

# bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

\$5

March 2019

3



## bridges

March 2019

LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN  
NEWS JOURNAL

3 The Sooner You Start Obeying the Laws of Nature, the Sooner You Become Healthier and Happier

*Interview with nutritionist Daiva Gaulytė*

9



9 The Poetry of Matilda Olkin, 1922 – 1941  
Panemunėlis, Lithuania

*By Laima Vincė*

### 2 from the editor

*By Karilė Vaitkutė*

### our community

12 January – A Month of Milestones

*By Dr. Robertas Vitas*

18 Our Time Is Now

*By Dr. Rimvydas Baltaduonis, Laima Liutikienė*

19 South Florida Community Celebrates  
Lithuania's Independence

Lithuanian Americans gather in Juno Beach, FL  
*By Kimberly Manning*

21 Independence Through Remembrance

*By Nojus Aušra*

22 Chicago Lithuanians Celebrated Independence Day  
with a Musical

*By Arvydas Reneckis*

25 2019 Declared the Year of

General Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas

29 Valdas Adamkus Inducted into the IIT Hall of Fame

### 13 book review

A Welcome Addition to our Library:  
History of Lithuania: From Medieval Kingdom to  
Modern Democracy

*By Dr. Robertas Vitas*

### 16 current events

*By Alan Stankus*

### c3 calendar

22



25



**Front Cover:** The City of Vilnius is celebrating February 16th.

**Back cover:** The statue of General Jonas Žemaitis in front of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Lithuania in Vilnius.

# bridges

Vol. 43 No. 2 / March 2019

Bridges is the English-language publication of the  
**Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.**  
lithuanian-american.org/bridges

EDITOR  
Karilė Vaitkutė

ART DIRECTOR  
Daniel P. Craig, Jr.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, CURRENT EVENTS  
Alan J. Stankus, P.E. (ret)

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER  
Laura Vidžiūnaitė

#### Editorial Office

139 Willow Blvd., Willow Springs, IL 60480  
kariledalia@yahoo.com

Subscriber Services and Advertising  
spauda@javlb.org

#### Facebook

facebook.com/BridgesLithuanianAmericanMagazine



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

LAC, INC. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD  
149 E Parkview Drive, Shirley, NY 11967  
Phone: 402-203-1119  
finansai@javlb.org

All statements and opinions, including product claims, are those of the organization/advertiser making those statements or claims. The publisher does not adopt, or put forth, any such statement or claim as his own, and any such statement or claim does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the publisher.

BRIDGES (ISSN: 87508028) is published 10 times per year (Jan/Feb and Jul/Aug 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. 43, No. 2. POSTMASTER: Send address corrections and changes to LAC, Inc./Bridges, 149 E. Parkview Dr. Shirley NY 11967. 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



Lituanica Avenue street sign. In 1934, Auburn Avenue in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood was changed into Lituanica Ave in honor of Lithuanian American pilots, Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė

Dear readers,

The Government of Lithuania declared 2019 to be the year of place names. Throughout the year, various cultural, educational, and commemorative events and activities as well as scientific conferences and seminars, data collection and publishing should take place in Lithuania in order to show the ethnological, linguistic, historical, and cultural importance of old place names. In 2019, Lithuania promises to publish the map of the place names that have vanished. The extinct villages will be immortalized by signs. Geographic field trips will be organized for students and young people. I thought it would be a good idea for Lithuanian Americans to record all the Lithuanian place names in the United States. Of course, most probably, we do not have towns or villages named after famous Lithuanian persons or Lithuanian towns. (I myself only know of a town named Wilno in Ontario, Canada.) However, we could create a database of Lithuanian streets, squares, monuments, and buildings. I know that in the past, several such initiatives have been started and/or continue. If you know of any database, listing or webpage with information on Lithuania names in the US, please share this information. Also, please send in photos and/or descriptions of Lithuanian place names from your town or neighborhood. It would be especially interesting to publish the stories of the emergence of any Lithuanian place names in the US. I think that for Lithuanian Saturday school students interested in the history of Lithuanian Americans it would be quite an interesting assignment.

Sincerely,

Karilė Vaitkutė  
Editor



# The Sooner You Start Obeying the Laws of Nature, the Sooner You Become Healthier and Happier

Interview with nutritionist Daiva Gaulytė



Daiva Gaulytė making fermented preserves.

Daiva Gaulytė is an extraordinary person. She overcame serious health adversities and decided to share with others her experience of healing with food. What she does and the lifestyle she follows are very important in today's society in more than one way. She is teaching not only to eat healthier but to be closer to nature, to be healthier and happier.

**Karilė Vaitkutė:** Daiva, you were born and raised in Lithuania. How did you find yourself in the United States?

**Daiva Gaulytė:** For some reason, I always wanted to live in America. Even in Soviet times, when it was inconceivable, I dreamed that someday, I will live in the US. Maybe it is because early in my childhood I witnessed my grandpa secretly listening to the Voice of America. We, the kids, were shooed out of the room because the sound on the radio was very scratchy and grandpa needed to hear better. Or maybe it was another reason that only God knows of. However, after joining the Sajūdis movement in the 1990s, keeping vigil at night by the TV tower, holding hands across Lithuania, etc. I realized that the freedom that came was not what I expected and thought it would be. And so I decided that my life was too short to wait for better conditions and when an opportunity came, I left for America, the country that I dreamed about.

**KV:** After you first came, do you remember if you saw any differences in the ways people ate in Lithuania and the United States?

**DG:** When I came in 1995, the popular diet was the “low-fat” diet. Food did not taste good but I thought that Americans knew best, and I joined the wagon. However, I continued to cook at home and couldn't understand what people meant when they



Home in Alaska.

asked: “Do you cook?”. I thought they were asking if I was a professional chef. I thought: how are you supposed to eat if you don’t cook? Only later, I learned that some people actually managed to live without knowing how to cook.

**KV:** Why did you decide to live in Alaska?

**DG:** It was not hard to make this decision. My husband David’s father is Lithuanian. He was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan. David’s grandparents died before David was born, so he never heard Lithuanian spoken. David saw me on a matching website. He wanted to meet me and, at least, hear Lithuanian spoken. This is how we met. At the time, we both lived in Las Vegas. However, David grew up in Alaska and always wanted to go back. When he brought me to the island for the first time, I was mesmerized by its beauty and the abundance of delicious foods I could harvest. We decided to move to Alaska.

**KV:** Please tell us about your typical day in Alaska. When do you get up, what do you do, where do you work, how do you make a living?

**DG:** There is no typical day except, maybe, that I have my coffee first thing in the morning. In the summer, everything depends on the weather, the tide, the day of the week (fishing or not), etc. If it’s a fishing day, we get up at 4:30 a.m., have coffee, make breakfast, go fishing, come back in the evening. Some evenings it could be as early as 4 p.m., others could be as late as midnight. On the next day, if the previous fishing day was short, I might bring the fish in for processing or attend the garden, collect wild berries or herbs or just rest. If the catch was good, we have to deliver the fish to the port town to sell. It usually takes another whole day. We make a living



Daiva and her husband, David, by the Trakai Castle in Lithuania.



Fishing.





Processing the fish for personal use.



Daiva holding salmon.



Daiva's freezers are always full of preserved food.

by working as commercial fishermen. We catch and sell fish for other people to eat. We fish from June 1st until fall, again, depending on the weather, the amount of fish and the price of fish. Last year we fished until the end of September. A year before last we finished in the middle of August. If we have time in September we hunt moose and process meat for personal use. For the past three winters, we worked on a fish broth project. We made fish broth, created a market for it and sold it. This winter I didn't have a particular project to work on, so I just finished all sorts of unfinished projects.

**KV:** Tell us about your typical menu. What do you eat for breakfast, for lunch, and for dinner? What do you never eat?

**DG:** I don't really specify what I eat for breakfast or lunch or dinner. Sometimes I eat the same dishes for breakfast and dinner. But most often, for breakfast, I make oatmeal with fish broth, butter, and raspberries. Or





Preparing smoked salmon.

a cup of fish broth with a caviar sandwich. Or eggs, bacon, and sauerkraut. I rarely make special plans for lunch and dinner. I just look into my freezer and decide what to take out. However, we eat fish every day in one form or another. In my freezers, I always have a lot of food that I prepared in the summer. I have raw fish, moose meat, broth, smoked fish, caviar, veggies, berries, etc. It's very easy for me to make a fast meal.

**KV:** You were raised in Lithuania and, obviously, you knew a lot about cooking from scratch. Here, in the United States, you studied to get a nutritionist's certificate. Did you learn any new things about cooking?

**DG:** Yes, I graduated from the Nutritional Therapy Association program. The courses gave me a lot of understanding on how the body works depending on the food we eat. For example, in Lithuania, we are used to making sauerkraut because there is a lot of cabbages to harvest at once, and people figured out how to preserve them. However, here I learned about the benefits of probiotics in sauerkraut. I also learned that there is no one magic food. Most of the food is healthy, depending on location. For example, I eat a lot of fish, because we have it in Alaska. In Lithuania, we ate a lot of pork, and that is also healthy. The NTA school was a stepping stone for me that allowed me to study further about what it takes to be whole, healthy, and happy. Surely, good nutrition is necessary, but it is only one part needed for the mainte-



Oatmeal with butter and raspberries for breakfast.



Fish broth with local herbs and edible flowers.



Crepes with caviar.





After picking blueberries.



Preparing herbs for drying.



Flowers and herbs are drying.



Caviar sandwiches.

nance of a healthy body. Also, a body is only one part of us being humans. We have to maintain our emotional/psychological part, too.

