

bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

\$6

November 2021



3 Lithuanian Americans and the History of their Support for Lithuania from the 19th Century to 2020

By Prof. Dr Juozas Skirius



15 Memoirs of an Ordinary Lithuanian, Jonas Venckus

Translated from handwriting in Lithuanian by Roland Giedraitis

19 Unexpected Journey
Memoir of a Siberian Deportee

By Juzė Avižienytė Žukauskienė



2 from the editor

By Karilė Vaitkutė

our community

22 Flax festival for Lithuanian families in Colorado
By Aura Juškevičienė

25 Traveling around Dzūkija
By Janina K. Shubert and Agnė Varžukienė

27 current events

By Alan Stankus



Front Cover: A leaf cut out by Odeta Bražėnienė

Back Cover: A quilt depicting a shape of Lithuania from the Darbėnai Craft Center and Museum

bridges

Vol. 45 No. 9 / November 2021

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

EDITOR
Karilė Vaitkutė

ART DIRECTOR
Daniel P. Craig, Jr.

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

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER
Marius Naris

Editorial Office

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

Subscriber Services and Advertising
spauda@javlb.org

Facebook

facebook.com/BridgesLithuanianAmericanMagazine



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

LAC, INC. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD
14911 127th Street, Lemont, IL 60439
finansai@javlb.org

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

BRIDGES (ISSN: 87508028) is published 10 times per year (Jan/Feb and Jul/Aug combined) by Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. SUBSCRIPTIONS: For subscription questions or address changes, write to spauda@javlb.org or LAC/Bridges, 1471 Wood Avenue, Downers Grove, IL 60515. Subscription rates are: US: \$40 per year or \$75 for two years.; International: \$65 per year payable in advance in US funds. COPYRIGHT: ©2021 by Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of the publication may be reproduced without written permission of the publisher. PRINTING: Printed by Printing Center USA, Great Falls, MT.

from the editor

Dear readers,

In Lithuania, November is called "Leaf-falling" (lapkritis). Yes, the leaves are falling in many parts of the country, but we have many reasons to love fall. One would be the possibility to admire trees that have changed their colors; another would be to extend the beauty of fall leaves into works of art. On the cover of the magazine, you can see an oak tree leaf turned into a beautiful leaf-cut by a talented master, Odeta Bražėnienė, who lives in Utena, Lithuania but has visited the Lithuanian American communities in the past teaching the mastery of paper cuts. If you wish to try and make art from fall leaves, you can do it under Odeta's instructions in her video class (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tg4js7cKgE>).

Another big reason to love fall is Thanksgiving. Even though this holiday is not celebrated in Lithuania, Lithuanian Americans, of course, enjoy celebrating it with their families. It is a great time to get together, list the things we are thankful for, and reflect on the past year. I am sure Lithuanians all over the United States have a lot to reflect on this year. We remember that the Lithuanian American Community, as an organization, is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year. In fact, the exact date is November 18, 1951. However, Lithuanians were here long before that date. You will read a long article about the Lithuanian Americans and their help to establish Lithuanian independence written by Prof. Juozas Skirius. The article was written for the exhibit opened in the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania this fall. It was an amazing possibility for everyone in Lithuania to get acquainted with Lithuanian American history. However, we too might find things we did not know in this article.

The very end of November marks the first winter festival, St. Andrew Day. It is also the beginning of the anticipation of the return of the Sun. In the Christian sense, it is the beginning of Advent, awaiting the birth of Jesus Christ. And in a pre-Christian sense, people are waiting for the Sun to start coming back, for the days to be brighter, and for the Sun to rise a little higher. This time of year is reflected in ancient Lithuanian beliefs. The old year is not yet over, the new year has not yet begun, and there is a certain chaos in nature, a mixing of the living and the dead, heaven and earth. A mysterious time of fortune-telling begins. It was especially important for unmarried girls. One of the fortune-tellings for unmarried young women is this: on St. Andrew's Day, pick a cherry branch and put it into water. If the cherry branch blossoms before Christmas, you will get married. On St Andrew's Day, Lithuanians would decide on the weather and harvest for the following year. If on St Andrew's Day there is lots of snow, the summer harvest will be good, especially for beans, peas, and vetches. If it is sunny, vegetables will grow well, and if it is cold, the summer will be hot and with thunderstorms. If it is wet, rye will bloom beautifully and the granaries will be full of grain.

Wishing you all the best,
Karilė Vaitkutė
Editor

Lithuanian Americans and the History of their Support for Lithuania from the 19th Century to 2020

Prof. Dr Juozas Skirius
Vytautas Magnus University
Lithuanian Emigration Institute



Cover of the catalog *In the Name of a Free Lithuania*

The start of emigration and the main waves of emigrants

Over the ages, people of various nationalities have moved from one place to another, from one country to another. There are various reasons for human migration: political, economic, religious, etc. The Lithuanian nation is no exception: it has its diaspora in various countries around the world, the very largest one is concentrated in the United States of America.

There is little information about the first Lithuanian emigrants. The first known emigrant from Lithuania was Aleksandras Karolis Cursius (Kuršius), who sailed to America in 1659 and settled in New Amsterdam (present-day New York). He was the first gymnasium teacher and head at the Dutch colony, its first environmentalist and first doctor.

Lithuanian surnames can be encountered in the US Civil War period as well. One of the most famous figures was General Tadas Kosciuszka, who considered himself a Lithuanian and was close to the first US President (1789–1797), George Washington.

Mass emigration to America by Lithuanians only really commenced at the beginning of the 19th century. The turbulent historical events that followed the demise of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth forced many Lithuanians to emigrate, especially after the failed uprising against the tsarist authorities in 1830–1831. These were political emigrants, mostly representatives of the nobility, who lived following the ideals of a Lithuanian-Polish union. In this period, a number of Lithuanians from Prussia arrived in the United States, forming compact settlements in Texas and other states suitable for agriculture.

A historical turning point in Lithuanian history was the abolition of serfdom in 1861. With serfdom no longer enforced, people, even former serfs, could (in theory) move around more freely. Many Lithuanian peasants left for foreign lands. News spread quickly about a better life in America, encouraging widespread (yet mostly illegal) Lithuanian emigration to the United States. Some longed for a better life, others simply wanted to earn some money and then return to Lithuania. Another group was fleeing the tsarist army or the Russian government's prosecution for distributing Lithu-

anian publications or even escaping criminal prosecution. They traveled via ports in Germany and France.

The first wave of Lithuanian emigration lasted from the second half of the 19th century until 1914. It is believed that in this period, over 300,000 Lithuanians could have arrived in the United States. Some did return to Lithuania and bought some land. Those who stayed in the United States established families, worked, and raised children. In literature and the vernacular language at the time, the first Lithuanians were commonly referred to by the English loanword – grynoriai (from the word “green” – meaning young, inexperienced, immature), a newcomer or recently arrived immigrant. In their new surroundings, these Lithuanians had better chances to broaden their horizons, educate themselves, create organizations, write and distribute various publications and develop in the cultural sense.

The emigration of Lithuanians to the United States came to a halt with the beginning of World War I in 1914. The poorly developed economy of independent Lithuania (1918–1940) could not ensure employment for all citizens. This prompted another wave of emigration, this time, purely on economic grounds. It was mostly landless peasants or those with very little land who emigrated. Their goal was to earn enough money to be able to return to Lithuania and buy some land. It has been calculated that in the years 1920–1923, more than 22,300 left Lithuania bound for America. Later, the US government started restricting immigration flows by introducing quotas for separate countries. For example, from 1924 a quota of 344 emigrants was applied to Lithuania, and from 1929 the norm of 366 emigrants was introduced. It is thought that in 1920–1940, over 31,000 Lithuanians left for the United States, among them, a number of Jews (around 30 percent of total emigrants from Lithuania). A significant number of Lithuanians who had grown wealthier in America returned to their Homeland.

The effects of World War II on Lithuania – Soviet and Nazi occupations and the fear of a second Soviet occupation – led to the mass evacuation of Lithuanians to other countries in Western Europe in 1944, primarily to Germany. This new wave of emigrants were political refugees (they called themselves exiles). Now it was mostly the intelligentsia, clergy, gymnasium students, and cultural figures who fled Lithuania – a wave of educated people. After the war, they were settled in special camps supervised by international organizations. These refugees were called dipukai, from the English term “displaced persons” (DP). There were around 70,000 Lithuanians interned at DP camps and their surroundings, where Lithuanian cultural life flourished. A kind of Little Lithuania had been established.

On account of the active campaigning of Lithuanian



Postcard *St. Francis Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts.*

The church was built in 1903.

Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius

Americans and other nationalities in the United States, in 1948 the US government passed a special law called Public Law 774, which opened America’s doors to dipukai. Over 30,000 Lithuanians arrived. The earlier Lithuanian Americans welcomed this new wave, however, they brought with themselves a different understanding of organizational life, their own habits, and instead of joining the existing organizations, the new arrivals started forming their own. They revived the activities of many of the organizations that had existed in pre-war Lithuania or that had been founded at the DP camps and started releasing related publications. Many of the older members considered this as an insult. Some time had to pass before the two generations got to know each other better and could begin sincere cooperation. Dissidents sometimes made it to the United States from occupied Lithuania up to 1990, along with refugees who had in one way or another escaped the communist regime. The diaspora in the US accepted them as Lithuanian freedom activists.



Postcard *Amerikos lietuvių tautinė sandara. Lietuvių Tautos vedėja prie ateities* (Lithuanian American National Union Leading the Lithuanian Nation into the Future) Antanas J. Dulbis (1892–1918) New York, New York, USA, 1916 Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius

The declaration of Lithuania's independence in 1990 paved the way for a new wave of emigration to the US. It is thought that in this period around 250,000 new Lithuanian migrants arrived. These were primarily economic migrants seeking employment and a better life. They included students, scientists, cultural figures, and emigrants of love. Some were fleeing the justice system or the persecution of competitors. Local Lithuanian Americans referred to these new immigrants as *tarybukai* (from the Lithuanian word *taryba*, in this context meaning Soviets). At first, they were hesitant to join Lithuanian American organizations as their prime goal was to become properly established. However, from the early 21st century, they started to join in the activities of Lithuanian American organizations more and more, especially the Lithuanian American communities. These immigrants make sure their children attend extracurricular Lithuanian language schools, create organizations and seek to uphold the tradition of fundraising and volunteering. They are gradually taking the leadership of organizations formed in earlier times into their own hands. It is estimated that more than one million Lithuanians and Americans of Lithuanian heritage are today living in the United States.

