Soul's Day members of the Polish community honor the fallen Polish soldiers by placing three white candles on the point of each cross, creating a sweeping visual image in the ink-black November night. Some Lithuanians take the gesture as a reminder that although the Poles have retreated for the moment, they will be back. After all, they reason, Piłsudski's heart is buried in Vilnius and his body in Poland. Certainly, one day he will have to come back to retrieve his heart.

Footsteps from the remains of Piłsudski's army lie the remains of 3,000 soldiers from Napoleon's Grand Armee. Their bones are consolidated into one mass grave marked with a common marker.

In 2002 a construction company was excavating in the suburb of Žirmunai when workmen uncovered layers of bones. At first they thought the worst, the typical story in this region, either Holocaust victims killed during the Nazi occupation of 1941-1944 or Lithuanian resistors to the Soviet occupation killed during the resistance that lasted from 1944 through 1953. But testing proved those first guesses wrong. The bones dated from the early nineteenth century, when Napoleon left his Grande Armee to fend for themselves on the streets of Vilnius after his retreat from Russia in the depth of a northern European winter. Further testing revealed that Napoleon's soldiers had died of exposure or starvation. When I wander through the cemetery, I often think of these men of the Mediterranean, of warmer climes, and of the reckless futility of their winter march on Moscow.

For Lithuanians, living so deep in the hinterlands of Europe, any brush with greatness, no matter how infamous, is noteworthy. Once when I was visiting a friend's dacha, my friend's mother enthusiastically pointed at a trench in their backyard and proudly said, "Napoleon's army marched through here." On my father's side relatives boast a dash of French blood, thanks to Napoleon. My great-great grandmother found a wounded French soldier in the fields and nursed him back to health, later becoming his wife. Subsequent generations point fingers at this distant French ancestor as the cause of any family lunacy and the explanation as to how in this gene pool of blonds some of our relatives have black hair and an olive complexion.

On the second tier of the hill lies my dear friend, the poet Nijolė Miliauskaitė, who died in 2002 at the age of 50 from

breast cancer. I remember our last visit together in May, 2001. I came to see her at the apartment she shared with her husband, the poet Vytautas Bložė, in the spa town of Druskininkai. She greeted me wearing a wig with bangs that fell too far down on her forehead.

Nijolė had prepared a table full of Indian delicacies. Nijolė and her husband had embraced Eastern teachings, mantric singing, dietary control, and an enhanced sense of transcendent mystical connection to the world through their belief in Hindu teachings.

They never ate in restaurants, they told me, because they could not be sure of the karma of the cooks who prepared the food—that karma would pass into them through the food. They especially never ate store-bought bread because the process of kneading the bread ensured that a stranger's karma would enter it, and by eating the bread that karma would pass into them.

After lunch we drove from their apartment complex to Nijolė and Vytautas's summer cottage in a nearby village. I was amazed at the amount of renovating and gardening the couple had done—he in his seventies and in poor health and she with her chemotherapy and radiation treatments that required long hospital stays. On that visit Nijolė showed off her kitchen. She had painted every appliance aquamarine blue, along with the kitchen floor and walls. Blue was a healing color, she told me, a divine spiritual color. Months after her death, Vytautas said to me: "Everywhere I look, I see her unfinished work."



There are no "standard" or "uniform" monuments in the section where the creative and intellectual people are buried.

About a year before her diagnosis, I translated one of Nijolė's poems. Now, upon reflection, I believe she sensed then that it was time for her to leave this world:

Time to Transplant

*this spring I must transplant, it's about time
my aloe, old, gnarled,
aloe vera treasured beyond words
by those who know its healing qualities
hidden deep within*

*what a tangle of roots, tiny ones, thick ones
so tight that there is no way
I can remove them no matter what I do—
I grab a rock and smash the vase*

*and why after all
were you so stubborn clinging
to those clay walls
with all your strength?
what was it that you were holding onto?
stop scratching me, stop scraping my arms*

*don't tell me you liked
your prison, narrow and poor as it was
where you never had enough water or food, after all
you'll get a new vase, spacious and beautiful!*

*my soul, don't tell me that you too
are clutching at the unstable
temporary walls
of your prison*

