

bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

\$6

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Back Cover: Daffodils in bloom. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė

bridges

Vol. 46 No. 4 / May 2022

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

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

LAC, INC. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD
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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: \$50 per year or \$95 for two years.; International: \$65 per year payable in advance in US funds. COPYRIGHT: ©2022 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 Reader,

The month of May has come. There is so much to celebrate and commemorate this month. You could pick any or all of the following:

05-01 Lithuania's Joining the European Union Day, Mother's Day in Lithuania

05-03 World Press Freedom Day, Sunshine Day, The First Written Constitution in Europe Day (1791)

05-04 St. Florian

05-05 International Day of Midwives

05-07 Press Freedom Day

05-08 Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Second World War, Lithuanian Customs Day, International Red Cross Day, Saint Stanislaus, Mother's Day in the US

05-09 Europe Day

05-11 Respect for Taxpayers Day

05-12 International Nurses Day

05-13 Day of Love - Lithuanian Goddess Milda Day

05-14 Tulip Blossom Festival

05-15 International Day of Families, St. Isidore's Day

05-16 World Day for Peaceful Living Together

05-17 International Day Against Homophobia

05-18 International Museum Day

05-20 World Bee Day

05-21 World Day for the Promotion of Cultures

05-22 International Day for Biological Diversity

05-25 International Day of Missing Children

05-27 European Neighbourhood Day

05-28 International Women's Health Day

05-29 International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers

Yes, so much to celebrate, commemorate, or just be aware of. However, how can we celebrate under the black shadow of the war in Ukraine? How can we celebrate any joyful events when we cannot stop thinking of the unimaginable pain that Ukrainian mothers and children are suffering every single day? The pain that echoes in the hearts of all decent people of the world. When will the atrocities stop? When will history stop repeating itself? When will humanity learn the lesson? We need to remain strong and do our part in trying to make the world better. Even if sometimes it seems to be the work of Sisyphus. So that we could celebrate every single day of every single month.

Sincerely,

Karilė Vaitkutė
Editor

LITHUANIAN AMERICANS SUPPORT UKRAINE

The Lithuanian American Community stands with Ukraine. In the strongest possible terms, we condemn the unprovoked, illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

The overwhelming response by the international community to condemn, sanction, and boycott Russia is unprecedented and heartening. While the growing level of military and humanitarian assistance is laudable, more help is urgently needed to stop the brutal devastation and destruction taking place.

We call upon all our elected officials to increase and expedite support for Ukraine. We demand that Russia be held accountable for the war crimes and devastation they have wrought upon innocent people and a sovereign nation.

In no context of reality is Russia's slaughter of innocent civilians, mothers, and children justifiable or acceptable. The perpetrators of these atrocities must be brought to justice in an international court.

In response to the clear political reality of Russian expansionist aggression, we ask that the United States and NATO allies also increase permanent security and defense commitments to Lithuania and the Baltic countries.

Ukraine is fighting not only for itself but for the whole free world. We applaud the courage and valor shown by the Ukrainian people in defending their homes and their state. And we, the Lithuanian American Community, are committed to doing everything we can to put an end to this war. The spirit of the Ukrainian people and their desire for freedom will prevail.

We ask whoever reads this letter do what you can, with whatever resources you have, to help bring peace and stability back to Ukraine, Europe, and the world.

As the Russian war against Ukraine continues, it is imperative to continue providing support for Ukrainians. Lithuanian American Community would like to sincerely thank all those who have already provided monetary support or have donated necessary items. The war wages on, we would like to invite you to continue providing your valuable support. There are many ways to show your support:

FINANCIAL DONATIONS will be used for the purchase and delivery of the medical supplies and baby food. The first batch of medical supplies and baby food purchased thanks to your generous donations of \$20,000 is already en route to Ukraine and will reach the brave, suffering people of Ukraine soon. To ensure the safe and timely delivery we are collaborating with a charity fund "Saulės Smiltys," based in Lithuania.



More information about this fund can be found here:

<http://www.saulessmiltys.lt/?fbclid=IwARoL2627X8OEmAoDF6zbH1drOr-G-mb7dHLyfg8spf2z2gm9IHolde-7LYhw> and <https://www.facebook.com/saulessmiltys>
You may donate through the GOFUNDME crowdfunding platform:
<https://www.gofundme.com/f/padkime-ukrainos-monms...>

Direct transfers can be made to the Lithuanian American Community bank account:

Taupa Lithuanian Federal Credit Union
368 West Broadway
South Boston, MA 02127
Account: Lithuanian American Comm
Acc# 101702. Routing # 211091934

You may also send a check to:

Lithuanian American Community
c / o A. Mikuckis
306 Arlington Drive
Pasadena, California 91105
Please add a note: SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

All donations are tax-deductible. We are grateful for your generosity!

DONATIONS OF SLEEPING BAGS continue. We collect and ship them in batches. You may purchase sleeping bags online and ship them directly OR deliver them in person to the following address:
Lithuanian American Community
14911 E 127th St, Lemont, IL 60439

The first shipment of more than 1000 sleeping bags is already on its way to Ukraine. We are collaborating with Chicago-based Patriot Transport Inc. to ensure the delivery of the goods.



DONATING MILITARY/COMBAT BOOTS that are desperately needed in war-torn regions of Ukraine. These boots are used by medics and by those doing clean-up work in war-ravaged cities, towns, and villages. You may also donate slightly used boots, as long as they are military/combat boots. Kindly purchase size 10 and up.

You may order the boots and mail or deliver them in person to the Lithuanian World Center:
Lithuanian American Community
14911 E 127th St, Lemont, IL 60439.

Here is the link to order boots:
<https://www.sportsmansguide.com/.../combat-tactical-boots...>

A large shipment of medical supplies was sent with medical personnel who went to Ukraine to deliver 167 suitcases full of medications desperately needed in Ukrainian hospitals. This was a joint initiative of several well-known international NGOs, including MedGlobal, an international medical non-profit organization pro-

viding health services to people in need, including refugees and displaced persons, in disaster and underserved regions. This is a truly international effort in support of Ukraine by people of many nationalities, including Lithuanians.

This was the first but definitely not the last shipment of medical supplies. The collection of the second shipment is underway. We invite you to join our efforts through monetary donations. All funds will be used to purchase medical supplies and tools needed in this fight against Russian aggression.



Chicago medics transported the suitcases to Ukraine

БЛАГОТВОРИТЕЛЬНАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ «БЛАГОТВОРИТЕЛЬНЫЙ ФОНД «ПОСТРАДАВШИЕ ДЕТИ ВОЙНЫ»
LITHUANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY, 14911 E 127th St, Lemont, IL 60439, USA
LITHUANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY, 14911 E 127th St, Lemont, IL 60439, USA



Благотворительный Фонд

«Пострадавшие Дети Войны»

Lithuanian American Community

Lithuanian American Community, 14911 E 127th St, Lemont, IL 60439, USA

Община литовци в Америка

БФ «Надіє спільно», Київ
Український фонд «Мирні Дубинки»

31 марта 2022, с. Київ

От имени Благотворительного фонда «Пострадавшие дети войны», оказывающего помощь детям и семьям, которые оказались в сложных обстоятельствах и вынуждены покинуть свои дома и рабочие места из-за военных действий в Украине, выражаем глубокую признательность и благодарим Общину литовцев в Америке и Фонд «Надіє спільно» из Киева, за оказанную помощь, предпринятые усилия, теплые слова, поддержку.

Мы знаем, что Литовская община в США - одна из старейших и сильнейших в мире. Своей любовью, преданностью родной и общности, она способствует современно-литовской идентичности. Вы боретесь за свободу Литвы. Спасибо, что помогаете нам бороться за свободу Украины!

К письму прилагаем фотоматериалы о передаче гуманитарного груза волонтерам фонда.

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Президент БФ



Светлана Сергеевна Васильевна

Thanks to the Lithuanian-American community for helping children in Ukraine

Memoirs of an Ordinary Lithuanian, Jonas Venckus

Translated from Jonas Venckus' handwritten notes by Roland Giedraitis, Mr. Venckus' son-in-law



Allied bombers over Germany in World War Two. Jonas Venckus and family had several close calls.

Part 6

Preface: Courage, ingenuity, perseverance, and love of family lead Jonas to survive as his family presses on to the West. Bombings and search for food and shelter are their daily uncertainties as they criss-cross East Prussia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Germany. They almost get trapped in the Russian-occupied zone, but they find a way out!