Lithuanian American *gynoriai* and their links to tsarist-ruled Lithuania

More and more Lithuanians started to settle in the United States from the second half of the 19th century. They were united by a common language, customs and other national bonds. This communality led to the forma-

tion of Lithuanian colonies. The first ones formed in Pennsylvania where many Lithuanian nationals worked in the coal mines. The largest Lithuanian community formed in Shenandoah, becoming the first Lithuanian diaspora capital, known by Lithuanians as *Šenadorium*. Lithuanians worked in the abattoirs, metal processing plants, weaving houses and sewing factories in the cities; they established small businesses (stores, bars, pharmacies, etc.). Lithuanians soon noticed that they were mutually reliant on one another in the event of unemployment, illness and accidents, and so they started founding mutual aid and charity societies. These were named after saints, Lithuanian rulers and activists. They also noticed that another common factor was religion, and so they started forming religious

societies, which in turn saw to the establishment of Lithuanian parishes. Alongside the more than 130 parishes, and also independent of them, various Lithuanian social, cultural and educational societies started forming one after another, including Lithuanian schools, libraries, book stores, newspapers and calendars were released, choirs and theatre troupes assembled. The first Lithuanian Society of St Casimir was founded in New York. The activities of *Aušrininkas* Dr Jonas Šliūpas and the priest Fr Aleksandras Burba played a fateful role in Lithuanian's lives in America. The latter established the first Lithuanian St Casimir's parish in Pittston (PA) in 1885.

In order to encourage greater involvement in national activities, the idea arose to gather Lithuanians into one association. At the initiative of Dr Jonas Šliūpas, the Federation of all Lithuanians in America was formed, with its first parliamentary session convening in Shenandoah in 1886. That same year, Catholic activists under the leadership of Fr Antanas Varnagiris also called their own parliament in Plymouth (PA), founding the Alliance of All Lithuanian Catholic Societies. This alliance split into two bodies in 1901 that operate to this day: the Lithuanian Alliance of America (*Susivienijimas lietuvių Amerikoje*, SLA) and the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Alliance of America (LRKSA). They both released their own newspapers – *Tėvynė* and *Garsas*.

Lithuanian Americans also gathered under party-affiliated umbrellas. The Lithuanian Socialist Party of America formed in 1905. The organisation's title was changed several times later on. The Lithuanian Roman Catholic Federation was established in 1906, and in 1915 – the Lithu-

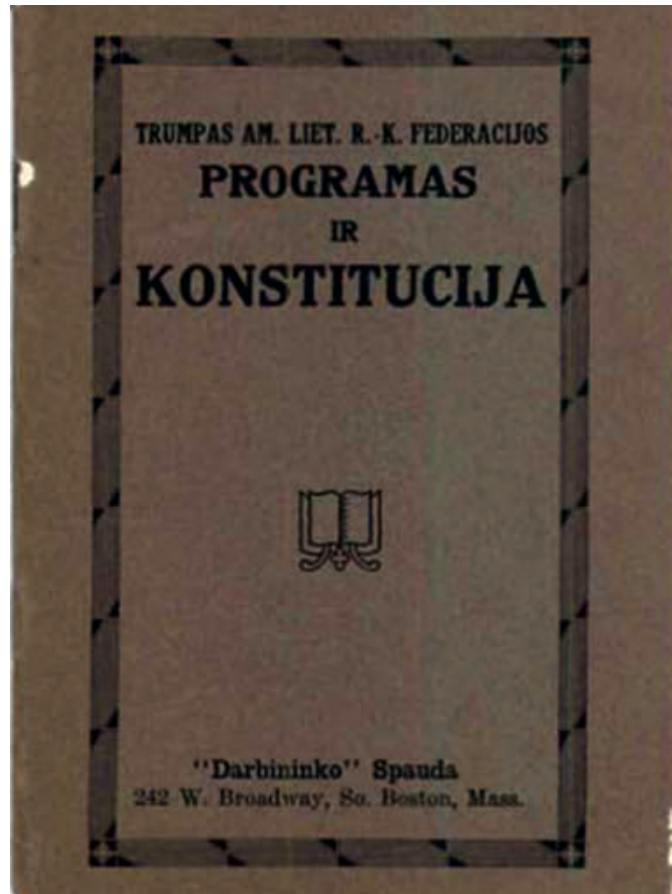
anian National League of America. They combined their societies and newspaper, and organised joint events.

The first Lithuanian newspaper, *Gazietą Lietuviszką*, was in circulation in 1879–1880 in New York. It started being published even earlier than *Aušra* (*Auszra*) (!). Other newspapers followed, reaching several dozen in number. One of the older Lithuanian newspaper, *Draugas*, is still in circulation today from Chicago, reaching its Lithuanian readership for over 110 years.

During the period of the Lithuanian press ban in Lithuania, the United States became the second most important (after Prussia) Lithuanian national press centre. In 1874, Mikas Tvarauskas founded the first Lithuanian printing house in Shamokin (PA) and printed the first Lithuanian book in the US there in 1875. Fr Antanas Milukas, one of the first Lithuanian American historians, was also involved in publishing activities. A special society was organised in 1896 for the release of Lithuanian books – the Friends of the Homeland Society. Also, separate émigré newspaper editorial boards also published books. During the years of the Lithuanian press ban, Lithuanian Americans were instrumental in the release of 741 publications in 1864–1904, while the total number of copies was over a million books and other printed material. Coming out in large and small editions, tens of thousands of copies were sent back to the Homeland to be distributed by book smugglers in Lithuania.

Lithuanian Americans were always ready to speak out in support of Lithuania and its people to the world. They drew the attention of international society to the events in Kražiai in 1893 (the Kražiai massacre). A Lithuanian American Protest Commission was formed, which organised rallies and strictly condemned the actions of the tsarist government, asking for Pope Leo XIII to protect Catholics in Lithuania. This was the first united Lithuanian American voice. In 1900 Lithuanian illuminaries succeeded in elevating Lithuania's name into the global arena for the first time. At the initiative of Lithuanian Americans (a committee including J. Žilius, A. Milukas, J. Šliūpas and others was formed) and with their funds, Lithuania was represented at the World Expo in Paris with Lithuanian folk art, old Lithuanian maps and a selection of banned books to illustrate the brutality of tsarist Russia and reveal the wrongs being done to Lithuanians. During the course of the exposition, lectures were given and information was spread promoting Lithuania's name around the world.

When the Great Seimas of Vilnius demanded autonomy for Lithuania in December, 1905, Lithuanian American organisations took the opportunity to establish the Central Committee to Aid the Revolution in Lithuania, with Lithuanian-American socialists organising their own Committee to Support the Revolution in response. The



Trumpas Am. Liet. R. K. federacijos programos ir konstitucija (Lithuanian American Roman Catholic Federation Program and Constitution in brief)

The constitution and program of the Lithuanian American Roman Catholic Federation founded in 1906 in Wilkes-Barre from several other Lithuanian American organizations. Boston, Massachusetts, USA, 1915
Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius

committees raised funds and sent the money across to Lithuania. Lithuanian Americans also became actively engaged in political activities.

During the years of World War I, Lithuanian American Catholic, nationalist and socialist organisations assembled and raised money. The Lithuanian American National Council released a petition in 1915 calling for complete autonomy for Lithuania. The signatures of 120,000 Americans were collected in support of this petition, which was then presented to the US government, the press and the embassies of other countries in Washington. In 1916, Lithuanian American leaders managed to receive permission from President (1913–1921) Thomas Woodrow Wilson to organise Lithuania Day in the country, during which over 130,000 dollars were raised for the Lithuanian population and also spreading the name of Lithuania within American society.

On January 10–11, 1917, Lithuanian Americans released a declaration demanding that Lithuania be united on



Lithuanian Liberty Loan. Fifty dollar bond

A Lithuanian Liberty Loan bond valued at fifty dollars issued in the United States. Bonds of several different values were released; 1,000 bonds came out valued at 500 dollars, the largest nominal value. The last bonds of this type were sold among Lithuanian Americans in 1931, although their issue ceased much earlier.

Government of the Republic of Lithuania. American Bank Note Co., USA, 1919–1923

Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius



Postcard Tautos išdas (National Treasury)

A postcard promoting a fundraising for Lithuania. Lithuanian American Roman Catholic Federation USA, prior to 1918

Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius

ethnographic grounds and be given complete political independence. This declaration was also submitted to the US President Thomas Woodrow Wilson and the press. Finally, on March 13–14, 1918 a joint National Congress of representatives of Lithuanian American Catholic and nationalist organisations (the socialists declined to participate) was held in New York with over 1,100 delegates participating (they did not yet know about the Act of Independence announced in Lithuania on February 1,

1918). The congress repeated Lithuania's goal of being independent and expressed the wish that a Lithuanian delegation would be allowed at the Paris Peace Conference after the war. Lithuanian Americans engaged in active agitation for recognition of Lithuania's statehood. Information bureaus were established in Washington and New York; Lithuanians who had been former US soldiers formed military units ready for service in Lithuania.

Lithuanian Americans and the Republic of Lithuania in 1918–1940

The Lithuanian question proposing recognition of Lithuania's statehood was debated by the US Senate in 1918 and 1919. Lithuanian American organisations can be credited with this achievement. By the decree of their congress in New York, in October 1918 Catholic and nationalist Lithuanian Americans founded a joint political body – the Executive Committee in Washington. It served to provide temporary recognition of Lithuania's state interests and conducted unofficial diplomatic activities. Even before that, on May 3, 1918 a delegation of Lithuanian American Catholics and nationalists visited US President Wilson. This was the first such visit by Lithuanians to the White House. 3031 The delegates presented a memorandum to the president, explaining the current woes that had befallen Lithuania and its goal of achieving independence. The Lithuanians asked the US government to support Lithuania's aspirations

and to include it into President Wilson's famous Fourteen Points peace program. The president promised to see to Lithuania's affairs and ordered a team of specialists to look into the matter. A commission was formed, its chairman was Professor Frank Alfred Golder from Harvard University, who was favourably inclined towards the Lithuanians.

Lithuanian Americans wanted to have a stronger influence on the US government and receive recognition for



Postcard Help free Lithuania

Chicago, Illinois, USA, 1918–1919

On the reverse – *Please help in any way you can restore to the Lithuania Nation and its people the freedom which is rightfully theirs.*

Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius



Share Certificate No. 5593

A share certificate confirming that Vladas Misiunas bought five shares valued at ten dollars each from the Lithuanian Development Corporation. Signed by the president of the Corporation Anicetas B. Strimaitis (1875–1945).

