

bridges



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from the editor

Dear readers,

The year is slowly starting to come to an end. It's been a difficult year for everyone. Not only the Lithuanian community in the United States but, it seems, the entire world. It's been difficult for many reasons, and the COVID-19 pandemic made it even harder to bear. While suffering on may different levels emotionally, economically, socially, physically, in many instances, many of us realized how divided we are. This divisiveness has come to the surface, it has become visible, and it is very painful. It hurts to see on the news and social media people demonstrate their frustration in quite aggressive ways. I believe the times have shown to all of us that what we lack is empathy, what we lack is time to stop to read, to delve deeper, to understand, to interpret, and think critically.

In the September issue of Bridges, we had an article about race in which several mostly young Lithuanian Americans expressed their thoughts on the Black Lives Matter movement. Talking about race has prompted some of our readers to express their opinion and disapproval of such articles. Others wrote that they would try to read the article and delve into the issues more deeply. Others offered some advice. The response we have received shows that we do care about issues that are hurting us. I would like to emphasize again that the Lithuanian American Community is a non-political organization, and Bridges does not stand on either side. The article on Black Lives Matter is not the official position of the Lithuanian American Community as an organization. It cannot be because, simply, LAC is not a political organization. We do not urge anyone to belong to one or another party or political movement. Bridges is a publication that tries to mirror what members of our community in the United States are engaged in, what their thoughts on various pressing matters are, and what their actions are. We welcome all the opinions from all sides. I would like to once again thank those readers who have become writers and who offer Bridges articles about their own life experiences, about their friends, about the Lithuanian community, and the Lithuanian schools. Thank you again, and I encourage every one of you to write to Bridges, share your opinions, and share your stories. It will all help us understand one another better. Everyone is entitled to his or her opinion. I believe in a strong community in which everyone is welcome. I believe that we will overcome these difficult times and we will emerge stronger, more understanding, and more empathetic.

I wish you beautiful fall days. Let the month of November bring peace to you and your homes.

Karilė Vaitkutė
Editor



Lithuanian Californians who Loved the Sea

By Roland Giedraitis

Lithuanian sailors in Tonga. Sailing on a bareboat catamaran: Juozas Venckus, Loretta Mulokas, Rūta and Rimas Mulokas; Jūratė Venckus, Danutė Giedraitis, and Dainius Mulokas.

“The sea, once it casts its spell, holds one in its net forever.” - Joseph Conrad

It was not hard to find kindred spirits who loved the sea. The sea is a magnet, a challenge, a beauty that stirs to a wild frenzy and then reposes to a calmness that soothes the soul. No wonder that from ancient times to modern days sailors savored the challenge of the sea. Its the unknown, hint of adventure, man against nature or man nurturing nature that seduces us mortals to venture out into the ocean.

Here, in southern California, and I am sure in other areas of the USA, there were always souls that loved recreational sailing. In Los Angeles, we are lucky to have Catalina Island some 30 miles away that makes it an ideal destination for weekend sailors. Also, an almost yearlong excellent climate promises sailing the whole year, not seasonal.

A contingent of Lithuanian Californians answered the siren’s call. Start with sailing lessons, then crew on a larger sailboat, try some solo sailing, learn seamanship and navigation, then with increasing confidence you feel like you could sail around the world!

All of us were amateurs. We were architects, builders, dentists, engineers, physicians, some still students. Lithuanian was our primary language but all were solid citizens of the US, some having served in the army as enlisted men or officers. None were in the navy. In our Lithuanian community, we were scout leaders, teachers in the Saturday School program, church lecturers, choir, and various committee members. But all of us loved the sea.

I would like to narrate some of our experiences. It was our third trip to the Caribbean on a bareboat. A bareboat, by the way, is a way to rent a boat for a week or two in various exotic places around the world. You get the boat, say in the British Virgin Islands, pay a fee, and off you go. It is fully provisioned with food and beverages to last you the length of your voyage. Of course, the owners check out your sailing credentials. They don’t release a \$100,000 motorized sloop to just anybody.

During this sojourn, the four of us, Rimas and Rūta Mulokas and Roland and Danutė Giedraitis were veterans of sailing in the Bahamas and the Virgin Islands. We were

now on our third day of hugging the coastline of Belize, some 10 miles offshore southeast of Dangriga. I was at the helm. Smooth sailing until swoosh! the sailboat stopped with the sails full. What's going on? We quickly realized that we hit a hidden sandbar. Our inboard motor would not budge us out of our predicament. The sun is setting, light rain is falling, and here we are in a strange ocean far from land, and not another boat in sight. What do we do?

Our sloop was equipped with a two-way radio. We surmised our approximate position then checked our sailing manual. We noticed, now that darkness was enveloping us, that far on the horizon on a small island, a light is shining. There is hope! We guessed it is the South Water Caye (island). They advertise that they monitor channel 8 on the radio. So we spoke:

Us: "South Water Caye, this is sailboat Mariposa, come in! South Water Caye, this is sailboat Mariposa, come in please!" (no response, but we kept trying.)

Finally a response: "South Water Caye to Mariposa, good evening! What can we do for you? Are you trying to make a dinner reservation on our island?"

Us: "No, but that can be arranged. We are stranded on a sandbar and need your help. Then we would be happy to enjoy dinner. What are you serving tonight?"

South Water: "We are serving BBQ beef. How many of you are there? And would you spend the night at our hotel?"

Us: "There are four of us. And yes we will spend the night. By the way, what about our rescue?"

South Water: "Yes, we can send a longboat over. But where are you? I can't see any sailboat or any lights!"

At this point, Rimantas grabbed his camera and started flashing. We soon got a response that they have a bearing on us. We were weary and delightfully relieved.

A longboat with three dark-skinned natives arrived soon enough. They placed a rope on our boat and started pulling with their powerful motor. Soon we were free of the sandbar. One of the locals stayed with us as a pilot who guided us to their island which seemed like heaven to us. Yes, we enjoyed a communal dinner on the island then gladly collapsed in our hotel beds at the Blue Marlin Lodge.

In the morning, we planned to hop aboard our sloop to continue our journey south. But the island was so beautiful, tranquil, so inviting that we decided to stay one more night. It was about the size of a football field. Abundant palm trees shaded us while tropical flowers enhanced the atmosphere. Actually, the hotel and pier was a scuba diving and fishing base. We promised ourselves that we would return.

On our return trip, we hit another sandbar. Belize is known for its shallows. I am just glad we did not hit a coral reef which would have been disastrous for the boat



Roland and Dana Giedraitis near South Water Caye, Belize.

and us. This time, we were very close to the base. Again we radioed for assistance. Within half an hour a speedboat arrived which shortly freed us. Time to fly back to Los Angeles.

Not all of our sailings were smooth and romantic. One of the Lithuanian community's notable sailing enthusiasts was Saulius Lišauskas. He owned a midsized sloop named Vaiva docked in San Diego. Saulius was a great sailor but a bit of a no-nonsense-lets-do-it-by-the-book type. One trip he enjoyed was a sailboat race from Newport Beach to Ensenada, Mexico. My brother-in-law, Romas Venckus, and I were invited as part of his crew. The race, an overnighter, was basically routine. Out of 450 boats participating in the race, we came in 240th or so. No big deal. We had a good time with some tequila, corona, and fish tacos in Ensenada. Two crew members, Vytas Burokas and Jonas Talandis opted to return home by auto, their wives picking them up. That left only Romas, Saulius, and me to sail the boat back to San Diego, a distance of about 90 miles. The wind would be against us.

