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LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

\$5

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bridges

Vol. 42 No. 5 / May 2018

Bridges is the English-language publication of the
Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

lithuanian-american.org/bridges

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Our thanks to
LITHUANIAN FOUNDATION
for its support of this magazine.
www.lithuanianfoundation.org

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BRIDGES (ISSN: 87508028) is published 10 times per year (Jul/Aug and Nov/Dec combined) by Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. The known office of publication is located at 2711 W. 71st Street, Chicago, IL 60629. The editorial office is located at 139 Willow Blvd., Willow Springs, IL 60480. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and additional locations. Vol. 42, No. 5. POSTMASTER: Send address corrections and changes to LAC, Inc./Bridges, 208 Linden Ponds Way, Unit 403, Hingham, MA 02043. SUBSCRIPTIONS: For subscription questions or address changes, write to spauda@javlb.org. Subscription rates are: US: \$30 per year or \$58 for two years.; International: \$55 per year payable in advance in US funds. COPYRIGHT: ©2018 by Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of the publication may be reproduced without written permission of the publisher. PRINTING: Printed in Chicago, USA by Lithuanian American Community, Inc.

from the editor

Dear readers,

The month of May is here and I hope it is beautiful in the places you live.

In Lithuanian, the month of May is called *gegužė*. When we say this word today we don't usually think of a cuckoo bird. However, it means just that – a cuckoo bird. Today, we mostly call a cuckoo bird *gegutė*. *Gegutė* and *gegužė* are variants of the same word. All three months of spring are named after birds in Lithuanian: *kovas* (rook), *balandis* (dove), *gegužė*. May was the most beautiful month in Lithuania to me. It is the month when there are so many colors around. Trees, grasses, flowers become vibrant with this special bright "May green". I think that this color can make many people feel very happy just by looking at it, being surrounded by it in parks, meadows, woods, and forests. Growing up in Lithuania, I was very fortunate to spend all my summers outside. I distinctly remember all the flowers, trees, and grasses of a little forest that I and my grandmother would pass when going to the Nevėžis River for a swim. I remember bees, dragonflies, and butterflies. I remember the sounds of various birds, and a cuckoo bird among them. It was special to hear a cuckoo bird. I remember my grandmother would stop and say to me: count the "cuckoos" because the cuckoo bird is telling us how many years we will live. It was a fun way to foresee future. Of course, I did not take it seriously and did not think that I would die in just ten years, for example. However, today I understand how close to the nature we were just less than half a century ago. People even "knew" what birds were telling them. We did not have to make a special trip in a car to be closer to nature, to enjoy a simple walk on a forest path. It was a part of our everyday life, we were surrounded by nature. Even in the cities. I remember every street had trees, many inside yards had grasses and bushes growing in every corner. May was especially beautiful and fragrant with lilacs and chestnuts blooming. Today, it saddens me to read about cutting entire rows of trees in the city streets in Lithuania.

I hope that you will spend as much time as possible outside enjoying the special "May green" color and if you hear a cuckoo bird, may it be generous to you.

Sincerely,

Karilė Vaitkutė
Editor



"My Goal Is to be of Service to Lithuania in Any Way I Can."

Interview with Astra Michels, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Lithuania in Nevada

By Karilė Vaitkutė



Astra Michels, Honorary Consul of Lithuania in Nevada.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with our readers. I would like to start by asking about the history of your family. Who were your parents and how did they find themselves in the United States?

My Father, Bronius Michelevičius, was from Skaistgiriai village in the Panevėžys district of Lithuania, the sixth child of a farming family. My Mother's family came from Kaunas.

He was a cavalry officer in the Lithuanian army and my mom was a student at the University of Berlin when WWII began. When the Soviets occupied Lithuania and he was assigned chief of staff of the 26th cavalry regiment of the Red Army he did not hesitate to decline an oath of allegiance to the Soviet Union and a career in the Red Army. Thus began his fight against the Soviets through the Lithuanian Underground, the German Abwehr and subsequently the CIA. Dr. Alfonsas Eidintas and I wrote a book about my father and my family history entitled:

Trijosė Žvalgybosė, which is currently being translated into English (A Spy for Three Countries).

During WWII, my dad was an intelligence officer in the German Abwehr fighting the Soviets on the Eastern Front. When the Germans capitulated and he was in a British Prisoner of War camp in Schleswig Holstein, the British knew that he was a hero to the Germans, decorated with two Iron Crosses. Once released from the POW camp, he went to Munich, met my Mother (with whom he had corresponded throughout the War), they got married and subsequently, I was born in Germany. Not long after the War ended, the Cold War began and the Soviets became our enemy. Since my dad was an expert on the Soviets, he was recruited by the newly forming US intelligence services (CIA) which facilitated our immigration to the United States. During overseas assignments, my Mother also worked for the Agency gathering intelligence with my Dad -- the Lithuanian version of Mr. & Mrs. Smith!!!



Astra in Bavaria, Germany with her parents in 1950.



High School graduation. Astra went to Boarding School at the Marymount International School in Rome, Italy.



In Rome, Italy after graduating high school.



From 1963 to 1965, Astra and her parents lived in Tunisia. This photo is of their house in Tunis with sheep in front of the house.

What were your parents remembering about Lithuania, their lost Motherland?

We became US citizens, but given my dad's line of work, we didn't stay in the US for very long; I grew up in several countries: Austria, Tunisia, Italy, Japan. My parents compared every country that we lived in with Lithuania. They talked to me about their homeland all of the time and the way that they talked about it, I imagined it to be heaven on earth: the green

countryside, the lakes, the shore, the forests and the snow in winter; everything was always better in Lithuania. My mother often spoke of her childhood in Kaunas, their house on Inkaro Gatve, her chickens, her brother's rabbits, her high school and her high school friends. My father also told stories about growing up in Skaistgiriai, the farm, playing with neighboring kids fighting imaginary Russians in the woods, swimming in the river. I knew the names of all of the horses, the dogs and the cats in the household.



At the Carthage ruins.



Riding a camel in Tunisia.



Her parents lived in Japan from 1967 to 1972. Astra with her parents during Christmas in Japan, 1969.



Attending a Japanese wedding in Tokyo in 1969.

Did you or your parents ever visit Lithuania at the time it was occupied by the Soviets?

Due to my father's occupation, I never visited Lithuania during Soviet times, however, I began spending time in the Baltics in 1992, shortly after Lithuania regained independence. I was with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) the private sector affiliate of the World Bank and sent to the Baltic's to help private sector companies get on their feet through restructuring, equity and loan financing. I remember that that first visit to Lithuania was in stark contrast to what my parents had described!

What was your road to Honorary Consulship?

Ambassador to the US at the time, Vygaudas Ušackas, asked me to be Honorary Consul when I was moving to Las Vegas in 2005. Upon returning from a four-year posting to the IFC office in Mexico, I retired from the World Bank Group in 2000 and with another ex-IFC colleague, we established our own development finance/venture capital consulting company based in Washington DC. I won a contract to manage an investment fund for small and medium-sized businesses in central Mexico and spent two years in Leon, Mexico returning to Washington DC in 2004



When Astra graduated from Georgetown's Foreign Service School in 1969, she went to join her parents in Japan and worked as an actress in Japan for two years doing TV, films, voiceovers, and commercials. In this photo, she is with the Director and /Assistant Director of the Key Hunter series (#1 TV series in Japan at the time) in Hakone, Japan where they were filming an episode of Key Hunter.



During appraisal of the Buenaventura mining project in Peru in 1983.



In Ecuador, on the appraisal of a sugar plantation project in 1984.



Photo from Calw, Germany during the appraisal of the Liteksas textile project in 1992. Astra's textile engineer and Astra were meeting with the German investors. It was the International Finance Corporation's (IFC - part of the World Bank Group) first investment in Lithuania.

and then moving to Las Vegas in 2005. The Ambassador knew of my work in development finance in the emerging markets and thought that I could be helpful to Lithuania.

What are your goals as an Honorary Consul?

My goals are to be of service to Lithuania and Lithuanians in any way that I can, particularly helping Lithuanian businesses get into the Nevada market and attracting US businesses to Lithuania. Another goal is to facilitate and help Lithuanian companies exhibiting at Trade Shows as Las Vegas is the trade

show capital of the US. There are relatively few Lithuanians in Las Vegas and there is no Lithuanian American community, however, I also strive to serve Lithuanian tourists coming to Las Vegas who occasionally need my help.

What are your major achievements so far?

When Lithuanians held the Presidency of the EU, in collaboration with the World Affairs Council, Las Vegas (I am on the advisory board) I organized an EU in the US conference in Las Vegas which included a piano concert by Lithuanian pianist



Some of the Las Vegas Honorary Councils during the visit of the Uzbek Ambassador to the US in 2012. The consuls, left to right, are: Gary Furlong, Honorary Consul of Uzbekistan, Aldo Aguirre, Vice Consul of Guatemala, Paulina Spahrkul, Honorary Consul of Chile, the Uzbek Ambassador, Lena Walther, Honorary Consul of Sweden, Jonathan Warren, Honorary Consul of Monaco, Astra Michels, Honorary Consul of Lithuania, and Jeffrey van der Pol, Honorary Consul of Slovakia.

