

bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

\$5

July/August 2016

this month in history

July Anniversaries



765 years ago

July 17, 1251

Pope Innocent IV signed two papal bulls related to Lithuania. One ordered the Bishop of Culm, Prussia, to crown Grand Duke Mindaugas as King of Lithuania, appoint a bishop for Lithuania and build a cathedral. The other specified that the new bishop of Lithuania be directly subordinate to the Vatican, rather than to the Archbishop of Riga.

The papal bulls followed the baptism of Mindaugas in 1250 or 1251. He agreed to be baptized and relinquish control over some lands in western Lithuania, in return for the Pope acknowledging him as king. For the Pope, a Christian Lithuania would serve as a defense against the Mongols, and as a Christian king, Mindaugas could seek an alliance with the Livonian Order, which had been a long-standing enemy of Lithuania. Mindaugas' coronation took place in 1253.



290 years ago

July 30, 1726

Birth of Ignotus Jokūbas Masalskis, Bishop of Vilnius, who built the palace at Verkiiai and began the reconstruction of the Vilnius Cathedral. As the first chairman of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's Education Commission, which was established in 1773, he reorganized the school administration system to

attempt to introduce compulsory primary school education for children aged 7 to 12.

Masalskis was a member of the Targowica Confederation, established by Polish and Lithuanian magnates and backed by Russian Empress Catherine II, opposing the new Polish Constitution of 1791 that limited the privileges of the nobility. After the confederation signed its founding document, Russian forces invaded the Commonwealth in 1792. Rather than just restoring the status quo, however, their victory precipitated the Second Partition of Poland and the term *targowica* became synonymous with treason in the Polish language. Masalskis was one of several Targowica Confederation members hanged as a traitor during the short-lived populist Kościuszko Uprising of 1794.



255 years ago

July 24, 1761

Birth of Jokūbas Jasinskis, Lithuanian engineer, poet and commander of the 1794 uprising in Lithuania.

In response to the Second Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Lithuanians and Poles mounted a resistance in 1794 organized and led by Jasinskis in Lithuania and Tadeusz Kościuszko in Poland. Their mission was to emancipate the serfs and persuade them to fight for the freedom of their countries.

On April 23, 1794, Col. Jasinskis, as commandant of the Combat Engineer School of Vilnius, led only a few more than 1,000 Lithuanian soldiers and armed residents of Vilnius in liberating their city from a garrison of the Russian Empire numbering 2,800. On April 24, he announced the Act of the Lithuanian Uprising in the square of the Town Hall of Vilnius. From May 3, 1794, Jasinskis was the chief commander of the military forces of Lithuanian insurgents. On May 7, 1794, his military units fought the Russian army in the battle of Polianai and forced the occupiers to retreat from the approaches to Vilnius.

Jasinskis was considered more radical than other uprising leaders, as he also called for universal equality without class distinctions and supported a sovereign Lithuania, independent of Poland. Because of his radical views he fell out of favor with the Polish gentry and was dismissed from the post of the commander of the Lithuanian Army. He was killed on November 4, 1794, in the defense of Warsaw.

The uprising ultimately failed and, in 1795, Russia, Prussia and Austria carved up the Commonwealth a third and final time, with Russia getting most of Lithuania.

25 years ago

July 31, 1991

The Medininkai Massacre. The Soviet Union, still not recognizing Lithuania as independent, viewed the border posts established by the new republic as illegal, and sent OMON troops to disrupt them. The worst of these attacks occurred on the Lithuanian-Belarusian border at Medininkai, where seven Lithuanian border guards were shot and killed in the pre-dawn hours. It was the last of the attacks, which had overall resulted in eight Lithuanians killed, 60 injured and 23 guard posts burned or otherwise destroyed.

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Cover: Backstage smiles at the XV North American Lithuanian Dance Festival. Photo: Sandra Scedrina

Back cover: Feeling a sense of accomplishment at the end of the festival. Photo: Kazys Razgaitis

from the editor

The Art of the Dance

On my last visit to Lithuania, my cousin asked me if I'd be interested in attending the ballet in Vilnius. Just days later, seated a few rows from the stage, I found myself every bit as mesmerized by the movements of the dancers as I had when I watched my first performance when I was a little girl.

It struck me then that I had never outgrown my fascination with dance.

I'm not sure how it started, but it started early. One of my most prized possessions was a jewelry box with a ballerina that popped up and pirouetted to Swan Lake when the lid was opened. Little ballerinas held the candles on my birthday cakes for many years. I had ballet coloring books, a record album of musical selections from popular ballets, books about the lives of famous ballerinas. When I was in second grade, I began to take ballet lessons. And after four years of classes, I had not been in one production.

All that effort, it seemed, proved nothing except that I was singularly ungraceful.

My love of dance didn't end when I became an adult, but it did morph into appreciation rather than participation, and broadened to other styles. For some years, I still went religiously to see the Nutcracker every Christmas while I also devoured classic song and dance films of the 1930s and 1940s. I even suffered through the atrociously scripted and woodenly acted movie *White Nights* just for the brilliant dance sequences by Mikhail Baryshnikov and Gregory Hines.

Inspired by Hines and other dancers both classical and contemporary, I signed up for tap lessons. I envisioned myself hoofing it old style like legends Ann Miller and Gene Kelly. Sadly, my lack of coordination caught up with me. After a third "beginners" class in which 90 percent of the dancers clearly had previous tap experience, and I still could not brush-pank-step-heel, I hung up my Capezios in tears.

About 10 years later, perhaps forgetting the tap fiasco, I bid on and won tango lessons during a silent auction at our local arts league. I went down twice in the first class, done in by the required leather-soled shoes that allow one to glide a little too easily, but still felt I would get the hang of it with a little persistence. The lessons, however, were cut tragically short, this time when my other half took a tumble down the stairs one Sunday morning on the way to class. At least that injury didn't take place at my hands (or feet).

But then it happened—I found my niche. One night at English-speaking family camp at Camp Neringa, I was whisked from the sidelines during a particularly raucous number by one of the Lithuanian-speaking staff. I had no time to protest that I didn't know the song or the steps—and I didn't have to. Caught in the moment, I found I could easily follow his lead and soon was swinging and stomping my way around the floor without injuring myself, my partner or any adjacent dancer.

Until this year, I indulged my new-found love of Lithuanian folk dancing only at community events, so I was thrilled to attend (as a spectator) my very first Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival in Baltimore in July. And I'm excited that we're bringing you this issue with special coverage of the festival, including photos and a comprehensive history of the event. If you were there, I hope you enjoy this look back; if you weren't, I hope it inspires you to participate in the future.

Wishing you a spring in your step,

Teresė Vekteris, Editor

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Sharing the Joy

Thank you for the last two issues of Bridges. They surely have improved with each issue. I especially liked Rimas Domanskis' article regarding our heritage [May 2016].

We lived in New Mexico when our children were small and had no Lithuanian friends for them to play with, other than visiting our folks on the East Coast in the summer. However, we had books which we bought from the Chicago Lithuanian schools and had our own Šeštadieninė Mokykla [Saturday School]. They learned to speak Lithuanian fluently, to write and about Lithuanian history and literature. I believe that we are exceptionally lucky to be able to pick the best of the Lithuanian culture and the American to be better people.

Thank you for publishing your Bridges and sharing the joy of having a Lithuanian heritage.

Respectfully,
Liuda Avizonis, via email

A Big Role to Play

It is a thrill to receive the Bridges, June 2016 issue. Outstanding! The photography, articles and the layout—superb! One can imagine the amount of care, the hours put in by the small but exemplary staff to make such happen.

In the past, I had visited the Lithuanian Consulates in Manhattan (420 5th Ave.) and in Chicago (Ontario St., now in new offices). There are tables with magazines in the waiting rooms. Bridges should be among them.

Can you keep it up with so many issues per year? Hope you can. Bridges has a big role to play.

Sincerely,
John Vazbys
Mahwah, N.J.

PS: I am attaching a \$30 check as a donation.

Editor's response: *Letters like your make the effort worth it. We very much appreciate your donation, as well as all of the generous donations made by our readers. Because our subscription price just barely covers printing and postage, every contribution helps.*

Current and Informative

I would like to compliment Bridges' staff for producing a fabulous magazine. The articles are current and very informative with the focus on Lithuanian history, culture, national cuisine, sports and current events. I like how social/economic issues are discussed and how religious aid and the Lithuanian diaspora are helping/supporting those in need.

Sincerely,
Carol A. Luschas, via email

What I Envisioned

WOW!!! The addition of partisan photos really adds punch to the articles [Memories Can't Fade Away, May 2016].

Back in the mid seventies I was in two Krašto Valdybas [Lithuanian American Community National Boards] headed by my buddies Juozas Gaila and Algimantas Gečys—that is when we "created" Bridges. And I must say, finally, with your arrival it has become the type of magazine that I had envisioned back then. You will receive news from our community in the future, as well as new subscriptions.

Rimas A. Chesonis
Hon. Consul of the
Republic of Lithuania
Webster, N.Y.

Editor's response: *We can't think of a better compliment than to know that we're fulfilling the vision of our founders! Thank you!*

Priceless Essays

I really liked the essay contest on the Partisans [May 2016]. Getting the young Lithuanians involved is priceless.

Joanne Antanavage, via email

May in July

Just got my May issue [on July 10]. (Hahaha.)

Great article by Rimas Domanskis. After a super-Lithuanian week in Baltimore, I really appreciated his words. Many dancers do not speak the language but they love the culture. We in Madison are lucky to have a community made up of all 3 bangos [waves] who work together in harmony and friendship to keep that culture alive.

The cooking section made me cry. Jana Motivans is a great writer!

The Alytus [student] essays are terrific. They write better than Americans of the same age. Everything you print is wonderful.

Nijolė Etwiler, via email

Editor's response: *Thank you for your good humor about our chronic lateness. We laugh, too, to keep from crying.*

We Love Feedback!

We welcome letters and feedback from our readers. Please address correspondence to: Editor, Bridges Lithuanian-American News Journal, 6125 McCallum St., Philadelphia, PA 19144, or email bridges.terese@gmail.com. Letters may be edited for space or clarity.

Was It Just a Dream?

The Journey That Called Us
to the XV North American
Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival

By Algis Šilas



Confetti rained on the dancers as the last notes of Suktinis, the traditional finale dance, signaled end of the festival. Photo: Rimas Gedeika

The XV North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, also known as Šokių Šventė, was three years in the making. Organizing meetings, conference calls, fundraising events, direct mail pieces, press releases, production of various festival publications and organizing a team of volunteers to help with the festival's activities were the oxygen for the 26-member volunteer organizing committee from Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Md. and other communities, including Toronto, Canada.

After three days of celebrating Lithuania's cultural heritage, culminating with a theatrical production of a three-hour choreographed dance program at Baltimore's Royal Farms Arena on Sunday July 3, 2016, the folk dance festival was over.

