

bridges



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Front Cover: Lithuanians in Washington, DC celebrated July 6th by singing the Lithuanian national anthem.

Back Cover: Lithuanians in Chicago celebrated July 6th by sailing their boats in the Chicago River and singing the Lithuanian national anthem.
Photo by Karilė Vaitkute.

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from the editor

Dear readers,

As we all know, this year is different. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine, many of us have suspended our regular summer activities, vacations, and anything that involves large gatherings. Many plans that the Lithuanian American Community had for the summer were suspended or canceled. Students could not participate in the LISS program in Lithuania this summer.

However, some activities did take place. On July 6th, Lithuanians celebrated Lithuanian Statehood Day (also known as King Mindaugas Coronation Day) in Lithuania, the USA, and many other countries of the world by coming together in small groups and singing the Lithuanian national anthem. On July 17th, Lithuanians celebrated the World Lithuanian Unity Day.

On July 23rd Lithuanians in the USA and Lithuania mark a special day. On this day in 1940, the Welles Declaration, a diplomatic statement was issued by Sumner Welles, the United States' acting Secretary of State, condemning the June 1940 occupation by the Soviet Union of the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and refusing to recognize their annexation as Soviet Republics.

For all Lithuanians who live abroad and who are Lithuanian citizens or dual citizens, it is important to participate in the upcoming elections to the Parliament (Seimas) of Lithuania that will take place on October 11, 2020. Seimas members are elected for four years. Voters who reside abroad can register electronically to be able to vote. The registration procedure lasts just several minutes. The link to the registration page is here: <https://www.vrk.lt/en>. I do encourage everyone eligible to vote to do so.

In this issue of Bridges, we turned to the history of the Lithuanian Americans. You will read about the lives of some Lithuanians in Chicago more than a hundred years ago. Also in this issue, you will be able to get acquainted with a fascinating man, crowned the Triple Crown of long-distance hiking. And finally, I hope you will enjoy fun-filled leisure read about a little dog, a beautiful tribute to a pet by its owner.

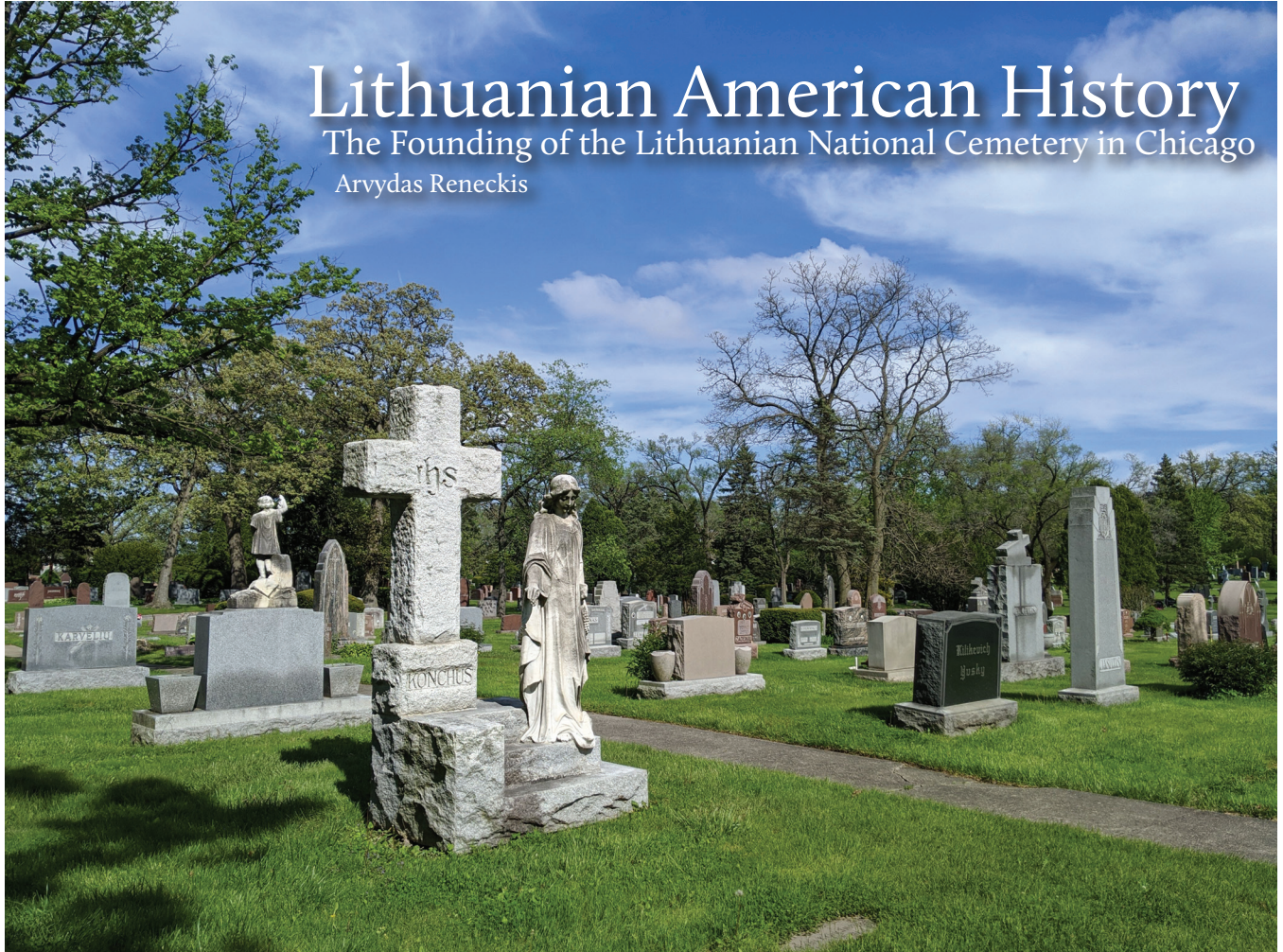
Wishing you peace and inner strength
to endure our turbulent times,

Karilė Vaitkutė Editor

Lithuanian American History

The Founding of the Lithuanian National Cemetery in Chicago

Arvydas Reneckis



The Lithuanian National Cemetery, 2020. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

"I have a body, but where am I going to put it?" undertaker Povilas Mažeika complained while talking to the regulars of Laurynas Ažukas's tavern. "I don't know what the man's sins were, but Father Kriauciūnas won't give permission to bury him in St. Casimir's Cemetery."

This conversation took place on a late fall evening in 1910 in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood. It must have been retold by Lithuanian Americans many times, and a quarter of a century later, in 1936 it was even recorded in the Lithuanian National Cemetery's Commemorative 25th Anniversary Book. The above-mentioned conversation probably was the "last drop" that suddenly made the cup of patience of some Lithuanians in Chicago overflow. The news about the dead body instantaneously spread from the Lithuanian tavern to people's homes, and soon afterward, it was retold in the local press and the meetings of various Lithuanian national societies. The unanimous conclusion was this: it is really terrible that Lithuanians do not have an independent cemetery...

Belonging to a national society was among deadly sins

In 1903, Father Mataušas Kriauciūnas, the pastor of St. George Parish in Chicago, established St. Casimir's Lithuanian Cemetery. At the time, Lithuanian immigrant families were quite large and often lived in poverty. Diseases were spreading easily, and a relatively large number of young people, especially children, were dying. The threat to refuse to bury a deceased person within cemetery grounds was considered to be huge disrespect to the memory of the deceased. What were those "deadly sins" that made it impossible to be buried in the cemetery?

Father Mataušas Kriauciūnas was relentlessly threatening his parishioners, saying that he would not accept in St. Casimir's Cemetery any members of various Lithuanian national societies. He must have been keeping his word because we find that many Lithuanians had to bury their deceased family members in non-Lithuanian cemeteries - Waldheim (more than 700 Lithuanian



Father Mataušas Kriauciūnas, pastor of St. George Parish in Chicago.

graves), Greenwood (about 400), Oakwood, Mt. Olive, Bohemian National, and others.

In 1908, Lithuanian American priests held a congress during which they decided to prohibit Lithuanian Catholic societies to work together with Lithuanian secular, national, and liberal societies. Parishioners were strictly forbidden to join any society that did not belong to the parish.

In the course of the 19th century, 2,000 to 3,000 Lithuanians immigrated to the United States. The vast majority of them were Catholics. In the new country, they at first clustered as brethren of faith, extending each other a helping hand. The reality of their lives dictated their desire to stay together. A typical Lithuanian immigrant of the time was a son or a daughter of a recently liberated serf. In the US, he or she became a blue-color worker. Wages in the mines of Pennsylvania or the slaughterhouses of Chicago were meager. The lives of most newcomers rotated around the narrow circles of their fellow workers. Often the new immigrants remained illiterate. However, some had the desire, the will power, and the ability to get an education and live not only within the boundaries of their "village" but in the "world." However, in an event of a disaster or hardship, many looked for help within their community, among people with similar experiences and fate.

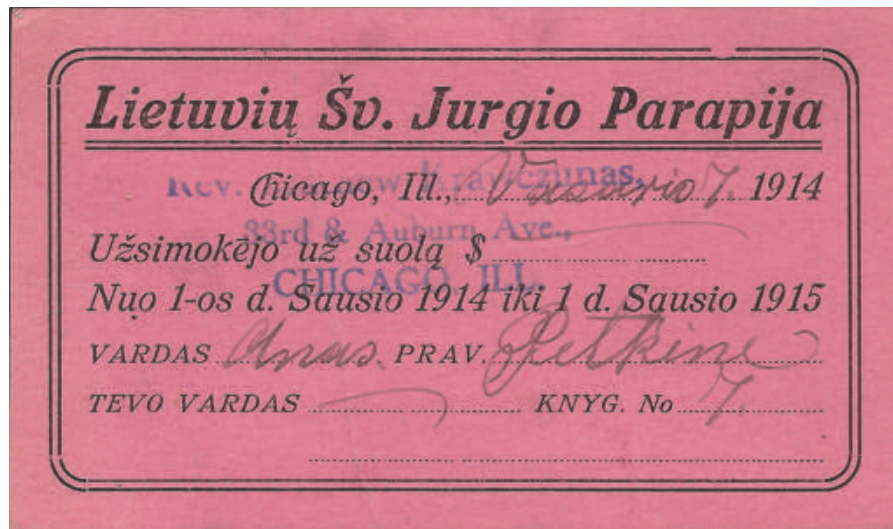
The first Lithuanian organizations were fraternal benefit societies (in Lithuanian, they were called draugystės which means "friendships"). They were needed because, in case of an illness, an accident, or death, society members or their families received financial and human



Birute Chorus concert program cover. Many cultural organizations, including choruses, were established by Lithuanian Americans in the first half of the 20th century.

support. A member of any first benefit societies would pay an annual membership fee of \$3. If a member would fall ill, he would receive \$5 per week. If a member died, other members paid an additional dollar each, and the collected sum was given to the family of the deceased.