**KV:** What are the major ailments people suffer from because of their diets? What would be the most important advice you could give to people who suffer from these ailments?

**DG:** Most illnesses people are suffering from do not come from “wrong” diets. Healthy food is important for supporting the physical body but it is only one factor of why people get sick. Even very healthy food can do very little if we are lying to ourselves and to others, if we are angry, resentful, judgmental, envious, ungrateful, etc. Emotional burdens and traumas are the major factors in getting sick. What is the most important advice? If you grow your own food, grow it, harvest it, and prepare it with respect and gratitude and then share it in a good company. This way we can build not only a healthier body but also better relationships with people. Be grateful for what you already have. Respect yourself and others.

**KV:** What have you learned from living in Alaska and being close to nature?



**DG:** I thought I was strong and stubborn. I thought I could do anything I decided to do. What a joke! How arrogant and ignorant I was! I learned a lot! And from the strictest teacher of all, the Ocean. I worked directly under His rules. I learned that Nature (or God, if you prefer) is the real boss. You can only obey and follow it. Nature doesn't care about our rules, schedules, and whims. The sooner you realize it and start obeying the laws of Nature, the easier it becomes to live under those conditions. When I started following those rules, I became healthier and happier. Even though the laws of Nature are strict, Nature is also very loving and it always is trying to help us. A human body is a part of Nature and it knows how to heal itself. All we need to do is to support it. We can make all sort of problems for ourselves with unhealthy lifestyles, with imagined expectations, and not following Nature's rules. However, I want to emphasize that Nature is always trying to help us, we only need to listen and follow. I almost died 12 years ago from a thyroid problem. I was disobeying those laws, and after I started following a natural path, after I disciplined myself and lived according to those rules I become healthy and sincerely happy. I am 52 years old and I am perfectly healthy. I know it works. I don't believe I have any kind of special powers. If I can turn my life around anybody can! And that is what I am encouraging everyone to do. It is possible to become healthy and happy.

**KV:** How do people get in touch with you?

**DG:** At this time, I am teaching self-healing techniques and how to become healthier and happier. If you are interested in my lifestyle, follow me on Facebook or Instagram. If somebody is interested in organizing an event with me, please email me [gdaiva11@gmail.com](mailto:gdaiva11@gmail.com).



Fermented preserves.



Dried herbs and flowers for tea.



Teaching groups about self-healing with food.

## The Poetry of Matilda Olkin, 1922 – 1941 Panemunėlis, Lithuania

By Laima Vincė  
Laimavince@gmail.com



Matilda Olkin, around age 18 or 19. Archival photograph from the Rokiškis Museum.

Matilda Olkin was born into a Jewish (Litvak) family in the small village of Panemunėlis in 1922, just a few years after Lithuania became independent from Czarist Russia. Her father was the local pharmacist and her mother was a housewife. She had a happy childhood together with her two sisters, Grunia and Mika, and her brother, Ilya. Matilda's father, Noah Olkin, was close friends with the village priest, Father Matelionis. They drank tea in the rectory on Sundays and celebrated the Sabbath together in the Olkin's home. Noah Olkin donated an ornately carved confessional to the Panemunėlis Church as a gesture of friendship to Catholics in his community. It still stands there today.

Already at the age of 13 Matilda was known in her region for her exuberant nature poems, which were published in magazines for children. At 18 she was accepted into Vytautas Magnus University and studied French and Russian Literature, first in Kaunas, and then in Vilnius, when the university moved to the newly liberated historic capital. In 1940 the Soviets occupied Lithuania and the Olkin's pharmacy was nationalized. Despite the oppressive Soviet occupation Matilda continued her studies with Lithuania's elite poets and scholars, like Vincas Mykolaitis Puti-

nas. She wrote her first collection of poetry during 1938 - 1940, although she knew that she could not publish her poems until better times. She wrote in her diary about how because of the politics of her times, and her patriotic views of Lithuania, the Soviets considered her poetry anti-Soviet.

In June 1941 the Soviets began deporting Lithuanians and Lithuanian Jews to Siberia. Within weeks the Nazis occupied Lithuania, pushing out the Soviets. They began arresting Lithuania's Jews and imprisoning them in ghettos. Father Matelionis hid Noah Olkin in his rectory. However, one night Noah Olkin went out for a walk in the village and saw a notice that anyone hiding Jews would be executed. He immediately feared for his friend's life and made the moral decision that he could not risk another's life to save his own. He turned himself in to the Nazis. After that his family turned down all rescue attempts.

The family was shot and killed by Nazis and their local collaborators soon afterwards in the summer of 1941. Matilda was 19 when she died. She was only just beginning to find her voice as a poet. She longed to live. In her diary she wrote about how she had fallen in love and wished to have a baby one day. However, she realized the grave danger she was in.

*Millions of people in the world are dying. People are starving. The war is moving closer towards us. I may not receive my stipend—nothing is certain, everything is in a fog. And I am standing on the edge of a precipice picking at the petals of a daisy, asking: Love me? Loves me not? It is foolish and naive.*

September 24, 1940

Before their deaths, somehow Noah Olkin managed to pass on Matilda's diary and notebook of poems to Father Matelionis, who hid them under the Great Altar of the Panemunėlis church. Soon afterwards in 1950 the priest was exiled to Siberia by the Soviets. Upon his return from prison camp many years later, he passed the diaries and poems on to the church organist, who passed them on to Holocaust survivor, Dr. Irena Veisaitė. Last summer Irena gave me permission to translate the diary and poems. This is how one talented young poet's voice, silenced by hate 77 years ago, has been able to reach us today.

Matilda wove Lithuanian folk symbolism into her poetry, and celebrated the beauty of the land, and her simple life in a small farming community, where her family lived in harmony with their Catholic neighbors. But she also wrote about what it felt like to be a Jew in those awful times. Many of her poems, written in 1938 were eerily prophetic. This poem predicts the tragic fate of Lithuanian displacement.



Was it true, or was it a story?  
I don't know...  
I saw three sisters walking,  
Three sisters I saw

Carrying armfuls of flowers,  
Much sunshine and flowers.  
Their hair was blond and braided,  
And their eyes were blue.

Then, someone carried off  
The Sun and all the flowers.  
The young sisters left  
For foreign lands.

Then I saw their tears,  
And their sorrow I saw...  
Was it true, or was it a story?  
I don't know.

The poem “My People” tell us what it felt like to be a Jew  
in those awful years.

### My People

A pair of dark eyes ignite once again  
With a pain that could not be extin-  
guished.  
And they—they just keep walking past  
and away.  
But for me, Lord, there are no words.

Do you hear? Do hear that awful laughter?  
The hills, even the hills shake with it—  
And the rivers will faint, and the seas will  
faint—  
And the stone will cry, the stone will cry.

You are laughing? You walk past and keep  
on walking,  
But for me, Lord, there are no words for  
my horror.  
That laughter—that awful laughter...  
And dark eyes flash  
With an undying, relentless pain.

Matilda depicts the sadness and longing of a Lithuania  
without its Jews.

Beyond Three Hills  
The Sun went down.  
It was dusk  
When we set out.



Memorial to the Olkin and Jaffee families, Panemunėlis, Lithuania.  
The memorial was built by local volunteers and the Rokiškis Theater  
Association. Photo by Laima Vincė.

A Black Angel  
Carried off the Sun.  
Beyond Three Hills  
The Sun has set.

Farewell, farewell—  
We will never return—  
We've already gone,  
Beyond the Three Hills.

And we did not find there  
Our beloved Sun.  
We only found  
The dark night—  
Beyond Three Hills  
The Sun has set.

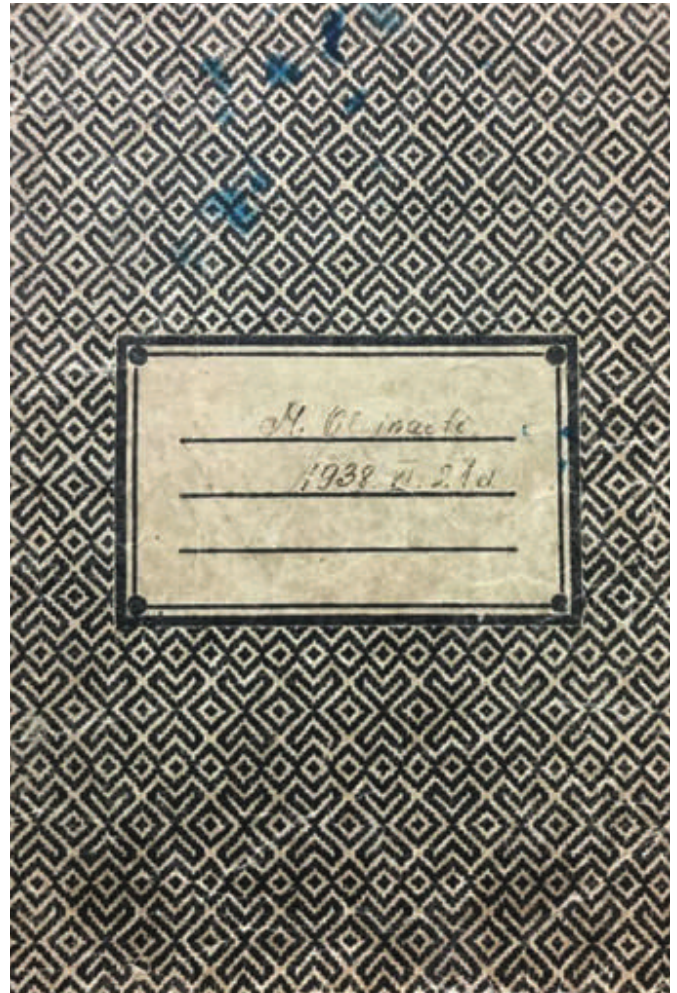
Oh, farewell, farewell.  
We will never return.  
And flowers will bloom  
In the early morning—  
In the early morning,  
We will never return.

