

# bridges



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**Front Cover:** Metropolitan Archbishop of Vilnius Gintaras Grušas celebrating Mass at the Blessed Matulaitis Mission Church in Lemont, Illinois. Born on September 23, 1961, in Washington, D.C., Grušas grew in a Lithuanian family. He participated in the activities of Lithuanian St. Casimir Parish of Los Angeles, Ateitininkai Federation. In 1983-1987, he was the Chairman of the World Lithuanian Youth Union and a member of the board of the World Lithuanian Community. On April 5, 2013, he was appointed Metropolitan Archbishop of Vilnius by Pope Francis.

**Back Cover:** An Advent wreath made by the children of the LAC Colorado Chapter

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## from the editor

Dear Reader,

As the Year 2021 closes, I wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and good health and good luck in 2022. I am also sharing the words of an ancient Lithuanian Christmas song.

### Kalėdų rytų rožė inžydo

Kalėdų rytų rožė inžydo, lylio kalėda kalėda,  
Sekminių rytų dyvai pasidarė, lylio kalėda kalėda,  
Dyvai pasidarė: ažerai užšalo, lylio kalėda kalėda,  
Jaunas bernelis ladelį kirto, lylio kalėda kalėda,  
Ladelį kirto, žirgelį girdė, lylio kalėda kalėda,  
Žirgelį girdė, mergeli virkdė, lylio kalėda kalėda,  
Atlakė elnias Devyniaragis, lylio kalėda kalėda,  
Ant pirmo rago ugnelė degė, lylio kalėda kalėda,  
Ant antro rago kavoliai kalė, lylio kalėda kalėda.

### Christmas morning a rose has bloomed

On Christmas morning a rose has bloomed, lylio kalėda kalėda,  
On Pentecost morning a miracle has happened, lylio kalėda kalėda  
A miracle happened: the lake has frozen, lylio kalėda kalėda  
A young lad cut through the ice, lylio kalėda kalėda  
Cut through the ice, gave his horse a drink of water, lylio kalėda kalėda  
Gave his horse water, made a young maiden cry, lylio kalėda kalėda,  
Then came a deer with nine horns, lylio kalėda kalėda  
On the first horn, the fire was burning, lylio kalėda kalėda  
On the second horn, blacksmiths were hammering, lylio kalėda kalėda.

Linksmų Šventų Kalėdų ir laimingų Naujųjų Metų!

Karilė Vaitkutė  
Editor

# Lithuanian Hall in Baltimore Celebrates its Centennial

Henry Gaidis



The Baltimore Lithuanian Hall, also known by its Lithuanian names, Lietuvių Namai (Lithuanian Home) or Lietuvių Salė (Lithuanian Hall), is the venerable historic building located at 851-853 Hollins Street, in Baltimore, Maryland

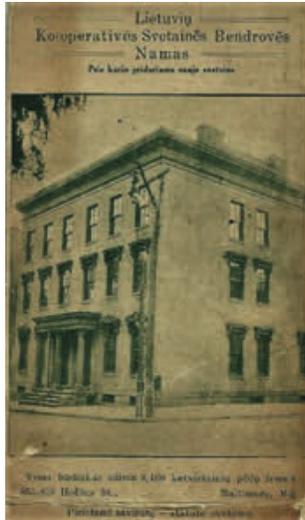
On November 20, 2021, the Lithuanian Hall in Baltimore, Maryland, celebrated its 100th anniversary. The guests enjoyed the live performances by Malūnas and Mituva dance groups from Baltimore and a concert featuring Nida Grigalavičiūtė and Suktinis dance group from Chicago. Guests also had a chance to view a special presentation about the history of the Lithuanian Hall prepared by Arvydas Reneckis of Chicago and featuring the curator of the Baltimore Lithuanian Museum and an honorary member of the board of directors of the Lithuanian Hall, Henry Gaidis. Here is the transcript of the narration about the history of Lithuanians in Baltimore and the Lithuanian Hall.