We started out late in the afternoon. All of us were tired. We tried to be heroic so we tacked deeper into the Pacific than necessary, about 30 miles seaward. The waves started to get bigger and the wind stronger. Saulius, our captain, ordered us to don life jackets. Why? Its windy, stormy, and we need to reef the sail! Romas and I both



Dana Giedraitis relaxing in South Water Caye, Belize after the sandbar rescue.



Rūta, Rimas Mulokas and Dana Giedraitis near South Water Caye, Belize.

tried to keep the boat steady into the wind while Saulius tried to lower the sail for reefing. Neither Romas nor I were able to hold the boat straight enough for Saulius to do his job. He swore at us. Basically, the hell with you guys! We lowered the sail completely so we could motor our way home in the middle of the night. Not very honorable, but we made it back to port. Saulius would not speak to us afterward for over a year.

A less dramatic minor incident happened in the Bahamas waters when we were bareboating a ketch. The crew was Rimas and Rūta Mulokas and Roland and Danutė Gied-

raitis. It was our second day of sailing so we anchored by Green Turtle Cay. We were having a peaceful dinner aboard when Rūta let out a scream. A rat! How did she come aboard? Never mind. Early next morning we docked near a village where we were able to procure a rat trap. I had the honor of baiting it. A bit of sailing during the day, then evening, then waiting for the snap of the trap. Yep! Just before sunrise, a snap and a high soprano screech of soulful mourning. We got the rat. Now what do we do? It was being held down on its leg by that thick wire of the trap. I tried to open the trap to remove the rat. But it was defiant! It glared menacingly at me. Yes, I was afraid of being bitten in the hand. Throw the damn trap with the rat overboard, yelled Rimas. So I did. We were a couple of miles from shore. Perhaps the rat floundered over to the island, bit off its leg, and lived a three-legged life of a pirate rat. Anyway, no more rat nonsense for the rest of the sail.

There were about 15-20 Lithuanian sailors with various degrees of skills and interests. Some just wanted to come along for the ride to do some fishing but also help out as needed. Raise or lower the sail. Set and retrieve the anchor. Hold the steering wheel on a proper bearing. Execute maneuvers when changing tack (direction). We would have a quick snack on our trip to Two Harbors on Catalina Island, then take our dinghy or shore boat to the dock. There we would beeline to the Harbor Reef restaurant (there was only one). Two

Harbors was quaint because you felt you have arrived on a South Pacific island. There is a narrow stretch of land so that in less than a mile you can walk over to the other side of the island which opened up with palms around a bay. Indeed, this is where the original Mutiny on the Bounty was filmed. And that's why this part of the island is called Two Harbors. The side facing the mainland is called Isthmus Cove while the opposite side, facing Hawaii is Catalina Harbor. The length of sail from Marina del Rey (where our boat Tinker Toy was docked) is about seven hours. Depends on the wind and its direction.

Over the years, we circumnavigated the island several times. My daughters, Andrea and Teresa, and our son, Vincent, were happy helpers. It's quite thrilling. The Pacific ocean side is definitely more wild, primitive, and pristine. During the first circumnavigation, you have a feeling that you are a Robin Crusoe explorer looking for a safe anchorage. There are only some temporary anchorage sites due to the large swells from the Pacific. The mainland side is more protected but also denser with boat traffic. On a busy weekend, you may have a hard time finding a mooring. On approach to either Two Harbors or Avalon (the main town of Catalina), it is courteous to radio ahead that you are coming. A harbor patrol boat approaches you, checks your length, and collects a mooring fee. The larger the boat the more you pay. We all want a mooring since it is very stable. The boat is parked steady and does not swing around too much. But if you come later, say Saturday afternoon on a sunny but busy weekend, you may be out of luck for a mooring. Then you end up looking for a safe spot to drop your anchor.

During one trip to Catalina with my wife, Dana, and our friends, Rimas and Rūta, we had to drop the anchor a little far from land, in deeper waters. We did get a shore boat to take us to the dock. Then we decided to enjoy a tour bus from Two Harbors to Avalon. A bumpy and vigorous journey of about one hour or so. Small herds of buffalo and a spectacular view of the ocean. At Avalon we had a late lunch, then journey back. But when we approached the anchorage we could not locate our boat as we were looking down on the bay from high ground. What gives? Where's our boat? We checked with the harbor patrol. Ah, they said! You are the ones! A boat named Tinker Toy was reported drifting from its site on its way to the mainland, but we caught it in time. It is now tied up jointly with another boat at a mooring. Thank you so much, we said. Rimas slipped the harbor patrolman a 20 as a thank you. Apparently, we made a fundamental mistake. The deeper the water the longer an anchor line is needed. Just dropping the anchor straight down does not work. There should be a minimum of a 1 to 3 ratio on a calm day. To be safe the line should be 1 to 5 or longer so that the anchor can dig into the ocean floor, otherwise, it drags. We dragged. In other words, if the water is 10 feet deep you need 30 to 50 feet of anchor line. If its 60 feet deep you may just be unable to safely anchor. In the Bahamas, we were required to use two anchors with the



Rimas Mulokas and Roland Giedraitis with their rescuers on South Water Caye, Belize.



The Vaiva crew in Ensenada, Mexico: Roland Giedraitis, Romas Venckus, Vytas Burokas, Saulius Lišauskas, Jonas Talandis, and Rimas Mulokas.

proper ratios due to the tides and unstable ocean floor.

Evenings at anchor or a mooring were usually relaxing after a day of rough or smooth sailing. We ate, we drank, we talked, we sang, we played cards, we played scrabble, or just went on deck to watch a moonrise. Vytas Zeleznis and Saulius had their harmonicas. We loved to sing Lithuanian songs, especially with sea themes. (Norėčiau aš keliauti ten toli, toli; Tau, sesute, puikios gėles; Umba umbarasa).

At least twice in the middle of the night we felt unsafe. The anchor is dragging and we were crowded to the rocks of the shore. Have to get up, fire up the engine, move to a different spot, reset the anchor. One night, sailing with Saulius on his Vaiva we were anchored near the tiny Santa Barbara Island, one of California's channel islands. We planned to make a shore landing with our dinghy but the



Vincas Giedraitis and Juozas Venckus sailing on the Pacific side of Catalina Island.



Roland Giedraitis, Vytas Burokas, Albinas Sekas, Saulius Lišauskas sailing off Catalina Island, California on the sloop Vaiva.



Can Can in Tonga? Juozas Venckus, Rimas, Dainius Mulokas, and Roland Giedraitis on a bareboat catamaran.

surf was too rough. We anchored but hundreds of seals protested wildly. We saw baby seals so they felt very protective. Some seemed to attack by trying to jump aboard. The island itself is uninhabited except for a lone ranger/EMT/game warden combo who keeps order. It's too bare and windy for human habitation.

So we just anchored. About 2 am Saulius wakes us up. We are dragging anchor, he announces. What to do? It's unsafe, he says. So we stowed the anchor and motored to the safer waters of Catalina in the middle of the night. After leisurely cruising along the island we returned to San Diego. It's about a 100-mile trip so we sail where there is wind, but at night the wind drops so we motor. The journey was worth it.

