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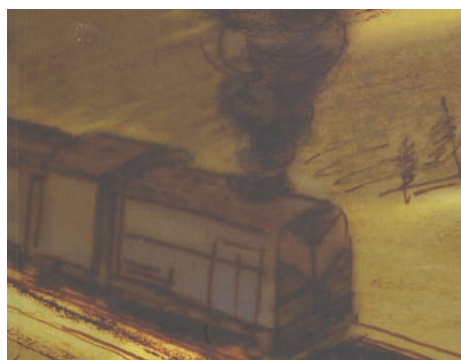
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Front Cover: Consul General of Lithuania in Chicago Matvydas Bekešius and Chair of the Lemont Chapter of the Lithuanian American Community Violeta Valaitytė honor the memory of Lithuanian deportees by placing a wreath at the monument dedicated to the mothers of Lithuanian partisans who fought against soviet occupation after World War II. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

Back Cover: "Angel" by Rusnė Sakavickas, 3rd grade student, Lietuvėlė Lithuanian School, Jackson, NJ.

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from the editor

Dear readers,

Every year, on June 14 Lithuania marks the Day of Mourning and Hope, and the Day of Occupation and Genocide. On June 14, 1941 at 3 o'clock in the morning the Soviet authorities started mass deportations and arrests. This was the first wave of Soviet mass deportations in Lithuania.

During 1941 and 1953 some 132,000 Lithuanians were deported to Siberia, remote parts of the USSR, the area of Arctic Circle and Central Asia. More than 70 percent of the victims were women and children.

During the Soviet occupation Lithuania lost about 800,000 residents. Many died as the result of hunger or exhaustion or were killed by the Soviet authorities. Deportation operations were held at the same time also in Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova.

Based on data from the Genocide and Resistance Research Center, from 1940-1958 every third Lithuanian became the victim of the Soviet genocide and terror.

This year, Lithuanians in the United States of America marked June 14th under very special circumstances. Coronavirus still holds the world in its grip, and we could gather in big groups. Therefore Lithuanian Americans participated in the event during which the names of thousands upon thousands of deported Lithuanian citizens were being read out loud in Lithuania and other countries of the world.

There is not a family in Lithuania that has not been touched by this tragedy. We must not forget our history.

Karilė Vaitkutė
Editor

Music Made My Life Brighter



Stasys Baras and Arvydas Reneckis during the TV interview in 2000.

On May 26, 2020, we celebrated the 100th anniversary since the birth of Stasys Baras, a prominent figure in the Lithuanian American community, an operatic tenor, and an honorary doctor of the Lithuanian Academy of Music. A couple of decades ago, celebrating his 80th anniversary, Stasys Baras shared some reflections on his life with filmmaker Arvydas Reneckis, the then program director of the Lithuanian American Television show. We offer our readers an excerpt from this video interview.

Arvydas Reneckis: Dear Stasys, in my hands, I am holding a book written by musicologist, Ona Narbutienė, and entitled Stasys Baras. Let me read the words from the back cover of this book with which a famous American Lithuanian journalist, Bronys Raila, described you in 1962: “Baras. In this man, we can find three virtues that are rarely found in one place: a big voice, a big heart, and a clear mind. He is kind, warm, friendly, and intelligent person, and so is his voice: strong, beautiful, gentle, loud, dramatic, and crystal clear”. So let’s start this conversation with your “first virtue” - a big voice.

Stasys Baras: (Laughs) You see, voice is such a relative thing. It’s like a kind of a trumpet to which strings are attached. The main instrument in singing is the vocal strings. I started working on those strings more seriously when I was 9 years old. Then later, Antanas Grudzinskas, my music teacher at the Klaipėda Vytautas Magnus High School, placed me, a sophomore, among senior girls (sopranos) and told me to help them sing Stasys Šimkus’s “We are born Lithuanians”. Later I also had to sing in

high school concerts. I remember I wasn’t very happy about being placed together with those older girls, and when they took a photo of the choir, I even squatted so that only my forehead would be visible.

AR: In the book, we read that you were born in Suvalkija Region, in Mierčiai manor, but you spent your childhood in Klaipėda Region, which at the time was just regained by Lithuania. Your father suddenly sold his manor in Suvalkija to a Lithuanian man who had returned from the United States of America for a considerable amount of dollars, and your family moved to a 250-hectare farm in Kiškėnai, near Klaipėda. What was the childhood of a son of a wealthy farmer like? Was it just attending school and singing without a care in the world?

SB: Neither my mother nor my father pampered me. Just like everyone else in the family, I had to get up early in the morning, at six o’clock, and start working with a rake or a mower. At that time, almost everyone was still using horses for work in the fields, and we already had tractors. So you

see, my singing went like that: I would sit on my tractor and sing as loud as I could. My father died when I was 13, and my mother had to do all the work. I had to help her a lot. I would cut and plow; I also contributed to the administration of the farm. I didn’t get to graduate from high school. I was absent for 9 months due to an illness. The doctors mistreated me, there were false diagnoses, but that’s another story...

AR: And still, how did this happen?

SB: It was simple. One day my cousin, an aviation officer Juozas Andriušis, came to visit and said: “Let’s go to Klaipėda. I want you to fly around in an ANBO plane”. We were driving at high speed on his Harley Davidson motorcycle when two pigs rose from a ditch and ran across the road. We hit the pigs, killed one on the spot, and I flew about five feet up from the motorcycle and landed on my right side. I was in extreme pain... Inflammation of the joint followed. I went to the hospital. They decided that I had bone tuberculosis and started injecting iodine and

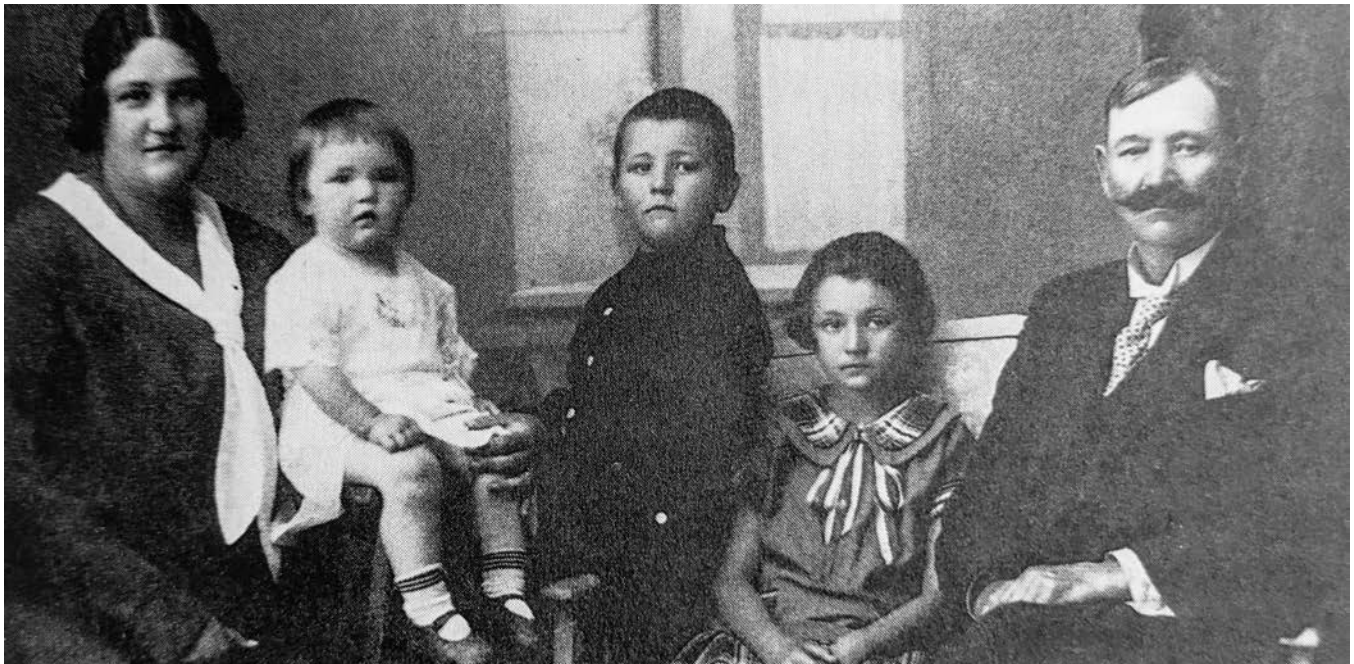


Stasys Baras

glycerin into the joint until they dissolved all the tissue. This is how the biggest mistake was made. At the age of sixteen, I began to limp and it continued for the rest of my life. Later in life, I went to see a famous German professor in Munich. He asked me straightforwardly if shoemakers, not doctors, were treating me. I'm celebrating my 80th birthday now, and I still don't have any tuberculosis in my bones (laughs). You see, sometimes life can be cruel.

AR: In 1939, Germany ripped the Klaipėda region away from Lithuania. In the book, you tell how Nazis evicted you from your farm, and the family found themselves in Kaunas. What prompted you to choose a rather impractical opera singer's career in the face of war?

SB: I wouldn't say I chose it. I graduated from high school in 1940 when the Soviet army invaded Lithuania. All those things hit us very unexpectedly. In Kaunas, I enrolled at the Medical University and, at the same time, at the Conservatory. I was accepted into both. I had studied medicine for a semester and a half when I was advised that it would be better if I voluntarily withdrew from it. Since we had a large farm in the Klaipėda region, and everyone knew that I, a child of well to do farmers, had to give priority to the children of the poor. My mother had bought a four-apartment house in Kaunas. In one of the apartments, there lived the rector of the Veterinary Academy, Jonas Nainys, a good man. He said to me: "You know, maybe you should go to the Veterinary Academy then?" And so for a month or two, I studied to be a veterinarian. And there were no obstacles to study at the Music Conservatory. There was a competition, and from about 300 students, I got selected into Vladislava Grigaitienė's singing class. She checked my voice and found me to be a tenor. Unfortunately, another surprise soon happened - she repatriated and assigned me to Petras Oleka's class. Right from the start, Oleka told me: "You are not a tenor, you are a baritone". One day, I was coming out of the conservatory building after my class and I saw a stout man with a grey beard on the street. He asked me: "Are you the student that was singing just now?" I said that I probably was. Then the man said: "I am Jonas Būtėnas. I studied in Italy for seven years with Mario Sammarco. They don't know how to teach you here, but if you want, come to my class." And he gave me a piece of paper with his address written on it.



Stasys Baras as a child with his siblings and parents.



Stasys Baras among students of the Jonas Būtėnas class.

AR: How many students were there in Būtėnas's class?