The festival featured 1,800 dancers from 46 folk dance troupes representing 29 cities from six countries—Lithuania, England, Sweden, Canada, Israel and the United States. Almost 4,000 audience members witnessed a vibrant and dynamic display of 28 choreographed dances woven around the theme of "A Journey Calls You There," inspired by the poetry of renowned Lithuanian poet Bernardas Brazdžionis.

An International Event Crystallizes
How did this international event come together in Baltimore?
The Washington, D.C., chapter of the Lithuanian American

Community, Inc. (LAC) was approached by the LAC National Executive Board and board members from the Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute three and a half years earlier to consider proposing a bid to organize the XV North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival in the nation's capital. A detailed site



Dancers entered the arena to a cheering crowd. Photo: Mantas Kubilinis



Artistic Director Tomas Mikuckis (left) keeps an eye on the formations and an open line to the floor to provide direction to the dancers.
Photo: Rimas Gedeika

examination was conducted of the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia and Baltimore metropolitan areas with respect to venue opportunities, transportation logistics, potential vendors and hotels. Upon completion of an extensive feasibility analysis, the potential organizing committee members proposed

that Baltimore be the next city to host the XV North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival. The proposed bid was accepted and, as they say, the rest is history.

Initial seed monies were available due to Boston's XIV North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival's organizing committee's fundraising prowess. Their surplus, which had been maintained by the LAC National Executive Board, became our start-up funds.

This festival's fundraising goal was achieved in large part through various Baltimore-Washington, D.C.-area fundraising events. Furthermore, thousands of direct mail fundraising pieces were sent out to members of the Lithuanian-American and Lithuanian-Canadian communities. Outreach was also made specifically to local Baltimore and Washington, D.C.-area businesses, as well as Lithuanian-owned businesses in Lithuania, Canada and the United States for financial support.

To draw attention to the festival, the media relations team disseminated press releases and wrote articles, which resulted in 18 published articles and two TV interviews—with FOX45 Baltimore TV and LRT TV Lithuania—to inform potential audience members, dancers and the local Baltimore community about the festival. A close working relationship with Visit Baltimore, Inc., facilitated outreach locally to the Maryland and Baltimore regions. Finally, social media (ŠokiųŠventė2016.org website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), were used to create a real-time communications network for connecting with our global Lithuanian community.

The efforts of the organizing committee members finally began to crystallize on the ground the week before the festival. The three years of planning culminated in a three-hour theatrical production in one of the top North American venues of its size. Lithuanian folk dancers can now say that they have joined the ranks of major music performers such as U2, The Beatles, Elvis Presley, The Rolling Stones, Johnny Cash, Bruce Springsteen, The Trans-Siberian Orchestra and Rihanna, all of whom have performed at the Royal Farms Arena.



Many dances celebrated the work of spinning thread and weaving cloth.
Photo: Rimas Gedeika



Managing logistics was essential to ensuring that each of the 1,800 dancers were in the right place at the right time. Photo: Mantas Kubilinis



Dancers filled the arena floor with swirling patterns of color.
Photo: Nerijus Liutkus



Artistic directors and dance teachers past and present were honored at the Teachers' Dinner. Photo: Rimas Gedeika

A Dynamic Cultural Weekend

The July 4th weekend was full of daily and evening events. Dancers rehearsed on Friday and Saturday. An artisan market at the main festival Hilton Baltimore hotel featured over 30 vendors. Baltimore food truck vendors promoted local cuisine at an outdoor street fair next to the main festival hotel, while the Southern Maryland band, Sam Grow Group, showcased local sounds. Friday evening was capped off with a lively concert by celebrated Lithuanian musician Jurgis Didziulis.

All weekend long, the local Baltimore Lithuanian Hall was open and added a variety of activities to the festival's agenda.



An artisan market at the main festival hotel featured more than 30 vendors. Photo: Teresė Vekteris

Organized by the hall's kitchen staff, one day was billed as "Cepalinų Day," featuring potato meat dumplings for dinner. Another day was billed as "Balandėlių Day," featuring stuffed cabbage rolls. The Hall's Lithuanian Museum was open for those eager to see and learn from the cultural and historical exhibits. Each evening, the Lithuanian Hall provided an additional opportunity to socialize and dance to various DJs and live performances. On one evening there was a Lithuanian Youth Association dance. Another evening included a concert by the Lithuanian-American Long Island, N.Y.-based Steel Wolf band, with a special guest appearance by Jurgis Didziulis. The last night of the festival featured a "Beach Party" themed dance.

On Saturday evening, many participants and guests dined at the Hilton Baltimore, accompanied by a Lithuanian folk music concert performed by noted Lithuanian folk ensemble Ave Vita. There was also a Lithuanian poetry event, featuring readings by descendants of Baltimore's and Washington, D.C.'s local Lithuanian writers, and free time to explore Baltimore's Inner Harbor and its surrounding neighborhoods. A teacher's dinner honored past and present artistic directors and dance teachers.

Sunday, the day of the festival, began with Lithuanian Mass at the historic St. Alphonsus Church. A VIP reception followed at the Radisson Hotel Baltimore near the Inner Harbor. Then the folk dance festival commenced. The three-hour performance was full of choreographed energy, excitement and joy, culminating in the traditional finale dance for all folk dance festivals, "Suktinis," with 1,800 dancers dancing in unison. The day concluded with various themed banquets for all the dancers and guests—a jazz-themed gala for adults, featuring the Chicago-based 10-piece orchestra "Sodžius"; mystery-themed dinner for high school and college-aged students; and a LEGO creativity-themed dinner for young families.

Finally, on Monday afternoon, participants gathered at the harbor to sing the Lithuanian national anthem in concert with Lithuanians around the world.

The end result was a continuation of a dynamic cultural event that celebrated our Lithuanian heritage as we renewed and rekindled old friendships, and produced memories for a lifetime. We had a vision and developed a plan of creating



His poems contain countless themes and motifs of journeys and travel, and he expressed the idea of a journey from the homeland in beautiful scenes and imagery that reveal a sense both of longing and nostalgia, love and hope. Our goal was to reflect the feelings and images of Brazdžionis' words through dance, and to tell a story of our common journey."

Like a Distant Dream

For those of us on the organizing committee, the Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute, the folk dance teachers, the many volunteers and of course the folk dancers, the XV North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival was a labor of love. Many on the organizing committee were either first or second generation Lithuanian-Americans who continued in the footsteps of our parents and grandparents in embracing and cultivating our rich and unique cultural folk dance tradition.

The poetry evening was held in a casual salon style. Photo: Teresė Vekteris

and constructing an atmosphere of a Little Lithuania, including the artisan fair at the Hilton Baltimore, all in the heart of downtown Baltimore. All events were within walking distance, not only of the Royal Farms Arena, but of all the festival's hotels and Baltimore's Inner Harbor attractions. The Lithuanian language echoed through Baltimore for four enjoyable days.

A Beautiful Symbol of Shared Life

As Tomas Mikuckis, the festival's artistic director, said: "In the beginning, Lithuanian folk dance festivals in North America were an expression of patriotism and devotion for the then captive nation of Lithuania, and a determination to maintain our culture and customs. Over time, they grew into the most beautiful symbols of our shared life, and brought and bound together those of us dispersed outside Lithuania. Lithuania has now been a free nation for many years, and indeed over a third of our folk dance festivals have taken place since the joyous event of March 11, 1990, when the Lithuanian Parliament voted to re-declare and restore its independence, which it lost in 1940.

"The performers of the 15th dance festival are now the children and grandchildren of the dancers who performed at the very first festival in 1957 in Chicago, and their ranks were complemented by new waves of Lithuanians. The title of the dance festival, 'A journey calls you there,' reflects the long journey that we, Lithuanians living abroad, have traveled together. The festival aimed to reflect to the audience and participants alike the beautiful national identity and expression that we each feel.

"The XV Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival was inspired by the poetry of the famous Lithuanian poet Bernardas Brazdžionis.

Reflecting back, after three years of being immersed in organizing such an event, it happened so quickly—the XV North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival seems like a distant dream. Here's to the next Šokių Šventė in 2020, when the dream becomes reality again. We'll see you there. Or, as they say in Lithuanian, "iki malonaus pasimatymo"—until our next enjoyable meeting!

Algis Šilas is media relations advisor for the XV North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival.



Dancers return to the hotel following the festival. Photo: Teresė Vekteris

A Journey Calls You There ...

Prologue: Lithuania, Lithuania, you're alive like the sun

The prologue is an expression of the significance of Lithuania as our homeland, which defines and gives meaning to the entire coming journey. The journey begins at dawn: the ritual dances of a young girl traveler and her friends invite the morning sun to rise. The dawning sun is then greeted by a young man, her future companion. As more dancers gather, they become a vision of the sun itself, whose warmth and light reflect each Lithuanian's love of the homeland.



Blezingėlė is a traditional girls' dance symbolizing the flight of the swallow. Photo: Kazys Razgaitis



Saulėle, Kelk is a lyrical girls' dance encouraging the sun to rise. Photo: Kazys Razgaitis



Saulės Vartai is a dance greeting the rising sun. Photo: Kazys Razgaitis

Moments from XV Šokių Šventė

Act I: I Carry paths of white blossoms in my heart



A young couple (Aleta Juozelskytė and Tadas Varaneckas) meet and fall in love amid the trees of a cherry orchard. Photo: Teresė Vekteris

The first act is the start of the journey: a remembrance of the departure from our parents' farm, from its beloved flower gardens and cherry orchards. It is a playful and happy memory of the past, of youth, of home.

The First Journey—In a blossoming orchard, a young couple meets for the first time. These travelers become friends and fall in love.

As the dancers gather, youthful daydreaming, playful games and spirited dancing quickly ensue. The farmstead and its blossoming orchards are dear to the entire family. Young children happily dance and play in the gardens, and are soon joined by their grandparents. But for everyone, young and old, the favorite memory of farm life is the large windmill and its strong blades spinning in the wind.



Vėjo Malūnėlis is a dance in which children play with small windmills. Photo: Kazys Razgaitis



Malūnėlis | Malūnas is a combination of two well-known and beloved versions of a dance about a windmill. Photo: Rimas Gedeika

Act II: My country's heart wrapped in the whitest linen



Džigūnas is an agile men's dance imitating the motions of horses.
Photo: Kazys Razgaitis



Kubilinis is a dance around a basket of seeds demonstrating the traditions of the first springtime planting. Photo: Teresė Vekteris

The second acts reflects the travelers' active, working days, and their search for and creation of a new home. Traditional farm work has always been at the heart of the Lithuanian worldview, regardless of what distant lands their journey leads them to. The intricate work of spinning thread and weaving linen cloth become a metaphor for the travelers' journey.