In California, we enjoyed different sailboats. I was a partner with my brothers-in-law, Romas, Laimis, and Juozas Venckus. We had a 32 ft sloop named Tinker Toy. We entertained the notion to rename it something more Lithuanian. We considered Jūratė, Žibutė, Neringa, Undinė, but could not agree unanimously. Typical Lithuanian! It helps with expenses when we share. It also helps that we get along and have similar interests. We enjoyed frequent day sails in the Santa Monica Bay and occasional sails to Catalina Island. The other boat belonged to Saulius, docked in San Diego. On several occasions we carpooled from LA to rendezvous with Saulius near his boat then, starting at about 11 pm we would aim for Catalina. It was an all-nighter motoring since no wind at night. One of us at the helm for a couple of hours while the rest sleep. We took turns. About 9 or 10 am the wind blows. We raise the sails. Soon Catalina is in sight. Saulius liked to ask which side of Catalina, gentlemen? Avalon, towards the mainland or the wild Pacific side? Since we sailed up from the south we get a choice right or left. We ended up doing both sides on different occasions.

We also sailed with Rimas Kaminskas aboard his Casablanca. Rimas actually introduced me to sailing when we migrated to California. Several cruises in the bay and at least one trip on his boat to Catalina. One of our last sails with Rimas was with Rimas Mulokas, Martynas Mikalauskas, and myself in 2015. Lots of fun. Thank you Rim!

The other way to sail is bareboat. Basically, renting a sailboat. Of course, you make arrangements ahead of time. You fly to the British Virgin Island where a super clean, fully provisioned boat with food and booze is waiting for you. You also get to drag a motorized dinghy for shore expeditions. For a week or a month, but you and your crew are the captains and cooks of your boat completely on your own. On request, for a fee, the company can provide a skipper and a cook. But you can't just hire a cook since she would not want to be put in the awkward position of cooking and manning the boat when you get in trouble. We managed by ourselves with no particular problems. In this manner we have sojourned in the Bahamas, Virgin Islands, Belize, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sea of Cortez, and Tonga. Each had its own charms, challenges, and delights. The Mulokai and Tompauskai sailed near the Seychelles island and the Gulf of Honduras. Unfortunately, we were not able to join them.

They did hire a skipper and a cook in Seychelles but were not impressed.

For the record, I want to list the active and semi-active members of the Lithuanian Californians who were part of the sailing community. Here we go, alphabetically: Vytautas Burokas; Roland, Danutė, Andrea, Teresa, and Vincas Giedraitis; Rimas Kaminskas; Saulius Lišauskas; Martynas Mikalauskas; R. Dainius, Loreta Mulokas; Rimas and Rūta Mulokas; Rimas and Giedrė Petraitis; Albinas Sekas; Rimas Tompauskas; Juozas, Laimis, Linas, Romas, and Vitas Venckus; Aušra, Jūratė Venckus; Vytautas Zelenis. I am sure there were other sailors but I did not know them. Sorry if I missed you!

The years have gone by quickly. All three of my boating partners are deceased; Saulius Lišauskas, Vytautas Burokas, Vytautas Zelenis, and Rimas Petraitis are no more in this world. Only memories remain but I am glad we all gave it a good try.

What is left? Well, the ocean is an ocean that can be appreciated in different ways. Now we enjoy world cruising with friends like Albinas and Ina Sekas; Dalia and Vytautas Černius; Rimas Dabšys; Manuelis Jarašūnas; Aldona and Arvydas Kudirka; Birutė and Zigmas Viskanta; Audra Deveikis. These are our Lithuanian friends who loved the ocean on a more relaxed level. Some are now deceased. But that's a different story. We had ideas for travel but COVID 19 sabotaged our plans. Still, something to look forward to. Princess Cruises, you are not forgotten!



Rimas, Rūta Mulokas and Roland Giedraitis sailing in the Bahamas.



Lithuanian naval flag in St. Vincent and Grenadines waters.



Roland and Dana Giedraitis showing their home-designed Lithuanian flag in the Bahamas.



Roland Giedraitis with the flags of St. Vincent and Grenadines and the Lithuanian naval ensign.



The Graphic Design of Vincas Lukas

By Indrė Antanaitis-Jacobs, LRC
Director of Archives

The Lithuanian Research Center inherited a truly unique archive this summer, from graphic designer Vincas Lukas. His works in the American Lithuanian community are prolific.

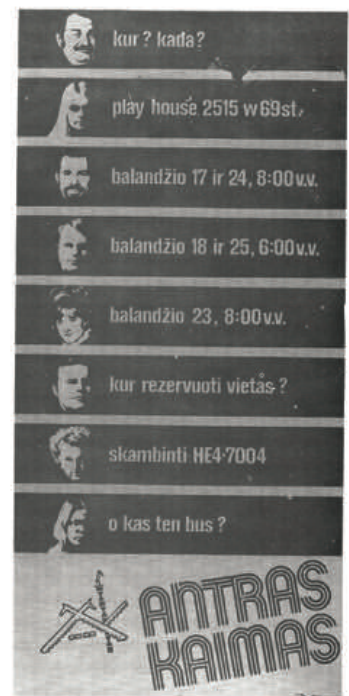
Lukas was born in Lithuania but immigrated to the United States with his family in 1949 when he was 6 years old. The family settled in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Vincas's father got a job working in a furniture manufacturing company, his mother – as a maid, cleaning offices at night.

After high school, Lukas initially studied engineering in college but discovered that it was not for him. Prodded by his father to continue his education so that he “would not have to work in factories all his life,” Vincas Lukas enrolled in the Kendall School of Design, where he studied interior design, furniture design, and adver-

tising design. It was in design that Lukas discovered his true talent.

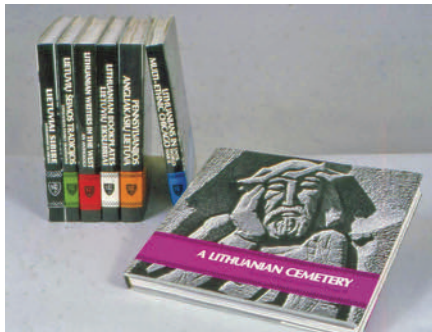
In his “regular” day job at Nova Marketing and Communications, Vincas Lukas worked first as a graphic designer, then as Art Director, and then – Creative Director, progressively overseeing more and more people, working on projects that designed for big company clients such as Ameritech, Motorola, Sears, Square Deal Electronics, and Shure. And then, in the evenings and at night, at home in his garage, he worked in gratia on designs for the Lithuanian American community.

Vincas Lukas's graphic design work for the Lithuanian community began when he became a member of Antras Kaimas (“Second Village”), a Lithuanian émigré theatre group of humor and satire that had formed in Chi-





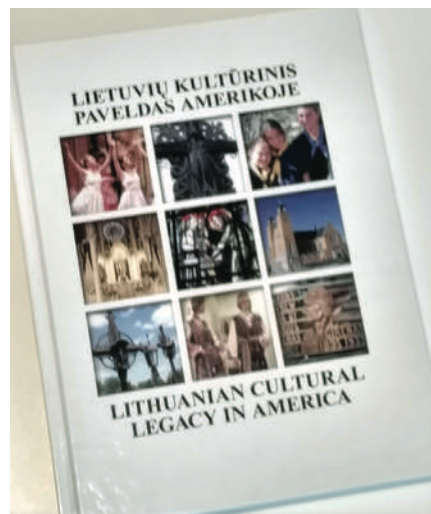
Chicago in 1963 and took after Chicago's famed "Second City." His very first Lithuanian design job was a poster for the 1971 performance of Antras Kaimas. (Source is Antras kaimas: Veidai ir tekstai, 1989, p. 128, compiled by A. T. Antanaitis, Lithuanian Library Press). Lukas won the "CA" or "Communication Arts" magazine award for his "Flashers" poster of Antras Kaimas in the mid-1970s.