Lithuanian Americans started coming to the continent that became the United States in the pre-colonial days but the real immigration began in the 1860s and 1870s when

Lithuanians came and mixed with Poles and generally settled in Polish communities. Firstly they came in waves of single men out of Lithuania that was suffering under the situations coming out of the industrial revolution. The tsar in 1861 gave each family a piece of land, and it was probably sufficient for a family at that time to live off. But as those families grew, and if they got married they would divide the land up, and then there would not be enough land for anyone to survive so what they did is that the oldest son would inherit the land they would hope to marry off the girls to other farmers that had the land and they would pull their money to send the first oldest male after the first of the sons to the United States he would come to get a job get settled and then he would help bring over his next brother and his next brother is next brother and then if there were any girls left they would bring them over. But when they came to the United States, Baltimore in particular, they came by boat from Germany, they arrived here at Locust Point, got off the boat, and came right into

Baltimore. Some went through Ellis Island. Those usually went to Pennsylvania and worked in coal mines. Some came down to Baltimore later because the coal mine work was so bad. But those that came into Baltimore generally lived in, for the lack of a better word, boarding houses where there might be three or four single men living in the same place. They initially found labor work but by 1880 there was a sufficient number of Lithuanians to form their own neighborhood. The males all thought they were going to make fortunes and go back to Lithuania. Well, that didn't work out.

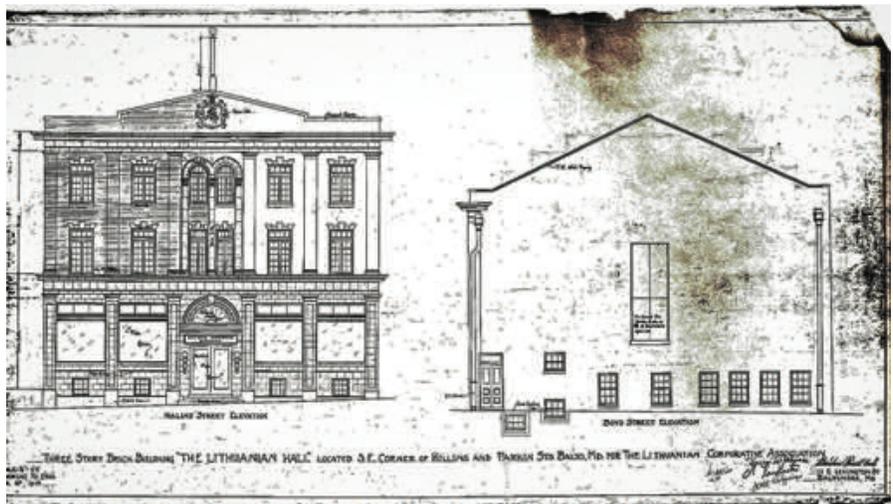
The catalyst for the establishment of the Lithuanian American community separate from the Poles which they usually settle with was the arrival of the ladies. And upon their arrival, their Masses, and sermons, and their gospels were in Lithuanian, and the Lithuanian ladies wanted to get married and it wasn't going to be a justice of the peace, it had to be a priest and there were no Lithuanian priests and we had to recruit our own Lithuanian priests, and they had to come from the old country initially. When the priest came where were you going to have him hold the Mass? You had to get a church. So they formed clubs (in Lithuanian they were called draugijos or societies). The first one was Saint John the Baptist society which was formed for the purpose of buying and establishing a Lithuanian Catholic Church in Baltimore that was formed in 1885. The first place where they started Holy Masses in St. Peter's, the Lithuanians and Poles in that one church. And it worked for a while. The first church they acquired was a Jewish synagogue that they had outgrown and the Lithuanians bought it. It was perfect for them. It had a small hall. The hallways were used for all kinds of activities. Remember, we had single ladies and single men, and they needed a place to meet. And you didn't go to bars in those days,



