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from the editor

Dear Reader,

March is the month when Lithuania celebrates its independence. And so do the Lithuanians of the world. This year, as the Russian aggression rages in Ukraine and people are being killed every day, including civilians, the elderly, women, and children, we celebrated Lithuanian independence with a heavy heart. Ukrainian flags were flying along with the Lithuanian ones during the independence celebrations in all the chapters of the Lithuanian American Community and the Lithuanian Saturday schools. Lithuanians remember but too well the Soviet and the czarist occupations and their consequences. We are grateful for the "miracles" of Lithuania's independence and of Lithuania's inclusion in the European Union and NATO and for all those who worked hard so that those "miracles" would happen. We now stand with Ukraine and help Ukrainians in every way we can. And we hope and believe that Ukraine will be free.

Karilė Vaitkutė
Editor



Happy Independence Day!

*March 11th is our Freedom Day. Freedom brings many opportunities, but it also brings more responsibility for one's actions, for the fate of one's children and for the fate of one's country. Let us love Lithuania and believe in its future. The country that we will have in the future is the country that we will build together. Let us be worthy of the freedom, of which March 11th has become a symbol.
I wish you a joyful and meaningful celebration!*

Arvydas Urbonavičius
LAC National Executive Committee President





The Achievements of the Sunlight Children's Aid

Salantai School principal Aušra Zebitienė shows the school's classrooms

The start of a new year prompts us to reflect upon the achievements of 2021 and look forward to continued progress in 2022.

July 1, 2020, Lithuania's parliament passed a mandate requiring all schools to integrate special needs students within their general student body by September 1, 2024. This is a truly notable goal. The country does have staff members at many schools who are trained in special education. However, a formidable obstacle remains because Lithuania has allocated only minimal funds to purchase the materials, technology, and dedicated classroom space to assist these special needs students. In particular, rural schools desperately need financial assistance.

In 2021, Sunlight Children's Aid was able to support a rural school in Mosėdis, Lithuania, by funding the creation of a dedicated multi-use Special Education Classroom. The classroom was subdivided to accommodate speech pathology, reading disabilities, as well as physical and developmental disabilities. We are now focusing on the Salantai School in the Kretinga Region of Lithuania. The goal of this classroom is to create a multipurpose room, specifically designed for autistic, attention deficit, and aggressive/emotional disorders. Although each classroom requirements differ, on average, the cost per classroom has been approximately \$20,000.00.

We have sent the first of three payments to the Salantai Special Education Classroom Project and will send the remaining balance when the project nears completion. We are very grateful to Artūras Žilys, our authorized representative in Lithuania, for his oversight of these projects. A third school in Lithuania is finalizing its formal proposal for its own dedicated Special Education classroom. If we accept their proposal, we will strive to collect additional donations for that project.

Although our focus has somewhat changed to pursue project-based support that may help more children at one time for extended periods, we do continue to support the children remaining in our Sponsor a Child program. Most of our children in this program are selected by Lithuania's Children's Fund (Lietuvos vaikų fondas) in Vilnius. However, we have expanded to include some families in Mosėdis, Lithuania, through a not-for-profit organization called Asociacija Aukime (translated – The Let's Grow Association).

We have many other future considerations, which are all dependent upon your donations. Projects include expanding the computer programming options at the Mosėdis school for students ages 10-14 years old. We are in the process of discussing options with such programs as Sourcery Academy <https://sourceryacademy.com> in



On October, 2021 Daina Siliunas and Artūras Žilys visited Salantai School in Lithuania and met with a variety of specialists, teachers and the principal of Salantai School, Aušra Zebitienė.

Kaunas. This project could introduce and ignite students into STEM, or specifically IT fields, giving them a solid career prospect. We may also consider sending financial support to established organizations in Lithuania such as Šeimos Slėnis <https://seimos-slenis.lt/> an organization that provides services for infants and children with disabilities, and Viltis <http://www.viltis.lt> the Lithuanian Society for the Care of People with Intellectual Disabilities.

Sunlight Children's Aid continues to utilize nearly all of your donations to directly support children in foster care, living with disabilities or with dire circumstances in Lithuania. All of our board members and members at large are volunteers and receive no financial compensation. One rare expense in 2021 was the creation of our new website <https://sunlightchildrensaid.org> which will allow us to better communicate the work we are trying to accomplish through the generosity of our donors. Please check our website regularly for information on upcoming fundraising events, current projects, as well as our annual report.

Our chairman Daina Siliunas spent two weeks in Lithuania in October 2021 to visit multiple NFP children's organizations; she also followed up with many of Saulutė's donation recipients. This information has helped us hear directly from schools, social workers, and families to help us plan and prioritize future donation allocations. In principle, Saulutė does not accrue funds. As donations are acquired, we evaluate our project list and distribute our funds.

This year presents a unique goal for our organization as we approach our 30th anniversary in 2023. If we can raise \$78,480.00 to donate to Lithuania this year, we will have reached a milestone of sending a total of 4 million dollars in aid in 30 years.



Salantai School Special Education Classroom has begun construction of its "calming area"

Like the classic children's story "The Little Engine that Could," Sunlight Children's Aid continues to optimistically believe in perseverance.

Established in 1993 as Sunlight Orphan Aid, Saulutė, our organization has been collecting donations, small and large, to support underserved children in Lithuania. It is only because of the generosity of donors such as you and the organization's tireless volunteers, both in the US and Lithuania, that so many children have received needed aid.

Please help us continue to support children in foster care, living with disabilities, or in dire circumstances, by making a donation. You can be their ray of hope. www.SunlightChildrensAid.org.

Thank you!
Sunlight Children's Aid Correspondence Committee

Memoirs of an Ordinary Lithuanian, Jonas Venckus

Translated from handwritten notes by Roland Giedraitis



Vilnius area returned to Lithuania in 1939

Part 4

Preface: John's police career is going well. But Lithuania is occupied by the Russian Soviets. He is arrested and incarcerated, eventually freed when the Germans attack. He was able to resume his duties in Simnas.

SIMNAS

After Vilnius was returned to Lithuania, there were changes in the civil service. I was promoted from a 2nd class to a 1st class police precinct chief. I was also assigned from Varėna to Simnas. It was a prosperous area with a population of about 15,000. There were two parishes, a post office, an elementary school, two physicians and a dentist, a railroad stop, and various shops.

Our family received an apartment opposite the police station, which was also inhabited by the municipal administration. The farmers were prosperous. The parish pastor

Šeškevičius and school director Bendorius were especially influential citizens. We invited them to our home to get better acquainted, serving them a sumptuous meal and vodka! We got along very well with the inhabitants.

Then suddenly, on June 15, 1940, we suffered a Soviet invasion. (Note #1: October 1939, Lithuania agreed to accept about 20,000 Soviet troops confined to four bases, Vilnius returned to Lithuania; the government did not change. In June 1940, Lithuania endured a full Soviet occupation; the government soon changed) We received orders from Kaunas to maintain order and not resist the Russian forces. The Russian infantry marched with their horse-pulled transport through our town of Simnas. They all looked very tired. We watched unhappily through our windows. Our local reporter wanted to take a picture, but a Russian officer stopped him.

Demonstrations and slanderous accusations began against the Smetona regime. One poor farmer shouted from a wagon that now we will have equality, and the police will not confiscate his cows. But he was wrong.

After a month or so, he was jailed for not giving his proper quota.