"Communication Arts" is the largest international trade journal of visual communications, whose coverage includes graphic design, advertising, photography, illustration, and interactive media. All CA competitions are juried by creative professionals.

Lukas designed the book covers and keylines (formatting) for the 1970s Lithuanian Library Press book series that included Lithuanians in Multi-Ethnic Chicago until World War I, A Lithuanian Cemetery, and Pennsylvanijos angliakasių Lietuva. Other examples of book covers and keylines designed by Lukas include Opposition to Soviet Rule in Lithuania 1945-1980 (by Thomas Remeikis, 1980) and

Lithuanian Cultural Legacy in America (edited by Algis Lukas, 2009).



A wide variety of Lithuanian American logos were designed by Vincas Lukas. Perhaps among the best known is that of "JC" or Jaunimo Centras (currently called the Chicago Lithuanian Center), the building on the South Side of Chicago that was the historical hub of Lithuanian community activity in education, the fine arts, opera. Other logos that Lukas



JAUNIMO CENTRAS

created include those of the Lithuanian Scouts Collegiate Division (Akademiniškas skautų sąjūdis), the Lithuanian Art Gallery Čiurlionis, the Baltic Jesuits, Racine Bakery, and others.



AKADEMINIS SKAUTŲ SĄJŪDIS

Not only did Vincas Lukas design the Čiurlionis Art Gallery logo, but also in the late 1970s and 1980s, he was very involved in advertising the Lithuanian artists' exhibitions there. For eight years, he designed ten exhibition posters per year for the Gallery.



Theater has long been a big part of Lukas's life. In addition to being a member of Antras Kaimas, he and his wife Ramunė regularly attended performances at the Goodman Theatre, Shakespeare Theater, Court Theatre, and many black box theatres in Chicago. Lukas's design of the 2000 program cover and poster for the X Lithuanian Theatre Festival. Note the Lithuanian Theatre Festival logo Vincas designed in the bottom left corner of the poster; the red and black



squares represent comedy and tragedy, while the wavy line is the smile and frown.

Lukas did the graphic design for the plethora of events that took place during the 1983 World Lithuanian Days in Chicago. These designs

appeared on brochures, programs, flags, banners, t-shirts, buttons, pins, and mugs. Another World Lithuanian Community design of Lukas from more recent years was the Lithuanian World Center MasterCard.



Vincas Lukas was a member of “SOS – Americans for Lithuania’s Freedom,” a group that devoted itself to encouraging the United States to recognize the declaration of Lithuania’s reestablished independence in March 1990. Specifically, Lukas was the campaign’s designer and he created the now well-known “Don’t Close the Door on Democracy in Lithuania”

poster. The title photo shows Vincas Lukas (on the right) presenting Marijus Gudynas, the Consul General in Chicago, the framed poster. For this particular design, Lukas received a PRINT Award (formerly known as Regional Design Award). PRINT is considered a mainstay in the design industry. In 1990, this design appeared on billboards in Chicago and Washington D.C., on banners, bumper stickers, t-shirts, envelopes, and coffee cups, spreading the message of U.S. recognition of Lithuania’s newly proclaimed independence.

To be continued due to Vincas Lukas’s prolific creative activity.

All photos (except I, II, and 12) by Vincas Lukas



The Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture is Launching a New Oral History Project



Blessed Virgin Mary Nativity Church in Marquette Park neighborhood in Chicago. Photo courtesy: Vilija Vakaris family album

In celebration of 150 years of Lithuanian immigration to the United States, the Balzekas Museum is launching an exciting new project entitled: “Lithuanian Life and Landmarks in America”. Collecting and preserving oral histories of Lithuanian immigrants and their descendants throughout the United States is integral to this project. These histories and the Museum’s archives will be used to develop both physical and online exhibits as well as interactive maps and tours documenting where and how Lithuanian Americans lived, worked, studied, prayed, and played.

To ensure the history and contributions of Lithuanian

Americans are preserved for future generations, the Balzekas Museum invites Lithuanian immigrants and their descendants throughout the United States to fill out the following questionnaire:

About You

1. What is your name?
2. Why did your parents choose this name? Did you have a nickname and who gave it to you? What did your parents call you? What did/do your friends call you now?
3. When and where were you born?

4. What were your parents' names? When and where were they born? Who were your grandparents? When and where were they born?
5. When did your family or ancestor(s) immigrate to this country? When and why did they leave Lithuania? Did they all come at once or separately?

Home & Community

6. Where was your first home (in the U.S.)? When did you live there? Why did your family move to this community? Was this an urban, suburban, small town, or rural community; was this an established community or brand new development; do you remember addresses or major roads/intersections; what other details come to mind?
7. Describe your childhood home. Was it old or new? Did you live in an apartment, duplex, high rise, single-family home? Did you have a yard or garden and what did you grow?
8. Was your house decorated in any particular style? Which possessions or family heirlooms were displayed about your home? Who looked after your home? Did you have any chores?
9. Who lived with you? Who were your closest friends and neighbors? Were there any memorable charac-

- ters in your neighborhood? Were there Lithuanians nearby?
10. Which neighborhood events or occasions stand out in your memory?
11. Were there any Lithuanian businesses, services, or professional offices in your neighborhood? Do you remember their names? Did you shop at any Lithuanian stores? What kinds of products did they sell?
12. How often did you venture outside of your community? Why?
13. How long did you live in this home and community? If you moved, when and why did you move? How old were you when you moved away? Where else did you live and when did you live there?
14. Where do you live now and why? How do this home and community compare to your childhood home and neighborhood?

Family Life

15. What is your earliest childhood memory?
16. Describe a typical weekday during your childhood? Adolescence? Now?
17. Which schools did you attend and when did you go there (e.g., preschool, elementary school, high school, college/university)? What were they like?



Vakarlis family in Marquette Park neighborhood in Chicago. Photo courtesy: Vilija Vakarlis family album

- Who were your favorite teachers? What were your favorite classes? Did you attend Lithuanian classes or heritage schools?
18. Who worked in your household and how did they support the family?
 19. Describe a typical family dinner. Who did the cooking? What were your favorite foods?
 20. Did you learn any skills (e.g., cooking, carpentry, crafts, playing an instrument) and who taught them? Have you retained those skills and passed them on to others?
 21. What did you do on the weekends? What activities did the family do together? Did you have any hobbies or interests? What hobbies or interests do you have now? Which games did you play in your free time?
 22. What were your best and worst subjects? What did children do after school? Did they play any games?
 23. What did you do during the summer?
 24. What was important to your parents and to you then? What is important to you now? Were there any conflicting opinions, such as cultural differences or world views, between you and the adults in your family?
 25. What is/was your occupation and how did you choose it? Do you still work? If yes, where do you

work now?

26. If you were or are married now, when and where did you meet your spouse? What was your wedding like? Did you incorporate any Lithuanian traditions into your ceremony? What memory stands out the most from your wedding day?
27. If you have children, what is most satisfying to you about raising them? What was most difficult? What values do you/did you try to impart in your children that your family passed down to you?