Nijolė's grave marker consists of a playful wooden angel with pudgy cheeks carved by a local woodcarver. The angel wears a smirk on his face. I remember a poem Nijolė wrote and I think this poem could have been her epitaph:

*ach, not again! I cannot
do two things at once:
if I'm writing a poem
then there's no doubt
that I'll burn the potatoes*

A few footsteps down the path, the writer Jurga Ivanauskaitė lies at rest. She earned her stripes as a controversial post-Soviet writer when she wrote a novel about priests having sex with young girls. After independence, when Lithuanians could travel outside the borders of the former Soviet Union for the first time, she hitch-hiked to Dharamsala, India, to study Buddhism with the Dalai Lama. She wrote a nonfiction trilogy about Buddhism and Tibet. Jurga died of cancer at the height of her career at the

age of 45. I translated her last book of essays, *The Sentence*, written during the two years of life she "borrowed" after her cancer diagnosis by receiving specialized treatments in a hospital in Lund, Sweden. The essays are honest, spare, written in a race against death, and in my opinion, are some of her best work:

On the same evening I find out that I have cancer, I am told that I have been awarded the National Prize for Culture and Art. ... On that memorable evening I did not feel pain or fright or even panic. ... My only wish—to get home from the hospital and to cry my heart out in the kitchen, chain smoking—was fated not to happen. I had barely got a good cry going when the phone rang and a cheerful voice congratulated me on winning the National Prize. Again, just as the tears managed to come and get me past my rock hard wall of self-control, the phone rang once more, and I was obligated, as winner of the prize, to give a blitz telephone interview to a journalist. My cry gets lost in the emotional undertow and does not return, like a stepchild led out into the forest, who has tossed away his bread-crumbs in vain. During my year of overtime I rarely cry. I laugh much more. And I smile almost all the time...

Jurga's mother often comes to tend her grave while I am tending my grandparents' grave. We share a common water spigot. She is my cemetery friend. When we each finish our weeding and watering, we take a stroll together around the cemetery, and Jurga's mother advises me on what plants grow best in this harsh northern climate and which plants to avoid. She speaks softly, pointing to this shrub, that ground cover, offering me advice. She sometimes speaks of her daughter. One time she brings me a book of her daughter's poetry. It is not natural for a mother to outlive her daughter, she tells me.

The bard Vytautas Kernagis is buried a few plots away from Jurga. On the All Souls Day after Vytautas died, also of cancer, his friend sat beside his grave, strumming a guitar, sipping dark beer from a glass bottle, tears streaming down his face, calling out, "Oh, Vytautas, I miss you so!"

Catholics in Lithuania honor their dead on November 1st and communists honor theirs on May 9th, the anniversary of the end of World War II, and Russia's victory over Germany. One May 9th, forgetting the date, I made one of my usual Sunday afternoon trips to Antakalnis Cemetery to tend to my grandparents' grave and found myself in the middle of a sea of Russian-speakers, dressed in suits and formal gowns, carrying bouquets of blood red carnations to their people's graves.

Painful as the Soviet occupation was for many Lithuanians, a percentage of the population collaborated with the Soviet regime and intermingled with the Russian colonists brought in by train to occupy the homes and lands of those exiled to Siberia. Many of them are buried in Antakalnis Cemetery as well. The entire hilltop directly behind the graves of the stu-

dents killed during the demonstrations for independence is populated by the graves of Soviet communist aparatniks and collaborators. These graves reflect the aesthetic of social realism, an aesthetic that now comes across as absurdist, or even comical, but at the time conveyed the symbolism of a very concrete ideology. Besides the expected hammers and sickles and red stars, these graves are adorned with carvings of social realist depictions of the working man or working woman. For some odd reason, communist party leaders are sculpted into stone still wearing their square rimmed spectacles perched, even after death, on their noses, as though they'd forgotten to remove their glasses before dozing off to their eternal sleep.

A friend once showed me a secret burial ground in a patch of forest just beyond where the cemetery grounds end. In a forgotten corner overgrown with thick tangled weeds, KGB officers and NKVD soldiers of the postwar period lie in communist peace. No religious ornamentation here. A single red star decorates each of the identical graves, bearing names in Cyrillic. A year later I came back to this spot and was surprised to find the weeds cleared out and the graves restored. A new memorial plaque dated from 2009 read that the Russian government had funded the restorations: Putin's steely fingers reach even this far.