At first, Lithuanian immigrants were establishing parishes and building churches together with Polish immigrants. Later on, Lithuanians separated from Poles and started founding their own parishes. It seems that whenever Lithuanians and Polish immigrants tried to cluster together, the "eternal" disagreements would arise between them. However, after Lithuanians separated from Poles, the situation did not improve. One of the first Lithuanian churches in the United States was St. George Church in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania, the city dubbed the Capital of Lithuanians in America. (The construction of the church continued from 1891 to 1915; the church was demolished in 2009). In a video interview recorded in 1974, Prelate Juozas Karalius, the pastor of St. George



A ticket issued in 1914 to a parishioner of St. George parish in Chicago to prove that he paid his yearly fee for his seat in the pew of the church.



A ticket issued in 1928 to a parishioner of St. George parish in Chicago to prove that he paid his yearly fee for his seat in the pew of the church.

the future parish and collect their donations. The donations were usually very large. After a church was built, parishioners had to pay for their seats in a pew. The money was used to maintain the parish and pay off loans.' (Jonas Žilius by J. Šlekys, 2011).

It appears that at the time, people had to support the maintenance of parishes and the construction of churches with quite substantial donations. After a church was built, they still had to "rent a seat" or buy a ticket for "a place to sit." Fr. Žilius also writes about the so-called "Easter receipt" custom that was being practiced in Lithuanian parishes in the US. According to him, due to this custom, various misunderstandings were commonplace. He said, "Let's say a parishioner wants to go to confession before Easter. To do that, he has to have a receipt, and he would not have a receipt if he didn't pay "the prescribed fee," i. e. "a monthly fee for the entire year." The "Easter receipt" practice was alive only in Lithuania and Poland and was brought to the United States by Lithuanian and Polish priests. In 1902, American bishops met in Baltimore and discussed the question of Easter receipts in the Polish and Lithuanian parishes. They decided to prohibit the Easter receipts or taking money in any other form in exchange for allowing parishioners to go to confession. However, Polish priests

Parish, reminisced, "All Lithuanian parishes in America, and there were almost 150 of them, were founded and the churches were built by Lithuanian people, not by priests. However, even in their own parishes, Lithuanians could not do without fighting among themselves."

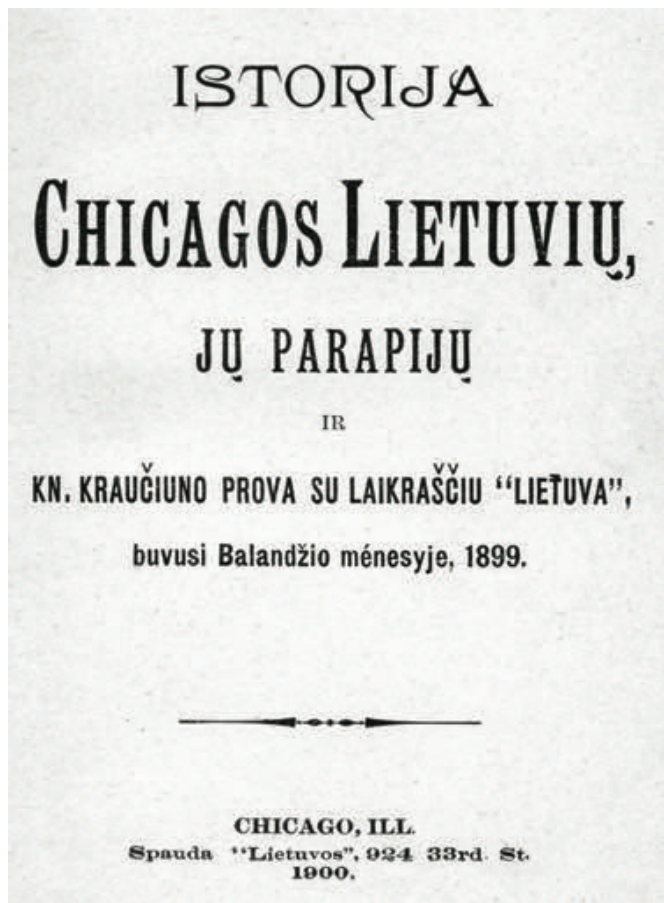
Paying a fee for the permit to go to confession

Fr. Jonas Žilius (Žilinskas) was a famous Lithuanian public figure of the 20th century and the pastor of St. Peter's Church in South Boston. He helped to rebuild St. Casimir's Church in Plymouth, Pennsylvania after it was ruined in the fire. According to him, 'When a new church had to be built, a priest or somebody else usually would go around addressing everyone willing to help

did not want to give it up and threatened to refuse to work in their parishes. Only after a few years, the signs of the former customs completely disappeared.

It is not surprising that parishioners who had donated money to their parishes were quite demanding to their priests. Fr. Kriaučiūnas did not escape sharp conflicts with his parishioners. (St. George parish in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood was established in 1892; the church construction ended in 1902, and in 1993, the church was demolished).

The court case between Fr. Kriaučiūnas and Antanas Olšauskas (Olszewski), the publisher of the Lietuva newspaper, and writer-journalist Juozas Adomaitis Šernas became widely known in all Lithuanian American colonies. The trial took place in 1899. It was described



Title page of the History of Lithuanian Parishes in Chicago. In the book, the court case between Fr. Kriaučiūnas and the Lietuva newspaper publisher is described in detail.

in detail in a 585-page long book, *History of Chicago Lithuanians*, published in 1900. The description of the trial also provided an overview of the life of Lithuanians in Chicago at the time.

The quarrel arose when Olšauskas and Šernas publicly asked the pastor to account for the use of funds donated by parishioners to build the church. Instead of providing an explanation, Fr. Kriaučiūnas labeled the newspaper publisher and writer atheists and called the police. Olšauskas and Šernas were arrested "for defamation" and put in prison to wait for the trial. They soon were released for a cash deposit. Many Lithuanians testified at the trial, and the pastor lost the case.

The misunderstandings between parishioners and priests were arising not only because of the use of funds and property. Even today, some parishioners find it not easy to understand the laws and regulations of the Catholic Church in the United States. In 1884, during the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, the Catholic bishops of the United States decided that "the bishop is the guardian and supreme administrator of all diocesan property." Pastors were appointed or dismissed by the

bishop, not by parishioners. This rule remains valid to this day. We have to remember it, especially when smaller parishes are being merged or closed, and churches that were built by parishioners many years ago are demolished.

Even today, nobody is in a hurry to give the parish property - churches, parochial schools, halls, rectories, various other buildings, as well as land and cemeteries - to the diocese. After all, these buildings were built with the hard-earned money donated by parishioners. A great example is the present-day Lithuanian World Center in Lemont, Illinois, and the Mission of Blessed George Matulaitis operating in its premises. For a similar reason, at the end of the 19th century, the so-called national Catholic parishes began to be established in the United States. American Poles were leading in this kind of church founding, and Lithuanians followed them. In Chicago alone, there were a few Lithuanian national Catholic churches. Although they were open for a relatively short time, the very phenomenon of their emergence shows the desire of many people to be independent at that time.

A demographic portrait of Lithuanians

At the beginning of the 20th century, most Lithuanians were concentrated in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood. Juozas Adomaitis Šernas, the editor of the *Lietuva* newspaper, had to flee Lithuania and seek refuge in America because of his work together with the participants of the Lithuanian national movement, Dr. Vincas Kudirka and Dr. Jonas Basanavičius. In his book, Šernas wrote that in 1900 there were as many as 39 different Lithuanian societies in Chicago.

In the 1936 publication of the *Lithuanian American Alliance*, we read that about 6,000 Lithuanians participated in the Alliance's congress held in Chicago in 1910. According to Chicago city statistics, 9,052 babies were born to Lithuanian parents in five years, from 1905 to 1910.

Nobody knows the exact number of Lithuanians that lived in Chicago at that time, or how many Lithuanians immigrated to the US by the end of the 19th century. For decades, the US Immigration Service registered all Lithuanians as Russians or Poles. More precise data started emerging only after 1899 when the word "Lithuania" was used in the immigration lists to name the homeland of immigrants from Lithuania. From 1899 until the beginning of World War I in 1914, 252,594 Lithuanians came to the United States (170,699 men and 81,895 women).

Among immigrants who came during the period from 1905 to 1907, were young Lithuanians who had studied in high schools and universities in Riga, St. Petersburg, and Moscow. They were forced to flee the persecution

of the tsar's gendarmes for their Lithuanian activities, the distribution of Lithuanian books, and their beliefs or direct participation in revolutionary activities. Almost all of these young people were interested in the Lithuanian national affairs, culture, and press. They started staging Lithuanian performances and organizing concerts. Cultural and educational societies and clubs started sprouting. Soon those organizations became the cells of public life, its driving force.

On February 19, 1911, in Juozas Ridikas's tavern in Bridgeport, Chicago, not far from the editorial office of the *Lietuva* newspaper, representatives of fourteen Lithuanian societies held a meeting. In the minutes of this meeting, it was recorded that "the delegates acknowledged that the need for an independent cemetery is an urgent matter." It was unanimously and without any deliberations decided to establish the Lithuanian national cemetery.

The need to establish a second Lithuanian cemetery in Chicago more than 100 years ago was determined by conflicts between Lithuanians who were quite numerous in the area. Most of them were ordinary farmers, whose parents and grandparents remained in the old country and were still freeing themselves from the legacy serfdom. Having arrived at an industrialized metropolis of America (in the late 19th century, the city of Chicago was the fifth largest in the world), the settlers had to meet the challenges of the modern world. They dealt with those challenges in a variety of ways. Eventually, they separated from each other depending on their social and economic status, education, hobbies, and the way of life in general. However, at first, all Lithuanians, scattered widely throughout America, were divided into just two opposing camps: believers and atheists. Both sides cared deeply about the national revival of Lithuania and their relatives that remained in the old country. However, most Lithuanians in America were firmly convinced that only Catholics could be true Lithuanians. Meanwhile, a fairly large proportion considered any religion to be "a thing of the dark past." They called themselves "progressives" or "forerunners," and nicknamed the believers "hinders of progress". A rare Catholic, who believed in the resurrection of the body and eternal life, could imagine how he would be able to "rest in peace" after he died when a sinful atheist "without sacred sacraments" would lay beside him.

Who established the second Lithuanian cemetery?