The Second Journey—The travelers arrive at a growing field of flax, carrying the woven linens they have worked so hard to create.

The travelers' labors begin outside: clearing trees and preparing fields for the springtime ritual of planting seeds. But the work of spinning flax into thread and weaving beautiful fabrics, always accompanied by song, holds a special place in every Lithuanian's heart. When the weaving is completed, everyone celebrates, rejoicing and dancing with their woven textiles and fabrics. The young dancers also join in, playing various games. As everyone dances, the colorful outfits and unique figures seem to transform them into a giant, living tapestry.



In Tolkašokis, the girls celebrate having completed the work of spinning thread. Photo: Kazys Razgaitis



Jerubėlė is a game using large cloths in which the girls represent small birds that the boys must try to lure into their traps. Photo: Kazys Razgaitis

Act III: Beneath the vaulted starry skies



Ak, Norėtum Grijžti, created especially for the XV Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, symbolizes the longing to return to our parents' homeland. Photo: Kazys Razgaitis



Subatvakaris is a fun evening dance combining several unique polka steps. Photo: Kazys Razgaitis



Kupolinis incorporates many of the traditions of Midsummer Night's Eve. Photo: Mantas Kubilinis

Act three depicts the travelers' often dreamed-of return to their homeland, to its beloved sky last seen so long ago. Some travelers could only return in their dreams to see that starry homeland sky, but now that sky brings us all closer together, and surrounds our smaller, or at least more intimate, world.

The Third Journey—Beneath a starry sky, the travelers light a symbolic lantern to the light the way down their future path.

Everyone gathers in the night to continue the journey into an unknown future, carrying shimmering lanterns. These lanterns become offerings of the travelers' love for Lithuania, and guide them down the right roads of their journey. This love sows greater confidence and courage in their hearts. As they dance, it seems to disperse the lights of their lanterns like stars, which multiply across the sky. The past, present and future seems to blend, and now it feels as if everyone is no longer dancing on earth but in our homeland's sky among the stars themselves.



Šventinė Polka is a fast-paced celebratory polka. Photo: Kazys Razgaitis

A Fly on the Wall at Šokių Šventė

By Paul Trimakas



Retro rehearsal in L.A. on May 30, 2016 (Paul's birthday). Paul in middle and his vadovė, Sigita Barysienė, on far right.

I had no intention of dancing at this year's Šokių Šventė in Baltimore. For many reasons, I refused to participate in the preliminary rehearsals. My personal relationship with the vadovė (leader) of the Los Angeles Lithuanian folk dance group (Retro) had been tarnished only four years ago during my first attempt at Boston's Šokių Šventė.

(I had to resign at the last minute due to illness and fatigue—I was “sick and tired” of the intense rehearsals, which had damaged my knees and almost put me in the hospital!)

Anyone who has practiced folk dancing knows how taxing it can be on the joints, as it requires hopping and jumping, skipping and twisting, spinning and turning for hours on end. Not only that, but memorizing intricate dance routines in Lithuanian is quite a challenge when you were born with two American, flat left feet.

However, as anyone can attest, we all have sacrificed the pawn to save the queen when it comes to love ... literally and figuratively! Don't get me wrong; I was stubborn and resisted as long as possible, but when a talented dancer had to exit due to his wife's critical illness, I finally capitulated and agreed to dance in my very first Šokių Šventė.

Ironically, this year's rehearsals were even more difficult and

intense than my last attempt. Whoever said “love is blind” forgot to mention deaf, dumb and mute!

Yet, on the other side of the litas coin, sacrifice does have its rewards. First, the routines, although longer in length and greater in number, proved to be excellent exercise, great for building character and socially satisfying.

Secondly, there was unexpected icing on the proverbial pyragas. Because of my relationship with the L.A. vadovė, who impressively also served as one of four Artistic Committee members, I was given *carte blanche* entrée into the behind-the-scenes production.

From dance configuration blueprints, which resembled the intricate patterns of an arena-size juosta, revised and redesigned a thousand times to conference calls and airline trips back and forth from L.A. to Chicago and Baltimore, the Artistic Committee worked tirelessly and sacrificed their personal lives for the greater good of the community.

If you have ever worked on a jigsaw puzzle, try to imagine fashioning a dozen of them together, where the pieces are missing and constantly moving, and you will get a sense of what it takes to create the first of many dance steps and routines.

Now remember, my perspective is from my personal relation-

ship with the vadovė. I can only imagine what the Artistic Director, Tomas Mikuckis, and the other committee members had to endure to build such an enormous project from the ground floor.

Ready? Fly with me. Fast forward to Baltimore ... Baltic More! As soon as my plane landed (four days prior to the Sunday event) I was thrust onto the masterful marathon of many moving parts.

Meeting the vadovė at the Hilton Hotel, I was immediately whisked away up the escalator to find dozens of volunteers preparing thousands of plastic bags filled with programs, brochures, tickets and souvenirs. With her committee hat on, the vadovė simultaneously met with several organizing members representing various cities and countries, who busily worked in tandem, setting up tables, signs, balloons, shirts, hats, flyers and schedules. Then she quickly introduced me to several dignitaries, including Linas Orentas, the festival chairman, as we jumped on an elevator stuffed with arriving Lithuanians from around the world. I felt like a fly on the wall of a speeding Lithuanian train.

After throwing my overnight bag in the hotel room, I rushed with the vadovė back down to the lobby to meet with her artistic director, Tomas, and her colleagues, the Artistic Committee members: Ramona Kaminskaitė, Giedrė Elekšytė-Knieža and Vilija Yžaitė, as well as Simona Užaitė, design director, all enthusiastic and energetic yet formidably focused and surprisingly mature for their collective young age.

With permission, I was invited to their exclusive “boardroom” meeting in the penthouse suite. This fly on the wall was about to witness genius in action.

Once inside their inner sanctum, I was privy to a birds-eye view of the vast Inner Harbor; the Orioles’ baseball stadium, Oriole Park at Camden Yards; and the panoramic Baltimore skyline. But more impressively, I observed, in close proximity, five dedicated members sitting at a conference table piled with volumes of organizational meeting memoranda and folders being methodically reconfigured, calibrated and synchronized, all vying for room at the table with an assortment of junk food and caffeinated soda. A new definition of a sugar high!

Without missing a beat, Tomas directed orders and eloquently supervised from the head of the table to the immediate committee members, who stapled voraciously. Simultaneously on his cell phone, he requested extra copies, and his proud Mamytė would rush in several minutes later with a stack of neatly piled pages ready to replace last-minute changes.

The captain of this ship even found time to instruct a maid who was navigating the halls of the penthouse, cleaning last night’s directives and picking up trashcans full of disposable ideas. Certainly “Šaukia Ten Tave Kelionė” (A Journey Calls You There)!

The meeting adjourned as soon as the last pages were fashioned in the coordinated folders and I followed the fearsome five out the door and down the hall as the following day’s agenda



Paul Trimakas and his dance partner, Laimutė Gaysuskas, backstage at Baltimore's Royal Farms Arena during this year's Sokių Šventė.

was being finally finalized for the fine tuning that would take place at the arena. Why was I the only one out of breath?

Thursday, Friday and Saturday rehearsals were as equally supervised by Tomas and his committee at the arena. Patiently instructing from his captain’s bridge at the top level of the arena stadium seats, Tomas calmly corrected and coached thousands of dancers as the four ladies choreographed his instructions via headphones and referenced the stapled papers devised at the penthouse. The mood was never frantic, although the task at hand could not have been more intimidating to this nervous fly on the wall. I was truly awe-inspired.

As a former theatrical and musical performer/composer, I empathized with the enormous task at hand and how well the event was coordinated considering the short three-day dress

rehearsal timeframe. It was all a testament to the amazing composure of the Artistic Committee and their director.

In addition to my envious perspective of the day-to-day events leading up to the final performance, I was invited to escort the vadovė to a formal awards dinner honoring Tomas and previous directors, various dignitaries, and a highly seasoned past choreographer and guest from Lithuania, Professor Laimutė Kisielienė. Sitting at the table with Laimutė, I sensed her creative passion that she exudes in her signature traditional dances, “Kubilinis” and “Ak, norėtum grįžti”(which I had the honor of dancing in part). Now I understood the importance of my vadovė’s painstaking detail in our rehearsal sessions back in Los Angeles. This fly’s swollen knees are blessed!

In this room were special placards commemorating previous Šokių Šventės, coordinated by Danguolė Varnienė, honoring their significance in regards to our cultural heritage. Here I witnessed the true value of this one-day event: One day that represents a celebration of our survival despite the totalitarian oppression that attempted to stifle a flame that burns in the heart of every Lithuanian dancer. A torch passed on from gen-

eration to generation that refused to allow darkness to obliterate its warmth. I believe the festival represented those ideals metaphorically as I stood with my dance partners, spinning the wheel of lights in the darkened arena.