Soon announcements came that there would be elections to a People's Congress and then entreat "The Sun of Stalin" so that Lithuania would be admitted to the Soviet Russian family. I and my policemen tried to maintain order during these times of Soviet propaganda. I eagerly waited for my assigned August vacation when our family could travel to our hometown. While we were vacationing, a policeman came from Vabalninkas and said that a police sergeant from Simnas, Venckauskas, urgently wanted to speak to me. I immediately went to the Vabalninkas police station and called Simnas. I found out that the communists want to arrest me. A border policeman, Jasiūnas, told me that a Varėna Russian, Savčenko, told him that there is pressure from the Varėna

Jews that I be arrested. Jasiūnas said he would try to rectify the situation. I returned to Simnas, and the next day I was arrested by a Lithuanian Soviet security official Tamulevičius (from Varėna). He transported me to Alytus.

Tamulevičius and Savčenko were known local communists. They were known to the authorities. They had been arrested for minor offenses such as agitations and hanging red ribbons from their houses. But now, Tamulevičius is appointed as security chief for the Alytus area, and Savčenko has been appointed as his assistant since he speaks Russian and can translate.

I was transported from Simnas by an auto confiscated from a local physician. During the trip, Tamulevičius was silent, but in the end, he said times have changed and that our positions have changed. In the office, we found Savčenko and a Russian who did not speak at all. But Savčenko mocked me, saying: "Your overlordship has ended. You'll need to redeem yourself for your pretty epaulets." I replied that times change and epaulets change. You see, he was already wearing the Russian security man uniform. He sprung on me: "Please do not insult me!" He grabbed a chair and swung it toward me. But I suddenly moved, and the chair crashed above my head on the wall and shattered. I was barely touched. He seemed to realize that he acted foolishly; he called a militiaman who escorted me to a jail room.

They held me in that jail for a couple of days and then delivered me to the Marijampolė prison. I was a lone prisoner accompanied by two escorts. We traveled by train



Happy days. Lithuanian army troops enter Vilnius in 1939 when it was returned. The euphoria lasted until 1940 when the Soviet Russians occupied the entire country.



Soviet Russians occupy Lithuania in October 1940. This will last till March 1990.

without incident. We were greeted at the prison by the same caretaker as in independent Lithuania. He documented what I had on me: a watch, a ring, a belt, and assigned me to cell # 115.

The cell was meant to be occupied by two persons, but I found six. A priest, an amateur short wave radio enthusiast, an ex-security official, and some other people. We all received a bag full of straw for a pillow and an army-type blanket for covering. At night, we decided to leave the two beds stacked one on top of the other while all six of us lay

on the ground like sardines in a barrel.

We stayed in that cell for four months without any interrogation or any communication with the outside world. The priest knew a bit of morse code, so we had some communication with the adjacent cell. In the morning and evening, we were escorted to the bathrooms where sometimes we found newspaper clippings which gave us some idea of what was going on in the world.

The food at first was not bad. We called it “smetoninis” after our late president. In the morning, we received a half loaf of bread, a spoonful of sugar, and cikorija coffee. For lunch, we had barley or pea porridge, a bit of pork, and cabbage or beets. For supper, milk-based soup. It was about what a soldier would get. But after the new year, there were changes which we called proletarian communist. The bread ration was reduced to a third of poor-quality bread loaf. The sugar was eliminated. For lunch, we received soup with pieces of pork head. For supper, there was watery soup.



German troops crossing the Nemunas River in their attack on the Soviet Union, c. 1941



Marijampole prison, where Jonas Venckus was incarcerated

In the springtime, for lunch, we got rotten cabbage and poorly rinsed pig entrails. And later, it was chopped pig lungs with cabbage soup. Many got diarrhea from this, and some just could not eat it at all. I pinched my nose and swallowed since I was afraid to weaken and not be able to stand.

There was no correspondence. No parcels from home. We began now to be interrogated. I was moved to room 3. There were 14 beds, but there were over 30 of us. There were various people in the room. A couple of Jews, some Polish POWs, students, Varėna’s school director Andrius Ryliškis, Alytus tax inspector Čeplinas, and others. Mainly a motley crew of civil servants. We were summoned from the room for midnight interrogations and returned by breakfast.

I was personally interrogated 25 times, always at midnight. My interrogator was an ex-Suvalkija blacksmith. A young and sturdy man, but like us, very tired. When summoned, he filled out a form then asked me to tell him about my crimes.

I told him that I did not commit any crimes, but he insisted I relay to him the routines of my duties, which I told him till he fell asleep. When the pencil dropped from his hand, I stopped talking and joined him in sleep. Thus two or three hours passed, then he told the guard to return me to my cell. And so, in those 25 instances, he wrote almost nothing, and my case was not concluded.

This delay saved us from the June 1941 deportations. Our interrogators were not very cruel since the prisoners were returned in fairly good health. There was some bloodshed and punches. Through our windows, we heard screams and moaning coming from the women’s section of the prison; however, they did not suffer as severe cruelty as the Kaunas prisoners.

The stronger of us tried to keep up morale. Myself, lying on the table, I would pretend I am the room’s rooster. Whenever we heard the prison’s whistle to get up in the morning, I would stand on the table and flap my hands on my sides, imitating a rooster, I would crow. It seemed to amuse my fellow prisoners.

By springtime, there were instances of convicts going insane. Some were removed from our room due to their screaming and flaying about. New arrestees were not sent to our room. We heard the news when we visited the doctor or the dentist. I was trusted by the dentist Orentienė. As she was fixing my teeth, she related some news about the outside world.

But we had to be discreet since there were spies.

After supper, until silence, we had free time, and during it, we would tell each other remembrances or about books we read. The best narrators of books were Čeplikas and Sadauskas. Čeplikas would recount a book so vividly that it seemed he was reading the book right then. In one evening, he would narrate a book from beginning to the end with the author, plot, and even the publishing date. Sadauskas was also an excellent storyteller. Besides, he would predict your future from the palm of your hand! Unfortunately, when we got out of prison, Čeplikas was executed by the Germans since he was suspected of being a spy. He spoke Lithuanian, Russian, and German fluently.

By the end of May and the beginning of June, a lot of our cases were nearing their end. We were transferred to different cells. In the shower rooms, we found writings that told of being exiled to Siberia. We expected a similar fate. But on June 22, 1941, the war started and ruined some Russian plans. We heard shootings and airplanes flying. One German plane was shot down, and the pilots were locked in the prison. Then we knew that the war had begun.

On June 22, 1941, we received our supper in a normal manner, but we noticed that the guards were quiet. We heard loud conversations in the prisoner cells, and we talked from one cell to another through windows. We noticed there were no guards in the guard towers. That night we did not sleep. We wondered what was going on and what we should do. We heard noises of doors being pounded by benches. Then we heard that the ones who first freed themselves got hold of the cell keys and then started opening all the doors.

In the morning, we met German soldiers. From the prison emerged the Marijampolė county supervisor Geštautas who spoke German well. They decided to move all the prisoners to a nearby sports stadium; the prison caretakers and criminals were told to return to the prison and cook breakfast and lunch for us. The political prisoners were left in the stadium. The Jews and those suspected of being communist agents were led away separately by the Germans.

We spent two days in the stadium. Tuesday evening, Geštautas announced that we were free to go home. The teacher Ryliškis and myself left the Marijampolė prison in the evening when it was getting dark. We were imme-



A typical Marijampole prison cell, meant for two people; Jonas Venckus shared it with five others

diately stopped by a German patrol. We knew a bit of German, so after explaining the situation, they released us. Six kilometers away lived the teacher Avaravičius's mother. We knocked on her door at night, and she was reluctant to let us in, but then she recognized Ryliškis and welcomed us in. We learned from her that her son Avaravičius was exiled to Siberia a week ago. We tried to comfort her, saying that the Germans were moving fast and their planes could have bombed the railroad. But in her mother's heart, she sensed that she would never see her loving son again.