SB: There were Valentinas Adamkavičius, Antanas Karosas, Danutė Stankaitytė, Jonas Vaznelis, Valerijonas Indrikonis... It was a large class, more than 30 students. I immediately felt relaxed there and my singing improved. It was the second or third year of German occupation when I sang Bizet's "Agnus Dei" with the choir at the Jesuit Church in Kaunas. Suddenly everyone in Kaunas started talking (sometimes news in Lithuania spread very quickly) that there was a new tenor in town! And then we had to flee... As a refugee in Austria, I started studying with professor Jurenjev. He was a Bulgarian. His daughter was an opera singer. We would perform together; we sang in Vienna's Karlskirche. But again... bombs were falling every night, we would have to run, seek shelter. Besides, I was taking care of my family: my kid sister, my mother, and my other sister who had a baby. Her husband was taken by the Germans to dig trenches. We moved to the small town of Gottszell and just waited for the war to end. Soon more Lithuanians found themselves in the area, including my acquaintances.

AR: Did you have the opportunity to continue your education, participate in cultural activities?

SB: I was lucky that in the Augsburg DP camp we lived together with composer Jeronimas Kačinskas. Eventually, Būtėnas came from the British zone. He found me. You know, at that time, nobody had money... In a word, we agreed to feed him, and he agreed to teach me in exchange.

That's how we worked for about 6-7 months, practicing for 3 hours every day. He had other students as well, but I was given special attention. In 1947, a final recital took place in Augsburg. Būtėnas did not have diploma forms, so he took his portrait photo, and on it, he wrote in red ink that I had graduated from his class, his bel canto school, and I am ready for everything. Then we formed a concert troupe: clarinetist Ambrozaitis, Paukštys, Šeštakauskienė, Šimkus, Krištolaitytė. We traveled around different DP camps giving concerts to Lithuanians. Luck smiled upon me. In 1948 and 1949, artists recommended that I would go to England to perform with others. I was only 27 at the time, I was extremely happy to be among four or five experienced singers and musicians at such a young age. They

were Antanina Dambrauskaitė, Izabelė Motiekaitienė, Alė Kalvaitytė, Ipolitas Nauragis, and Prof. Vladas Jakubėnas. In two years, we had 29-30 successful concerts. The English press gave us very good reviews. Even the Time newspaper wrote nicely about us. Only I had one failure there ... The Lithuanian ambassador to England, Bronius Kazys Balutis, found a way for me to sing at the Royal Covent Garden Opera in London, they liked me. Then I was asked how many operas did I know? I had to answer that I didn't know any... It was the truth. I did not know anyone opera in its entirety so that I could show my talent to them. Well, then we went back to the DP camps and eventually emigrated to the United States of America. And here we worked hard in the factories. We worked really hard.

AR: What did you do?

SB: It's disgusting even to say what we did. We worked in a train carriage workshop. There we had to repair the carriages used to transport cows or pigs.

AR: Were they transported to the famous Chicago stockyards for slaughter?

SB: Yes, for slaughter. Those carriages were so dirty and old; we had to replace their parts -- floors, walls, etc. I had to cut those screws with pneumatic hammers. It was extremely dusty. And that sound. That sound... My hearing is still poor, possibly due to that hammering; the sound made even my teeth rattle... There were no head-

phones at the time. And we did it without thinking: we could at least plug our ears with cotton or something but no one did. A lot of us worked on those carriages. We had to work in pairs. My partner was our former tenant from Kaunas, the rector of the Veterinary Academy. I was young then and much stronger; we helped each other, and we remained good friends. I worked there for five years. Later on, I worked in a factory where car parts were pressed: chassis, wings, roofs. I was one of the loading workers who had to carry those parts on my shoulders and load them into wagons.

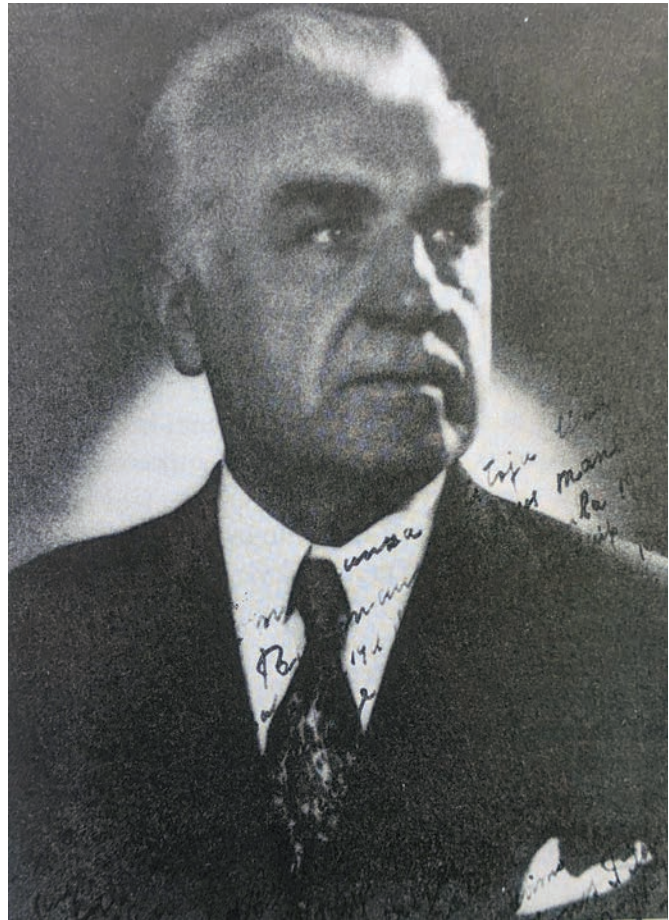
AR: How did you manage to free yourself from those hard jobs?

SB: After work and in my free time on weekends I sang to Lithuanians in Chicago, New York, even Canada. It was in Canada that the following idea came to my good friends and relatives: let's save the talent of Stasys Baras... Composer and music professor Vladas Jakubėnas helped a lot. He wrote in the Draugas newspaper that a committee was formed to help me. A fundraising concert was held. My colleagues sang in it together with me. That's how I went to study in Italy. It was in 1956-1957. Of course, the dollar value was not the same then. Although we were all really poor at the time, I had about \$5,000 or \$6,000, and that money was enough to pay for a year and a half of music classes as well as a modest living.

AR: Were the studies in Italy very different from the teaching of Jonas Būtėnas?

SB: Absolutely not. Būtėnas himself knew well how to use his voice; he had that so-called "mask" when the voice sounds not in your throat, but much higher. This kind of singing can be heard well, it "goes far". Būtėnas taught me well. However, my studies in Italy were truly extraordinary. I understood even better what singing is. And today, when I talk to my young colleagues, future singers, I tell them that it is good to have one teacher who provides you with a solid foundation, but it is necessary to go somewhere else and test yourself with other teachers, learn everything they can give. One teacher, no matter how perfect, cannot give all you need, it is impossible.

In Italy, I became friends with Stasys Lozoraitis, his brother Kazys and their parents. They always invited me to the February 16th commemorations, and I sang in church as well. I also had a chance to perform in Germany. There again, luck had smiled upon me. In Munich, one of Europe's most famous impresario companies, the Ballhausen Agency, got fascinated by my singing. They encouraged me to quit everything else, stay in Germany, sing in operas and concerts. They offered me big money.



The portrait of Jonas Būtėnas with his inscription regarding Stasys Baras graduation.

I told them that I wanted to stay in Italy and finish my studies.

AR: Didn't you later regret that decision? After all, you were offered a really big stage in German opera.

SB: It was big. However, sometimes it is hard to evaluate everything unambiguously. I can only say so much: I've never admired German as a language for singing. For me, all those "nicht, warum" was the complete opposite of what I had learned in the Italian school where your voice has to "flow" and all the vowels have to be open and marked: "aaa, ooo". I've sung German songs but I've never been fascinated by them. Also, by then I already had a family: a wife and two daughters. While I was in Italy, they stayed in Gary, Indiana. My wife worked in a factory; she pressed windshield wiper blades for cars. When you don't have certain settings in life, you don't want to choose the unknown. My responsibility for my family, my children, made me want to return to the United States. I finished my studies and came back. Antanas Olis, a well-known lawyer, a bright and noble Lithuanian, had extremely

wide and good relations with American music professionals. He always tried to help everyone. He helped me as well by providing me with a wonderful opportunity to sing together with the famous French-born Metropolitan Opera singer, Lily Pons. The concert was a great success; it even caught the attention of the American press. However, suddenly and unexpectedly Antanas Olis died, and my life suddenly took a sharp turn. When I found out about Olis's death, I called Mrs. Olis and asked if I could be of any help. She asked me to sing at the funeral service. After the service, a person unknown to me approached me in the cemetery. He gave me his business card and introduced himself saying he was Justinas Mackevičius, and that he really liked my singing and wanted me to come to him and talk.

AR: Was it Justinas Mackevičius, the founder and president of Standard Federal Bank?

SB: Yes. The Chairman of the Board of Directors. One day I went to see him. He told me he liked me and invited me to work for him. He offered \$550 per month and a car... And so then I started thinking again if I should go to Germany. And again, that unfortunate accident with a motorcycle... I've always had an inferiority complex since the time of the accident. Just imagine, Radames (a character in Aida opera, a heroic commander of the Egyptian army) goes out on stage dragging his foot... At that time, as if on purpose, two letters came from the Ballhausen Agency. They invited me to come to Germany right away but I never came up with determination to do that. I replied thanking them and saying that I would stay in the United States.

AR: And suddenly you became a banker!

SB: I became a banker. But they offered me a very good arrangement. I had free weekends which enabled me to go around and perform. I soon won the title of the best singer in Indiana, and then I competed at the Chicago Tribune Festival. I was lucky again. I won against an Italian tenor and won the title of the best singer. I had to sing in front of the audience of 72,000 people at the Soldier Field Stadium. At that time, I changed my last name from Baranauskas to Baras. I also sang on various radio stations. With Prudencija Bičkienė and a guy whose last name was Bandon, we formed the Rimarco Trio. We toured various American cities. All those trips were by train. We would ride at night, come back in the morning and go to work without having slept... I was successful at my job in the bank. Besides, the American press wrote about my musical accomplishments and mentioned the bank where I worked. It was a good advertisement. Half a year later, I was promoted and became an assistant to the vice president. Eventually, I became vice president. So I climbed up that ladder.

AR: You have not forgotten your artistic vocation either. Your contribution to the productions of the Chicago Lithuanian Opera is truly extraordinary. Could you list at least some of the roles you remember?

SB: I sang 15 or 16 major roles. I sang Faust in Charles Gounod's Faust, Manrico in Verdi's Troubadour, Don Chose in Bizet's Carmen, Radames in Verdi's Aida, Radames. I also sang in Mascagni's Cavalleria Rusticana, in Leoncavallo's Pagliacci, Verdi's La Forza del Destino... One of my best



Stasys Baras and his family.

roles was in Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*. I remember getting very good reviews from critics at the *Chicago Tribune*. I would not be able to list all the roles now but there were many of them.

AR: You have long worked for the benefit of the community. You have done especially much while working at the Lithuanian Foundation, almost since the time of its founding.