Lithuanian Development Corporation, New York, New York, USA, August 31, 1937

Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius

Lithuania sooner, so they set themselves the goal of collecting a million signatures in support of the Lithuanian state. Signatures of both Lithuanians and other nationalities were collected, thus Americans at large were introduced to the problems facing Lithuania. On May 31, 1921, the representatives of Lithuanian American organisations presented US President (1921– 1923) Warren G. Harding with a million American citizens' signatures bound in 138 books, asking for recognition of the Lithuanian state. Their goal was achieved on July 28, 1922 when President Harding signed an act recognising the Lithuanian government de facto and de jure (but not yet the state !). Afterwards, Lithuania was recognised by Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan and other countries.

Lithuanian American foundations collected more than a million dollars to support all these campaigns and to help establish the Lithuanian state. Also, Lithuanian Americans raised around 1.9 million dollars for the Lithuanian Liberty Loan bond, which was issued by the Lithuanian government. This was in addition to the private donations and funds raised by various companies for supporting Lithuania's economy, culture, education, the introduction of the Litas and other fields. Also, Lithuanian Americans would send some of the money they earned back to their relatives in Lithuania. It has been estimated that around 400 million Litas had been sent to Lithuania during the course of twenty years. American tourists would leave sums amounting to millions in

Lithuania, and Lithuanians, returning from the United States, would buy land in Lithuanian rural districts. This was one of the most reliable sources of currency for the Lithuanian state.

The contribution of Lithuanian Americans in bringing fame to Lithuania's name is noteworthy: in 1919–1920, Lithuania was given the Freedom Bell, national holidays were celebrated (February 16 and the Year of Vytautas the Great in 1930, etc.) and the country was duly represented at world fairs – in Philadelphia in 1926, and New York in 1939–1940.

The diaspora was also united through the loss of the Vilnius Region and Vilnius itself – committees, branches and groups for the liberation of Vilnius were formed, active fundraising activities prevailed. The transatlantic flight of pilots and US citizens Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas took place in 1933. Lithuanian Americans also donated money towards the organisation of this brave attempt. In 1935 US pilot Feliksas Vaitkus flew a plane called Lituania II over the Atlantic Ocean, repeating Darius and Girėnas' flight. Lithuanian Americans helped Lithuania win the FIBA European Championship in 1937 and 1939. Swimmer and Olympic champion Albina Osipavičiūtė, boxer Juozas Žukauskas-Sharkey, baseballer Vytautas K. Tamulis, wrestler Karolis Požela and many others all brought fame to Lithuania's name.

When Lithuania's statehood was restored, up until 1922 around 20,000 people returned to their Homeland, of

whom around 15,000 settled down permanently, bringing their hard-earned cash which they tried to invest in the fledging economy. However, the country's legislative system was barely in its founding stages, there was no stable currency until 1922 (the currency at the time, the *auksinas*, experienced severe inflation), the lack of qualified civil servants and economic knowledge exposed re-emigrants to losses and bankruptcy. This angered the émigrés who had returned and a majority, disappointed that their expectations had not been realised, decided to return to the United States. However, their money nevertheless contributed to getting the Lithuanian economy on its feet in one way or another.

A group of Lithuanian Americans stayed in their Homeland and were involved in the Lithuanian state's economic, social and cultural life: Dr Jonas Šliūpas, Bronius K. Balutis, Fr Jonas Žilius, Tomas Norus-Naruševičius, Fr Dr Fabijonas Kemėšis, Julius Kaupas, Leonardas Šimutis, Prof. Kazys Pakštas, Dr Julius J. Bielskis, Petras Daužvardis, Magdalena Avietėnaitė, Steponas Darius and many others. They brought a different understanding and sense of duty in laying the foundations of the young state.

In 1926, a majority of the diaspora, especially those with a leftist leaning, were left dismayed by the coup d'état and the fact that democracy had been replaced with a dictatorship. Incidentally, Lithuanian Americans with a communist leaning, who followed the newspapers *Laisvė* and *Vilnis*, never approved of the independent national Lithuanian state. They were the largest critics of the Lithuanian government and the nationalistic Lithuanian Americans. However, it was only during the period when President (1926–1940) Antanas Smetona was in power that a number of fundamental concessions were made to the diaspora, creating more favourable conditions for them to become economically operational in Lithuania. Relations between Lithuanian Americans and the Lithuanian government grew more amicable and mutual understanding increased.

Historian Vincentas Liulevičius has calculated that Lithuanian Americans donated, counting just actual funds, more than 53 million dollars to Lithuania since the start of emigration to 1940 (1978). These days, that would amount to more than a billion dollars. And then there is the volunteering of Lithuanians in diaspora and their deeds for the Lithuanian cause! All of this cannot be valued in monetary terms alone.

Lithuanian Americans and occupied Lithuania in 1940–1990

Lithuanian Americans were left strongly affected by the aggression of Lithuania's neighbours in 1938 and 1939, and when the Soviet army occupied the country in 1940,

they felt their nation's fate was in dire trouble. Already in 1941, the three main Lithuanian American patriotic streams (Catholics, nationalists and socialists) who spoke in favour of the liberation of Lithuania established a joint political organisation – the Lithuanian American Council (LAC), whose aim was to restore Lithuania's statehood. The leaders of the LAC were Leonardas Šimutis, Pijus Gri-gaitis, Mikas Vaidyla, and others. On October 15, 1940, an LAC delegation visited the White House where they met with US President Franklin Roosevelt (1933–1945) and declared that the United States did not approve of the violent occupation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia by the Soviet Union and the subsequent annexation of these countries. The LAC still exists. An association founded by Lithuanian American nationalists – the Lithuanian-American Mission – performed great patriotic deeds in 1941–1948 with the aim of liberating Lithuania. The nationalist leaders were Antanas Olis, Kazys Karpis, Juozas Bačiūnas and others.

Communist Lithuanian Americans, known as *pažangiečiai* (progressives), backed the Lithuanian SSR and did not envisage Bolshevism as a threat to the nation.

The United Lithuanian Relief Fund of America (widely known as BALF) brought the representatives of various Lithuanian streams under one umbrella and collected funds in aid of Lithuanian refugees in Western Europe, for their fellow nationals in occupied Lithuania who had suffered in the war and at the hands of the communist regime, for deportees in Siberia and Lithuanians in Poland. BALF had as its mission to ensure that the refugees scattered around Europe would not be deported back to their now Soviet-occupied homeland. When Lithuania became independent again, BALF supported Lithuanians living in poverty and the ill, former deportees, political prisoners, orphans and the elderly and frail. A total of 10 million dollars in aid was collected. BALF ceased its activities in 2008. The Fund had been headed by Prelate Dr Juozas Končius, Fr Vaclovas Martinkus and Marija Rudienė.

Back in the years of World War II, the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania (VLIK) had been established in Lithuania. It operated from Germany for some time, and from 1955 it was based in the United States where a majority of Lithuanian war refugees had settled. The leaders of this organisation were Prelate Mykolas Krupavičius, Jonas Matulionis, Dr Antanas Trimakas and others. The VLIK authored presentations, spread proclamations and declared that liberated Lithuania had to be a democratic republic; it demanded the Soviet Union to remove its army from Lithuanian territory so that the Lithuanian nation could restore an independent state. The National Foundation was established to financially back the Committee. When Lithuania's independence was restored, the VLIK ceased its activities in 1992, while

the National Foundation continues to exist, dedicating most of its attention and funds towards Lithuania, especially its eastern regions.

The Lithuanian American Community (LAC) was founded on November 18, 1951. It was noted in the founding act that a Lithuanian, through their deeds, academic pursuits, wealth and dedication, strives to defend and maintain the independent Lithuanian state, to uphold the Lithuanian language, to foster cultural and national traditions and customs, and should actively engage in the fight against communism enforced upon Lithuania by the Soviet Union, as well as dutifully support Lithuania's struggle for freedom. The leaders of the LAC were Jonas Šlepetyš, Stasys Barzdukas, Vytautas Volertas and others. The Lithuanian-American Youth Association was founded in Cleveland in 1973 with the aim of training future leaders for the diaspora community. Lithuanian Americans have significantly more leverage in the World Lithuanian Community as well. The involvement of dipukai has had an immense impact on Lithuanian American cultural and social life – every four years, the Lithuanian American and Canadian communities organise joint national folk dance festivals, academic and cultural symposiums and joint theatre festivals. They were also instrumental in the release of a unique publication – the Encyclopedia Lituanica (37 volumes); the formation of the Lithuanian Opera 3 2 3 3 Company of Chicago, Lithuanian Folk Art Institute, Lithuanian World Archives, Lithuanian Research and Studies Centre, a Department of Lithuanian Studies at the University of Illinois, etc.

For many years, the work of seeking Lithuania's liberation was exclusively the domain of the early diaspora organisations and their combinations in the United States. As the involvement of older members decreased, liberation activities also started to wane. When the Lithuanian American Community became more involved in this task and brought an influx of new, younger members, such activities were revived, becoming more professional and widespread, while the younger generation of the diaspora was also being prepared to continue with rebuilding Lithuania's independence. More active Lithuanian liberation campaigns commenced within Lithuanian communities in around 1967, ahead of preparations to mark the 50th anniversary of Lithuania's independence in 1968. American media editorial offices were contacted with requests to feature headline topics regarding the issue of Lithuania's freedom, meetings were arranged with politicians and leading clergymen. From the 1970s, the Lithuanian American Council, VLIK and LAC engaged in closer cooperation in the political field. The joint efforts of Lithuanian Americans led to the arrangement of meetings with US presidents in 1946, 1948, 1952, 1953, 1962, 1975, 1976 and 1986. This served as a guarantee that the



**National Foundation program *Už Lietuvos laisvę*
(For Lithuania's Freedom)**

The program aimed at Lithuanian Americans explains Lithuania's difficult post-war situation and encourages them to donate funds for its freedom; the National Foundation's report is also given.

Lithuanian National Foundation, Brooklyn, New York, New York, USA, 1918–1919

Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius

United States would not alter its position and not recognise Lithuania's occupied status. Political support for Lithuania from Lithuanian Americans dominated during the occupation period.

The Lithuanian American Community was one of the founding members of the Lithuanian Foundation – an organisation whose main aim was to preserve and support Lithuanian culture, education, Lithuanian community centres in the United States, Lithuania and the rest of the world. To date, the Lithuanian Foundation has fundraised over 40 million dollars. Other foundations also functioned, e.g., Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, which searches for ways of supporting the Lithuanian Church and established an Information Bureau in New York.

Efforts also went towards creating and broadcasting



Booklet *Liuosuokime Lietuva!* (Let's liberate Lithuania!)