Seventy-seven years since her murder, Matilda has brought love and healing into contemporary Lithuanian's lives. The brightness and exuberant joy of her early poetry, her love for Lithuania, so powerful in her poems, and then her later poems that prophesize the death of Lithuania's Jews, have moved many.

Matilda is important to Lithuania today because she breaks all the stereotypes of what it means to be a Lithuanian. She was both a Jew and a Lithuanian. She lived in an era, the time of Lithuania's independence, between the two world wars, when such an identity was possible, before the cruel ideologies of the Soviets and the Nazis tore Europe apart.

Today we live in a global Lithuanian community with Lithuanians dispersed all over the world, and yet our Lithuanian identity remains strong no matter where we live and work. There are some Lithuanians who hold onto the view that a true Lithuanian is only one who was born and raised in Lithuania and never left. Their viewpoint comes from another era, when Lithuania was isolated by occupation. The Lithuanian Grand Duchy was a tolerant multicultural society. The first period of independence fostered for the most part a tolerant society. We Lithuanians who have grown up in America, Canada, South America, Australia, and elsewhere have always known that it is possible to balance two identities, or maybe even three, at once. Matilda teaches us now that it was possible for her to be a Jew and Lithuanian at the same time, and to be fully integrated into Lithuanian society, while not losing her Jewish identity. Her love for Lithuania carries with it a lesson for all of us.

The road to translating Matilda's poetry and working to fulfill her dream of publishing her book of poems has brought me together with many people who I didn't know before. All of us share a love for Matilda and for Lithuania. It is our desire to heal our nation's wounds through Matilda's poetry. We were all shocked and disappointed, and frankly baffled, when we received the news that the Lithuanian Cultural Fund and the Jewish Good Will Fund decided not to allocate us funding to publish Matilda's poems and diary in Lithuania. I wrote about how I felt about it on Facebook, and people began to donate money, whatever they could spare. We were all so moved by people's generosity and goodwill to make Matilda's dream come true. Now, I am in a way glad that we did not receive government funding. I know now how strongly Lithuanians feel about Matilda's book, about her words. They are eagerly awaiting the publication of this book. We are close to our goal of collecting enough funds to pay for paper, binding, printing, and book design. The editor, Minister Mindaugas Kvietkauskas, and me, the author of the introduction to the book and the translator of Matilda's poems and diary, have donated our honorariums. Everyone else



The cover of Matilda Olkin's notebook of poems.  
Photo by Laima Vincė.

on our team has worked tirelessly to collect photographs of Matilda, search out the poems that were published in the 1930s, research her life, located her friends who are still living. All this work was done from the heart.

As people in Lithuania have sent their donations to fulfill Matilda's dream of publishing her collection of poems, they also sent their encouraging words. One woman wrote to me: "If my small contribution to Matilda's book helps to heal Lithuania's wounds, and bring us together as one nation, then I will be at peace."

What this experience has taught me is that despite the hate and accusations we read in the press, people in Lithuania, and Lithuanians abroad, feel the tragedy of the Holocaust in Lithuania very deeply. I feel as though in death, Matilda is healing both Lithuanians and Jews, bringing us closer, through her poetry.

If you would like to donate to our book fund, we would be very grateful. Please write to my email at [Laimavince@gmail.com](mailto:Laimavince@gmail.com) for information on how to help.



## January – A Month of Milestones

By Dr. Robertas Vitas



Dr. Robertas Vitas is Chairman of the Board of the Lithuanian Research Center in Lemont, IL and Chicago, IL.

“I remember” is a fitting theme for the month of January. The Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Home Church in Western Springs, Illinois took appropriate note of the significance of January at its service and commemoration on January 20, 2019. Two anniversaries were remembered: The return of the Klaipėda Region to Lithuania following the uprising of January 10-15, 1923 and the tragic events in Vilnius on January 13, 1991.

The service began with a procession of flags brought to the altar by members of the Lithuanian National Guard, led by their chief, Julius Butkus. As they saluted, Rev. Liudas Miliauskas lit fourteen candles to remember the fourteen unarmed civilians who were killed by Soviet forces 28 years ago. Among the readings was Saint Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians which highlights the fact that God has given different people different talents and that one should pursue their vocation in a spirit of excellence. Rev. Miliauskas noted this in his sermon, adding that because of the good work of those who came before us our lives are relatively easy. For example, the people of Klaipėda are able to live in a free and democratic Lithuania because of the heroic actions of Lithuanians who drove occupying forces out 96 years ago. Lithuania herself is free because of the sacrifices of so many through the generations, including the thousands who converged on Vilnius 28 years ago to defend the capital and the country’s Declaration of Independence.

Rev. Miliauskas’s reminder that every generation needs to be taught the lessons of history was a perfect segue to Dr. Robertas Vitas’s presentation on the Act of Tilžė.

Lithuania Minor is located in the previously Prussian region of Europe and encompasses its northernmost portion. The territory’s name was derived from its substantial Lithuanian-speaking population. With the exception of the Klaipėda Region, which became a mandated territory of the League of Nations in 1920 under the Treaty of Versailles and was annexed to Lithuania from 1923 to 1939, the area was part of Prussia until 1945. Today a small portion of Lithuania Minor is within the borders of modern Lithuania and Poland while most of the territory is part of the Kaliningrad Oblast of Russia.

Sovetsk, before 1946 known as Tilžė (or Tilsit) in East Prussia, is now a town in Kaliningrad. Its relationship with Lithuania was greatly influenced by the number of Lithuanian-language books published, and smuggled from, here during the Czarist Press Ban of 1864-1904, when it was illegal to publish using the Latin alphabet. The Lithuanian language could only be published using the Cyrillic alphabet, resulting in a jumble that came to be known as graždanka.

The eastern boundaries of Prussia - which from 1871 was a part of the German Empire - having remained unchanged since the Treaty of Melno in 1422, became a matter of discussion following World War I, as the newly independent states of Poland and Lithuania emerged.

In 1918, during World War I, Lithuania declared its independence from Russia. The separatist Act of Tilžė was signed on November 30, 1918 by 24 members of the National Council of Lithuania Minor who were pro-Lithuanian oriented Prussian Lithuanians. The Act demanded the unification of Prussian Lithuania with Lithuania proper. This claim was supported by the Lithuanian government.

Eventually, the Act of Tilžė became an important tool during the Klaipėda Revolt of 1923, when Lithuanians rose up against the French forces stationed there by the League of Nations and drove them out. The Klaipėda Region, located in the most northern part of the German province of East Prussia, was annexed by Lithuania. The rest of East Prussia, located south of the Nemunas River, including the town of Tilžė, where the act was signed, remained within Germany. In March 1939, Lithuania was forced to cede the Klaipėda Region to Nazi Germany.

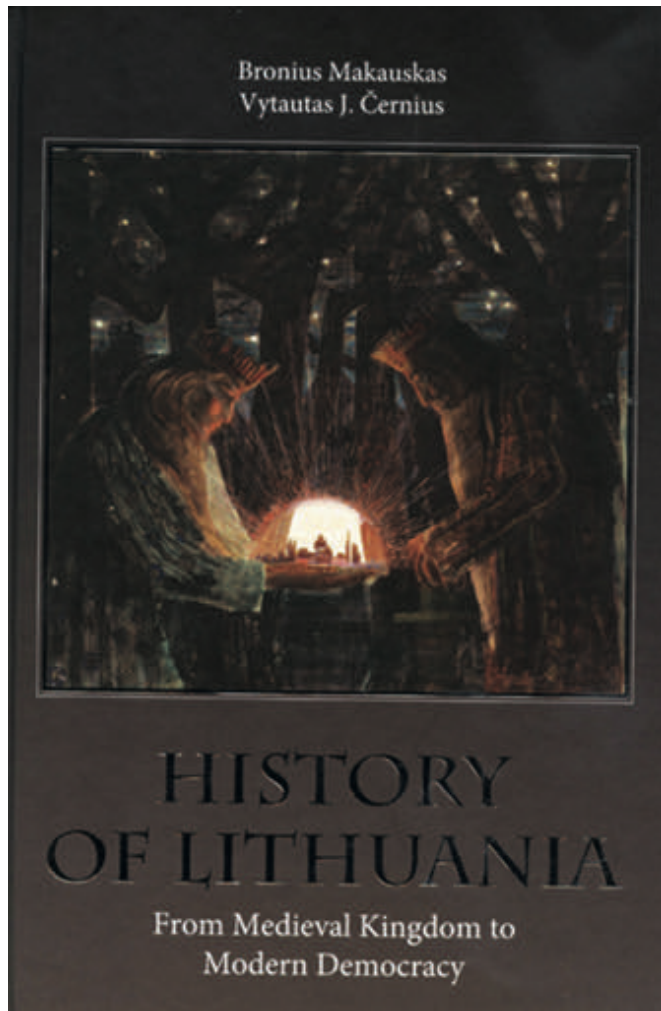
Dr. Vitas added that not only does every generation need to be taught their history, but that every generation also needs to be vigilant in the defense of their freedom. He acknowledged the Lithuanian National Guardsmen in attendance, noting that 1919 will see the centennial of the foundation of the National Guard and the 65th anniversary of its reestablishment in exile. The Guard is a visible reminder of Lithuania’s statehood and sovereignty. He concluded by noting how appropriate it was that the green, white and red tricolor flag of Lithuania Minor was displayed at the altar in celebration of the victory in Klaipėda.