After riding in our wagon about 2 kilometers, we found an obliging German farmer. The children and the mothers were welcomed to the house, where they were provided with sour and sweet milk, scrambled eggs, and bacon. The children with the moms were bedded in a room while

we men, I and Baranauskas, were offered the barn with dried clovers for bedding. We slept so well that we did not even hear our hosts walking in the barn as they were also getting ready to abandon their farm. In the morning, we were again amply fed while the horses ate the clover. With tears, they said goodbye to us since they saw the same fate for themselves. They were alerted that they would need to evacuate.

We were back on the main road riding our wagon southwest through East Prussia. We traveled thus for about a month. We tented our wagon with sheets since fall was approaching, so it rained frequently. Our wagon was long. It held my wife Bronė with our three children and the Baranauskas family with their son Liūtukas. Only 14, but he was tall. I had a bicycle, and I frequently rode it. Now there were many wagons. We slept in farmers' houses or

with random citizens. Frequently we rested with local Prussians who could speak Lithuanian, although with a Prussian accent. They were all cordial since they sensed the same fate for themselves.

In towns, there were refugee relief societies that gave food to all. The children got milk and bread with marmalade. We were near Königsberg (now Kaliningrad). We were greeted by “brownshirts” (*1, members of Nazi militia) who led us to a manor. We were given shelter in barns, but we slept like kings since we were very tired.

In the morning, all the men were lined up in formation. The ex-policemen and auxiliary police were exempt, but the others were not even allowed to say goodbye to their families. They were all trucked away for trench digging work. We were left with our families so that even Baranauskas was saved since I had issued to him an auxiliary policeman’s credentials. Liūtukas curled himself up as much as possible so he would look childlike. Quite fortunately, we left the manor and then traveled through Königsberg, which was badly damaged by bombs. We crossed the Visla river bridge by Danzig and continued another 20 kilometers.

Our horses and wagons were confiscated. The women and children were placed on a train to be sent to an unknown destination. The men were sent to Vienna, Austria. In Vienna, the ex-policemen and soldiers through an officer’s rank were gathered and sent as security echelons for airports. Those who held an officer’s rank, like me, were housed in a zoo’s hall. There were officers from different countries. The Nazis did not trust the officers. A week later, I and P. Mainelis and his wife left for Thuringia to his brother-in-law’s house, with whom he had contacts. (*2 it is unclear how he was able to leave his confinement in the zoo’s hall so easily; possibly the security was very loose or there was free movement.)

Search for my Family

I stayed in Thuringia with Meinelis for a few days. Finally, I got word from his wife, who said my family is in Lehrte, near Hanover. So very quickly I picked up my backpack and left for Lehrte. There, I found a camp where families were settled, but my wife Bronė was not on the list. I was told she was taken to Innsbruck, Austria. Now again, I journeyed by train from the North to the South. When the train arrived in München, it stopped far from the sta-



Refugees fleeing the Soviet Russians

tion since it was heavily bombed.

I hurriedly searched for a train to Innsbruck. I had a couple of hours, and I went to inspect the station. It was a scary sight. Bombs had penetrated the cement of the bunker’s ceiling. All was a big mess and ruined. But the cafeteria was working, so I got vegetable soup and a bit of bread. I had not eaten for 24 hours, so everything was tasty.

Around noon the train left for Innsbruck. Halfway through this trip, the train was divided in two. I was a bit disoriented since I was left in the section going in a different direction. I disembarked at a small station where I spent the night. In the distance, I could hear bombing. In the morning, I left for Innsbruck. The Innsbruck train station and the surrounding area were badly damaged by bombings. There were many dead bodies and many wounded. It seems I was in a bit of luck that I did not arrive there sooner since I could have been one of the victims.

I did not find my wife or family in the designated area. They told me she was moved to Waldheim, Austria. I did not find her there either. Now they told me she was moved to Kirchheim, near Stuttgart, Germany. Again, I traveled back North. That city was also brutally bombed. The train station was heavily damaged. I finally arrived in Kirchheim. It was a camp made up of numerous barracks. She was here! She was in Barack #8. Arriving at the barrack I found my children and my wife Bronelė, who could not believe that I found her. My boys were not excited to see me, but my daughter Danutė warmly embraced me. My wife now told me the story of the tree stump which nearly killed her.



Approximate areas of travel of Jonas Venckus: 1. Lithuania 2. Königsberg, East Prussia 3. Vienna, Austria 4. Thuringia, Germany 5. Hanover, Lehrte, Germany 6. Innsbruck, Austria 7. Waldheim, Austria 8. Gablonz, Czechoslovakia 9. Bamberg, Germany 10. Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany 11. Bremerhaven, Germany - ship to the United States of America

The Stump

At this time, airplanes were bombing the whole area. The children were laying near the barracks while Bronė, sitting on her bed, was knitting socks. While there she heard the window-rattling. She got up from her bed to observe her kids. At that time, there was a huge explosion very close. An object fell through the roof of the barracks and landed right on the bed where Bronė was just sitting. The beds were bunk beds. The upper bed was completely shattered while in the nearby bed, a man had several ribs broken.

Bronė and the others in the barracks were very frightened. They assumed the object was a bomb, but it was not exploding! Some men went to aid the injured person, but then they noticed the object was not a bomb but a tree stump! Apparently, when a bomb exploded near the stump, the force catapulted it about 60 meters upward which then landed on the barracks. The roof was broken through, and so was Bronė's bed. Such fate! Afterward, Bronė was very scared of the bombs. After enduring a couple of weeks, we asked the administration to send us to an area which is not bombed. A couple of days later, we

received news that they are sending us to Sudeten which was not being bombed.

We knew we were traveling eastward, toward the Russian front. But we went eagerly since the front is still far away and the war may end soon. We just wanted to get away from the bombings. The trip was successful without any big incidents. We arrived at the Reichenau village not far from Gablonz. We were settled in an ex-beer hall. This was toward the end of December 1944, just before Christmas. The hall had bunk beds. There were many Polish men and women. We were the only ones with small children. We got food from the common kitchen with our ration cards. It was slightly better than Kirchheim where some foul-smelling seeds were not added to the soup, which would stink up the whole room.

The beer hall was sparsely heated; besides, it had huge doors through which people would walk, so the result was it was well ventilated. The winter was quite cold. Indeed there were no bombings here, so we lived a tranquil life. On February 16th, in the Gablonz hospital, our son Juozas was born.

When we returned from the hospital, we asked the mayor if we could have a separate room. The mayor set-

tled us in a half-cellar with a WWI retired colonel who lived on two floors. We had the servant's room with a kitchen. We had new worries. We needed wood for the kitchen and warmth; we had to buy food with our ration cards and prepare the food ourselves.

The mayor granted permission for us to go to the forest so we could break off dried pine branches. He also gave us the right to obtain coal from which gasoline has been extracted. We collected all this in a small cart. We were satisfied since we were self-sufficient. Our biggest worry was that the Russians would not overtake us. Our landlord informed us about what is going on in the front. We also did not sever our contacts with the beer hall inhabitants. Some of them transferred by train to the Austrian side. But then we received news that the train had been bombed.

Very uncertain future

During the first days of May, the colonel told us that Berlin has been taken. Also, contact with the Fuhrer was lost. The war could end soon, so the entire Sudeten area would be occupied by Russians. We looked for ways to escape westward. We squeezed our way on a train filled with wounded German soldiers. We hoped to find ourselves on the West side of the Elbe river which at that time was designated as the East-West boundary.

We journeyed that day with multiple stops. In Vienna, the train stopped. An announcement was made that the bridge across the Elbe river had been blown up, so the train will not go any further. Many troops were retreating from the East in trucks. An army captain with a drawn pistol would stop the trucks and buses so they could be loaded with the wounded soldiers. Well, in this way, some civilians would also sneak into the vehicles. We did not want to scatter our family, so all of us stayed together waiting for an emptier truck to hop on. Eventually, the captain himself climbed onto a truck, so the remaining vehicles passing by would not even stop. We saw no hope to get on a truck. Looking around we spotted an abandoned wagon. Then we corralled a loose horse which we tried to harness to the wagon. But the horse was a cavalry horse, so he would not allow himself to be harnessed. Soon, we spotted another loose horse that we could manage. We placed our belongings in the wagon so that we could leave the area before it was bombed.

We traveled around five kilometers. We stopped at a village where we found an abandoned house and barn which we occupied. The same day the village mayor announced that the German army has capitulated. It was on May 9, 1945. He also announced that the whole Sudeten area is taken over by the Czechoslovakian government. Of course, the Sudeten Germans were very frightened since

during the time of Hitler, the Czechoslovaks were persecuted.