I once took a group of writing students from Concordia University's Summer Writing Seminars through Antakalnis Cemetery. I showed them a monument built for Lithuania's first Soviet puppet president Antanas Sniečkus, a cement wall with his larger than life Big Brotheresque image carved into it. He was a real traitor, disowned even by his own mother, who fled to the West when the Soviets invaded Lithuania in 1944. Sniečkus organized the mass deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia and I suppose she felt that he would not have spared even his own mother. In the group there was an Inuit woman from Greenland. She had grown up in a small tribal community in northern Canada. After I narrated the story of Lithuania's traitor, Antanas Sniečkus, she asked:

"Was he a Russian?"

"No," I answered.

"How could he have betrayed his tribe?" she insisted. "In our culture, you do not betray your tribe."

Unfortunately, sometimes we do betray our own tribe.

In interviews I conducted with Lithuanian Holocaust survivors, I listened to stories about how before World War II Jews and Lithuanians and Poles and Germans and Russians lived in Lithuania peacefully, side by side, for centuries. Then, during World War II, during the four-year Nazi occupation of Lithuania, ninety percent of Lithuania's Jewish population was murdered by the Nazis along with local help. At the same time, other Lithuanians sheltered and hid Jews. There are no Jewish graves in Antakalnis Cemetery, however. The Jewish cemetery was located in the center of Vilnius and was destroyed during the Soviet occupation.

During the years of the Soviet occupation people could not



The grave of Lithuania's first Soviet puppet president, Antanas Sniečkus, is marked by a cement wall with his larger-than-life bust atop a pedestal (at right). Sniečkus organized the mass deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia.

openly celebrate All Souls' Day, a holiday in Lithuania where families visit the graves of their loved ones and decorate them with carnations and candles. In fact, my good friend, Dalia, now a mother of six, was arrested by the KGB when she was a student, on November 1, 1987, and almost expelled from Vilnius University, for secretly lighting candles and placing them on the grave of the great Lithuanian poet and 19th century nationalist leader, Jonas Basanavičius. A year later the Lithuanian communist party, in an attempt to placate the rapidly growing independence movement, allowed people to visit their family graves on All Souls' Day. Today All Souls' Day is an official state holiday and schools and businesses shut down for the entire week so that families can travel to their home villages to honor their ancestors.

Every November 1st Antakalnis Cemetery is flooded in a sea of candles carried by people who come to the cemetery after dark to visit the graves of their family members and the graves of people they admire. My brother once flew into Vilnius on All Souls' night and from the airplane window saw thousands of twinkling candles down below in Antakalnis Cemetery.

Each time I fly out of Vilnius, I look down from the oval of the airplane window at the patch of forest green where I know Antakalnis Cemetery lies. I think of my grandparents lying beneath the deep dark, under thick vines that I dug up from my friend Virginia's garden and replanted on their graves, a tangled green blanket to comfort them.

Laima Vincė Sruoginis is a writer, playwright, poet, literary translator and educator. She has been awarded two Fulbright grants in creative writing, a National Endowment for the Arts Award in literature and PEN Translation Fund grant. Sruoginis earned an MFA in writing from Columbia University and an MFA in nonfiction from the University of New Hampshire. She has worked and published in Europe, the United States and Hong Kong.

*If you are interested in ordering *The Snake in the Vodka Bottle* from Amazon, please visit <https://www.createspace.com/3828310>*





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FINNAIR
DESIGNED FOR YOU

Bulvių Mišrainė

Potato Salád

By Jana Sirusaitė Motivans



Jana and her brothers Petras and Vytas in the late 1960s at their old farm, having a Lithuanian lesson out in the fields with their Močiutė.

My beloved Močiutė Sofija passed away in January, just one month short of her 100th birthday. She lived a full century, from 1916 to 2016. Looking back, her life story is like a history lesson.

Močiutė was born in the middle of World War I. When the war started in 1914, Lithuania was under Russian occupation, but the Russian/German front line ran right through Lithuania. In 1915, the German army advanced and Močiutė's home village Andrioniškis (near Anykščiai) was occupied for six weeks. Farmers, whose houses had been occupied and their crops and livestock commandeered by Russians, now had Germans occupying their houses and taking their goods. When the Germans were pushed back again, then the Russians returned. Močiutė was born into this war zone under Russian occupation in 1916. Other parts of Lithuania and Latvia remained under German occupation until 1918.