SB: I am dedicated to this organization and, I think, we have achieved a lot. The Lithuanian Foundation is on the right track. It was started by medical doctors, but it was soon noticed that they were not too knowledgeable in financial matters. Finance professionals, bankers, and lawyers came to the rescue, and a completely different mindset emerged. The most important task was to further develop the Foundation, to invest capital. Of course, the Lithuanian Foundation grows the most because of bequests. Some Lithuanian Americans allocate a portion of their assets for the goal of fostering Lithuanian activities. Today, we are thinking of gradually transferring the Lithuanian Foundation and all Lithuanian activities into the hands of our new generation. When we arrived here in 1948–1950, we made a big mistake of not joining the Lithuanians who were already here. Many of their organizations were lost forever.

AR: You mentioned at least a couple of people who helped you -- Antanas Olis and Justinas Mackevičius. They were from the old-generation American Lithuanians.

SB: Olis was born here in the 19th century. Although he never visited Lithuania, he spoke Lithuanian. Mackevičius came to the United States of America before the First World War. Our friendship was a relatively rare occurrence, but it only shows that both we and the new generation need to think about the future. It is extremely important that someone would take over all that work. Then the Lithuanian halls, churches, and the World Lithuanian Center will survive. All of this was built and purchased with the money that was donated. We need to work together, come together, find out if there are any differences, and pursue our goals so that we can guarantee our future.

AR: You have founded the Stasys Baras Scholarship that is awarded to the best young Lithuanian tenors. What prompted you to do this?

SB: My own experience. When, as Samogitians say, I was still young and single and received the *Būtėnas* “diploma” in the DP camp, I turned to the Lithuanian Red Cross,



Stasys Baras (second from left) after performing with the *Dainava Ensemble*.

to its chairman Dr. Domas Jasaitis. I went from one DP camp to another in a dusty coal wagon because after the war, that was the only means of transportation available, and I waited for him for a couple of days. When he arrived, I asked him for a chance for me to go to Italy. I didn't need anything else. And in those days, such an opportunity was very easily granted. He could have written on the international Red Cross stationery that such and such a person should be allowed to pass through the Brenner border crossing to Italy. No visas were required. And he refused to give me such a letter. He said that we needed engineers, agronomists, businessmen... not singers. And I felt then that I was really hungry for that song. I came back on the same dusty train, and I said: “You know, if the government doesn't help the arts, it is not a good government”. I was angry. Later in life, when I became a bit more stable financially, I thought: why not do good to someone, why not make someone happy? When I am gone, this scholarship will stay forever.

AR: You are celebrating your 80th anniversary. What are you most happy about and what are you sorry for?

SB: It's a very difficult question, and I cannot answer it right away very easily. You know, I've always felt happy about something in my life. I loved my job, I loved singing. Music gave me a break; it brightened my life, my thoughts were always light. The most important thing in life is not to give up, not to panic, and choose a straight and honorable path. That gives you a certain reward, a real feeling. In that sense, I was lucky. I am happy about who I was and who I am.

AR: Thank you for the sincere conversation and the opportunity to feel the moment of encounter between art and the reality of life.



The Saga of the Three Pillars

By Roland Giedraitis

Three pillars by St. Casimir's church in Los Angeles.

In the Little Lithuania area of Los Angeles, in the shadow of St. Casimir's church, three pillars were erected 12 years ago. Not only beautiful to look at, they are rife with symbolism and history. There is a unique story about them.

A devout parishioner, Bronė Venckus asked her daughter Danutė, that upon her death instead of consolatory flower wreaths, a flower garden would be constructed to beautify the parish grounds. Well, the daughter went a leap forward. After consulting with her family, it was decided to commission three pillars or Lithuanian style wayside chapels on the church grounds. Why three?

Towards the end of World War 2, thousands of Lithuanians escaped west fearing the terror of Soviet communism. Bronė and her family were typical. Upon landing in Boston in 1949, the parents engaged in low paying jobs to support their family, which had four children. But they had their values straight. Thriftiness yes, but also edu-

cation for the children. All four finished college. Three brand new engineers (Romus, Laimis, and Juozas) and a lady dentist (Danutė). California beckoned not only with its superb climate but also with job availability. The family with its excellent values thrived. Thus the three wayside crosses have these themes which are engraved on the memorial plaque. Wooden pillars were common in pagan Lithuania. Even now suggestions of the Moon, Sun, and Stars linger on the Christian artwork.

This is the writing on the plaque: In Loving Memory of Bronė Vasiliauskaitė Venckus (1911-2007) and thousands of other Lithuanian immigrants who shared a similar fate.

LIETUVA (Lithuania) - Represents the land of their birth, the land that nurtured them and instilled in them the values of faith family, and education.

TREMTIS (Exile) - The years spent in refugee camps of



Little Lithuania sign in Los Angeles, CA.

Europe where they fled to escape the Communist threat of concentrations camps and deportation to Siberia in the 1940s. Their strong Catholic faith is represented by the Rūpintojėlis or the Pensive Christ, which sustained them during those uncertain years.

AMERIKA (America) - Their adopted nation which provided the opportunity to raise their children in freedom and moral and economic prosperity.

Donated by the Venckus and Giedraitis families, together with many other friends of Bronė Venckus.

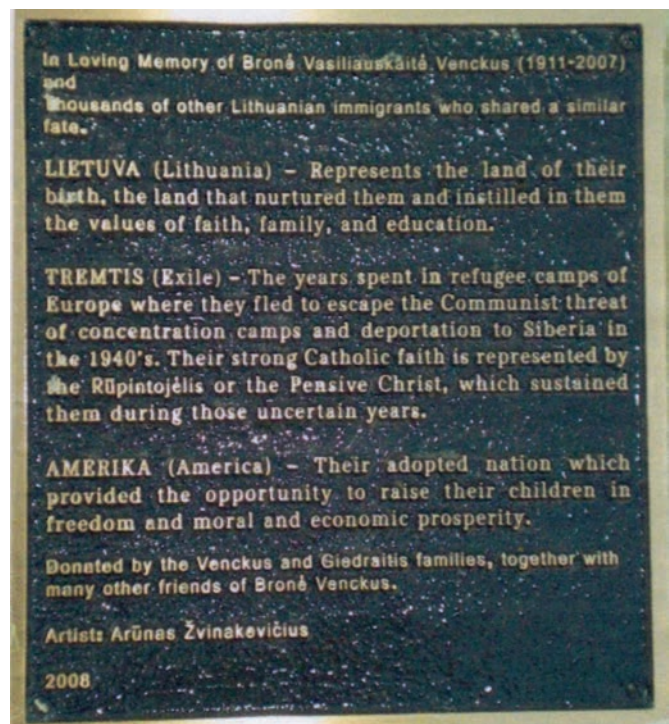
Artist: Arūnas Žvinakevičius, 2008.

Vitas Venckus and Ariel Dumse installed them on the church grounds facing the street. On January 11, 2009, Rev. Tomas Karanauskas ceremoniously blessed these pillars. They now stand as a monument not only to the memory of Bronė Venckus but also as testimony to the opportunities of this great country.

Life of Bronė Venckus (1911-2007)

Bronė Vasiliauskaitė Venckus comes from a family who valued public service. Her cousin, Monsignor Kazimieras Vasiliauskas, was the rector of the Vilnius Seminary. Her uncle, Rev. Alfonsas Petrusis, was a signatory of the February 16th proclamation. Her other uncle, economist Vytautas Petrusis, was a finance minister of independent Lithuania and was known as “the Father of Litas.”

Bronė was born in Vabalninkas, in the Aukštaitija area of Lithuania. She graduated from the Panevėžys Teacher’s Seminary. In 1936 she married Jonas Venckus, who was a police officer as well as a lieutenant in the Lithuanian



The memorial in memory of Bronė Vasiliauskaitė Vanckus.

army reserve. During the first Soviet occupation, Jonas was arrested and sent to the Marijampolė prison. When the Germans invaded, he escaped and resumed his duties in Varėna, Simnas, and Seirijai. Bronė remembers fondly those halcyon days.

When a second Soviet invasion threatened in 1944, the Venckus family, along with thousands of other Lithuanians, escaped to the West. For a long while Bronė, then

with three children, was separated from her husband who was drafted by the Germans to dig defensive trenches. Eventually, he managed to escape and search for his family in the chaos towards the end of the war. Bronė and her three children were in Czechoslovakia at that time. That's when her fourth child, Juozas, was born on February 16. The family, without a father was in dire straits. Jonas, the husband, was frantically searching for them.

After many false leads they finally joyfully united. They ended up in the American zone of Germany in Bamberg, close to the Bavarian Alps. They finally connected with some relatives in Boston who agreed to sponsor their immigration to America, which was in 1949. They were the Razvadauskas family.

Hard work, but devotion to thriftiness and education paid off well. The family settled in Los Angeles. Bronė and Jonas had four children, eight grandchildren and eighteen great-grandchildren.

Upon her death in Los Angeles in 2007, her daughter Danutė, in consultation with her relatives, decided to honor her memory and thousands of other Lithuanians by commissioning the three wayside shrines.



The wedding of Bronė Vasiliauskaitė and Jonas Venckus, 1936.



Bronė and Jonas Venckus sitting in the front, c 1985. Back row, from left: Jūratė and Juozas Venckus, Dr. Danutė Venckus Giedraitis, Dr. Roland Giedraitis, Aldona and Laimis Venckus, and Giedrė and Romas Venckus.



Bronė Venckus and her family. From left: Bronė's husband Jonas, Bronė, children: Romas, Danutė, Laimis, and Juozas.



Bronė and her family at Christmas time in 1947. DP camp in Bamberg, Germany.

UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

Memoir of a Siberian Deportee

By Juzė Avižienytė-Žukauskienė

Translated from the Lithuanian by Giedrė Kumpikas, Ph.D., niece of the author



1. INTO THE UNKNOWN

It was early morning on June 14th, 1941, when, as usual, I left for work. First one, then a second, then a third truck drove past me, each one filled with dejected people, adults and children, all being guarded by armed soldiers.

I froze. Shivers ran down my back.

The fact that people were being arrested at night and taken somewhere was not news. But they had been adults:

officials, employees and, in general, more prominent persons. But here?

Women with eyes swollen from weeping, children crying, huddling and pressing against their mothers. Where were they being taken? What were they guilty of? What would be done with them? My mind was burning with these thoughts.

When I arrived at work, I found a worried, frightened little group of co-workers.

"What happened?"

"Don't you know that people are being deported massively? At first, they're deporting more influential and richer people, and then?"

"But why? What have they done? Especially the children?"

"Well now, don't play dumb! Don't you know, that you don't have to be guilty of anything to be arrested, and no one will even know where you disappeared to."

Yes. I knew that, I knew that people were being arrested at night and no attempts of the family at finding them gave any results. Everywhere the answer was the same:

"We don't know anything."

But these had been only individual people. But now I myself saw how people, surprised at home, were carrying and piling bundles into trucks, seating their crying children...