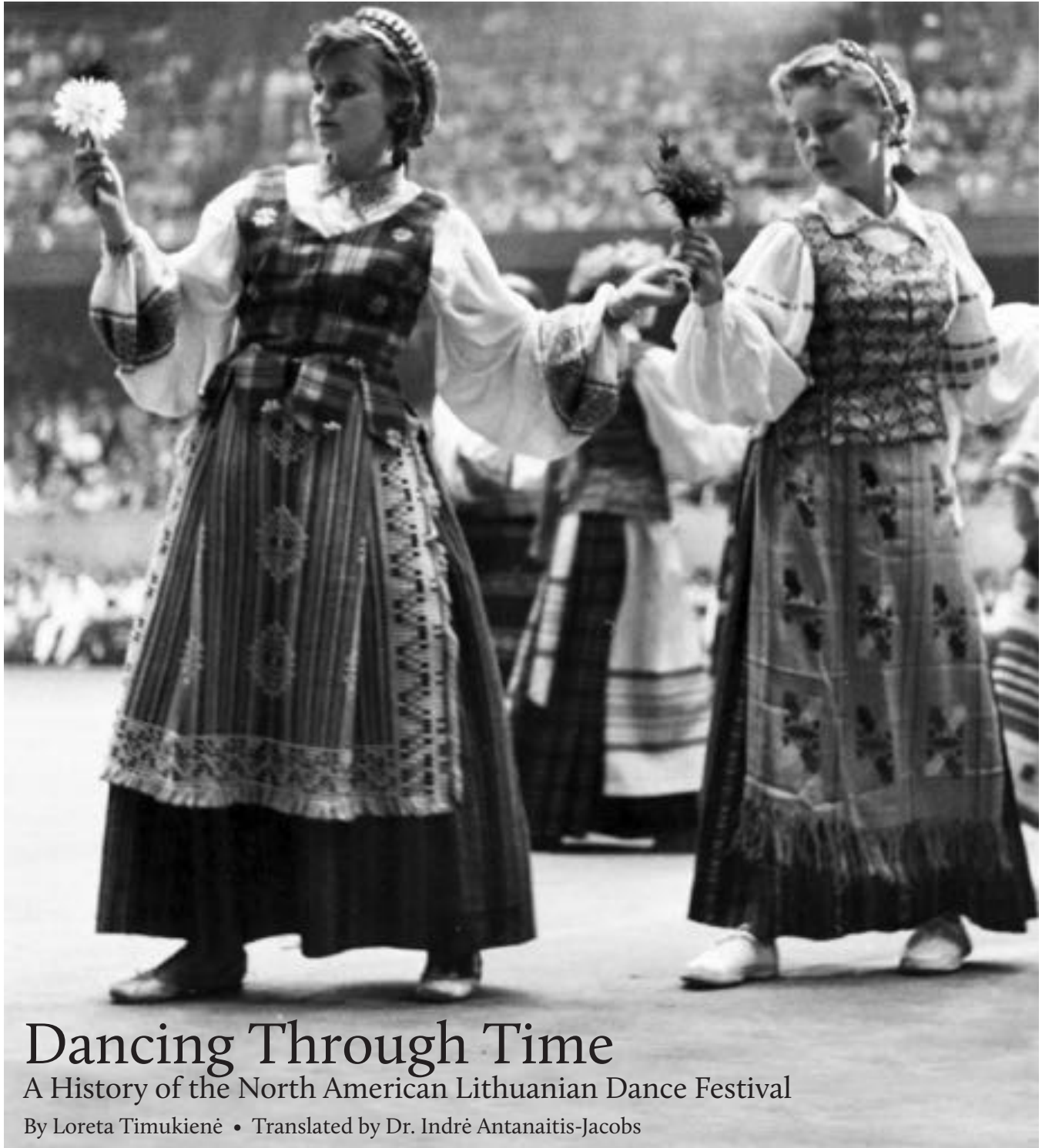
As the fly on the wall of this fast-moving train, I felt honored to catch a glimpse of this spectacular large ship that comes to port every four years: Flying over and around smiling children dressed in wreaths for the first time, buzzing past older women and men who were dancing together in their eighth, ninth and tenth dance festival, and landing on the shoulders of reacquainted friends backstage who shared memories and made plans for the next one.

Love is blind, but not forgetful. Ačiu, Sigita Barysienė (mano vadovė), for giving me a second chance.

Paul Trimakas is president of the Lithuanian Heritage Society, a non-profit organization for uniting individuals of Lithuanian descent and traditions. More information at www.iLoveLietuva.com, the Lithuanian Heritage Society’s cultural news and radio portal.



Retro dancers having fun imitating the Maryland crab.



Dancing Through Time

A History of the North American Lithuanian Dance Festival

By Loreta Timukienė • Translated by Dr. Indrė Antanaitis-Jacobs

In 1957, the Chicago chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. organized the first North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival. It was an historic and wildly successful event, marking the first of many subsequent festivals. That same year, the Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute - Lietuvių Tautinių Sokių Institutas (LTSI) was formed. Its mission is to

preserve and nurture the art of folk dancing together with its music, authentic costumes and traditions. The Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute, together with The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. and The Lithuanian Canadian Community, organized the folk dance festivals that have taken place approximately every four years since 1957.

I Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, 1957

Chicago, Illinois

1,100 dancers from 18 cities in the U.S. and Canada

29 dance groups

800 singers

7,000 spectators

Artistic director: Bruno Shotas

The first North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival was organized by Chicago's Lithuanians, since long ago the largest number of Lithuanians was concentrated here, and when Lithuanians began emigrating from DP camps in Germany, this was the first city where Lithuanian cultural activities were revived. The first Lithuanian Song Festival had occurred in Chicago on July 1, 1956, and on August 24 of that year, it was decided to prepare a dance festival as well. In less than a year, dances were recreated, largely from memory, with very little time to prepare.

While spirits were high and the dancers were dressed in colorful national costumes, many still wiped their eyes while singing the Lithuanian national anthem, wistfully remembering their homeland. Participants were welcomed by Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley. Cleveland's dance group Grandinė, led by Liudas Sagys, danced the Sadutė for the first time in Chicago. The program included an ensemble of Lithuanian zither players, who beautifully performed several musical compositions; a professional orchestra that played for the procession and dances; and an accordion.

This festival showed how Lithuanians manage to gather and organize events that allow for rejoicing and sharing in their art, even while being far from their homeland. The decision was made to organize such events every four years, and to invite dance groups from South America, Australia, and Europe. The need to train teachers, to provide dance descriptions and musical notes, and to familiarize dancers and teachers with Lithuanian folk art and history was clear.



Dancers at the I Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival.

II Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, 1963

Chicago, Illinois

Artistic Director: Liudas Sagys

1,043 dancers

34 dance groups

8,500 spectators

On the eve of the festival, 150 dancers, invited by Chicago's mayor and under the direction of Bruno Shotas, participated



New York folk dance group, Sadutė, at the second dance festival.

in the U.S. Independence Day celebration at Soldier Field in Chicago. The Festival began on Saturday evening with a gala at Chicago's Youth Center monument to those who died for Lithuania's freedom. In the evening, the Youth Center hosted a dance for the dancers to get acquainted.

The festival was even more grand than the first and the dancers were better prepared. Composer Professor Vladas Jakubėnas created a special Dancers' March to start the event. Artistic Director Liudas Sagys used an overall choreographic layout for the first time, and special dances depicted the passage of time. The appearance and speech in good Lithuanian of actress Rūta Lee Kilmonytė made a big impression on the young people. The celebration ended with the song *We Were Born Lithuanians*.

"Various wheels of dancers interwove, spun, and danced. Colorful, diversely patterned costumes shone. Such is the beautiful Lithuanian youth, which always were happy. The most popular dance was the Sadutė. Perhaps it drew most attention because of its distinctly lyrical, elegiac spirit. It was danced by girls in big groups, which helped track the undulating movements of the dance."

Darbininkas, 1963 No. 59

III Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, 1968

Chicago, Illinois

1,500 dancers

31 dance groups

10,000 spectators

Artistic director: Jadvyga Meiliūnaitė-Matulaitienė

Pre-festival activities included appearances by actors Aldona Eretaitė and Leonas Barauskas, plus ceremonies at the Freedom Monument before the program—the lighting of the ceremonial fire, placement of a wreath, presentation of speeches.

Festival guests included presidential candidate Richard Nixon's daughters, Tricia and Julie; Julie's fiancé, former President



III Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival Artistic Director Jadvyga Matulaitienė.

Eisenhower's grandson David; and Illinois Governor Samuel H. Shapiro. Dancers from abroad—the dance group Gintaras from Uruguay—participated in the festival for the first time.

The celebration started with Bronius Budriūnas's procession march Hey, Youth, conducted by the symphony orchestra. Artistic Director Jadvyga Meiliūnaitė-Matulaitienė prepared a beautiful and exciting dance layout; many beautiful patterns marked the dance floor, especially in the dance Aštuonytis.

IV Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, 1972

Chicago, Illinois

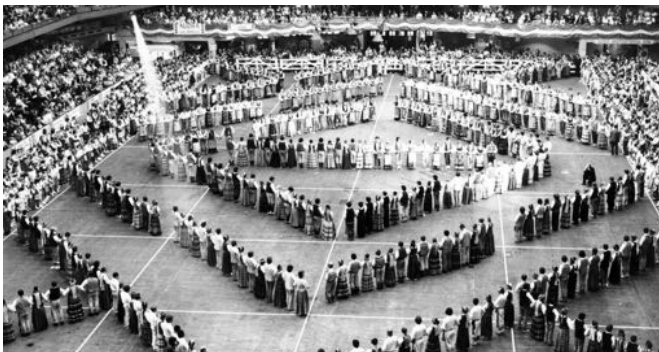
2,000 dancers from the U.S., Canada, South America and Germany

54 dance groups

13,000 spectators

Artistic director: Genovaitė Dumčiūtė-Breichmanienė

The opening of the festival occurred at the Youth Center; together with dancer representatives from other countries, special guest Marija Baronaitė-Grėbliūnienė lit the ceremonial fire for those who died for their homeland. A concert at Maria High School's auditorium included an appearance from



Dancers were neatly and beautifully aligned at the fourth festival. Photo: A Gulbinskas

overseas guests, most notably the men's quartet Baltija, from Germany. The festival was connected with the Second World Lithuanian Youth Congress.

Australia's Lithuanian basketball team, followed by the dancers carrying their group's names, marched into the amphitheatre in tune with Bronius Jonušas' resonating march composed specifically for the festival, using the lyrics of Bernardas Brazdžionis—Lithuania, for us you are one. Five groups from abroad participated. The festival was begun by First Lady Pat Nixon, who expressed her admiration for our folk dances. The festival ended with the dancers' departure to the melody of Suk, suk ratelį. A banquet occurred in the same amphitheatre after the festival, held in honor of the folk dance leaders and teachers. From an artistic standpoint, this festival was considered one of the most successful. It was featured on all the television stations as well as in major American newspapers and radio stations. After counting the festival's revenue and expenditure, the organizing committee presented the LAC National Executive Committee \$22,000.

V Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, 1976

Chicago, Illinois

1800 dancers

48 dance groups

60 folk instrument musicians, 96 singers, 30 professional American orchestra members.

Dancers came from Britain and Venezuela.

12,000 spectators

Artistic Director: Galina Gobienė

The crowd warmly received the veteran women dancers and distinguished guests: Illinois Governor Don Walker and his wife, Senator Charles Percy, Chicago Mayor's spokesman Jack Rilly. The festival began with a greeting from First Lady Betty Ford, who was presented with a traditional Lithuanian folk costume. At the end of the first part of the festival, a favorite American folk dance—the Virginia Reel—was danced in honor of the U.S. Bicentennial. Then the dancers formed the number 200, and the choir sang America the Beautiful. Matulienė's dance Piemenėlis, Breichmanienė's Aušrelė, and Gobienė's Apgavikai were danced at the festival for the first time.

A joint folk instrument orchestra played, which consisted of Cleveland's Čiurlionis ensemble's Lithuanian Zither Orchestra, the Stepas Kairys Orchestra of scouts from Toronto, Detroit's zither players from St. Butkus's Šauliai Company, and Chicago's Lithuanian Folk Instrument Ensemble.

A joint choir sang, which consisted of the ensemble Dainava, the Lithuanian Evangelical-Lutheran Home Parish Choir, the Chicago Lithuanian choir Pirmyn, the Chicago Lithuanian Opera Choir and Chicago Vyčiai Choir. The joint choir was prepared by musician Aloyzas Jurgutis. In speaking of this festival, Gobienė said: "Today, we embraced Lithuania with all our hearts."