When the 1917 Russian Revolution overthrew the Tsar, it gave the Lithuanian army a needed boost of courage. Lithuania declared independence on February 16, 1918 while still partly under German occupation. In November 1918, Germany surrendered to the Western Allies and on the same day a Lithuanian republican government was established. The Peace Conference of Paris in June 1919 recognized Lithuania's independence. Močiutė grew up in this time of independence between the wars. She studied, became a teacher, married and started a family.

When World War II started, the situation in Lithuania was very similar to what it had been during the first World War. There was Russian occupation, then German, then Russian for the final time in 1944. Many Lithuanians fled with the retreating German Army, fearing life under yet another Russian occupation. Most of the Lithuanians who fled were just trying to get out of the way



Jana's Močiutė and Senelis making potato salad to be served at the big "after party" the day after Jana's wedding—a cookout at her parents' house in New Jersey.

of the war. They had no idea what the future held for them, but most assumed that they would eventually return to Lithuania. Many Lithuanians ended up in refugee camps in Germany. When the war ended, Displaced Persons Camps were established in 1945. Refugees were brought together in camps that grouped similar nationalities. Lithuania had been annexed by the Soviet Union and became the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania, which meant that those who fled could not return for fear of being punished as a traitor." In 1945, the United States Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act and began accepting refugees from the camps. Canada and Australia, as well as other countries, also accepted refugees.

Močiutė Sofija, Senelis Vincas, my mother Gražina and my aunt Jūra came to America in 1949. They settled in Brooklyn, N.Y., and joined the growing Lithuanian community there. They learned English, got jobs, worked hard and adjusted to life in America, all the while relying on their Lithuanian community for support and friendship.

Močiutė never forgot Lithuania and the family and friends she had left behind. She was a dedicated letter writer and re-



In 1998, Jana and her Močiutė on the pier back at her home in Andrioniškis, which is beautifully situated on the Šventoji River.

a taste of lithuania

established and maintained close contact with those who were important to her.

Močiutė taught all her grandchildren about Lithuania and told us stories about her family so often that we felt we knew them. Whenever she received a letter she would read it to us, so that we could maintain these ties to our relatives. When we finally were able to visit Lithuania and met everyone in person, it was as if we had known them all along. Because of Močiutė's efforts, we grew up knowing how closely we were connected to Lithuania.

I was very fortunate to spend a lot of time in the kitchen with Močiutė. Together we made kugelis (baked potato pudding), koldūnai (dumplings), bulviniai blynai (potato pancakes),

balandėlai (stuffed cabbage), nališnikai (blintzes) and šližikai (Christmas Eve biscuits). We even made košeliėna (also known as šaltiena, or jellied meat), using pig's feet. That was an experience that I have not yet dared to try on my own! I have shared much of what I have learned in Močiutė's kitchen in my monthly articles here in Bridges.

There is one dish Močiutė was famous for above all else—her potato salad. Anytime we had a family gathering, she would always bring a big bowl of her potato salad.

Močiutė was a true Lithuanian—her favorite food was potatoes. In fact, just before she died, one of her last requests was "Aš noriu bulvių" (I want potatoes). The thought of that makes me smile.

Bulvių Mišrainė (potato salad)

INGREDIENTS

- 3 pounds potatoes (about 6 medium-sized potatoes)
- 1 cup diced celery
- 1/2 cup minced onion
- 4 hard-boiled eggs
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- salt and pepper



1. Put whole potatoes in a large pot (cut them in half if they are large) and cover with water. Bring the water to a boil and add 1 teaspoon of salt. Lower the heat and cook the potatoes until they are tender.
2. Drain the potatoes in a strainer and let cool. When they are cool enough to handle, peel them and cut into small cubes.



3. Put the cubed potatoes into a large bowl, along with the chopped celery and minced onion. Peel the hard-boiled eggs and chop them up, then add to the bowl.



4. Add the mayonnaise, one teaspoon of salt and a pinch of pepper. Mix together thoroughly. Taste, and add salt and pepper as needed.
5. Serve at room temperature or chilled. The flavor improves when chilled overnight.