The booklet encourages readers to contribute to the Lithuanian-American Trading Company to provide economic aid to Lithuania. Lithuanian-American Trading Company, Brooklyn, New York, New York, USA, 1919
Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius



Vilnius passport, No. 211466

Vilnius Railway Foundation Committee, 1932
Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius

Lithuanian radio programs in Lithuania on Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, as well as running radio programs aimed at audiences in the diaspora. Lithuanian national celebrations were marked, Lithuanian interests were represented at US state agency conferences; Lithuanian American organisations made the most of occasions to meet with US government institutions in an effort to influence their state's senators and congressmen. The diaspora also raised the Baltic States occupation issue with the United Nations in New York.

Lithuanian Americans did not lose contact with the people in occupied Lithuania. Relatives were sent packages, they received inheritances and stayed in touch via written correspondence. Lithuanians from America with communist leanings would organise excursions to Lithuania and take in visitors who had arrived from the Lithuanian SSR. Lithuanian Americans of the younger generation gathered in the liberal Santara-Šviesa organisation, seeking a closer connection to their fellow nationals in Lithuania. This created a kind of confrontation in Lithuanian American society. Nevertheless, for the population in Lithuania, ties with the diaspora were very important, not just in the material sense, but in the moral and national sense as well.

Lithuanian American figure Bronius Juodelė tried to calculate how much the diaspora had contributed materially in the years under occupation to help their relatives, and came up with the sum of around 3 million dollars.

Some years after the war, the Soviet government sent cultural figures from the Lithuanian SSR to the United States with greater frequency – writers, artists and academics, who were seeking contact with leftist and patriotic Lithuanian Americans. They shared more objective impressions upon their return about the United



Postcard „Lituanicos“ kelias iš New Yorko į Kauną
(Lituanica's route from New York to Kaunas)

Jonas Subačius (1904–1973), New York (?), New York, USA, 1933
Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius

States and their fellow nationals who lived there.

The Lithuanian American Community (1978–1980) tried to supplement the circle of the aging Lithuanian diplomatic service with diplomats of the new generation from among the diaspora. These efforts brought figures such as Stasys Lozoraitis, Vytautas Čekanauskas and Vaclovas Kleiza into the Lithuanian diplomatic service in the United States. The Lithuanian American Community made it possible to maintain the Embassy of Lithuania building in Washington and to keep the Lithuanian Diplomatic Mission in the United States open until Lithuania recovered its independence and during its first years as an independent country.

When the Lithuanian reform and nationalist movement formed in Lithuania in 1988, the Lithuanian American Community and other organisations brought the plight of Lithuanians and their aspirations into the field of vision of American government and society. They also managed to familiarise the leaders of Sąjūdis with democratic processes and institutions, and to seek out US political support for Lithuania's goals.

Lithuanian Americans and independent Lithuania in 1990–2020

The Lithuanian diaspora always believed in the Lithuanian nation's determination to win back freedom and was prepared to support independence. On March 11, 1990, when the Act on the ReEstablishment of the Independent State of Lithuania was declared, Lithuanian Americans urged the Washington administration to recognise Lithuania's independence and collected the signatures of those backing this position. A special, informative Lithuanian Hotline was created by the diaspora in Chicago, financed by donations. An organisation called S.O.S. – Americans for Lithuania's Freedom and other similar organisations were founded in other American cities. They provided Lithuanians as well as US media agencies, the American public and politicians with information. Similar initiatives were organised in other countries.

In order to present the new leader of Lithuania, the President of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania Vytautas Landsbergis to the US government, press, radio, television and public at large, the Lithuanian American Community and the Lithuanian American Council invited him to come to the United States, organising meetings, discussions and presentations. In

1990–1992, the Lithuanian American Community and Lithuanian American Council arranged a number of conferences in Washington which sought to garner the interest of the US press, Congress and other government institutions. Experts presented lectures followed by discussion sessions. A conference held in 1990 was called A Gift to Lithuania. These efforts proved to be successful. On September 2, 1991 the United States recognised the independence of the Republic of Lithuania.

Lithuanian American Community leaders met with almost all the US presidents during this period and established contact with the Polish and Jewish communities. Lithuanian American organisations sought to raise as much effective support for Lithuania as they could. Their efforts to attract as many US Senate and House of Representatives members to join in the Baltic Caucus, which would support the Baltic States, proved fruitful. In the Senate, the Baltic Caucus was headed by Senator Dick Durbin and by Congressman John Shimkus in the House of Representatives. In 1998, the Lithuanian American Community took part in the signing of the Baltic Charter between the US and the Baltic States, which defined cooperation of the Baltic States with the US government in the fields of security, politics and the economy.

To ensure the security of Lithuania and the Baltic States and their statehood, NATO expansion was deemed extremely important. The Lithuanian American Community cooperated successfully with the Central and East European Coalition which represented 21 million ethnic US citizens in seeking Lithuania's NATO membership. The Coalition tried to influence both US political parties and their representatives to be certain that Lithuania would be accepted into NATO. On March 26, 2004 in Washington, NATO officials signed new member membership protocols – the Lithuanian American Commu-



**Ticket to an event Commemorative Dinner
for the 10th Anniversary of Lithuania's Independence**
Laurence, Massachusetts, USA, 1928
Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius



Postcard *Lighten the Burden of the War Victims of Lithuania*
 United Lithuanian Relief Fund of America, Inc. New York, New York,
 USA, early 1940s
 Private collection of Prof. Juozas Skirius

nity and its president at the time, Regina Narušienė, was instrumental in this important achievement.

When the Soviet Union launched an economic blockade on Lithuania, the diaspora provided Lithuania with material aid (the Knights of Lithuania founded an organisation called Aid to Lithuania, Inc., the Lithuanian American Community created the Lithuanian Children's Hope committee and the Lithuanian Orphan Care Committee; a group of enthusiasts joined in the Lithuanian American organisation Lithuanian Mercy Lift, a Lithuanian Children's Care Committee was founded in Boston and a Lithuanian Partisans Welfare Fund was established in Chicago, etc.). Annual aid figures for Lithuania reached tens of millions of dollars annually. In the early years of Lithuania's independence, especially during the economic blockade, this support was invaluable, and in many cases – the only form of assistance they could expect. In order to help Lithuania's people and government, émigré repre-

sentatives and specialists arrived in Lithuania (Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus (1998–2003, 2004–2009), the Chief of Defence of Lithuania Major General Jonas Kroinkaitis (1999–2004), members of Seimas Kazys Bobelis, Vytautas Dudėnas, Feliksas Palubinskas, Romanas Algimantas Sedlickas), a significant number of Lithuanian Americans joined the diplomacy service and became involved in various business ventures.

World Lithuanian lawyers' congresses initiated by Lithuanian American lawyers in 1992 and 1996 helped in the compilation of the Constitution of Lithuania, submitting programs for the creation of the civil and criminal legal systems and encouraged the formation of an independent court system in Lithuania. Medical professionals from the diaspora also arrived in Lithuania to teach their colleagues new work methods and to familiarise them with the latest technologies. Americans of Lithuanian descent who were affiliated with the US military helped reestablish the Lithuanian Army and prepare it in accordance with NATO standards.

Lithuanian diaspora professors assisted higher education processes in independent Lithuania as well, passing on their knowledge and western experiences to students, and continue to act as patrons of Lithuanian scientists conducting internships in foreign universities. The diaspora academic community was greatly involved in reopening Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas in 1989 (the first rectors were from the diaspora – professors Algirdas Avižienis and Bronius Vaškėlis). World Lithuanian research and culture symposiums, which had been organised in the United States by the diaspora from 1969, made it possible for Lithuanian scientists to learn about advances in the sciences abroad from up close, and brought the achievements of Lithuanian scientists into broader global circulation. Later, participation of Lithuanian scientists in symposiums increased, which had an immense impact on the development of the sciences in Lithuania. Lithuanian scientists who arrived in the United States were given excellent opportunities to work in the Lithuanian World Archives in Chicago, the American Lithuanian Cultural Archives in Putnam, the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture in Chicago and in other Lithuanian research and document storage centres. The Lithuanian Research and Studies Centre in Chicago (Prof. Jonas Račkauskas) organised the mass transportation of academic literature and publications released in diaspora to Lithuania. Hundreds of thousands of books reached libraries and schools. Individual enthusiasts in Lithuania also participated in this process, donating their collections of books, periodicals and documents (the archive of Bronius Kviklys, Dr Kazys Pemkus' collection, etc.).

An impressive educational project was the A.P.P.L.E. Program (American Professional Partnership for Lithu-

anian Education), organised by Vaiva Vėbraitė-Gust and Jūratė Krokys-Stirbienė. This was one of the most successful examples of long-term (25 years) voluntary activities within the diaspora. A majority (over 50 percent) of Lithuanian teachers could learn about western teaching methods and democratic ways of educating children at A.P.P.L.E. Summer Seminars, which would be attended by foreign lecturers (453). Special pedagogical books would be sent to Lithuania and Lithuanian specialists would be informed of internship opportunities abroad.

Various diaspora Lithuanian foundations altered the way they allocated their support – from 1990 a majority of funds started being set aside for Lithuanian culture, science and art projects. When Lithuania restored its independence, cultural exchanges started to take place. Local communities would look after Lithuanian artists who arrived in the United States and other countries, assisting in the organisation of exhibitions and concerts. In 2000, the Lithuanian American Community brought over one thousand works of art to Lithuania that had been kept at the Čiurlionis Gallery in Chicago. Cultural treasures that had been kept safe outside of Lithuania continue to be returned to Lithuanian museums. Diaspora cultural figures, artists and individuals donate their works and art collections and allocate funds for the upkeep of Lithuanian cultural objects, churches and education institutions.

The Royal Palace Support Foundation was established in 2000 with the aim of not only collecting funds but also popularising the reconstruction of the Palace of the Grand Dukes in various ways. During the period 2000–2016, the Royal Palace Support Foundation collected approximately 5 million Litās from over 70,000 donors, a significant number of whom were Lithuanian Americans. In order to encourage Lithuanians in America to donate, in 2003 the Lithuanian American Community founded the Royal Palace Restoration Committee USA (the initiators were Edmundas Kulikauskas, Regina Narušienė, Marija Remienė, Vytautas Kamantas and others) for fundraising purposes. Lithuanian Americans donated over 700,000 dollars. The Royal Palace Restoration Foundation was obliged to maintain contact with the Committee and provide it with all the latest information regarding its activities. The money raised by the Committee went towards the refurbishment of the Gothic Hall in the Palace of the Grand Dukes, the murals in the Renaissance Hall, the creation of the sundial design and production, the manufacture of the Millennium Bell (which was donated to the Palace of the Grand Dukes), the publication of academic and other literature, etc.

In 1995 the Lithuanian American Community and the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania created a joint commission that was later reorganised to become the Com-

mission of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian World Community. The main goal of this body remains the cooperation of Lithuanians in the country and around the world.