The service ended with a final blessing hymn and procession of the flags out of the church. The sponsors of this event were the Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Home Church, the Lithuanian National Guard in Exile, the Foundation of Lithuania Minor, and the Lithuanian Research Center.

### A Welcome Addition to our Library:

History of Lithuania: From Medieval Kingdom to Modern Democracy

By Dr. Robertas Vitas



History of Lithuania book cover.

Lithuanian scholars have produced a plethora of both general and subject-specific histories of Lithuania. All too often, however, they have not been presented in languages other than Lithuanian. This has prevented a broader audience from becoming familiar with the Lithuanian people. Thus, the publication of the new English language History of Lithuania by Dr. Bronius Makauskas and Dr. Vytautas J. Černius is a valuable addition to global scholarship.

The volume, published in 2018 by the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., is comprehensive, almost 700 pages. It is also rationally structured. For example, the time period between the Grand Duke Vytautas and the

Partitions of Lithuania and Poland in the late eighteenth century is an often-confusing epoch laden with short-serving rulers and various degrees of intervention by Poland. Compounding that is the often excruciatingly detailed coverage of the various functionaries in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, for example, grand marshals, chancellors, hetmans and palatines. This book becomes more accessible for the reader thanks to its first chronological and, then thematic, presentation of these four centuries. The authors' approach builds an effective bridge between the formation of the Kingdom and the later Czarist occupation and Lithuanian national renaissance.

The article cannot comprehensively address every significant issue raised in the volume, but several questions can be highlighted. One is the role of religion throughout Lithuania's history, specifically the use of Roman Catholicism as a political tool. King Mindaugas received his crown from a papal legate in 1253 because, at that time in Europe, only popes crowned monarchs and Mindaugas sought international recognition for the Lithuanian people. Later, in 1323, King Gediminas wrote Pope John XXII inviting western scholars, craftsmen, and artisans to Lithuania to help it both prosper as well as to ingratiate himself with the Vatican. The Reformation begun by Martin Luther in 1517 with the 95 Theses spread across Europe, dislodged the exclusive hold of the Catholic Church on the continent and ultimately affected Lithuanian Minor. As an aside, when Gediminas invited westerners to Lithuania most of them and their descendants remained in Lithuania. This begs the question: Who are we? What does it mean to be Lithuanian? Are Lithuanians just Balts and Aisčiai or are we a more amalgamated nation? Some may be disturbed by this notion, however, Lithuanians should be proud that they welcomed and integrated people of other nations 400 years before the establishment of the melting pot known as the United States. In that sense Lithuania has been an example for others.

In recent years there have been increased debates over the longevity of the Lithuanian Kingdom. Traditionally, Lithuanians have recognized their first and only king, Mindaugas. This volume, though, extends the Kingdom to the time of Jogaila. Since they were not crowned by the pope, the book refers to the "pagan kings" Traidenis, Vytenis, Gediminas, Jaunutis, Algirdas, and Kestutis. It is time for Lithuanian scholars to revisit this issue and to provide recognition for a Kingdom possessing greater





During the presentation of *History of Lithuania in the World* in the World Lithuanian Center in Lemont Illinois.

longevity than has hitherto been recognized.

Lithuania's relationship with Poland is an unavoidable and significant factor in our history. This too has certainly created its share of controversy. Some may recall the celebration of what was referred to as the 600th anniversary of the Christian baptism of the Lithuanian nation. Some may also recall that there was disagreement over whether this event should be commemorated since it remembered the baptism of Jogaila and his family, and not the baptism of Mindaugas and his family in 1251.

Makauskas and Černius are exemplary in reflecting Lithuania's evolution from a pagan to a monarchical and, finally, a civil order based on codified law. The Lithuanian Statute of 1529 consolidated customs and prior decrees into a unified legal code, which served as a model for the rest of Europe. The Educational Commission of Lithuania and Poland of the eighteenth century was a model for the reorganization and modernization of education throughout Europe and even the United States. Thomas Jefferson referred to the Commission when addressing the needs of public education in Virginia. These are just two examples of how the authors chronicle Lithuania's march toward a modern nation.

The social sciences such as political science, psychology, and sociology are analytic disciplines, often utilizing statistical methods to flesh out the details of human behavior. The humanities, such as literature and history, tend to be synthetic disciplines that synthesize and inte-

grate such details into a coherent and flowing narrative. Makauskas and Černius have achieved this goal of the humanities. Lithuania's history becomes more dynamic thanks to short sections interspersed throughout the volume entitled "History Alive." These vignettes cover various interesting topics, such as famine, feudalism, the birth of the Lithuanian national anthem, the role of Lithuanian Americans, and even the role of alcohol among the Lithuanian people.

An adjunct to the book which is almost 200 pages long is entitled "Witnesses to History, 1940-1990," edited by Vytautas Černius, Algirdas Marchertas and Vytautas Babušis. This is a collection of reminiscences by 24 individuals, mainly about Lithuania's half-century of darkness under both Nazi and Soviet occupations. Some reminiscences, including those of deportations and ghettos, are especially poignant. This also reflects the importance of memoirs to historians. The letters, documents, and photographs of ordinary people are reflective of the mosaic that is a nation. One such treasure trove can be found in New York City at the headquarters of the Lithuanian Alliance of America. The LAA at one time offered insurance policies to Lithuanian Americans. Their files contain important documentation of the policy holders, including family details. These were ordinary people, but this collection is significant for historians, sociologists, and demographers. The memoirs contained in the volume also remind us that Lithuanians are in the best position to

# book review

write their own history. Lithuanians must also remember to present that history to non-Lithuanians and to see to it that it is integrated into world history.

This article's author was struck by three themes throughout the book: nationalism, statehood, and sovereignty. It is miraculous that Lithuanians were able to preserve both their national identity and their state sovereignty against all odds and constantly surrounded by enemies that sought to subjugate them. A recent phenomenon in the social sciences is the concept of national resilience. Lithuania is certainly an example of that.

I also wish to thank the individuals involved in the writing, editing, and financing of this significant edition to Lithuanian scholarship. Among various photographs in the book was one of Juozas Tūbelis, Lithuania's Prime Minister and Finance Minister from 1929 until his death in 1938. Tūbelis was an economist and a mild-mannered man who fought to avoid economic extremism during the Great Depression. His policies resulted in less economic dislocation and suffering than was found in the rest of Europe and the United States. I point out Tūbelis because the individual responsible for beginning this project, Vytautas Mikūnas, was characteristically very similar to Tūbelis. He was also educated as an economist, was a reasonable and mild-mannered man, and for almost 40 years served as the very competent president of the Vydūnas Youth Fund. Just as without Tūbelis, there would not have been a relatively prosperous Lithuania, without Mikūnas there would not have been this book.

After his passing in 2007, Raminta & Dr. Algirdas Marchertas continued coordinating the writing and editing of the book. Their efforts were by all means heroic in bringing the book to the public. Others associated with the production of the book are: Pranas Jurkus, Dr. Algirdas Avižienis, Rimantas Dirvonis, Šarūnas Rimas, Dr. Rasa Mažeika, Karilė Vaitkutė, Bill Notley, Alyssa Popowitch and Skaistė Bosas. There was also a host of advisers.

The dedication of the History of Lithuania states: "This book is dedicated to Lithuanians throughout the world, especially to those who were born or live far from Lithuania, may no longer speak the mother tongue, but remain steadfast in their love for the people and history of Lithuania." It addresses all Lithuanians in all places over all generations. The dedication and the book reflect the unity and resilience of the Lithuanian people past, present, and future.

*Dr. Robertas Vitas is Chairman of the Board of the Lithuanian Research Center, Chicago.*



Pranas Jurkus.



Raminta Marchertas.



Rimantas Dirvonis.



Robert Vitas.



## Security

...The U.S. dock landing ship USS Fort McHenry along with members of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit began its northbound voyage to the Black Sea through the Dardanelles Strait. This is the first deployment of U.S. forces since the November 25 attack against three Ukrainian vessels and the capture/imprisonment of 24 Ukrainian crewmembers. The USS Fort McHenry was followed two weeks later by the guided-missile destroyer, USS Donald Cook, also through the Dardanelles. Both ships are elements of the U.S. Sixth Fleet based in Naples, Italy.

...The Ukrainian Military has reported that the U.S. Air Force has sent a Boeing RC-135V reconnaissance aircraft to patrol off the Russian controlled Crimean peninsula and the Russian Federation near Novorossiysk. The RC-135V is based at Souda Bay airbase on the island of Crete.

...Twelve Lithuanian servicemen from the Prince Vaidotas infantry battalion will join instructors from the U.S. to train Ukrainian military personnel in central, northern, and western regions of Ukraine. The Lithuanian and U.S. instructors are said to not be directly involved in military hostilities in eastern Ukraine.

...The Lithuanian Armed Forces have established the Communications and Information Systems Battalion, which will be directly responsible for the security of internal communications among units of the Armed Forces.

...The 12th annual "SNOW MEETING" of Lithuanian and foreign policy experts was held in the District of Trakai near Vilnius and attended by the Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pavlo Klimkin, who warned of Russian effort to "suffocate" the Donbas region as well as the Southern Ukraine with "creeping occupation" in the Kerch Strait and Azov Sea and Russian efforts to meddle with the upcoming presidential and general elections in Ukraine. The two-day informal meeting was attended by over 100 high ranking diplomats, parliamentarians, advisors from 15 countries including Ben Hodges, former commander of U.S. Army – Europe.