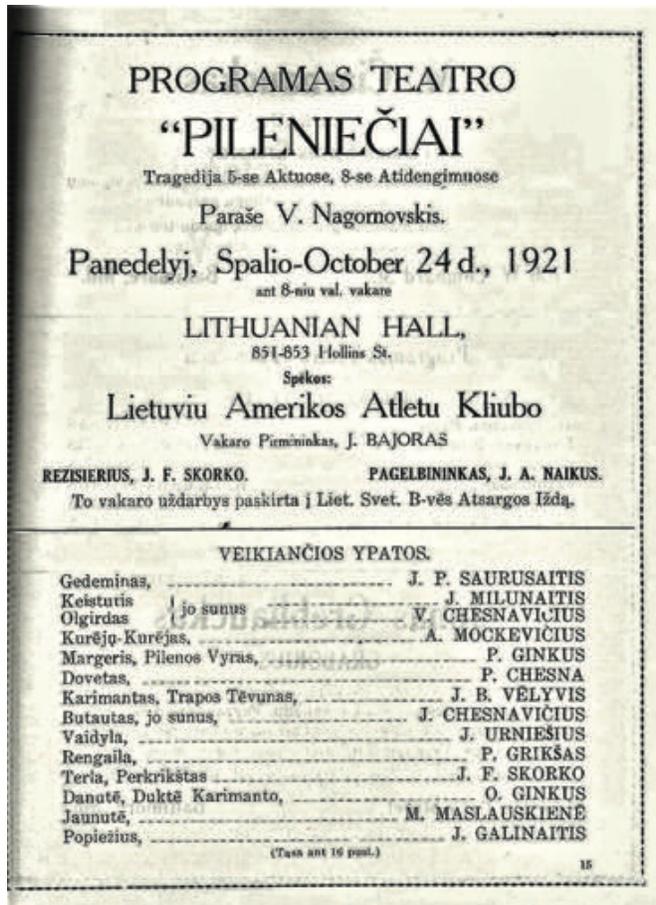
F. Knapp's Institute School for the Deaf



The Alexandroffsky estate's Hollins Street Entrance (now Little Lithuanian Park), across from the F. Knapp Institute School for the Deaf (now the Lithuanian Hall) circa 1900



Part of the architectural drawings for the newly designed Lithuanian Hall



Playbill for the Drama “Pilėniečiai,” October 24, 1921



Program book cover for the opening celebrations in 1921

there were no computers or anything for dating services. You had to meet in person and they were usually Church events. There were lots of picnics in the summer and dances and things like that in the church.

The bulk of the Lithuanians arriving went into the Baltimore garment industry. One of the problems of that era was terrible work conditions. There were no social security benefits whatsoever. So if you had a job and you got fired, you starved. Unless you got another job. If you got sick, there was no hospitalization, and you died. So they formed these draugijos, or insurance companies and if you had one of the situations - you are unemployed, got sick, died - they would handle a lot of the benefits through your widow and your orphans and make sure you got a good burial. The draugijos were the main catalyst for the growth of the community, the treasury for virtually everything. If you want to set up a business, a grocery store, or a bar, draugijos would pool their money and give loans out. In the 1880s - 1900s, there was the birth of the national revival in the old country and it spread here to the United States. The main person in the United States leading the national revival was Jonas Šliūpas. He formed many draugijos and the first secular draugija was the

Lithuanian Scientific Society. They had Lithuanian newspapers in Baltimore and he helped Lithuania establish a Lithuanian Catholic National Church but the Lithuanian attempt failed pretty quickly. It only lasted for about two or three years. When the church went under, the main nationalist draugija bought that church and converted it into a hall. They put a stage in there, and they had all kinds of activities. The rentals are the same way we operate now: they gave plays, they gave dances, they rented the halls for other events, weddings, funerals. Anything we do today they did in that hall which was christened the Lithuanian Central Hall.