That day, work did not go well, -the keys on the adding machine kept getting stuck one behind the other; I kept checking the ribbon twice, three times... The day was dreary; a light rain was falling. Near our bank (at that time, I was working at the Lithuanian Bank) a truck stopped. We all looked through the windows. In the truck sat only one boy about eleven or twelve, huddled, wet from the rain, shivering since he was only wearing his school uniform, without a coat, without a cap. One soldier remained with him, - two soldiers and one civilian entered the bank. We all sat as if frozen. Who will be arrested? The truck moved near the front door, but none of us dared even to budge. Only later we found out that they had arrested the manager of the Lithuanian Bank, Zigmą Starkus.

On the following days this no longer surprised us. - (How quickly one gets used to everything.) - People were being deported non-stop, shoved into freight cars and being taken no one knew where.

There were all sorts of rumors that in the Katinsky Forest, near Minsk, the Bolsheviks had shot 10,000 interned Polish officers; that the Minister of Internal Affairs, Skucas and the Director of the Security Department, Povilaitis, had been tortured to death; that Colonel Barauskas, having been seized on the street at midday and, while being taken to the "varna" (as the truck for the transportation of prisoners was called), had succeeded in shouting: "Let my family know..."

2. A NEW ORDER

I was supposed to have my vacation as of June 15th. But now, since the government had been taken over by new "landlords," disorder was felt everywhere. In our bank, it was the same: formerly: on the 30th of every month, a cashier with a book and a box of money would go around to all the departments and would give each employee an envelope with the money due him, and the latter would simply sign his name and that was all. There were no deductions; there was no confusion. But now, the salaries were paid twice a month, on the 15th and the 30th day, and the deductions were as follows:

- 1 - an income tax, whose percentage was deducted unequally, but depended on the amount of the salary,
- 2 - a single person tax,
- 3 - a professional organization tax,
- 4 - a government loan, which everyone "voluntarily" and with "the greatest enthusiasm" was obliged to sign for.

Because of such accounting followed by control upon control, salaries could not be paid regularly and in an orderly fashion.

Although I was supposed to be on vacation already on June 16th, but not having received my salary, I could not go away as I had planned to do. On June 17th, another meeting was again announced. With the new "landlords," there were more and more of these meetings and attendance at them was mandatory.

This time I decided to escape since I was considered on vacation.

We were becoming very tired at work. We were not accustomed to it: before, we used to work from 8 o'clock until 2 o'clock by Middle European Time. Now, we were working by Moscow Time from 9 until 6, with a one-hour lunch break: this meant, we would start work two hours earlier. At 7 o'clock in the evening we had to return to work again and would sometimes work until 11 o'clock or midnight. The nationalization of factories, private concerns, stores, homes and so on was taking place and there was endless confusion. Many of the old, experienced workers had been fired, considered to be "untrustworthy," and in their place, were appointed mostly young Jewish girls who had worked in larger stores. They had no understanding whatsoever about banking, but they were from the "proletariat," and quite a few belonged to the Young Communists.

When I would come home, I would want nothing more than to collapse on my bed and rest. But that was impossible, because there were many chores and worries at home. I had three school-age sons and an ailing husband. A woman would come to prepare dinner, who, having tidied up, would leave. In the stores everything doubled and tripled in price, lines began to form something that

had never before existed in Lithuania. Until the arrival of the Bolsheviks, my husband, as a second category war veteran, used to receive a pension of 200 litai.* He also worked for the journal KARYS and the radio, which paid rather well. The new government stopped the payment of pensions, the radio and the press needed a "different soul," which inspiration my husband did not have.

When I lay down, my head pounded, a multitude of numbers coursed through my brain, floated in front of my eyes...

We were not the only ones who had ended up in such a situation, - there were many more Lithuanian people who found themselves in even a worse state.

* *litas* (plural - *litai*) the monetary unit of Independent Lithuania

3. ARREST

On June 17th, not having waited for the meeting, I ran home and stretched out on my bed. I was just beginning to doze, - a sudden, protracted ringing of the door bell.

In the doorway, appeared a man. He said in Russian: "Does Liudas Zukauskas live here?"

Hearing the grim, unfamiliar voice, I understood immediately who he was and what he had come for.

I was speechless. My husband answered for me: "Here."

"Weapon!" again that same sharp voice.

"I don't have one. There was an order to turn it in. I returned it to the Military Commander," retorted my husband in the same sharp manner.

After a few seconds, a very young, armed soldier and a civilian stepped into my bedroom.

With angry eyes the latter looked the room over and turned to me sternly:

"Let's go, hurry up and get ready!"

To ask where and what wasn't necessary: everything was clear...And yet, I felt very disturbed and shocked. None of the children was home. Where the older ones, high school students, were I did not know. I had to call at their friends' homes. I was hoping to find them at the home of one of their classmates, the son of Colonel Bobelis. They were both preparing for their final examination. They did not allow me to call myself, the MGB man called himself. (MGB - Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti - Ministry of Government Security) In a few minutes, my son and his friend came running in. My son wanted to give his friend his brand new bike. The security men wouldn't even let the boy inside.

I asked them to let me find my youngest son, who was playing with his friends in a nearby courtyard.

"It's not allowed!" came the angry, sharp answer.

"But how will he stay here alone being so little? What



Juzė Avišienytė Žukauskienė and her sons Juozas, Stasys and Liudas.

will he do? Please let me find him, he's here, nearby. I won't disappear anywhere," almost through tears, I was beginning to beg my "leaders."

"O.K., go! And you, accompany her. Make sure she doesn't talk to anyone!" was the order to another civilian.

"Is your child far away," asked the latter in Lithuanian.

"No, he doesn't go far. He's probably right here."

We found my youngest in a neighboring yard, carefree, playing in the midst of a group of other children.

"Juozuk, run home, the CHEKA* have come to deport us," I said loudly on purpose, so that the people who were looking from a distance at the truck parked in front of our house and the two soldiers at the door, would hear us. The frightened child came running to me and started crying pitifully.

"Why did you do that?...you shouldn't frighten a child with the CHEKA..." answered the Lithuanian CHEKist, lowering his eyes as if he were guilty.

"You're frightening him, not I. I am not surprised that the Russians are killing and destroying us, but you?! Why are you, a Lithuanian, doing this Judas work?!"

"You shouldn't speak like that! Without us it might be even more difficult..."

We turned in through the gate and, with that, all talk stopped. My middle son, who was in ninth grade, came home by bicycle.

The older children started packing their personal things

into knapsacks, and I, as if in a daze, picked up one thing, then another, put it in, tied it and kept singing the same verse from a popular Russian song:

"I know no other such country, in which a person could breathe so freely."

It was ironic: all around were armed soldiers, and the "free person," guilty of nothing, is packing his belongings and is going God knows where... He doesn't even know what will be done with him.

The chief of the CHEKA was sitting in the study and was interrogating my husband. Periodically, I would hear my husband's angry voice.

"Lies, slander! Nothing of the sort!"

The chief of the CHEKA warned me, that we should only take as many things as we could carry, because we would have to go on foot. He advised us to take food for at least two days.

I had completely forgotten about food. But what should I take? It was already the 17th of June and we had not yet received our half-month's pay. There was no money left... The children pooled their savings. My middle son, Stasys, ran to the store and bought a small loaf (2 kilos) of bread, a half kilo of butter and a half kilo of sausage. We had been given a half hour to get ready, we took an hour. No one urged us to hurry. The young soldiers looked at us with sympathy: whenever there was no CHEKist in the room, they themselves started tying bedding, clothing,

even albums, silver knives, forks, spoons into bedspreads or sheets, things which I would not have remembered or not taken because of the weight. I thought they would take these things for themselves. So be it, -everything perishes anyway, and we ourselves may soon perish in the unknown. One of the guards opened the door of the wardrobe and asked to whom we were leaving all that; there were quite a few clothes there.

"To no one. Whoever will use it, I don't know," I answered.

"So, then take them, you can always throw them out later." - But, I had no desire to take anything more, - I had already packed two woolen dresses, two silk ones, a couple of blouses and skirts, a couple of sweaters and was wearing one. I thought even that was too much, because it was already hard to close the suitcase. Besides, I had a second suitcase into which I put a couple of suits for my husband, some underwear, some clothes for my youngest... In addition, coats for all five of us... Who would carry them? Without being aware of it, I started singing the same words:

"I know no other such country, in which a person could breathe so freely." No one interrupted me, no one shouted at me, no one disturbed me, only I myself would sometimes fall silent, realizing the situation, but, uncontrollably, the same verses would again escape from my lips. A young soldier, saying nothing, took out a tablecloth, spread it out on the bed and having taken the clothes out of the wardrobe, even with their hangers, piled them on the tablecloth, and having tied them into a bundle, carried them out to the truck. I didn't care, I just couldn't rid myself of the irritating words of the song.

I went into the kitchen to pack some food and some essential utensils. The chief CHEKist came in and said very sternly, -(he probably did not know how to speak any differently):

"That's enough. Hurry up! Let's go!"

But, having noticed a silver samovar on the table, he shouted:

"Oh! Definitely take this little trifle!"

"But, it's heavy and what will we need it for?" I protested.

"Juzefa Stanislavovna*, this is how much you will need it," and he drew his finger across his neck.

I was surprised that the CHEKist addressed me with such respect and even with my father's name... So, I had to take the "trifle." I could always throw it out... Finally, my family with its "escort," - two armed soldiers in the open truck and a CHEKist in the cab, - we were speeding in the direction of the railroad station. They drove us to a reserve freight station located in the suburb of Anãiai, they shoved us into freight cars used to transport pigs. Yes, into pig cars, since it was obvious that pigs had been

transported. Although the floors had been washed, two-level bunks had been put in, but one could still see on the wall, at a height of about two feet, remnants of encrusted dung; besides the car itself reeked very strongly of dung stench.

Here began our "ROAD TO CALVARY."

It was already dark outside, and quite dark in the car, because two small windows, which were only on one side of the car, were tiny and even these had been covered with iron bars. The door-gate could be pushed open only from one side, on the other side it had been tightly nailed shut. Near that door, a hole in the floor had been made, and into it had been placed a two-foot high box made of light boards. That was the car's "toilet."

The car was already inhabited: in the semi-darkness human shapes appeared.. Near the closed doors, were piled up bundles of, apparently, also hurriedly tied clothing. On the second level of the bunks, we found an empty corner. There we shoved in our belongings and climbed in ourselves. The children felt hungry. Well, for this evening we still had bread and butter. I gave each a slice.

When the screeching door closed, it became completely dark. Those arrested earlier immediately began to question us: Who? From where? For what reason? How?...It appeared that we were already 26 people: three Jewish and three Lithuanian families. As best as possible, we began to get settled in our corner. The children went to sleep, while we stayed up; we were not sleepy, although our tension had subsided somewhat, - after all, our fate had been decided...

Suddenly, the door screeched open. Against its background, dimly appeared three shadows. It was the wife and the two little daughters of Colonel Giriunas: one seven, the other five years old. The little one was clutching a huge doll, holding it close to her chest and was crying aloud, the older one was crying quietly.

"Girls, don't cry! Lithuanians are not supposed to cry," said the mother with her soft, melodious voice.