After a good night's sleep, we had a hearty breakfast of scrambled eggs with bacon. We continued on the road toward Prienai. The German army marched unrelentingly eastward. The road was a cloud of dust. Russian troops tried to run eastward, but the Germans shot at them like rabbits.

We continued our journey toward Simnas, always afraid of Russian soldiers since they were retreating like rabbits eastward. We arrived in Žuvintai village at nightfall. I recognized the village elder who welcomed us. We spent the night at his home and, again, had scrambled eggs and bacon in the morning. Then he harnessed his horses and took us to Simnas on roads not used by the soldiers. After leaving Aravičiene and Žuvintai, we apologized that we had fleas. Fleas are friends of the oppressed.

After returning to Simnas, I did not assume any duties. Dr. Starkus checked my health and was kind enough to let me rest at his home. Our old apartment was converted to an office. We did not find any of our furniture or other

belongings. But Simnas itself did not suffer during the war.

Two weeks later, I traveled by truck converted to a bus to Kaunas. And from Kaunas, again by truck, to Panevėžys, then Rokiškis, then Palėvenė, where I met my brother, Stasys. From there, we traveled to Romongaliai where I found my family healthy and increased by a daughter (Danutė). The children did not recognize me and avoided me. But by the next day, we became friends again. After a week's vacation, I returned by train to Simnas, while my family stayed behind. Only then did

I resume my old duties as Chief of Police. Normal police work ensued. I was given a new apartment, so normal family life resumed. But early in 1942, I received a summons from the Kaunas police directorate that I am being transferred to Seirijai with the same duties. I eagerly went there since we were all afraid of being sent to the Vilnius region, where communist bandit forces were active.

Next: posting to Seirijai and life under German occupation.



Simnas town square, c 1920s



Present-day Simnas, a town in southwest Lithuania

Finding Relatives in the United States

Karilė Vaitkutė



Loreta's (standing first from the right) reunion with relatives in America

Since the abolishment of serfdom in Lithuania in 1861 and the unsuccessful insurrection of 1863 against the czarist Russia, Lithuanians were leaving their country and coming to the United States. The majority came by the start of the First World War in 1914. The second great wave of immigration happened after the Second World War when Lithuanians fled the Soviet terror. Families have split apart. For many decades, until Lithuania regained its independence in 1990, those who remained in Lithuania could not travel freely and see their long-lost relatives who settled in the United States.

Things changed after 1990. Family members tried to find out what happened to their loved ones during the decades after the war, and many tried to re-established the lost ties. Loreta Timukienė was among many who did exactly that. When she came to the United States fourteen years ago, all she had that linked her to her grandmother's

sister was a small newspaper clipping that later on proved to be the starting point of her long search for her relatives. That newspaper clipping was an obituary of her grandmother's sister, Agnė Judzentienė. It was published in an American Lithuanian newspaper in 1938. The name of the newspaper remains unknown.

Loreta remembered that when she was a small girl, her grandmother, Marijona Makarevičiūtė, used to tell her about her older sister who was sent to the United States by her aunt and who died young after giving birth to her second daughter. That was the family story. Nothing else was known. Loreta wanted to find the two daughters and their families, the first cousins to Loreta's mother. It would be nice to one day have a family reunion.

Agnė was born in 1902, and in 1922 she sailed to New York upon the invitation of her aunt, who had already settled in America. It is not known why it was only Agnė, the oldest of the three siblings, who was invited to go to America. The family speculates that perhaps because she was the oldest. The only piece of information about Agnė was a newspaper clipping,

an obituary which sadly reported about her early death at 35, just after giving birth to her second daughter. Loreta's grandmother often wondered about what Agnes's life was in America, where did she live, what happened to her husband and their two daughters. After Loreta's grandmother passed, the newspaper clipping was not thrown out. It was saved by Loreta's mother, the family historian, who keeps track of all the members of the family. She even embroidered the family tree. The embroidery is framed and kept in the family in Lithuania. And recently, she, with the help of the daughter, published her family history.

A few words should be said about the obituaries of Lithuanian Americans that are published in Lithuanian American newspapers. Usually, they provide quite a lot of information, including the information about the location in Lithuania from which the deceased immigrant



First Communion of Elena, eldest daughter of Loreta's grandmother's sister Agnė



Agnė and Juozas Judžentas

came. It also sometimes mentions the closest relatives who were left not only in the United States but also in Lithuania. In Loreta's great aunt Agnė's case, the obituary was even more informative. Loreta says that Agnė got a longer article in the newspaper because her husband, Judžentas, was quite active in the Lithuanian community in New York. He was a member of the Aidas chorus. Later on, Loreta even found a newspaper clipping picturing the chorus and Judžentas among the chorists.

And so, the very start of the search for her great-aunt's relatives was through the Internet. In the obituary, Loreta found the name of the funeral director and tried to find the funeral home. She was not successful in the beginning. Later on, when Loreta was working at the Draugas newspaper, her eye got caught on another obituary in which her late great aunt Agnė was mentioned. In the same obituary, her children were mentioned, and Loreta decided to write to one of the daughters, Ruth. She wrote a letter and sent it by regular mail as she did not have the email address at the time.

Also at that very same time, Loreta was attending a Lithuanian American Community session in Orland, Florida. There she met Vida Jankauskienė, a Lithuanian from New York who worked with religious charities. Loreta told Vida about her relatives in New York, and Vida promised to ask around about them. Vida found out that the funeral home was already closed, but she promised to find out in which cemetery Agnė might have been buried. Eventually, she found the grave in St. John's Cemetery. Some time passed and eventually, Loreta had an opportunity to travel to New York and visit the grave of her great-aunt in St. John's cemetery. She took a picture of herself at the grave and sent it to her relative, Ruth. She received a response only two or three years later. Ruth called Loreta, and she was very excited. Ruth was approximately Loreta's mother's age at the time. Ruth said that when their mother, Agnė, died, the two girls were taken in by their aunt Rasimienė's family. The aunt raised the two orphans as her own. Ruth remembered that she spoke Lithuanian in her childhood but later she forgot the language.

Loreta wanted to meet Ruth in person. Ruth did not know much about her mother. Her father married the second time and was not much involved in the upbringing of his daughters from his first marriage. Ruth did not know anything about having relatives in Lithuania, and Loreta told her all she knew. Ruth had four children, and one of them, Laurie, wanted to meet Loreta.

Ruth was already elderly and was moved to a nursing home in Connecticut. Eventually, Loreta found out that the nursing home was quite close to the Lithuanian American Community President Sigita Simkuvienė's home. Sigita took Loreta to the nursing home, where Loreta met Ruth, her two daughters, and one of the grandsons. It was an emotional meeting. It was like a miracle. Ruth asked all she could about Lithuania and relatives. The grandson expressed his great wish to visit Lithuania someday.

Laura started looking for pictures and documents among her mother's things. And she found some great old photos that she did not know they had before. Loreta and Laurie worked on the photos and found some great family history hidden in the pictures.

After her first daughter, Helen, was born, Agnė visited Lithuania together with her. Loreta found the ship ticket for that trip. Ruth was very surprised that Loreta managed to find this record. Finding genealogical records takes time and stubbornness.