It was the Mecca of the Lithuanian American community in Baltimore, and many people that would come to Baltimore that's the place they would go. The national revival that was going on in Lithuania needed money. Well, there was an image that the United States was the land of milk and honey and the streets were made of gold and things like that, so we did have a number of visitors come over. One of the visitors who came over was Dr. Jonas Basanavičius, the founder of the Lithuanian freedom movement and who became a sort of Benjamin Franklin type of person in the Lithuanian national psy-



Cast from the 1921 play "Pilėniečiai"

che. He came to Baltimore as well as other cities trying to raise money to build a museum. He has envisioned a museum somewhat similar to the Smithsonian complex. The first place he went to was Central Hall. He had a fundraiser, he gave speeches and when he left Baltimore he was very happy. The community was growing from 1880 to about 1902, about a 20-year period, it grew to about 5,000 people. So you needed a bigger place to have meetings. The Kestutis society helped fund the purchase of the building that the Hall is right now bought by the Lithuanian community in 1914 with the funds that came from the first Lithuanian Central Hall. A couple of other draugijos kicked in some money to acquire the property but not enough to do the conversion, the reconstruction. So then they started selling the shares to the community. This was going to be a private club which it is till today. You had to buy one share for \$25. Doesn't sound like much today but back in those days, it was like 2 or 3 thousand dollars today. The Hall had its grand opening in 1921. The major part of the festivities was naturally a dedication of the building and a gala dance and a Lithuanian opera "Pilenai" that was presented by the Lithuanian Athletic Club. The opening day lasted probably six weeks. There

were 31 draugijos. Each draugija wanted to have its opening day.

The two surviving clubs that still exist from the original opening were the Athletic Club and the Lithuanian National Library. The Democratic Club and the Republican Club, the Socialist Club and the Communist Club.



Lithuanian Hall in 1956



Lithuanian Dance Group circa 1954



J. Kruzės nuotrauka

*Baltimorės lietuvių skautai sodina Lietuvos Nepriklausomybės medį*

Baltimore's Lithuanian Scouts plant the Lithuanian Independence oak at the State House in Annapolis.



The American Legion Lithuanian Post #154 presents the colors during a Lithuanian Independence Day celebration

There were clubs that teach languages, there were clubs that had people become citizens. The Athletic Club did all kinds of things - gymnastics, pyramids. And one of the things they did was that they had a bowling alley and some of the competitions were with other organizations that would come to the Hall. They had professional boxing matches, professional wrestling. You know, Litvaks, the Lithuanian Jews, were in Baltimore as well. And there was even a Jewish wedding held in the main hall. Burial ceremonies, confirmations, marriages, wedding ceremonies, anything. Again, you would think that anything we are doing is unique to us but we are just following what grandpa and grandma did before us. After Smetana fled Lithuania because of Soviet occupation, he came to Baltimore too and visited here in 1942. It was soon followed by a visit by President Grinius. One of the reasons he came was to give a speech but he had another purpose - he had not seen his brother for probably 20 or 30 years. Well, his brother lived in Baltimore and sat on the Lithuanian Hall Board of Directors for many years. For most Lithuanians, the most famous of all people were Darius and Girenas, the two aviators who were the third people that attempted to go across the Atlantic. They came to Baltimore on at least six occasions. Raising money, giving talks in this hall. He had the airplane at Logan's field and he also gave a flight show to raise money. If you gave a lot of money and a lot of money was \$25 you would get a ride on the Lituanica. He also flew his airplane to Washington. They were happy with the money that they got here. If you gave enough money you could get your name painted on the plane. And three Baltimore draugijos had their name painted on that plane.

The Lithuanian Hall has a great tradition of assisting and defending Lithuania. If you read our charter, that's our mission. That was part of what the immigrants on the opening day of this Hall said: we will foster everything to support Lithuania. I'll give you a couple of examples. On February 16th, 1918 Lithuania declared its independence. The Lithuanians were not recognized by the United States until 1922. So among the things that Lithuanian Americans did was to start a petition drive, which was also done in Baltimore. The Lithuanian Americans, not only Baltimorians, collected over a million signatures and in 1921 presented that million signature petition to President Harding who shortly thereafter recognized Lithuania as a free and independent country. So there were all kinds of funds being raised here. Lithuania was struggling to get independence and stay independent. Where did the money come from? Who supported it? In this Hall, we contributed money and savings bonds for Lithuania to even exist financially before it could get on its feet.