...The investigation of spying for Russia by former MP and Vice Mayor of Vilnius, Algirdas Paleckis, has broadened to include Pavel Zevikov, a board member of the Socialist People's Front, Deimantas Bertauskas, director of the Vilnius based Food Expert, and Arturas Sidlauskas, of the Lithuanian People's Party plus Andrej Gorbatenkov, deputy chairman of the Socialist People's Front and activist Leonas Minkevicius. The group is accused of acting under orders of the Federal Security Service of the

Russian Federation to collect information on potential hostage-taking in Lithuania.

...President Dalia Grybauskaitė attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland and described the 55,000 annual cyber-attacks in Lithuania as a new weapon of war. Targets include key public sectors -energy, transport and financial networks, posting fake news on media portals and affecting the results of democratic elections. She noted that Lithuania has teamed with the U.S. to set up a regional cybersecurity center in Kaunas which will follow the framework of the newly established Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) for the common defense for 25 of 28 members of the EU.



President Dalia Grybauskaitė at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

...The Russian enclave of Kaliningrad will test its electrical system in May. The Baltic nations, Russia, and Belarus are controlled by the post-Soviet BRELL ring which is synchronized and controlled in Moscow. The Baltic countries are preparing to prevent a power system blackout during the isolation testing in Kaliningrad.

...The Defense Ministry drew up the conscription list for 2019 which includes 31,000 men between 19 and 26 years. Some 3,827 will be called up for nine-month military service this year.

## Business

...Homanit, a leading Saarland, German manufacturer of medium and high-density wood fiberboards, will invest around 100 million euros and hire 440 employees in the Vilnius region within the next 5 years. Customers will include local furniture manufacturers and suppliers to IKEA from as far away as North America and the Far East. Homanit has had a plant in Karlino, Poland since

## current events

2005 and is known for its community involvement including funding social housing and sports facilities. The CEO of Homanit Lietuva, Andrius Ostrauskas, said that they would be offering summer internships and apprenticeships throughout the year. In 2016 Homanit had sales of 225 million euros with a workforce of 1500 employees.

...Lithuania's financial technology (fintech) sector increased by 45% last year with the number of companies increasing from 117 to 170 employing 2,600 specialists. The Bank of Lithuania (BOL) has issued 3 specialized banking licenses (SPBs), 33 payment institution licenses (PIs) and 47 electronic money institution licenses (EMIs). For reference, Luxembourg, another fintech hub, has only issued 7 EMIs. Thirty percent of Lithuania's fintech companies are headquartered abroad including the U.S., the U.K., China, Singapore, and Israel.

...Almost 2 million packs of smuggled cigarettes were confiscated by Lithuanian border police in 2018. Most of the contraband came from Belarus but some came from Ukraine and Tajikistan. Smuggling is driven by the price difference of less than a euro in Belarus and 3 euros in Lithuania. One failed effort included a stuck overloaded amphibious vehicle in the swampland between Lithuania and Belarus that was carrying 12,000 packs of Belarus Korona cigarettes. Two Lithuanians face up to 7 years in prison. Tobacco producers reached an out of court settlement with the European Commission to allocate 6.2 million euros in 2016-2019 as compensation for indirect promotion of contraband; therefore, Lithuania may be eligible for some payment by the producers of the confiscated cigarettes.

...Currently, as an associate member of CERN (European Center for Nuclear Research), Lithuanian teachers are eligible for training programs in physics and research associates can obtain internships at CERN. Plans are being finalized for Lithuania to be the site of CERN business incubator centers in Vilnius and Kaunas. The sites will enable access to CERN's newest technologies, databases, and expertise in advanced physics, health and information technologies, plus industrial lasers and are the only ones in Central and Eastern Europe.

...The European Commission approved a renewable energy support package for Lithuania worth 1.24 billion euros by supporting producers of renewable energy through a levy paid by the final user. Lithuania is one of only 11 EU members out of a total of 28 countries that are already sourcing 20% of its energy from renewable sources before the year 2020.

### General

...The Lithuanian Migration Department announced that at 16,873 – Ukrainians increased 42% last year and are the largest foreign group while Russians at 12,433 decreased 3% and Belarusians at 12,162 were up by a third over a year. Citizens of EU member states - Latvia, Germany, and Poland comprise other sizable numbers of residents. In total, foreigners increased 17.5% over a year and make up about 2% of the population of 2.8 million.

...PM Skvernelis visited Israel for International Holocaust Remembrance Day accompanied by Faina Kukliansky, chairwomen of the Jewish Community of Lithuania. They met with Israel's PM Benjamin Netanyahu who visited Vilnius in August 2018 and requested the remains of Vilna Gaon, a famous 18th-century rabbi, be moved from Vilnius to Israel for reburial. This request was eventually denied because Vilna Gaon is considered an inseparable part of Lithuania's Jewish community and Lithuania history. PM Skvernelis made a point of not visiting any Palestinian sites during his visit.

...The Evangelical Reformed Church on Pylimo Street in Vilnius has removed a 30-foot staircase composed of Jewish headstones which will be moved to a Jewish cemetery. The headstones were installed when Lithuania was part of the Soviet Union.

...The Ministry of Health will require mothers who want to deliver at home to submit an application and sign a contract so that specialists will evaluate her health and the proposed birth premises. Only low-risk expectant mothers will be approved and she will receive consultations before and after birth, assistance during birth and will be visited by an obstetrician after birth.

...A flu epidemic has been declared in 14 out of Lithuania's 60 municipalities. The incidence of acute upper respiratory infection has reached 155.2 cases per 10,000 inhabitants.

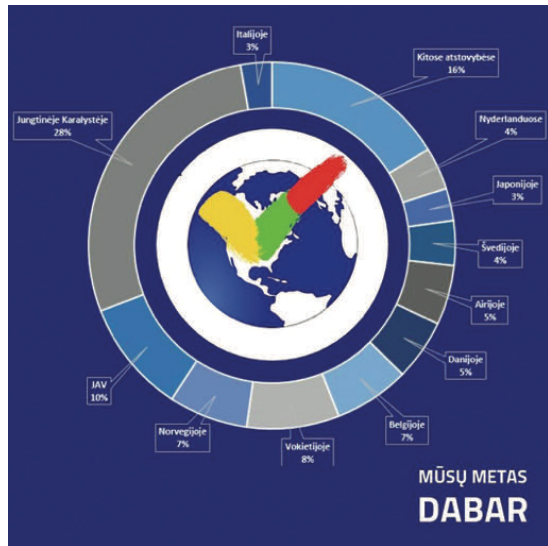
...Lithuania and Vietnam have signed a readmission agreement that makes it easier to deport illegal migrants. The Interior Ministry reports that it deported 374 Vietnamese in 2015, 210 in 2016, 85 in 2017, and 122 in 2018.

...After 4 years of litigation, the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania has finally allowed foreign-language decorative street signs in Vilnius.



## Our Time Is Now

By Dr. Rimvydas Baltaduonis, Laima Liutikienė  
Translated by Rasa McKean



This year is very important for Lithuanians all over the world. The year of 2019 has been declared the “Year of the World Lithuanians”, and the Presidential election of the Republic of Lithuania will already be held on May 12th. It is likely that the election will be accompanied by a referendum on the retention of citizenship for those who have accepted the citizenship of the countries in which they live and work.

According to the data of several recent years, only about 3% of all émigré Lithuanians, with the right to vote, participate in the elections of the Republic of Lithuania. This low level of activity shows that people do not understand the importance of the elections for the survival of the nation and the democratic civil society, due to inadequate national awareness, or are not aware of the electoral process itself. After all, we have such an excellent example to follow: Dr. Jonas Basanavičius, who is called the Patriarch of the Nation, was the first to sign the February 16th Act of the Restoration of Independence, but at the same time, he was also a world Lithuanian in the true sense of the term: he had lived and visited in many countries (including the US), having citizenship of another country, but working consistently for the benefit of Lithuania everywhere he lived or visited. The upcoming elections and the planned referendum on the preservation of citizenship are an opportunity for Lithuanians globally to also contribute to the further development and strengthening of the Lithuanian state.

In this important year for Lithuania, the PLB is coordinating a broad civil initiative “Mūsų metas #DABAR”.

Its purpose is to organize an informative, energetic and attractive campaign of civic engagement that promotes national awareness, encouraging Lithuanians globally to maintain their Lithuanian heritage, strengthen their national identity, and encouraging active participation in the decision-making that is important to the Lithuanian nation. The aim of this politically neutral project is to educate the Lithuanian community of the diaspora about the value of civic action, emphasizing the importance of active national participation in one’s own life, and mobilizing voters. A particularly important aspect is to attract young people, because we need to raise the interest of young people, who have been given the right to vote for the first time, in the idea of the unity and power of the nation, expressed through the elections. Read more about the information campaign run by the PLB and other Lithuanian communities here: [www.musumetasdabar.lt](http://www.musumetasdabar.lt).

Voter registration is currently underway. Anyone who has reached the age of 18 and holds a personal document of the Republic of Lithuania may vote in the election. Registration is available on the website: <https://www.rinkejopuoslapis.lt/elektronine-registracija>. All that is needed to register is the voter’s personal code and identity document (passport or identity card) number. During the registration process, you can choose to vote in person at the nearest Consular Mission or by postal service.

We invite and encourage everyone to register without delay, and in May - to vote.