When the new and significantly large wave of Lithuanian émigrés became incorporated into the community of world Lithuanians from 1990, the flows of money being sent to Lithuania increased considerably, reaching billions of euros a year in total. This is invaluable material assistance not only for relatives who stayed in Lithuania, but also adds to the current state's foreign currency reserves.

Diaspora (and new immigrant) charity organisations and single individuals continue their activities, large sums of money are being allocated to Lithuania's medical and education sectors, the welfare and health of children and the elderly; scholarships are granted to students and young scientists, support is offered to schools, etc. These organisations include the Lithuanian National Foundation, Daughters of Lithuania, Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, Child's Gate to Learning, Saulutė, Lithuanian Foundation Inc., Lithuanian Children's Hope Committee, Lithuanian Assistance Foundation in California, Kazickas Family Foundation, Vydūnas Youth Fund, Lithuania Minor Foundation, Rotary Club of Chicagoland Lithuanians, the Alatėja club, Chicago Mothers Foundation and many more.

During the course of over one hundred and fifty years, Lithuanian Americans have provided enormous material, financial, political, cultural and professional assistance to Lithuania and its population; at times it was critical and could not have come from any other source. We can be content knowing that the tradition of charity and volunteering within the diaspora remains alive and continues even today.

This article was printed in the exhibit catalog, *In the Name of a Free Lithuania*, published by the Lithuanian National Museum, Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania

Literature

- Aleksandravičius E. Karklo diegas. Lietuvių pasaulio istorija, Vilnius, 2013, p. 632.
- Eidintas A. Lietuvių kolumbai. Lietuvių emigracijos istorijos apybraiža, red. V. Žemaitis, Vilnius, 1993, p. 228.
- Januta D. Lietuviški takai, Vilnius, 2015, p. 299.
- JAV lietuvių indėlis atkuriant Lietuvos valstybingumą, sud. R. Narušienė, Vilnius, 2018, p. 559.
- Lietuvių išėvija Amerikoje (1868–1961), sud. S. Michelsonas, South Boston, 1961, p. 499.
- Liulevičius V. Išėvijos vaidmuo nepriklausomos Lietuvos atkūrimo darbe, Chicago, 1980, p. 398.
- Skirius J. JAV lietuvių darbai Lietuvai 1918–2018 metais, Vilnius, 2018, p. 560.
- Skirius J. Lietuvos valdžios ryšiai su JAV lietuviais 1926–1940 metais: suartėjimo kelių paieškos, Vilnius, 2016, p. 500.
- Škiudaitė A. V. Lietuvių pėdsakai Amerikoje, Vilnius, 2006, p. 808.

Memoirs of an Ordinary Lithuanian, Jonas Venckus

Translated from handwriting in Lithuanian by Roland Giedraitis



A portrait of Jonas Venckus in a Lithuanian hussar uniform, likely during basic training in 1927, by his great-granddaughter, Karina Konstantinavičius

Preface

Jonas Venckus was born in 1906 in Lithuania and died in 1988 in Los Angeles. He was just an ordinary, average man, but during his funeral, the church was filled to capacity.

Born into a farming family, his life spanned the entirety of Lithuania's independence from 1918 to 1940. He was a soldier, a police chief, a convict under the Soviets, a refugee, and an immigrant who made it to the US in 1949. His life reflects a similar fate suffered by thousands of other Lithuanians. Here are sketches of his life as he wrote in his memoirs.

I was born as the 12th child. Eight of us reached maturity: five brothers and three sisters. My parents were Antanina Žilvytė and Kazimieras Venckus, who lived in the village of Vosniūnai near the shores of the river Pyvesa. I was the youngest in our village.

There were no other children my age in the village, so I felt lonely till I went to school. I started classes only in 1915 during the German occupation. But my learning was not systematic since the school was about 4 kilometers away, so I had to trudge through mud or snowbanks, which slowed me down considerably. One year I was sick with typhus. I was bedridden from Christmas till Easter, sometimes in a semi-conscious state. Only when Lithuania's independence was maturing did I seriously begin my studies and finally finish high school.

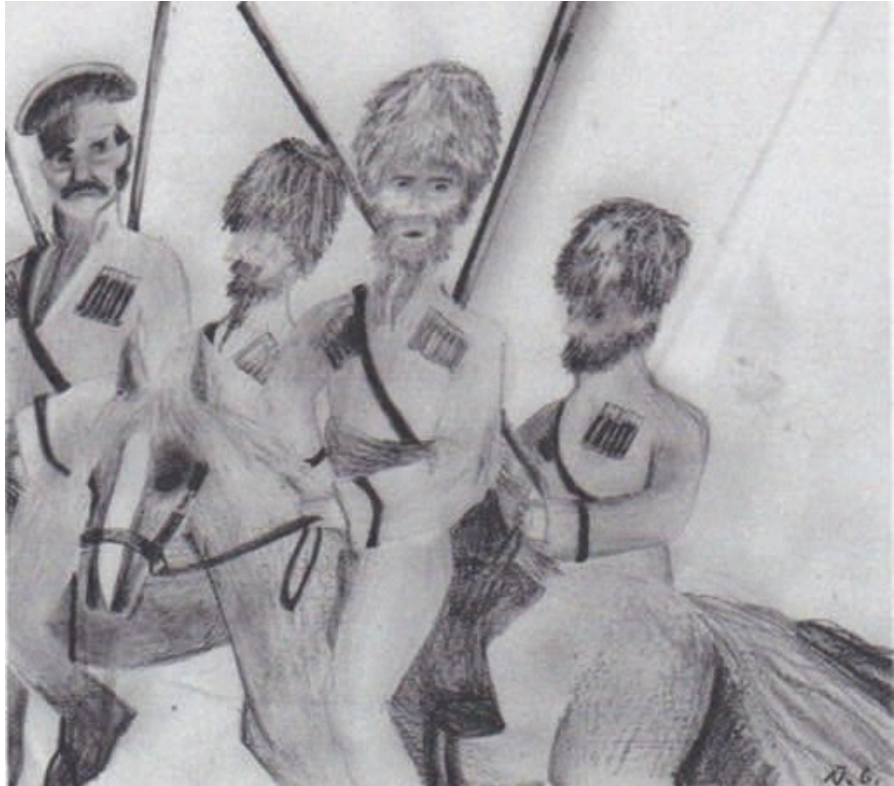
My childhood was in my village of Vosniūnai, where I was the youngest. I usually wanted to play with my brother, Stasys, and a neighbor's daughter, Onutė, who were four years older. But they did not always welcome me to their company. My mother loved me, so I spent a lot of time with her. My father had poor health, some liver disease. He was sickly, could work very little, and had no desire to play with me. Perhaps I was mostly loved by my brother Juozas. I would follow him around, and sometimes we worked together. He would always bring me something from the market. A bagel or a toy. In 1914 he was drafted into the Russian army. We felt very sorry for him and cried since we heard that he could get killed in the war.

I remember the First World War very well since our village was on the front line. Many Russian Cossacks came on horseback, and their scouts would gallop around to ascer-

tain where are the German troops. One day the scouts rode in with an injured cossack. They commanded my brother Pranas to harness a horse and take the injured cossack to a military field hospital. The next day the Germans started shooting at us with cannon fire. The cossacks ordered us to get out of the village. They told us to get a supply of food and hide in the forest since they anticipated combat. The Russians were digging trenches in our village. We grabbed some food, warm clothing and hurried along a small river to a forest. My father stayed behind even though my mother and I urged him to come along with us. But he refused, saying he is old and he thinks he could be more useful around the house if he stayed behind.

As we were hiding in the forest, we heard fighting with shooting and machine-gun fire, but the fiercest fighting was at dawn. It seemed the entire forest was rattling due to the noise from cannon fire, rifles, and machine guns. Around noon things quieted down, so the elders started returning to the village to check things out. Firstly, they met my father who said that it's OK to enter our homes since the Germans chased out the Russians. So, all of us, with our belongings, returned home. My father further related that the cossacks wanted to torch the entire village, but he gave the leader a bottle of vodka, who then canceled the torching. We found our homes a wreck. The animals were let loose to the fields since father was afraid they would burn if the stables were set afire. We found our horses and two cows shot. After a couple of days, my brother Pranas returned after the delivery of the injured cossack. Then, a couple of weeks later, the German administrators arrived from Geležiai, and all the remaining animals were ordered to be driven out to the Geležiai manor.

The Vosniūnai village really felt the German occupation. Each family was allowed one cow. This was in the summer of 1915, around August. My brother Povilas, who was a priest, was visiting. Because of his position, he was allowed an extra cow. So, during the German occupation, we struggled through with a couple of cows and two or three sheep. Later, my mother received a goat, so we had more milk. The cow's milk was requisitioned to the dairy plant for processing. We would receive back skim milk while the cream went to the Germans. The wool from the sheep and eggs from the hens were also requisitioned.



Drawing of Cossacks by Jonas Venckus's great-granddaughter, Ūla Giedraitis

My Education

In the fall of 1915, under orders from the Germans, the Sodeliai village elementary school was organized. Aside from mathematics, the Lithuanian language, science, and the German language were taught. With my brother Stasys, in winter we would travel to class with a horse-pulled sled since the school was about four kilometers away. The education went smoothly since the teachers were good. In the summer, my job was to be a shepherd. We had two cows, a couple of sheep with ewes, and a goat with two kids. Us shepherds especially did not like the ram since he smelled awful and always would get into things. In 1916 I attended the Geležiai elementary school since my brother Stasys did not want me to walk from my village. Thus, in the town of Geležiai, my mother found a room with the church organist where I stayed the whole week until Saturday, then on Monday, my brother would give me a ride to the school.

In 1918 my brother Juozas returned from service in the Russian army. That fall, I began private studies in Daršiškiai village to pass exams for high school. But after a year of work, I still did not pass the exam. Finally, I passed the exam in 1922 to enter high school in Pasvalys.

I boarded with Juozas Vizbaras and a spinster by the Jiesia River. Three of us in one room. She would cook for us, launder our clothes, and keep the room clean. She herself



The Pyvesa River by Sodeliai village



A bottle of vodka like this one may have saved the village of Vosniūnai from being torched by cossacks.



Elementary school in Pasvalys that Jonas might have attended. Photo taken from Lietuva Senose Fotografijose, Facebook



Children in the Pasvalys elementary school. Photo taken from Lietuva Senose Fotografijose, Facebook

slept in a tiny room that barely accommodated a bed. We lived like this for two school years.

In the year 1923-1924, a school was leased in the middle of town. A spacious two-story structure where we did not have to slosh through the mud to get to school. We felt like city folk. The school enlisted two young ladies who had graduated from Marijampolė high school and who were teaching us Lithuanian history, grammar, science, and geography in a clear Lithuanian language. Thus in 1924, eleven of us graduated from Pasvalys middle school.