After a couple of days in the village, a local Czech presented himself to us, announcing that he is now the mayor. The former German mayor was arrested. We worked on this farm planting vegetables and doing farm chores. For this work, we earned food for the family. Bronè would rise early in the morning to milk the cows, getting fresh milk for the children. I worked in the field. Near this village, there was also a large Latvian family, all adults. They would travel around looking for an entry point to the West zone. They advised us which way to go. So again, we bought tickets to Eger on the other side of the Elbe river.

There was plenty of room on the train since there were few travelers. We arrived in Karlsbad. The train conductor warned us that we would not be able to go to Eger since the Americans are checking everyone. We did not understand the German or Czech languages very well, so we did not disembark the train. The train stopped in the middle of a field. American soldiers showed up telling us to get off the train. Our baggage was left on the train. It was at night. The children were sleeping so we carried them out. We disembarked along with some Latvian passengers. After a while, a train arrived from the Elbe river. The American soldiers told us again to return to Karlsbad. I had a small box of cigars, so I approached the conductor, offered him the cigars, and asked how we could arrive in the West zone. The Czech became very friendly. He explained that once we arrive in Karlsbad we should disembark this train and cross over to the East station. There is a train which goes to Marienbad. Board that train and travel to Marienbad. There is passport control at the station. Do not show your German documents but only the ones from your country. The American soldiers are a bit disoriented, so they should pass you through.

I thanked him as soon as the train stopped in Karlsbad. We woke all the kids and disembarked. I enquired where the East station was. We walked to the station. We bought tickets to Marienbad and at 5 in the morning we left. We arrived in Marienbad around noon. Just as we stepped off the train we noticed American soldiers standing by the door. We chose an older mustached soldier to whom we pushed little Juozas in his baby carriage, then Bronè with the children then lastly myself. We showed him only Lithuanian documents which were incomprehensible to him. He let us into the station and thus we were in the American zone!

After leaving the rail station I noticed there was a bus going to Eger. I seated all the children and Bronè on the bus then we sped to Eger where I knew there was a camp that determined whether you go to the West or the East. We left the bus in the middle of the city. We inquired



Lithuanian DP camp school in Germany, c. 1946-47

where the refugee camp is, and then we all marched in that direction. We reached an office manned by a young lieutenant. He questioned us in German and then issued a certificate that we are admitted. A soldier led us to an empty room.

Soon we enjoyed an American supper! It was delicious! Yes, we did ask for and got seconds. We stayed in Eger for about a week till the barracks were full. One morning we were told to get ready to travel with all our belongings. We were seated in army buses and then told not to speak to Russian soldiers or speak very little. Around noon we were in Pilzen. As we disembarked a Russian officer asked us where we want to go, i.e. to the West or the East. At first, we were silent, but when he repeated the question we answered that we wanted to go west. The Russian officer turned around and left us, but our transports left the city and headed to the freight station with boxcars. We stayed in this boxcar until way into the night, then we moved. We had no idea where we were headed. But after an hour, we saw the Regensburg station then we calmed down since we knew we were headed west.

Around noon we were in Bamberg. The steam engine disengaged and left us. We wondered what would happen to us. At the station, I noticed two men with Lithuanian insignia. They told us that there was a Lithuanian camp about two kilometers away. I walked with these two men to the camp asking if we could be admitted. I had warned my wife Bronė that if the train began to move, she would leave the train so we would not be separated.

I went to the camp where I found a Lithuanian chief administrator by the name of Grigaliūnas. He was reluctant to admit us since the barracks were already full. But when I started lamenting that we didn't know where to go, he conceded by saying "yes". He gave me a small cart so we could transport our goods and children from the train station.

Returning to the train station, I found my family sitting in the wagon. Immediately, with all the children and our goods, which wasn't much, we transferred to the cart and hurried to the camp by the forest. We settled temporarily in a sports hall which held about 20 people. There was the straw for the bedding. The other people started mumbling that with the arrival of all the children, they would have no peace and would not be able to sleep. Little Juozukas was five months old. But the children slept well during the night. The other people and we got used to each other.

Later, we obtained a room in the barracks with four beds. Here we stayed until winter. Later we were given a larger room in the barracks. The children went to school. I worked in food distribution, where I could listen to all kinds of gossip. I heard that in other camps, there were screenings. It means there are commissions that interrogate everyone. What kind of work did you do during the German occupation? Later this commission arrived in Bamberg. They worked for a couple of months. They raised a lot of anxiety in the people since nobody knew exactly what they were looking for. Later it became clear they were looking for Nazis, ex-army people who executed Jews, concentration camp guards, and other people who worked for the Germans.

People wriggled in all kinds of ways, especially those who had something to hide. Some were caught and denied UNRRA benefits. Later UNRRA (*3, United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration distributed \$4 billion worth of food and goods to war refugees. It was replaced by IRO, International Relief Organization). The situation relaxed a bit. There were fewer tales of being thrown out of camp and deported.

Next and final episode: Life in DP camps; actions to reach America.

Rays of Lithuanian Education in Minneapolis

Aura Juškevičienė



Martynas Mazvydas Lithuanian School, 2021-2022

The Martynas Mažvydas Lithuanian School has been operating in Minnesota's largest city, Minneapolis, for more than twenty years. Families from all over the city travel downtown to the beautiful Minnehaha (Indian for "laughing") Falls Park to learn the Lithuanian language and culture. The school was opened in 1999. Thanks to the active teachers and the principal for the last almost ten years Vilma Alkhas, it is still open and growing.

The roots of Lithuanians in Minnesota are very strong. How do you manage to keep it that way? Vilma Alkhas, the head of the Lithuanian language school in Minneapolis, and the school community share their experiences.

At the beginning of its existence, the school operated twice a month on the basis of clubs and games. Now, more than ten years later, the curriculum and the calendar of traditional festivals are well established. The school community is proud that education has been uninterrupted since its establishment.

All the children attending the school were born in America. Many of them come from mixed cultural back-

grounds. The ability to speak two or three languages is highly valued in these families. Around thirty children aged 4 to 13 participate in the school activities every Saturday during the school year. They study the Lithuanian language, history, music, folk art, and folk dance. The dedication of teachers Kristina P., Kristina S., Kristina L., Ingrida, Margarita, and Vilma keeps the school going. Each of them is a specialist in her own field - pedagogy, medicine, philology, finance. Teachers with different backgrounds enrich the educational process. Kristina Liaugaudaitė has been a teacher at Howland for over 13 years. She herself attended a Lithuanian language school in Chicago and is a very good example to everyone of how to maintain Lithuanian identity while living far from Lithuania.

Not only the children are motivated to come and learn Lithuanian, but also the adults. Erikas did not have the opportunity to attend a Lithuanian language school as a child. The father of two young children inherited the Lithuanian surname Adomaitis from his grandfather.



Music class with teacher Juste



Children's dance group Vejas

Last year he contacted the school and now, together with the older children, he attends classes every Saturday, does his homework conscientiously, and dances folk dances in the adult group. He has never been to Lithuania but is very interested in his family roots. More Lithuanians have come forward to learn Lithuanian, and the plan is to reopen the adult class next school year.

The children's favorite class is folk dancing because, as Vilma Alkhas jokes, it doesn't require much talking. And at the same time, it's fun to move around and recharge your batteries with a dance step. The atmosphere of the school changed a lot when the children's folk dance group "Vėjas" was founded. All the students from 7 to 12 years old actively attend it. Children as young as four years old start dancing, going in circles, and there are no

problems when they join the dance group. "Vėjas" performs at Minnesota Lithuanian community festivals and outside the school. The children have danced at the Minnesota Festival of Nations and other events.

When the children started dancing, the parents joined in, and later other members of the Lithuanian community and adults joined in to form the dance group "Pūga". The name was born out of Minnesota's cold winter climate. The dance classes are taught by Kristina Satkevičius, who has been an active dancer herself since her early days in Lithuania. At the moment, dance rehearsals are very active. Both groups will take part in the 16th Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival in Philadelphia this July.

Over the past year, the school community has learned to use technology more actively. Thanks to them, it has become possible to include children who live far away from the Lithuanian school in the Lithuanian language education process. Medina lives with her family in South Dakota. Together with her mother, she searched for the nearest Lithuanian school, and it was Minneapolis. Medina participates in the school activities together with all the children remotely. The children are looking forward to seeing their classmates in person.

"By supporting each other, our small school community is able to solve problems. One of the biggest challenges that many Lithuanian schools face is how to find specialist teachers, especially in music and folklore, which are very important in Lithuanian schools," says Vilma Alkhas, the principal. I was delighted when Justė, the current music teacher, responded to the school announcement and is now living in Lithuania and teaching music lessons remotely to students in Minnesota for the second year. Participation in various teachers' meetings brings a lot to the Lithuanian language school. In one of them, at the Dainava camp, a friendship with folk artist Indrė was born. From time to time, she helps the teachers with their folk art lessons, also remotely.