A Heavenly Lithuanian Evening in Portland

By Ingrida Misevičienė

On an ordinary Monday afternoon you would have trouble finding any events organized by the Lithuanian community of Portland. One special Monday during the Easter period, however, saw an event that will be remembered by the local Lithuanians for a long time.

On April 18, 2016, our little corner of the earth was honored by a visit from His Excellency Eugenijus Bartulis, the bishop of Šiauliai. Together with Father Tomas Karanauskas, pastor of Saint Casimir parish in Los Angeles, and

Father Ignacijus Kisielius-Kissel of Portland's Grotto religious community, the bishop celebrated Mass in Lithuanian at the Virgin Mary chapel.

What's so special about that, you ask? For larger Lithuanian-American communities, church services in Lithuanian are a usual occurrence, as in most of the bigger U.S. cities, parishes founded by Lithuanians are still going strong. Sadly, our state has no such luxury. However, Lithuanians can hear the words of God in their own language thanks to Father Karanauskas from L.A., who took the Lithuanians of Oregon and Southwest Washington under his wing and periodically visits Portland. This April, Father Karanauskas brought Bishop Bartulis with him. A great lover of nature and mountains, Bishop Bartulis had the opportunity to see the impressive landscapes of Portland and then Denver—all of which he documented in photographs and videos. His Excellency is originally from Kaunas, so of course he was interested in stopping in the famous Rose Quarter (recently renamed the Moda Center), the arena that is home to the Trail Blazers, Portland's NBA team. After all, it was here that the legendary Arvydas Sabonis from Kaunas played for seven whole seasons! More than a mere fan, the bishop in 1990 had blessed the marriage of the basketball player and Ingrida Mikelionytė.

The National Sanctuary of Our Sorrowful Mother—known as the Grotto—was founded in Portland 92 years ago. In June 1963, a wayside shrine was dedicated here to Jonas Mulokas, a Lithuanian architect who lived in California. Another connection between the Grotto and Lithuanian culture is the Lithuanian priests who worked here for many years. On April 17, 2016, Father Kisielius-Kissel, who was born in a Lithuanian-American



The Lithuanians of Portland with Bishop Bartulis, Father Karanauskas and Father Kissel. Photo: Darius Kuzmickas

family and grew up in Chicago, celebrated the 50th anniversary of his priesthood at this famous religious community. The chapel of the Virgin Mary was packed to listen to Father Kissel's sermon, in which he stressed that without the followers of God—the flock of believers—there would be no 50th anniversary of the priest, the spiritual shepherd.

On this special Monday afternoon, Bishop Bartulis subtly revisited the sermon of Father Kissel and encouraged the congregation to feel God's love. To us, Lithuanians over 8,000 kilometers away from our country, the sacred words spoken in our own language in the magnificent Grotto chapel became a springtime beacon of national feelings. All this, with the accompaniment of a Lithuanian nightingale, made for a heavenly evening—during the Mass, the audience heard the singing of the Lithuanian-American soprano Vakarė Rūta Petrolīūnaitė. The culmination of the evening was the National Anthem, sung by Algis Garolis, long-time veteran of Portland's Lithuanian community. Priests and the congregation alike, we all unknowingly looked up to the sky and tried to hold back the tears as memories and thoughts of Lithuania flooded over us, and our souls felt a yearning for our homeland. We are sincerely grateful to His Excellency for visiting our small community in Portland. We also thank Father Karanauskas and Laurynas Misevičius for organizing this extraordinary event, as well as everyone who contributed or took part in any way. Having lived in the U.S. for almost 16 years, I can honestly say that this evening in the chapel of the Virgin Mary was one of the most emotional and Lithuanian moments I have experienced. After all, we are not only the flock of God, but also the flock of Lithuania.

our community

Lithuanian President Attends Sunday-After-Easter Festival in D.C.



Lithuanian Ambassador to the United States Rolandas Kriščiūnas and Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė at the Embassy's after-Easter festival in Washington, D.C.

On April 3, 2016, Lithuania's President Dalia Grybauskaitė attended a Sunday-after-Easter festival with members of the Lithuanian-American community and Lithuanian school students.

The event, organized by the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in Washington, D.C., brought together more than 100 students from the Lithuanian School of Washington (Vienna, Va.) and the Kristijonas Donelaitis Lithuanian School (Rockville, Md.), and their parents.