Edvinas Minkštimas. Foreign Minister Linkevičius and Ambassador Pavilionis were speakers at the conference which was well attended by state representatives, leaders of the Jewish community and other movers and shakers in the Las Vegas community. We received good coverage in the Las Vegas press.

Most recently, this past summer I helped Invest Lithuania in its pursuit of Elon Musk's Gigafactory Europe project by putting them in contact with three of Tesla's largest shareholders, arranging meetings for Invest Lithuania with the principals in the Nevada state agencies involved in attracting Musk's first Gigafactory to Nevada and a tour and meetings with the Tahoe Reno Industrial Center, where the Gigafactory is located. Musk plans to decide on the first Europe Gigafactory sometime next year.

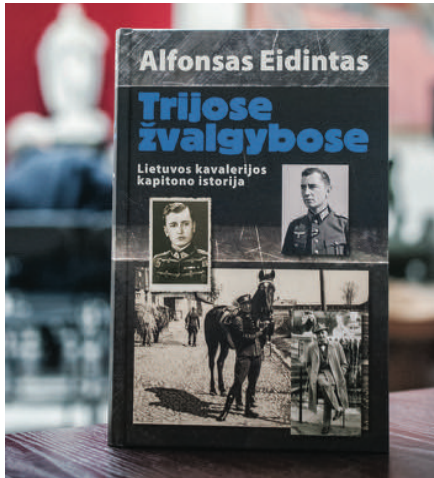
Currently, I'm working with the Japanese Honorary Consul in Las Vegas and the Japanese Consulate in San Francisco on bringing a screening of the film, *Persona non Grata* to Las Vegas. The film is about Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese Consul

in Kaunas during WWII who in defiance of his government-issued thousands of exit visas to Lithuanian Jews during the Nazi occupation. The plan is to show the film to the Las Vegas Jewish community as well as a general screening at one of the large theaters. I am currently in touch with Brenden theaters to see if we can arrange something there.

What would be your advice to Lithuanians all over the world who want to help Lithuania's success?

Be the best that you can, be in your specialty and promote by example. UFC world champion Rose Namajunas immediately comes to mind — what a wonderful ambassador of her homeland she is!

What are the major challenges that Lithuania faces today?



Dr. Alfonsas Eidintas and Astra Michels wrote a book about Astra's father and her family history entitled: *Trijose Žvalgybose*. It is currently being translated into English (A Spy for Three Countries).



Trijose žvalgybose was presented to the readers at the Kaunas War Museum.



Astra Michels speaking at the Kaunas War Museum during the presentation of her book.



At the Vilnius Book Fair 2017, Astra Michels with her co-author, Dr. Alfonsas Eidintas, and Mr. and Mrs. Viktoras Pranskietis, the leader of the Lithuanian Parliament.

Off the top of my head: security, demographics, and continued economic growth.

As far as the Russian security threat, Lithuania is doing what it can to make that threat manageable. The NATO troops are there, we are strengthening our alliance with the Poles and improving cybersecurity.

Regarding demographics: the issue is that many young people have left and the older population is increasing. The United States has the same issue - a small base is increasingly supporting a larger one (the retiring baby boomers). Demographics is entwined with the economic growth issue. It will be increasingly more difficult to maintain increasing levels of economic growth under this scenario. That being said, I must underline what impressive progress Lithuania has made in less than 30 years of regained freedom. Since I visit every few years, it is easier to notice the great strides that the country has made. The Lithuanians are on the right path having chosen to be a knowledge-based economy with its greatest asset being its human

capital. The technological innovations are phenomenal. I stand in awe of what such a small country has achieved in such a short time. I was so proud when last year at the Consumer electronics trade show (CES), the world's largest electronics trade show, the Lithuanian company Deeper UAB, received the innovation award in its category. That's quite an honor!

What is your advice to the young generation of Lithuanians and to Lithuanian Americans?

To young Lithuanians: never give up; keep learning, striving and innovating. You are fabulous!

To Lithuanian Americans: visit your homeland whenever you can, as mentioned before, promote by example, get involved in political activities and organizations that are conducive to Lithuania's interests.

The Jasaitis Family – Patriots of Lithuania

By Algirdas Joseph Jesaitis



Identity Pass Republic Lithuania issued to Jurgis Jasaitis 03-20-1922 by the Garliava County Board. 1. Name: Jurgis, Surname: Jasaitis; 2. Birthdate 17-IV-1861; 3. Birthplace: Kaunas Region, Garliava county, Village of Stanaičiai; 4. Permanent Address: Kaunas Region, Garliava county, Village of Stanaičiai; 5. Occupation: Farmer; 6. Religion: Roman Catholic; 7. Nationality: Lithuanian; 8. Family status: Married; 9. Documents on which the passport was issued: Russian government witness book volume 7 page 91. Personal description: Size: Medium height and weight; Face: Elongated; Hair: Yellowish; Special marks: none; Eyes: Blue.

Carriers of Lithuanian Books

Jurgis Jasaitis (b. 17-02-1861, Stanaičiai - d. 09-07-1930, Stanaičiai) and two eldest sons of nine children, Juozas (b. 01-12-1880, Stanaičiai, d. 27-10-1938, Kaunas) and Povilas (b. 0605-08-1887, Stanaičiai; died xxxxxx) were knygnešiai, variously translated as book “carriers” or “keepers” and more accurately “smugglers” and “contraband book distributors”. In 1864, to speed Russification of his empire, Tsar Alexander II issued Temporary Rules for the Colonial Northwestern “Krai” (Region) that included the Vilno (Vilnius), Kovno (Kaunas), and Grodno (Gardinas) Governorates. All language primers had to be printed in the Cyrillic alphabet. By 1866, all Lithuanian-language use of the Latin alphabet, the printing, and the importation of Lithuanian print-

ing were banned. Even supporting activities such as the distribution of already printed Lithuanian language material were also banned. Noncompliance with these orders was punishable by exile, deportation to Siberia, and execution. Nevertheless, peasants remained faithful to the Lithuanian language and the Russians confiscated more than 170,000 publications. The Jasaitises, Lithuanian patriots and believers in the importance of a Lithuanian education, suffered severe beatings, imprisonment, and exile for their knygnešiai activities.

Jurgis was a farmer with 30 hectares (approximately 75 acres) of farmland and beautiful location in the Garliava valley. He and Kazimieras Aglinskas, a pharmacist who often visited villages in the Garliava County, were both involved in the dissemination of Lithuanian language books in the valley. It is believed that

Aglinskas, while treating people in his pharmacy, told them about the books that he was hiding and distributing. Jasaitis had the task of transferring to Lithuanian press texts derived from other sources.

Aglinskas and Jasaitis hid and distributed Lithuanian books, educational primers as well as newspapers such as *Aušra*, *Varpas*, and others. Tsarist authorities were aware of Jasaitis' activities and connection with Aglinskas and repeatedly broke into his home to try to stem the flow of contraband printed material. In September of 1899, when Juozas was a teenager, the Jasaitis homestead was raided by Russian gendarmes after his family had gone to Garliava for church and while he was still preparing to leave. Juozas Jasaitis as well as his associates, the enlightened Lithuanians of that time - Juozas Paršaitis (student at the Marijampolė Gymnasium), Kazimieras Kizelevičius (student at the Veiveriai Gymnasium), Vasiliauskas (teacher from Liudvinavas), Juozas Rimša (from Margeriai village), and Apanavičius (from Kaunas) were arrested and imprisoned in the Tsar's notorious prison, Kalvarija, about halfway between Vilnius and Königsberg/Kaliningrad.

Imprisonment and Exile for the Cause of Lithuania's Freedom

Juozas spent almost a year in solitary confinement but never broke or lost resolve. A friend of *knygnešiai*, Juozas Rimša, described the teacher (Juozas) as brave and undaunted. The year Juozas remained in the Kalvarija Prison was the longest of all those arrested, and afterwards he was deported to Odessa where he had to wait for a further sentencing. Finally, he learned that he would be placed under police surveillance there for an additional two years. In Odessa, he maintained close contact with the already numerous Lithuanian exiles, and especially the most beloved of book carriers, priest Šmulkštys.

During those years of exile, he passed the matriculation exams for admission to Warsaw University, and in 1904 was admitted to the University to study law. In 1904 the bans on the Lithuanian press were lifted, and Juozas returned to Lithuania and continued to distribute Lithuanian books and fight for the restoration of the Lithuanian press. At this time, he also graduated from the Veiveriai School for Teachers.