VI Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, 1980

Chicago, Illinois

2,300 dancers

76 dance groups from the U.S., Canada, Brazil, Britain, West Germany

100 singers, 100 musicians

9,000 spectators

Artistic director: Nijolė Jasenaitė-Pupienė

Showcasing more than 2,200 dancers, this was—and still remains—the largest folk dance festival.

The festival unofficially began on July 3 with an honoring of the “father” of international folk dance—Vytautas Beliajus. The official opening of the festival was on July 5, concurrent with Lithuanian Day, which was held on Lithuanian Plaza Court in the Marquette Park area. Reminiscent of a great religious festival in a free homeland, Lithuanian Day received about 10,000 visitors who enjoyed a folk art exhibit, and Lithuanian food and products.

The festival began with the march of the dancers, speeches of guests and organizers, and the uplifting Suktinis, followed by dance after dance. Sadutė made a lasting impression—jumping figures poured out to the edges and the most beautiful wreaths grew into wheels, rising to the top after having made a wonderful flower bouquet. As usual, the festival ended with Malūnas, accompanied by the audience’s thundering applause. When the dances ended, a large green circle with the words “See you in 1984” made its appearance in the center of the arena. At the very end, 10,000 stood up and sang Lietuva brangi, referred to by many participants as the second Lithuanian anthem.

VII Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, 1984

Cleveland, Ohio



Children's dance group at the sixth—and largest—folk dance festival.

2,000 dancers

50 ensembles (Brazil's group Nemunas participated with 46 dancers)

7,000 spectators

Artistic Director: Jadvyga Reginienė

This festival was the first held in a different location—at Richfield Coliseum outside of Cleveland, Ohio.

U.S. President Ronald Reagan greeted those gathered by phone, and Cleveland Mayor George Voinovich attended the



VII Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival opening event at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Lithuanian Parish in Cleveland. Photo: V. Bacevičius

festival. The celebration had 22 dances. The joint choir led nine dances in song, which diversified the program. One novelty was a rather large, raised screen, which showed the entire Coliseum and all the dancers. For the first time in festival history, the dancers and the audience did the “wave” together—totally unplanned, they began jumping up, following each other, making waves.

VIII Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, 1988

Hamilton, Ontario

2,000 dancers

Groups from the U.S., Canada, Australia, Germany, South America and Poland

10,000 spectators

Artistic directors: Rita and Juozas Karasiejus, Genovaitė Dumčiūtė-Breichmanienė and Liudas Sagys

This was the first festival held in Canada. The daily paper Hamilton Spectator ran a special edition about the first local Lithuanian dance festival, and immediately sold out 25,000 copies. Elvyra Bajoraitienė organized a folk art exhibit in the Botanical Garden on the city outskirts, where singers Anita Pakalniškytė and Jonas Vaškevičius gave a concert.

On Sunday, a procession walked to the center of the city. The festival began with the marching in of the dancers, the bringing in of the flags, honoring of the guests, and then the entire coliseum suddenly broke out into dance, music and song. Sagys found Gudavičius's dance after Kur Šešupė teka, and also made a corresponding floor layout design, which made an impressive beginning for the festival. The Malūnas (Breichmanienė's composition) happily danced at the end of the first part, and after dancing the festival's final dance, the Suktinis, the dancers stopped and spelled out the word LIETUVA (composition by Sagys); when Čiuberkis exclaimed “I am alive here!”, the dancers replied “LIETUVA!” When the announcer repeated “I am alive there... I am alive everywhere...”, the dancers again exclaimed “LIETUVA!” The third time the word LIETUVA rang out, the choir sang “Lietuviais esame mes gime (We have been born Lithuanians)”. Thus the spectators saw an emotional ending to the festival.

The festival was filmed for the first time by professional filmmakers, and the video shared around the world.

IX Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, 1992

Chicago, Illinois

2,200 dancers

53 dance groups from the U.S., Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Germany—and free Lithuania!

8,000 spectators.

Artistic Director: Dalia Dzikiene

For the very first time, a folk dance group from Lithuania—Vetrungė—joined the festival. Guests from Lithuania included Premier Gediminas Vagnorius, Culture and Education Minister Darius Kuolys and Vice Minister Audrius Antanaitis.

It was clear from the very beginning of preparations for the Ninth Folk Dance Festival, that this had to be a joyous festival, as our nation was now free and guests were expected from Independent Lithuania.



More than 2,000 dancers participated in the IX Festival. Photo: Martynas Vidzbelis

Artistic Director Dalia Dzikiene led the processional march, and accepted the festival gift brought from Lithuania—a specially woven sash, symbolizing the real possibility for all Lithuanians to come together, now that the Iron Curtain had fallen.

While many dance themes in the first part of the program regarded outside work or the farmers' daily labor, to the festival's participants and spectators they symbolized almost 50 years of tireless work and care given while striving for Lithuania's freedom. The first part ended with the Malūnas, which always roused the spectators. The joy of completion was reflected in the program's second part, a carefree fury of amusement – all joined in a whirl of happiness that our nation was free again, marching on the road of an independent life.

The many-colored dancers were led from one dance's complex figures to the next by a 40-member wind instrument orchestra, good directing, and strong dance rhythm, sometimes

accompanied by the joint choir. Schoolchildren, students, and veterans danced 22 dances. The Vetrungė dancers of Klaipėda's Conservatory stood out for the elegance of their dance. The festival especially impressed the guests from Lithuania, where a different kind of dance festival gets organized. The program ended with the Suktinis, and the last choreographed dance was Brangiausias spalvos (Dearest Colors), by the words and music of Kęstutis Vasiliauskas, with the orchestra, choir and dancers all holding small yellow, green and red flags. So passed the Ninth Festival—the celebration of all our joy. It was like a miracle, because once the iron curtain fell, the entire world saw Lithuania's resolve and love of freedom.

X Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, 1996

Chicago, Illinois

2,060 dancers

47 dance groups from the U.S., Canada, Argentina, Brazil and Lithuania

8,000 spectators

Artistic Director: Violeta Smieliauskaitė-Fabianovich

All past festivals and the newly knit ties with Lithuania were reflected in the Tenth Festival's theme: "The Tenth Festival spins us into the Lithuanian wheel!"

This festival featured music and song recordings from Lithuania, rather than an orchestra, choir or conductor. All music recordings were made in the Vilnius Recording Studio and featured several ensembles: Lietuva, Dainava (from Alytus), Ūla, and others.

As if to summarize all previous festivals, much older dances were danced. Despite a variety of glitches with the recorded music, the festival was a success.

The show continued further—a basketball tournament between Lithuania's and Croatia's Olympic teams was arranged on July 7, and a post-festival concert was held at the Youth Center on July 9.



X Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival Artistic Director Violeta Smieliauskaitė-Fabianovich, second from left.

XI Folk Dance Festival, 2000

Toronto, Ontario

1,678 dancers

42 groups

Artistic Directors: Rita and Juozas Karasiejus

Choreographer Laimutė Kisielienė, who lived in Vilnius but often spent summers in Mississauga, Ont., (near Toronto) helped create the festival's program. She had successfully led three dance festival appearances in Lithuania. Music for the festival was recorded in Lithuania, and was supplemented by the orchestra of the folk ensemble Žilvitis from Kaunas.

The festival had no processional and no work dances, and was divided into several parts. The program began with the prologue Land of Our Ancestors, with the first two dances dedicated to the veneration of the hearth and of fire, thereby returning to pagan times. In the second part, When I was little, the children and young students danced five dances. Wedding dances were danced in the third part, Now the rings have been exchanged. The Wedding Dance, professionally danced by Vyautas Magnus University's ensemble Žilvitis, was much appreciated by the audience. After a break, three dances were performed where the entire family, from youngest to oldest, all danced together. The theme On my father's estate was chosen for the festival's ending, and more rarely performed dances were chosen for it, the last of which was Suktinis. The spectators missed the traditional Malūnas and Blezdingėlė.



The XI festival program began with the prologue Land of Our Ancestors.

XII Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, 2004

Chicago, Illinois

1,500 dancers from the U.S., Canada, Brazil and Lithuania

40 groups

5,000 spectators

Artistic Director: Rasa Šoliūnaitė-Poskočimienė

After an eight-year break, the Dance Festival returned to Chicago. The opening ceremonies occurred on June 30 at Daley



Artistic Director Rasa Šoliūnaitė-Poskočimienė (right) celebrates as the XII Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival concludes. Photo: Jonas Kuprys

Plaza. Guests included acting President of Lithuania Arturas Paulauskas, Ambassador of Lithuania to the United States Vygaudas Ušackas, basketball player Šarūnas Marčiulionis and others. Lemont's Spindulys made an appearance in the program, as did guests from Lithuania—Nida's Kalnapusė and the Lithuanian zither ensemble Gabija.

The festival followed the traditional plan; everything that had been dismissed in the XI Dance Festival was brought back.

The program began with a welcome dance Labas vakaras, sveteliai, and a dance with the same name was danced in the first part by students, children, youth. The audience met the Blezdingėlė and Subatėlė with clapping, and when the Malūnas music started, the audience howled with delight. More than half of the dances for the second part, called Vakaruškos, were performed by the veteran and adult group dancers. It was interesting to watch the 50- to 70-year-old dancers energetically spinning in the dance's circle. Spectators enjoyed the wooden shoe dance called Pakeltkojis performed by male students, and the Pasiutpolkė danced by other students.

XIII Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival

Los Angeles, California

July 4-6, 2008

1,100 dancers (from 22 U.S. cities; Hamilton and Toronto, Canada; and Lithuania);

3,000 spectators

Artistic Director: Danguole Razutyte-Varnienė

West Coast Lithuanians organized a festive and joyful celebration that included 28 folk dances, some that had become traditional and were well-liked by the spectators and dancers, and a few suggested by Lithuanian choreographers. While learning the latter, the dancers had the opportunity to get familiar with the repertoire occurring in festivals in Lithuania.

The program, which was made of two parts—Spring, The Sower of Joy and The Festoon of Summer Work—began with the traditional Kuprinė. Fast dances, like a kaleidoscope's symmetrical patterns, were alluring to the eye and ear. Dignified,

elegant dances like Blezdingėlė, Dek, ugnie and others, as well as the Vainikų dance, created by Ona Razutienė and danced for the first time at the festival, captivated the spectators with graceful, harmonious movements to the lyrical music.

A pleasant surprise were the rooster, goat and rye dolls, as well as sculptures of a pot and cauldron made by artists in the group GIRO; when brought out into the center of the floor, the artwork clarified the themes of the dances. The festival's design was augmented by lights and other decorative elements on the dance floor.

The festival attracted not only dancers of Lithuanian descent, but also Americans who danced in the Kansas City group Aidas and those from Durham, N.C.'s, group Šokis. The program joyfully ended with all dancers performing the ever-popular Malūnas, with smaller windmills turning alongside the big ones!