## South Florida Community Celebrates Lithuania's Independence

Lithuanian Americans gather in Juno Beach, FL

By Kimberly Manning

Saulėtas Krantas Lithuanian School | Lithuanian Community of South Florida



National Anthem.

Lithuanian Americans living in South Florida gathered at the Juno Beach Town Center on Sunday, February 17th to commemorate Lithuania's Independence. Mayor Jason Haselkorn, joined by Vice Mayor Jim Lyons, welcomed the crowd to the town of Juno Beach. Maria Prunskis Brizgiene, President of the Lithuanian Community of South Florida shared a message from the president of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė. Ingrida Bridikytė Lomborg, Director of Saulėtas Krantas Saturday Lithuanian School, and Lithuanian singer and actress, Violeta Leskyte Cucchiara, emceed the event.

This marks the 29th year that Lithuanian Independence Day was celebrated in Juno Beach. The Lithuanian flag was raised, alongside the US flag, while the crowd sang the national anthem of Lithuania. Children and parents from Saulėtas Krantas Saturday Lithuanian School, dressed in traditional costume, performed folk dances and songs. The national colors of Lithuania -- red, green and yellow-- were proudly displayed.

Lithuania's Independence Day is a national holiday in Lithuania, and celebrated by Lithuanians around the world.

Lithuania is a country in Europe roughly the size of West Virginia with a population of 3 million people. During the Middle Ages, The Duchy of Lithuania was the largest state in Europe, stretching from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea. After the country's 200-year alliance with Poland ended in 1795, most of Lithuania became part of the Russian Empire. This continued until a period of German occupation during World War I. On February 16, 1918, the Council of Lithuania unanimously adopted the Act of Independence, the document proclaiming the nation as a sovereign democratic state with Vilnius as its capital.

Today more than 700,000 Lithuanian-Americans live in the United States, many in South Florida. Saulėtas Krantas (Sunny Coast) Saturday Lithuanian School is the Lithuanian School for the South Florida community. Its mission



is to foster youth education, where children are taught Lithuanian language, folk songs and dances, folk art, Lithuanian history, geography, and literature. Founded in 2004, Saulėtas Krantas joined the Education Council of the Lithuanian Community in 2013. Children from ages 3 to 16 are admitted to the school. Saulėtas Krantas Lithuanian School is a non-profit organization. The school is supported by the Lithuanian Foundation, the Kazicki Family Foundation, the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, and JAV LB Švietimo Tarybai, and other generous donors.

Saulėtas Krantas Saturday Lithuanian School and the Lithuania Community of South Florida hold various events throughout the year showcasing Lithuanian arts, music, food and culture.

**About Sauletas Krantas and the Lithuanian Community of South Florida:**

Sauletas Krantas Mokykla, Sunny Coast Lithuanian School, was founded in 2004 and in 2013 joined the Education Council of the Lithuanian Community of Lithuania. The school for the Lithuanian Community of South Florida, its mission is to provide Lithuanian language and cultural education in South Florida. For more information visit [SauletasKrantas.org](http://SauletasKrantas.org)



Dancing in traditional LT Costume.



Sutartine.



Kindergarten Dancing.

## Independence Through Remembrance

By Nojus Aušra



February 16th marked the 101st celebration of the re-establishment of Lithuanian independence. As per usual, Lithuanian students, parents, and teachers spent their Saturday morning at St. Mary of the Hills Elementary School, where “Bostono Lituainistinė Mokykla,” also known as Boston Lithuanian School, is currently running. At BLSM, all sorts of students, from toddlers to senior citizens, learn about the rich culture of a thousand-year old country: language, history, and performative arts. Whether the child of Lithuanians or just simply married to one, the drive to learn from this unique heritage is seen through the commitment of the hundred or so students to the program.

Because the date marked a fundamental Lithuanian holiday, attendance was especially grand. Over the course of the four-hour school day, a representative of the project “Misija Sibiras,” or “Mission Siberia,” held multiple presentations about the goals of their mission. Since 2006, volunteers from Lithuania would travel around Eastern Europe to restore abandoned Lithuanian gravesites belonging to those who were exiled during and after the second world war by the Soviet Union. Representative Enija Davidonytė described how 130 thousand Lithuanians were exiled over the course of eleven years, while 150 thousand were placed in concentration camps. The living conditions that the exiled were placed in were devastating. On her 11-day expedition in Kazakhstan, Enija told the audience what she learned about the mass “lagers,” or camps, which Lithuanians and other exiled cultures were placed in, where they were impris-

oned for an arbitrary number of years. People were tortured for not admitting to false crimes. The harsh winters became unbearable due to the lack of heating. Mothers and their infants struggled to survive when they were only given enough food for one of them.

So, what does fixing the graves of the exiled do? Many Lithuanians, including Enija and some of the teachers and students, had relatives who were sent to camps like the ones in Kazakhstan and Siberia. No matter how physically and emotionally difficult the task may be, “Mission Siberia” aims to preserve Lithuanian history by maintaining the graves of Lithuanians, simultaneously creating hundreds of areas that contain their own cultural significance. Each gravestone, cross, and memorial contains its own story that, as a sum, narrate the heart-wrenching times that many are not aware of. That is why principal’s assistant Rita Lapšienė found it most interesting that there was such a high demand for the volunteer position. As someone who lived through the restrictions of Soviet Lithuania, Rita strongly appreciated the drive for young Lithuanians to provide justice to those who suffered, recognizing the importance in educating individuals who did not know what occurred—like some of the students at BLM. When asked about their impression of the presentations, the 8th and 10th graders were all astounded by the generosity of the volunteers, and some even expressed their aspirations to work with “Mission Siberia” in the future. Some of the parents also proclaimed their own wishes for their children to take up the opportunity. Rita stated that despite not having any exiled relatives, she would send her own son because the tragic events have evolved into every Lithuanian’s concern.

Yet, the relevance of this event to Lithuanian Independence Day may not be exactly clear. Parent Aidas Kupčinskas wouldn’t exactly compare the day to the Fourth of July, which is typically associated with American barbeque and fireworks. Nonetheless, he said remembering the painful past is just as much of a celebration of freedom as explosions in the sky. Acknowledging those who suffered is pivotal in reminding people of their liberties today, reinforcing the importance of Lithuanian pride. Especially outside of Lithuania, in the face of cultural assimilation, exercising one’s heritage is particularly useful. At the end of the day, the parents, students, and teachers left St. Mary’s with a renewed sense of dignity for their Lithuanian identity, determined to continue its legacy of resilience.



## Chicago Lithuanians Celebrated Independence Day with a Musical

By Arvydas Reneckis



This year, the Chicago Lithuanians were commemorating February 16th in traditional ways getting together in various organizations and parishes as well as organizing festive concerts. However, the main and so far unsurpassed celebration of this year was *Šnekučiai*, a musical staged together with performers from Lithuania. All tickets to the only performance were sold out in advance.

The popular genre of a musical was born in the United States more than a hundred years ago, and so far it remains one of the most viewed forms of theatrical expression. Lithuanian Americans began staging performances already in the 19th century, much earlier than Lithuanians in Lithuania could do it because of Tsarist Russia's oppression and the press ban. In 1901 the very first Lithuanian operetta was also staged in the United States. It is symbolic that the attention of contemporary Lithuanian Americans was attracted by the *Pagramančio šnekučiai*, a musical created by composer Algimantas Bražinskas in 1976 in the then Soviet Lithuania.

Because of its still relevant and timeless content, witty phrases, cheerful music, and numerous folklore ele-





# our community

ments, Šnekučiai was staged more than 100 times in the past several decades in Lithuania. The plot of the musical is quite simple. At some point at the end of the 19th century in a Lithuanian village, a master carver, Deveika, dreams of building a flying bird. However, because of the illiteracy and gloominess of the village people, robberies, and the oppression by the Czar's gendarmes, he could not make his dream come true. The flying bird that he built was destroyed by his family and neighbors. However, the musical ends with a ray of hope. A newborn child comes into this world bringing new hope and meaning.

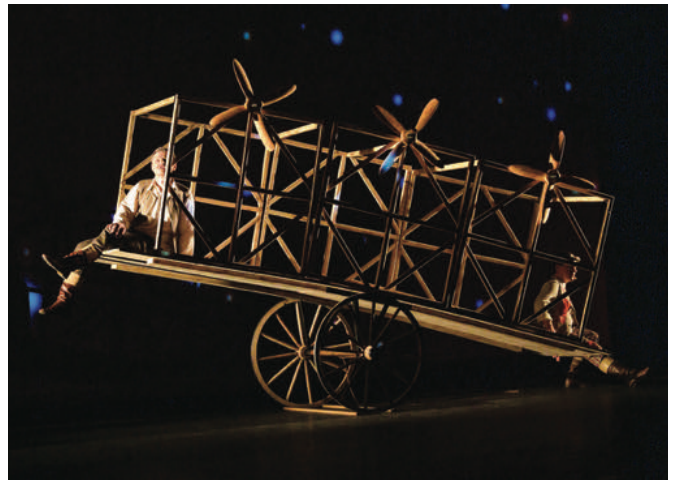
After he arrived in Chicago, Nerijus Petrokas, a theatre director from Panevėžys, rehearsed the musical for a couple of weeks together with Suktinis, a folk dance group from Chicago as well as the Chicago Lithuanian opera choir and soloists. Chicago soloists, Nida Grigalavičiūtė, Linas Sprindys, Julius Jokimas, Ramūnas Paulauskas, Aušra Jasaitė-Paulauskas had parts in the musical. Other major performers, Liudas Mikalauskas, Deividas Norvilas (Deivis), Renata Norvilė, and Liutauras Sutkus, came from Lithuania. The main choreographer of the musical was Alfredas Kondratavičius.