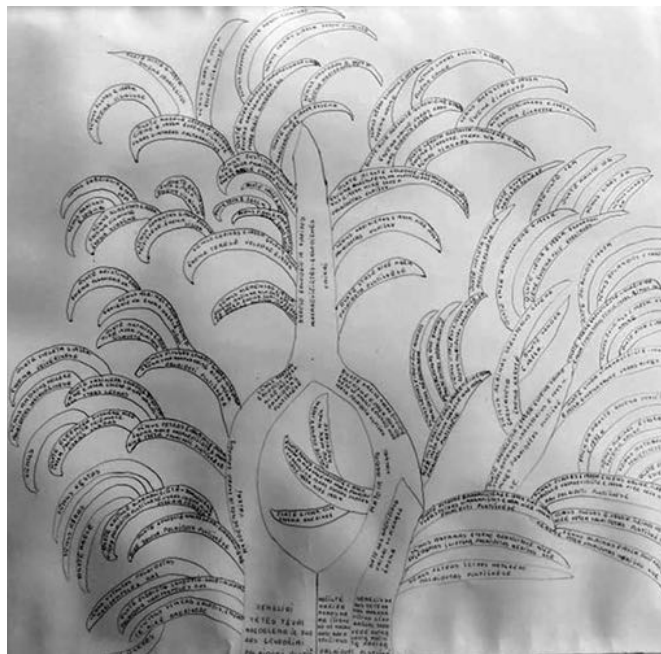
The families wanted to have a reunion but since the time they met Ruth, she died a year or so later. The reunion was postponed.

The biggest miracle was that sometime after Ruth and Loreta met, Ruth started remembering Lithuanian words and even remembered a Lithuanian song. When Loreta went to Lithuania to her family reunion, she brought back a video recording of Ruth who expressed her wishes to all of her Lithuanian relatives.

Another miracle that happened in the process of uncovering stories of her grandmother's life was a recording of songs her grandmother sang in Lithuania. The songs were recorded by students of the Lithuanian Pedagogical Institute who were studying Lithuanian folklore. Now the recordings are kept in the archives of the Folklore Institute. It was thrilling to hear her grandmother's voice recorded and preserved. Not many families can boast of that because, in Soviet times, people did not have the



Loreta's great-grandparents Marija and Matas Makarevičius (seated) with their children Marija (Loreta's grandmother), Petronė, Antanas, and Kazimieras.



Family tree compiled by Loreta's mother Birutė Gruodytė-Breskuvienė

recording equipment and could not record their voices for posterity.

Loreta triggered Ruth's daughter Laurie's interest in her roots. The reunion of the family members in Lithuania and the United States had to be postponed but the family hopes it will happen sooner or later. The most important thing is that the long-lost relatives found one another.



My Love for Cars

Giedrė Kumpikas

The author of the article standing next to her 1970 GTO in 1999

To grow up in America and not love cars is un-American. The beauty of the lines, the colors, the mechanics, the 8-cylinder horsepower, the tires, black or white walls, or red, or gold. Cars have played a major role in the events of my life and have furnished a backdrop for it.

Growing up in the '50s and '60s, I admired the sleekness of the convertible Ford Thunderbird, the majestic Cadillac, the luxurious Buick Riviera, the custom-made design of the Pontiac, and, of course, the ultimate American sports car - the Chevrolet Corvette. The Mustang made its appearance later and soon became the car of choice for young people. Being picked up in front of my high school by my teenage boyfriend in his 1953 Corvette, to the envy of my girlfriends, was a thrill. It was straight out of "Grease" or "Rebel Without a Cause." A boy with a nice car was a great feather in a girl's cap. My next young man had a 1959 Chevrolet Impala - it was red, with a blue interior and bench seats. Couples could sit close together, frequently with the young man's right arm around his girl, steering with his left arm. There were Drive-In Movie Theaters, and "Submarine Watching," and malts at a CarHop. The bucket seats put a stop to that togetherness. Those cars had personality. They were all different, all unique. There were turquoise cars, gold cars, blue, green, yellow, red, even pink cars, and cars with fins. It was romantic. Today's cars are boring - boxy, gray, black, shades of brown, and white. They are indistinct from one another. Somewhere along the way, they lost their dazzle and became more "practical, more aerodynamic."

I remember, at one summer youth camp, speeding on a country road in Michigan with a very handsome young man I had just met in his sleek, black 1958 Ford Fairlane Skyliner convertible blasting "Green Onions" by Booker T. & the M.G.'s. We were young, carefree and the car was fast. There was no thought of danger, just the thrill of the ride and being with someone I liked very much. Summer days; beautiful cars; exciting music. Elvis Presley was singing "It's Now or Never" and that became my song, forever associated with that wonderful summer.

My curiosity about mechanical things began at a very early age, not to speak of one morning announcing to my mother "I swallowed that." Alarmed, my mother asked, "What?" I showed her a lamp from which I had unscrewed a screw and swallowed it. I was around three. My first experience in a car was at the age of two or two and a half in Lithuania. My father had me sit in his car, a stately consular Buick, and told me not to stick my little finger into the cigarette lighter, which, of course, I did, with the predictable results.

In Germany, as refugees having fled from the Communists, we were living in the English Occupation Zone near Kiel. My father used to take me for rides on his Harley. I would sit in front of him, his arms around me, holding me tight. I was only four, but I felt the excitement even then. Ever since, I have loved Harleys. For me, they are the only motorcycle. My mother told me that my father would take her for a ride on his motorcycle while still in Lithuania, but she would sit in a sidecar. When the war

ended, he obtained a DKW, a type of small truck, from a German lady, who gave it to him because she said that the English would confiscate it anyway. We drove south with it to the French Zone. It was a nice little truck with a canvas top, but it did break down in Karlsruhe on the way. To this day, I still like the smell of oil and gasoline and remember my father filling the gas tank, repairing the tubes in the tires. He repaired the little truck, and we did make it south to Tübingen. While there, he would take us on trips to the Black Forest, where he went wild boar hunting with some friends, while my mother and I sat in the truck, quite frightened, as we saw the wild boar rushing past us. We also drove to the Bodensee, on the border of Switzerland; we saw the source of the great Danube, which was a tiny stream in the mountains of the Black Forest; and once even drove up to the Principality of Liechtenstein to visit the castle of Prince Urach. The Princess of Liechtenstein held my hand as we walked around the castle grounds and visited the rooms, some with fantasy decorations of gnomes and goblins. One day we got stuck in a pelting rain on a forest road and while waiting for the rain to stop, we heard the haunting sound of a gypsy violin emanating from a caravan nearby deep in the forest.

It seemed mystical and unreal. That little truck stayed with us for five years until we left for the United States.

Our first American car was a 1936 white Ford. I did not like it at the time because it looked so old-fashioned, smallish. I was embarrassed when my father used to pick me up in school. Now, I think of it fondly. It too took us on exploratory trips to Bear Mountain, Greenwood Lake, Lake George, on many Sundays to Prospect Park - places where new immigrants used to go on weekends. I must also mention, Putnam, Connecticut, the Convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, a summer meeting ground for our new arrivals, as well as Kennebunkport, Maine, the Franciscan Monastery, another Lithuanian vacation spot. Having a car meant so much. It gave us freedom and a semblance of normalcy.

When I was fifteen my father bought a newer car, a 1950 Chevrolet. It was dark blue, longer than the Ford, and had rounded fenders. My driving lessons began. There were winter months of practice in the Rockaway and Riis Park parking lots. My father was a strict teacher, having driven diplomats in Lithuania. He always



Giedré's father, Julius, by his Buick in 1929



Giedré with her mother next to their 1936 Ford



DKW that Giedrė's father obtained in Germany



Giedrė and the Princess of Lichtenstein in 1947

said, "Drive smoothly, not jerkily, so that people do not spill their drinks. And do not brake abruptly. Smooth and easy." After a few months of practice, I asked him to let me drive our '50 Chevy with three on the column. One down, two up, three down. For those who only know how to drive automatic cars, three on the column meant it was a standard shift. I was good. I could shift without a problem - step on the clutch, balance the gas, and go. As I drove on

one point, we were close to running out of gas on a hilly desert road with no gas station in sight, when suddenly, as we reached a rise, as if by magic, a small rusty gas station appeared almost like a mirage. A real desert person came toward us, and, I asked prayerfully, "Do you have gas?" He answered, "Sure do, Miss." I loved those soulful, simple people we encountered on the road. America is a wonderful place to explore and see. The variety of flora and fauna

Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, in heavy city traffic for the first time, I could see that my father was nervous, but I was a naturally good driver. Nonetheless, ever since then, my father said that I was a cowboy behind the wheel.