Juozas' father Jurgis was away at Šv. Trejybės (Holy Trinity) church in Garliava during the fateful raid that sent Juozas to the Kalvarija Prison. However, suspicions about him remained and for his role in the outlawed activity, Jurgis Jasaitis was forbidden to leave the Garliava district and, of course, forbidden to continue the contraband distribution. His health in jeopardy and unable to travel to Kaunas because of the restriction on his mobility, Jasaitis attempted to travel secretly, as doctors who only worked in the city would not see him in Stanaičiai village. In 1905, for failure to comply with his restrictions now under the jurisdiction of the Vilnius Seimas, he and another son, Povilas, were also imprisoned in the Kalvarija Prison for a



Juozas and Sofija Jesaitis – ~ 1910. Juozas and Sophia Klementina Oginskaitė were married in Warsaw, Poland on February 22, 1906. They lived together in Warsaw where 4 children were born, Algirdas (1907), Kęstutis (1909), Birutė (1911), and Kazimieras (1914), then in Smolensk, where Vytautas (1917) and Margeris (1919) were born, and then settled finally in Kaunas where Jūratė (1923) and Danutė (1925) were born.

year. After their release, Jurgis continued his activities and during WWI was again imprisoned, this time sent to a concentration camp in Germany for three years. In spite of all this turmoil and upheaval in his life, from his small 30-hectare farm, Jurgis was able to educate all his children (6 sons and 3 daughters). Jurgis died in 1930 Stanaičiai and is buried in the Jonučiai cemetery, with Povilas and Juozas, in marked and unmarked graves, respectively.

Juozas, like his father, also continued to agitate for Lithuanian freedom. According to Juozas Kudirka, during the Russian Revolution of 1905 after police assaulted protesting students in Kiev, the resistance movement spread to teachers and students of Veiveriai Teachers' Seminary: 65 seminarists signed and presented to the police inspector, a petition asking them permission to teach in Lithuanian, to abandon textbooks with improper historical content, and to remove the basics teacher, G. Kesler from the faculty. Seminarists stated that they would not study and teach until their requirements were satisfied, but the seminary's leadership did not listen to their requests and expelled them from the school. The strike then spread and education stood still in the school district. The student Pranas Dovydaitis along with other scholars participated in the rebellion demanding that teacher Kesler be let go. At the end of the day, 4 agitators from Garliava arrived in Veiveriai, led by a former teacher of the Teachers Seminary Juozas Jasaitis, a representative of the Lithuanian Teachers' Union. Seminary teachers were temporarily closed in a separate room, while seminarists and students of the rural municipality school signed an even wider petition asking them to return 65 banished students to the seminary, allow students to freely create their organizations, stop any harassment of students, allow them to read various content books, and teach all subjects in the native Lithuanian language. After a few days, the response of the Czarist Russian



Juozas Palemonas Jesaitis examining a plan for the Ežerėlis peat production facility (1919). Juozas Palemonas Jesaitis (née Jasaitis) was a Lithuanian lawyer and developer, whose strong patriotic roots trace back to his father's and his activities as "Knygnešiai" or "Book Smugglers", well known, if not notorious in the Garliava Valley near Kaunas. Juozas played a significant role in the formation of a free and independent Lithuania until its independence in 1918. He also was very interested in Lithuania's economic development and led an attempt with a Lithuanian founding father, Jonas Basanavičius to develop Lithuania as an Agricultural Machinery Production Center with his directorship of the Vilija Agricultural Machinery Corporation. This promising enterprise was damned by WWI, causing the plant to be evacuated to Smolensk in 1915 where again Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution thwarted Juozas' attempts to keep the concern under Lithuanian ownership. On his return to Lithuania, he spearheaded a plan to develop a source of fuel for peat/carbon-fired power for the Kaunas region of Lithuania. Juozas began buying land in the name of his children Kęstutis, Birutė, and Kazimieras near Zapyškis on the left bank of the Nemunas River. The land map shown in the photo is dated 1919 and is called "Ežerėčio Durpių Dirbtuvė, PLANAS, Kauno apskritis, 1919" or The Ežerėlis Peat Production Facility, Plan, Kaunas Vicinity 1919. The world economic depression and poor weather of the 30s prevented him from retaining ownership of the Ežerėlis Facility forcing its takeover by the Kaunas Municipality in 1936. However, Juozas' economic dream survived and provided a reliable source of energy for the city until WWII. During and after the war years the production was ramped up more than tenfold supplying a power source for the occupying armies and for soviet exploitation. Production, employment, and technology improved over time and now UAB "Ežerėlio durpės" with international reach is the largest peat production facility in Lithuania.

authorities to Lithuanian seminarists was clear. Soldiers of the Kalvarija 112 Infantry Ural Regiment arrived in Veiveriai and 37 students were arrested, sentenced, and imprisoned. The others, however, were re-admitted to study by application for study for the next school year and only for the same course. After some time, however, the school inspector dismissed teacher Kesler and the Lithuanian mother tongue was allowed in speech but not for teaching in the Seminary and the district school.

Life in Independent Lithuania

On February 22, 1906, when he was 26, Juozas Palemonas Jasaitis married Countess Sofija Klementina Oginskaitė (b. 22-11-1884, Kurkliai, d. 26-06-1963, Flushing, NY, USA). Sofija, then 21, was living with her parents, Count/Duke Jonas Antanas Oginskis

and Eugenia Dambrauskaitė in Warsaw Poland. Juozas and Sofija remained in Warsaw so Juozas could complete his legal education and there Sofija gave birth to the first 4 of her 8 children: Algirdas Jurgis (b. 24-11-1907, Warsaw; d. 15-01-1923, Klaipėda), Kęstutis Juozas (b. 16/11/1909, Warsaw; d. 13/11/1962 Flushing, NY, USA), Birutė Ona (b. 08/12/1911, Warsaw; d. 01/01/1982, Putnam, CT, USA) and Kazimieras (b. 1913 Warsaw; d. 29/08/1929, Klaipėda). Juozas continued his patriotic activities investing in a future for an independent Lithuania. He participated in the activities of the Warsaw Lithuanian student organizations and was a member of the board of directors of the Warsaw Lithuanian Charity Society. He wrote articles for Vilniaus Žinios (Vilnius News) and Viltis (Hope) under the alias of N. Karuža. After he was awarded his Law Degree in 1910 and the birth of Kazimieras in 1913, Juozas was offered the directorship of P. Vileišis's agricultural machine factory "Vilija," and the family returned to Vilnius.

Within a couple of years the Russian revolution heated up again, World War I was expanding towards the Tsar's Lithuanian territory and in 1915 the factory was evacuated to Smolensk, where the family continued to grow with the birth of the youngest sons Vytautas Jonas (19-5-1917, Smolensk; 05-01-1948, Lithuanian forests) and Margeris Adomas (16-09-1919, Smolensk; 02-11-1986, Flushing NY, USA).

Soon after he was married but before the birth of their children, Juozas changed the family name from Jasaitis to Jesaitis, to help protect his family from continuing Russian harassment, exploiting the fact that "Je" and "Ja", almost indistinguishable phonetically in Lithuanian, fall at opposite ends of the Russian Cyrillic alphabet and thus provided the Jesaitis's cover from eyes not willing to wander further than one category in a list to "Jasaitis."

Nevertheless, the Revolution followed Juozas and he was again imprisoned by the Russians, but this time by the Bolsheviks. Fortunately, his name change ploy worked, he was released and the family returned to an independent Lithuania in 1920. The family established their home and a law office in Kaunas, at Maironis Street No. 8 where he offered his services as a notary, keeping his name as Jesaitis. Though his business in Kaunas grew and he became a successful and highly reputable member of the business and landed class in Kaunas, fate

was less kind. The Revolution left little of “Vilija” in Lithuania and his directorship vanished with his bankruptcy. The death of his first son Algirdas at age 16 in the Klaipėda Uprising in January 1923 and his third son, Kazimieras at age 15 in a motorcycle accident near Klaipėda in 1929 were heavy blows to the family. Rays of hope emerged with the birth of Jūratė Sofija (13-08-1923, Kaunas; d. 18-05-1992, Bozeman MT, USA) and Danutė Marija Irena (20-05-1925 Kaunas, 08-08-1991 Flushing NY, USA).

Juozas and Sofia suffered through these losses and slowly began to rebuild by investing in the development of the Ežerėlis peat swamp as a source of cheap energy for Kaunas. Economic conditions were not favorable for its development but Juozas continued to invest in the project, being certain that they would pay off for his family and for Kaunas in the long run. However, economic conditions in the early 1930s remained difficult, the weather was unfavorable, and Kaunas ultimately took over the operation in 1936. However, Juozas’ entrepreneurial dream survived and provided a reliable source of energy for the city until WWII. During and after the war years the production was ramped up more than tenfold supplying a power source for the occupying armies and for Soviet exploitation. Production, employment, and technology improved over time and now UAB “Ežerėlio durpės” with international reach is the largest peat production facility in Lithuania.