A tragedy occurred that year. There was one student who came from a poor family but was quite bright. He even received special help from the teachers since he was so promising. We went to the Lėvuo River for a swim. Some of us, who were better swimmers, would swim to an island in the river. He was not a good swimmer, but he also tried to reach the island. After a while, he went missing. We got help to look for him. He was found drowned in the river's whirlpool. We all felt very sad about this promising student's untimely death.

Finally, in 1924 I was admitted to the Panevėžys high school. This seemed like a modern, up-to-date school with qualified teachers. I rented a room where another student by the name of Bronys Raila also boarded. He



The Lėvuo River in Pasvalys. Photo taken from Lietuva Senose Fotografijose, Facebook



Panevėžys at the time Jonas lived there. Photo taken from Lietuva Senose Fotografijose, Facebook



Pasvalys at the time Jonas went to school there. Photo taken from Lietuva Senose Fotografijose, Facebook



A horse-drawn sleigh. Jonas and his brother may have traveled to school in a similar one. Photo taken from Lietuva Senose Fotografijose, Facebook

was a talented writer. Our literature teacher was Father Lindė-Dobilas. Upon graduation from high school in 1926, I enrolled in an accounting school in Kaunas. The classes were in the evening, so there was a variety of age levels. Our teacher was Prof. Ilgūnas, which means "a tall man", but he was actually quite small but full of energy and enthusiasm. I enjoyed the accounting classes for a whole year, but in 1927 I received a notice to report to the Lithuanian army as a draftee. I was assigned to the cavalry as a hussar. After basic training, I was nominated to be a cadet in an officer training school. I was discharged from the army in 1928 with the rank of reserve lieutenant.

After my army experience, I wanted to continue my studies, but due to severe weather in my region, the economy was depressed. Farmers were forced to borrow to keep their farms. I then decided to attend the police academy since, at that time, it was easy to get in. I graduated in 1929. I was assigned to Panevėžys to serve in the city's police department. Thus, until the Soviet occupation, I was always dressed in some type of uniform.

To be continued...



German soldiers in 1915. Photo taken from Lietuva Senose Fotografijose, Facebook



Elementary school in Pasvalys. Photo taken from Lietuva Senose Fotografijose, Facebook

UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

Memoir of a Siberian Deportee

By Juzė Avižienytė Žukauskienė

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



Siberian Sky. Photograph by Rolandas Žygas

27. THERE IS NO BREAD, THERE IS NO NEED FOR TEETH

Time was moving towards spring. At the office, Tania and Talia, although from the "old contingent," that is, already better off, were obviously not sated either, since they constantly chewed "sulfur," overcooked and strained cedar resin, something similar to American chewing gum. Day in and day out, they chewed and smacked, because the resin sticks to the teeth and, as they chew, it makes a smacking noise, that just to listen to them, my jaws would begin to hurt.

"Why do you girls chew that awful stuff? You can't eat it, you can't drink it, you only ruin your teeth," I would ask.

"What do you mean! It cleans the teeth. Of course, one gets no satisfaction as from food, but still, you swallow the foam, and it fools your stomach, and you think you're eating something."

The most difficult thing was to watch the hungry children, especially the smallest ones. In our settlement, where there were so many deportees, it was impossible to get any food. Because if Tania, the chairman's daughter, was fighting off hunger with melted resin, then what to say about us.

My sick man got out of bed after about three months. Having gotten permission from the commandant, he went to the "freemen." He took my winter coat to exchange. Perhaps we could get some potatoes or a small piece of

butter. Unfortunately, no success.

.....One day, upon coming home for lunch, I found my husband spitting blood.

Frightened, I said:

....."What is this? Is it pneumonia again?"

.....And he, smiling with bloody lips, held out his bridge of golden teeth.

There were five of them. Two were healthy, two were covered with gold crowns, and three were false. One of the healthy ones was broken off, and the second one pulled out with its roots.

....."What happened? Why did they break off? I asked not yet having recovered my equilibrium.

"Don't worry, my dear, it's nothing terrible! If there is nothing to eat, so what are those teeth for? I'll get 8 kg of flour for them."

....."You're crazy, what have you done? You pulled out good teeth which cost not 8 kg but more than 8000 kg of flour.

And who will buy them from you?" I shouted.

"Oh, that was in Lithuania where bread was cheap, and gold was expensive.

But here, I found a man who's going to Tomsk. He'll sell them there, and we'll get 8 kg of flour. Soon nettles will be coming up through the ground. They use them here for food. We'll stretch it out. Maybe the war will end. It's important to safeguard the children somehow.

What could I say against such logic?

28. A GARDEN - A RAY OF HOPE

It was full spring. Since we were a family of three working members, the chairman offered that we dig up and fence off a small piece of the former "horse yard." The horse yard had already been set up in a different place, near the new stables.

We started to work eagerly. Stasiukas, back from school, would cross the river in a small boat to the other shore, would cut down poles and send them down the river towards our chata. With them, he built a fence as well as he knew how and as well as he could. We hurried to dig up the earth. And that earth, having been pounded for many years into a road, was not easily dug.

Other single women came and asked to be part of our "collective farm." We accepted them. A small bed would be enough for each one of us. We had no means to fence off a larger plot and nothing to dig with; we had little strength; besides, where would we get seeds. Whenever we could get a shovel for an hour or two, we dug and pounded the clumps of earth.

Here and there, from the local women, we exchanged things for seeds. Mostly turnips. Some kale, cabbage, carrots. My husband, having gone 26 km to the "freemen," got two pails of potatoes in exchange for his new pants

and a tablecloth.

What a joy it was when in the black, fertile Siberian earth, weak little green sprouts appeared. It was a hope that, at least for a while, we could defend ourselves from hunger. We tended those little sprouts with our hands or with chips; we watered them and waited when we could eat something. Here, everything grew quickly and luxuriantly.

That is how we, a strong family, lived. And what could one say about women who had been separated from their husbands, especially those, who had small children?

The Russian housewives, in the winter, when the whole family came back to the village, to the small tight chatas, would curse out these women who had been placed with them. Quite often, they would throw out the small pot that these women had placed to cook in the stove since they cooked only in the "Russian stove" (bread oven).

As a rule, no one had top ranges, and outside, one could not cook in the snow.

Whoever could, was repairing the chatas of those Russians who had died or who had left. One of the "strong ones" who obtained their own chata was the teacher Markvėnas, also with three children, and two young single women. There was also a woman, B.L., who "played up" to the chairman and would get from him at times this or that. What can one say, one warded off hunger in any way one could.

When my husband began to cough up blood after his pneumonia, Mrs. Jasinskienė became frightened that her young daughter, Jūratėlė, could be infected with tuberculosis and moved out. Genė Snarskienė buried her newborn infant.

How could I recount the miseries of all?

29. FIRST CASUALTY OF HUNGER

One early morning, while I was working in the garden, Savickas, starving, yellow, his unshaven face covered with gray bristle, his eyes sunken in, came staggering up. He had buried his wife in the autumn.

"Madam, give me a couple of potatoes. I shall give you a hundred for one when we are in Lithuania..."

My God! We were all still dreaming of returning to Lithuania and living again with plenty.

"I don't know what to tell you. If we were in Lithuania, I too could give you a hundred with a light heart, or even as much as you want, but here? You see, dear man, they are not even flowering yet, and even of those, there are only a few small beds. If I touch the roots, I shall destroy them," I tried to refuse.

The man fell on his knees and began to weep.

My heart could not withstand this.

With trembling hands, I began to dig under the plants.

Having looked around under several plants, I pulled out about ten little potatoes, as big as walnuts. I held them out to Savickas. He grabbed and began to kiss my dirt-covered hands. I jumped back and hid my hands behind my back.

"Well now! Eat to your health and do not consider yourself indebted..."

I ran to the chata, I scooped up a glassful of flour and was taking it out to him so that he could boil himself some potato mash. While he?... Having wiped the small young potatoes on his pants was stuffing them into his mouth.

"You'll get sick! They're covered with dirt. Here's a little flour. Make yourself some potato mash."

"I'm going, I'm going. I'll make myself some," and he hurried off to where he lived.

I doubt very much if he took all that home; most probably, he ate everything on the way. My neighbor Marfa came running up to me and shouted:

"Jaroslavna! Savickas is stealing potatoes at night! We must kill that skunk! Just look, in your garden too, the plants have been ripped out."

"No, Marfa, I dug up a few small potatoes for him myself, he's very hungry."

"Are you out of your mind, Jaroslavna!

Hungry!... And who is not? The potatoes have just begun to knot, and you are ripping them up for some trashy, stinking old man. Don't you know that a potato that you rip out now would give you ten in the fall. It will be a hundred times bigger! Besides, you are ruining the whole bush!" Marfa kept pouring on the reproaches as if I had damaged her potatoes.

Marfa was right, but for me to look at a man dying of hunger lightheartedly was not possible. A few more times, I gave him a little bit of this and that but not enough to stave off hunger.

And we ourselves were hungry also.

30. ANOTHER FUNERAL

One morning Ignasiūnienė came running up and, very frightened, announced that Savickas had died. They lived in the same chata.

I and a few other women went there. In a tight little hole in the wall behind the stove, Savickas was lying. His clothes were crusty, dirty, the stubble of his beard sticking out, his lifeless eyes were staring at the sky, lice were crawling over his rags and body. No one wanted to touch him. But, he had to be tidied up. Human kindness demanded it.

I informed the team leader. I made some sort of shroud from a sheet. I went back.

No one had touched the corpse: they were afraid, and

they were reluctant. I undressed so that there would be as few clothes on me as possible. I wrapped myself with a cut-up bag and began to tend to the dead man. -I had seen many corpses. During the First World War, from 1915 to 1918, I had worked as a nurse at the Front, and in 1922, at the Faculty of Medicine, I had to do practice in anatomy.

However, this was the first time that I had seen a person who had died of hunger. Only his skeleton was left. From his colon, came out only a little blood and some membranes.

Apparently, his intestines had been completely emptied.

After I arranged him, I went back to the office, but the work did not go well.

Before my eyes, constantly appeared the corpse of the tall man Savickas.

He had a grown son, who had been sent away to the "kulstan" (field camp) a few kilometers away to work on the spring sowing. The team leader sent a boy to inform the son about the father's death and kept cursing that the devil let the old man die when it was the height of the working season. He had to pull a man away from work so that he could nail together some sort of a coffin and would dig a hole.

"Where to get nails, the boards?" And again "Mat, mat."

At that moment, Stasiukas came running up to me.

"Oh, fine, fine, Stasiukas! You'll help to dig a hole for the dead man!" the team leader was overjoyed.