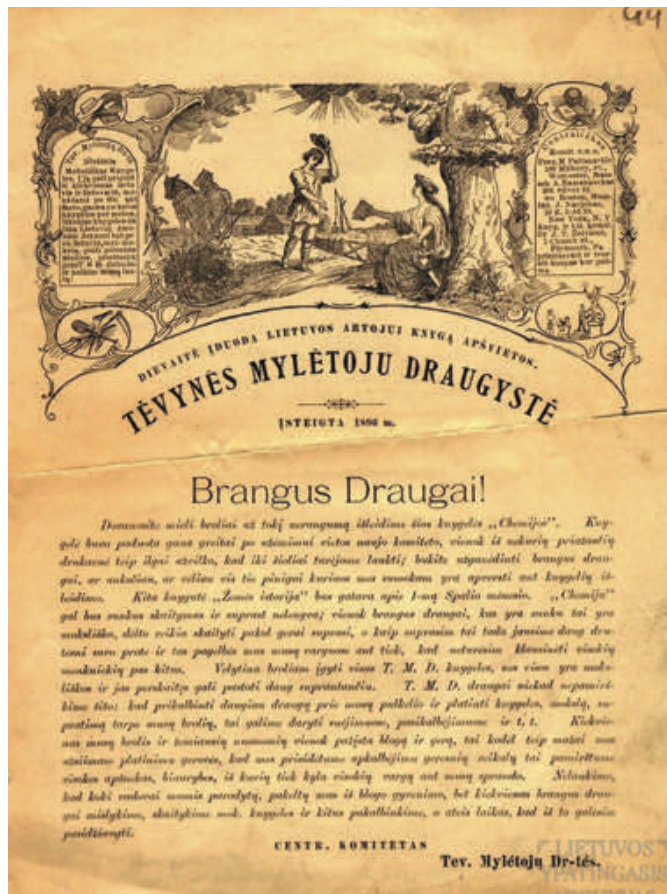
The progressives decided to stop fighting with the Catholics and start acting. On March 26, 1911, representatives of eleven Lithuanian national societies opened an account in a savings bank, located on the corner of State and Madison streets in Chicago. Each of them paid five dollars entrusted to them by members of their societies. Soon after the news about opening the account spread, delegates from another ten national societies joined, bringing their share of funds.

All the founding societies (21) are listed on a symbolic monument that stands on the grounds of the Lithuanian National Cemetery. Picture 15 However, today it is quite difficult to find more detailed information about some of them. The names of several of them, e.g. Sons of Lithuania, Young Lithuanian Song Lovers, Freedom Lovers, Simanas Daukantas, Lovers of Lithuania, Lovers of Justice, Lovers of Homeland, Blessed Lithuania, Love of Lithuanians in America, The Entertainment of Young Lithuanians in America, suggest that they were not just fraternal benefit societies. Most of them had chapters in various cities of the United States. The statutes of these societies list many noble aspirations and obligations to foster the Lithuanian way of life. The work of some of these societies was extremely important for the newly-reborn Lithuanian nation.

For example, the Homeland Lovers Society (founded in 1896 in Hazleton, Pennsylvania; later its headquarters moved to Chicago) expanded its activities not only in various American cities, but also in Lithuania, Lithuania



The monument to the founders of the Lithuanian National Cemetery.



Homeland Lovers Society's ad encouraging to buy and read books. The Society published Lithuanian books and disseminated them in the United States and Lithuania during press ban.

Minor (East Prussia), Switzerland, and France. During the Lithuanian press ban imposed by the Russian tsar (1864–1904), the Society of Homeland Lovers was publishing Lithuanian books and periodicals in thousands of copies. Not only did they read them in America, but they smuggled them to Lithuania in various ways. Eventually, to save money, instead of sending heavy books to Europe by mail, the Homeland Lovers Society agreed with the printers, Martynas Jankus and Otto von Mauderode, to print books in Tilžė, Lithuania Minor, closer to the border of Lithuania. They were sending a smaller number of books to America and distributing most of them free of charge to book smugglers who would secretly bring them to Lithuania. On the eve of the establishment of the National Cemetery, the Society of Homeland Lovers complained about lack of funds, because in 1910, almost all the money the Society had was spent for the publishing of Dr. Vincas Kudirka's selected works (6 volumes). Mauderode's printing house alone received \$5,000, a huge amount of money at the time. It should be noted that until the present day, these 6 volumes remain the only complete and uncensored set of writings by Dr. Vincas

Kudirka, the author of the Lithuanian National Anthem.

The statutes of some Lithuanian national societies obliged their members to subscribe to newspapers and magazines, some others -- to establish libraries, reading rooms, organize concerts, performances, and lectures. American Lithuanian National Societies donated funds and helped to set up the Lithuanian exhibit at the World Fair in Paris (1900), raised funds for the construction of the National House in Vilnius, and helped their compatriots to achieve higher education. On March 28, 1911, representatives of various societies that had experience in public activities registered a new Lithuanian organization, the Lithuanian National Cemetery, in the State of Illinois.

The founders were elected and the place was found

On April 15, the delegates met in the Aušra Hall (3149 S. Halsted St., Chicago, IL) and elected eight trustees-directors. Their first task was to find a suitable plot of land for the cemetery. The search for the plot proved to be very short.

For sanitary reasons, already at the end of the 19th century, the Chicago government banned the establishment of new cemeteries within the city limits. Local Lithuanians were well acquainted with Chicago's southwestern suburbs. They would go there taking the long and busy Archer Street. It is said that before it became a street, it was a path along the Des Plaines River that the Indian tribes used to take. However, in the 19th century, horse-drawn carriages and later cars and coaches were already driven on this road. The construction of Chicago's sanitary and shipping canals was made possible by providing a variety of materials, tools, and cheap immigrant labor from the city. Irishmen, Germans, Poles, Italians, Czechs, Russians, Jews, and, of course, Lithuanians worked here. The canals connected Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River. They made it possible for commercial barges to sail back and forth from New York to the Gulf of Mexico. Steam locomotives ran to and from the City of St. Louis (Missouri), where thousands of Lithuanians already lived and worked at the time.

In the beautiful wilderness of Willow Springs (then Spring Forest), various Chicago societies rented so-called "gardens" where they would have their picnics in the summer. The place was suitable for relaxation. The town was relatively clean with just a few taverns for travelers. The biggest business in the area was extracting ice from the nearby Des Planes River. Ice blocks prepared in winter had to be stored so they would not melt all year round. Ice was needed to freeze the meat transported by train from Chicago slaughterhouses. The nearby suburbs of



The so-called "gardens" of Willow Springs, Illinois at the beginning of the 20th century. Lithuanians of Chicago often organized picnics in the outskirts of the city.

Justice and Palos did not yet exist. Farm fields stretched around, and the Bethania German Cemetery and the Mary of Resurrection Polish Cemetery were located along Archer Road (now in Justice, IL). A little further south, on Keen Street, in Archer Forest Park (also known as Mount Glenwood) there was a small cemetery. The farmers that lived next to the cemetery were selling a large 21-acre land plot.

The elected committee of the founders of the Lithuanian National Cemetery, namely, M. J. Damijonaitis, J. Smitas, S. Morkūnas, found the farm and before long, decided that the place was suitable for their purpose. Some members of the societies suggested not to rush, to consult, to look elsewhere. Lawyer Pranas F. Bradčiulis, a representative of the Lithuanian Scientific Society, took the initiative into his hands. Without telling anyone, he went to the farm, paid the owners symbolic one dollar, and asked them to sign the purchase documents. At the next meeting, he informed the directors, that "the land has already been bought." The discussions were over, and everyone started working on the next fundraising.



Attorney Frank P. Bradčiulis.

It was decided not to borrow money from the bank so that the profits would remain with the Lithuanians

Attorney Bradčiulis divided the amount of \$10,000 into \$50 and \$100 bonds for which 3% interest was to be paid. The bonds were to be bought by Lithuanian national societies, and this way, after the cemetery paid off its debt, the money and the interest would come back to the Lithuanian societies. According to the founders, if the loan had been taken from a bank, the interest that the cemetery would have had to pay would have been twice as big.

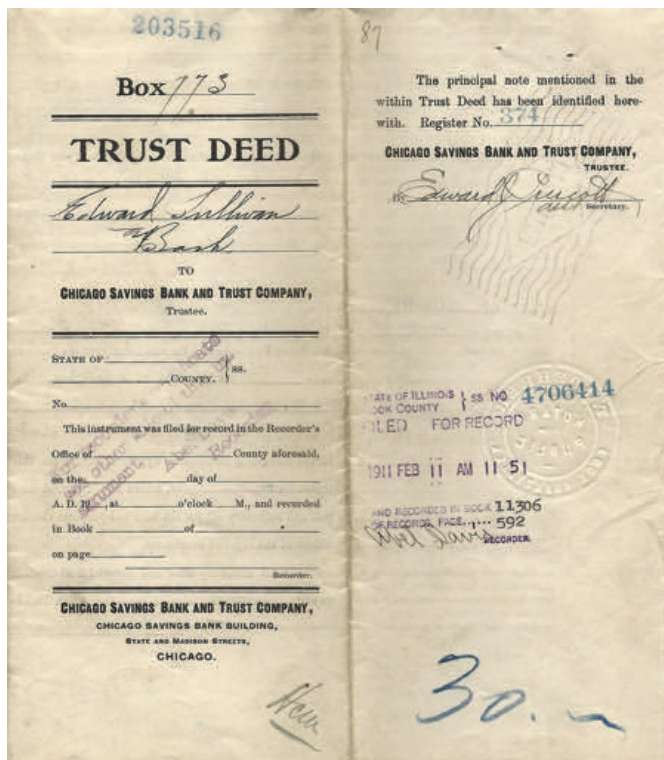
The societies had enough money in their treasuries and willingly lent them. More prosperous Lithuanians also

contributed. Soon a deposit of \$1,000 was paid to farmers Edward Sullivan, Elizabeth Rogers, and Johanna Murphy, and by January 12, 1912, the total agreed amount was paid. The loan was paid off in installments to the societies and individuals by 1921.

There was certainly no lack of enthusiasm to work for the Lithuanian National Cemetery. Volunteers immediately fenced the territory, cut down unnecessary trees and shrubs, and cleared the area. First, a brick gate and a wooden office building were built.

The first grave was a statement

On Memorial Day on May 30, 1912, a grand opening of the cemetery took place. It was recalled that "on the day, thousands of Lithuanians came to their new cemetery. At that time, few Lithuanians had cars. So most came by foot or took streetcars."



The trust deed of the Lithuanian National Cemetery.



The first grave in the Lithuanian National Cemetery was the grave of cemetery keeper Zaleskis's daughter, Brone.



Volunteers working in the land plot that was purchased for the Lithuanian National Cemetery.



The gates of the Lithuanian National Cemetery.



The gates of the Lithuanian National Cemetery.