In the Soviet era and the Nazi era, there were all kinds of demonstrations. During the Cold war, we would picket at

the Russian embassy. It would not have happened had it not been planned here in the Lithuanian Hall. During the 1990-1991 struggle, this was the home office of the Free Lithuania Committee. We had a little miniature Lithuanian Statue of Liberty monument that was taken and carried to Washington DC for that demonstration and you can see it in front of the US Capitol building showing that we're struggling for Lithuania.

When the Lithuanian immigrants fled Soviet occupation and were in DP camps, they set up organizations to sponsor them and first of all to get the law passed that would allow them to come here. There were 700 DP families that came to Baltimore and settled here. Many of them today run the Lithuanian Hall. I am very hopeful that now we see the new-wavers coming in and they are doing the same things. DPs saved the Lithuanian Hall from going under, and I hope that the new-wavers will continue the Lithuanian Hall to another century. We did a century already and we have a long time to go here if everything keeps going.



Ambassador of Lithuania Audra Plepytė congratulates Henry Gaidis.



The anniversary cake



Lithuanian Museum at the Lithuanian Hall



Dainos Tremtinių Choir



The Baltimore Lithuanian Hall banquet

# Memoirs of an Ordinary Lithuanian, John Venckus

Translated from handwritten notes by Roland Giedraitis



Jonas Venckus as a policeman

## Part 2

Jonas Venckus gets called to the armed forces, which he leaves as a lieutenant after a year. Then he joins the Lithuanian police.

### In the Army!

On the 4th of November, 1927, I again found myself in the Kaunas railroad station, but this time, with a group of draftees who were called by name. We were assigned to various sections. I was assigned to a Hussar regiment for basic training.

We were lined up four abreast, and our baggage was placed in wagons. We were marched on Vytautas Avenue to the Žaliakalnis hill where the hussar barracks were located. Here we were assigned to our squadrons. I was



Lithuanian army cadets at the gates of their School of War, in Kaunas. Jonas Venckus was a student there.



Lithuanian army cadets parading, 1938



Jonas Venckus as a policeman is first in line facing his chief

assigned to the first squadron. We were provided uniforms, and the next day we were engaged in assignments. Sports in the morning - as we were lightly dressed, the noncoms would lead us on a jog on the asphalt highway to the Mickevičius valley and back. Many of the trainees from the farms were not used to intensive runs. They would quickly get tired and fall out of line. After breakfast, we were engaged in infantry and cavalry formations. In the afternoon, we continued with training in military rules and the use of weapons. After supper, further preparations; usually care and cleaning of the horses, which would take about an hour. We had about half-hour of free time. 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. was bedtime in the barracks.

After about a week of such training, I and eleven others were selected from the squadron to continue training as army cadets (tr: officer training). We were housed with the base staff. We felt much cleaner, but riding and formation lessons continued with a lot of pressure since we had to accomplish in two months what the squadron would do in six. We were assigned a noncom who would drill us unmercifully. The skin peeled from my thighs in

riding horses. We had to learn formations and rules and regulations. But we knew it was only for two months, so the time passed quickly. It was an abbreviated basic training course.

In January of 1928, our whole group was transferred to the military school campus! Here we were issued army cadet uniforms while our Hussar outfits were returned to the regiment. We felt like we were among intellectuals, but discipline was maintained, and it was very strict. As the upper class-men would pass by, we had to stand at attention, but at the same time, we felt we were equals. Food was much better and of interesting variety. We had fewer formations but more classes. And the lessons were more interesting. The lecturers were well prepared and knew how to teach. Morning athletics were of different modes.