Advances in technology and exciting educational programs enrich the school community. Teachers themselves have the opportunity to gain new knowledge and improve

their skills. Children always participate in drawing competitions and international concerts organized by the American Council on Education. Families enjoy the thematic educational programs and festivals organized by the Martynas Mažvydas Lithuanian Language School very much. This school year, the Fall Festival was about bread, and the Christmas event was linked to the presentation of Advent customs. The beauty of the homeland and the love and respect for Lithuania was the theme of the event dedicated to Independence Day.

Minnesota has many forests, very fertile land, and lots of rain. Families love mushroom and berry picking - mushrooms and jams are frequent gifts for each other. There are families who keep bees, and everyone has



True friends don't mind the distance



Celebrating Christmas



We always remember January 13th

local Lithuanian honey. Everyone is looking forward to meeting a Lithuanian beekeeper in the near future.

The school is located in the Minnehaha United Methodist Church. In front of the church, the Lithuanian words "Let there be peace in the world" are engraved on a wooden pillar, alongside other languages, to welcome and say goodbye. The school has been renting space in this church since 2019. In a short period of time, a beautiful friendship and cooperation have developed between the two communities, and festivals are celebrated together. Most importantly, the children enjoy their classes, feel comfortable, and are eager to return to the Martynas Mažvydas Lithuanian School in Minnesota every Saturday.



Teachers Ingrida, Margarita, Kristina P., Vilma, Kristina L., and Kristina S.

Poems[©]

by Dorothy Minkus

Five Storks

High atop a pole, one is sitting in a nest.
Two glide across the cloudy sky.
One pecking at the ground in an open field.
Must be a female as she watches a little one.

A stork in Flight

Sighting a standing stork is considered good luck.
Sighting a stork in flight means you are going on a trip.
A football shape with long legs and necks – awkward on the ground but graceful in flight.
Returning from a winter in Africa to their home thousands of miles away.
Time to deliver their own babies.



Sister Do

Old Will asked a question.
To be or not to be.
But he fell short.

I am. I exist
Yet it is what I do
That makes me who I be.

What do I do to be whom I am?
I live like I will reach 103
But also like today is my last day.
I start each day with a new page
And try to finish all that I have started.

I take everybody as they are
But try to make myself better.

Don't tell me what I can't do
For I am Sister Do and will do things until
I do no more!



Dr. Minkus is a professor of marketing and amateur photographer. She grew up in Westfield, Massachusetts and enjoys tracing her Lithuanian forbearers.

Easter is Celebrated by Making Clay Eggs

Janina Shubert

Teacher at the Colorado Lithuanian School



Colorado Lithuanian School students listen to folk artist Jurgita ČiPLYTĖ

In the spring of 2022, the Colorado Lithuanian School received news of a grant from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania for the project "I, YOU, and WE - Lithuanians!", during which ceramic folk artist Jurgita ČiPLYTĖ would introduce the traditions of Lithuanian folk art.

The folk art project started on April 2, 2022, when the first of six classes took place. The ceramic artist Jurgita ČiPLYTĖ was teaching virtually from Lithuania, while the children of the Colorado Lithuanian school watched and listened to her and worked at school in Colorado. Jurgita told the audience about the ancient Baltic patterns, their meanings, and origins, and the practical task was related to Easter. Jurgita taught us how to make clay Easter eggs. It turned out three different clay eggs could be made: flat, hollow, and full-size. It was fun for the children to have several choices and pick according to their desires and capabilities. It was even more fun to see the children's clay eggs "dressed up" as hares, chickens, dragons, or even Vikings. Each one of them, with great enthusiasm, created their personal Easter clay eggs, decorated with pictures of the Sun, snakes, fire, symbols of happiness, and wind. Some children had time to create several impressive creations. For two hours, children's creative energy, big smiles, and pride in their work filled the room!



Folk artist ceramist Jurgita ČiPLYTĖ

The unconventional classes for children, teachers, and parents help learn new skills, work closely together, and foster Lithuanian identity in Colorado.

We are grateful to ceramist and folk artist Jurgita ČiPLYTĖ for the opportunity to work with clay and create art. We are also grateful to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports for funding this project.

our community



Ceramics class has started



Milda, Austeja, and Saule concentrate on their art



Milda and Ricardas create their eggs



Sean and his egg dressed as a Viking



Children's art

Where is the cultural wealth of our nation?

By Kristina Vyšniauskienė
Translated by Arvidas Jarašius



Gražiausias kiaušinis

We usually hurry into the holidays and do not get all the real work done. Not surprisingly we end up spending very little time preparing for the holiday. In ancient times, our ancestors spent up to 7 weeks preparing for Easter. It was a celebration of Spring, of rebirth and renewal, when not only the corners of the house should be cleaned, but also one's own conscience.

Easter, with its traditions, is deeply embedded in the spiritual treasure of our nation's culture by providing serenity, refreshment and joy. Even far from the Homeland, this holiday is probably in one way or another commemorated or deeply celebrated with our families. It is the continuity of traditions and that nurtures and refreshes our cultural roots, historical memory and suppresses the longing for the Homeland.

For the second time, our Lithuanian community in Colorado has had the opportunity to begin the celebration of Easter Day with a Lithuanian Holy Mass offered by Brother K.J. Francis. Our community does not have

a church, so the celebration took place at the Latvian church. Easter Mass reminded us of the Resurrection of Christ with hymns sung by our community volunteer choir. The people of Ukraine were not forgotten in the universal prayer and we asked to bless all who fight against the enemies who have invaded their country, to give them strength and hope for the wounded. Yes, it was also asked to bless the Lithuanian community and the Lithuanian schools in Colorado, for them to grow in their love for Lithuania and each other.

An integral part of the Easter holiday are the festive meals. According to customs, festive meals start with the egg. In some regions, the first egg was not broken. It was reverently cut and, in the interests of health, divided. One of the most important customs was that a huge cake flavored with poppies, nuts and dried fruits was baked with great love and care by the hostess. Our community women, as well, had many foods to brag about, but the most striking were the eggs decorated in various ways. It was amazing to marvel at the talent, artistry and love of the tradition.

After Mass and the feeding of the soul, the celebratory program was started by the Vytureliai Colorado Lithuanian school. The students recited poems and invited all of the children into a Lithuanian circle. There they learned that the egg symbolizes new life and fertility. The decorations on the egg reflects the expectations of the decorator and the different colors have different traditional meanings: red = life; green = vegetation; yellow = cereals; black = the earth; blue = heaven. The most popular decorations are suns, snakes (symbols of life and fertility) and stars. These, too, are related to life, fertility and renewal. The assembled school staff organized egg hunting and rolling for all children in the community. It was during the celebration that the most beautiful egg was also chosen. This year's winner was Austė Kučiauskas.

The end of the celebration was crowned with a thank-you note to the community's volunteers. In the weeks before the Easter celebration, our community women, Janina Shubert, Jurgita Demenė, Aldutė Bulotaitė, Rasa Gluosnienė and Kristina Vyšniauskienė, gathered example of ancient Lithuanian cut art and decorated thank you cards. These were meant to honor all of our volunteers who responded to the call for support. It is very important for a small community like ours that everyone helps.

And who did we thank? First of all, the Vytureliai

our community



Mišios



Padėkų atvirutės

Lithuanian school for the holiday program. Irmantas and Viktorija Gluosnis and Janina Shubert for the Easter Mass readings. Vilma Balyte for gladly agreeing to coordinate the Easter table. Romas Zableckas for organizing the choir rehearsals. For our choir singers, Donatas Juodzevicius, Simona and Roma Grincevičienė and, of course, for offering Holy Mass, Brother K.J.Pranciškis, who was able to leave the Hermitage in the mountains, where his ministry is no longer preaching nor teaching, but prayer and intercession of the whole world. Thanks to Brother K.J.Pranciškis, the feast of Easter was filled with the main ingredient – Prayer.

Easter, the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ, helps us draw closer to the eternal source of good, understand the spiritual values of our nation and contribute with creative works to the nurturing and maintenance of our Lithuanian community. Let Easter, like our other major holidays, remain non-commercial and in our hearts.



Savanoriai



Savanorių choras

Cultural Chronicle of Past Events

On February 20, a long-awaited premiere of a glamorous musical took place at the Lemont High School Performing Arts Center in the Chicago suburbs. The project was directed by Rūta Bunikytė (LT), choreographed by Sandra Krumhorn (USA), with costumes and sets by Auksuolė Kišonaitė (USA), Šarūnė Stankevičienė (USA), and Kernius Miežlaiškis (USA). The project curator was the Lithuanian American Cultural Council. Financial support was received from the Lithuanian Foundation which enabled the musical to be of a high artistic level. This musical was also shown in Los Angeles on February 27.