"Is Giriunas here?" she asked in a louder voice.

"No, he's not," someone answered.

Then she rushed to the door and began to speak very quickly:

"Wait, don't close the door, we haven't been arrested. I came here with my children of my own free will. I want to find my husband and learn something about his fate; whatever his fate, let ours be the same... Let me find him and let us leave together!"

The crack in the door widened and she jumped out of the car. The girls started crying loudly again. We all came out of our dark corners and tried to calm them as best we could. But it didn't help: they began to cry with intermittent sobs. Everyone felt sad and desolate.

After a while, the mother returned, accompanied by

a guard and took the girls. It seemed that her husband really was in this echelon.

Morning. The screeching door opened. The guard said that ten people could get out and go get some water from a nearby spring and wash themselves.

It was fortunate that I had put food and some dishes into two enamel pails. I emptied them and grabbing them jumped out of the car. Accompanied by the guard, we went to the small spring. We washed ourselves and having drawn some cold, refreshing water, went back to the car. Someone from a Jewish family had a tea kettle. In the second group, whoever had anything they could use, brought back some water. At least we wouldn't suffer from thirst.

Sometime later, one of the security men arrived and asked if anyone had a complaint. We were surprised: in our situation, what complaints could we possibly have... Still, I dared to speak up:

"What sort of complaints could we possibly have in our situation. Well, I have a request, and a very big one: I worked in the State Bank. I did not receive my salary for the month of June. If possible, please bring it to me, or let me go to the bank where I worked and pick it up myself. The functionary wrote down my request. He closed the door so that only a crack was left through which it was possible to look out and even stick out a hand. A guard was walking back and forth in front of the door. We all started to eat a little of whatever we had. Once again, I gave the children each a small slice of bread with butter and looked anxiously at the loaf which was getting smaller and fearfully thought what would happen when it was finished. In the afternoon, the CHEKist, who had been there in the morning, arrived and called out my name. I jumped out of the car. The others, glued to the windows and the crack of the door, looked with curiosity as to what would take place.

"Here, Juzefa Stanislavovna, I brought you your pay."

I even jumped for joy:

"Thank you, I really thank you very much!"

"And this is from your friends and co-workers," and he extended a second envelope with money. There were 200 rubles and a note. I was so touched that my lips trembled and I began to cry... I couldn't even read what they had written.

"What? Didn't they pay you correctly, did they shortchange you?" asked the worried functionary.

"No, it's not that. I was moved to tears by the concern of my friends," I answered.

"Ah!" and he left.

In the envelope was only 260 rubles, my salary for the "second half of June." I was confused, why for the second half? I was supposed to be paid for the first half and for my vacation, that is, after deductions, about 1000 rubles; and I was being paid only for the second half of which I

had only worked two days, 260 rubles...

But, I didn't care, - there was no way to clarify the matter. It was important that I had money and, at least for the moment, my family was not threatened by hunger.

When I had calmed down, I read my friends' letter. They expressed their sympathy and asked me to forgive them for helping only that much. They all contributed what they had, since they had not yet received their salaries for the first half of June.

On June 19th, we were still standing in the same place and trucks were constantly bringing newly arrested people.

Towards evening, two of my co-workers came by: Penkaitò and Janu%auskienò, they brought another 250 rubles, personally from their own salary. Both their eyes and mine glistened with tears. We were able to say very little, nearby stood a guard and repeated quite indulgently:

"That's enough, comrades, the superiors will see us. Then both you and I will get it."

We said goodbye. Uncontrollable tears ran down our cheeks. We said goodbye for all time... What was ahead for me? What was ahead for them? I never met my caring co-workers again, even though after 22 years of forced exile, I returned to Lithuania.

*CHEKA-"Cherezvichainaya Komisiya"- Special Commission (former KGB)

*Stanislavovna - a patronymic term referring to the author's father - Stanislovas.

4. ON THE JOURNEY

On June 20th, we started to move out of Kaunas. The echelon was very long and all the cars were tightly packed with arrested people. We all crowded around near the two small barred windows. Each small detail of the native country we were leaving behind pierced our heart...

The first stop was in Naujoji Vilnia.*

The door of the car opened a little wider.

Shouts of "Water! Water!" could be heard from all corners.

Besides the guards, a group of uniformed KGB men was walking in front of the cars.

"Muzhikov," * (thus they called the men), "will have to be removed," we overheard a conversation.

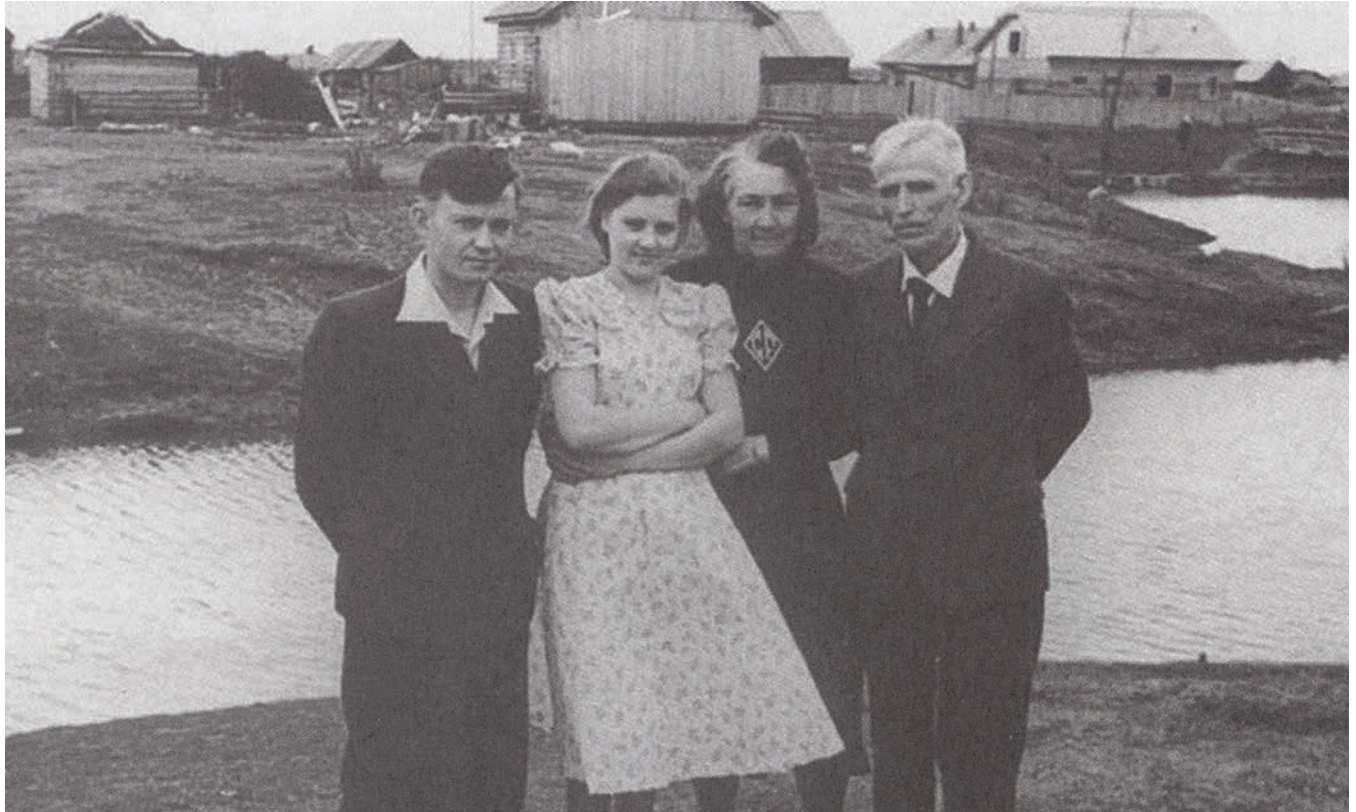
We froze: will they shoot the men?!

The women and children began to cry and sob. I did not cry, - I stood stiffened and dazed. The men also sat rigid and pale...

A group of KGB men came up to our car.

"Who is the elder of the car?"

We all fell silent. I was still standing in the center of the car, like a statue. No one answered, since we had no elder



Pictured from left: Juozas Žukauskas, his wife Aleksandra, Juzė Žukauskienė, and Captain Liudas Žukauskas in exile.

in the car. No one had told us up to this point, that we needed one.

A Jewish man, Finkelšteinas, pulled himself together: he came up to me and said.

"Madame, you be our elder, you speak Russian well," and without waiting for my response, he said:

"Here's our elder," and pointed to me.

"So, you are responsible for order in the car. Let no one dare to leave, make a list of the travelers. And now, go get some water!"

The door opened even wider and I, grabbing the pails, jumped out of the car. From all the cars, people, escorted by guards, were going to get water, carrying whatever receptacles they had. To those cars, in which no one had any larger receptacles, were issued "fire brigade buckets." This was a sort of privilege: they were larger and held about 12 liters. I brought back a 5 liter tea kettle and an 8 liter pail. As the elder, I distributed the water to everyone. In the end of June, the weather was hot, especially at mid-day. The cars were without windows, and the tin roofs were heating up like a roasting pan. So that in the car, everyone was suffering from thirst, especially the children. Having gotten some water, they all began to drink greedily, even though it was necessary to economize, since we didn't know when we would get some again.

In our car, there were no nursing children or children in

diapers. What were women doing with very little ones, - it was awful to imagine. Since they needed water not only for drinking, but also to wash out the diapers and infant clothes.

A commotion arose. Apparently someone tried to protest against these inhuman conditions, - since in some cars, 40 or more people were jammed in.

Voices were heard and strict orders from the KGB.

"Oh, look," shouted one Jewish man, who had stuck his hand through the bars of the window and was clutching a small mirror in the palm of his hand. I immediately applied that "invention" also.

Men with bundles were climbing out of the cars, surrounded by a reinforced number of guards. They were being pushed on the spot into another echelon.

"They will be shot!!!" shrieks were heard everywhere. Women were crowding by the door.

"Get back! I'll shoot!" -shouted the guards angrily. The crying, screaming women stepped back from the guns aimed at them. The doors immediately slammed shut.

My hand with the little mirror in its palm, was trembling. Everyone was crowding around near our small window, stepping on our bedding, everyone wanted to see what was happening.

From one car, Colonel Giriūnas jumped out... His beautiful wife and small daughters had been with him

only two days.

What fate awaited the men and their families? - No one knew, no one foresaw, only a sharp uneasiness gnawed at our hearts.

The men in our car began to get ready feverishly: they were putting the most necessary things into separate bundles, the women were dividing the last reserves of food, from which the men were categorically refusing to take anything, while the women, with woeful crying, were shoving the food into their packs.

Suddenly, the guards stirred. They closed the doors hurriedly, jumped onto the guard platforms, ...the train was moving.

In our car, the men remained with their families. And so we all breathed easier. Whoever had anything, began to snack lightly. And my family, thanks to my dear colleagues from work, had bread, ham and cheese.