Bronius Kazys Balutis, editor of the *Lietuva* newspaper and later, Lithuanian ambassador to Great Britain, described the celebration in detail. He wrote, "It was surprising to witness the before unseen tolerance and respect that Lithuanians of different views showed one another. Attorney Frank P. Bradčiulis delivered a speech; the *Lietuva* Orchestra, conducted by K. Filipavičius, played Vincas Kudirka's "National Anthem"; the Birutė Chorus performed, and following the mayor of Chicago Lee Mathias's speech, the orchestra played "America". After poet and writer Kleofas Jurgelionis's speech, the chorus of the 81st Chapter of the Lithuanian Socialist Union, with the support of the orchestra, played "La Marseillaise". Finally, everybody, accompanied by the same orchestra, sang the well-known religious hymn "God, our savior, and strength". After the program ended, people walked around, selecting plots for their graves. As far as I could see, everyone who visited liked the place and praised the fact that the Lithuanians chose a great location for their National Cemetery. It had many trees, mostly oaks (...) All in all, about 6 thousand or more people came".

The first funeral and the first grave in the Lithuanian National Cemetery was a kind of a statement. Bronė, the first cemetery keeper V. Zaleskis's two-year-old daughter, had already been buried in the St. Casimir's Lithuanian Catholic Cemetery. The parents decided to dig the coffin out and re-bury their daughter's remains in the Lithuanian National Cemetery.

More than 100 years ago, some people thought that the Roman Catholic Church in the United States had

no future and that various national (in the sense of the time, independent) churches would gradually take root in the country. The establishment of national parishes was supported and even encouraged by socialists and compatriots who seemed to contradict their own beliefs. The famous figure of the Lithuanian national revival, a free-thinker Dr. Jonas Šliūpas, when speaking about the Lithuanian nation's need for religion, called on American Lithuanians to establish national Catholic parishes and explained that there is nothing wrong with Lithuanians wanting to have independent churches. According to him, it was important that they would not serve strangers (the Pope of Rome) and would not make them rich.

However, when Fr. Stasys B. Mickevičius, the bishop of the Lithuanian Catholic National Church from Scranton, Pennsylvania, offered to perform the cemetery blessing ceremony and bless the recently purchased bell for free in 1913, only a year after the Cemetery was opened, none of the patrons of the Lithuanian National Cemetery (the founding members) protested or publicly resented the offer. The cemetery was consecrated and the bell was given the name of St. Peter. Until 1917, every year on Memorial Day, priests of Lithuanian national churches were delivering speeches and holding services in the Lithuanian National Cemetery.

It was not easy for the restless Lithuanians to maintain peace, respect for the dead, and tolerance for each other even in their cemeteries. Offended by the inability to establish their order and rules, the priests of the national churches resigned. By no longer agreeing on what the



Memorial Day celebration in the Lithuanian National Cemetery in 1936.

future of newly-independent Lithuania should be, the so-called nationals (*sandariečiai*) separated from the socialists. There were instances of communist and Bolshevik offensives; they even wanted to take over the management of the cemetery and its treasury; nationalists and even Lithuanian fascists who suddenly emerged were furious.

In more than 100 years, the world survived several revolutions and two great wars, and Lithuania has won, lost, and regained its statehood and independence. During the last century, two large and vibrant waves of Lithuanian emigrants came to the United States. More than thirteen and a half thousand Lithuanian sons and daughters found a place of eternal rest in the Lithuanian National Cemetery. Like a mirror of history, this cemetery reflects the path our nation took in the course of over a century. Picture 16

*It is so good to talk to those who are not with us anymore.
They smile forgivingly and they don't disagree with you so
that you would feel calmer and safer.*

*So that you would not fear those that are coming, hiding,
lurking...*

All of what scares you.

*Talk, talk to those who are no longer with us,
They smile soothingly and protect you.*

"Let It Be" by Liūnė Sutema, 1927–2013

To be continued



One of the old grave stones in the Lithuanian National Cemetery, 2020. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

Triple Crown & More!

By Roland Giedraitis



Victor Kubilius at Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, Canada. Photograph by Victoria Kubilius Fortier.

“The world is big and I want to have a good look before it gets dark.” -- John Muir

“I love the simple life.” declares Victor Kubilius. “That’s when I am happiest!” Simple life indeed! Ultra-long distance hiking thousands of miles or literally crisscrossing the North American continent on his bike is his idea of a “simple” life. I’ll try to explain.

The term Triple Crown may be applied in sports such as baseball and horse racing, but here it is in the context of the unique sport of ultra long-distance hiking. When you have walked the Appalachian Trail of 2158 miles from Georgia to Maine, the Continental Divide Trail of 3100 miles from New Mexico to Canada, or the Pacific Crest Trail of 2650 miles from the Mexican border in California to Canada, you can claim the Triple Crown of long-distance hiking. There are only about 400 such royals in the world. This includes our very own Lithuanian Victor (Vytautas) Kubilius, who completed his first long hike at the age of 64.

Victor’s daring lifestyle may not be for everybody. He comments: “These travels were my dream all my life. But I had to wait until retirement to do it all.” Now, at age 89, he has few regrets but many, many joys.

A Korean War veteran, he proudly wears his cap with the usual veteran markings and always a Lithuanian

emblem. Victor’s life story may be familiar to many of you. Born in Lithuania, he escaped the Soviet onslaught in 1944. His family’s wagon was pulled by horses when they left, but these were confiscated at the German border. So they ended up pulling their cart themselves for about 250 miles into the depths of Germany. They ended up in the British zone where they lived in a DP (displaced person) camp until arrival to the U.S. in 1949. He was 18 years old. English lessons and odd jobs followed.

In 1952 he was drafted into the army. He says he actually enjoyed army life because of the physical activities, learning the language, and an accelerated path to U.S. citizenship. He was fortunate not to be sent to combat because he was assigned to army intelligence at Ft. Bragg on account that he spoke four languages: Lithuanian, German, Russian, and English. When discharged, he took advantage of the GI Bill, enrolling in an electronics course. This led to employment by United Technologies in East Hartford, Ct, where he worked for 35 years.

In the meantime, he married my sister, Irene Giedraitis. They had five children: Paul, Victoria, Adam, John, and Peter. As per his daughter, he was a good provider, strict but fair with the children. Even when he worked, he

always found time for sports. Basketball, running, some boxing, but he especially enjoyed dancing. His family also enjoyed frequent outdoor events, like traveling in their camper to places like the Adirondacks in New York state, or Myrtle Beach, S.C. His daughter Vikki became a physical fitness instructor. Even now she likes to accompany her dad, whom she calls "Pappy," on some of his hikes. She also communicates with him on his treks by telephone to make sure he is OK.

Victor started long-distance hiking at a relatively advanced age, but for him, it was not an obstacle. "I always liked to stay in good shape," he said. But it was only on retirement, when his children were grown and he was getting a small pension from UT, that he attempted his first long hike. This was the Appalachian Trail, which he completed in five months in 1996, at age 65. He carries a 30-40 lbs pack, hikes about 10-20 miles per day, depending on the terrain and weather. "I always sleep under the sky," he says, "Unless it is raining or very cold." He likes to hike alone. "With other people," he says, "they are either faster than me, so I cannot keep up, or they are too slow. I like to set my own pace." But he is happy to have temporary company when setting up camp where he almost always tells his life story of his beginnings in Lithuania and the wonders in the U.S. "I love this country," he says, "It has given so much to me."

Here is a partial list of his accomplishments:

Just for fun:

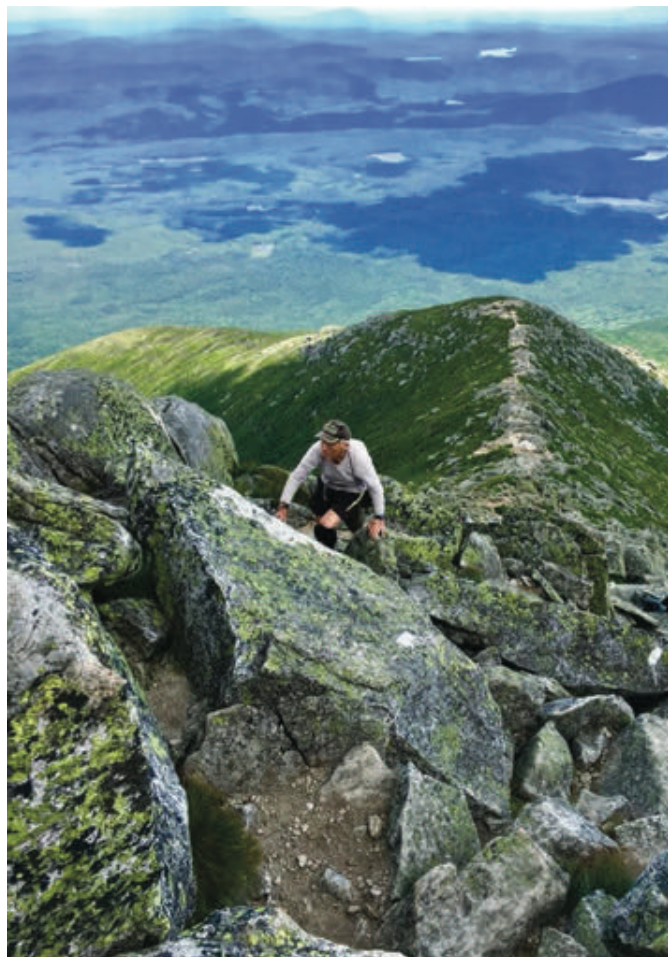
- 1) About 100 10 k (6-mile) runs.
- 2) Competing in 10 (26-mile) marathons. Best time: 3 hrs 4mins.
- 3) Short hikes and bike rides of 100-200 miles, just for practice.

Serious hikes:

- 1) Appalachian Trail (AT), 1996 and repeat in 2018. 2158 miles. Georgia to Maine.
- 2) Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), 1998, 2650 miles. From the Mexico border in California to Canada.
- 3) Continental Divide Trail (CDT), 2002, 3100 miles. From the Mexico border in New Mexico to Canada.

Serious bike rides:

- 1) Myrtle Beach, SC to Canada and back. 2001, 3000 miles. Visited Acadia NP, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island (accessed by ferry)
- 2) New York to Arctic Circle reaching village of Inuisk, then back (partly by ferry) to Washington State, then diagonally across the USA to Myrtle Beach. 9400 miles. Paralleling CDT but on the roads in 2005. 3200 miles.
- 3) Circumnavigation of the USA in 2009. 9800 miles. Florida to Maine to Vancouver, BC, south to San Diego, CA, east to Texas, back to Florida. 5 months. The biggest danger on the road: cars!





now endured an Arctic blast from the North - cold, rain, and sleet. "I was miserable," he recalls. His other scary encounters were grizzly bears in the Yukon. "I see them on the road up ahead. At first, they look like big rocks, but then it moves. I had the safety off my bear repellent, but never had to use it." Black bears were usually easily scared away, he exclaims.