"Let's go!"

(Stasiukas later told us how he had "helped" dig a hole for the dead man.):

We went to the old man Siedych.

"Well, uncle, you'll help the boy dig a hole.

"Oh, Sidar Ivanovich, I can't even move. My back is killing me, I can't move...Oh, Oh, Oh!..."

"Oh, you can't! So who will dig the hole?" said the angry team leader. While the old man groaning, retorted:

"That's not my problem."

We went to another old man: that one had cut his foot. To a third: that one, groaning, and moaning, was crawling off the stove.

Somehow, we staggered about a kilometer away from the settlement into the taiga. He began to dig. Roots, grass above his head. The shovel doesn't go in. As soon as I step on and turn the shovel a little harder, immediately, my "helper" shouts:

"No, no! Take it easy, you'll break the shovel!" We dug as deep as our knees, and the old man said:

"That's enough. The coffin will fit and that's enough." I protested:

"The coffin won't go in yet, it's not deep enough."

"We'll put the earth on top so it won't show. The bears don't eat corpses, and there are no wolves, the snow is too

deep in the winter," said the old man.

Another old man, having ripped off a few other knobby boards from the daytime pig yard, nailed together a sort of trough. One could not call it a coffin: the boards were dirty, one side was rounded, - (they did not fence in pigs with good boards) - the trough had slits and was low.

His son came back. He was a young, nineteen-year-old boy, his hands cracked and hardened. He stood by his father, half dead, half alive as if he were a statue chiseled from wood.

"Well, Ivan, take care of your father and let's go bury him," the team leader poked him on the shoulder. Jonukas* was startled. He covers his face with his rough hands and groans. Dropping to his knees by his father, he sobs pitifully, even his shoulders shake. In the autumn, his mother died, and now his father. The women also wipe their tears.

Old man Tumaikin brought up a lame horse, its back rubbed sore, harnessed to a flat platform. To accompany him, the team leader sent Stasiukas and Jonukas. He ordered the others to go to work. By the coffin, someone had placed a cross tied together from two pieces of wooden fiber since they had no nails to nail it together.

The blacksmith would only make as many of them as were necessary to nail a coffin together somehow. Old man Tumaikin, crossing himself three times, sat at the foot-end of the coffin, took up the reins, and, with their ends, striking the horse across the back, began to move. Stasiukas and Jonukas, having placed the shovel beside the coffin, followed.

Tumaikin, with a hoarse voice, began to sing: "Rest in peace, with all the Saints..." It was like the Lithuanian, "Eternal rest..." He was singing and singing, the wheels hit a root, and both the old man and the coffin almost rolled off.

"Where are you stumbling, are you blind, you Soviet nag?!" He slapped the horse again with the reins and kept on singing: "Lord, have mercy..." The wheel hit a rut:

"Are you blind, you dim-sighted Soviet?! Svoloch!""* and once again, a strike across the horse's back and again a holy song.

We finally arrived. Jonukas began to deepen the hole. The old man, happy that we had arrived more or less successfully, and that we had rolled the coffin off the platform, crossed himself several times, made a very deep bow over the dead man, and mumbled: "Even though you are not christened, may God receive you," he turned the horse around and drove away. Jonukas and I rolled the coffin into the hole with difficulty, we tidied up the grave, stuck the cross in, and went back on foot.

Jonukas - diminutive of Jonas, Lithuanian for John
Svoloch- s.o.b. in Russian

Flax festival for Lithuanian families in Colorado

Aura Juškevičienė, Colorado Lithuanian School teacher



Kindergarden children's performance

Lithuanian-American families learned about the traditions of harvesting and processing flax at the educational event "I sowed the green flax" organized by the Lithuanian School of Colorado. Lithuania is a linen country. For centuries, it has grown flax for flaxen yarns, strong fabrics, and, nowadays, mainly for their flaxseeds, which have many nutritious and healing properties.

On the last Saturday of October, families dressed in linen, national and light-colored clothes took part in a concert, a linen workshop, and a presentation of culinary heritage. Songs and poems about flax, autumn, and the land that feeds us were performed by children aged 4-15. Together with their teachers and parents, the students danced and played Lithuanian folk games. The Lithuanian folk song "I sowed the green flax" will be remembered for a long time.

The children's performances were accompanied by stories about flax processing. We learned that October is the month of flax and what the month of October is all about. Where in Lithuania you can see flax crops turning blue. Why flax is a sacred plant in Lithuanian beliefs.

Children and their families heard proverbs, learned about the flaxen way by watching a film and exploring decorations collected from the Lithuanian community in Colorado. And it was well worth the search. The children saw a spinning wheel, linen tablecloths, handicrafts, dolls with national clothes, the Lithuanian national anthem woven, and dried twigs made of natural linen. Parents even constructed a threshing machine, which Lithuanians used to use to thresh grain. Everyone had the opportunity to read books on ethnic culture, poems, and leaflets on linen traditions. And since fall is the harvest season in Lithuania and many other countries, the children brought decorated vegetables of spectacular beauty to the festival.

Everyone was invited to bring a homemade flaxseed dish and share the recipe with the participants. Mothers, grandmothers, and children became experts in culinary heritage. For many of the authors, this was the first time they had experienced flaxseed as the main ingredient in a dish. The dishes ranged from black bread to sourdough bread, and it turns out that you can even find sourdough bread in the USA. There are also crisps with cheese, cakes

our community

made from berries, fruits, and various seeds, including flaxseed. The only drink is flaxseed vinegar and many other delicious, rich, and fall-scented treats.

Children took part in a linen workshop, where they could feel linen threads and fabrics up close. They put their hearts into decorating bags with colorful linen appliques and shaping linen yarn into cherubic dolls. All these creations will go to the Christmas event exhibition with the pupils' names.

We received a lot of help from teachers and parents. And all of this is just for our own children and for the Lithuanian families in Colorado so that we can be proud of Lithuania, the country where we come from.

The fall festival with the linen theme was the first day of the project "Four Ethnographic Days in Colorado". The project is supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania. The next meetings will include candle-making and carving workshops, as well as workshops on Advent and Christmas. All four ethnographic days will culminate in an ethnographic Christmas celebration. All the events are open to all families of the Lithuanian community in Colorado.



The festival began with singing the national anthem.



Linseed



Linen textiles exhibit



Children listen attentively to the story about flax.



Fall decorations made of pumpkins



A pumpkin decorated in Lithuanian colors



School principal Edita and Parents' Committee chair Kristina



Šarūnas with a flax doll he made

our community

Traveling around Dzūkija

Janina K. Shubert, Colorado Lithuanian School teacher
Agnė Varžukienė, Head Teacher of KTU Vaižgantas Progymnasium



Two Lithuanian communities in the Dzūkija Region



Vaižgantas School and Colorado School teachers

As summer passed and autumn rolled around again, students from the United States and Lithuania opened the doors to a virtual STEAM classroom. Over the past school year, students have already explored Aukštaitija and Suvalkija. So, this school year started with an unexplored region - Dzūkija. What makes it special? How did the Dzūkians decorate their homes? Why did partisans live in the forests? All this is what the students have been trying to find out during these classes.

Dzūkija is the most barren ethnographic region of Lithuania. However, it is probably the most beautiful part of Lithuania. In ancient times it was known as Dainava. The

Nemunas River flows peacefully between high banks and vast forests, and the woods are full of berries and mushrooms. During classes, students went mushroom hunting and berry picking and competed to see who could find the most. It is said that the most distinctive character traits of the Dzūkians are friendliness and hospitality, but it is immediately added that this friendliness ends where the mushrooms begin: a true Dzūkian will never give away where the mushrooms grow.

On October 16, teachers Jūratė, Jolanta, Agnė and Česlova from KTU Vaižgantas Progymnasium invited students from Lithuania and Colorado Lithuanian School to visit Dzūkija, famous for its songs and mushrooms. Together with their teacher Česlova, they visited the partisan hiding places in the Dainava District. Teacher Agnė talked about carvings and the Tree of Life, and the students created and cut an imaginary Tree of Life. Of course, they picked mushrooms and berries together with teacher Jūratė and even had a mushroom competition. The Dzūkians not only dressed up themselves, but they also liked to decorate their surroundings and homes. Various plant motifs, ornaments of geometric shapes, and a wide variety of colors dominated the decoration. Together with their teacher Jolanta, using STEAM, the students tried Ebru painting and experimented with dishwashing liquid.

On Saturday evening we were connected by heaven and earth, past and future, and between these poles, there is always HERE and NOW. The HERE and the NOW contain a lot...



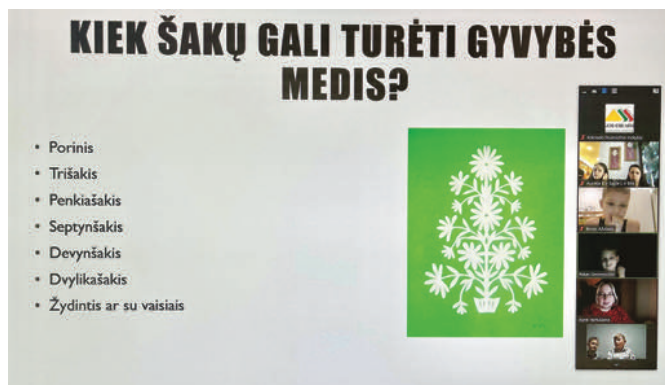
Dzūkija partisans and their bunkers



Learning about underground bunkers



Trying to find answers to riddles



Learning about the Tree of Life



Colorado Lithuanian School student Milda Lankelytė made a Tree of Life



Two brothers from the Vaižgantas School are making art



Saulė Lankelytė and Austėja Buzėnaitė are drawing on milk

current events

Security

...The U.S. Department of Defense's State Partnership Program (SPP) includes a state's National Guard units with 83 security arrangements with 90 nations. As part of the SPP, Lithuania is partnered with Pennsylvania's National Guard for more than 25 years. This year's program, Amber Mist, included 9 soldiers from the Pennsylvania Army National Guard Defensive Cyber Operations Element working with their Lithuanian counterparts in a week-long exercise in Lithuania. Last year's program was held remotely because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The cyber problem included detecting and defending a large metropolitan area network with multiple organizations.

...The Lithuanian Customs Department has signed a contract with the Warsaw branch of China's Nuctech for the installation of X-ray equipment for the inspection of freight on the border with Belarus at the Kena customs office. The value of the contract is less than 4 million euros. Although the Customs Department signed a contract with Lithuanian Railways in 2019 for infrastructure improvements, the installation of the X-ray will occur after construction. It is noted that Nuctech Warsaw was barred from bidding on the Lithuania airports' baggage scanning project because of national security concerns. In June 2020, The Wall Street Journal reported that U.S. agencies had launched a campaign against Nuctech, noting that its low pricing was meant to control and gather data on strategic EU infrastructure.