In March, Lithuanian rock legend Povilas Meškėla performed in Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, and Florida. In Chicago, a meeting with musicologist and Eurovision jury member Darius Užkuraitis took place at the Siela Gallery.



our community

The Lithuanian Documentary Film Festival (LDFF) took place in Chicago and Boston in February. The Chicago LDFF is led by Audra Januškienė, while the Boston Baltic Documentary Film Festival is led by Živilė Symeonidis. The film presentations in Chicago were attended by director Vytautas Puidokas and film critic Narius Kairys, while the Boston Film Festival was attended by Karolis Kaupinis, director of Nova Lituania.



The Lithuanian American Cultural Council, in celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Lithuanian Foundation, the Community's main supporter, presented a free screening of the film *Nova Lituania* to all Lithuanian American districts. It is encouraging that after the global pandemic, the LAC chapters are returning to their normal activities.

The Lithuanian American Cultural Council has submitted applications for financial support that amounts to nearly a quarter of a million to the Lithuanian Foundation for the next two years.



Lithuanian Youth of South America Congress Held in Uruguay

Lithuanian youth associations around the world actively organize youth congresses, meetings, discussions, and various events. On February 16-20, the 24th South American Youth Congress was held in Uruguay. The annual Lithuanian Youth Congresses in South America are held one year in Argentina, the next year in Uruguay, and the third year in Brazil. This year, over 30 people attended. The Lithuanian World Youth Association President Rimvydas Rubavičius (UK), the WLYA Board Member Vincentas Palubinskas (Belgium), Second Secretary of the Lithuanian Consulate in Brazil Augusta Lėkaitė, and Prelate Edmundas Putrimas participated. Marija Čyvaitė and Maja Chiapetta represented the Lithuanian American Youth Association.

The congress started on February 16 at the Montevideo City Hall in Independence Square, where members of the Lithuanian community gathered. Local soldiers put a tricolor bouquet of flowers at the monument in honor of Lithuania. After singing the national anthem, the participants went to the Plaza de Republica de Lituania. In the evening, all participants met at the Lithuanian Uruguayan Community Cultural Centre in the old part of the city, where all Lithuanians lived many years ago, similar to Chicago's Marquette Park. Young people met the members of the Uruguayan Lithuanian Community and the Lithuanian Youth Associations and spent the rest of the

time in San Jose village, where various presentations, excursions, discussions, and lectures about the activities of the Lithuanian youth unions around the world, about dual citizenship, about the Lithuanian language and the opportunities available to young people in Lithuania were held. In the evenings, the young people had fun sitting around the same table, enjoying authentic Uruguayan dishes. Back in Montevideo, they celebrated the 16th of February together with the Lithuanian community. They attended the Mass, commemorated the event, had dinner, and danced.

Lithuanian youth associations are active, working, and creating. The Lithuanian Polish Youth Association is preparing to host up to 80 young Lithuanians from all over the world who will gather for their Youth Congress this summer. And the Lithuanian American and the Lithuanian Canadian Youth Associations have already started preparations for the next Youth Congress (date and location to be announced this summer).



Marija Čyvaitė (right) and Maja Chiapetta represented the Lithuanian American Youth Association at the Congress.



Congress participants

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

34. EXPENSIVE BREAD

Those grams cost Juratėlė and me dearly. Her little face was chapped and peeling while my legs became swollen and full of festering sores. I couldn't even walk as far as the office. The doctor's assistant, Paukson, wrote me an excuse from work and advised me to soak my legs in a hot solution made of birch bark ashes. As a result of those baths, the tightening eased somewhat. On the sores, I put plantain leaves because there were neither bandages nor medication.

The commandant did not believe the medical assistant's report that I could not walk to the office. He and the chairman came to see me and said, "So what if the legs hurt? Do you have the daintiness of a newborn calf! When you sit, your legs don't hurt. You can work in the office."

I answered nothing. I just pulled my legs out of the wooden bucket in which I was soaking my legs at the time the men came. My legs were swollen from the hot alkaline solution; the skin was red and shining like glass. In spots, suppurative boils were festering.

The chairman glanced at them and shuddered: "Mm...yes. With such legs, you won't go far."

"They don't even want to carry me a short distance," I said.

"You are too delicate," said the commandant and left.

There was an inordinate amount of work on the collective farm, and very few workers. Everything was done primitively there, done in the most primitive fashion! There was no technology.

The Russians are not inventive. The next project was wheat. How much soil could those hungry women and those adolescents dig up for the planting of wheat? I know that if, in twenty or thirty years, anyone reads

these notes in Lithuania or in another European country, perhaps even today, no one will believe that the report is really so.

In the spring (in the month of June) potatoes were also planted with a shovel. Two women dug little holes, and a third one dropped in the potato eyes. The women covered them with hand hoes.

The soil of the Siberian taiga is fertile. The grasses grow fast and quickly, overpowering cultivated plants. It was necessary to weed not only the potatoes but also the other crops. All the children were sent to do this work. And not having the strength to weed directly, they would take up sticks and strike with them everything in turn. If they saw the field team leader, they would quickly hide the sticks in the grass and would complain that there was too much grass and very few crops. I am sure that the field team leader did not fail to guess how they were weeding, but he did not pay attention. The important thing was the plan.

Hay-harvest. Women with scythes would cut at the luxuriant grass in between tree stumps. They were using short scythes, but even the shortest ones caught on the stumps and roots since only such plots were designated for haymaking. The more level ones, even if they had stumps, were considered arable land.

Rye and summer wheat (there was no winter wheat—it froze) they would cut with sickles and gather in handfuls. There was a big plan projected for grain from one hectare, but wheat for bread cultivated in this fashion had no desire to grow.

Every year the collective farms could not produce enough to settle with the government, and as for bread for the workers, it was not even a matter for discussion. Feed yourselves with whatever you can, you did not grow any bread; you did not fulfill the plan. Eighty-five percent of what was produced under the plan went to the government; only fifteen percent to the needs of the collective farm: seed, feed, bread. But the plan was not completed! Therefore, even the 15%, which should normally have been left, was non-existent.

And people who worked under compulsion worked reluctantly.

In the summer, we managed more or less. Nettles, garlic, and later cabbage and turnip leaves from our garden. We even dug up a potato or two. Besides, my son Liudas and his father worked cleaning the riverbank. It was the responsibility of another section, but the collective farm had to supply the workers to clean the banks, which were in its territory.

The river district did not pay the workers directly but would transfer their pay into the account of the collective farm. The collective farm would write down workdays for all work. Since the collective farm was never able to settle its account with the government, it paid nothing for these

workdays. But the flour, which was designated for the river district workers, would be brought to the cooperative. Every five days, the workers could buy out 300 grams each. That was a great help. Our two workers, every five days, would get 3 kg of good rye flour.

35. THE FIRST CASES OF INSANITY

One day, the cleaning woman, running into the office, said, “Oh, girls! Some young guy swam across the river. He’s sitting naked on the shore in the nettles. And the mosquitoes. He’s black, covered all over with mosquitoes, and he’s not even defending himself. He’s probably a Lithuanian. He can’t speak our language.”

I asked Motia where this was happening as I jumped up and ran out to see what was going on. But I met the storekeeper and old man Sadych dragging the young man in the direction of the chatas.

The sight was terrible: he was swollen, blue, his hair disheveled, his eyes full of dread like those of a trapped wild animal looking around in fear.

“Who are you? Where are you from?” I asked in Lithuanian. The young man answered nothing, only kept brushing his body with his hands. “Do you want something to eat?

Where are your clothes?” I asked, trying again. The young man shuddered. He spat out a green mouthful of recently chewed grass.

“Eat, eat, eat.” He kept repeating the same word and finally gave out a pitiful, long-drawn-out sob.

They brought him to one of the abandoned huts and locked him up. They informed the commandant. He gave the order to issue one kg of bread and one liter of milk. The young man’s rags (one could not call them clothes) they found on the other side of the river.

Tiotia Motia* brought him the food. The young man grabbed it and ate it wildly while the militiaman and some curious people watched through the window to see what would happen next.

Motia, out of breath, ran into the office. “Oh, girls, he swallowed everything, and he’s not dying. He fell asleep. The militiaman even cursed: ‘We shouldn’t have given him any milk.’”

So that’s how it was! The food was given but not for humanitarian reasons. They had heard that, if a person who is nearly starved to death ate a lot of food all at once, he would die immediately. And here? What a disappointment! They used up one kg of bread and one liter of milk (such a treasure), and, instead of death, there were only convulsions. The scoundrel fell asleep peacefully.