From the officer training school, I remember one episode. One upper-class man cadet would lead us to Sunday supper. He would put us in formation and give the command, "sing from the first step." This meant we would march and sing from the first step. Of course, the song



Police service. Jonas Venckus is in the first row on the right



Lithuanian army in formation during ceremonies, c 1930

would happen. He would stop us, and we would begin anew. We got tired of this game. One Sunday, Dilba (a fellow classmate) conspired that we would not go to supper. This was at the end of May. It was a beautiful spring evening, and all the cadets were burdened with books that were disbursed throughout the school's campus. As supper time arrived, this upper-class cadet began calling us to formation for supper. But only the academy's staff were present. After supper, this upper-class cadet reported to the on-duty officer that the cadets did not go to supper. The officer in charge called the company's leader, Dulksnys, but he was not home, so he contacted the company officer Urbšys. He soon arrived and ordered

all the cadets to formation. Of course, we all assembled in good order. Without comment, he gave the command to march right and led us out of the area. He ordered us to march with more vigor and then to sing. He led us out of the school's campus. We went to Napoleon's hill. The evening was quiet, and our song resounded beautifully. Thus after more than an hour of marching, we were led back to our barracks for evening inspection and went to sleep. The next day our company commander Dulksnys assembled us and angrily berated us. "What is this? A sabotage? He threatened us, revolutionaries, with the firing squad, swore at us, etc." The whole company was punished by not allowing going

to town for a whole month. The upper-class cadet was also punished to seven days of confinement.

Soon after, we went to the Kalnikos camp for firing practice and trench preparation. The punishment was soon forgotten.

In the middle of July, they sent us to regimental maneuvers. I was assigned to the second regiment's liaison company. The company had its commander, Ališauskas, but there were no other officers. The sergeant was sick. That meant I had to partake in the sergeant's duties. We also had telephone and Morse code specialists who did their jobs well. Two others cadets seemed ill, so before exams, we sent them to the hospital to check their health. But all the others passed their exams, and the company's commander, Ališauskas, and I were officially commended. Honestly, I spent maybe an hour a day in the headquarters where we signed documents and I received orders. He enjoyed history lessons more and was studying at the university. (Later he wrote a history of the fight for independence and now lives in Chicago.) Returning from regimental maneuvers and practice to the officer school, we had to present recommendations on company leadership. During the examinations, a lot of attention was placed on these reports so it was easier to pass the exams. And so on October 28, 1928, I was released to the reserves. At first, I was promoted to a non-commissioned officer but later, I received a junior lieutenant's rank.

As I exited from the armed forces, the question came, what to do next? I was looking for some sort of service. Some of us decided to look for service in the interior department. So we went to the department director, Svilas, who greeted us cordially and accepted our applications. He told us we would get answers later. We knew the police were collecting data about every one of us. At



Lithuanian army officer trainees (cadets) relaxing with their instructors. Jonas Venckus is lying in the front row on the right.

the end of January, I received a note that I was accepted to the Panevėžys police department and was directed to present myself to the chief of police.

The winter of 1929 was very cold, especially at the end of January and the beginning of February. I had to travel 35 km from my home with a horse-pulled wagon. Roads were covered with snow and potholed. My mom and elder brother, Juozas, urged me to dress more warmly, but neither I nor my brother had proper boots. So my shoes consisted of leather with wooden soles which were tacked on. These were quite comfortable to walk on the snow, warm to the feet. So with these wooden shoes, I presented myself to the chief of police, Vilkas. When he started to escort me around the office chambers, these shoes were so loud that all the office workers stared at me. After all the ceremonies, I was accepted but warned that in this police department, wooden shoes are not welcome. Starting on the first of February, I began my service in the Panevėžys city police department. The police chief gave me money for a uniform and the proper leather boots I purchased with my first paycheck.

I lived very thriftily since I was assigned to the police department as a night watchman. I had to watch the office from 8 in the evening to 8 in the morning. I could

take hour breaks for meals. And the next 24 hours, I was free. Thus I served about one year. Sometimes when I was free in the evening, I would buy a ticket to see a movie.