...Zapad-2021, the large-scale joint military exercise of Belarus and Russia, will be observed by two Lithuanian military officers and an observer from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Zapad, meaning "west" in Russian, is held every 4 years on a rotation with Russian exercises in the east (vostok), center (tsentr), and Caucasus (Kavkaz). Since the last Zapad in 2017, Russia has expanded its military by adding the 18th Division in Kaliningrad and expanding existing brigades into Divisions. It is expected to tackle threats posed by remotely operated aircraft, loitering munitions, and drone swarms. At the Mulino Firing Range about 300 miles from Moscow, President Vladimir Putin watched the finale. Estimates of participants often vary widely: one estimate includes 2,500 Russians, 10,000 Belarusians, 50 soldiers from Kazakhstan, small contingents from Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Armenia, and representatives from India who will be using Russian tanks and infantry fighting vehicles. Other estimates are that 200,000 are taking part. Unlike in Vostok-2018, Tsentr-2019, and Kavkaz-2020, China was not represented. In August, China and Russia held a joint exercise in China named Interaction-2021.

...In a partial response to Zapad-2021, Lithuania has requested that NATO send the Counter Hybrid Support Team (CHST) to advise Lithuania on the hybrid aggression by Belarus against Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland. NATO formed CHST in response to the 2014 military occupation of the Donbas and Luhansk regions of Ukraine by Russian irregular forces and by the recognition of hybrid threats such as Russia's interference in the 2016 US elections, the nerve agent attack on former agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Salisbury, UK and a campaign to overthrow the government of Montenegro and prevent it from joining NATO. During a two-week program, NATO's CHST will investigate cyber defense, energy security, counter-terrorism, civil preparedness, and strategic communications.

...The Lithuanian government has contracted with the state-owned power and gas grid company EPSO-G to build the first section of 110 km (70 miles) of fence at a cost of 36 million euros. The target date is April 2022. It will have razor wire on top at a height of 4 meters. Six additional coils of wire will be arranged in a pyramid and placed between the border and the fence. Overall the total project is projected to cost about 152 million to cover the 500 km (315 miles). Lithuania and Belarus share a 680 km border. Donations are pouring in. The Czech Foreign Minister announced a donation of 13.5 million Czech crowns (530,000 euros) for the barrier. Denmark has sent 15 km of barbed wire to Lithuania. Poland is dispatching 53 police officers to help Lithuania patrol its border with Belarus.

...Lithuania's Defense Ministry is drafting legislation to ban state institutions from purchasing "untrustworthy" equipment after finding Xiaomi's Mi, 10T 5 G phones could be remotely turned on to censor browsers of "Free Tibet" and "Long live Taiwan." It noted that an encrypted SMS message sent on registering for Xiaomi's Cloud service with the security assessors was unable to verify which personal data were contained in it. Xiaomi said that it had hired a European-based third-party organization to assess the censorship allegations. The Ministry is also recommending that consumers that already have the phones get rid of them due to consumer data monitoring. Similarly, a Danish IT expert and corporate security consultant, Jasper Heilbrandt, recommends avoiding this product because both Xiaomi and the Chinese state would benefit from consumer data monitoring. He said, "Commercially, we know from experience that data from private consumers is insanely valuable, while the targeted censorship is a clear geopolitical agenda."

Covid-19

...Lithuania will donate a second batch of 235,900 doses of the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine to Taiwan as a follow-up to the initial donation of 20,000 doses, which was warmly received. In Taipei, the Presidential Office spokesman, Xavier Chang, said that "The warm friendship between diplomatic partners knows no borders. The second donation of Covid-19 vaccines again displays Lithuania's love for democracy and its strong and warm support for diplomatic partners." He continued, "The circle of good between the two nations would definitely overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic." The Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the two nations are set to reciprocate representative offices by the end of this year in a show of solidarity between democracies.

Overall, the number of deaths directly or indirectly related to Covid-19 is 9,709.

Business

...The Norwegian furniture maker Ekornes plans to expand its production and distribution facility in the Panevėžys Free Economic Zone to 25,000 sq. meters and add 100 specialists to its current 200 employees. The company manufactures beds, chairs, and sofas with 19 sales offices and presence in 48 countries and has 3,100 employees. The Lithuanian site was the company's first combined production and distribution facility and made use of the skilled labor force and strategic location, which facilitates shorter product delivery times.

...Satalia, a leading Artificial Intelligence company, with headquarters in London but a major office in Kaunas has been purchased by Wunderman Thompson, a division of WPP, considered the world's largest advertising company with revenue of 12 billion pounds. It will act as a hub of AI expertise for all WPP agencies. Employing 80, Satalia has two products: Workforce, which automates and optimizes the allocation of people to their work and is used in accounting and consulting sectors, and Delivery, which is a leading home-delivery solution that optimizes the routes and schedules of fleet vehicles every time a new order is made.

...Telia Global Business Services Lithuania plans on hiring 200 specialists each year out to 2024. The Vilnius office specializes in IT, telecommunications networks, analytics, software development, procurement, finance, and human resources. In 2019 after the merger of Teo and Omnitel, it laid off 285 employees but has rebounded in recent years. Headquartered in Sweden, Telia has 20,800 employees in the Nordics and Baltics and over revenue of over 89 billion Swedish krona (approx. 8.9 billion euros).

...Last year Lithuanian business invested 180 million euros in Ukraine, with major emphasis in the financial, insurance, wholesale and retail sectors. Trade between the two countries reached over 1 billion euros. The Lithuanian Ambassador to Ukraine, Valdemaras Sarapinas, said that Lithuanian businesses are interested in future investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency, ecology, water purification, infrastructure restoration and reducing climate change. He said that Ukraine can improve its business atmosphere by having more transparent courts, reducing corruption, and reducing administrative barriers.

...Achema, the Lithuanian nitrogen fertilizer and ammonia manufacturer and the Baltics largest consumer of natural gas, laid off a third of its workforce (400 employees) as rising prices for natural gas and energy sources made operations uneconomical.

...Lithuania's unemployment rate in September was 12.2% representing 211,200, down 24,400 from a year ago.

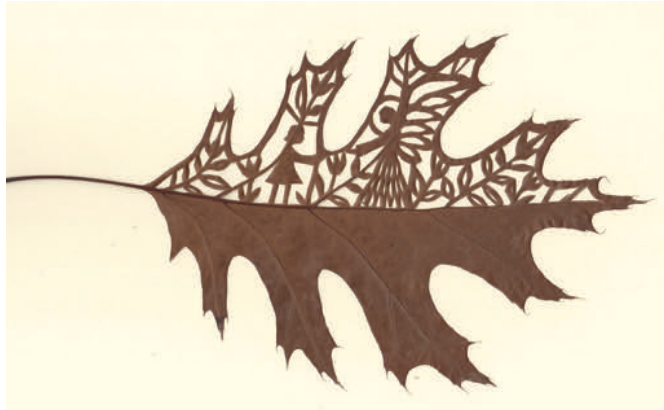
General

...During World War 2, three U.S. pilots were shot down in Lithuania between February and March 1944. Recently their remains were discovered and are being returned to the U.S. for DNA tests at a military laboratory in Nebraska for eventual return to their families. The send-off ceremony is planned at Vilnius University Medicine Faculty, with U.S. Ambassador Robert S. Gilchrist, Lithuanian Vice-Defense Minister Margiris Abukevičius, and Archbishop Gintaras Grušas in attendance.

...Five Afghan men who had made at least 10 attempts to enter Lithuania illegally from Belarus had been pushed back into Belarus by Lithuanian border guards. The European Court of Human Rights had said that they should be allowed to stay because they claimed that they had been "westernized" and feared living under the Taliban and sought international protection. A spokesman for the Lithuanian Border Guards said that they would be allowed to apply for asylum, despite entering the country illegally, and be taken to a temporary camp, tested for Covid-19, and quarantined. Last year 81 migrants came from Belarus; so far this year 4,100 migrants from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Asia have illegally entered Lithuania from Belarus.

...President Gitanas Nausėda presented state Life-Saving Cross awards to 37 people for saving Jews from Nazi genocide during WWII when about 195,000 Jews were killed in Lithuania.

Leaf cut outs by Odeta Bražėnienė



bridges

SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

Please check all that apply:

- New Renewal
 Gift Donation

Mail to:

LAC, Inc./BRIDGES Subscriptions
 1471 Wood Avenue
 Downers Grove, IL 60515

Order online with PayPal at lithuanian-american.org

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

Please send:

- 1 year electronic (10 issues via email) \$30
 1 year print (10 issues by mail) \$40
 2 years print (20 issues by mail) \$75

Your Name (please print)

Gift Subscription Name (please print)

Your Email

Gift Subscription Email

Your Address

Apt. No.

Gift Subscription Address

Apt. No.

City

State

Zip

City

State

Zip

November 2021

“Lithuanian International Student Services” (LISS)

liss-vasara.lt

The 2022 LISS program will take place from June 12, 2021 to July 17, 2021.
Registration for the program opens November 15, 2021 and closes February 1, 2022



LISS program participants with President Valdas Adamkus

“Lithuanian International Student Services” (LISS) program is organized by the Lithuanian-American community for university students of Lithuanian descent in the United States of America and Canada.

LISS provides the opportunity for a 5-week summer internship in Lithuania according to your field of study and future career aspirations. LISS students intern 5 days a week, at least 6 hours a day at the place of their internship.

The LISS program is an intensive cultural program – students will travel throughout Lithuania, meet with inspiring working Lithuanians, and in the process, gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of their Lithuanian heritage. The students will also discover a creative and high-tech Lithuania, with visits to biomedical centers, laser companies, high-tech science centers, and during these visits, will be able to learn from business and science representatives in each of these fields.

Program participants who successfully complete their Lithuanian internship can add their valuable and diverse international work experience to their CV, as well as receive 5 university credits, as the Lithuanian-American community in the United States has partnered with select Lithuanian Universities: Vytautas Magnus University; Vilnius University; and Vilnius Gediminas Technical University.

The LISS program is funded by Lietuvių Fondas. The program is led by Romėna Čiūtienė.

The LISS program invites Lithuanian-Americans and Lithuanian-Canadians who are undergraduate and graduate students (ages 18-26), to become a part of this program. To become a participant, one of the following requirements must be met: (1) the student previously participated in a Lithuanian Saturday school; (2) the student is an active member in the Lithuanian-American community; or (3) the student is a Lietuvių Fondo member.

bridges

VOLUME 45

ISSUE 9

LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