In two days, Motia informed us that the young man had died anyway. Someone helped him die. Who was it? We

found out later. He was Jonas Lazauskas, 18 years old, who had finished high school in 1941. He had been deported together with his family. But his father, like all the adult men, had been separated from them at Naujoji Vilnia and been transported to a concentration camp. He had been brought with his stepmother, who also had an 8-year-old girl, to Sobolinka. It was a settlement in the same Parbig region 26 km from our Komarovka, deeper in the taiga, in an even marshier place. The stepmother, with whatever she had, tried to save her little girl, chased Jonas out, wouldn't even let him into the chata to warm himself, because he had become beset by lice.

At the beginning of winter, another deportee became insane—he was the policeman, Juškėnas. The cruel Siberian winter had brought it about. His clothes were not adapted to the Siberian cold, and even they had become worn. The resources were meager. To exchange something for something edible was impossible. And three small children were constantly asking for something to eat. Hope that life would change was non-existent. The war did not seem to be ending. His nerves could not take it.

He was brought bound to the regional hospital, and from there, a few days later, they brought back a frozen corpse.

*Motia and Tiotia Motia – are the same person. Tiotia means “Aunt”. Many older women were called “Tiotia” even by non-relatives.

36. TAXES, DRAMA, TEARS

My haranguing of the agents ended badly. My family and a couple of other able-bodied ones whose husbands had not been separated from them were loaded down with taxes: 46 kg of meat based on live weight; 1.5 kg of hides; 216 kg of potatoes; various payments in money: 1) farm tax, 2) insurance, 3) per capita tax, 4) war tax. In short, thousands of rubles. Where to get them no one cared. People were working day and night without pay.

All the demands were received in writing. We couldn't pay; we didn't have the means. After some time, the storage agent came and delivered an executive court order: Pay 84 rubles for the first half of the meat contribution and 5 rubles for court costs. Surprise. We had not been summoned to court, and I knew nothing.

I went to court to complain. “The year is not over yet. Before fall, no one has meat, and even if there were any, where would we get it?” I said. We justify ourselves as best we can.

“That's not my affair, I know nothing. You've been adjudged, so pay up. The court is no laughing matter:

they'll take your last rags,” answered the agent coldly.

What to do? How to pay? Where to get the money? Worry. Tears. Ran home to confer with my family. Whatever was possible had been sold, exchanged for food, given to support the army, given for the chata.

In the first place, my husband's watch had been sold for money, then my son Liudas'; later my gold watch with its gold band, which fell to the speculator from Tomsk. There was still Stasiukas'. It was my present to him on his name's day in 1941 for being a good student.

Stasiukas was guarding it, did not take it off day or night. He guarded it as the greatest treasure. One time, I noticed that he was putting his watch in his pocket.

“Stasiuk, did the band break that you're putting the watch in your pocket. Don't lose it!”

“I won't lose it, Mamyte. I don't want to wear it on my wrist because, as soon as the director saw it, he asked me if I would sell it. And another time he said, ‘Sell it to me, I'll pay well.’ So I don't want him to see it.”

Here was the critical moment. They say, “A drowning man grabs even a razor.”

“Stasiuk, give me the watch, I'll go see the director, maybe he'll take it. There's nothing else to be done,” said my husband.

“I won't give it! I won't! It's Mamyte's present and I won't part with it.”

Stasiukas was defending himself even with tears in his eyes. My husband was explaining to him that there is no joking with a court. It was the decision of a court, not a bargaining session with agents. For the lack of those 89 rubles, we would lose our last clothes; they might put us in prison and so on. But Stasiukas, clutching the watch tightly in his hand and pressing it to his heart, kept repeating with tears, “I won't give it up, I won't! Let them take everything! I won't give it up! It's Mamyte's present. I won't give it up.”

I am not quick to cry, but even I could not bear it. I wiped away my tears and ran out to beg them to postpone the payment at least until the next day.

“And what will you do in one night?” asked the agent mockingly.

“You won't do anything at night either. You won't travel through the taiga at night. You know very well that the morning is much wiser than the evening,” I answered with a Russian proverb.

He relented but warned me that I must pay in the morning. Poor Stasiukas, awaking in the morning, did not find his watch. It was a terrible drama, not only for him but also for us all. My husband brought back 300 rubles. I took 90 to the agent and thought that I could breathe easier, but, as the Lithuanian folk tale says, “The throat of the wolf is wide, it can't be closed with a key; it can't be plugged up with a stump.”

37. THE FIRST PRISONER

The winter of 1943 was nearing. In the fall of 1942 we had already successfully grown some potatoes in our garden. My husband and my son Liudas were working in the collective farm section of the cooperative union mill. Here, they received every day 200 grams of flour for their work. Working in the office, I knew when an animal was going down. On those occasions, I would ask for an allowance of some meat, although the meat of a starving animal was only bones and membranes. For reasons of thrift, we would not peel the potatoes, but would only wash them very well. I would cut the potatoes into very small pieces, I would put in a small piece of that meat, a handful or two of flour, and it made a tasty soup. Even though we nourished ourselves only in this fashion, we were considered wealthy. One evening, a tearful Astrauskienė came running to our chata. In tears, pale, she wanted to speak but kept choking and wailing.

We became frightened. Was it death again?

“What happened? Calm down!” I gave her some cold water and had her sit on the plank-bed.

“My dear lady! Only you can help me. You work in the office. You have a garden,” and again her voice broke.

“Fine, but what happened? What kind of help do you need?” I asked, not understanding what the garden had to do with her problem or the office.

“They have sentenced Vytuką. * Tomorrow they are driving him through Komarovka to the jail in Tomsk.” Again sobs. “He has nothing to eat for the journey, and I have nothing either. Tomorrow they’re taking him away! Oh God, oh God!”

“Wait, don’t cry. Sit down. You’ll eat some soup. We’ll help in whatever way we can,” said my husband.

“And how did he wind up in court?”

The woman, having stopped sobbing and calmed down, started telling us the story. “In the fall, he was taking grain by boat to Krylovka. The way was quite long, about 50 km. On the way, even though the boat was full, it was going lightly down the stream, but on the way back, he had to go against the current. Vytukas was with a Russian, Kolia, both young, about 17 to 18 years old. They were given 300 grams of bread each for four days. But, it took them longer. And what is 300 grams when there is nothing else except river water? Kolia had at least taken a bottle of milk and a potato patty, but our boy”—and tears again—“they couldn’t stand it anymore.

The two of them scooped up a small bagful of grain and

brought it back. ‘At least we can grind up some barley,’ they said.”

“The receiver at Krylovka, wrote down a shortage of 13 kg. Our office informed the commandant. Kolia said that he and Vytas had eaten that grain. There was a search. A militiaman came to our chata. I gave him what little I had. But they drove Vytuka and Kolia to Parbig. Today, Santalicha came running and informed us that they had both been sentenced to five years in prison, and tomorrow they are being taken from Parbig to Tomsk. And he has nothing to eat for the journey,” and again tears.

This was the beauty queen of Biržai, Astrauskienė, but with swollen, red eyes, swollen nose and lips. Ecce Homo!* Her husband had been taken away at Naujoji Vilnia. She had come to Komarovka with two sons, Vytas and Romas.

I cut off a piece of frozen meat, I brought half a pail of potatoes and a small bowl of flour.

“At least bake him some patties.”

Looking for words of gratitude, she took the treasures and ran off home. After she left, we sat for a long time and discussed how cruel life is, how inhuman and cruel the laws of this country are, and how brutal and heartless the officials were.

But, was it their fault?

*Vytuką – diminutive of Vytas, short for Vytautas, a popular Lithuanian name after Vytautas Didysis (Vytautas the Great) Grand Duke of Lithuania (c.1350-1434), King of Poland (1386-1434).

**Ecce Homo* – “Here is the Man,” the words of Pontius Pilate when he presented Jesus Christ to the crowd of Jews.

№	Vardas	Epavardis	Gimimo metai	Gyvenamasis rajonas	Pašalinimo data	Repsuoti metai	Repsuoti kraštas/respublika/valstija	Repsuoti pabaiga	Likimo
1	luzs	Zukauskienė	1906	Kauno	tremtis	1941	Tomsko sr.	1958	grįžo
2	Juzefa	Zukauskienė	1906	Kelmės	tremtis	1951	Krasnojarsko kr.	1957-02-19	grįžo

current events

Security

Lithuania's Ministry of Defense announced that it will spend 1 billion euros (\$1.09 Billion) on new military equipment from the U.S. and Germany over the next couple of years. The hardware includes 120 eight-wheeled Boxer infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) and 155 mm self-propelled howitzers (SPHs) from Germany and Javelin medium-range anti-tank systems and Switchblade combat drones from the U.S., which have proven very effective in the Ukraine's efforts to repeal the current Russian invasion.