An obvious question is how he gets his food on the trail. No, he does not bring a burro carrying 600 pounds of supplies! He mostly buys his provisions along the way. This was easiest on the AT where every 2-4 days he would walk into a town to get resupplied, spend a night in a motel, enjoy a hot shower, even visit a restaurant. He is a semi-vegetarian avoiding red meat, but on a trail, he admits, "I will eat anything available, even a hamburger." For protein, he likes to eat fish. On one trip he consumed 300 cans of sardines. But the CDT is a bit more intimidating. There are few towns close to the trail and very few hikers. Victor says he once walked four days without seeing a single human. Here pre-placement of supplies is a must. You need to mail or cache provisions on your route. Motels or gas stations accommodate hikers. They hold your goods until you arrive. Sometimes wide detours are needed. There are maps and guides available. Victor now lives in Myrtle Beach, SC, but often visits his daughter, Vikki, who is a ferrière (or farrier who shoes horses) in Connecticut and who accompanied him on parts of his hikes. Victor (he changed his name from Vytas to Victor when getting his U.S. citizenship) Kubilius is an inspiration not only to his four sons and daughter but also to many other people. (His wife and my sister, Irene, died in 2017). He has been written about in local newspapers and on the internet. Who knows what he plans to do next? I do not think he ever plans to take it easy. Even now he walks 10-12 miles per day. He comments, "I like to stay fit."

The AT is the most popular trail. About 3000 people attempt it every year but only about 10% finish. It is crowded at the beginning, but hikers are sparse at the finish. Some divide the hike into several parts, one month at a time, coming back to the same area to continue their march for another month or so. In five years you are done! Usually, it is a South-to-North walk, since Georgia is balmy in March, but it is still frigid at Mt. Katahdin in Maine. In September, when and if you reach your goal, it is pleasant in the North but hot in the South.

"The CDT is the hardest," relates Victor. "Very few people try it. There are grizzlies, fires, and wilderness. In the Red Basin around Wyoming, it was 135 degrees ground temperature. There is no shade, just sagebrush. I got lost even though I had GPS." He was 72 then. Snow and blizzards possible even in summer. A lot of steep terrains.

His worst biking memory was pedaling along the Canadian border from Bar Harbor, Maine, westward. He had just pedaled up from Florida where it was balmy; he



Some final thoughts. Why hike? Why the pain, fatigue, dehydration, hypothermia, heat exhaustion, and misery? Why climb the highest mountains? Why sail the widest oceans? Why memorize long, intricate piano concertos? Why sweat out the grueling MDs and PhDs? Why reach for the stars? The human soul can be unfathomable and insatiable, but we have our reasons for testing our limits, our abilities, and our endurance. Practically, though, if you do hike or bike, do prepare well! Read and research. You may need to quit your job for 6 months and spend \$4000 to \$8000 for training, equipment, and trail expenses. Or you may need to wait till you retire, like Victor Kubilius! I am sure there are hundreds of Lithuanian-Americans who are stretching their limits not only in hiking but multiple other endeavors. Good luck to all! Or as Victor likes to say, "Keep moving!"

Side note: I recently researched commercial guided bike tours. One was from Santa Barbara, California to Jacksonville, Florida. It is about 3200 miles, with motor coach escort and professional guides. Hotels and meals are included. You pedal about 90 miles per day. \$20,000.00 per person, double occupancy. Any takers? This is the luxury version!

My Little Dog Story

Giedrė Kumpikas



I had a little dog – his name was Cachito. That is short for Cacho, which in Argentinian Spanish means “little dear one.”

He was a Chihuahua, chocolate-colored and the man at the pet shop had given him the name “Chocolate” pronounced in the Spanish fashion.

But I thought the name was not elegant enough for him, because he was beautiful – sleek and a golden chocolate color. I didn’t love him very much in the beginning because I wanted a doggie exactly like the one I had just lost, but I realized soon that no two are the same and that I was going to develop a very different relationship with this one.

He was adorable and had from the very beginning a warrior personality. He would run across the room with the intensity and determination of a little rhinoceros when he heard a sound at the door. He defended his territory with all his little might, not an inch would he give. And he had no complex about size. He was the fastest little doggie I had ever seen. He raced across the yard like a brown flash and back again and once he even caught a squirrel!

The early years were stormy. After he reached his first birthday - December 11 – he was a Sagittarius – he began not to like being touched. No more caressing his ears, or his nose or back – his attitude was – “I am a very self-

sufficient, independent personality.” So, I did not touch him but contented myself with sometimes brushing my hand lightly across his silky back. Then he would turn abruptly and growl. I overcame my rejection and accommodated myself to his personality and so we lived. He would trot after me and I would give him his food. As every good little watch doggie, he would accompany me to the door and then greet me when I came home. During the day, I would hear his tags jingling after me, or the patter of his little paws. His nails were always long because to cut them – impossible. It would have been a major battle and enormous stress for both. So, I left them alone and he managed to do his pedicure himself. He was always clean, so there was no bath on his schedule.

I also soon learned that little dogs have very definite food preferences. This one was curiously inclined to be a vegetarian! He loved soups – lentil, cabbage, beet and pea soup, sometimes broccoli, but no barley and absolutely no spinach. Spaghetti, not a chance! Chinese food – absolutely not! Anything with sauces, he rejected. Chicken and rice were his staple diet, but in between, it was soup and sometimes potatoes, especially potato skins. Where he got these Proletariat tastes was a mystery to me. No Brie or any other cheese. Oh yes, he also liked a little warm milk. And, I forgot to mention, I taught him a very bad habit – to have a spoonful of coffee with me in the morning. After all, he was a Mexican doggie from a tropical land.

The mailman – every dog’s mortal enemy!

Waiting for the mail was no ordinary event. It began at about noon. The first stage was to jump up on the bay window and lie in wait. When the mailman barely came into view across the street, the squealing would begin then jumping up on his hind legs, he’d begin to paw the windowpane and squeal even louder. While there was still a curtain on the window, Cachito’s entire little body would be under the curtain, except for the tail and as he jumped, the tail would rise and with it the curtain. And finally, when he felt that the mailman was close, he’d jump off the window seat, run to the door and jump and jump as high as he could to reach the mail slot in the door! When the mail began to appear through the slot, he would rip it out of the mailman’s hand and begin to tear it to shreds! Papers flying! Checks in the air! With rage, he’d grab an envelope with a window between his teeth (he preferred these because they made a crackling sound) and would shake his head back and forth all the while emitting the most ferocious growls! After a few minutes – there was nothing but a pile of mangled mail on the floor and many a check with little teeth marks. It was the most

exciting and anticipated part of the day. After this daily ritual had been performed, he would trot off somewhere quite often with a shred of paper still clinging to his little jaws.

Why didn’t I stop him? Absolutely not. It was too amusing to watch and besides, he had so few pleasures. Although, if I spotted a very important letter about to be destroyed, I would lure it away from him with a noisy envelope and it would be saved. To Cachito, everything was junk mail!

Dramatic scene: Cachito with jabot!

One morning, while I was still in my night robe, a pale mauve silk, he rubbed against me and his tag clip got caught on the hem of the robe. He panicked and started to pull! I panicked and began to pull as well to try to unhook it! No success.

He panicked even more and pulled harder, so I took off my robe and watched it going down the hall into the spare bedroom, but before he had dragged it completely into the room and under the safe haven of the bed, I grabbed the end and closed the door while holding the end through a gnawed out space he had made. Now I must explain about the gnawed-out space: Cachito did not like having doors closed on him so he would fight this every time and attack the side of the door. Through the years, almost all the doors had little teeth marks, but this one had about an inch-wide space because his attacks had been fierce and frequent. Taking advantage of this fortunate gap, I held on to the robe and pulled and pulled.

Finally, I had most of the robe out with Cachito close to the door on the other side and I began to hear choking sounds, so I cut the end of the robe and released my stranglehold on my fighter doggie.

A few minutes later, he came out of the room in a great formal dress: a pink silk jabot under his chin! It was really pretty. He was pretty; the decoration in silk was charming. Lunchtime came. No way to detach the jabot, so in it went into the food dish. After some days, the jabot was no longer as pink, but still firmly attached.

A real dilemma. How to get it off before it became an unsightly rag. Well, the heavens finally took pity on a bewildered owner and a discontented pet, and one day, while rolling around on the bed and scratching at it, the jabot came off by itself! It was a treasure! An unforgettable trophy of a battle of strength and wit, which after being washed, was carefully sewn back on the robe, slightly less pink, and slightly discolored, but still maintaining its perfect bow-like shape.

Cachito and the tarpaulin leggings

I believe I mentioned my doggie was a fighter – no, more precisely, a warrior!

My mother was not well, and I was employing a woman to assist her. She was a very patient and kind woman and got along reasonably well with Cachito because she had been instructed carefully as to what to do, or rather more precisely, what not to do. It was forbidden to cross the hallway in front of the large front closet because that was his hideout. I must mention parenthetically that all Chihuahuas hide. They are very small dogs and constantly on the lookout for danger – other dogs, ill-tempered owners, abusive children. So, he used to hide out frequently in the front closet, sometimes barricading himself there with a pillow. Do not enter! Do not pass in front! If someone forgot and passed this dangerous intersection, he would lunge out of the closet and either an ankle or a calf or any other available part of the unfortunate passer-by would be nipped!

She learned the routine – do not pick up anything from the floor, do not pet him, do not stand nearby when he is eating, and do not pass in front of the closet!

Their relationship was not an easy one, but livable. However, after too many little bite marks on her unlucky legs, she decided to make herself some leggings from very strong tarpaulin. Guaranteed to resist almost any puncture. Excellent precaution. The construction seemed foolproof. But not to my clever little high jumper. How he understood that the leggings were a protection against him I do not know, but one day, he measured the distance to the top of the legging, and with one precise leap, he reached the unfortunate lady's leg just above the covered part and nipped!

Another protection of my mother's invention was wearing winter boots at all times. This was indeed an effective protection but rather uncomfortable in the summer. But both ladies clunked around with them because the alternative was – little teeth! Now, you will be curious as to why I would keep such a wild doggie. Difficult to explain. First of all, he wasn't always on the attack. He was actually nice and very, very amusing, but you had to be careful, always watch where you stepped and not infringe on his territory, and his territory was the entire house. I would avoid crossing any dangerous lines, but sometimes, when I passed too closely to him, he would raise a suspicious eye, but seeing no imminent danger, would relax. So, it was a constant guessing game – who will get there first! If he got there first, he would growl and I would back off, if I got there first, he would look at me with displeasure and walk away.