XIV Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, 2012

Boston, Massachusetts

1,800 dancers

50 dance groups from the U.S., Canada, Lithuania, Poland, Great Britain, Sweden and Brazil

6,000 spectators

Artistic Directors: Romas Jonušonis and Vida Brazaitytė

The 2012 festival in Boston marked the first time this festival took place on the East Coast.

Vilnius University's Song and Dance Ensemble lifted the spirits of dancers and participants on Thursday night. The dance teacher welcoming evening at the Sheraton was well attended. The Foreign Affairs Ministry's Foreign Lithuanian Department Director Arvydas Daunoravičius, Lithuanian ambassadors to the United States and Canada Žygimantas Pavilionis and Gintė Damušytė participated in the festival. Dr. Vidmantas Mačiulskis, a choreographer from Lithuania participating as a guest, did not hide that he was participating in the festival to gain experience at organizing such events.

"Fly, fly to Lithuania; You stork, white stork; There into the tall aspen; A nest has been placed for you..."—the festival's concert program, *I Rose With the Sun*, began with this prologue, danced by ballerina Mantė Baliutavičiūtė. The entire arena was overtaken by landing cranes (girl students) afterward. The second part of the festival began with Kupolinės and an invitation to practice the spells of St. John's. Two of the program's parts—*Rise, Earth and Let's Bring In the Harvest with a Plait of Dances*—included 25 dances, many of them new and modern. The festival was nicely diversified by the Vilnius University Song and Dance Ensemble. America's famous Boston Crabs did not stay on the sidelines, either—a couple of them dressed up in the nation's tricolors and crawled over to the Agganis arena.



XIV festival artistic directors Vida Brazaitytė and Romas Jonušonis.



Dancers form a wheel at the XIV festival. Photo: Saulius Kuprys

a taste of lithuania

Šašlykai

By Jana Sirusaitė Motivans



Shashlik, originally a Georgian speciality, is popular throughout Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia. It is marinated meat, cooked on skewers over an open fire, served at social gatherings all summer long. Shashlik is to Eastern Europeans what hamburgers and hot dogs are to North Americans.

Traditionally, shashlik is prepared with lamb, but in Lithuania it is called šašlykas and prepared with pork. Šašlykai are cooked outdoors over a wood-burning fire in specially built brick or stone grills or on more conventional charcoal grills such as we would use in the States. Gas grills are practically non-existent in the Baltics.

Although šašlykai are most often enjoyed at outdoor cookouts, they are also available in casual restaurants called šašlykinės, usually located near popular weekend destinations or at rest stops along the highways. The first time I ate šašlykai was at a šašlykinė near a lake on Žaliųjų Ežerų gatvė (Green Lakes Street) just outside of Vilnius, many years ago. Since then I have enjoyed šašlykai while visiting relatives all over Lithuania and Latvia during the long Baltic summer evenings.

Grilled šašlykai are served simply, with just fresh garden cucumbers and tomatoes and slices of dark Lithuanian bread, and are often accompanied by shots of vodka!

Happy grilling!



Šašlykai

Yields approximately ten 12-inch skewers.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds pork (I used tenderloin)
- 1 large onion
- Juice from 1 large lemon (3 tablespoons)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper

1. Cut the meat into 1-inch cubes. Peel the onion and cut it also into 1-inch chunks.



2. Place the meat and onion pieces into a large ceramic (not metal) bowl. Add the lemon juice, olive oil, bay leaf, salt and pepper to the bowl. Mix thoroughly to coat all the pieces evenly.



3. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and marinate for a minimum of three hours at room temperature, or overnight in the refrigerator.
4. When you are ready to grill, spear the marinated meat and onion onto skewers, placing one piece of onion between each piece of meat. For more even cooking, do not squeeze the meat too tightly together.



5. Grill for about 10 minutes, turning skewers to brown on all sides.



Lituanica Wins the LAUNA Championship for the 15th Time!

By Dainius Ruževičius

Translated by Gabija Barnard



LAUNA basketball MVP Žygimantas Riauka, center for the 15-time championship Lituanica team of Lemont, Ill. Lituanica defeated Toronto's Aušra team 82:61 in the final.

At the end of May 2016, the 66th LAUNA (Lithuanian Athletic Union of North America) games took place in Lemont, Ill. Once again, the men's basketball A category was won by the home team, Lituanica. The LAUNA champions were awarded the Lithuanian Foundation Cup for the third time in a row and for the 15th time overall!

The repeat winners of the annual championship defeated Toronto's Aušra, their rivals, 82:61 in the final. This year, the most valuable player (MVP) was center Žygimantas Riauka, who has played for Zaragoza's Simply Olivar. Laurynas R. Misevičius, LAUNA chairman, presented Riauka with an original prize: the

official Lithuanian Basketball Federation T-shirt for fans of the Lithuanian national team, which reads "Mes už Lietuvą" (We're for Lithuania).

Third place went to Juodkrantė, champions of the Chicago Lithuanian Basketball League (CLBL), who defeated Chicago's Atletas 72:64. Traditionally, the winning team chooses which Lithuanian school receives the cash prize established by the Lithuanian Foundation. This year, the winners selected Žiburys Lithuanian School (the headmistress of which is Vida Pekorienė) in the Motor City—the city that was represented by the team Kovas. The team includes Juozas Pranckevičius, the son of Pranas Pranckevičius, the administrator of the LAUNA website who died suddenly last year. Detroit lost to Toronto's Vytis by only one point, 49:50, in the men's B category final.

Chicago's Alytus proved strongest in the men's C category, beating Toronto's Aušra-2 by 77:65 in the final.

In the women's final, both competing teams were from the Windy City: Lituanica and Marquette Park, the latter team playing in the LAUNA games for the very first time. Unlike in the group stage (24:35), Marquette Park, led by Larana Stropus, proved to be the stronger team and beat Lituanica 45:32.

In the youth (under 18) basketball tournament, Chicago's Lituanica turned out to be the superior team: they crushed the hopes of both Detroit's Kovas and Lithuanian visiting team Kretinga.

Deivis Pavasaris: Strongest in Table Tennis

The Lithuanian World Center wasn't just the site of basketball tournaments; table tennis enthusiasts also gathered to compete for the Edmundas R. Čapas Cup, founded in honor of the player who died last year during a LAUNA table tennis singles match. The cup ended up in the hands of New Yorker Deivis Pavasaris, who, along with Canadian Eugenijus Krikščiūnas, also won the doubles tournament.

In the singles tournament, the silver medal went to Gediminas Žilys, and Mindaugas Bieliauskas took third place. Along with his namesake, Mindaugas Bindokas, he also won the silver medal in the doubles tournament, leaving Dainius Mocius and Tomas Povilanskas in third place.

LAUNA Games Moving to Canada

After a three-year-long break, the annual LAUNA games returned to Chicago, the capital of émigré Lithuanians. LAUNA chairman Misevičius, who was a great help to Auriimas Matulevičius, the founder of CLBL, Dr. Donatas Siliūnas

and Svajūnas Masilionis in organizing the games, was pleased about the exceptionally favorable conditions for basketball and table tennis in the World Lithuanian Center in Lemont. He also thanked the management team of the Center, as well as the volunteers, the participants and the audience.

Misevičius made a special mention of the fact that more and more American and Canadian female basketball teams are showing an interest in participating in the LAUNA games, which adds to the charm and significance of the games.

In addition to noting great progress made by the organizational committee of the basketball championship since the LAUNA games of 2013, Misevičius was also happy to see the younger generation taking part in organizing the tournament—namely, Domas Matulevičius, Kristupas Aleknavičius and Artūras Čaplinskas. There were even two 8-year-olds who helped to prepare the medals for the winning athletes: little Deimantė Ruževičiūtė and Medutis Bytautas!

Next year, the LAUNA games are set to take place in Canada. Perhaps the games will be held in Hamilton and Toronto/Mississauga, where in late May or early June it would be possible to organize tournaments for all three age groups: seniors (over 35 years old), teenagers and children (under 16 years old), and adults.

However, the most important sporting event of 2017 for the Lithuanians of the world is, without a doubt, going to be the X Sporto žaidynės (10th Sports Tournament), which is set to be



Preparing the awards for the champions, Laurynas R. Misevičius was aided by 8-year-old Chicago Lithuanians Deimantė Ruževičiūtė (right) and Medutis Bytautas (left).

held in Kaunas between June 29 and July 3, 2017. On this occasion, one of the best delegations of American and Canadian athletes is going to be sent to Lithuania. Those interested in competing in any of the 30 different sports tournaments are welcome to contact the head of the CLBL Aurimas Matulevičius or LAUNA chairman Laurynas R. Misevičius.

Photographs courtesy of LAUNA.



Participants of the 2016 LAUNA table tennis championship with referee Gintas Krivickas (center).

The Lithuanians of Portland Come Together on the Day of Mourning and Hope

By Ingrida Misevičienė, Chair of the Portland Chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community
Translated by Gabija Barnard



On June 14, 2016, the Lithuanian community of Portland commemorated the Day of Mourning and Hope at the National Sanctuary of Our Sorrowful Mother, a Catholic shrine that was established back in 1924.

Despite the heavy rain, the Lithuanian community gathered at the foot of a wayside shrine created by one of the most renowned émigré architects, Jonas Mulokas. The wayside shrine isn't just the

first national and religious structure of this nature constructed here in the 20th century—it also symbolizes the Lithuanian pres-

ence in the state of Oregon, as well as the tragic deportation of Lithuanians to the plains of Siberia.

The Lithuanians of the City of Roses shared memories of the deportations of their close family and relatives, listened to the history of the Lithuanian wayside shrine as told by the previous district chairman Vilius Žalpys, and sang the songs of the exiles in Siberia. The congregation was also greeted by Thomas J. Fullmer, the head of the Grotto Sanctuary. Fullmer noted that it was Lithuanians who started the “alley” of wayside shrines that has recently experienced an increase in both visitors and monuments connected with the religious history of diverse cultures.

The head of the Grotto Park also delivered some good news—thanks to the initiative undertaken by Laurynas R. Micevičius and Thomas J. Fullmer himself, the Grotto gift shop is already stocking postcards with the image of the Lithuanian wayside shrine, and is going to start selling magnets and candles with the image as well.



Ethnic Communities Highlighted at Cultural Heritage Mass

By Rimās Gedeika

Photos by Antanas Krušinskas

Philadelphia, like many other large American cities, comprises many diverse ethnic communities. Wanting to bring them together to celebrate Holy Mass under one roof, Philadelphia's Archdiocese, 19 years ago, initiated an annual Cultural Heritage Mass, the purpose of which was to show both the unity and diversity of its faithful.

This year, the Cultural Heritage Mass was celebrated on March 19, 2016, in the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul. Thirty ethnic communities were represented by members dressed in their national costumes, carrying banners in a procession up the center aisle toward the altar. It was an impressive sight!