The U.S. Army Chief of Staff General James C. McConville met with the Commander of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, Lt. General Valdemaras Rupšys, in Vilnius to discuss the resumption of training of Ukrainian soldiers on NATO weaponry. The U.S. was training the Ukrainian military at a site in western Ukraine to fight Russian-backed separatists in Donbas. The training was put on hold as Russia massed 200,000 troops near the Russian-Ukraine border prior to the February 24 invasion. Two weeks before the invasion, about 160 U.S. National Guard soldiers were relocated from Ukraine to Germany.

Since 2017 the U.S. has rotated about 1,000 troops each in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. The Lithuania Defense Ministry now says that the number in Lithuania is 1,600.

The Seimas has approved the restoration of a military training ground in the south-eastern Lithuanian village of Rūdninkai, 35 km south of Vilnius. It includes parts of three nature reserves, and the Environment Ministry will have to monitor activities. It includes 48 private lands which will be acquired.

Ukraine

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the Lithuania Seimas via video conferencing and encouraged the European Union to tighten economic sanctions against Russia. During his speech, the blue and yellow Ukrainian flag joined the yellow-green-red Lithuanian flags flying over the 141-seat Seimas Assembly.

In response to the Ukrainian accusation that Russian forces were killing civilians in Bucha, northwest of Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, the Lithuanian government has ordered the Russian ambassador to leave Vilnius and has retrieved the Lithuanian ambassador, Eitvydas Bajarūnas, from Russia. It has ordered the closure of the Russian consulate in Klaipėda.

The Lithuanian ambassador to Ukraine was returning to Kyiv.

Lithuania's President Gitanas Nausėda, Poland's President Andrzej Duda, Estonia's President Alar Karis, and Latvia's President Egils Levits met with Ukrainian Presi-

dent Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv to discuss ongoing support for the Ukrainian army and civilians as well as the investigation of war crimes.

Lithuanian Defense Minister, Arvydas Anušauskas, said that Lithuania is supplying Ukraine with an unstated number of heavy mortars.

Lithuanian filmmaker, Mantas Kvedaravičius, was captured and executed by the Russian military in the Ukrainian city, Mariupol. His wife retrieved his body and returned it to Lithuania. Born in 1976, he made the film, *Barzakh*, (the Islamic version of Purgatory), an award-winning documentary about Chechnya and its disappearing population, in 2011. Among the awards it received: from the Lithuanian Film Awards - it won the Silver Crane for the Best Documentary and from the Berlin International Film Festival - it won the Amnesty International Film Prize and from the Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival - it won the Grand Prix as Best Film. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed his condolences to President of Lithuania and to the Lithuanian people on his loss.

Eight members of the Seimas made a working visit to Ukraine following visits by the Speaker of the Seimas, Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, and the Lithuanian Defense and Health Ministers.

Three priests of the Russian Orthodox Church serving in Lithuania have been dismissed and suspended from active work after criticizing Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Patriarch Kirill for supporting Putin's war. Patriarch Kirill, a long-time ally of Putin, has referred to Ukrainians defending against Russian forces as "forces of evil" who are preventing "Russian unity."

In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has restricted the activities of Gazprombank, which owns Gazprom-Media. The Lithuanian regulator LRTK has banned the retransmission of 32 TV channels operated by Gazprom-Media. They include NTV Mir, Pyatnitsa, TNT, TV3, and Zee TV. Additionally, LRTK considers their retransmission to not be in Lithuania's national security interest.

The Lithuanian Radio and Television Center, Telecentras, has started retransmitting the radio program of the Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine between midnight and 6:30 AM, which can reach 1500 km. The broadcasts are in Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian.

Much like the Nazi swastika is banned from being displayed in Lithuania, the "Z" or "V" that the Russian invasion troops use on their equipment, have been banned in Lithuania. The Russian black and orange Saint George Ribbon has also been banned.

COVID-19

The Lithuanian State Medicines Control Agency (SMCA) reports 1,151 adverse reactions to COVID-19 vaccinations during the first quarter of 2022. The majority of the reports, 933 were related to the Comirnaty vaccine; 82 to the Vaxzevria vaccine; 68 to the Spikevax vaccine; 64 to the Janssen vaccine, and one related to the Nuvaxovid vaccine. In total, the SMCA reports 7,959 adverse reactions by March 31, 2022, out of nearly 4.5 million jabs (a rate of 0.18%). Ninety-two percent were considered minor, while 8 % were considered severe and included 4 reports of myocarditis and pericarditis. There were six reports of deaths after vaccination; most of the fatalities had severe underlying medical conditions for the patients ranging in age from 60 to 80 years, with the average being 73.5 years. So far, the statistics indicate that there have been 11,000 “excess deaths” in Lithuania due to the COVID-19 virus.

Business

Lithuania now has its second “Unicorn”, an Initial Public Offering of greater than \$1 Billion. Founded in Vilnius in 2012, Nord Security has a staff of 1700 and is recruiting another 200. It is the largest tech employer in Vilnius. The company raised \$100 million from investors which gave it a valuation of \$1.6 billion. The investors include Novator Ventures, Burda Principal Investments, General Catalyst, and the co-founders of the second-hand clothes marketplace, Vinted, Lithuania’s first Unicorn. Nord Security’s best-known product, NordVPN, costs \$12/month. VPN, a virtual private network, allows internet users to access blocked websites and services. As Russia tightened internet controls following its invasion of Ukraine, Russians turned to VPNs to bypass these controls. Nord Security has other products, including NordPass, a password manager, and NordLocker, an encrypted cloud storage product. Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė met with founders and CEOs Eimantas Sabaliauskas and Tomas Okmanas to congratulate them and indicate that investors feel safe in Lithuania and encourage new Lithuanian start-ups.

...Shift4, a U.S.-based integrated point-of-sale (POS) payment system with 225,000 customers is once again expanding its Vilnius operations. Established 25 years ago, it opened its Vilnius office in 2017 with two employees. It now has 260, and in the coming months, it will add 70 specialists in customer service, operations management, and software development. In September 2021, Shift4 was in the news when its founder and CEO, Jared Isaacman, took a Lithuanian flag on the first civilian space mission, “Inspiration4” where he was the commander of

the SpaceX operated mission onboard the autonomous Crew Dragon spacecraft launched by a Falcon 9 launch vehicle. He plans to return to space on a Polaris Dawn mission in late 2022.

Amina Technologies, a U.K.-based loudspeaker developer and manufacturer, announced plans to establish a Research & Development center in Kaunas through its Lithuanian sister company, The Invisible Loudspeaker Company. Over the next 3 years, it expects to hire 20 specialists. Founded in 1999, it developed a patented hidden speaker in 2001. It uses flat panels to produce sound via Vibrational Panel Technology, hidden by a skim coat, wallpaper, or veneer. Amina applied for financing via the Lithuanian government’s SMART FDI program to support R&D activities with the aim to attract high value-added foreign investment.

With the European and U.S. sanctions against Belarus cutting into the potash freight traffic, state-owned Lithuanian Railways estimates that it will lose 11 million tons and revenue of 61 million euros. Therefore, it plans on laying off about 2,000 of its 9,200 employees to moderate an expected loss of 150 million euros.

General

The Lithuanian government has approved adjustments to the 2022 budget because of the large increase in energy prices. It has allocated 570 million euros to households to offset some of the costs of gas and electricity. It is adding 67.7 million euros to increase old-age pensions by 5%. It plans to allocate 120 million euros to support businesses affected by increased energy prices and help agriculture with 9.3 million euros. State-owned Lithuanian Railways will receive an additional 155 million euros. The Finance Minister has proposed allocating 370 million euros for Ukrainian war refugees. The Board Chairman of the Central Bank of Lithuania, Gediminas Šimkus, criticized some of the increases as being “politicized”, especially the pension increase.

The Jewish memorial in Paneriai outside Vilnius, was defaced with anti-Semitic graffiti and the pro-Russian letters “Z” and “V.” About 100,000 Jews, Poles, and Russians were murdered by German SD and SS and their Lithuanian collaborators between 1941 and 1944.

Public-sector employees with children under the age of 3 are now eligible to work four 8-hour days per week (32 hours per week) for full pay. One goal of the change is to make public-sector jobs more appealing to compete against higher-paying private-sector jobs. Other European countries with less than 40-hour work weeks include France with a 35-hour workweek and Iceland with a 35 to 37-hour workweek.