Next came what has become an American classic - a 1957 Chevrolet Bel-Air. It was a beautiful car - turquoise, with a lot of chrome. My parents and I used to go to a secluded beach called Plum Beach, where I learned to fish and swim. Later, I used to drive it to Rockaway Beach on weekends, because I was such a sun worshipper. It was dependable and ran for a long time until my father sold it to a Polish diplomat, who kept it for many years as well.

My first car was a brand new, white 1962 Pontiac Catalina with red bench seats. I was so proud of that car. It floated, long and elegant. I bought it the first year when I started working. It cost \$3,000. As soon as I bought it, I suddenly had so many friends. My cousin warned me not to become a chauffeur, but everyone wanted to ride in it. To break it in slowly, my parents drove it out to Montauk Point, at the very end of Long Island, where it seems that all the waters of the world converge and pound wildly against the rocks. My mother said that it had been a beautiful ride for the two of them. I was happy about that.

I drove that car cross country with a friend and saw so many beautiful sights - the Grand Canyon, the Painted Desert, the Petrified Forest, the Sequoias, Crystal Cave - its pitch-black darkness frightened me terribly. A spelunker I was not. We saw Indians still living in mountainside caves. At

and people is extraordinary, but you need a car to feel the full impact of its vastness and beauty.

I learned so much from my father about cars, their maintenance and care. Since I was always rushing to work in the morning - my teaching classes began at 8 A.M. - my caring father would get up in the morning and sit in my cold car to warm it up. I wonder how many fathers do that for their daughters?

In the meantime, my father bought a 1966 Pontiac Le Mans. He was so very happy with that car. It was a beautiful gold car, but unlucky. One day while it was parked in the lot where he worked, a milk truck toppled over and crushed the roof. Thankfully my father was not in it. He did not want to repair it, because he was superstitious. He sold it and the new owners repaired it and even came by to show it to him. It made him sad to see his beautiful car drive away. He replaced it with another Pontiac, a 1966 four-door red Tempest sedan with a powerful motor. He used to call it his "junk" car because it was second-hand.

I kept my beautiful white Catalina for nine years and then decided to change. My father and I went to Myrtle Motors on Fresh Pond Road, and I ordered a yellow Firebird with a white interior. When the time came to pick it up, I went with my mother. She took one look at the car and said that it looked like an egg yolk and that she would not let me buy it! The salesman was upset because it was a custom order, but then we saw a beautiful car on the lot, it was a Pontiac GTO, Palomino Copper in color, a two-door coupe. My mother said, 'Now that is the car for you.' The salesman tried to dissuade us, saying the car had too much power for a young girl. It had a 455 c.i.d. (cubic inch displacement) motor and 360 HP. My mother, unperturbed, answered, "You don't have to use it, but it is good to know that you have it." Impeccable logic. I loved and still love that car. It took me cross-country, over the hills of Pennsylvania, the valleys of Nebraska the mountains of Utah, the deserts of Nevada and New Mexico, and through dense fog and rain in Wyoming to California and back to New York. It is a



Giedrė and her dog by her 1950 Chevrolet on Easter Sunday in 1957



Chevrolet Corvette, 1953

classic muscle car, pure Americana.

On my way from San Francisco to Los Angeles to take the southern route back to New York, as I was driving with a friend, accompanied by another friend in a second car, suddenly my GTO came to a dead stop! We were in the middle of a desert. This was before cell phones. What to do? I sent my two friends in the second car for help. As I was standing on that desert highway all alone, I tucked my jewelry under my sleeves and prayed. Hardly any cars drove by. I saw a group of Hell's Angels riding by in the distance in the opposite direction. The sun was beginning to set. A man stopped by in an El Camino and looked at the motor but could not help. He drove away. It was



Giedrè and her father in Prospect Park, 1954

getting darker and darker. Finally, my friend arrived with a tow truck. The other friend was told at a gas station that her differential was leaking. It was an old scam from which I had escaped in Utah, but she was alone and fell for it. They changed her shocks, which had nothing to do with the differential. I was so happy to reach New York, and I was probably the only person ever to smile upon seeing the traffic jam by the Holland Tunnel.

In between, in 1980, I had an accident with my GTO. The city was repairing Madison Avenue, and I hit a raised manhole cover and smashed the oil pan. My poor car. But I refused to give it up and repaired it. While it was in the



Giedrè and her 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air

shop, I needed a car. Someone had a non-running Pontiac Firebird sitting in their parking lot. It looked dilapidated, unpainted, and did not run. I bought it for \$200, put in a battery, had it painted blue for \$99, but did not fix the muffler. It became known as my “Demolition Derby” car because I would roar into the school parking lot where I was a teacher. Once my GTO was repaired, I sold it to a student. I wish I had kept it, but I was running out of room in the garage.

I drove my GTO for nineteen years until I decided that I needed a more practical automobile for work. I also wanted to preserve the GTO; it had served me so well and faithfully. So, I chose a 1989 beautiful white Pontiac Bonneville four-door sedan. Once again, it was luxurious, smooth, easy riding, and exceptionally comfortable. Although it was a conservative car, it was stolen right from my driveway within one year. The police found it with all four doors missing. I suspected that the company that picked it up and replaced the doors (which turned out to be water damaged, because they corroded after one year), was dishonest, because the directors were fined, some of the managers went to jail, and the company went bankrupt.

My mother loved my Bonneville because it was so comfortable and spacious. And I still have it as well. Memories. We used to drive it to East Hampton and back in one day, about 200 miles, and never felt fatigued. I drove it to Niagara Falls and to Montréal and Québec City, and to the beautiful Basilica of Ste. Anne-de-Beaupré.

In 1990, someone convinced me to buy the ultimate American sports car - a Corvette. I found a listing in New Jersey for a 1987 Corvette, drove to look at it, and there it was - a magnificent, shining red beauty. I was dazzled by it and took it for a test drive. It was a powerful car, 8 cylinders with a 350 H.P. engine. But since I had grown up with 8-cylinder cars, I was not intimidated. I bought it two days later and at sunset, as I drove home over the George Washington Bridge with the Targa top removed, I felt the complete freedom and exuberance that only a magnificent machine can give.

By 2005, one of my friends criticized my Bonneville, not only criticized but insulted it, because she had a new Japanese car. I became angry and thought of what would be the most annoying car to buy to show off? I drove around and did not find anything to my liking, but then I stepped into a Mercedes Benz. I fell in love with the E350. It had a white exterior

and a pale beige interior. It looked so very elegant. A Mercedes is a Mercedes. You can feel and see the quality in the moldings, the comfortable seats, the details, all so very fine. I bought a 2006, and suddenly, some other people in my circle of acquaintances began buying that very same car.

My latest car, I prefer not to say last, is a 2019 Jeep Cherokee. I like the name “Cherokee” because since my arrival here in the United States as a small D.P. (Displaced Persons) child, I became fascinated with American Indian, rather Native American, culture. I used to read books about the Indians, learned the names of the ponies they rode, like “piebald.” And I always commiserated with them for the loss of their land, perhaps, because we Lithuanians had also been subjugated periodically by outside nations. The entire folklore of cowboys and Indians, the prairie, the “noble savage” theme so popular in the 18th century, fascinated me. Perhaps it was pure romanticism on my part, but my Cherokee is a tough car. It goes through snow and slush and sand and ice, and it gives me security.