The President rolled colorful Easter eggs with the smaller children and watched a performance based on the popular children's book by Lina Žutautė, *Kakė Makė ir Netvarkos*

Nykštukas (Kakė Makė and the Elf of Mess). She also met and talked with members of the Lithuanian-American community.

"Every Lithuanian, wherever they live, is very important to Lithuania. There are not many of us in the world; therefore, we need to be united, support each other, foster Lithuanian identity, and preserve our native language and traditions," Grybauskaitė said to the Lithuanians at the festival. "Your success story is a success story of the whole of Lithuania."

Photos: R. Dačkus, courtesy of the Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania



Lithuanian children's book character Kakė Makė entertains festival-goers.

Lithuanian Ambassador Meets Maryland Officials

Ambassador of Lithuania to the United States and Mexico Rolandas Kriščiūnas and 15th North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival Organizing Committee Chairman Leonardas Linas Orentas met with Maryland Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford and Maryland Secretary of State John Wobensmith in the state Capitol on April 21, 2016. Kriščiūnas discussed future opportunities between the state of Maryland and the Republic of Lithuania. Orentas briefed the state officials and invited them to the 15th North American Folk Dance Festival in Baltimore on July 3, 2016. For tickets and more information about the 15th Šokių Šventė, please visit sokiusvente2016.org.



Left to right, Maryland Secretary of State John Wobensmith; Lyra Puišytė-Bostroem, Minister-Counselor Embassy of Republic of Lithuania; Maryland Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford; Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania to the United States Rolandas Kriščiūnas; and Leonardas Linas Orentas, Chairman of the Organizing Committee for 15th North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival.

Nation

... The general election for the Seimas (Lithuania's Parliament) is set for Sunday, October 9, 2016.

... Euronews reports that Lithuanian police are using military drones to identify illegal alcohol distilleries in the woods.

Business

... The airports in Vilnius, Palanga and Kaunas have combined as Lithuanian Airport, which will solicit private investors to bid on a 25-year lease to manage and develop the airports. Last year Vilnius handled 3.3 million passengers, 13 percent more than 2014. After a hiatus of eight years, Germania Airlines will resume direct flights between Vilnius and Zurich. Palanga will add Wizz Air and Ryanair for flights to London.

... President Dalia Grybauskaitė endorsed the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the European Union and the U.S. The agreement would reduce trade barriers for U.S. agricultural products and liquefied natural gas. The goal is to conclude negotiations by the end of 2016. The President said that 78 percent of Lithuanians support the transatlantic agreement.

Security

... U.S. President Barack Obama hosted the Nuclear Security Summit, attended by leaders of international organizations and 52 countries, among them President Grybauskaitė. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the progress on ensuring the security of nuclear infrastructure and radioactive materials, and to build systems to forestall nuclear terrorism. According to one working group, there are 2,000 tons of poorly protected radioactive material around the world that needs to be better monitored and secured.

... The prestigious Washington think tank, The Center for a New American Security, presented its report, "Assured Resolve: Testing Possible Challenges to Baltic Security" to 50 representatives meeting in Vilnius. Attending were Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius and U.S., NATO, Nordic, Baltic and EU policy makers. Tabletop exercises analyzed potential responses to Russia's provocations at national and multinational levels, detected deficiencies and made suggestions for corrections.

... Repeated cyber attacks were detected and overcome on the websites of Lithuania's Seimas (Parliament) and Ministries of Defense, Finance and Agriculture. The most intense attack happened to coincide with a gathering of Crimean Tatars in Lithuania.

... President Dalia Grybauskaitė welcomed two U.S. F-22 stealth Raptor jet fighters to the Lithuanian Air Force Base in Šiauliai, which is NATO's forward deployment facility for the three Baltic members of NATO. It was built during Soviet times and has two runways that are almost 2 miles long.

... Deutsche Welle News reports that Germany supports a proposal for the July 8-9, 2016, NATO conference in Warsaw for a rotating contingent of troops in and out of the Baltic countries, Poland and Romania. The rotating troops would comply with the existing treaty between NATO and Russia that prohibits the "permanent" stationing of troops on Russia's border.