Forced to Flee Motherland Once Again

Juozas died of heart disease on October 18, 1938, in Kaunas. All his children who survived long enough were educated at the university level and were inspired and dedicated to service to family, profession, and country. Algirdas died a hero of the republic in the Klaipėda Uprising, Vytautas caught in the snare of war, fought the reinvansion of Karaliaučius by the Red Army with the Fatherland Defense Force or Tėvynės apsaugos rinktinė. Although accounts are conflicting he may have been killed in action in 1944 or have survived and continued to fight under an alias in the forests of Lithuania as a “Forest Brother”. Kęstutis fled together with his wife Jadvyga Kalinauskaitė Jesaitienė, their 1-year-old Gediminas Raimondas, and two unrelated and still unknown 16-year-old youths. Kęstutis worked as a director for the Valstybinis Elektrotechnikos Fabrikas (an electronics and radio components factory) and was able to commandeer a Siemens Holzkraftwagen, a wood powered delivery truck,



The Jesaitis Family arrives in the USA (1949). Kęstutis Jesaitis and Jadvyga Kalinauskaitė Jesaitienė (top row) and their two boys, Gediminas Raimondas and Algirdas Juozas arrive in New York on September 3, 1949, on the USAT General J. H. McRae. Sofija and her children, Birutė, Margeris, Jūratė, and Danutė will join them within weeks. In the end, Viktoras and Dominykas and their families, Kęstutis and his family knowing they would be hunted down by the Red Army and Bolsheviks all emigrated to the United States out of desperation and for the survival of their children. Vytautas, unmarried, joined the resistance, fought, and died for Lithuania possibly as the Forest Brother, “Naktis.”

where he hid his family and the two young boys behind a false wall of light bulbs for delivery to Dresden. Margeris and his mother Sofia left by train to Dresden, Danutė to Berlin, and Jūratė, who was impressed into the medical service of the German army as a medical student, found her way into a war hospital in Breslau and then Feldkirch, Germany. Birutė escaped with her future husband Vacys Lukauskas to the DP camp in Spiegelhütte on the Czech border. The life-changing escapes brought most of them to the post-war French-occupied zone. They chose this locale in Germany during wartime since it was within walking distance to the French and Swiss borders where they might find further refuge if needed. In Freiburg, Germany there was one more Lithuanian grandson of Juozas Jesaitis to be born near the still smoldering ashes of Allied bombing raids. Algirdas Juozas Jesaitis, the author of this piece, was born on August 21, 1945, to Jadvyga and Kęstutis Jesaitis. All found their way to New York in 1949 where their new lives began.



Algirdas Joseph Jesaitis, the author of the article.

Reading is in Fashion in Lithuania

Vilnius Book Fair 2018

By Vilma Kava

Translated by Karilė Vaitkutė



Vilma Kava at the Vilnius Book Fair 2018.

"Twenty years later" - this will be the topic of the Vilnius Book Fair next year. Could anyone expect that in twenty years of its existence the Vilnius Book Fair would become the largest book fair in the Baltic States and one of the most prominent international cultural events? Over the course of twenty years, several new generations of readers have grown. Those children, who used to come to book fairs with their parents, are now bringing their children.

"I am proud of this nation. Its people read books," said my friend when he came to the Vilnius Book Fair this year. He emigrated from Lithuania twenty-eight years ago and rarely comes back to visit.

This year, the Vilnius Book Fair took place on February 22-25 in its traditional venue - the Litexpo Exhibition and Congress Center. It attracted over 67,000 visitors, almost 5 thousand more than last year. The Fair is not a local event only. It was visited by 53 delegations from 21 countries from all over the world. There were 370 exhibitors from 9 countries. The event was held

in all five main Litexpo exhibition halls and seventeen smaller halls. The motto of this year's fair was "I read Lithuania, I read the world."

I myself flew to Vilnius from Chicago and attended the Book Fair as an author: Tyto Alba publishing house published my first novel, *Aš tau sakau* (I'm Telling You). During the book fair, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited the authors of Lithuanian descent who presently live abroad to meet. The Ministry has a Facebook page, "Globali Lietuva – rašytojai" (Global Lithuania – Writers) that brings together authors of Lithuanian descent. This year is an extraordinary year for Lithuania as Lithuanians all over the world celebrate the 100th anniversary of Lithuania's independence. The celebration was clearly expressed at the Book Fair - many books on historical topics were published, many meetings and discussions were held. Events in the main halls changed every hour; at the same time, smaller events were held in special spaces. Many events were broadcasted by the Lithuanian television and radio. Some visitors stayed for a



The Vilnius Book Fair was held in the Litexpo Pavillion.

Long lines to get into the Vilnius Book Fair 2018.

whole day because they found programs that interested them, met people they knew or wanted to talk to writers. During all four days of the fair, the longest lines of people were standing by Prof. Liudas Mažylis who discovered the Independence Act and published his first book of fiction called 99 metai po įvykio (99 Years After the Event).

It is unique that books by Lithuanian authors are popular in Lithuania itself and this tendency is becoming more and more evident. According to the Lithuanian Publishers 'Association, Lithuanian authors' books comprise about two thirds of all books published in Lithuania every year. Most are published by the Alma Litera Publishing Group and the Šviesa publishing house.

Every year since 2005 readers elect the Book of the Year. This year, more than 23,000 readers voted in four categories. The winner in the category of books for adults was Rimantas Kmita and his novel Pietinia kronika (The Southern Man's Chronicle, Tyto Alba); the winner in the category of poetry was Agnė Žagrakalytė and her book Štai (Here, Tyto alba); Evelina Daciūtė and her book Laimė yra lapė



General view of the Vilnius Book Fair 2018.



General view of the Vilnius Book Fair 2018.



Vilma Kava (center) with Viktorija Preskienyte Diawara and Vitalijus Zaikauskas.

(Happiness is a Fox), illustrated by Aušra Kiudulaitė won in the category of children's books (Tikra knyga), and the winner in the category of books for teenagers was Daina Opolskaitė's novel *Ir vieną kart, Riči* (And One Day, Richi, Alma littera).

For the fifth year in a row, the Papyrus Lietuva was electing the most aesthetically looking book. This year, the winner was *When Lithuania Ruled the World*, a book by a Lithuanian American author, Kęstutis Nakas. It was published in English and Lithuanian (translator Karilė Vaitkutė). Designer Agnė Dautartaitė Krutulė and the "Aukso Žuvys" publishing house received the awards. Kęstutis Nakas's book was also awarded by the Ministry of Culture as the winner for the "Book Art" contest in the category of bibliographic and experimental publications. The Vilnius Book Fair shows that we are leaders in the region's ability to write, illustrate, and publish books. We are a nation that is able to attend international book fairs, be it in Leipzig, London, Frankfurt, or Bologna.

Reading is in fashion in Lithuania and among Lithuanians.

All photographs are by Vilma Kava and Gintautas Vasilevskis.

Twenty years of work to ensure the future of Lithuania's children

"Child's Gate to Learning" supports and cooperates with after school centers

By Ramunė Kubilius



10th anniversary of volunteer coordination (2010): early volunteers and two "Child's Gate to Learning" founders.

During the summer of 2017, sixteen Lithuanian speaking Lithuanian American high school juniors, seniors, and new graduates spent almost a month volunteering in four different cities and towns of Lithuania, at five after-school centers in all. School was out for the summer, so they participated in summer camp activities, crafts, sports, and outings together with center attendees, children and youths from at-risk families, served as day camp counselors as well as big brothers and sisters. They were prepared for their trip to Lithuania and work with at-risk children by two educators - Rita Venclovas, an officer (as well as one of the original founders) of "Child's Gate to Learning" ("Vaiko vartai į mokslą" in Lithuanian), and Viktorė Siliūnas, a member who travelled to Lithuania together with the group and coordinated their activities there. Volunteer preparation and coordination with centers in Lithuania was provided by "Child's Gate to Learning", but it was the young volunteers' families who financially supported their travel and other expenses. Many young volunteers were the second or third family members to volunteer with the organization. "Child's Gate to Learning" is an organization founded by volunteers and volunteerism is at the core of its work.

A beginning and evolution

As each year passes, "Child's Gate to Learning" as an organization remembers its beginnings twenty years ago. In the fall of 1997, a group of Lithuanian American educators and social workers sat in a session of the Lithuanian Symposium on the Arts and Sciences in Chicago. They listened to reports by pre-

senters from Lithuania, academics and government officials, on the "street children" problem in Lithuania. At the time, no social work agencies or infrastructures were in place to ensure that school-aged children attend school. The reports were that these children were not attending school because their families' home situations were difficult, complicated by economic problems and parents' unemployment, addictions, and other problems. They (the youths and children) were recruited to stay home to care for pre-school younger siblings. They were often seen in the streets begging, doing errands and small jobs (e.g. cleaning car windows at intersections) to make money for their families.

These reports touched the hearts of the women in Chicago who gathered after the session. The informal Chicago group (būrelis in Lithuanian) initially wrote letters and petitions to Lithuanian government officials, later sent clothing, school, crafts and art supplies. Eventually, it was decided that supporting trustworthy people who had established centers to work with children from at-risk families in Lithuania, such as the first one "Child's Gate to Learning" established ties with Vilnius, was the most effective grassroots level support that could be offered. To this day, these after-school centers provide an oasis for children, where they can eat a nutritious meal, do homework, and learn life skills they are not always being taught home because of often chaotic home situations.