Cachito and the Orangerie

Plants accumulated in my house. I did not particularly like them, but I could not throw them out or put them outside in the winter to die, so they grew and flourished. I was not inclined towards gardening, inside or out, I just watered them once a day, sometimes too much, but never too little and they all seemed content. The two plants I really loved were a very beautiful, large gardenia, which went outside onto the patio in the summer and was hauled back inside in the winter. The other one was amaryllis, which blossomed once a year, in the summer, ostensibly for my birthday. The others were, if not gifts, then homeless humble little plants. They were placed on assorted small tables in no particular order, some on higher ground others on the floor. It was a mini jungle to be enjoyed by a very small dog, who wandered around this lush territory, sniffing here, sniffing there. When he was still a puppy, he would sometimes eat the soil from the plants leading me to believe that he needed some of the minerals and for this reason, my plants never received any fertilizer. One day, a huge house guest, and I say huge because in comparison to my doggie he was just that, decided to put some order into the placement of the plants and before I could say “watch out!” in went his hand among the foliage and was pulled out sharply with a sound akin to “ouch” and I saw a bloody thumb! Cachito came out from behind a potted plant growling as if to say, “That's what you get for sticking your big thumb in my face!”

Cachito and the food bowl

I mentioned before that you had to be careful in giving him his food. When Cachito was hungry, he would begin circling around my legs, licking his little mouth, sometimes he would raise himself on his two hind legs and scratch at me, clear signs that I had to feed him. The ritual was again rather complicated. Whatever the day's fare was, whether soup or chicken and rice, it was placed into his bowl but then the psychology began – the bowl had to be placed on the floor quickly and the placer had to withdraw just as quickly, because in Cachito's mind, the food that was being so generously given, could just as easily be taken away, so as soon as the bowl was on the floor, he would turn, not in gratitude, but with an angry growl for you to back off and if this was not done quickly enough to suit him, he would attack. One would think that the doggie would now happily enjoy his meal. Not exactly.

The second part of this procedure was the requirement that the human being who had given him the food sit

quietly on a chair, at a safe distance, and watch over him while he ate. Even so, he would periodically turn his head suspiciously and look if there were any threat or imminent danger. And there could be no loud talking while his little majesty ate. If anyone talked too loudly or made an unwanted noise, the eating would stop, and he would bark or even worse!

Cachito and sleeping

Many little dogs sleep with their owners. Actually, many large dogs sleep with their owners as well. Sleeping, like everything else with this complicated little dog, was an adventure. When he was still a puppy, I let him sleep on my bed. However, after some time I became sleepless and began to look haggard. The reason was this: we would fall asleep, then I would want to turn over, but no, I could not because of a solid little weight at my feet or against my leg. If I moved, there would be a sudden growl and the usual bite. This was not the best way to spend the night, constantly thinking and planning every move of your body. This could be done only very gingerly and carefully, sometimes one leg or foot or even toe at a time, and even then, it was risky. I solved this problem by putting a basket on the floor with a folded soft comforter in it. Fortunately, this was to his liking, but the nights were still not quite peaceful.

Even then, when I turned over, or if by some mischance a part of my comforter slid down the side of the bed on him, there was a royal reaction!

Later as he became older, he could no longer jump on the bed because it became too high.

One would think that now there would be peace. Not so. I could reasonably well go to bed and settle in, but if there were any reason to get up, then getting back to bed was a challenge. I never could understand why this stage bothered him. This is what used to happen: After I had gotten up and, let's say, and gone to the bathroom, I would then peer out from behind the door to see where he was. If he was in his basket, then I had to simulate that I was going out of the bedroom into the kitchen or down the hall and then worry about getting back in somehow. If he was not in his basket, that meant he was under the bed lying in wait for a toe or a foot to be reachable. I would then time my movements quickly – two or three large steps to reach the bed and then leap onto it as a fierce growling noise was heard from below!

Then I could breathe a sigh of relief.

One night's challenge overcome.

Cachito and the traveling comforter

As I mentioned, he liked the soft comforter. It was old and not stiff and easily movable. And move it did. Sometimes, as I sat in the kitchen, I would see it traveling down the hall, sometimes I would find it stretched out in the living room in all its old fineness. It was an inexpensive comforter, easily transportable for a very small but strong doggie.

The comforter did not present a moving challenge, but a big heavy bolster seemed impregnable, a rock of Gibraltar. It was one of those big brown bolsters with armrests that people use to sit in their beds and read at night. It was heavy, it was cumbersome and not at all an appealing object for a small dog. But my life with Cachito was full of surprises and one day, I heard a huffing, puffing, straining, and growling and I looked into the hallway to see what was happening – and there was Cachito struggling with the unwieldy bolster and he was winning! The bolster was traveling down the hall in the same direction as the comforter!

Cachito was an incredibly strong doggie, from champion stock, a fighter to the end.

Cachito and the soprano.

One evening there was a rehearsal at my home. A tenor, a soprano, and a pianist were going to rehearse in the den for a performance at the Javits Center. The tenor and the pianist were both familiar with Cachito's idiosyncrasies and personality, but the soprano was not. I suppose most sopranos are divas and many are blonds – this one was blond and temperamental. The evening of this rehearsal, the door to the den or music room had been closed for privacy and, in my opinion, to protect the performers from any foreign onslaught. And then we heard the sounds! And what sounds! The tenor with all his power! The soprano reaching for a high note! Adding the pounding of the piano was too much for Cachito! His little ears had never experienced such piercing noises and he reacted! He barked!

The soprano sang! He barked louder! The soprano sang louder! Then, Cachito not being able to stand the noise any more pushed and barged his way in through the door and attacked the soprano's leg! She screamed: "He just bit me!" but kept on singing only her notes became higher. Before a major war erupted, I managed to get him out of the rehearsal.

One could always count on Cachito to make an appearance and an impression!

Cachito and the blond Indian

Cachito did not like women visitors, but he also did not like all men visitors either. If anyone wants, in reading these reminiscences, to get a Chihuahua as a pet, he, or she, must know that Chihuahuas are not “other dog” dogs, but rather “people dogs” and, with that, very particular about people as well. In all the years that I had this quite individual and unusual doggie, I only saw him fall in love once and that was with Frank. Frank was a young man, very handsome, blond, and of Native American heritage – Cherokee, I believe. He was friendly, generous, and helpful. A very kind young man. Frank lived for a while downstairs and when Cachito used to hear him moving about, he would immediately position himself at the top of the basement stairs (he was afraid to go downstairs) and his whole little body would tremble in anticipation, his tail would wag, he would step from little foot to little foot and when Frank began to climb the stairs, Cachito’s excitement knew no bounds.

Frank could pet him, stroke his back, pull his tail, even tweak his nose! No reaction except a greater wagging of the tail and pure joy! This went on for some months and then Frank met a bad woman and moved out. Cachito would go every day at a certain hour to the top of the stairs and wait, and when Frank did not appear, he would walk off dejectedly. It was a sad sight and yet so moving to see a little dog, who loved another human being so much. Native Americans have a special understanding of animals, of that I am certain. After a while, he stopped going to the landing, but I am also certain that Cachito never forgot Frank.

Frank never came back. Sometime later, he committed suicide.

Cachito and another pianist, or Lady Godiva

Musician visitors were quite frequent in my home. For many years a very talented young violinist lived with me and then he invited a young pianist to come and accompany him for a recital.

She was a stately, lovely and lively young woman with cascades of long blond hair. I gave her the famous rehearsal den in which to sleep. There was a long couch, fairly low to the ground and she seemed quite comfortable sleeping on it. Being a true artist, all her things were scattered all over the floor and one had to step gingerly to avoid crushing any tubes of creams or any of the other small and sundry objects that young women pack when traveling.

This room now became a realm of adventure – unfamiliar smells, unfamiliar things, and all within Cachito’s reach. And explore he did!

One morning I hear a strange sound – a mixture of “ah” and “ouch”. The door to the den had been pushed open by my inveterate explorer and he was on his hind legs with his front paws entangled in a mass of long flowing blond hair, which was hanging down the side of the couch.

She had been sleeping on her stomach and her hair had been cascading down to the floor. Cachito had never seen such a golden phenomenon and it had been too much to resist – so he plunged into it! It took a while to disentangle them but, once again, he had discovered the beauty of the unknown.

Cachito and the unlucky tenor

This was the same tenor who had experienced the attack on the temperamental soprano. He was staying downstairs in the basement and had settled in comfortably. There were closets, but invariably full of old unwanted clothing, sad reminders of days gone by but yet not quite ready to bid their final farewell to a home they had known. So, the tenor, being a good sport, hung his clothing, among which was a brand-new suit, on a clothesline directly under the upstairs hallway.

Sometime before this new musical visitor graced my now famous artistic basement I had removed the wall-to-wall carpeting in the hallway. In so doing, there appeared a small space between the last wooden floorboard and the molding. As I may have mentioned sometime before, my doggie made his own rules and had been difficult to train and, at times, downright disobedient.

One evening, I suddenly heard the tenor running up the stairs exclaiming that there was water dripping from my floor and that there must be a leak. I immediately suspected what had happened, but tried not to react, halfway hoping that it was not true. Cachito had just innocently exited the hallway. What the little rascal had done was to let a stream of his own making down through the crack by the wall and right onto the shoulder of the tenor’s new suit! What to do!

“Oh, that little devil!” wailed the tenor! “I have a recital tomorrow!” Fortunately, the dry cleaner was nearby and managed to repair the damage and, if one did not have a very good nose, one might hopefully not notice.

Cachito and the piano

When he was still a puppy and you could lift him up in the palm of your hand, a violinist friend of my violinist nephew came to visit and see the new doggie.

As I said, this doggie was not lacking in personality and immediately began flirting with the two young musicians.

Suddenly, the friend scooped Cachito up and set him down on the piano keys! And there was the little musician stepping lightly with his little paws over one chord, then another, each time surprised at the sounds he was producing and delighting the mischievous young violinists. I suggested they compose a “Cachito Concerto,” but they did not, although they should have since the melodious sounds produced by Cachito were far more pleasant than some of the strident, atonal music written these days - music not fit for the ears of man or God.

Cachito guarding the bathroom door

Ah, to be a guest in my home was full of perils! As one entered my house, one came into a small foyer containing the famous front closet, then, to the right was a large, long living room where I normally received my guests. If, however, one went to the left, one would come to a hallway where, contiguous to the front door, there was a guest bathroom. Most guests were greeted at the door with the usual canine effusion, after which, they were allowed to sit and socialize while Cachito remained on watch for any untoward movements, loud noises, or anything unfamiliar and threatening.

Frequently, he would go into the front closet and guard from there. The difficulty arose when a guest wanted to use the aforementioned bathroom. Cachito would immediately position himself in front of the door and with a ferocious growl guard the entrance. If the guest were familiar with this little Cerberus, he would dash into the bathroom and would quickly close the door and worry about exiting later. Rarely was the exit not stormy. No sooner did the bathroom door open, than Cachito would lunge at the poor intruder with all the power of his little body! And I almost always had to intervene and lure him away with his security pillow. This, of course, would be repeated with almost every guest. After some time, my doggie became famous, or perhaps I should say infamous and less courageous visitors became infrequent. I must, however, mention that not all guests were deterred



by this guard-dog approach. Some used clever doggie psychology and succeeded in getting around his military tactics by simply standing still and then moving ever so slightly out of the bathroom with reassuring phrases of “Good boy! Good boy!”