According to the producer, Žygis Janus, the idea to bring Lithuanian artists to Chicago and to stage Šnekučiai together with local performers came to him a couple of years ago, when he visited Lithuania and saw Deividas Norvilas and Liudas Mikalauskas singing in this musical on TV.

*All photographs from the musical are by Sandra Šcedrina, Studio Light, Inc.*







## 2019 Declared the Year of General Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas



Jonas Žemaitis. Photo from the Lithuanian Archives.

The government of the Republic of Lithuania declared 2019 as the year of General Jonas Žemaitis – Vytautas, the leader of Lithuania Freedom Fighters and wartime head of state.

Jonas Žemaitis was born on March 15, 1909, in the town of Palanga to Jonas Žemaitis and Petronėlė Daukšaitė. From 1910 to 1917, he lived with his parents in Łomża, Poland, where his uncle A. Daukša owned a large dairy farm. In Łomża, Žemaitis attended a primary school while his parents were working. In 1917, Žemaitis returned to Lithuania and settled down in the village of Kiaulininkai, near Šiluva, where his grandparents lived. In 1921, he finished first grade in the Raseiniai Gymnasium. In 1926, Žemaitis started studying in the Kaunas Military School from which he graduated in 1929 with the rank of a lieutenant. Žemaitis started his military service with the 2nd

Artillery Battery as a commander. In 1936–1938, Žemaitis studied at the School of Applied Artillery in Fontainebleau, France. After the studies, Žemaitis was promoted to captain and commanded artillery units of the Lithuania military forces.

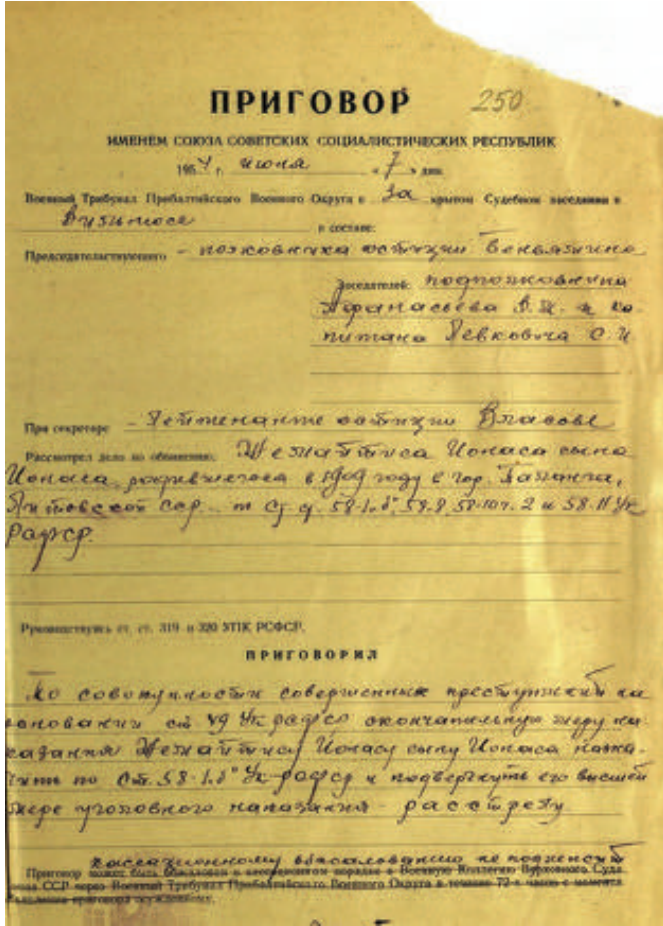
After the Soviet occupation of Lithuania in June 1940, Žemaitis continued his active service in the 617th Artillery Regiment, where he was the head of the regiment's school. At the beginning of the war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, Žemaitis was at the proving ground of Varėna. In 1944, he became the commander of the 310th Battalion of the Lithuanian Territorial Defense Force. After the Nazis dissolved the Battalion, he went into hiding for a period of time.



Lithuanian partisans. Photo from the Lithuanian Archives.

In 1945, Žemaitis became a member of the Lithuanian Freedom Army and the chief of the Žebenkštis brigade staff. In 1946, he was the commander of the Šernas Brigade. In May 1947, Žemaitis was elected commander of the Kęstutis Military District. In May 1948, he founded West Lithuania Partisan Region and became its commander. In February 1949, during the meeting of partisan commanders from all of Lithuania, Žemaitis was elected Chairman of the Council of the LLKS (the Union of the Lithuanian Freedom Fighters); he also temporarily served as the commander of the Defense Forces and rose to the rank of freedom fighter partisan general. In December 1951, Jonas Žemaitis suffered a stroke. He resigned and remained in hiding in his bunker in Minaičiai Forest. He





The sentence of Jonas Žemaitis. Photo from the Lithuanian Archives.



Jonas Žemaitis in the Soviet Prison. Photo from the Lithuanian Archives.

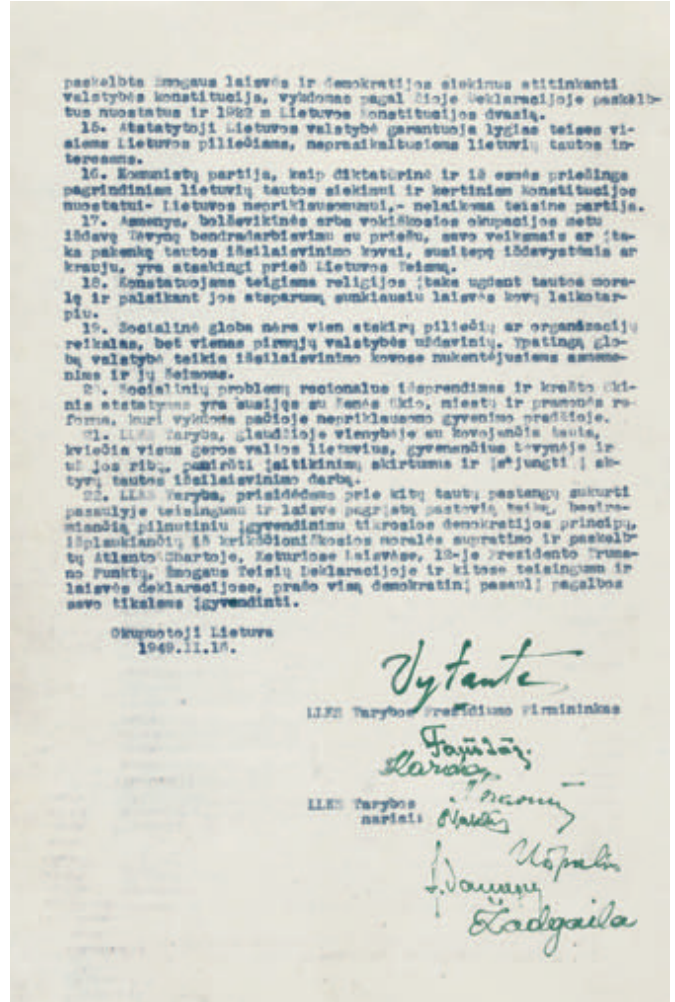
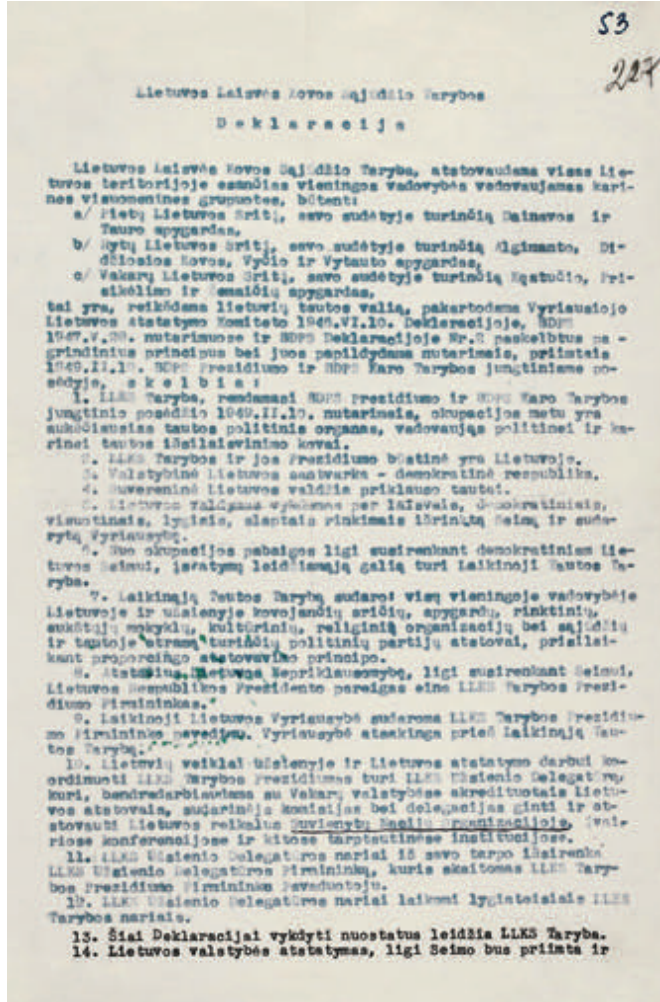
resumed his post in the spring of 1953. On May 30, 1953, after the location of the bunker had been betrayed he was captured alive.