From the early days in Chicago at the symposium, networking with those who understood the social climate in Lithuania has been important. One early contact was a social worker and sociology doctoral student, Sister Daiva Kuzmickas from Lithuania, whose religious order in Vilnius had formed an after-school center to provide support for "street children", in current terminology, referred to as children from at-risk families. The center, "Vilties angelas" later became the first supported after-school center. The concerned group also met with Lithuanian American biochemistry Ph.D. (who later became a priest) Arvydas Žygas, who had gone to Lithuania as a Fulbright scholar and stayed to live and work with Lithuania's youths and was in Chicago for a visit. Both young academics relayed stories and concern about Lithuania's school-aged children who didn't attend school. They confirmed that support from the Lithuanian American community in this area could make a big difference.

The fledgling group formalized, incorporated, and in 1998, became the non-profit organization, "Child's Gate to Learning" (Vaiko vartai į mokslą), with officers and a board of directors. The number of after-school centers it supports has evolved over

our community

the years. Currently, the organization supports ten after-school centers in Lithuania that are attended by children and youths from at-risk families in Vilnius (2 centers), Kaunas, Kazlų Rūda, Rukla, Rumbonys, Šateikiai, Užpaliai, Varėna, and Žemaičių Kalvarija.

The organization is based in Illinois and has small support groups in Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, Sunny Hills (FL), and Washington, D.C. where coordinators organize local fund-raisers. A website was begun, a Facebook page was started, and, more recently, donations have been accepted through PayPal. In Lithuania, "Child's Gate to Learning" has arranged with a Lithuanian social worker to devote some time from her busy professional life, to also serve as a local coordinator for support fund distribution, to visit the centers and confer with directors, as warranted. As of fall of 2017, the coordinator has been Lina Gervytė Michailova.

Fundraising

The centers were founded by religious orders, parishes, a school, the Catholic organization, "Caritas". Center social workers have grown accomplished at writing reports to document their work and request funding support from various Lithuanian government agencies, their centers' parent organizations, Lithuanian and international support organizations. Directors of centers the "Child's Gate to Learning" supports have stated that the financial support each year plays a large part in guaranteeing the continuing operation of the centers (and provides peace of mind for center directors): funds have often been used in gap months before Lithuanian government support is dispersed, to pay utility bills in cold winter months. Support has also helped centers pay for food for children, school supplies, and other essentials, for arts and craft supplies, and medical needs, such as dental and vision check-ups, filling niches when other funds are not available. In 2017, "Child's Gate to Learning" supported the ten Lithuanian after-school centers in the sum of \$53,315.9.



Washington D.C. coordinator, T. Landsbergis, (right) fund-raising with adult and youth volunteers at the St. Casimir fair (Kaziuko mugė) in Washington, D.C. (2008)

Annually, the directors send itemized reports to "Child's Gate to Learning" to explain how the financial support was used.

"Child's Gate to Learning" officers also apply for funding support for special projects. In 2017 "Child's Gate to Learning" wrote project support applications that were granted- from the Kazickas Family Foundation and the Lithuanian Foundation. The first helped support a seminar held in Kaunas at the end of May, 2017 (seminars are held every few years to bring together supported center directors and staffs for a weekend of lectures, discussion, and networking). Lithuanian Foundation has supported a number of projects and initiatives over the years, including "Lithuania, My Home", "Following in the Footsteps of Lithuania's Partisans", and others.

Various organizations have been generous supporters. For several years, most recently in 2017, Florida golfers donated proceeds of the Florida Lithuanian Open Golf Tournament. A Chicago area coffee club's members, the Chicago Women's Club, the Daughters of Lithuania Chapter in Seattle, WA have sent donations. Members of the high schoolers' division of the Lithuanian Catholic Federation „Ateitis" have donated their time, serving as volunteers at many fall harvest lunches („Derliaus pietūs"). Young individual benefactors have shown initiative and generosity. A young scout donated his Catholic Confirmation gift money and worked at the "Child's Gate to Learning" booth in the Washington, D.C. St. Casimir bazaar (Kaziuko mugė). One group of suburban Chicago children sold their used toys during a driveway sale. Over the years, „Child's Gate to Learning" members and officers have been amazed by individuals' generosity. They have directed donations (in lieu of a personal gift) from birthday celebrants, they have donated in memory of deceased loved ones.

Successes

"Child's Gate to Learning" can celebrate various accomplishments achieved during its twenty-year history. Five character building programs (one with a second edition) were prepared by an editorial committee and put into use at the centers before such programs from Europe were so easily available in Lithuania. The programs, written with Lithuania's at-risk children and youths in mind, provide center staffs with methods, ideas, and examples for teaching and through games, topics for discussion, focusing on basic social skills, the bad effects of smoking and alcohol, positive steps to help ensure a successful adulthood. Elements and ideas from the programs continue to be used to this day. Some centers also work with the center's families, to help parents build their parenting skills, and have created center traditions and activities for families.

Centers report the successes many of their former attendees have had in leading productive lives as they have reached adulthood. They have gone on to trade schools and universities, hold down jobs. They have gotten married and started families; others have felt the calling to the priesthood. Some have



A fall outing of the Vilnius center "Vilties angelas" (2016)

returned to volunteer at the centers they formerly attended, while others send donations. Many stay in touch with the centers' staffs.

It is a joy to note the growth of volunteerism, in both the U.S. and Lithuania. Youths in the U.S. perhaps have the example of a longer tradition of volunteerism. Community service requirements are common in schools, and many adults participate in volunteer activities. Young volunteers have brought enthusiasm to "Child's Gate to Learning" fund-raising activities. Since 2000, volunteers have gone to Lithuania, mostly in the summer, where they have had the opportunity to experience everyday life and culture in various Lithuanian towns and cities, playing, doing crafts, and sports with the centers' children and youths. They show that someone cares. In recent years, it has also been fun for the Lithuanian American volunteers when they are paired up with local Lithuanian volunteers, particularly those of a similar age. Sometimes, local volunteers have been able to serve as "translators" of Lithuanian customs, or local dialect (as volunteers working in centers based in towns of the Žemaitija region have experienced). Many volunteers later stayed in touch with "their" centers' staff and youths, sometimes even returning for visits during stays in Lithuania.

Reflecting on the past, looking to the future

Twenty years of work on behalf of Lithuania's children has benefitted about 300 children a year who attend the supported centers. There have been 110 Lithuanian-American volunteers, 5 character building programs, 2 DVDs films created for the organization and 1 filmed by a young volunteer, numerous fund-raisers, project proposals, meetings, articles, e-mail and telephone exchanges, as well as visits to Lithuania. It is hard to predict the future of Lithuanian American charitable non-profit organizations such as "Child's Gate to Learning".

The most ardent supporters of the earlier years are now elderly or rest in eternity. These days, those seeking to support Lithuania can find many causes, activities, and organizations. "Child's Gate to Learning" works hard to maintain existing supporters as well as capture the interest of new supporters. Lithuania's government funding support is being dispersed across a greater number of centers as the government has recognized the benefits of after-school centers in their work with at-risk youths and children. (36 of the currently operating 285 centers were established within the last year or two).

For after-school centers that receive government support, out of necessity, private or non-governmental support is a necessary supplement. "Child's Gate to Learning" officers and members try not to rest on the laurels of 20 years of work supporting Lithuania's children. As long as there is a need and there are donors, "Child's Gate to Learning" will continue to work from its base in the U.S. to support the centers in Lithuania it has committed to supporting. In February 2018 at the annual update session at the World Lithuanian Center in Lemont, IL, the volunteers of Summer 2017 reflected on their experiences, sharing brief stories of small things that touched their hearts. Several recalled the strength shown by young center youths who had home responsibilities and various hardships to overcome. They are not bad children, just occasionally mischievous, one observed. Another young volunteer reminded "Child's Gate to Learning" officers as well as the audience - "You are their hope".

Info: www.childgate.org



Varėna center social workers Dalia and Viktorija at seminar in Kaunas posing with a sign for 2017 summer volunteers "Laukiame Jūsų" (We await your arrival)

Lietuviais esame mes gimę

Chicago Lithuanians Celebrated Lithuania's 100th Anniversary with a Concert

By Darius Polikaitis



The Chicagoland Lithuanian community celebrated the 100th anniversary of Lithuania's independence in an impressive manner on February 18, 2018, at the Carl Sandburg High School Performing Arts Center in Orland Park, IL. The event, entitled "Lietuviais esame mes gimę" (We Have Been Born Lithuanians), was organized by the Lithuanian American Community, Inc. and brought together performers from throughout the Chicago area, including the "Dainava" Lithuanian Chorale, Lithuanian folk dance groups "Grandis" and "Suktinis", dance troupe "Dance Duo", theater company "Teatriukas Užtrauktukas", vocalists Nida Grigalavičiūtė, Marius Polikaitis, Agnė Giedraitytė, and Martynas Matutis, and instrumentalists Bronius Mūras, Vidas Neverauskas, Saulius Gyls, Tomas Strolia, Gintaras Milius, Linda Veleckis-Nussbaum, Nina Saito, Jessica Lipon, Emily Mantell, and Gloria Vaišnys. In addition to local talent, the afternoon featured special guest artist, pop vocalist Bjellė from Lithuania,

who performed her hit "Broluži", and closed the show with a stirring rendition of Vytautas Kernagis' "Baltas paukštis".