... Yevgeny Mataitis, a dual Lithuanian-Russian citizen, pleaded guilty to selling Russian military secrets to Lithuania over a period of six years. He was a reserve naval officer in Kaliningrad, the main base of the Russian Baltic Fleet. He was sentenced to 13 years in a high-security prison and fined 200,000 rubles (about \$3,000).

... Two Russian Sukhoi SU-24 swept-wing attack jets made 20 passes on the USS Donald Cook. The next day the jets made 11 passes and a Russian KA-27 Helix helicopter made seven passes around the guided missile destroyer as it passed 70 nautical miles outside Russia's Kaliningrad enclave on route to a planned visit to Klaipėda. The American vessel was on a good-will visit that included a "friendly" basketball game with members of the Lithuanian Navy. The ship is assigned to the U.S. 6th fleet headquarters in Naples.

Energy

... Deutsche Welle reports that Poland has signed a deal to build a pipeline connecting the EU energy market to the Baltic countries. The \$636 million, 332-mile Gas Interconnector Poland-Lithuanian is scheduled for completion by December 2019. It will have the capacity to deliver 2.4 billion cubic meters of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Poland to Lithuania and 1 billion cubic meters of LNG from Lithuania to Poland, as cost and need dictates. Poland recently opened an LNG terminal on the Baltic, and expects its first shipment from Qatar in December 2016. This capability complements the Lithuanian LNG ship, Independence, in Klaipėda.

Science

... Virginijus Šikšnys, a Vilnius University scientist, shared the 2016 Warren Alpert Foundation Prize worth \$500,000 with scientists from North Carolina State University, DuPont in France, University of California-Berkeley and the Max Planck Institute for Infection Biology in Berlin. The award is for describing the bacterial defense mechanism and its adaption for genome editing used in treating previously untreatable genetic diseases. AAAS's Science magazine named this technique the Scientific Breakthrough of 2015.

... Brolis Semiconductors' new SensAline tunable laser won the Compound Semiconductor Magazine Innovation Award for 2016. The Vilnius-based company, founded by two Vizbaras brothers with PhDs from Germany, and managed by a third brother, has developed a laser diode that uses photons in a quantum computer, which can be used in military reconnaissance systems. The staff of 16 is split between research in Vilnius and production in the U.K.

our community

Upcoming Lithuanian Friendship Day to Feature Crafts, Campers, Hat Contest and More

Lithuanian Friendship Day, aka the "Putnam Picnic," will shine a light on Lithuanian heritage while providing entertainment for all ages on July 24, 2016, in Putnam, Conn.

The day will begin with an outdoor Mass at 11 a.m. followed by a lunch featuring Lithuanian food. Afternoon activities include a Lithuanian arts and crafts fair, a program by campers from Vermont's Camp Neringa, a hat contest and parade, and a drawing for prizes that include a trip to Lithuania.

During the day, guests can also view a video featuring a historical glance of the mission of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Camp Neringa, visit the ALKA Lithuanian archives, meet with Lithuanian Saturday school director and teachers, or just plain socialize with friends and neighbors.

The picnic takes place on the grounds of the convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, 600 Liberty Highway, Putnam, Conn. For more information, or to make a donation to enter the prize drawing, please contact picnic chairman Aidas Kupčinskas at aidask@aol.com.



Campers' performance at a prior picnic.

bridges

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May 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

JULY 2016

July 24, 11 a.m.
**Lithuanian Friendship Day
(Putnam Picnic)**
600 Liberty Highway,
Putnam, Conn.
Info: neringa.org

July 24-30
**"Third Week" Youth Camp for
Lithuanian Speakers ages 12-16**
Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
Info: neringa.org

July 24-31
**Ateitininkų Sendraugių
Stovkyla I (Ateitis Old Friends
Camp)**
Camp Dainava, 15100 Austin Rd.,
Manchester, Mich.
Info: zaliaruta9@gmail.com

July 31-August 7
Lithuanian Heritage Stovykla
Camp Dainava, 15100 Austin Rd.,
Manchester, Mich.
Info: rimapolikaitis@aol.com

July 31-August 13
**Heritage Children's Camp in
English, ages 7-16**
Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
Info: neringa.org

AUGUST 2016

August 5-7
**Knights of Lithuania National
Convention**
Doubletree by Hilton,
Binghamton, N.Y.
Info: knightsoflithuania.com