Religion & Traditions

28. What was your religious life like growing up? Where did your family attend religious services? Are those churches still there?
29. How were religious, national holidays, other special occasions (Lithuanian Independence Day, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, birthdays, etc.) celebrated in your family? Did your family have special traditions or rituals at these times?
30. Do you remember attending funerals? Do any stand out in your mind? Where are your loved ones buried?
31. Which traditions and rituals from childhood do you still maintain in your adult life? Which tradi-



Vakarís family in Marquette Park neighborhood in Chicago. Photo courtesy: Vilija Vakarís family album



Holy Cross Church in Back of the Yards neighborhood in Chicago. Photo courtesy: LIMIS

tions have disappeared? Do you miss any of these traditions?

32. Do you recall any traumatic experiences from your childhood? Did you have any heroes? Was there anyone or anything you were afraid of?

Social Life

33. Where did you go to see a movie, play, or concert? Was there a neighborhood music or theater group? Did you perform in song and folk-dance festivals? Who were the favorite local performers?
34. Where were favorite gathering spots in your community? Was there a neighborhood bar, restaurant, or community center that you frequented?
35. Did you play any sports? What were the most popular sports? Did children play games in the neighborhood?
36. Did you belong to any fraternities, societies, clubs, scouts, or other community organizations?
37. What newspapers did you or your family members read? What radio programs did you listen to? What TV programs did you watch? Do you follow developments in Lithuania?
38. What were your families political beliefs growing up? What political or community organizations were your family or you involved in? Did you participate in demonstrations or events that supported Lithuanian causes and freedom during the Cold War? Which ones?
39. What events impacted you the most while growing up? What historic events do you remember? Were you ever scared or worried about the news? Conversely, what gave you cause for celebration and why?
40. Do you speak or read Lithuanian? Do your children



Parama grocery store and its owner in Marquette Park neighborhood in Chicago. Photo courtesy: Balzekas Museum Library and Archives

or grandchildren speak Lithuanian? What challenges have you faced speaking the language. If you don't speak Lithuanian, would you like to learn the language?

41. Did you ever visit Lithuania? When and why? What was your impression of the country?
42. How has your Lithuanian heritage shaped your identity? What do you want others to know about you?
43. Is there anything else that you would like to say now that you haven't yet been asked?

Ačiū! Thank you!

If possible, please send the Balzekas Museum photographs (originals or digital copies, 300 dpi) that would illustrate each section of the questionnaire. Please number your photographs and include the following information with each photograph (if known): when and by whom the photograph was taken, location pictured in the photograph, names of people in the photograph.

If you would like to arrange an audio or video interview for you or a loved one, please contact us at info@balzekas-museum.org or call at 773-582-6500.

To submit your questionnaire, please mail it to Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, 6500 S. Pulaski Rd., Chicago, IL 60629 or email to info@balzekasmuseum.org.

current events

Security

...The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine have announced a regional cooperative agreement, the Lublin Triangle, which will focus on the cultural, economic, and strategic interests of the three countries which build upon the 2014 formation of the Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade (LitPolUkrBrig). The agreement reflects the 17th-century historical territory of the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth which included most of today's Ukraine. All three countries have refused to recognize Russia's 2014 occupation of Crimea and regions of Donetsk and Luhansk and support Ukraine's desire to join NATO.

...Lithuania will purchase six UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and related weaponry worth \$380 million. The U.S. Defense Security Cooperative Agency said that this purchase will increase Lithuania's capability to provide troop lift, border security, anti-terrorist, medical evacuation, search and rescue, re-supply/external lift, and combat support in all weather.

...Belarus arrested 33 Russian private military mercenaries at gunpoint near Minsk, the capital, under suspicion of plotting to stage riots, just prior to the early August presidential vote. President Alexander Lukashenko, who has held power for 26 years, has had a contentious relationship with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, who continues to pressure for closer trade and political relationships between the two countries. Interestingly, China has substantial investments in Belarus with its low wage but educated workforce. Both Putin and Dmitry Medvedev, current deputy head of Russia's Security Council and former Prime Minister and President, objected to the arrests and called for their immediate release saying that they were in Belarus only because they missed a connecting flight to another country.

...The Lithuanian Ministry of Defense reported detecting fake news sent to a Lithuanian news organization about a Lithuanian officer allegedly arrested in Poland for supposedly spying for Lithuania.

...The National Cyber Security Center of the Ministry of National Defense found a vulnerability in common net routers and recommends that users change the default Wi-Fi passwords set by the manufacturers. A 10 random character password of digits and capital letters A to F can be broken within a few hours via the brute force of powerful computers. Dr. Rytis Rainys, the Director of NCSC, recommends users set their Wi-Fi passwords to be 12-14 characters with upper and lower-case letters, digits,

and special characters. The fallout of hackers obtaining passwords could be used to blackmail by threatening to leak private information or demanding ransom to decipher encrypted data. Criminals can also attempt to steal money from bank accounts.

...On National Statehood Day (King Mindaugas Coronation Day) July 6, thirteen NATO fighter aircraft did a flyover while patrolling Lithuanian airspace. The NATO mission is implemented by six F-18 Hornets from Spain, three Eurofighter Typhoons from the British Royal Air Force, and four Mirage 2000 from France.

...Two candidates for General were recommended by the Minister of National Defense and promoted by President Gitanas Nausėda. Both are graduates of the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania and the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA. Brigadier-General R. Baltrėnas also studied at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, VA. Brigadier General M. Steponavičius also graduated from the Baltic Defense College in Tartu, Estonia.

...TV presenter, Dmitry Kiselev of Russia Today (now RT), has been put on the European Union's list for financial sanctions for his role in 2014 in spreading Russian propaganda and disinformation justifying its annexation of Ukraine's Crimea. Latvia has banned Russian controlled RT and now the Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission following the recommendation of the Foreign Ministry has banned RT with Estonia expected to follow suit.

...Over a two-week period in mid-summer nine NATO allies participated in Exercise Furious Wolf in Estonia and Latvia. Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) from Estonia, Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States worked together with aircrews from Estonia, Spain, and the British Royal Air Force. The JTACs synchronized fighter aircraft in support of ground troops including NATO Enhanced Forward Battlegroup Lithuania.

...The Lithuanian Defense Minister Raimundas Karoblis said that the United States will deploy a battalion of troops to Pabradė, Lithuania for a rotation of more than six months as the U.S. redeploys troops from Germany to Poland and Lithuania. The Pabradė facility, northeast of Vilnius, will add three three-story barracks which will accommodate 1,000 troops with plans for sports and leisure facilities. Already some facilities have been built which include ammunition storage bunkers, firing ranges, vehicle repair, and wash facilities. A new Pabradė-

Pažeimenė railway line was completed earlier this year which will facilitate the swift redeployment of resources.

...Lithuania acquired \$31 million worth of Javelin medium-range anti-tank missiles from the United States as part of a \$104 million contract over the next decade. The Javelin uses explosive reactor armor with a range of 75 to 2,500 meters. The Javelin has a soft launch design that ignites the engine only when it is outside the launch tube, which minimizes the detection of the launch site. The launch system uses "fire-and-forget" technology: when the target is locked in and the missile is fired, it guides itself to the target while the launcher can change its location without waiting for the missile to hit its target. The Javelin can attack straight on or from the top from an altitude of up to 150 meters to hit a tank at its most vulnerable spot, i.e. the hatch.

...A \$24 million grant from the U.S. European Deterrence Initiative for 2016-2020 was used to improve the infrastructure at the Lithuania Armed Forces Air Base at Siauliai to triple the capacity to host allied aircraft. The improvements include new ground equipment maintenance hangers, three fighter aprons, up-to-date fighter arresting gear, area security lighting and taxiways and roads for ground vehicles. The improvements also include an OPS facility for squadron command posts for flight planning and setting out flight routes.