Director Vytautas Čuplinskas said, "We wanted this to be more than just a potpourri of songs and folk dances. We wanted to use music, dance, poetry, and prose, as well as multimedia content (video, audio, etc.) to take the audience on a journey across the last 100 years of Lithuania's history ... Our intent was to inspire people - to help them consider what it means to be Lithuanian and to make a conscious decision to embrace that identity, to be proud of our homeland. After all, to be born Lithuanian is only the first step ..."

Čuplinskas, along with music director Darius Polikaitis and director of choreography Gintaras Griškevičius, did not disappoint, integrating contrasting moods, styles and genres into a unified and meaningful artistic tour de force. Their creative ideas were realized thanks to the efforts and talents of over



150 live performers, as well as numerous individuals who contributed to the pre-recorded multimedia elements of the show. And all of this was enabled by Žygis Januškevičius (sound), Saulius Sadauskas (lighting), and Audra and Rima Linktakas (stage management), as well as Geoff Epperson of Carl Sandburg High School and his production staff. Thanks to the outstanding efforts of the organizing committee, Giedrė Knieža, Daina Miežlaiškis and Austėja Sruoga, the event was sold-out several weeks in advance. As a result, several hundred people also attended the open dress rehearsal on Saturday afternoon.

A heartfelt thanks to all of the performers and contributors for donating their time and talents, to the many benefactors for their financial support, and to the Lithuanian community for such a spectacular turnout.

Photographs from the concert by Sandra Ščedrina, Studio Light.



Fairfield University - Lithuania Connection through Basketball Social Responsibility

With a special thank you to the Lithuanian Foundation for the Scholarship received for the studies at Fairfield University in 2017-2018

By Vilia Baumilaitė
Freshman of Fairfield University



300 BP participants at the JPK 100 tournament, January 2018.

Winter break is time for friends, family, holidays, and relaxation. Most college kids come home to home cooked meals, gifts under the tree and a nice warm getaway to the Bahamas or Mexico. Myself, on the other hand, I did something a bit different, I lived the life of my mom for two weeks on our Lithuania trip and got to know the world of philanthropy.

Being by my mother's side started at a young age. I'd follow her around, on her work trips, tugging on her skirt, introducing myself to people far and wide. This never stopped it just bumped up a notch. While in Lithuania this time, I was my mother's right hand from her chauffeur to her secretary. Personally, I thought it was a blast. We became closer than ever driving to every small village in Lithuania talking to educators in schools and youth centers, listening and trying to figure out solutions to their issues, communicating to students of all ages, and taking time to bond with them, and then taking those issues to the government agencies, to the diplomatic corps and to the Lithuanian Basketball Federation.

My mom is the director of the Kazickas Family Foundation in New York. In my opinion, she's got one of the coolest jobs in the world. The Kazickas Family, who is of the Lithuanian heritage, helps thousands of people every year in some way shape or form. From building churches to funding coding lessons to sav-

ing children from the unpredictable in the US, Lithuania, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and South African Republic. The foundation's most recent project pulls on my heartstrings more than most, and for many reasons.

As of four years ago Peter Kazickas, then a 22-year-old Hamilton College student, the youngest grandchild of the foundation's founder Dr. Joseph P. Kazickas (who was a board member of the Lithuanian Foundation for 13 years), started the Basketball Power program in Lithuania. The program was based on Peter's volunteering in Africa and has been following the methodology of Hoops 4 Hope in Zimbabwe. As a matter of fact, Hoops 4 Hope program is known in Fairfield University, where English professor Dr. Bryan Crandall, who is on the board of Hoops 4 Hope, and Men's basketball coach Sydney Johnson (who, in 2015 recruited Aidas Kavaliauskas from Kaunas, Lithuania to his team) collaborate on numerous things, including summer programs, K-12 night, Literacy4Hope initiatives, and MLK Convocation. While, on the other hand, Fr. Antanas Saulaitis, S.J, of Fairfield'61, after numerous Jesuits missions across the world, now resides in Lithuania, and visits Basketball Power's teen boys in the local Juvenile Detention Center, where after sitting through a basketball practice, he talks to them inspiring them with his own life's story.



Vilia and her mom talking to the BP girls in Pumpėnai.

In both programs, Hoops 4 Hope as well as Basketball Power, children and youth, that lack parents' attention and cannot afford extracurricular activities, come to learn and play basketball (or even other sports) and are taught different life skills. They are given opportunities to travel and to be exposed to professions, history, and culture, to meet with people, to broaden their horizons. These programs have numerous partner organizations, including the US Department of State through US Embassies, and NBA (with a special thanks to former NBA player and Manager of the Basketball Operations International Martin Conlon, also Fairfield resident, and a true Godfather of the Basketball Power program). Upon recommendations of the latter, at least two tournaments a year are organized for the participants so they have a chance to get together, for the NBA athletes, national and international government and private agencies and local communities to get involved. Both programs stress out that children are not society's burden, but its treasure.

All over the world, young people these days are highly susceptible to different social issues, from bullying to drinking, to suicide, to human trafficking, it all happens whether light is shed upon it or not. Recently, we have come to learn that Lithuania is in the top tier for all the above issues, while Zimbabwe has its own societal struggles. The Kazickas Family Foundation (very much along with the Lithuanian Foundation, the Lithuanian National Foundation and the Lithuanian Religious Aid who work mainly in Lithuania) has become one of the admirable foundations that is aiding in solving most complicated issues, both in Lithuania and Zimbabwe, through the two social responsibility basketball programs it gives grants to, with its many sponsors, and friends, including Fairfield University. Together with their graceful work, they have contributed to changing hundreds of children's lives for the better.



Vilia Baumilaitė and Aidas Kavaliauskas celebrating Lithuania's Independence 100th Anniversary on February 16, 2018 on the Fairfield University Campus.

Lithuania is no foreign country to me. I speak Lithuanian and it's my home, although, I was not born there. However, home is where you believe it to be, and mine is Lithuania, which people I care and feel responsible for. I am thankful that since I was a little girl, I had the opportunity to learn foreign languages, and to travel. I met with people and was introduced to many state of the art things, and at the same time, to the most unsolved sensitive issues. I went on numerous service trips and got to know different countries with their diverse societies and cultures. While above it all, I was taught the most basic human thing - empathy.



Vilia with Fr. A. Saulaitis, S.J. Fairfield '61 and Arminas Vareika, Basketball Power director, discussing youth's social issues in Vilnius.

this month in history

May Anniversaries

455 years ago



The town of Ragainė in 1684.

On May 21, 1563, Martynas Mažvydas died in Ragainė. Martynas Mažvydas (1510 – 21 May 1563) was the author and the editor of the first printed book in the Lithuanian language. Variants of his name include Martinus Masvidius, Martinus Maszwidas, M. Mossuids Waytkūnas, Mastwidas, Mažvydas, Mosvidius, Maswidsche, and Mossvid Vaitkunas.



Henry III, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania.

445 years ago

On May 16, 1573, Henry III (19 September 1551 – 2 August 1589; born Alexandre Édouard de France, Lithuanian: Henrikas Valua) was elected King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from 1573 to 1575 and King of France from 1574 until his death. He was the last French monarch of the House of Valois.

155 years ago

The Battle of Biržai, a series of skirmishes during the January Uprising, took place on May 7–9, 1863, in the area of Lithuanian town of Biržai, which at that time belonged to the Kovno (Kaunas) Governorate of the Russian Empire. Rebel forces from former

Grand Duchy of Lithuania, commanded by Zigmantas Sierakauskas, clashed here with the Imperial Russian Army. On May 7, the first clash took place near Medeikai, 10 kilometers north of Biržai. Sierakauskas divided his party into three columns and ordered to march to Biržai. They were faced by troops of the Imperial Russian Army, which included Cossacks, lancers, infantry and Finnish riflemen. Left rebel column, commanded by Boleslovas Kolyška, was attacked by the Russians. After a heavy fight, the rebels, reinforced with additional forces sent by Sierakauskas, managed to kill 65 and wound 75 Russians. On May 8, Russian command sent reinforcements to the unit which had been defeated in Medeikai the day before. Near the village of Gudiškiai (3 kilometers southeast from Medeikai), they clashed with Sierakauskas. The battle ended in rebel defeat. Sierakauskas, himself wounded, lost 200 men (killed and wounded), and ordered a withdrawal, nominating Ignacy Laskowski new commandant of the party. On May 9, 1863, new rebel commandant, Laskauskas, ordered his forces to camp in a forest near Siurniškis. The rebels were completely taken by surprise when the Russians attacked them. For one hour, reverend Antanas Mackevičius defended rebel positions but was defeated and rebel survivors fled from the battlefield. In early May 1863, Sierakauskas and his men tried to break through Russian cordon to Courland, where a maritime transport with weapons was announced. Rebel forces concentrated in Biržai and Medeikai were attacked by the Russians. After several clashes, Sierakauskas's unit was destroyed.