One of the participating communities was Philadelphia's Lithuanian community. Others were from Haiti, Jamaica, Ghana, Liberia, Pakistan, Philippians, Korea, Vietnam, India, Poland and Brazil, just to name a few.

Archbishop Charles Chaput, himself a Native American, celebrated the Mass assisted by several concelebrants, one of whom was Father Peter Burkauskas, pastor of St. Andrew's Lithuanian parish.

The Mass was celebrated in 16 different languages. Eight choirs sang hymns in their native language. One of the most spirited hymns was sung by the Haitian choir. At first I was uncomfortable hearing a familiar hymn being sung in a rhythmic, Caribbean beat accompanied by loud percussion instruments. However, in a matter of few minutes, the beat captured my soul and I became one with the spirit of the Caribbean!



Indian girls interpreting a liturgical hymn.

In contrast to the loud, passionate, island beat, girls from the Indian community performed a gentle, smooth, flowing liturgical dance during the offertory profession.

The number of ethnic communities participating in the Heritage Mass has not only increased in size, but also changed in composition. In the beginning, the majority of ethnic groups came from Europe; now, in the past five years, the majority are from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, India and South America, reflecting the changing face of the Catholic Church world-wide.



Members of Philadelphia's Lithuanian-American community with the banner they carried in the processional. From left, Danutė Gedeika, Daiva Kazlauskas, Daina Krivickas, Teresė Gečys, Roma Krušinskas and Angelė Puodžiūnas.



Father Peter Burkauskas of St. Andrew's Lithuanian Church (center), concelebrated the Cultural Heritage Mass with priests from other ethnic parishes.

Sport Is Yet Another Link That Connects the Lithuanians of the World



Kaunas Deputy Mayor Vasilijus Popovas (right) presents a letter of thanks and the John Vileišis medal to Laurynas R. Misevičius "for strengthening the image of the city and contributing to the cultural life of Kaunas." Photo: Saulius Strazdas

On May 20, 2017, the first academic conference "Lithuanian World Sports History and Vision for the Future" was held at the Lithuanian Sports University (LSU). The conference was organized by the World Lithuanian Sports Association, the LSU and the Olympic Academy of Lithuania, with the help of the Lithuanian Athletic Union of North America (LAUNA).

"This excellent event is for those individuals who promote Lithuanian sports not only in Lithuania, but also abroad. We are always proud of the performances our athletes give in the Olympic Games, as well as in European and World championships, but too often do we forget the Lithuanian sport organizations and the exceptional athletes in émigré communities. Even though they are scattered throughout the world, they try to maintain their national identities through sport," stated Associate Professor Artūras Poviliūnas, president of the World Lithuanian Sports Association.

The conference attracted many honorable guests: former President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus; Prof. Vytautas Landsbergis; LAUNA chairman Laurynas R. Misevičius from the United States; World Lithuanian Community board member Gediminas Karoblis from Norway; general director of the Department of Physical Education and Sports, Edis Urbanavičius; and many others.

Remembering his life as an émigré, President Adamkus said that "sport was a powerful, unifying, cultivating force that helped to preserve the Lithuanian spirit in the younger generation of émigrés. I'm proud to have been involved in the work of Lithuanian sports organizations from the very start."

Having summarized the course of the World Lithuanian sports movement from the very first national championship to present day, Poviliūnas emphasized the necessity of making an active effort to unite the various sports organizations scattered across the globe, as well as the importance of organizing a World Lithuanian Sports Tournament (WLST) in Lithuania every four years.

In 2017, the 10th WLST is set to take place in Kaunas. The tournament hopes to attract around 3,000 athletes from around the world. Misevičius noted that the 10th WLST would take place in his hometown and promised the audience that the upcoming championship was sure to be the best in history. Poviliūnas' report on the history, the present and the future prospects of the largest union of émigré amateur athletes fascinated most of the audience. Misevičius also talked about the close ties that the LAUNA has with the Lithuanian embassies in the U.S. and Canada, with the Lithuanian Community of South America, with the Museum of Sport in Kaunas, and with the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center (LRSC), which recently arranged a unique exhibition "Sport in the Lives of American Lithuanians." The LRSC also contributed to Misevičius' report by supplying him with rare archive photographs and other information on the history of émigré sport kept in their archives.

Visvaldas Matijošaitis, the mayor of Kaunas, awarded the brass medal of Jonas Vileišis [independence signatory and mayor of Kaunas during the interwar period] to Misevičius, along with other organizers of the first academic conference "Lithuanian World Sports History and Vision for the Future."

Professor Landsbergis said that "it would be nice if we could have national championship every day—not at the Darius and Girėnas Stadium, but in the hearts of all Lithuanians and in the work of Lithuanian sports clubs. The World Lithuanian sports organizations should collaborate more often, so as to help young Lithuanians abroad stay connected to their homeland." Other things discussed at the conference included the ties that sport creates between Lithuania and its expat communities, the course of Lithuanian sport in Germany and South America, starting from its origins and ending with the future prospects, the development of Lithuanian bodybuilding, and the input of émigré Lithuanians into the history of Lithuanian basketball.

During the conference, President Adamkus and Professor Landsbergis received honorary memberships of the World Lithuanian Sports Association for their active, sincere and tireless work in the World Lithuanian sports community and their dedication, love and respect for their homeland and its people.

LAUNA news release, translated by Gabija Barnard. Photographs courtesy of LSU.

Our Partisans Honored

By Aleksandras Radžius

A beautiful, impressive and uncommon wreath honored our partisans on June 10, 2016, during the annual ceremony at the Victims of Communism Monument in Washington, D.C.

Although Lithuanian partisan living historians had been present at the annual ceremony, during the 2015 event, reenactor Visvydas Matulis suggested that we also lay a wreath in honor of our partisans.

So, we contacted the administrators of the Victims of Communism Foundation and got ourselves added to the list of organizations placing wreaths at the monument.

Living historian Vytautas Pakalniškis made a wreath similar to those that accompanied the January 13 Vilnius television tower victims to their final resting place.

When it was our turn to bring the wreath forward this year, reenactors Visvydas Matulis and Aleksandras Radžius carried the wreath. Vytautas Pakalniškis followed with our tricolors. Joining us was Raman Vasiliuk, depicting a Byelorussian partisan.



At the Victims of Communism Monument, from the right: Vytautas Pakalniškis holding our tri-colors, Aleksandras Radžius and Visvydas Matulis depicting Lithuanian partisans and Raman Vasiliuk depicting a Byelorussian partisan. Photo: Peteris Alunans

And so, four partisan reenactors, three Lithuanian and one Byelorussian, ceremoniously and with dignity, honored our post-war partisans.

House Baltic Caucus Welcomes New Members



Rep. Andy Barr



Rep. Julia Brownley

Two additional members of U.S. House of Representatives have joined the House Baltic committee recently: Rep. Andy Barr (R-Ky.) and Rep. Julia Brownley (D-Calif.).

Rep. Barr has been a member of the House of Representatives since 2013. He is on the Committee of Financial Services and on the Republican Study Committee.

He has co-sponsored House Resolution 469 - Urging North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member countries to meet or exceed the two percent gross domestic product commitment to spending on defense.

Rep. Brownley has been a member of the House of Representatives since 2013. She is on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

She has co-sponsored H.R.624 - The Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, that directs the President to impose U.S. entry and property sanctions against any foreign person who is responsible for gross violations of internationally recognized human rights committed against individuals in any foreign country.

current events

Security

... The NATO European Phased Adaptive Approach missile defense system added a new component, the Aegis Ashore system, in Deveselu, Romania. A similar component was started in Redzikowo, Poland, near the Baltic Sea and is expected to be operational in 2018. It is within 155 miles (250 km) of Kaliningrad, the Russian military enclave on the Baltic. The radar is located in Turkey. The Czech Republic pulled out of its agreement to host a component.

... The website of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry was hacked three times in the past several months at times that corresponded to raised tensions with Russia: the support of the Savchenko List of individuals involved in the prosecution of the captured Ukrainian pilot, the meeting of the World Congress of Tatars in Vilnius and, most recently, the stand of the Seimas against the nuclear power plant being built in Astravets, Belarus. The website stopped working because of the cyber attack.

... NATO announced that it would deploy four multinational battalions to the Baltics and Poland on a rotational basis and discussed forming a Romanian-led multinational brigade to defend the Black Sea area. Over 5,000 troops from seven NATO allies participated in "Iron Wolf-16" military exercises in the Training Range in Pabradė, 60 km (38 miles) north of Vilnius.

... Russia said that it would create four divisions in its southwest region to meet the build-up on its borders. As a frame of reference, the NATO Commander, Danish Colonel Jakob Sogard Larson, said that in 2014 Russia mustered 100,000 troops on the border of the Baltics.

... Russia has launched the first rocket from its new Vostochny Cosmodrome 3,500 miles east of Moscow in the Amur region of Siberia. It will phase out its use of the original Baikonur facility in now independent Kazakhstan, which it leases for about \$115 million per year.

... Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė expressed confidence in America irrespective of who is elected President in November, saying, "I'd like to send a message back saying: we trust America no matter what president America has. America has always defended nations that were attacked and it will defend." Her comments came in response to candidate Donald Trump's contention that he would not automatically defend the Baltic nations if Russia attacked them. She went on to say, "With Britain withdrawing from the EU... responsibility for stability in Europe will increasingly fall on the shoulders of Germany—not only for economic stability but also for security. ... No matter what we think about elections in the U.S., we can witness the strategic direction the United States will hand over more security responsibility to Europeans."

... General Ben Hodges, Commander of U.S. ground forces in Europe, agreed with an assessment of the Anaconda-16 exercise in Poland that Russian forces could capture the capitals of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania within 36 to 60 hours because of the inability to move heavy equipment from western Europe to the Baltic countries and the likelihood that all communications were being monitored by Russia.

... Lithuania has started to take delivery of 16 German 155 mm self-propelled howitzers.

... Under NATO, Germany will deploy a battalion of 600 to 1,000 troops to Lithuania; Canada will deploy troops to Latvia; the U.K. will deploy to Estonia; and the U.S. will lead troops to Poland.

... The Baltic Eye 2016 II exercise includes four L-159 combat aircraft from the Czech Republic that are in training for intervention against planes violating airspace.

... The Baltic Times reports that a member of the Russian Federal Security Service has been detained on attempts to recruit persons to plant listening devices in President Grybauskaitė's office and home.

... Reuters reports that Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has replaced the Baltic Fleet Commander and several other senior officers because of recent dangerous maneuvers by Russian planes near the U.S. destroyer USS Donald Cook.

Business

... In the wake of the British vote to exit the European Union (Brexit), Lithuania is making a move to attract British automakers to the Kaunas region, where there are established technical education and production facilities. Almost 60 percent of the autos produced in Britain in 2015 were for export to the EU. Toyota, Nissan and BMW (including Mini and Rolls Royce) encouraged voters to choose to stay in the EU, but this was ignored.