Loves and hates of a little dog

I mentioned before that Cachito loved Frank. But, he also hated. There is something in the chemistry of a dog, or perhaps of any animal, that instinctively draws them to one human and repels them from another. Cachito hated my cousin Al and even more so, his girlfriend.

No sooner would Al come through the door than the barking would start and would not stop until I put my

little dog in his room. There he would bark until he became tired but as soon as he heard Al moving about or heard a louder exclamation of some sort the barking would begin again. That was because Al was not a very nice man and not an animal lover to boot.

Now, his girlfriend for some reason inspired the greatest animosity I had ever seen in my little one. She came in, he barked, she sat down, he barked, she sat at the dinner table, he got under the table and barked, she moved her foot, he growled and attacked her shoe!

She was also not a very nice woman.

How Cachito knew the character of these two people will always be a mystery to me.

But he also loved instantly. I had a rather rotund, portly friend named Ron, who was a dog lover and had a German shepherd. One day he came to visit. He entered, the doggie looked at him did not utter a sound, sniffed his shoes and as Ron sat down, up jumped Cachito on his round soft lap and settled in comfortably!

Ron was not the only one that Cachito liked – there was also Dave, and Michael and some others with whom he felt an instant bond. Since I am not a dog psychiatrist, I cannot analyze his likes and dislikes, but I have become certain that dogs understand people much more quickly than we do, and all this without expensive psychological training. Their little inner barometers measure precisely the moods and emotions of humans as they read inner thoughts. Oh, Cachito, you were such a clever little mind reader!

Cachito and the birthday cake

It was summer and my birthday. I invited my niece and a friend to have some champagne and cake to celebrate. We placed the champagne and the cake on a round glass-top coffee table in the living room. The tabletop was only attached to the base by a large brass knob in the middle and would turn if one wished, almost like a lazy Susan. At first, Cachito was confused. He would stand under the glass portion of the table and would try to reach whatever he could see on top. This, however, proved to be fruitless and frustrating. But being a clever doggie, he soon realized that if he stood up on his hind legs and put his little front paws on the edge of the glass top, he could indeed reach certain goodies or at least sniff them.

And so, on that birthday afternoon, he was circling around under the table, waiting. He knew that food on this table meant a special event. The champagne glasses were placed, the cake was aglow with lit candles and suddenly, my doggie hopped on his hind legs, saw the flames, sniffed the air, and in so doing sneezed and blew out five birthday candles! Laughter! Delight! He might

have been the only doggie ever to make a birthday wish!

Rustling leaves...

Red, gold, burnt orange, yellow... all the blazing colors of fall! And in the middle, under a very old majestic oak tree in a carpet of rustling, crackling foliage, a small brown head would appear, then disappear. Then, with a leap, like a small doe, appear again only to disappear once again in the shimmering hues of fallen leaves. Cachito had discovered fall. And what a discovery! He did not know if he should run through this carpet of colors, hide in it, bound up and down a joyful discovery as only a little dog in the delight of youth could feel!

Flying leaves cascading around a racing flash of chocolate brown! Back and forth and back and forth! Ah, Cachito, your exuberance was contagious, and I cannot look at falling leaves without sadness...

First snow...

At the ripe age of one, Cachito experienced his first snowfall. He stepped to the sill of the back door and looked, then he sniffed the air. Unfamiliarly cold. What to make of it? There was a small snowdrift by the door, not very deep, just even with the sill. He gingerly stepped forth and down he went! Fright! Confusion!

What could this new matter be?

But being of a brave and curious nature, he got up, shook himself, and found the snow not unpleasant but where were the steps down to the yard? Everything seemed even and white. As curious as he was, he was almost a very cautious little dog. Whatever was unfamiliar was judiciously avoided. So, he stood on the patio as snowflake after snowflake fell on his nose and melted. He licked some of them, blinked to clear his eyelids, and as his coat became covered with a lovely white glow, he finally decided that warmth was better than cold, and leaving a small circle of trampled snow with tiny footprints, hopped up and sought his favorite sunny spot on the living room carpet.

A touch of autumn gray...

And then, the inevitable happened. Cachito began to age. Little by little, and very slowly at first because, after all, he was a small dog, and small dogs are supposed to live longer, but little by little I began to notice some gray on his small nose, then above his eyebrows, a bit around his ears, and finally his deep, rich chocolate color began

to become lighter and interspersed with gray. He did not chase the squirrels as much, nor did he take flying leaps off the patio to chase them. As the years went on, the squirrels no longer ran when they saw him, and he pretended not to see them because in his little heart he probably knew he would not catch them, and it was safer to ignore them haughtily.

He used to wait for me on the bay window, which furnished a wide perspective of the street. I noticed that he began to have difficulty jumping up onto the window seat, so I placed a large pouf on the floor to facilitate his ascent. He got used to that and for some years this suited him.

Then, one day, he looked at the pouf, measured the height, and slowly walked away. It was heartbreaking. I took some cushions from other couches and created a pyramid-type ascent of graduated steps, but this construction seemed precarious to him and was rejected. On some days, he would still however climb up on the pouf and standing on his hind legs, peer through the window and bark at a lonely passer-by. He began to sleep more and no longer wanted to fetch the ball thrown him with the invitation of "Cachito, let's play." Then he would look dejectedly at me and walk away.

However, there were sunny days still. The process was so gradual, that we both grew into it. I accepted the new, calmer little dog, and he was grateful while still maintaining his supreme independence. Nonetheless, I felt his insecurity growing with the years. He would sit closer by me, even lean against my leg, which he never used to do before. His eyesight began to fail. He began to bump into doorframes, into furniture legs. One day, I had let him out into the yard, but he wanted to go in before I did. No sooner had I let him in, than I heard a large noise and then a cry! Cachito had gone into the kitchen and as he walked to the hall to go into the bedroom, he stepped through the basement door and fell twelve steps straight down! As I ran down in a panic fearing that he had broken a leg or even worse, I saw the ever-valiant Cachito standing at the foot of the stairs, dazed and wondering where he was and what had happened to him. I scooped him up with his pillow and carried him back up the stairs, his little body trembling, his heart pounding. The whole day, I watched him carefully to see if he did not show any signs of internal bleeding or other damage. But, although dazed and shaken, he survived that experience without a trip to the doctor.

Attack!

About six months before Cachito fell down the stairs into the basement, on a sunny June day, he was outside

in the yard, patrolling his territory, when a very big and violent neighbor's dog jumped the fence into our yard and attacked Cachito! I screamed as I saw the huge jaws of this mastiff-like canine go around my little doggie's head! I ran down the steps as the neighbor jumped over the fence to control his dog! I thought for certain that Cachito had been killed! But no sooner, had the dog released his grip than Cachito got up, jumped up the two steps onto the patio, and ran inside. He ran into the darkest part of the closet and sat there shaking for a long time. I saw some blood on his leg, but it did not look like an open wound, so I decided that subjecting him to more stress by taking him to the vet was not wise. Cachito recovered. But after this incident, he became very fearful of the yard. Finally, he stopped going out altogether.

Although it was summer, for Cachito deep autumn was in the air. He began to cough. He lost his appetite. Even lentil soup did not tempt him. A visit to the doctor. Enlarged heart. Lasix. He improved dramatically. He regained his appetite and the mail began to fly again. But then, one day in late July, as we both sat in the living room, he at my feet, he heard the mailman at the door! All the old instincts revived, and he dashed for the door to grab the mail! Too much for his little heart. I heard an unusual and unfamiliar sound. I cried: "Cachito!" He was lying on his side, then got up, took a few steps into the front closet, found no solace there, then staggered into the study, lay down, took a few short breaths and closed his eyes forever. "Cachito!"

"Cachito!" My little warrior was now in his own Valhalla! He was a valiant doggie and he received a funeral fit for a Viking!

But now, I hear no more jingling of his tags as he trotted behind me, no little snores at night, just silence and emptiness in a house formerly so full of the presence of one little dog. The mail lies inert where dropped, the squirrels run about unchallenged, and the large oak tree no longer harbors the shadow of one very small dog. Small creatures, yet so much love, so much personality, such large hearts. Do dogs have a soul? I am told not, and yet, and yet, how can they not, when they feel our moods, understand our thoughts when they become part of our soul. Perhaps someday, when man reaches a higher evolutionary plane, we will understand this bond between human and animal and discover that of the two, the nobler by far is the animal species. Good night Cachito, my little warrior.

Giedre Kumpikas
East Hampton, NY
October 26, 2009
c. 2009

current events

Security

...The Lithuanian Ministry of National Defense has purchased a number of counter-unmanned aircraft systems (C-UAS), drone detectors, and radiofrequency sensors. The Danish MyDefence Communications Wingman 105 is a small handheld/wearable drone detector for use by special operations forces. It includes wider operating temperatures and lighter weight than its predecessor, the Wingman 100. It can detect drones at ranges in excess of 1 km and can be networked to the U.S. DOD Android Tactical Assault Kit for command-and-control.



...The Lithuanian Navy is buying a retired Royal Navy minesweeper (HMS Quorn) and will upgrade it with new Thales 2193 wide-band sonar and Thales M-CUBE Mine Countermeasure Management System. It will join two similar vessels acquired in 2008 and commissioned in 2013. The ship is crewed by 47 sailors and includes a 30 mm Mark 2 gun, 2 miniguns, and 3 general-purpose machine guns to combine both mine warfare and maritime patrol missions.

...In a notice to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Lithuania joined the U.S. and the U.K. in condemning Russia's "borderization" in Georgia and, specifically, its political attacks on the U.S. built Lugar Center in Tbilisi which is named after former Indiana Senator Richard Lugar. Based on 1997 and 2002 agreements between Georgia and the U.S., construction of the Lugar Center began in 2004 and opened in 2013 and is part of Georgia's National Center for Disease Control under Georgia's Health Ministry. By using genetic sequencing, the Lugar Lab is capable of identifying the origin of certain cases of COVID-19 by tracking genetic changes in the virus. Similar to Russia and its proxies' occupation of parts of Ukraine (Crimea and eastern Ukraine), currently Russia occupies about 20% of Georgia, including erecting unauthorized fences by the

Russian FSB near 12 Georgia villages in the Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions. Republican Senator Lugar was honored by President Obama with the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his work in reducing weapons of mass destruction, including the dismantling of 7600 Soviet-era nuclear weapons.

...Rytis Rainys, head of Lithuania's National Cyber Security Center, said that Chinese CCTV camera manufacturers Hikvision and Dahua have security vulnerabilities that allow easy remote access and their use for surveillance. The U.S. stopped using these cameras because of this vulnerability. In Lithuania, they have been used in the VIP Protection Department, Public Security Service, Police Department, Migration Department, State Border Guard Service, and the state-owned air navigation service provider, Oro Navigacija.