Mark Your Calendar



Let's Meet at the Dance Festival

Time is flying, and the long-awaited Dance Festival is almost upon us. There will be 35 dance groups performing at the grand finale on July 3rd. The artistic committee has been tirelessly working to prepare for the festival. Just a friendly reminder to the dance teachers: all changes and new materials are posted on the Festival's website (see a link below). There you will find music, videos, and a rehearsal schedule. Arena formation charts will be sent to the teachers soon after Easter.

Following the Festival's traditions, dancers and visitors will be invited to a "warm-up" party on Thursday night (June 30th), a "Meet and mingle" event for the youth on Friday night (July 1st), and Saturday evening events. More detailed information and tickets are to be announced soon.

Sunday evening will offer a choice between the Family/Youth buffet-style dinner party or an elegant Gala Banquet, and then an "after-party" dance night. The Gala Banquet cost is \$125 per person, which includes an elegant dinner followed by dancing. The Family and Youth Banquet tickets are \$65 for adults, \$45 for youth ages 13 to 18, and \$30 for children ages 2 to 12. This event is a lovely buffet dinner. Both banquet tickets include entry to both after-dinner evening dances at the Marriott hotel.

Sincere thanks to the dance teachers and dancers for their hard work and devotion. Can't wait to see you and a crowd of spectators in Philadelphia!

Information for the dance teachers <https://www.sokiusvente2020.org/instructors>

Performance tickets and Family/Youth or Gala tickets can be purchased at <https://www.sokiusvente2020.org/events>

Additional information about the XVI Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival weekend events can be found on our website <https://www.sokiusvente2020.org>

The 45th Teachers' Camp Will Take Place in Dainava

Camp Dainava will take place on August 7-14, 2022. You will have exciting meetings, share your work experience, listen to lectures, and enjoy evening programs. While the teachers are busy with lectures, the children will take part in a program specially designed for them. The children's leader is Asta Čuplinskienė. Information and registration for the Teacher Training Course are provided by Vilma Alkhas at m.mazvydo_mokykla@yahoo.com. A registration fee discount is available for teachers who register before June 1, 2022.

This camp will also include Lithuanian language courses for beginners and advanced learners. After the language classes, participants are invited to take part in evening programs, music lessons, and educational activities. For more information and registration, please contact Kristina Petraitienė at kpetraitiene@svietimotaryba.org. Registration forms can be found here: <https://svietimotaryba.org/dokumentai/dainavos-stovyklos-formos/>

Lithuanian American Business Forum to Be Held in June

The North American-Lithuanian Business Forum is organized by the Lithuanian American Community and its partners. The Forum will be held in Philadelphia on June 29, 2022.

President of the Republic of Lithuania Gitanas Nausėda has agreed to be the patron of the event. The Business Forum will be attended by senior representatives of the Pennsylvania government and economic development as well as the Lithuanian Ministry of Economy and Innovation, representatives of Versli Lietuva, Invest Lithuania, and Global Lithuanian Leaders (GLL), as well as global US business leaders. Meetings of the representatives of Lithuanian companies with the heads of U.S. companies and visits to selected US companies are being planned. More information at <https://www.bacc.nyc/forum>.

Regina F. Narušis

OCTOBER 12, 1936 – APRIL 25, 2022



Regina Gytė F. Narušis passed to be with God, her husband, Bernard, and parents, Eugenia and Viktoras, on April 25, 2022. She was with her children with whom she had an active dialogue and shared fond memories of friends and family in McHenry County, Illinois and her homeland, Lithuania.

Regina and Bernard resided in Oakwood Hills, Illinois, Vilnius, Lithuania, and finally Salt Lake City, Utah.

Regina was a dual citizen of the United States and Lithuania, born in Kaunas, Lithuania on October 12, 1936. Regina is survived by three children Victor Narušis (Clare Narušis), Ellen (Narušis) Behrens (Mike Behrens) and Susan (Narušis) Losurdo (Angelo Losurdo), nine grandchildren – John, Joseph, Therese Narušis Hartz (Matthew Hartz), Mary, Matthew, Anna, Alexa, Enzo and Zanna, and one great-grandchild Leonas Hartz. Preceding her in death are her beloved husband Bernard (married June 8, 1959), mother Eugenia (Česnavičius), father Victor and infant brother Vytas.

Regina and her parents immigrated to the United States on September 13, 1949 and became a US citizen on December 2, 1954.

Regina was an accomplished attorney, community & civic advocate, and passionate Lithuanian leader. She received her bachelor's degree in political science in 1957 and Juris Doctor in 1959 at age 22 from the University of Illinois.

Regina boldly formed a law practice in 1960 at her home in Oakwood Hills, Illinois and served as Assistant State's Attorney in McHenry County Illinois from 1968 to 1975. Her husband joined her in the practice of law in 1969, forming the law firm of Narušis & Narušis. There, she and her husband represented seven municipalities, for-profit and non-profit organizations, and worked in various areas of law.

As a community and civic advocate, she was elected a member of the Prairie Grove School District and served as President for several terms until 1979. Regina also served the Rockford Diocese in the 1980's and 1990's as member of the Rockford Diocesan Finance Council, member and Chairperson of the Diocesan Foundation, Executive member of the Diocesan Association Foundation and member of the Marian Central Catholic High School Board. With her husband, Bernard, she was a founding member of the McHenry County Community College, and served as a member of the District Health Council, the Social Assistance Council, and the Illinois State Highways Advisory Board. She and her husband were founders of the American Lithuanian Bar Association (LABAS) where she served as Chairwoman and a member of the council. Regina was an active member of the Republican Party which later became foundational in US support for Lithuania's independence and entrance into NATO.

As independence activities emerged in the former Soviet Union in the 1980's and early 1990's, Regina's passion in support of Lithuania's independence came into full bloom. While initially participating in Lithuanian cultural activities through the Waukegan – Lake County Lithuanian American Association, she later went on to actively serve as a member of the 16th through 19th Councils of the Lithuanian Community of the United States (2000-2006), and Chairwoman of the National Board of the Lithuanian Community of the United States (1994-2000). Regina went on to serve as Chairwoman of the Board of the World Lithuanian Community (2006–2012), and was a member of the Lithuanian Community Commission of

our community

the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the United States. Among her most proud achievements in support of Lithuania, Regina served Chairperson of the Central and Eastern European Coalition NATO Expansion Working Group which resulted in Lithuania's entrance into NATO in 2005. Regina's most recent efforts in support of Lithuania relate to her book entitled "In Lithuanian we are born Lithuanians we want to be".

Regina was the founder of the Support Fund of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a member of the Commission for the Restoration and Purpose of the House of Lords of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and chaired the US Support Committee for the House of Lords (2003–2020), an honorary member of the Council of the House of Lords, and 2nd Degree Order of the Grand Duke of Lithuania. Regina became a member of the Vilnius Club in 2018 and took great joy in participating in their many events and making many new and special friends there.

She and her husband were members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem in which they took great strength and comfort.

Among numerous awards, she held special fondness for those from the Order of Gediminas II, a Metal of Honor from the Republic of Lithuania for service to the nation (1998) and Order of Gregory of Great - Pontifical Order of Merit bestowed by the Pope for the Catholic Church.

The World Lithuanian Community mourns the passing of Regina Narušis, JD, Lithuania-born Lithuanian American, indefatigable champion of Lithuania's independence, history, culture, and language.

Regina Narušis organized a local chapter of the Lithuanian American Community, served on the Lithuanian American Community National Board of Directors, and as President of the World Lithuanian Community.

Regina Narušis worked tirelessly to persuade several U.S. presidents and many members of the U.S. Congress to support Lithuania's efforts to restore her independence from the Soviet Union and Lithuania's admission into NATO.

Regina Narušis believed in the vision of restoring the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in Vilnius and led the effort to build that monumental edifice in honor of Lithuania's mighty past.

She fought for the right of Lithuanians to have dual citizenship.

The World Lithuanian Community extends condolences to the family of Regina Narušis and to all who will miss her leadership and experience as they continue to work on behalf of the land of her heritage.

Dalia Henke
The World Lithuanian Community President



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May 2022



LITHUANIAN FOLK
DANCE FESTIVAL
PHILADELPHIA 2022

Events

Wednesday, June 29

North American Lithuanian Business Forum 2022

Thursday, June 30

Evening Youth Social, Lithuanian Music Hall

Friday, July 1

Welcome Celebration and Dance, Marriott Downtown Hotel

Saturday, July 2

Concert, Marriott Downtown Hotel

Sunday, July 3

Folk Dance Festival, Temple University Liacouras Center

Sunday, July 3

Gala, Family Banquet, Dance Party, Marriott Downtown Hotel

Tickets and more information at www.sokiusvente.org

bridges

VOLUME 46

ISSUE 4

LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