Zigmantas Sierakauskas (1826 – 1863). Photograph from the Lithuanian State Historical Archives.

90 years ago

On May 15, 1928, the Freedom Monument by sculptor Juozas Zikaras was erected in Kaunas on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the reestablishment of the independence of Lithuania. At that time Kaunas was the temporary capital of the state.



Freedom Monument by Juozas Zikaras in Kaunas.

25 years ago

On May 1, 1993, the Homeland Union Party was founded in Lithuania by the right wing of the Reform Movement of Lithuania, led by Vytautas Landsbergis. Until the merger with the Lithuanian Union of Political Prisoners and Deportees and the Right Union of Lithuania, it was known just as Homeland Union (Lithuanian Conservatives). The last change of the name was a result of the merger

with the Lithuanian Nationalist Union on 11 March 2008, and the Lithuanian Christian Democrats on 17 May 2008, after which the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats became Lithuania's largest party with more than 18,000 members.



Emblem of the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats.

On May 14, 1993, Lithuania joined the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe was founded on 5 May 1949 by ten western and northern European states, with Greece and Turkey joining three months later, and Iceland and West Germany joining the next year. It now has 47 member states, with Montenegro being the latest to join. Article 4 of the Council of Europe Statute specifies that membership is open to any European country, provided they meet specific democratic and human rights standards. Nearly all European states have acceded to the Council of Europe, with the exception of Belarus, the Vatican City, predominantly Central Asian Kazakhstan, as well as some of the states with limited recognition.



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Council of Europe logo.

15 years ago

On May 10, 2003, the Lithuanian European Union referendum took place to decide whether Lithuania should join the European Union (EU). Over 90% of those who voted supported membership and Lithuania joined the EU on 1 May 2004.

a taste of lithuania

Blynai (pancakes)

By Jana Sirusaitė-Motivans



Lithuanians love potatoes! Potato pancakes, together with kugelis (baked potato pudding) and cepelinai (meat-filled potato dumplings) are favorite comfort foods. Most Lithuanians would pick potato pancakes as the most popular type of pancake in Lithuanian cuisine.

Many Lithuanians are also familiar with naliėsnikai, better known as cheese blintzes, which I wrote about in one of my earlier articles in the January/February issue in 2014. Lesser known is grikių blynai (buckwheat pancakes) which I featured in an article about Shrove Tuesday in the February 2017 issue of Bridges. Those pancakes are often served with bacon as part of the pre-lenten feast.

This month I am sharing recipes for two more types of pan-

cakes: zucchini-mushroom and cottage cheese. Both of these recipes come from Beata Nicholson's excellent cookbook Taste of Lithuania. The zucchini pancakes would make a nice light spring supper, served with a fresh green salad and some roasted vegetables. The cottage cheese pancakes are perfect for a weekend breakfast, served with fresh berries. They are also an interesting alternative for lunch or dinner. Or, in my case, I served them both together for dinner. The savory and sweet flavors complement each other nicely.

Beata Nicholson recommends making these pancakes in the summer, when zucchini and chanterelle mushrooms are in season, but can also be prepared year round.

Cukinių blynėliai su voveraitėmis

(Zucchini pancakes with chanterelles)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium zucchini or 3 small zucchini, combined weight equal to 1 pound
- 3 eggs
- ¼ cup flour (really, that's all!)
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
- A few handfuls of fresh chanterelles (I used 1 cup of chopped baby bella mushrooms)
- Salt and pepper
- Sour cream and fresh dill for serving

1. Start by dicing the mushrooms into fine pieces.
2. Grate the zucchini into a bowl. Crack in the eggs, add the mushrooms and flour. Season with salt and pepper and dill, and mix everything together well.



3. Spoon dollops of the batter into a well-oiled pan (I used a ¼ cup measure). Flatten slightly, and cook on both sides until lightly browned.
4. Serve with sour cream and fresh dill.



Varškės blynai

(Cottage cheese pancakes)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups cottage cheese (one 16-ounce container)
- 1 cup plain kefir
- 3 eggs
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1¼ cups flour
- 1 heaping teaspoon baking powder
- Dash of salt
- Honey, jam, fresh berries, yogurt or sour cream for serving

1. In a medium-sized bowl, beat the eggs and sugar together. Mix in the cottage cheese. Add the kefir and ¼ teaspoon salt. Mix again.



2. Sift the flour with the baking powder. Mix them into the batter.
3. Use a spoon to ladle the batter onto a hot oiled pan (I used a ¼ cup measure).
4. Serve warm with your choice of toppings.



current events

Security

...The White House was the setting of a meeting between President Donald Trump and the three Presidents of the Baltic Nations to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the reestablishing the countries after World War I. Lithuania's President Dalia Grybauskaitė emphasized that NATO's charter Article 5 for collective defense is "iron-clad for all of us." {Article 5 was cited for collective action when the U.S. was attacked on 9-11}. The U.S. plans to provide nearly \$100 million for large caliber ammunition and \$70 million for training and programs to increase security in the Baltics. The Baltics annually receive \$3.5 million for 150 students to attend military academies in the U.S. In celebration of the anniversary the U.S. will sponsor an additional 100 youths from the Baltics for exchange programs. President Grybauskaitė also met with John Shimkus, (R-Illinois), co-chair of the House Baltic Caucus which supports political and financial assistance to the Baltic Nations with respect to defense, energy security and business.



...Also in Washington, Lithuania's Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius spoke on National Public Radio and cautioned about Russian President Putin's invitation to the White House in light of its aggression in Ukraine and Georgia.

...Russia has informed Latvia that it plans on launching ship borne missiles over Latvia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in early April. Airspace will be partially closed during that time. All altitudes up to 20 km will be closed to civilian aviation. Countries may claim up to 200 nautical miles of waters adjacent to their lands as EEZ. Full sovereignty extends for only 12 nautical miles.

...The British have sent some of their Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance aircraft to the Baltics following Russia deploying 300 mile range Iskander nuclear capable missiles to Kaliningrad. Russia has also deployed their newest generation Sukhoi SU-57 stealth fighter and an additional 5,000 troops.

...The U.S. Department of Defense is in talks with Lithuania and the Pennsylvania National Guard about establishing a regional cyber security center in Kaunas. Last year the European Union was recep-

tive to a Lithuanian proposal to establishing such a center to rapidly respond to ever increasing threats. They have now approved the proposal as one part of 17 Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework for cyber defense.

...In 2016 Lithuania's National Cyber Security Centre handled 49,000 cyber attacks; in 2017 it handled 55,000 attacks of which 500 were sophisticated. In 2017 26% attacked the energy infrastructure; 22% attacked public security and law enforcement and 21% attacked the foreign affairs and national security sector.

...Lithuania expelled three Russian diplomats over the nerve poisoning of a former Russian double agent and his daughter, 33, in Salisbury, England. In quick response Russia expelled 3 Lithuanian diplomats.

Business

...The Netherlands is the second largest investor in Lithuania. In June King Willem and Queen Maxima will visit President Grybauskaitė to discuss business, NATO and the European Union. They will open a business forum and visit Dutch troops deployed with German led multinational NATO battalion in Lithuania.

...After years of litigation fighting Gazprom, the Russian gas company, and Veolia, the French water and waste company, the Energy Ministry is looking to arbitrate a disagreement with Danpower, the German cogeneration company with projects in Vilnius and Kaunas. An anonymous letter copied to many institutions and the press questions this peaceful solution as indicative of corruption. MP and former Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius said the Energy Minister's peace plan with Danpower is evidence of corruption. A former Energy Minister is pleased with the settlement effort to encourage other investors to participate in Lithuanian projects without the certainty of lawsuits. Danpower has 460 employees working in Germany, Estonia and Lithuania and 2016 sales of 170 million euros.

...Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis fired his energy and environmental advisor, Tomas Garasimavičius, with the only explanation that he had lost confidence in him. The advisor did admit to accompanying former PM Butkevičius in inspecting the shutdown Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant and meeting with representatives of Russian owned German company, Nukem and Russia's nuclear energy company, Rosatom.

...MP Mindaugas Bastys resigned after his security clearance was denied because of his connection to Russian groups and organized crime. Even though the Constitutional Court had found that he had broken his oath, the Seimas failed to gather enough votes to impeach him. Street protests were planned to encourage him to resign but he preempted the protests with his resignation.

...Lotos, one of Poland's largest oil companies, controls four oil

production companies in Lithuania now has government approval to search for oil in Lithuania's Baltic Sea zone but it still needs the approval of Seimas.