...Lithuania has opted out of the BRELL agreement, which obligates members to exchange emergency electric power reserves with Belarus, Russia, Estonia, and Latvia because of its concerns regarding the safety of the 2.4 GW nuclear power plant in Astravyets, Belarus. Lithuania will stop providing 100 MW of power reserve to BRELL countries and will forgo 400 MW of reserve from them. Lithuania's transmission system operator, Litgrid, said that it will meet its reserve via links with Sweden (NordBalt) and Poland (LinPol Link). Eventually, Lithuania will drop its electrical synchronization and dependence with the former Soviet system and link with the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity, ENTSO-E.

...About 35-50,000 people held hands to form a "Freedom Way" chain from Vilnius to the Belarus border (about 32 km-20 miles) in solidarity with the people of Belarus over the disputed presidential election. U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania, Robert S. Gilchrist, was in the chain. President Alexander Lukashenko reportedly garnered 80.1% of the vote in his 26-year reign versus 10.9% for Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the only viable alternate after oth-

ers were disqualified, who has taken post-election refuge in Lithuania.

...Likewise, the Presidents of Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, and Estonia have called upon Belarus to de-escalate the situation and terminate the use of force against its people, to release all detained protestors and stop the persecution and initiate a dialog to advance social development and discuss reforms.

...In response to Lithuania's travel sanctions against 118 Belarusian officials, Belarus plans to divert its cargo from Klaipėda to other ports. Usually, Belarusian cargo accounts for about 30% of Klaipėda port's cargo.

...The Belarus Defense Ministry has ordered the increase in its military presence in the Grodno region along the borders of Poland and Lithuania including a guided missile division, anti-aircraft hardware, and drones. They also plan to hold defensive drills near the Astravyets nuclear power plants.

COVID-19

...While Germany, Europe's largest economy, experienced an 11.7% contraction because of the virus, and England reported a 20.4% drop, Bloomberg reports that Lithuania GDP shrank only 3.8%, making it one of the European Union's best performers. UK's precipitous drop to the economic level of 2003 put it in the region of depression with no signs of a bounce and recovery may be hard on the many Lithuanians who went to the UK seeking economic prosperity.

...Because the number of COVID-19 cases is increasing, the Minister of Justice, Elvinas Jankevičius, instead of shutting down businesses, reinstated mandatory wearing of masks in public places including transport and for indoor shopping or places providing services. Places that were exempt include restaurants, bars, cafes, as well as sports and cultural events.

...A representative of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry joined U.S. Ambassador Robert Gilchrist and U.S. Embassy staff in a send-off of 100,000 euros worth of Lithuanian made protective equipment destined for Pennsylvania. Included in the shipment were 11,400 face shields from UAB Medienos Era, 10,752 isolation gowns from UAB Interscalit, and 19,642 pieces of respiratory devices from Intersurgical UAB. The PA National Guard has worked with the Lithuanian Armed Forces for 27 years to enhance Lithuanian defense capabilities. This gesture was a token "Thank You".

current events

...Lithuania's Finance Crime Investigation Service has accused the Deputy Health Minister Lina Jaruševičienė of crimes related to the procurement of rapid coronavirus tests worth 6 million euros for Profarma, which provided the tests. She is accused of fraud, forgery, and legalization of illegally-obtained funds.

...The speaker of the Seimas, Viktoras Pranckietis, has ruled out online voting for voters abroad in the October parliamentary elections.

...The European Commission has approved a 59 million euro plan to support about 1300 Lithuanian companies in the agriculture, food, forestry, fishery, and aquaculture sectors, which have been affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The plan comprises grants of 9 million euros and loan guarantees of 50 million euros.

...With art galleries closed for 3 months, the Municipality of Vilnius offered 100 billboards to artists to sell their work under a three-week program, Art Needs No Roof. Within days about 500 applications were submitted. Those that did not make the cut were offered a spot on a virtual gallery along with pricing and contact information. The website had more than 8,000 visits in the first week.

...Mandatory wearing of masks was reintroduced because of an increase in cases with 24 new cases in 24 hours. One case was a returning Lithuanian who came back from the Philippines. Since June 1, Lithuania has recorded 112 cases that were contracted abroad. The latest death (86) was a very active Franciscan monk, 54, from the western coastal town of Kretinga who had been treated at the Santaros Clinic in Vilnius but could not be saved even with the use of the advanced technology of an Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenator (ECMO) unit.

...The criteria for mandating a two-week quarantine are returning from a country that has 16 new cases per 100,000 population over the last two weeks. According to the Latvian Center for Disease Prevention and Control, Lithuania's 14-day morbidity rate has exceeded 16 cases per 100,000, the highest since April.

...President Gitanas Nausėda and all members of the presidential office went into isolation after one staff member had contact with a Covid-19 infected person. When tested that staff person was found to be infected.

...Five members of Lithuania's Kaunas State Choir have been diagnosed with Covid-19. The Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theater has shut down after its direc-

tor, Jonas Sakalauskas, called in sick with Covid-19, and planned events may be postponed rather than canceled.

...Poland has recorded 640 new cases and 18 deaths over the past 24 hours for 17.9 cases per 100,000 and will likely be put on the quarantine list. Poland's total count is 48,789 cases and 1,756 deaths.

...Following the pandemic in March, Greece was one of the few destinations that Lithuanian travel operators were sending tourists. Greece has now been added to the list of Ireland, the U.K., and Nepal where arrivals are required to self-isolate for 14 days.

...Lithuanian wage growth slowed during the first three months of the quarantine but bounced back in June to the level seen in January. The State Social Security Fund, SoDra, also reported that 14,000 more people were hired that let go in July, a sign that people are returning to the labor market.

...The Lithuanian Finance Crime Investigation Service is looking into suspicious activities of the Deputy Health Minister Lina Jaruševičienė and the Lithuanian company, Profarma, regarding the 6 million euro purchase of rapid Covid-19 tests. The company is suspected of having forged documents and provided false information on the producer of the rapid tests. They are also investigating possible money-laundering.

Business

...Sweden's financial supervisory authority said that it was fining SEB bank 1 billion kronor (980 million euros) for deficiencies in its work to combat anti-money laundering in the Baltics countries.

...The U.S. Justice Department informed Game Insight, a Vilnius developer and publisher of free-to-play mobile games and social-network games with 800 employees that it had been hit by two Chinese hackers.

...Lithuania's central bank, the Bank of Lithuania, will sell digital tokens called LBCOINs based on blockchain technology and known as a central bank digital currency (CBDC). The digital tokens will be sold in packs of six for 99 euros and are geared to compete with Facebook's currency, Libra, which is promoted to its 2.5 billion users. The CBDC is not a cryptocurrency, such as bitcoin, which is produced by solving complex math puzzles and governed by disparate online communities. CBDCs are traditional money issued by a central bank in digital form and governed by a country's central bank. The Bank of Lithu-

ania expects users to trade them with others and then exchange them for a credit card-sized silver coin with a nominal value of 19.18 euros, a gesture to the date of the establishment of modern Lithuania.