The watchman's duties consisted of answering the telephone and noting the entrance and exit of policemen to their posts. To be sure that they went to their posts sober and returned sober. I had to list the complaints of citizens and record their grievances. Then I had to report all this to the station commander. The chief of this station was Jonas Daniūnas. He was very strict but also fair and just. He did punish policemen by placing them in jail for drunkenness while on duty and for disorderliness.

Before entering the police academy, I was sent to different posts. Here I had to enforce good order. No unnecessary noise, no fighting, no abuse of animals, maintain neatness, and that there would be no criminal acts.

In January of 1930, I was sent to the police academy. We were about 50 men. Some had military service; others were ex-army officers. We also had volunteers who had fought for independence: Plungė and Savickas. There were some who served as police for some time, like Jočys and Kronkaitis, who were 40 years old. They had a difficult time with sports such as running and learning difficulties in classes. Best of all during weekends Saturday

afternoon and Sundays we could visit the city. We had to return by 9:30 for the evening inspection. Some of the older ones would come back a bit drunk. The director of the school was Augustinas Ramanauskas. Often during the inspection, he would come around asking who had been drinking. The guilty ones would raise their hands. The older fellows would always raise their hands. Ramanauskas then would ask “how much” did you drink? Kronkaitis would say a glass of vodka. Then Ramanauskas would ask how big was the glass? Like for a beer? The men would avoid drunkenness and just for drinking, there was no punishment.

Ramanauskas entrapped me once. It was like this. The police academy’s watchman was on duty 24 hours from 12 to 12. Of course, time off for meals. When I took over the watchman’s duties, there was an exercise in the oak grove called “catch the bandits.” A lot of running and hiding and after four hours of exercise, we were exhausted. In the evening, when everyone went to sleep, the school was deathly quiet. I was very tired. It seemed I just sat down that I heard the doors shutting. I sat on my chair and, surprise! on my head, there is no service cap! Then I understood this was the director’s doing! I quickly obtained from a room another cap and started inspecting empty rooms. In the reading room the light turns on and by my desk sits the director with my cap on the table. So I entered confused and did not know what to say. Then Ramanauskas said, “The watchman was sleeping? Do you know what could have happened? We all could have been slaughtered! Who would then be responsible? But you are sensitive and perceptive and wise, so this time, I am just giving you a warning. Just know that during your whole life as a policeman you carry responsibility for yourself and others.” Ramanauskas lived in the same building as the school, only on the second floor. The watchman’s chair and table were on the first floor near the exit. During the rest of the night, I definitely did not want to sleep.

In the police academy, we had a variety of teachers, called lecturers. The most interesting one was Fakabas, who taught political studies and world events. He was especially fond of English politics and how the English perceive their politics.

The most humorous lecturer was Vorobjovas, who taught criminal code. He would pronounce Lithuanian words very erroneously. Instead of “žmogus,” he would say “žmogėnas”; instead of “numirėlis” he would say ‘nuomerėlis,” and similar. Police laws and duties were taught by the chief of police of Kaunas, Jankauskas, who was also the most strict. He liked to say a sergeant leaves the army, who is straight strong, and vivid, but still smells of straw. Then look, he spends half a year in police service, begins to relax, takes bribes, prostitutes himself, and so forth. So what do you do with such a policeman? Get

him out of the service! So in various categories, about 10 lecturers prepared us for six months for police work. We absorbed a lot of knowledge and theoretical preparation.

All the police cadets had final exams in all categories. I finished in the middle. Not the best and not the worst. I was immediately promoted to a senior policeman. After a vacation, I was assigned temporarily to the Panevėžys county police department. Then I was transferred to the city police. And starting in December of 1930, I was assigned to the Smilgiai point for a permanent position. There I spent four months. Then I received a promotion as assistant chief and transferred to Naujamiestis County point chief. There I spent about a year. I was assigned to Vadokliai County as precinct chief. This was a very quiet area. No robberies and no murders. During the year, we had about three bigger cases, and everybody paid their taxes. Then the police chief, Vilkas, doing an audit, told me that I am young and that in such a place, I would get careless. What is needed, is more practice and a higher rank. He transferred me to Panevėžys city as the precinct chief’s assistant. I was placed in the worst area. Here we had the most murders, assaults, and prostitute dens.