...ABC Pavillon, a Danish manufacturer of modular buildings, is opening a new factory in the Klaipeda region to expand its ability to supply product to the Nordic and Baltic regions. It has operated in Lithuania for 12 years and employs 12 people in a subsidiary, Baltic Modules. The new facility will double the capacity and be able to produce finished spaces of 100 square meters per day and ship it from Klaipeda. Products include vacation cabins, schools, childcare facilities, student housing and municipal facilities. It will be hiring additional trades including carpenters, plumbers, electricians and painters.

...UK game developer, Lockwood Publishing will open a studio in Vilnius to support its "Avakin Life", an avatar based social game. It has three studios in the UK and wants to hire a dozen developers. It has over 3.5 million monthly active users.

...The state run Lithuanian Railways has begun rebuilding the dismantled rail section from Mažeikiai to Renge, Latvia. The European Commission fined it 28 million euros for removing 19 km of track. It will cost about 10 million euros to rebuild and is expected to be completed by the end of 2019.

...Vilnius Airport has begun a four year program to modernize the departure area with new flooring, engineering systems, partitions and elevators and new spaces for shops and eating facilities. Last year it served 3.8 million passengers despite being closed for 35 days for rebuilding its sole runway.

...According to the Lithuanian Free Market Institute Lithuania's "shadow" economy accounts for 26% of Lithuania's Gross Domestic Product. In an effort to reduce this "underground" economy Lithuania plans on announcing changes in the tax system, which may include the deductibility of some purchases if they are documented by receipts.

General

...Relief pitcher Dovydas Neverauskas made the opening day roster of the Pittsburgh Pirates and pitched a scoreless inning in their opening day overtime win over the Detroit Tigers. Born in 1993 in Vilnius he is the first Lithuanian to make the Major Leagues. Currently he has a 1-1 record with 29 innings pitched; 18 strike outs; 10 bases on balls and an ERA of under 5.

...The report, Europe's Young Adults and Religion based on the European social survey of 16 to 29 year olds during 2014-16 indicates that Poland is the most religious with 80% saying that they are Catholic and 50% going to Mass at least weekly. In Lithuania 70% indicate that they are Catholic but only 5% go to weekly Mass. In

the UK only 7% identify as Anglican; 10 % identify as Catholic and 6% identify as Muslim.

...While in America, President Grybauskaitė and Representative John Shimkus attended a screening at the Capitol of the film "Ashes in the Snow" based on the novel "Between Shades of Gray" by Rūta Šepetys. It follows a teenage Lithuanian girl who is deported to Siberia and fights for survival in an Arctic forced labor camp. The book has been translated into 27 languages. The movie is scheduled for release in October 2018.



...President Grybauskaitė plans a working visit to France and meet with President Emmanuel Macron. Per France's request Lithuania has troops in Mali under a UN mandate to ensure peace and stability. France has troops in Lithuania under a German lead multinational NATO battalion. She will also meet with the Secretary-General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and present supplemental information on Lithuania's application for membership. OECD has been concerned by Lithuania's population decline. President and First Lady Macron will join the Baltic Presidents in opening an exposition of Baltic Symbolism at the prestigious Musee d'Orsay which annually attracts 3 million visitors. The last time the art of the Baltics was presented in Paris was at the World Expo in 1937.

...The 13th annual Design Week will be held May 7-13 in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipeda, Siauliai, Telšiai and Anykščiai. During the festival visitors will see exhibits and participate in demonstrations, workshops and visit showrooms to learn about the newest trends. Judged winners will be exhibited at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania in Vilnius.

...The latest in the Lithuanian Ball family basketball show is that LiAngelo has declared for the 2018 NBA draft and his American girlfriend has arrived. In nine first division games he has averaged 15.7 points. According to Yahoo Sports he is scheduled to work out for multiple teams once he returns from Lithuania and he plans to participate in the Pro Basketball Combine at the IMG Academy in Florida during May, despite his professional contract which runs to June! Some follow the rules; others don't.

our community

Lithuanian Culture at the University of Illinois in Chicago

By Karilė Vaitkutė



On April 12, 2018, I visited the University of Illinois in Chicago as a guest speaker. I represented the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture in Chicago and spoke about the Museum's exhibitions, collections, and events. My main focus was the Museum's most recent exhibit "For Freedom: Lithuanian Americans Support Lithuania's Independence and Its Recognition". During my power point presentation, students of the Lithuanian Culture class had an opportunity to learn about the immigration

of Lithuanians to the United States before World War I, their life here, and their support to Lithuania and its strive towards independence. The Lithuanian Culture course has been taught in the UIC since 1984, at first by Professor Violeta Kelertas and then by Professor Giedrius Subačius. It is a very popular class among students, and over the years, hundreds if not thousands of students learned about Lithuania, its culture and history. Pictured are the students with Prof. Subačius and me.

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May 2018

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

ONGOING

Most Fridays, 4:30-7:30 p.m.
Friday Fish Fry at the Rockford Lithuanian Club
 716 Indiana Avenue, Rockford, Ill.
 Open to the public. Weekly specials vary. First Friday of the month—Lithuanian dumplings.
 Info: lithuanianclub.org, 815-962-9256

Every Sunday, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
All-You-Can-Eat Lithuanian Brunch Buffet
 Lithuanian Club and Gintaras Dining Room
 877 E. 185 St., Cleveland, Ohio
 \$15 per person; \$6 kids 6-12
 Info: lithclub@gmail.com, 216-531-8318

First Sunday of the Month, 12-4 p.m.
Lithuanian Brunch
 The Avenue Restaurant, 71-22 Myrtle Ave., Glendale, N.Y.
 Reservations strongly recommended.
 Info: 347-725-3853

First Sunday of the Month
Rockford Lithuanian Club General Membership Meeting
 716 Indiana Avenue, Rockford, Ill.
 Open to all members.
 Info: lithuanianclub.org, 815-962-9256

Every Third Saturday, Mar-Jun & Sep-Nov, 1-3 p.m.
Amber Roots Lithuanian Heritage Club
 Lithuanian Music Hall, 2517 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia, Pa.
 Use Tilton Street entrance.
 Bring a dish to share.
 Info: milliemarks@aol.com

Exhibit "For Freedom: Lithuanian American Support for Lithuania's Independence and Recognition"
 Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture
 www.balzekasmuseum.org

MAY

May 11-13, 2018
Counselor Retreat at Neringa Camp
 We invite current and former Neringa counselors, who are over 18 years old, to come to the Neringa Counselor Retreat. Get together with counselors of all ages to reflect on how Neringa has and continues to impact their lives. Retreat coordinators are: Jessica Zikaras and Rebecca Liudzis.

May 12, 2018, 1 p.m.
Madison Vilnius Sister Cities, Inc. presents Restored Lithuania: Celebrating 100 years of Lithuanian Independence, a choral concert featuring The Singing Revolution by Kestutis Daugirdas & Rugilė Kazlauskaitė. At Wisconsin State Capitol. Free admission. For info go to www.madisonvilnius.org

May 12, 2018, 6 p.m.
Madison Vilnius Sister Cities, Inc. annual banquet with Prof. Guntis Smidchens speaking on The Power of Song, and music by Agnė Giedraitytė. For reservations see www.madisonvilnius.org

Saturday May 19, 2018
 8:00 P.M. – 9:30 P.M.

Mission Siberia 2006 & the Lithuanian deportations to Siberia
 Participant Justinas Riškus will discuss the Lithuanian deportations to Siberia and his experience in preserving the memory
 Carnegie Library
 300 Beechwood Avenue - Carnegie PA 15106
 More information: www.pittsburghlithuanianschool.org
 pghmokykla@yahoo.com
 412-613-5582

JUNE

June 1-3, 2018
American Association of Baltic Studies Conference
 Stanford University, Palo Alto, Calif.
 Info: aabs-balticstudies.org

June 2-3, 2018
Talka Work Weekend at Neringa Camp
 As every year, Neringa is awaiting volunteers who can come and help prepare the campsite for the upcoming summer.

June 16, 2018 at 12 p.m.
LWC Charity Golf Tournament Old Oak Country Club
 14200 S Parker Rd, Homer Glen, IL 60491
 www.lithuaniangolf.com

June 30 – July 6
Dainu Svente: Lithuania's Centenary Song Celebration
 Vilnius and Kaunas, Lithuania
 Info: dainusvente.lt/en/programme/

June, 2018
Jonines/Summer Picnic Event
 Kansas City Lithuanian Community
 More info to be announced

AUGUST

August 17-19, 2018
Kansas City Lithuanian Community Ethnic Enrichment Festival
 Swope Park, KCMO

NOVEMBER

November 24, 2018, 4PM
Kansas City Lithuanian Community Christmas Party
 Cedar Creek Clubhouse, Olathe, KS

GOT EVENTS?

Let us help you spread the word! Please send your event notice to kariledalia@yahoo.com two months in advance of the month in which you would like to see it listed.

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VOLUME 42 ISSUE 5

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