...The European Space Agency (ESA) has granted 1 million euros to Vilnius based NanoAvionics to develop key components for small satellite propulsion systems with thrusts up to 5 newtons (N). NanoAvionics is an advanced nanosatellite bus manufacturer and mission integrator founded as a spinoff from Vilnius University in 2014 with facilities in the UK and Midland, TX. It is scheduled to have payloads on a SpaceX Falcon 9 launch in December 2020. Interesting videos are accessible via its website, www.nanoavionics.com. Another ESA grant will go to the Baltic Institute of Advanced Technologies for the development of an ultra-wideband software-defined radio which will cover the vast majority of space communication bands. Since 2014 Lithuania has been a cooperating member of the ESA, which fosters closer ties between the ESA, the Lithuanian academic community, and the Lithuanian space industry.

...GE Renewable Energy will supply 13 Cypress 5.3 MW wind turbines for a project in Telšiai, 250 km northwest of Vilnius. This subsidy-free wind farm is financed via Sweden's SEB Bank, GE Capital's Financial Services, and Eesti Energija AS, the state-owned utility of Estonia, which agreed to a 10-year power purchase agreement. GE has a full-service agreement for 25 years. Lithuania has 548 MW of installed wind capacity. This project will add 68.9 MW in the area midway between Klaipėda and Šiauliai, site of the Museum Alka of Samogitian History, and is projected to be completed by the end of 2021.

...Harju Elekter UAB is expanding its capability at its facility in Panevėžys with an investment of 6 million euros which will expand its employment from 241 to 350. They provide detailed engineering, contract manufacturing, and full load testing services for large marine and industrial system integrators including liquid-cooled multi-drive systems and electrical switchgear.

...In the Lithuanian teaching profession, there is a mismatch resulting in a need for 700 teachers in primary school, physics, chemistry, Lithuanian and foreign languages while unemployed teachers are mostly specialized in music, arts, and sports. The job openings are mainly in Vilnius, Klaipėda, and Šiauliai.

...After the explosion of ammonium nitrate fertilizer in Beirut, the port of Klaipėda, which handled a half million

tons last year, is tightening controls on its loading and storage by the five port operators that handle this dangerous product. The enhanced controls cover unloading, loading, movement, and temporary storage. Warehousing of ammonium nitrate is specifically prohibited.

...During the 7 months, January-July 2020 all Baltic ports registered a decline in cargo traffic. Klaipėda handled 25.9 million tons-down 5.5 percent year-on-year; Riga handled 13.7 million tons-down 26.9 percent, and Ventspils-Latvia handled 7.8 million tons-down 41.5 percent.

...The operator of Lithuania's only crematorium is planning to add another line to bring capacity to 5,000 cremations a year. K2 LT plans to invest 2 million euros in its facility in Kėdainiai, 51 km north of Kaunas, over the next year.

...The Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission is charged with blocking pirated websites and their copies. During the quarantine period, the number of visits to pirated websites increased. The resulting complaints caused the LRTC to block 47 pirated websites and documented the drop in traffic by 60% or more with some pirated websites closing.

...Lithuania plans on establishing an anti-money laundering competence center which would be funded by the Central Bank of Lithuania, SEB, Swedbank, Luminor Bank, and Siauliu Bankas with participation by the Financial Investigation Service. The need for such a center was established by a 2018 assessment that Lithuania was deficient in protection against the money laundering and terrorism funding scandals that hit the Nordic and Baltic region.

...Lithuania's State Tax Inspectorate publishes the list of corporate taxpayers. The top 100 corporate taxpayers paid 504 million euros excluding VAT and excise duties in the first 6 months of 2020, known as H1. Top payer was the biotechnology company, Thermo Fisher Scientific Baltics with 35.377 million euros, followed by Klaipėda State Seaport Authority with 28.664 million euros, the Ignitis Grupe (State-controlled energy holding company) with 28.562 million euros, SEB Bankas with 28.297 million euros, and Valstybinių Miškų Urėdija (State Forestry Enterprise) with 21.127million euros. Swedbank contributed 18.954 million euros, retailer Maxima LT paid 13.85 million euros and Danske Bank's Lithuanian branch was taxed 12.483 million euros.

current events

General

...Lithuania's prosecutors announced they were holding a neo-Nazi suspect who was arrested last year for attempting to blow up a Western Union office in Vilnius with 2.5 kg of explosives. The teenage male suspect had sprayed "FK DIVISION" and "SIEGE" graffiti as well as a swastika. The Lithuanian anti-terror police unit, ARAS, was involved with neutralizing the device and found the suspect had bomb-making materials and an improvised firearm. "FK DIVISION" or "Feuerkrieg Division" is influenced by another neo-Nazi group, Atomwaffen Division, which is allegedly tied to 5 murders across the United States.

...Lithuania presented an official complaint to the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Vilnius regarding serious environmental violations on the D-6 offshore platform in the oil field in the Russian section of the Baltic Sea. The platform lies only 5 km away from the Lithuanian border and 22.5 km away from the UNESCO World Heritage site – the Curonian Spit.

...The third survey of 1,104 people by Vilnius University has found that stricter alcohol regulations have not resulted in Lithuanians drinking less over the last 12 months. With less advertising, increased taxes, and banning sale to those under 20, it was hoped that alcohol problems would be reduced. The survey found that the number of non-drinkers has dropped and the number of alcohol-related deaths has gone up after going down for a decade.

...Last year Vilnius Airport gained fame by decorating a Christmas tree with confiscated items that were discovered on travelers. This summer Vilnius Airport is decorated with pink-colored spots simulating the "cold pink" color of the national obsession – šaltibarščiai soup, which is often on the list of things to sample when visiting Lithuania. The pink spots lead to a 10-foot replica of the iconic chilled dish, made with pickled or boiled beets, cream, grated cucumbers, and hard-boiled eggs plus seasoned with dill. Being an airport, there are souvenirs for sale in the form of pink socks, pink t-shirts, and pink bathing suits.

...Former Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus (1998-2003; 2004-2009) was bestowed with Poland's Lech Kaczynski Prometheus Award at the Presidential Palace in Vilnius for his diplomatic activity in pursuit of regional integration. The award was presented by former Polish Foreign Minister Anna Fotyga, an associate of Kaczynski. In his acceptance speech, the former U.S. civil engi-

neer and EPA administrator expressed regret that joint infrastructure and energy projects between Lithuania and Poland remain unfinished. Lech Kaczynski, Poland's President (2005-2010) was killed in a plane crash in Russia in 2010, along with many Polish leaders on their way to the 70th anniversary of the Katyn Massacre, where 22,000 Poles were killed by the Soviet NKVD under orders of its chief, Lavrentiy Beria, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin.

...Lithuania has banned members of the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and its affiliated persons from entry for 10 years as a threat to national security. U.S. Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, and Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi praised this decision regarding the terrorist organization supported by Iran.

...Last year 82% of secondary school "leavers" passed the standardized math exams; this year after months of distance learning only 68% of the 15,000 students passed a lower passing score. Other graduation exams for this year did not show any drop in passing rates.

...Chefs in Lithuania are experimenting with unusual natural ice cream flavors: Pine needle ice cream created with freshly harvested pine needles, powder sugar, and cream is said to smell like a Christmas tree. While carrots are often used in cakes, puddings, and pancakes, a Lithuanian ice cream shop is marinating carrots in maple syrup to give the ice cream a caramel aftertaste. The beetroot ice cream has an earthy aroma, a magnificent purple color, and goes well when paired with dark chocolate. The Velvetti restaurant in southern Lithuania mixes honey and dill oil to create a savory offering. And finally, the Lithuanian Beer Academy offers a dark beer, sugar, and lemon juice-based ice cream with a caramel aftertaste and recommends a pairing with chips for the sauna!



Ice cream at the Velvetti restaurant in Druskininkai.