June 21st. We are traveling through Byelorussia. Having passed Molodecno, we stopped rather far from the station. From the village, women came running in our direction, fell on their knees, struck their forehead against the ground and cried:

"Oh Dear God, have mercy! Oh Mother Most Holy, save their souls!!"

Of course, this did not lift our spirits. On the contrary, it brought forth tears, and the unknown filled us with dread.

One little woman, having gotten past the guards, ran up to our car and stretched out to us a picture of the Mother of God of the Gates of Dawn* wrapped in a small rag and also three aluminum medals.

"May the Holy Mother of the Gates of Dawn save you and protect you!"

A guard ran up:

"What did she give you?" I showed him the small picture.

"Throw it down!" he ordered me.

"I wouldn't think of it!" I answered him. He left, without opening the car door.

Towards evening, we traveled past Minsk. Workers were going home from work and almost each one was carrying a small loaf of bread. Most of them were breaking the loaves and eating greedily. We simply could not understand, why they were going from work carrying bread and why they were breaking it with filthy, oily hands and eating it without anything on it..

Twenty years after the First World War, bread was still being rationed in the USSR. This we found out later.

Once we had passed Minsk, we traveled past impoverished villages. In places, the roofs of huts were covered with sod. Not a single tree, no greenery. Not even domestic animals, like pigs, dogs, chickens, which are usually seen around a house, were visible here. Everything

seemed empty, desolate...

The train stopped in front of one of these villages. No one ran out of the houses to look at the train. A group of officials came up. The guards opened the door wide. We all began to cast glances through the wide opening.

"Who is the car's elder?" asked one of the newcomers. He was uniformed; on his sleeve there were a few red stripes.

I introduced myself.

"Report! I am the commandant of the echelon."

"I am not a military person and I do not know how to report," I answered.

He explained that I must say how many people there are in the car, besides that, how many men, how many women, how many children of both sexes up to the age of 10 and if there are no sick people.

Having looked around, I began to count, although I already knew how many and what kind of travelers were in our car.

"Fine, we'll check," said the commandant and a soldier with a rifle climbed in clumsily and after him the commandant.

"Stand up!" ordered the soldier. But there was not enough room for everyone to stand up at the same time, since two-thirds of the car was taken up with bedding, and a section with piled up bundles.

The commandant was counting us by waving his finger and wrote everything down.

Having gathered up my courage, I pointed to the nearby village and said to him:

"And that is the "blooming" Byelorussia about which our newspapers wrote recently. There is not a tree here, not a flower...It's a dead plain... Oh, what huts!... What misery!..."

Everyone looked at me with fear, but the commandant answered me proudly:

"Nonsense, your flowers!... If only there is bread," and he got down from the car.

Everybody attacked me immediately, especially the Jews, why I was so provoking.

Because, with such statements, I could cause trouble for everyone.

I apologized and promised to be wiser. Besides, I offered that someone else be the car's elder.

They all fell silent, since no one wanted that "honor."

*Naujoji Vilnia - a small town near Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania

**Muzhikov* - a Russian word for men of the lower classes or uneducated farmers

*Mother of God of the Gates of Dawn - a famous shrine in Vilnius

Lithuanian Flag Cookies

By Jana Sirusaitė-Motivans



The Lithuanian community on the Northeast Coast has many cherished summer traditions and celebrations. We start the summer with Joninės (St. Johns, mid-summer eve) followed by summer camps, scout camps, Putnam Picnic, Kennebunkport Ateitis week and many other special events. Other communities across the country have their local traditions. This summer many of us were looking forward to the Šokių Šventė in Philadelphia. These events give us an opportunity to renew friendships and celebrate our culture. Unfortunately, all these events have been cancelled this summer leaving many of us feeling adrift with an empty calendar.

We each personally need to find a way to fill the void, and remain connected to our friends, communities and culture while respecting the social distancing guidelines. The internet does give us some opportunity to do this. For example, the camp Neringa community has posted videos on its website <https://neringa.org/visi-kartu/> inspired by the popular folk song 'Visi Kartu' (All Together). Also, the JAV Lietuvių Bendruomenė (Lithuanian American Community) updated website at <https://javlb.org/> highlights activities across the country, making it an excellent resource to stay informed.

While at home this summer, it would be a good time

to make Šaltibarščiai (cold beet soup) and grill some Šašlykai (kabobs). Make some kepta duona su česnaku (garlic bread) to have with beer while you wait for the grill to heat up. Make some Lithuanian inspired summer salads – potato salad, cucumber salad, beet salad- anything with dill! Make some fresh pickles. Play some Lithuanian music, sing some songs!

For many years, I have been admiring Italian flag cookies and thinking about how the colors are almost the same as a Lithuanian flag, but in a different order. I always thought it would be fun to change the layers around to geltona, žalia, raudona (yellow, green, red) to represent our flag. Well, I finally did it. It looks terrific and tastes good too! The colors are achieved with drops of food color and there is raspberry jam spread between the layers. Almond paste in the batter gives the cake layers a moist texture and fragrant aroma and taste.

Why not add the Lithuanian colors to your Fourth of July cookout? It falls on the weekend that the Šokių Šventė was supposed to take place. That same weekend also includes Karaliaus Mindaugo Karūnavimo Diena (coronation of King Mindaugas), a national holiday in Lithuania, on July 6th.

Lithuanian Flag Cookies

Ingredients

- 7 oz. almond paste
- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ tsp almond extract
- ¾ cup butter, room temperature
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup flour
- ¼ tsp salt
- Yellow, green, and red food coloring
- Seedless raspberry jam

1. Preheat oven to 350°
2. Grease three 8" x 8" metal baking pans (disposable foil pans are ok). Line the bottom of the pans with parchment paper (the grease helps the paper stick in place). Grease and flour the parchment-lined pans.
3. Use a grater to shred the almond paste into a large mixing bowl. Add sugar, almond extract and butter. Use an electric mixer on medium speed until well-blended. Reduce mixer speed and beat in eggs, one at a time. Reduce speed to low and add the flour and salt slowly to the mixture until combined.



4. Take two medium-sized bowls and add one cup of batter to each bowl, leaving one cup of batter in the original bowl. Add 10 drops of yellow food color to one bowl, 15 drops of red color to another bowl, and 15 drops of green food color to the third bowl. Use a mixer to stir each bowl until the colors are evenly blended, cleaning the mixer blades between each color.



5. Spoon the yellow-colored batter into one prepared pan and spread the batter evenly. Repeat with the red-colored batter in the next pan, and the green-colored batter in the third pan. Bake until set, and a tester inserted into the center comes out clean, about 12 – 15 minutes. Cool in pans on cooling rack for ½ hour or until the cakes are cool to the touch. Run the tip of a knife around the sides of pans to loosen the layers.



6. Place a piece of wax paper on a flat cutting board. Take the red layer and flip over the pan onto the wax paper. Warm up the jam in the microwave to make it easier to spread, and then use a spatula to spread an even layer of the jam on top of the red layer. Next, put the green layer on top of the red, and spread it with jam. Finally, put the yellow cake layer on top. Use your hands to gently push down on the top layer to help the layers hold together.
7. Use a bread knife to trim the edges into an evenly square cake. Cut the stacked layers into bars and serve.



current events

Security

...Lithuania's Vice Minister of National Defense, Edvinas Kerza revealed in the 2019 National Cyber Security Status Report that specialists from the National Cyber Security Center analyzed one of the most popular wireless routers used by Lithuanians at home and found that it sends data to servers in Russia. They found that the allegedly Chinese or Taiwan made equipment was actually made in Russia. Rytis Rainys, Director of the NCSC, said that the multi-month investigation revealed that the routers had pre-installed DNS settings and directed the service to Russian based servers. The DNS (Domain Name System) translates domain names, e.g. <https://dyn.com> in a browser to retrieve the website's IP address e.g. 50.16.85.103.

...Under the pretext of responding to the coronavirus threat, a fake letter purportedly from the NATO Secretary General to the Lithuanian Defense Ministry said that they were withdrawing troops from the country. The fake letter was sent to some Lithuanian media outlets, some of which republished the story. Defense Minister Raimundas Karoblis said, "It is one in a series of attempts to turn the pandemic crisis into a security crisis. Fake news like this piece is aimed at sowing distrust in our alliance partners and NATO unity". Other false stories include one that "a U.S. soldier in Lithuania was infected with the coronavirus".

...Military medics from Croatia, Germany, and the Netherlands have arrived in Lithuania to reinforce NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence battle group stationed in Rukla and not burden Lithuania's healthcare system with any coronavirus activities. NATO has four multinational battle groups stationed in the Baltic nations and Poland.

...The Lithuanian Ministry of Defense purchase of 200 Oshkosh Defense Joint Tactical Vehicles via the Foreign Military Sales program of the U.S. Government will be enhanced by the inclusion of Kongsberg Protective Remote Weapon System. This system provides better personnel protection and combat power.

...The Chinese Ambassador to Lithuania, Shen Zhifei, objected to a letter signed by 50 Lithuanian lawmakers and over 100 representatives of science and culture calling on President Gitanas Nausėda to support Taiwan's involvement in the World Health Organization, the United Nations, and the opening of a Lithuanian Economic Representation office in Taiwan. He called the action "an open provocation to the principle of one China". President Nausėda is in favor of practical cooper-

ation with Taiwan and sharing experience on containing the coronavirus. China is blocking Taiwan's membership in WHO and calls any support of Taiwan as interference in its internal affairs.

...The first conversation between the Presidents of Lithuania and Belarus in 10 years included discussions of needed medical supplies, the Astravyets nuclear power plant, traffic of goods, repatriating Lithuanian citizens and tourists from third countries through Belarus, cultural, scientific, and human rights issues. Lithuanian President Nausėda spoke with Belarus' Alexander Lukashenko about the need for uninterrupted movement of goods across their shared border during this rather difficult period. The power plant was started in 2008 and is being built by Russia's state-owned Rosatom within 40 km of Vilnius. The remaining timetable is for launch to begin this summer and generation to start in October.

...Thirty-three Lithuanian troops from the Siauliai District left for a UN mission in Mali after passing coronavirus checks. They replace troops from the Vilnius District. Lithuania can send up to 50 troops.

...Darius Jauniškis was sworn in for a second term as head of the State Security Department (VSD). Recently Jauniškis was instrumental in the spy swap of two Russians for two Lithuanians and a Norwegian. During his second term, he plans on following the lead of the U.S. in developing a medical intelligence capability in an effort to plug intelligence gaps highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

...The Telia network faced a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) cyber-attack on the Hostex infrastructure and the Baltic News Service-Lithuania but service was restored in less than a day.

...Eityvydas Bajarūnas was appointed Lithuanian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Russian Federation and charged with developing bilateral economic and cultural ties. He previously worked as Ambassador to Sweden and Lithuania's Consul General in St. Petersburg.