August 6-12
Ateitis Week
Franciscan Guest House, 26
Beach Ave., Kennebunk, Maine
Info: franciscanguesthouse.com,
207-967-4865

August 7-12
**Lankas Lithuanian Heritage
Camp**
Kursa - Latvian Community
Center, 3381 W. Dayton Airport
Rd., Shelton, Wash.
Info: lankostovykla.com

August 7-14
Lithuanian Language Course
Camp Dainava, 15100 Austin Rd.,
Manchester, Mich.
Info: ausreles@comcast.net

August 13-20
**"Third Week" Youth Camp in
English, ages 12-16**
Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
Info: neringa.org

August 19
Ethnic Enrichment Festival
Swope Park, 4701 East Gregory
Blvd., Kansas City, Mo.
Info: kclith.org

August 21-28
**Meno8Dienos Adult Lithuanian-
Language Art Camp**
Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
Info: danguoale@kuolas.com,
781-383-6081

SEPTEMBER 2016

September 3-5
**Camp Dainava Celebrates 60
Years**
15100 Austin Rd., Manchester,
Mich.
Saturday evening program will
feature the Dainava Choir Men's
Ensemble, Darius Polikaitis,
director. The weekend will
feature entertainment, activities,
interesting presentations, good
food, and good company.
Info: dainava.org

September 10
**Portland Lithuanian Community
Piknikas (Picnic)**
Rooster Rock State Park, Hwy. 84,
Corbett, Ore.
Info: 503-974-6407

September 11
**Omaha Lithuanian Community
Fundraiser (Sausages and
Cabbage)**
Sts. Peter and Paul School gym
5912 S. 36th St., Omaha, Nebr.
Info: facebook.com/OmahaLB

September 17, 1- 3 p.m.
Amber Roots Heritage Club
Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E.
Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia, PA
Use Tilton Street entrance.
Info: milliemarks@aol.com

September 18, 3 p.m.
**Vilija Kerelytė Concert "Bring
Me a Song"**
Sabre Room, 8900 W. 95th St.,
Hickory Hills, Ill.
Concert accompanied by Algis
Baranauskas
Info: vrk15@att.net, 708-567-6718

September 25,
9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
**Divine Providence Lithuanian
Church Parish Picnic**
25335 West Nine Mile Rd.,
Southfield, Mich.
Info: divineprovidencechurch.com

OCTOBER 2016

October 7-9
Iškyla/Walk-a-Thon
Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
Info: neringa.org

October 9
**Golden Jubilee of Our Lady of
Šiluva Chapel**
Basilica Shrine of the Immaculate
Conception, Washington, D.C.
Info: siluva50usa.org

October 15, 1-3 p.m.
Amber Roots Heritage Club
Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E.
Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia, PA
Use Tilton Street entrance.
Info: milliemarks@aol.com

NOVEMBER 2016

November 5
**Lithuanian Foundation Annual
Fall Gala**
Lithuanian World Center, 14911
127th St., Lemont, Ill.
Info: lithfund.org

November 5
**Omaha Lithuanian Community
Fundraiser Bowling Tournament**
Immaculate Conception Hall,
2708 South 24th St.,
Omaha, Nebr.
Info: facebook.com/OmahaLB

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

November 25
**Kansas City Lithuanian Commu-
nity Christmas Party**
Cedar Creek Clubhouse, Olathe,
Kans.
Info: kclith.org

DECEMBER 2016

December 3-4
Holiday Craft Fair
Lithuanian World Center, 14911
127th St., Lemont, Ill.
Info: milliemarks@aol.com

December 10
**Amber Roots Heritage Club
Kučios**
Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E.
Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia, PA
Use Tilton Street entrance. Bring a
meatless dish to share. Everyone
welcome.
Info: milliemarks@aol.com

December 11
Lithuanian Scouts Kučios
Divine Providence Lithuanian
Catholic Church,
25335 West Nine Mile Rd.,
Southfield, Mich.
Info: divineprovidencechurch.com

December 11
**Annual Ecumenical Christmas
Concert**
Sts. Peter and Paul Church,
5912 S. 36th St., Omaha, Nebr.
Info: facebook.com/OmahaLB

GOT EVENTS?

Let us help you spread the word!
To be listed in our calendar,
please send your event notices
to bridges.terese@gmail.com.

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