... Denmark's Dovista Group plans on investing 50 million euros in a door and window plant in Marijampolė's Free Economic Zone in southern Lithuania. They plan on ramping up production in the next four years and employ 300. Dovista, which currently employs 4,000 in their door and window operations, is part of the Danish company VKR Holdings, which has combined employment of 13,500 distributed over 40 countries.

... Hilton Worldwide plans to have properties in each of the Baltic capitals by the end of 2018. This summer they opened a Hilton Garden Inn in Tallinn Park, Estonia. In late 2017 they plan on opening a property in Riga's old town and by the end of 2018 they plan on opening a property on Gediminas Avenue in Vilnius under a franchise agreement with EIKA, a prominent real estate developer.

... Lithuania is increasing its trade and cultural exchanges with China as part of China's "16 + 1" initiative. The 16 Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries are Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia. Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius met with a member of China's State Council to discuss multilateral trade between Lithuania and China. He stressed that Lithuania adheres to China's "One-China Policy" with regard to Taiwan. To some degree China's "16+ 1" eastern orientation competes with the European Union's western orientation. The Chinese company, China Merchants Group (CMG), already has offices in Vilnius and Klaipėda. Lithuania plans on exporting dairy products, beef and high-tech equipment such as lasers. Invest Lithuania and Invest Longua (in Shenzhen, China) have signed a memorandum of understanding related to Chinese interest in developing industrial parks in Lithuania. China has been invited to the bi-annual Life Sciences Baltic Forum scheduled for September 14-15, 2016, in Vilnius.

... Grigo Klaipėdos Kartonas AB, manufacturer of cardboard paper products in Klaipėda, has contracted with Voith Paper to double its production capacity within five years while reducing the use of energy, water and fiber. The company was formed in 1898 and is one of the oldest companies in Lithuania. Voith Paper of Germany has extensive expertise in the paper industry.

... U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Michael Scuse met with the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Raimundas Karoblis to discuss the ramifications of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) in reducing tariffs on Lithuanian meat, dairy and fish products. The trade sanctions against Russia have hurt Lithuanian exports, and new markets are being sought. Recent exports to the U.S. have been growing about 50 percent per year.

Science

... The Kaunas University of Technology opened a Fabrication Laboratory workshop including sections for Industrial Electronics, Avionics (aircraft electronics), Nanosatellites and Electromagnetic Compatibility. Kitron, an electronics company, contributed 120,000 euros to the Industrial Electronics Lab. According to the Dean of KTU, Aligamantas Valinevičius, they plan on making the Laboratory available to non-students who have an interest in experimentally testing their ideas.

... Vilnius-based LigoWave, developer of wireless networking equipment, won a silver award for their new Infinity NFT 3AC dual radio access point in the International Design Competition. The system, designed by Denis Orlenok and Deividas Juozulynas, operates in the 2.4 GHz (450 Mbps) and 5 GHz (1300 Mbps) bands concurrently. LigoWave was founded in Vilnius in 2007 and its equipment is used in over 150 countries.

... Researchers from Israel, Lithuania, the U.S. and Canada used electrical resistivity tomography (ERT) to locate an escape tunnel at a Holocaust massacre site in the Ponar forest outside Vilnius. An estimated 100,000 people, including 70,000 Jews, died at Ponar, which is now known as Paneriai. The search and discovery of the 115 foot (35 m) tunnel will be the subject of a public television NOVA documentary, which is scheduled for broadcast in 2017.

Foreign Affairs

... Lithuania said farewell to Deborah A. McCarthy, who has been U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania for three years, and will welcome Anne Hall from Maine. Hall is a career member of the U.S. Foreign Service and most recently was director of Central European Affairs in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs.

... Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Linas Linkevicius met with the new U.K. Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Boris Johnson, to discuss hate-related incidents involving Lithuanians living and working in the U.K. Linkevicius extended an invitation to Johnson to visit Lithuania, the homeland of Johnson's great grandfather. The Lithuanian Ministry said that Johnson "accepted it with delight."

... To encourage more Chinese visitors, trade and investment, Lithuania has opened five new Schengen visa centers in China—Shanghai, Hangzhou, Chengdu, Jinan and Shenzhen.

In Lithuania

... More than 61,000 signatures were gathered to support restrictions on alcohol sales. This petition exceeds the minimum of 50,000 needed to propose amendments to be put before the Seimas. Proposed restrictions include a ban on alcohol advertising, allowing sales only in specialized stores and raising the minimum age to purchase alcohol to 20 from the current 18 years.

... The European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, V.P. Andriukaitis, identified Lithuania as having the highest mortality in the EU for people of working age, 20-64. Lithuania's Prime Minister Butkevičius said that Lithuania plans on raising the non-taxable income to 310 euros per month and that doctors and nurses will receive higher salaries.

... There has been a shift in higher education goals in Lithuania. Secondary school graduates are shifting from the social sciences to Information Technology and biological sciences. The most popular centers for software/computer engineering are Kaunas University of Technology and Vilnius University. For biological sciences and medicine, the schools are The Lithuanian University of Health Sciences and Vilnius University. The growth in IT interest is inspired by a 50 percent increase in state funding and the large number of IT startups and foreign companies locating in the Vilnius area.

current events

... Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius met with the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who was visiting Lithuanian sites including the Hill of Crosses. Via Parolin, Butkevičius extended an invitation to Pope Francis to visit Lithuania in 2018, the centenary of the restored statehood after World War I.

... The Lithuanian Crime Police Bureau led Europol, Kaunas police, Vilnius police and the Lithuania Forensic Research Center in busting two printing operations making counterfeit 50-euro notes. One shop produced low-quality "paper" but the other had sophisticated laser equipment that reproduced the security holograms. Almost 3.5 million fake euros were confiscated and three Lithuanians were arrested.

... Several hundred people gathered in Vasingtono aikštė (Washington Square) in Vilnius on July 23 to commemorate the 76th anniversary of U.S. Secretary of State Sumner Welles' diplomatic statement refusing to recognize the Soviet Union's annexation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in 1940. The Welles Declaration allowed Lithuania to maintain an independent diplomatic presence in Washington, D.C., during the 50 years of Soviet rule.

Around the World

... Regarding Brexit, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė says that a "huge gap between the British people and the country's politicians has emerged." Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas

Butkevičius said, "In my opinion, a situation has started forming lately when the European Commission in certain cases even ordered which laws and which decisions on the national level parliaments and governments should adopt. That I think was one of the biggest governance mistakes." For example, the European Commission recently warned Lithuania for blocking the free broadcast of Russian TV channels whose editorial view differed from Lithuanian government positions. The Lithuanian Radio and Television has recently removed the requirement that the Russian broadcasts be only as a paid service.

... Litvaks—Lithuanian Jews or relatives of Jews that "left" Lithuania between 1919 and 1940—are now eligible for dual citizenship. A recent amendment to the citizenship law makes it easier to prove that they "left" rather than needing prove that they "fled." For example, South Africa has a Lithuanian diaspora of about 80,000 and many desire a European Union passport in addition to their South African passport to ease travel, buy property and take advantage of educational opportunities in Europe.

... The Eurovision Song Contest was won by Ukrainian Jamala, who sang the politically charged "1944" about Stalin's forced deportation of Crimean Tatars during World War II. The Russian candidate came in third. Negative Russian sentiment may result in their boycotting the next contest because of Eurovision allowing a political song.

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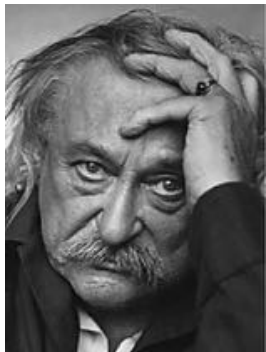
130 years ago

August 21 1886

Birth of Povilas Lukšys, the first Lithuanian army soldier to die for Lithuanian independence.

A soldier in the Imperial Russian Army during World War I, Lukšys was one of the first volunteers in the newly established Lithuanian army that was established in November 1918, several months after the republic declared its independence.

In November 1918, the Bolsheviks attacked Lithuania from the east trying to prevent its independence and to spread the global proletarian revolution. By December, they had taken Vilnius and Šiauliai. On February 8, 1919, during a reconnaissance mission, Lukšys was killed in a firefight near the village of Taučiūnai, in the Kėdainiai region. A monument commemorating his death was built there in 1929.



125 years ago

August 22, 1891

Birth of Jacques Lipchitz, one of the world's premier cubist sculptors, in Druskininkai, Lithuania. Born Chaim Yakov Lipchitz, he changed his name to Jacques after he move to Paris in 1909 as a teenager. There he studied at the École des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Julian, and befriended Picasso and Modigliani, who influenced his development as an artist.

He produced his first Cubist sculptures in 1913, had his first solo exhibition in 1920 and won a gold medal for his Prometheus sculpture at the 1937 Paris World Exposition.

After the German occupation of France in 1940, Lipchitz fled for the U.S., settling in New York State. He received numerous important public commissions in the U.S. and Israel throughout his career. Much of Lipchitz's late life was spent in Italy. He died on May 16, 1973, in Capri.

85 years ago

August 5, 1931

Official opening of the Žaliakalnis funicular railway in Kaunas, the first funicular in Lithuania. It climbs 466 feet up from behind the Vytautas the Great War Museum to the Basilica of the Resurrection.

25 years ago

August 5, 1991

Lithuania introduced a new temporary currency, the talonas, to replace the Russian ruble.

August 19-21, 1991

During the 1991 Soviet coup d'état attempt, also known as the August Putsch or August Coup, Soviet military troops took over several communications and other government facilities in Vilnius and other cities, but returned to their barracks when the coup failed.

The August Coup was an unsuccessful attempt by members of the Soviet Union's government to take control of the country from Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev. The coup leaders were hard-line members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union who opposed Gorbachev's reform program and the new union treaty that he had negotiated decentralizing much of the government's power to the republics. Although the coup collapsed in only two days, the event destabilized the Soviet Union and contributed to its dissolution. In addition to placing tanks in Red Square prepared to attack the barricaded Soviet parliament building, tanks were also deployed throughout the Baltics. On August 19, Lithuania's head of state Vytautas Landsbergis encourages people to engage in passive resistance. As the coup collapsed, Soviet troops pulled out of Lithuania on August 21.

The Lithuanian government banned the Communist Party and ordered confiscation of its property. Following the failed coup, Lithuania received widespread international recognition and was admitted to the United Nations on September 17, 1991.

August 23 1991

Monuments to Lenin were dismantled in Klaipėda and Vilnius. Photo: Vytautas Daraškevičius, from the exhibition "To Freedom."



August 26, 1991

Lithuanian Customs began issuing Lithuanian visas.

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