COVID-19

...Although no foreign nationals have been admitted or allowed to depart on ferries, most of the 14,382 Lithuanians who departed left by way of the Klaipėda-Kiel, Germany route and some left via Klaipėda-Karlshamn, Sweden. The nearly closed airports saw 4,700 Lithuanians leave with dual citizenship or because of work contracts

in foreign countries, or special permission. The Health Ministry is still maintaining the mandatory 14-day self-isolation requirement for all arrivals until further notice.

...By request of the Health Ministry, The Ministry of National Defense arranged for two deliveries of medical protective supplies from China via Luxembourg's Boeing 747F and the Movement Coordination Center Europe (MCCE). MCCE is a military cooperative of 28 NATO and the European Union member states which Lithuania joined in 2015.

...A woman infected with coronavirus left Santara Clinics in Vilnius and took public transport to her home thus exposing the public. Subsequently, the Seimas passed a law criminalizing the breaking of self-isolation and quarantine rules after being informed of having an infectious disease. They now face up to a year in prison.

...Per Italy's request, Lithuania is sending face masks and medical equipment worth 60,000 euros acquired from UAB Intersurgical in Pabradė near Vilnius. The humanitarian aid was transported without charge by Girteka Logistics. Lithuania also allocated 40,000 euros for medical supplies including disinfecting products destined for Spain in partial thanks for Spain's continued participation in NATO Baltic Air Policing in Siauliai. This equipment was acquired from TEREKAS UAB, a plastics manufacturer located in Kretinga, Klaipėda County. A Spanish military plane is being used to transport the equipment.

...The Lithuanian Cabinet authorized 20,000 euros to purchase PPE's for Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova plus 40,000 euros for Ukraine.

...Reuters reports that Lithuania is borrowing 1.5 billion euros from three institutions to lessen the impact of the coronavirus. It plans on borrowing 700 million from the European Investment Bank, 400 million from the Nordic Invest Bank, and 400 million from The Council of Europe Development Bank.

...RIA Novosti reports that Russian Railways has canceled the Kaliningrad-Moscow and Kaliningrad-St. Petersburg trains because of coronavirus.

...Vilnius has opened 18 outdoor spaces including Cathedral Square to be used as temporary cafés and restaurants free of charge. During the quarantine, they can only serve outdoor diners and must maintain social distancing rules of 2 meters between customers in the city's squares, plazas, and streets.



...The Mary Health of the Sick Shrine in Šiluva near Kaunas has launched a "Map of Light" where every spot where people prayed to end the pandemic is marked by a light. Within two weeks, 3,393 lights of prayer were lit and 13,300 euros were collected and donated to an affiliated charity, Caritas Internationalis, a confederation of 165 Catholic relief, development, and social service organizations operating in 200 countries.



...A private Klaipėda hospice licensed for 1 bed, had 38 patients with 33 patients and 10 staff members testing positive for the coronavirus. Lithuanian Health Minister Aurelijus Veryga described the situation as "scandalous", saying that someone responsible will be held to account.

...The Seimas approved (120-0) a pay raise of 60-100 % for healthcare workers including medical residents working in coronavirus hotspots. The pay raise would be financed from the national budget, instead of the Compulsory Health Insurance Fund.

...Teltonika, a telecommunications and transport management company located in Vilnius, has assembled a 30 member team to work with Medtronic, a U.S. manufacturer of medical equipment, to design and build ventilators for hospital use. In 2019 Teltonika had sales of 79 million euros and a profit of 11 million.

...With international travel restricted, President Nausėda suggested that Lithuanians follow his lead on spending their summer vacations in the country to support internal tourism.

current events

...A hotspot was recorded among 52 workers at a garment factory in Nemenčinė, 20 km northeast of Vilnius. The entire town of 5,000 was put under lockdown and everyone was scheduled for testing.

...As part of an exit plan, all retailers including those in shopping centers are allowed to open.

...According to Worldmeters.info/Coronavirus and reported in *Emerging Europe*: Estonia had 1,535 coronavirus cases and 40 deaths for a rate of 30 deaths per million population; Lithuania had 1,326 cases and 37 deaths for a rate of 14 deaths per million; Poland had 9,453 cases and 362 deaths for a rate of 10 deaths per million, and Latvia had 739 cases and 5 deaths for a rate of 3 deaths per million.

Business

...Grigeo Klaipėda, a cardboard manufacturer, was found to have been releasing untreated wastewater into Curonian Lagoon. It made arrangements with Klaipėda city's water treatment facility Klaipėdos Vanduo (Klaipėda Water) in mid-January but it failed to comply with the contract terms and conditions. Klaipėda Water said that would not put its facilities at risk and Grigeo Klaipėda will suspend operations until it addressed the issue of wastewater treatment.

...A 42-container train arrived in Vilnius on Easter Sunday from China carrying 260 tons of postal parcels for 30 European countries including Britain, France, Germany, Hungary, and Spain. Two of the containers were intended for Lithuanian customers. Previous deliveries from Chinese cities of Beijing, Chongqing, Guangdong, and Hunan came by way of air and auto transport but the pandemic necessitated the rerouting to rail.

...AB Swedbank provided a loan of 16 million euros for BaltCap Private Equity Fund III to acquire two Lithuanian meat processing companies: Krekenavos Agrofirma (2019 sales 122 million euros) and Mesa LT (0.7 million euros). Krekenavos Agrofirma has a 20,000 sq. meter facility in Mantviloniai village near Kaunas. BaltCap's strategy is to "buy-and-build" rather than flip investments.

General

...Former Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė will co-chair the UN commission that will draft recommendations on international financial accountability, transparency, and integrity (FACTI). The other co-chair of FACTI will be former Niger Prime Minister Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki. The goal is to eliminate gaps in and vulnerability of inter-

national and legal systems related to financial accountability and transparency.

...Within a total decline of industrial production of 1.5% in March there was a decline of 16.3% in durable goods and 9.7% in energy but an 8.6% surge of capital goods and 6.7% in non-durable goods.

...Former Lithuanian President Rolandas Paksas and Gedvydas Vainauskas, CEO of the media group Lietuvos Rytas were found not guilty of influence peddling by a Vilnius court. Paksas, the leader of the Order and Justice Party, was accused of agreeing to accept a 15,000 euro bribe from Vainauskas to influence construction inspectors to authorize the opening of a new Norfa retail store in southern Lithuania.

...The year 2020 marked the 300th anniversary of the birth of the Vilna Gaon, Rabbi ben Shlomo Zalman, a great Jewish thinker, born in Vilnius and buried there. Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius spoke at his grave and Israeli Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz replied and thanked him for the recognition. Likewise, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin spoke with Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda.

...After a year of preparation, the 25th anniversary Vilnius International Film Festival had a week to switch from cinemas to streaming digital platforms. The festival team had to refund tickets, find new sponsorship, develop digital marketing strategies, arrange for on-demand viewing, partner with streaming platforms, and solve technical difficulties. They did it! Last year 126,000 filmgoers attended the festival. Sixty-nine percent (118 films) made it onto streaming sites and on-demand TV. The market research firm, Kantar, estimates that each of the 56,000 streamed films was viewed by two people making 112,000 total viewers which almost matches the previous year's viewership. The Polish film *Corpus Christi* by director Jan Komasa won the Audience Prize.

...With airports generally shut down and cinemas closed, a drive-in movie theater is planned for Vilnius Airport. A 50-foot screen will present the video and sound will be broadcast to each car's radio. The social distance is supposedly maintained by limiting capacity to two people (good luck!). Cars with more than two passengers will be allowed to attend the day screenings, but they have to be family members. The first scheduled film is Oscar-winning Best Film – the Korean language hit *Parasite*.

National Board News



The Lithuanian American Community Chairman Arvydas Urbonavičius participated in the online meeting with the World Lithuanian Community leaders. Photo courtesy of event organizers.

On May 23, the LAC Chairman Arvydas Urbonavičius participated in an online meeting of the leaders of the World Lithuanian Community and Lithuanian communities. Representatives of the Lithuanian diaspora from more than 40 countries participated in the meeting. Among the issues discussed was the situation of Lithuanians in the world during this special time and the challenges they currently face, as well as the plans for the near future. A lot of work awaits Lithuanians all over the globe. We will encourage active participation in the forthcoming elections in Lithuania, the continuation of the citizenship preservation issue, and joint efforts to recover in the post-pandemic period.

We invite you to visit the updated website of the Lithuanian American Community, where you will find the most important information on the organization's structure and activities. The website address is <https://javlb.org/>. A new business page has been created on the website which offers useful business-related information <http://javlb.org/veikla/>.

The Lithuanian American Community website <https://covid19.javlb.org/> is designated to assist the victims of COVID-19. Please register if you find yourself in a difficult situation due to the pandemic and are looking for the necessary information. A section dedicated to the support of businesses and the general population has been set up at <https://covid19.javlb.org/help-business>. Business owners who could be of help are also encouraged to register on this website.

The creation of the Lithuanian American business professionals database is underway. Inga Klimašauskienė, the LAC National Board's Vice President for Business Affairs offers consultations regarding business partners, market searches, and other business-related issues. Her e-mail is ekonomika@javlb.org. A North American Lithuanian Business Forum is planned to take place in 2021 in Philadelphia. The exact date will be announced later.

Given the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of a possible economic crisis, the Presidium of the LAC XXII Council decided to hold the third session of the LAC XXII Council online. The session will take place on October 16-18, 2020. The agenda and technological solutions will be announced in September. We urge all Council members to plan to actively participate in the virtual Council session meetings. If you have any questions, please write to the Presidium at prezidiumas@javlb.org.

Due to the current global health crisis, the Lithuanian Diaspora Student Internship (LISS) program organized by the Lithuanian American Community will not take place this summer. However, preparations for next year are already underway. The 2021 program is planned for June 19-July 25. We look forward to seeing you all!

Raminta Urbonavičienė took over the position of the LAC National Board Vice-Chair for Special Projects after Skirmantė Philippone resigned. Juozas Kazlauskas (Atlanta, GA) took over the position of Marius Vilemaitis, our IT specialist. We wish the new team members success!

We are looking for a candidate for the position of Vice President for Information. If you would like to join the National Board team, please contact us by email at president@javlb.org or by calling us at (402) 203-1119.



our community

Culture



A group of Lithuanian American Poetry Spring participants.

No quarantine and no COVID-19 could interfere - the Lithuanian American Poetry Spring, sponsored by the LAC Cultural Council, did take place! True, it did not take place in the Siela Gallery as planned. According to the event organizer and compiler of Vėtrungės poetry book, poetess Sandra Avišienytė, "poetry is a living thing

that cannot be closed in, restricted, or moved to another date". That is why the event took place online. Nearly 100 poetry lovers joined and were not disappointed. They could listen to poems, songs, and music and meet the poets who participated in this year's Poetry Spring.

The organizing committee of the 16th North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival announces that due to the current global health crisis and in coordination with the leaders of dance groups, performers, hotel representatives, and service providers, a difficult decision has been made to postpone the 16th Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival that was to be held in Philadelphia on July 3-5. The event will take place on August 6-8, 2021 in Philadelphia. For more information, please visit <https://www.sokius-vente2020.org/>

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, a decision was made to postpone the North American Lithuanian Song Festival. The event will take place on June 30 - July 2, 2023 in Cleveland.