On November 26, 1954, he was executed by shooting in the Butyrka Prison in Moscow. Pursuant to a decree of the President of the Republic of Lithuania of February 14, 1997, he was awarded the 1st Class Order of the Cross of Vytautas (Knight) (posthumously) and on January 28, 1998, the rank of brigadier general, retired (posthumously) was conferred on him. On March 11, 2009, the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania recognized Jonas Žemaitis as the fourth President of Lithuania.

The Lithuanian armed anti-Soviet resistance started in the summer of 1944 and continued until 1953. During this time, military companies, partisan military districts, and partisan military regions were established. The partisan leaders had a goal to unite all the partisan territorial structures and establish a centralized organization that would coordinate the political and military fight to liberate Lithuania.

On February 10–20, 1949, the meeting of partisan commanders from all the regions of Lithuania was held in the bunker of Leonardas Grigonis (partisan code name Užpalis), the commander of the Priskėlimas partisan military district. The bunker was located in the farmstead of Stanislovas Miknius in Minaičiai village, not far from Šiauliai). The Union of the Lithuanian Freedom Fighters (commonly referred to by its Lithuanian acronym, LLKS) was established and the leadership of the LLKS was elected. The assembly discussed the political, tactical, ideological, and organizational issues of the LLKS, including the political program of the LLKS, the statue of the LLKS and the issues related to partisan uniforms, ranks, and posts. Appeals to all members of the partisan movement and the population of Lithuania were adopted.

The most important document written during the meeting was the LLKS Declaration of February 16, 1949. "The Council of the LLKS shall be the supreme political body of the nation during the period of occupation. The governing of Lithuania shall be exercised by the Seimas (Parliament) elected in free, democratic, general, equal elections by secret ballot," reads the declaration of February 16, 1949. The Declaration was signed by eight participants of the meeting: Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas), chairman of the Presidium of the Council of the LLKS, and the LLKS Council's members: Aleksandras Grybinas-Faustas), Vytautas Gužas-Kardas), Juozas Šibaila-Merainis), Bro-



The Declaration of February 16, 1949. Photo from the Lithuanian Archives.

nus Liesys-Naktis), Leonardas Grigonis-Užpalis), Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas), and Petras Bartkus-Žadgaila).

By signing the declaration, the LLKS assumed responsibility to lead the restoration of the independent democratic state of Lithuania, where equal rights for all citizens and social care are guaranteed. The document also states that "Communist party, as dictatorial and essentially opposite to the main aim of Lithuanian nation and keystone provision of the Constitution – independence of Lithuania, – is not considered a legal party". The declaration appeals to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Lithuanian Constitution of 1922 and addresses the whole democratic world asking for help.

In 1996, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania recognized the Declaration as an official act of the Republic of Lithuania and Žemaitis as President of Lithuania.

In 2010, eight partisans, who had signed the Declaration, were awarded the status of signatories. The status (posthumously) was awarded to Bartkus, Grigonis, Grybinas, Gužas, Liesis, Ramanauskas, Šibaila, and Žemaitis.

On November 22, 2010, a monument was unveiled in Minaičiai village to honor the Declaration and its signatories (author – sculptor Jonas Jagėla). The barn and the bunker, where the Declaration had been signed, were restored in 2012 to house an exposition "Atiduok Tėvynei, ką privalai".

Sources: www.genocid.lt and www.archyvai.lt.





Monument to the signatories of the Declaration of February 16, 1949 in Minaičiai village. Photo from the Lithuanian Archives.



The monument to Jonas Žemaitis and his restored bunker. Photo from the Lithuanian Archives.

# our community

## Valdas Adamkus Inducted into the IIT Hall of Fame



On behalf of President Valdas Adamkus, Consul General Mantvydas Bekešius takes the award from the IIT President Alan W. Cramp.

Valdas Adamkus, former President of the Republic of Lithuania, was inducted into the Illinois Institute of Technology Hall of Fame on February 19, 2019 at the Illinois Institute of Technology Gala event in Chicago. Consul General of Lithuania in Chicago Mantvydas Bekešius participated in the event on behalf of Valdas Adamkus.

Valdas Adamkus together with his parents, brother and sister immigrated to the United States in 1949. Upon arrival, he immediately found a blue-collar job with a manufacturer of spare car parts in Chicago and later worked as a draftsman in an engineering firm. In 1960,

Adamkus graduated from the Illinois Institute of Technology as a civil engineer. Valdas Adamkus was an active organizer of protest actions against Lithuania's occupation and the initiator of numerous petitions. In 1961 through 1964, Adamkus was a member of the Board of the American-Lithuanian Community (LC), Vice-Chairman of the Centre Board, member of the American-Lithuanian Council (ALC). He also was Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the World Lithuanian Games in 1983. Working for the U.S. Environment Protection Agency (EPA) in the early 70's, Adamkus first headed the environmental research center and later was appointed Deputy Administrator at the U.S. EPA Region 5 (Great Lakes Region). He was later promoted to Administrator at the same institution and held that office until June 1997. Encouraging and supporting the construction of water treatment facilities and development of environmental monitoring, Adamkus assisted the environmental institutions of the Baltic States in acquiring academic literature, equipment and software needed for their projects. In the capacity of the coordinator of the US aid to the Baltic States in the field of environmental protection, Adamkus organized study visits for the representatives of Lithuania's academic institutions and developed many-sided co-operation with Vilnius University, helping it acquire the latest academic literature on environmental issues.

bridges

### SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

e-subscriptions  
**60% off**  
the cover price!

Please check all that apply:

- New     Renewal  
 Gift     Donation

**Mail to:**  
LAC, Inc./BRIDGES  
Subscriptions  
149 E Parkview Drive  
Shirley, NY 11967

- Please send:**
- 1 year electronic (10 issues via email) \$20
  - 1 year print (10 issues by mail) \$30
  - 2 years print (20 issues by mail) \$58
  - Print subscription outside U.S., add \$25 per year

Make check payable to: Lithuanian American Community. Please mark "Bridges" on the Memo line.

Your Name (please print)

Gift Subscription Name (please print)

Your Email

Gift Subscription Email

Your Address

Apt. No.

Gift Subscription Address

Apt. No.

City

State

Zip

City

State

Zip

Order online at [lithuanian-american.org/bridges](http://lithuanian-american.org/bridges)

March 2019



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, Rock-  
ford, 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 Sup-  
port for Lithuania's Inde-  
pendence and Recognition"**

Balzekas Museum of  
Lithuanian Culture  
www.balzekasmuseum.org

## MARCH

March 10, 2019

12 noon to 4 pm

**Lithuania's 101st  
Anniversary Banquet**

Giando on The Water  
400 Kent Ave.

Brooklyn, NY 11249

Reservations by Feb 28, 2019

More information:

https://www.nylithuanian.org/  
renginiai/1240/

March 15, 2019

at 7 pm

**Musical Findings in the  
Balzekas Museum Music  
Collection**

Prof. Dr. Darius Kučinskas  
will present the results of his  
year-long research.

More info:

www.balzekasmuseum.org

March 16, 2019

at 1:00 – 3:00 pm

**Amber Roots invites you to  
celebrate Lithuanian Inde-  
pendence in the Cultural  
Center**

at the Lithuanian Music Hall,  
2715 East Allegheny Avenue,  
Philadelphia, PA.

Please enter on Tilton Street.

If you like, bring a snack to  
share. We hope to see you  
there.

March 23, 2019

at 7 pm

**The Far Side of Lituania**

Researcher Dr. Gražina K.

Sviderskytė will present

her new book about pilots

Steponas Darius and Stasys

Girėnas.

More info:

www.balzekasmuseum.org

March 30, 2019

at 10 am

**Easter Egg Decorating  
Workshop**

More info:

www.balzekasmuseum.org

## APRIL

April 13, 2019

**Velykos**

Catholic Church of St. Ann

4905 Roswell Rd., Marietta,

GA 30062

More info:

www.lietuviatiantojetoje.org

## MAY

May 12, 2019

at 1 pm

**Mother's Day Celebration  
Children's Computer  
Graphics Art Exhibition**

Presented by: Valdas

Kančiauskas

Detroit Lithuanian Cultural

Center

Divine Providence Parish

25335 West Nine Mile Rd.

Southfield, MI 48033

More information:

vilkai@aol.com

## AUGUST

August 4-11, 2019

**Lithuanian Education Week**

Dainava Camp, Michigan

More info:

www.svietimotaryba.org

Registration for camps at  
Neringa is continuing.

**Registration forms and any  
other information may be  
found at [http://neringa.org/  
en\\_forms.html](http://neringa.org/en_forms.html)**

Would you like to work at  
Neringa this upcoming  
summer?

Counselor application forms  
are online at [http://neringa.  
org/en\\_counselors\\_forms.  
html](http://neringa.org/en_counselors_forms.html)

Counselor applications for  
Heritage Children's Camp  
will be accepted until April  
22, 2019. Applications for  
the Lithuanian Speaking  
Children's Camp are due by  
March 25, 2019.

The Lithuanian  
Foundation Inc. is  
accepting 2019 grant  
applications

**The application deadline is  
April 1, 2019.**

The Lithuanian Foundation  
provides grants that propa-  
gate Lithuanian culture, urg-  
ing a better understanding of  
our language and promoting  
the Lithuanian identity.  
[http://www.lithuanianfounda-  
tion.org/grants-application-  
guidelines/](http://www.lithuanianfoundation.org/grants-application-guidelines/)

## GOT EVENTS?

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

# bridges

VOLUME 43 ISSUE 2

LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

PERIODICALS  
POSTAGE PAID

**POSTMASTER:**  
Dated Material  
Please Deliver Immediately