...On May Day, NATO forces, including a nuclear submarine, support ships, two American destroyers, a long-range maritime patrol aircraft, and a British frigate, moved into the Norwegian Sea to practice their sub-hunting skills of Russian targets. On May 4, some ships, joined by another destroyer, moved into the Barents Sea north of the ice-free Russian port of Murmansk and were greeted by the Russian Navy which announced their intention of conducting live-fire exercises in the Barents Sea. The NATO forces departed on May 8. One purpose of the excursion was "to assert freedom of navigation" as Russia has been imposing rules on ships that wish to transit the Northern Sea Route passage between the Atlantic and Pacific that is becoming increasingly navigable via global warming. Murmansk competes with the Lithuanian port of Klaipeda for the future of ice-free shipping.

COVID-19

...When life gives you lemons, make lemonade. Lithuanian designer Julija Janus launched a Mask Fashion Week which culminated in 21 billboards around Vilnius featuring pictures of local artists, musicians, people chosen at random from the streets, and even the Mayor of Vilnius, Remigijus Šimašius. Some of the masks are home-sewn; others are decorated surgical masks. One of the subjects was Sandra Bružaitė who goes outside in a full costume dressed as a medieval plague doctor, which includes a leather beak believed to protect from disease. The Vilnius Mask Fashion Week was mentioned by NPR host, Noel King.

...According to the Lithuanian police, the number of

homicides in Lithuania increased by 120% between the March 10 lockdown and early May, compared to last year (10 in 2019 vs. 22 in 2020), due to alcohol consumption and “immediate social environment”. Conversely, the aggregate level of crime declined by more than 7% including a decrease of thefts by 17%.

...The Lithuanian government has allocated 100,000 euros to purchase Lithuanian made PPE’s for Pennsylvania healthcare workers in appreciation of the 27 years of cooperation with the PA National Guard including summer training at Indian Town Gap in PA.

...European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen proposes Next Generation grants and loans of 153 billion euros for Italy, 149.3 billion euros for Spain, 78 billion euros for France, 64.5 billion euros for Poland, and the Baltic nations: 6.8 billion euros for Lithuania, 5.3 billion euros for Latvia, and 2.3 billion euros for Estonia. It is anticipated that the money will come from borrowing rather than increased taxes and that 2/3 of the distribution will be in the form of grants and 1/3 will be loans.

At the end of May primary schools are allowed to resume teaching in classrooms and higher and professional education are allowed to resume classes for courses that cannot be held remotely.

Starting in September, families in Lithuania will be able to home-school their children in accordance with educational curricula for pre-primary, primary, basic, or secondary levels as long as they sign an agreement with a school designated by their municipality and meet certain requirements. It is estimated that it will cost an additional 76,600 euros this year to pay for teachers to monitor the program and 230,000 to monitor it next year.

...Mission Siberia, the annual expedition to tend to the graves of Lithuanian deportees and political prisoners, has been canceled due to COVID-19. Although the mission is 15 years old, in the last two years it was denied visas by the Russian embassy to Lithuania but they arranged to travel to Kazakhstan. They are preparing fundraising, etc. for a post-COVID-19 trip in 2021.

...COVID-19 has impacted the budget with a revenue shortfall of up to 1.5 billion euros of the full-year target of 9.5 billion euros and 11.5 billion euros including EU funds. Initially, the shortfall was due to tax deferrals but now it is compounded by a deterioration in corporate performance.

The latest Lithuanian status on COVID-19 is that there were 1675 cases, 1236 recovered, and 70 deaths. Two cases came from abroad – one had arrived from Sweden and one came from the UK. Two medical workers were

infected – one worked at the Santara clinic in Vilnius and one worked in Ignalina in northeastern Lithuania.

Business

...Revolut, the London based digital financial firm with 25 offices and 12 million customers worldwide, is expanding its service by opening a full-service bank in Lithuania. In 2017 it opened an office in Vilnius and now has 170 employees. It received its European bank license in 2018 from the European Central Bank and the Bank of Lithuania. As a full-service bank, it will accept direct deposit paychecks, offer consumer loans and credit cards and customers’ deposits will be protected by Lithuania’s Deposit and Investment Insurance. It plans on opening Revolut Junior accounts for children 7-17 which would allow them to manage their own accounts with parental oversight.

...A Florida based developer of cloud computing solutions-CAST AI has selected Vilnius as its only hub outside the U.S. and plans to have 100 employees in the next 3 years. Established at the end of 2019, it has raised \$4.8 million to resolve the problem with 81% of users running multiple clouds with several providers without simultaneous synchronization and seamless solutions. CAST AI allows organizations to deploy and automatically optimize applications across any combination of cloud providers, such as Azure and AWS. One of CASTAI’s original investors is Fred Sorkin, co-founder of Hummingbird, one of Canada’s largest software firms, who emigrated from Lithuania in the 1970s. It is led by a group of experienced serial entrepreneurs.

...The United Arab Emirates’ Growmore Group, an investment and financial services firm, has acquired Medicinos Bankas UAB, a retail bank in Lithuania with 51 branches with assets of \$395 million. The Growmore Group has businesses in the UAE, UK, India, Switzerland, and the Caribbean. Medicinos Bankas will continue its primary focus on lending for small and medium enterprises (SME), personal banking services, and agricultural lending. SME’s comprise 99% of businesses in the EU and have special considerations regarding funding for research and fewer requirements or reduced fees for EU administrative compliance.

...The Bank of Lithuania has reached the end of its third and final stage of a blockchain-based “sandbox” that allowed companies to trial innovative financial products. The developers of LBChain, IBM Polska, and TietoEVERY will present their solutions which were used by 11 financial

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firms from 8 countries to test more than 10 different products and solutions in a controlled environment combining regulatory and various technological infrastructures.

...Although Vilnius Airport never closed (it always handled cargo flights), it is now receiving passenger flights from Germany's national airline, Lufthansa, with newly implemented safety standards. Passengers will not be allowed to bring liquids on a plane that exceed 70% alcohol.

General

...The Lithuanian public broadcaster, LRT, has investigated allegations that the Transport Minister, Jaroslav Narkevič had his (or his parents') house renovated for free in exchange for municipal contracts to renovate schools in Vilnius and Trakai, where the house is located. Aleksandras Ribnikovas, the former owner of the now-bankrupt contractor, Sodžiaus Būstas, made the allegations to the LRT team as they checked court documents, public bids, archives, and interviews with 30 sources. Ramūnas Karbauskis, Chairman of the ruling Farmers and Greens Union, has pushed for political oversight of the LRT but the Seimas has countered with an amendment that established an independent committee to oversee the work of the LRT, which is affiliated with the widely respected investigative group, the OCCRP (Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project). Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis opined that "I see no scandal. I see fairytale". The Special Investigation Service has launched a pre-trial investigation.

Lithuania has become an Observer of the 21-member Biobanking and BioMolecular Research Infrastructure Consortium which will enable researchers to gain access to a wide collection of biosamples prepared under standardized protocols and procedures and enhance breakthroughs in molecular biology. Participation will be coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the computer node will be hosted by the National Cancer Institute in Vilnius. Headquartered in Graz, Austria, the consortium brings together more than 600 biobanks from across Europe and covers ethical, legal, and societal issues, quality management, and IT solutions to search collections and request access.

...A Lithuanian couple was arrested in Spain for holding 8 fellow Lithuanians as virtual slaves in a fruit picking operation in Valencia. The victims, aged 29-44, were kept in isolation and their wages were siphoned off by the gang leaders. The company employing the workers

provided information and documentation to the Spanish Guardia which enabled authorities to arrest the traffickers and exploiters.

...Lithuania and Belarus have signed an agreement on early notification of any nuclear accident and exchange of information on nuclear facilities and activities. Belarus is loading nuclear fuel in the first of two Russian designed Astravyets units 50 km from Vilnius. Lithuania is decommissioning its twin-unit Ignalina plant, 110 km northeast of Vilnius. The plant has the same design as the infamous Chernobyl plant in Ukraine near Belarus which lacked sufficient intrinsic safety features and proper containment buildings.

...During a 6 week period in April – May, 61 tons of Polish poultry was rejected by the Lithuanian State Food and Veterinary Service as being contaminated with Salmonella bacteria. Nearly 100 warnings were issued via the multi-country Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed regarding chilled and frozen Polish poultry. In 2018, the EU produced about 15.2 million tons of poultry with Poland as the main producer at 2.5 million tons (16%). Of 18 batches of poultry that were recently assessed from Poland, Romania, and Hungary, 5 were rejected which included 3 from Poland, and 1 each from Romania and Hungary.

...After the Eurovision Song Contest finale was called off because of COVID-19, in Germany, a smaller-scale program with live performances was held in Hamburg in front of empty seats at the Elbphilharmonie concert hall. With finalists from 10 countries, including Denmark, Iceland, and Lithuania the Lithuanian band, The Roop, won the views voting with its popular song, "On Fire".



Lithuanians in the USA Celebrate the Lithuanian State Day

Lithuanian State Day is a national holiday observed on July 6. On this day, Lithuanians honor the coronation of Mindaugas, who became the first king of a unified Lithuania in 1253, bringing the Baltic people together under his leadership. In 2003 Lithuanians celebrated the 750th anniversary of his crowning with a series of cultural activities, including operas, folk music concerts, folk dance performances, parades, and festivals.

Mindaugas founded the first independent Lithuanian state in 1240. Fearing that Lithuania would be unable to withstand attacks from neighboring groups, Mindaugas sought help from the Teutonic Knights, a religious military order that had established power in the southeastern Baltic region. In gratitude for their support, Mindaugas became a Roman Catholic in 1251. He is generally credited with bringing Christianity to the country for the first time, although the people of the Baltic region eventually rebelled against their compulsory Christian conversion, and many returned to pagan beliefs following his assassination in 1263.

On July 6, Lithuanians sing the national anthem all around the world simultaneously to express Lithuanian global unity. This initiative was born in 2009 during Lithuania's millennial anniversary of being mentioned in written history.

Approximately 2.8 million Lithuanians live in Lithuania, while 1.5 million live abroad, mostly in Great Britain, Norway, the U.S.A., Canada, Argentina, Brazil, and Australia.



The Los Angeles chapter of the Lithuanian Community celebrated July 6th and sang the national anthem by the St. Casimir's Church.



Lithuanians in Chicago celebrated July 6th by sailing their boats in the Chicago River and singing the Lithuanian national anthem. Photo by Karile Vaitkute.



The Marquette Park chapter of the Lithuanian Community sang the national anthem by the Blessed Virgin Mary Church. Photo by Karile Vaitkute.



Consul General Mantvydas Bekešius sings the Lithuanian national anthem together with Chicago Lithuanians sailing in the Chicago River. Photo by Sandra Scedrina, Studio Light.

our community



In celebration of Lithuanian Statehood Day, the Lithuanian national anthem was sung in Vilnius, Lithuania.

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DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
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