So, I come to the end of my saga of my love for cars. I have six, yes six. I forgot to mention that on one of my trips to Lithuania I bought a 1996 BMW 523. It was only one of the four automatic cars on a lot of hundreds. Most people in Lithuania drive cars with manual transmission because they are more economical, and gas is very expensive in Europe. As of this writing, we are quickly catching up to high gas prices. But it is not in the American character to give up gas-driven cars. Perhaps, we shall be forced to do so one day, but the love for speed and power is inherent in this culture.

To me, the car is a 20th-century American art form - powerful and beautiful. I have loved all my cars, but most of all, I love my GTO.



1959 Chevrolet Impala



1962 Pontiac Catalina



Giedrė's mother, Isabel, next to the family's 1966 Pontiac LeMans



Giedrė next to her GTO, 1970



1987 Corvette at Atlantic Beach, Amagansett



Giedrė next to her Mercedes, 2006



Giedrė with her darling Pepito by her Pontiac Bonneville, 1989



2019 Jeep Grand Cherokee

Security

...The annual military conscription list has about 34,000 young men aged 18-23, per sauktiniai.karys.lt, with only 3,828 being called up for nine-month military service. The National Defense Minister, Arvydas Anušauskas, estimates that in 6-8 years, all young men who are fit to serve will be invited to perform military service, with about 6,100 being called up. The additional cost for 6,100 recruits is estimated to be 400 million euros. If women are added to the universal conscription list, the additional cost is estimated at 1,500 million euros.

...US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and representatives of the Bucharest Nine Group expressed solidarity with Lithuania in its fight against Chinese retaliation against Lithuanian businesses by suspending the movement of freight trains connecting Vilnius with China's Belt and Road Initiative and excluding Lithuanian food exports. The Bucharest Nine countries extend from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria.

...The Lithuanian State Defense Council (comprising the President, Prime Minister, Defense Minister, Seimas Speaker, and chief of Defense) has agreed to purchase Lockheed Martin's M270 Multiple Launch Rocket System in 2026 rather than 2028 because of Russia's buildup near the Ukrainian border. Latvia plans on ordering their M270 MLRS in 2023, and Estonia anticipates theirs in 2031. The self-propelled tracked unit is a derivative of the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and hosts 12 launch tubes with rockets that range to 32 km and can be reloaded in 9 minutes. It is priced at about \$2.3 million.

...Since the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea, upwards of 4,000 Lithuanian volunteer "Elves" track Russian paid trolls who spread disinformation on social media, i.e. Facebook.

...The trolls target NATO, politicians, policies, and sow general social discord on Covid-19. A typical Elf might spend 20 hours a week monitoring Facebook and responding to propaganda.

...About 15% of Lithuania's population consists of Russian-speakers and are frequent targets for fake news. As one Elf explained to FRANCE 24, the news agency "for the Baltic states, becoming NATO members was our only chance to survive."

...In response to Russian-linked cyber-attacks on Ukraine, the European Union is considering activating the cyber rapid response team led by Lithuania. In addition to Lithuanians, it is staffed by experts from Croatia, Estonia, Poland, Romania, and the Netherlands. Lithuania and Ukraine also considered activating the Regional Cyber Security Center in Kaunas which includes cyber-security experts from Lithuania, Georgia, Ukraine, and the United States.

...Under U.S. Export Control Regulations, countries must obtain State Department approval before transferring any weapons they received from the U.S. to third parties. The State Department has cleared Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia to send U.S.-made missiles and other weapons to Ukraine. Lithuania and Latvia will be allowed to send Stinger ground-to-air missiles and Estonia will be allowed to send Javelin anti-tank missiles.

...Four Danish F-16s and 70 personnel will be deployed to Lithuania's Siauliai air base to supplement Polish and Belgian F-16s to provide air cover in the Baltic region.

COVID-19

...The Lithuanian public broadcaster LRT reports that the Mayor of Vilnius, Remigijus Šimasius, of the Freedom Party, called for lifting all restrictions because "It's time to start living with a virus that is, luckily, not that dangerous anymore". He went on to say, "The virus poses almost no danger to those who have been vaccinated. The unvaccinated should not be our priority, since they made their choice".

...The daily count of new coronavirus infections exceeded 10,000 for three consecutive days. On one day there were 12 deaths of which 11 were either not vaccinated or only partially vaccinated. The number of Covid-19 patients in hospitals has increased by 40 to 1,212 including 97 in the ICU. The Lithuanian death toll has topped 7,800.

Business

...With U.S. sanctions on Belarus because of a dubious presidential election and suppression of human rights, the Belarusian fertilizer producer, Belaruskali, was to cease all shipments through Lithuania by Dec. 8, 2021. However, Belaruskali had made an advance payment to state-owned Lithuanian Railways to cover the cost of rail services for several months. With shipments continuing into 2022, the Lithuanian government was widely criticized. This eventually resulted in the resignation of the Lithuanian Railways CEO, Mantas Bartiska, and threatened other Ministers including Prime Minister, Ingrida

current events

Šimonytė. Annually Belaruskali ships 12.5 million tons of potash and is the world's second-largest producer. The price has doubled in the past year and is the largest source of revenue for Belarus. Potash is used to increase the yields of soybeans, rice, corn, fruits, palm oil, vegetables, and wheat. Lithuania will lose hundreds of millions of dollars via transport fees and halting exports via the Klaipėda shipping facilities. It could also face legal claims of up to \$15 billion over broken contracts. Lithuania is stuck between these legal obligations and the U.S., which is its main protector via NATO. The halt of shipping via Lithuania will benefit Russia which is anxious to gain business for its port at Ust-Luga, near St. Petersburg, which is a favorite project of President Vladimir Putin and tie Russian and Belarus closer together economically and militarily in the "Union State", which is another Putin goal.

...The European Union has filed a formal complaint against China at the World Trade Organization in support of Lithuania for China violating the WTO rules by its coercive actions that interfere with EU's all-member inclusive single market and supply chain. China's actions are in retaliation to Lithuania dropping out of the 17+1 trade group and allowing Taiwan to open a representative office using its name "Taiwanese" rather than "Taipei". Although Lithuania's direct sales to China constitute only 1% of its total exports, its manufacturing is closely linked with German and multinational corporations that China threatened to stop sourcing from Lithuania.

...Pon.Bike, a large producer of bicycles, will open a new manufacturing facility in the Kėdainiai Free Economic Zone near Kaunas in 2024 with the capacity to produce 600,000 bikes over its multiple brands including U.S. brands Cervelo and Santa Cruz. With a global headcount of 2,400, it has an annual revenue of 2.5 billion euros. It expects to hire 300 people when production starts and expand to 500. Pon.Bike has introduced the concept of rental and leasing bikes to the European market with Swapfiets and Lease a Bike. Pon.Bike operates in Europe, North America, Asia, and Australia.

...Norwegian Dokka Fasteners, is expanding its European operations and is planning on hiring up to 50 people in Klaipėda within the next 3 years. As part of the Würth Group with close to 80,000 employees, it had a revenue of 14.4 billion euros. Dokka Fasteners is a major supplier of hot forged bolts and studs for wind turbines, drilling rigs, cranes, and steel construction. Its products are relatively heavy so the proximity to a port is advantageous.