Ethnic Culture Camp



Sofia, Austėja, and instructor Dalia are making flower wreaths.

Do you remember what a snowy St. John's Day celebration we had in Colorado last year? This year, the students of the Colorado Lithuanian School invited guests from all over Colorado and planned to camp in the mountains and light the highest-burning St. John's bonfire. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 virus in Colorado, the campsites were closed at the beginning of summer. Due to the drought, bonfires were banned. This completely disrupted the plans of the camp organizers. After lengthy deliberations, the school community decided to organize a camp on the second Saturday of September in Chatfield State Park, south of Denver.

The drought continued on the first weekend of September, and the bonfire restrictions were still on. The summer heat continued with temperatures exceeding 86 degrees. However, just days before the camp had to start, on Tuesday, a snowstorm began. The temperature fell to around 32 degrees. The cold continued for several nights. At first, it was hard to believe that such a weather forecast would be true. However, after the cold stayed for a few days, we started getting anxious about the camp. Then the good news came - meteorologists promised sun and warm weather for the weekend.

On the first day of the ethnic culture camp, the children, with the help of teachers and parents, made wreaths and learned sutartinės, old Lithuanian multipart songs.



Sofia, Austėja, and Dalia with the flower wreaths they made.



Children are learning to sing a sutartinė song.



Making clay bells.

our community



Ričardas is making his first clay bell.



Clay on levutė's hands.



Clay bells will have to dry out.

Some had already heard of these songs before, and others heard them for the first time. Everyone had a chance to sing together. While making wreaths, music teacher Vilma was telling about the sutartinės song tradition. Both children and adults learned many new facts. For example, does everyone know that sutartinės can be not only sung but also danced and played, or that they are on the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity?

After the wreaths were made, the children dressed in the national costumes of different regions of Lithuania, put their wreaths on and, after a bit more rehearsing and learning a new sutartinė song, had a small concert for everyone to show what they had learned. Both the children and their parents, as well as the music director Vilma, were amazed at how beautiful the newly-learned song sounded.

After the concert, the children started learning how to make clay bells. You can imagine how much fun it is to work with your hands, knead soft clay, and make art! There were no strict rules; everyone made bells according to their imagination. Ceramics art instructor Dalia enjoyed the beautiful pieces the children made. Leaving the clay bells to dry, the campers headed to the Chatfield Reservoir, where they learned fly fishing. Amateur fishermen, Gytis and Mindaugas, taught the children how to hold a fishing rod, how to prepare bait for fish and how to put it on a fishing hook, and then, after casting rods, wait quietly for the fish to catch the bait. Our children were not lucky and did not catch any fish but the people who fished nearby showed the children the fish they've just caught. Its weight was 6 kilograms fish. The children could not only pat the fish but also take pictures of it.



Fly fishing requires patience.

Children would not be children if they would be upset about the unsuccessful fishing. They just built a sandcastle on the shore of the beautiful reservoir, collected shells, performed various gymnastic jumps, and enjoyed the water, the smell of which resembled the Baltic Sea. After they returned to the camp, the young fishermen were greeted by Ieva who told them about skudučiai, a traditional Lithuanian folk instrument. Ieva explained how and when the first skudučiai were made; she also said that this instrument was used to play the sutartinės songs. The children tried to play skudučiai and clay whistles and decided that it would not be too difficult to learn to play them at school in music lessons.

The next day began with an introduction to musical instruments. The campers were visited by musicians of the Colorado Lithuanian community, Rasa and Rimantas who brought kanklės and an accordion with them. The children could learn about the history of these two musical instruments and the peculiarities of playing them. They also tried to play them. Later, a folk dance lesson was held to the music of the accordion. Everyone – the children and their parents, teachers, and camp guests participated.

The Colorado Lithuanian School students Saulė and Sofija learned the technique of weaving bracelets in 2019 at the “Dainava” camp in Michigan organized by the LAC Education Council. During the COVID quarantine time,



Cartwheels on the shore are so fun.



Lukas and Ričardas attempt at playing clay whistles.



Can we pet your fish?



Instructor Rasa explains how to play kanklės.

our community



Leva, Milda, and Agota are learning to play skudučiai.



Dancing to the music of the accordion.



Greta, Emilija, and Agota are choosing the patterns they like best.

they improved their weaving skills at home and learned more patterns. Now they shared their expertise with everyone who wished to learn the art of weaving bracelets and bands using multicolored yarn.

For the campers, the camp was a fun and useful experience. They do not doubt that next year they will come together again in one of the Colorado parks and learn many new things about Lithuanian ethnic culture, customs, and history.

Although the Colorado Lithuanian School is only in its third year of existence, such events are becoming a beautiful tradition and help nurture children's patriotism. The children learned not only to boldly come up on the stage, dance folk dances, and sing Lithuanian songs, but also to better understand what Lithuania is and what it means to us all. We are glad that our cultural heritage has found a place in the hearts of young Lithuanians in Colorado.

We thank all the organizers and instructors who contributed to the organization of the event. We are grateful to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania for the financial support to the Ethnic Culture Camp in Colorado. We are also grateful to members of the Lithuanian Community in Colorado who always support our initiatives and activities. See you at other events!

Written by the organizers of the camp

Photos by Vilma Balnytė, Dainius Lankelis, Diana Reznik, Kristina Babonas



Look at the bracelets we made!

Lithuanian Lunch- Covid Style

By Aušra Lelis Clifford

On Sunday, August 23, the Lithuanian Heritage Society of Rochester and the Rochester Chapter of the Lithuanian American Community hosted a take-out Lithuanian lunch in the parking lot of Our Lady of Lourdes Church. Board members from both organizations volunteered their time to distribute packages of Lithuanian food, beer and wine, and Lithuanian-style face masks for members. Ačiū to Virginija Mockevičius for making delicious kugelis, balandėliai, and Lithuanian cookies. 110 meals were served from 12 pm to 1pm.



Colorado Lithuanians Started the New School Year

*Edita Buzėnienė
Principal, Colorado Lithuanian School*



Colorado Lithuanian School teachers.

This year, we were waiting for the start of the school year at the Colorado Lithuanian School with impatience and great uncertainty. The enrollment began just a couple of weeks before the school year's opening festivity. We are glad that almost all the students have returned to school, and we are also very happy to see new students. We will start the school year with one kindergarten class and five school-age children's classes. Twenty-one students will soon open the doors of the Lithuanian school.

On the morning of the school year opening, the sun smiled on everyone, and it was fun to see how much the children have grown over the summer. The students chatted with one another, telling about their summer adventures. We were happy to see the teachers that came back as well as the new ones. This year, nine teachers will work at the school. Dear teachers, we thank you for your work and initiatives, and, most importantly, for your love for our children and the knowledge you pass on to them.

We are grateful to the entire team of school teachers, students, and their families for their support and trust at this time. We hope that this school year will not become another difficult test for the entire school community and that we will all work together to keep our children and teachers safe and healthy. I thank everyone for your work in helping our children preserve the beautiful Lithuanian language and Lithuanian traditions while living so far away from our motherland.

I wish all the students, parents, and teachers a very good school year!



This is the first year at the Lithuanian school for Ieva Stonkutė.



First-grade student Lukas Babonas with his Mom.



First-grade student Milda Lankelytė.



Colorado school teachers, from left: Asta Liepas, Ieva Burnham, Dalia Lankelienė, and Edita Buzėnienė.



School principal Edita Buzėnienė is greeting students and their parents.

our community



Colorado Lithuanian School family.

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