Sports

The Lithuanian National Olympic Committee and LTeam (Lithuanian Olympic Team) invite Lithuanians from all over the world to join in the celebration of the Olympic Day. On June 23, 2020, an online Lithuanian Olympic Mile Run will take place aiming to cover at least 1988 meters (this number symbolizes the date of the restoration of the LTOK).

How to participate in the online Lithuanian Olympic Mile Run?

1. On June 23, run at least 1988 meters.
2. Record the result using any running app.
3. Share the results on social networks using hashtag #OlimpineDiena2020 (important: make sure the published post is made public).
4. On June 23-25, fill out a special form giving information about you.
5. On June 29 – July 10, pick up prizes you won at the LTOK headquarters or any "Eurovaistine" drug store in Lithuania. Although Lithuanians living anywhere in the world can take part in the run, prizes will not be sent abroad. Persons living in Lithuania who have been appointed by the winners will be able to pick up prizes won by Lithuanians living abroad.



A runner. Photo by Saulius Čirba.

For more information about the run, please visit <https://www.ltok.lt/olimpine-diena/>. Visual information is in the attachments of the letter. For any related questions, please contact the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee Project Manager, Ignas Gibas at ignas@ltok.lt.

Education



From left: Estera Sunelaitė, former LAC Cape Cod Chapter Chairwoman Regina Petrutienė, and Regina Balčaitienė. Photo courtesy of event organizers.

At the end of the school year, representatives of the Lithuanian American Community visited the Saulė Lithuanian School in Atlanta and thanked its principal and teacher, Virginija Šileikaitė-Thoresen for her sincere and dedicated work. Virginija has worked in this school for 11 years, during which the school has grown to more than 40 students! Margarita Austin will take the helm of the school now. We wish the new principal and the entire school community further growth and good luck.

Your Contribution is Welcomed



We invite you to contribute to the alleviation of the consequences of COVID-19 by donating to the Let's Help Each Other Foundation established by the Lithuanian American Community. The money will be used to help those Lithuanians in the United States who need it the most at this difficult time

by providing them with medications, food, and personal hygiene products. The distribution committee formed by the Lithuanian American Community makes decisions on how the money is to be used. You can donate to this fund via gofundme at https://www.gofundme.com/f/34t92-a-cause-i-care-about-needs-help?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_campaign=p_cf+share-flow-1

We are truly grateful to all the donors who are contributing to this mutual aid campaign!



Say, Hear, Remember.

For the fifth year in a row, on June 14th, the Day of Mourning and Hope, during the "Say, Hear, and Remember" campaign, hundreds of Lithuanians around the world will be reading out loud the names of deportees and political prisoners. This year, the campaign will take place online. You can register for readings at www.birzelio14.lt. On this page, you will also find information on the Facebook

page and visual material. Invite your friends and relatives to join the readings. Let us help bring home the fates of thousands of exiled and imprisoned Lithuanians. More information is at <https://www.facebook.com/GlobaliLithuania/photos/a.528512720546909/3126417804089708>

Winners of Essay Competition Selected

Every year, the Lithuanian American Community Education Council organizes Art and Essay Competition for the students of the Lithuanian schools in the United States. 250 students from 16 schools wrote essays in classrooms at the end of February, when schools were not yet closed due to the coronavirus pandemic. Students had the opportunity to choose to write in Lithuanian or English,

as those whose level of proficiency in Lithuanian does not yet allow them to express their thoughts fluently in Lithuanian also study in Lithuanian schools. Teachers selected the essays for the competition, and a team of teachers from the Maironis Lithuanian School (IL) read and evaluated the essays. The following compositions are the winners in the group of essays written in English.

As Many Languages You Know, as Many Times You are a Human Being

Sean Vytautas Shubert, 12 years old

Colorado Lithuanian School
Teacher Kamilė Mitkus

It's important that you know of other places and cultures. Like France--they love wine and protesting, and Italy--they love lasagna or like other Italian things. I think it takes living a tough life to appreciate and know of life and what you believe. Lithuanian school is important for the same reason.

You see, Lithuania has been through a lot. They survived Russia and the Soviet Union's advancements. They got through World War I and World War II, and the fact that our school can teach this much history, in these troubled times, inside a country that has, like, a lot of immigrants, I think--no, I firmly believe that that is amazing. That is why Lithuanian school seems like an oasis; somewhere people can go and learn of their roots. Through that, people can and will determine who they are, not who they should be, and not just to say, "Hey, I have an interesting background," but to really identify with other people like them, and with themselves. This oasis helps people know about themselves, the struggles and the history of their people.

Lithuanian school is important because of all the background information that is provided by the school, that

otherwise would not have been provided, if not for the Lithuanian school. We would not have been given the chance to know where we came from, or the history we inhabit. We know the culture, the struggles, and the victory of this great country. From repelling the Red Army twice, the best we could, to somewhat preserving the Jewish culture Vilnius had, even after World War II. This is extremely impressive given the small size of the country, but as they say, "It's not the size of the dog in the fight, but the fight in the dog." I believe this quote resonates with the Lithuanian fighting spirit.

Lithuanian school is a very important beacon for those in America who are afraid to show their true colors that are afraid to learn who they really are, because Lithuanian may have been oppressed by multiple giant countries, in multiple extremely dark times, but we kept our spirit. I know that fire surviving passion, that stayed aflame in the darkest times, really says something. We were around longer, felt more heat, and loved (still love) basketball more than most--and that's why we ROCK! Lithuania ROCKS!

I Really Love Lithuania. What About You?

Michaela Kokkinos, 8th grade

Maironis Lithuanian School, New York
Teacher Justina Miklaševičius

Lithuania has always had a place in my heart. I was born in America but I appreciate its customs and ideology. I've only been to Lithuania a few times when I was small (and plan to go this year, 2020) but I go to Lithuanian school, and that makes me yearn to go to Lithuania for more experiences.

I participate in all Lithuanian holidays and events. For example, Užgavėnės is one of the fun events I do. You eat pancakes all day, dance, and try to "scare away winter." This is mostly for small kids because they get to run around and dress up, but it'll always be enjoyable. Another important event is the remembrance of Lithu-

anian freedom. It makes us remember the past and what our people had to do to finally have independence. We wouldn't have these unique festivities if it wasn't for Lithuania, protesting against the Russian army.

To add on, Lithuania's environment is entertaining. There are many lakes and rivers to swim in, and it is very woodsy and green. When I traveled to Lithuania, my family and I often hiked and swam in our free time. The landscapes are pleasant and also have remarkable historical sites. For instance, the Gediminas Tower in Vilnius is very popular. It is a remaining part of what was once the upper castle during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It provides a great view of the city from on top of the hill and a reflection on how interiors looked in the past.

Leah Kirk, 4th grade
Boston Lithuanian School
Teacher Rūta Gudmand

I am 50% Lithuanian, but even though I've heard a lot about Lithuania and what it's like there, I have never been there. It is hard to show my love for a country I've never seen, but there is a special place in my heart for my mother's birth country, and I will try to explain why.

At home, we have a lot of books and photo albums about Lithuania. Sometimes my sisters and I scroll through the pages and admire the beauty of Lithuania, with so many forests, lakes, and rivers, and the beautiful Baltic Sea.

The history of Lithuania is so old, rich, and fascinating. There are many towns and cities that are holding their untold secrets locked in castles, churches, and tiny cobblestone streets.

Eva Razgaitis, 2nd grade
Maironis Lithuanian School, New York
Teacher Ramona Krecikaitė

I am proud to be lietuvė because of Lietuva's gintaras, history, food, language, songs, dances, costumes, holidays, and traditions. I am proud to tell you about the unique Lithuanian culture and country.

I like Kūčios because of the twelve dishes, and the tradition where you take out straw to tell if you'll live long. I am proud of the food because we have delicious bread, cepelinai, šaltibarščiai and so much more! We even made šaltibarščiai at our school! I even made koldūnai with my dad.

I am also proud of the amazing history. I really love the legend of Gedimino pilis. I also love the legend about

Lithuania's foods are also the main part of why I like Lithuania. Their foods are different from America's. Cepelinai is one of the most popular foods. It is a grated potato stuffed with meat and topped with sour cream and bacon. Even though it is difficult to make and takes time, it is still enjoyable food that every Lithuanian appreciates.

Of course, there are other remarkable destinations to go to, but for a new and distinctive experience, Lithuania is a great choice. Personally, I adore Lithuania because of its culture, sights, and the time I get to spend with my family and friends.

The Lithuanian kitchen is the only thing I've experienced so far. I love Lithuanian lazy cake, and the stuffed cabbage my mom makes once in a while. I also like pancakes for breakfast, and the tree cake my mom gets in the mail that we get from Lithuania.

I listed just a couple things I know and love about Lithuania, but I'm still learning something new every day. But I'll tell you one thing...very soon I will have an opportunity to experience how this little country looks, sounds, and feels because in May my mom and I are planning a trip to Lithuania. I am very excited and can't wait to confirm what I already know and get to know even more, so when I come back I have a little part of Lithuania in my heart.

Jūratė and Kastytis. The folk tales are really old and cool! I love the language because it is interesting and old.

I am proud of the dances and songs because they're really fun and only a few people know them. I love Lithuanian costumes. Mine is so colorful. The costumes have so much detail, especially the juosta. These things make me proud of being lietuvė.

Last, but not least, I love the gintaras. It looks so pretty. It comes from tree sap that was in the sea. Sometimes it has bugs and plants stuck in it! We saw some of it in the exhibit during the amber lesson in Lithuanian school. All these things make me proud to be lietuvė.

our community

1-2 KLASĖS NUGALĖTOJAI	3-4 KLASĖS NUGALĖTOJAI	5-6 KLASĖS NUGALĖTOJAI
 <p>II vieta: Olivia Sanchez 2 kl. Los Angeles Šv. Kazimiro LM, CA</p>  <p>II vieta: Rimvydas Žemaitaitis 1kl. Čikagos LM, IL</p>  <p>III vieta: Andželina Abrudeanu 2 kl. Dallas LM "Bažga", TX</p>  <p>III vieta: Nojus Milevicius, 1kl. Šv. Kazimiro LM, Cleveland, OH</p>	 <p>II vieta: Michelle Zuzindlak, 4kl. Šv. Kazimiro LM Cleveland, OH</p>  <p>III vieta: Brigita Bartkevičiūtė 4 kl. Maironio LM, Lemont, IL</p>  <p>III vieta: Rapolas Ogrodnikas, 4kl. Šv. Kazimiro LM Cleveland, OH</p>	 <p>III vieta: Ema Kimmage 5 kl. Vashingtono K. Donelacio LM, MD</p>  <p>II vieta: Martynas Pelešinas 6 kl. Maironio LM, Lemont, IL</p> 

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DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
THE XVI LITHUANIAN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL
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