General

...Vilnius is one of the 15 winners for the 2021-2022 Global Mayors Challenge and will receive 1 million dollars and multi-year technical support on setting up several hundred in-city learning places that utilize business premises, parks, art places, streets, and institutional spaces to make an educational process that is resistant to challenges like the coronavirus pandemic. The Mayors Challenge is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies which is funded by Michael Bloomberg, co-founder of Bloomberg L.P. and former New York City mayor. Vilnius authorities hope to set up 150 such places by September and 450 within the next three years. Other winners with different projects include Amman, Jordan; Bogota, Columbia; Bhutan, Philippines; Freetown, Sierra Leone; Hermosillo, Mexico; Istanbul, Turkey; Kigali, Rwanda; Kumasi, Ghana; Paterson, NJ; Phoenix, AZ; Rochester, MN; Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Rourkela, India; and Wellington, New Zealand. This year's Global awards follow regional competitions in the United States in 2013 and 2018; Europe in 2014; and Latin America and the Caribbean in 2016 with a total of 38 winning cities.

...On orders of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, Lithuania has paid 100,000 euros to the brother of Abu Zubaydah, a stateless Palestinian, and suspected al-Qaeda member who was captured in 2002 and tortured by the CIA in a secret prison in Antaviliai near Vilnius. He has not been charged with any crimes and subsequent investigations found that he was never a member of al-Qaeda and he had no advanced knowledge of the 9/11 attacks. He has been imprisoned for 15 years at Guantanamo Bay and cannot gain access to the money which is held by his brother in Saudi Arabia. Lithuania also paid 30,000 euros to his Dutch lawyer.

...The Lithuanian Special Investigations Service (STT) opened an investigation into suspected bribery at Vilnius City Clinical Hospital which involves the hospital Director Narimantas Markevičius and four doctors. The investigation stemmed from a patient's complaint that a bribe was demanded certain medical services. The STT suspected that the hospital's doctors requested and accepted bribes ranging from 100 to 400 euros per service.

...In another case involving a Vilnius hospital, the STT has handed over for prosecution a case against the former Director of the Informatics and Development Center of the Vilnius University Hospital Santaros Klinikos for kick-backs from businesses that won purchasing contracts in 2017-2018.

Samogitian Dances in Colorado

Jūratė Valančauskienė
Teacher of the Vaižgantas Gymnasium



Back in 2021, the teachers and students of the Colorado Lithuanian School and the KTU Vaižgantas gymnasium were united by a common idea - to get acquainted with the ethnographic regions of Lithuania.

In March 2021, the students got acquainted with Aukštaitija; in May, they traveled virtually to Suvalkija; in October, they visited Dzūkija, and on January 15, 2022, they opened the virtual classroom doors for the fourth time. This time, the students traveled around the Žemaitija region with their teachers Agnė, Česlova, Jolanta, and Jūrate as well as Ilona Raudonienė from the Šilalė Cultural Centre. Teacher Jolanta, who knows the region well and has cycled through it many times, playfully explained what makes the Samogitian region special and showed the places of interest. Ilona, an employee of the Šilalė Culture Centre, told the children in the Samogitian dialect about the differences between the national regions of Lithuania. She mentioned that the Samogitians are very reserved and tough. There is a witty saying in Samogitia that describes the key character trait of the Samogitians - stubbornness: "Je žemaitis osėspėrs - ėr



i dėbėsi ispėrs" (If a Samogitian wants it badly, he will even be able to kick into a cloud). The students listened to the Samogitian folk songs sung by their peer Indrė Raudonytė from Samogitia ("Lyk lyk lyteliau", "Turėja buobuti"), and sang them themselves. The children learned the refrain of a Samogitian song, listened to a story about the Samogitian Duke Šarūnas, and learned about the difference between the national costume of Samogitia and those of other Lithuanian regions. After learning about the Samogitian folk dances "Šilales glops," "Ciceliuki Marceliuki" and "Kiaulė grikiuos," the children danced Samogitian dances together with their family members. Before the class, the children had ingredients ready for two Samogitian Advent dishes, which they made and enjoyed during class. Many of them will make the newly-discovered dishes again.

This international STEAM project brought together two communities – schools in Lithuania and the United States - and helped the participants and their families to have a great time and get to know Lithuania better.



Support for Ukraine



Global Lithuania organizations thanks all Lithuanians around the world for their contribution to the relief efforts in Ukraine and strongly encourage them to continue their active support for Ukraine. Please join the fundraising campaigns for humanitarian aid to Ukraine organized by international organizations or in your country, as well as the initiatives of Lithuanian public organizations to help Ukraine.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORT

International organizations:

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency | Ukraine Emergency - <https://donate.unhcr.org/be/en-be/ukraine-emergency>
 UKRAINE CRISIS | International Committee of the Red Cross - <https://www.icrc.org/en/donate/ukraine>

Lithuanian public organizations:

Blue / Yellow for Ukraine - www.blue-yellow.lt/lt/
 aukok.lt - www.aukok.lt

Strong Together - www.stipruskartu.lt

For up-to-date information on Lithuania's support to Ukraine, please visit www.ltua.lt

Let us all be together with Ukraine, with thoughts and noble deeds.



Austėja Sruoga, together with the Lithuanian American Community and Rotary Club in Chicago and its suburbs, work organizing humanitarian aid for Ukraine.

our community

LITHUANIAN AMERICANS CELEBRATE LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE AND EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Embassy of Lithuania in Washington, D.C.

On March 11, 1990 Lithuanian Supreme Council voted to restore Independence. Today we cannot help but think of our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, who are fighting for their freedom, defending democracy and European values.

Together with some of our European counterparts, ambassadors from the EU, Germany, France, Finland and others, Lithuania's Ambassador to the US and Mexico Audra Plepytė took part in a discussion with US Senators on how to help Ukraine, what other pressure measures to apply to Russia and how to ensure the security of NATO's Eastern partners. There was such genuine concern and willingness to help. The Senate approved a \$1.5 trillion budget for Ukraine. The EU has allocated \$180 million for US security assistance to the Baltic countries (Baltic Security Initiative). Work with the US Congress is intensifying.



Ambassador Plepytė meeting US senators



Lithuanians of Washington, D.C. show their support for Ukraine.



Kristijonas Donelaitis Lithuanian school in Washington, D.C. celebrates Lithuanian independence and express support for Ukraine.

Consulate General of Lithuania in New York

On February 27, 2022, members of the Lithuanian community in New York gathered and prayed for the Ukrainian heroes at the Church of the Annunciation in Brooklyn, New York. They picked up the flags of Ukraine, Lithuania, and the posters of support, and headed to the Ukrainian Community Parish Church to tell our Ukrainian brothers and sisters that they stand with them, that they support them, and that they will be there for them.

Lithuanian and Ukrainian communities prayed together for Ukraine and its soldiers and people fighting for their homeland. "Shche ne vmerla Ukrainy" (Ще не вмерла України) was sung together #slavaukraini. We are strong together and #laisvesviecia. #StandWithUkraine



Lithuanians in New York



Students and teachers at the New York Maironis Lithuanian School also showed support for Ukraine.

Consulate General of Lithuania in Los Angeles

On Sunday, 13 March, Consul General Laima Jurevičienė attended the Independence Day celebrations organized by the Honorary Consul in Nevada, Astra Julianna Michels.

Welcoming the audience, Laima Jurevičienė stressed the importance of international support for Ukraine in its struggle against the unprovoked, unlawful and unjustifiable aggression of Putin, and the necessity of Lithuania's firm stance on the need for Russia to be held accountable for its hostilities against Ukraine. Ukraine's struggle is also a struggle for the freedom of Lithuania and the whole of Europe. By helping Ukraine, we are also supporting our freedom.

Consul General thanked the organizer of the commemoration, Astra J. Michels, and the gathered compatriots for their willingness to be part of a global Lithuania, and urged the Lithuanians of Las Vegas to continue to foster their nationality and culture and to establish a Lithuanian community in their area.



Lithuanians in Nevada express their support for Ukraine



The new board of the Los Angeles Lithuanian community. We wish you success! From left to right are Rasa Paliulis, Saulius Kajota, Laura Remeika (Chairperson), Tomas Umbrasas and Vincent Bernota. Vytenis Vilkas and Giedre Garbish are missing from the photo.

On Sunday, March 13, the Ukrainian Cultural Center (UCC) in Los Angeles organized an information and support meeting, which was attended by Mindaugas Čiaglys, Counselor of the Consulate General of Lithuania in Los Angeles, Daiva Čekanauskas Navarrette, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Lithuania in Los Angeles, representatives of the Lithuanian American Business Association in Los Angeles and the Lithuanian-American Freedom League, and members of the Lithuanian community.

Representatives of the Ukrainian Culture Center with Mrs. Danguole Navickiene, Consul General Laima Jurevičienė, Honorary Consul Daiva Č. Navarrette and the outgoing President of the Lithuanian Community Raimundas Šilkaitis



Lithuanians in Los Angeles express their support for Ukraine



Representatives of the Ukrainian Culture Center with Danguolė Navickienė, Consul General Laima Jurevičienė, Honorary Consul Daiva Čekanauskas Navarrette, and the outgoing President of the Lithuanian Community Raimundas Šilkaitis

our community



Lithuanian Saturday School children demonstrating in front of St. Casimir's church in Los Angeles in support of Ukraine. Photo by Roland Giedraitis

Consulate General of Lithuania in Chicago

On March 12-13, the Consulate General in Chicago organized a series of events to mark Lithuanian Independence Day, the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Lithuania and the United States, and to express solidarity with Ukraine's fight for freedom.

On Saturday, the premiere of "The Jump" (director Giedrė Žickytė) at the European Union Film Festival in Chicago was well attended. Consul General Sigrida Mulevičienė, in her welcoming speech, thanked the Centre for its long-standing cooperation in presenting the best Lithuanian films and stressed the relevance of the film and the themes it raises in the context of world events. The screening was followed by a discussion with the film's director.

On Sunday, the World Lithuanian Center welcomed the participants of the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Lithuania and the United States by the WLC Director Elena Reklaitis, the President of the Lithuanian American Community Arvydas Urbonavičius and the Consul General Sigrida Mulevičienė. Dr. Robertas Vitas and Kristina Lapienytė, directors of the Center for the Study of Lithuanian Studies, talked about how the US recognized the state of Lithuania, and highlighted the contribution of diplomats and the Lithuanian-American community to Lithuania's path to statehood. Later, Prof. Giedrius Subačius, Head of the Department of Lithuanian Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, interviewed the director Giedrė Žickytė about the circumstances of the film's creation. One of the film's protagonists, the Chicago lawyer Povilas Žumbakis, joined the discussion. In order to commemorate the anni-

versary of the Lithuanian-US diplomatic relations and to encourage more young people to take an interest in the history of Lithuania, the Consulate General together with the Lithuanian Consulate organized a quiz for Lithuanian language schools in Chicago. During the event, the Maironis and Chicago Lithuanian language schools awarded prizes to the students who answered the quiz questions best. In the World Lithuanian Center you can also see an exhibition organized by the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture about Lithuanian-American activities for the independence of Lithuania.



The LAC President Arvydas Urbonavičius spoke at the Lithuanian Independence celebration in Lemont, Illinois



The Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture opened its exhibit "For Freedom" at the Lithuanian World Center in Lemont, Illinois



Lithuanian Research Center directors Robert Vitas and Kristina Lapienytė gave presentation on the 100th anniversary of Lithuanian-American relations



The University of Illinois professor Giedrius Subačius (on the left) discussed the circumstances of creating the documentary film "The Jump" with the film director Giedrė Žickytė (center). Lithuania's Consul General in Chicago Sigrida Mulevičienė (on the right) addressed the audience.

Portland Lithuanian American Community

Let us cherish the priceless gift of Independence. On March 12, Saturday, the Lithuanian Community of Portland had the opportunity to gather together once again to celebrate the 32nd anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania's Independence. This year's celebration is also special because it coincides with the 100th anniversary of Lithuania's global recognition as an independent state.

The Act of Independence signed 32 years ago, freed us from the hands of the occupier and opened the way to a free, independent Lithuanian State. A democratic country that we can each build with our own work and ideas.

March 11th, a symbol of freedom and rebirth in Lithuania, is different this year. Unprecedented Russia's aggression in Ukraine has shaken the entire democratic world and is a reminder that we cannot trust dictatorial regimes and the natural resources they control.

Giedrė Babarskienė, Chairperson of the Board of the Community, congratulated everyone on the occasion of the Lithuanian Independence Day. The evening began with the singing of the National Anthem of the United States of America by Brett Bolstad and the singing of the National Anthem by all, followed by a congratulatory speech by the Honorary Consul of the Lithuanian Community of Portland, Randy Miller, which included a number of warm words for Lithuania, the first free swallow to escape from the clutches of the Soviet Union... The Honorary Consul's great-grandmother was born in Vilnius...

The guests and participants of the evening were welcomed by the President of the Estonian Community, Kalev Sepp, and the representative of the Latvian Community, Pauls Toutonghi. Both speakers welcomed the

freedom won by all three Baltic nations and expressed their solidarity with Ukraine, which is threatened to be occupied once again by the Russian aggressor.

Leonidas Donskis has said that freedom is a test and must be earned. Today, it is a very difficult test, but we will pass it. Our Ukrainian brothers and sisters will also pass it. Let us defend our freedom and the freedom of the Ukrainians with deeds and help.

Lithuania's road to freedom has not been an easy one: many times it has passed from one aggressive invader or more powerful neighbor to another, and the ruthless wars throughout Lithuania's history have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of freedom fighters and innocent civilians...Eternal glory to them!...

Vilius Žalpyis, the former long-time President of the Lithuanian Community of Portland, gave a very detailed and vivid account of the events. Thanks to the video he showed, we could see very clearly how the borders of Lithuania as an independent state have changed over the last few centuries. We heard interesting facts that the first states to recognize Lithuania De Facto and De Jure were: Germany, Sweden, Japan, Norway, England, Finland, Latvia, France, Poland, Soviet Russia, Estonia, Argentina, Mexico. By the way, America was only the 20th country to take this step...

After we observed a minute of silence in honor of the recently departed members of our community and those who died for the freedom of Ukraine, a more cheerful part of the evening followed. It was filled with poetry and music performed by the children of the Lithuanian School "Atžalynas".

We would like to thank the teachers of the Lithuanian Language School Laimutea Kazlauskaite-Meurer, Kristina Kupčiūnienė, and the director Ernesta Ingelevičiūtė-Bolstad, as well as the children's parents for all their hard work in preparing the children for the festive program. It takes a lot of love and dedication to help them learn the longest rhymes and songs in such a short time!

And at the end of the evening, everyone was treated to traditional Lithuanian dishes.



Children of the Portland Lithuanian Community perform during Lithuanian independence celebration

our community



Lithuanians of Baltimore and Washington, D.C. were in full swing celebrating Lithuania's freedom and standing with Ukraine. #ForOurFreedomAndYours Слава Україні!

Lithuanian American Community in St. Petersburg, Florida

What a great honor it was to have a visit from the Lithuanian Ambassador to the USA Audra Plepyte during the commemoration celebrations of the restoration of Lithuania's independence from the Soviet Union on March 11, 1990. A large crowd at the Lithuanian-American Club, including military representatives from Lithuania and the US. We made a special tribute to our Ukrainian brothers and sisters and collected a very large amount of cash for donations to charities that will help them directly at this tragic time.



Lithuanians in St. Petersburg, Florida

Lithuanian American Community of Cincinnati, Ohio

Cincinnati Lithuanian American Community had the honor of hosting the former president of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė. The thoughts shared and memories will last for long.



Lithuanians of Cincinnati Ohio with former President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė.

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