But the police department looked at the situation differently. It seemed to them like I got a demotion, so after a month, I got an assignment to Alytus District’s Nedzingė County as precinct chief, 2nd class. Thus I arrived in Dzūkija. In Nedzingė, I stayed about four months because the county chief, Furgelys, was minimizing the number of counties, so my county was eliminated, and so was the police precinct. They transferred me to Varėna in February of 1934, with similar duties. There as the precinct chief of police, I matured and spent six years. Varėna was very close to the Polish administrative line or border, which extended about 20 kilometers in our area. We had three police areas. We had three Catholic parishes: Perloja, Varėna, and Akmuo. Two TB sanitariums: State and Dainavos. A health department with personnel and patients. Five elementary schools. A high school. A post office, a pharmacy, a health center, a birthing center with a midwife, a dentist, a small bank, and a Jewish synagogue. All stores and restaurants were in the hands of Jews. The city’s center was burned during the First World War and remained unrestored during all the years of independence.

*(To be continued)*

*Next: Varėna experience; John Venckus starts a family*

## Colorado Lithuanian American Community Member Awarded the Medal of Distinction

By Kristina Vyšniauskienė



This year, the Lithuanian American Community is proudly and happily celebrating its 70th anniversary. Various events were organized for the occasion, and many Lithuanian Americans came together to celebrate. Also this year, the Colorado Lithuanian community (CLC) is celebrating its 60th anniversary. I would like to introduce a prominent member of our community, Arvidas Kazimieras Jarašius, who received the Medal of Distinction for his efforts to foster Lithuanian culture, education, and the arts and to contribute to the life of independent Lithuania. The award was presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania at the Lithuanian World Center in Lemont, Illinois.

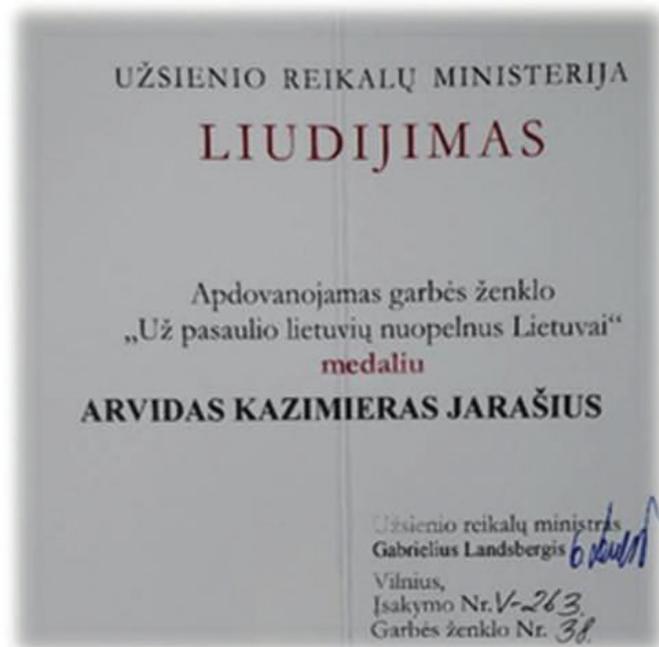
I was not surprised that Arvidas Jarašius was the recipient of this award. He truly is one of the pillars of our community. Arvidas was one of the founders of the Lithuanian school, and the school was located in his own home for many years.

Also, on many a Sunday, he and his wife, Laima, would open the doors of their home to the Rūta dance group. As a matter of fact, they both have been dancing in this group since its early days and are still going strong!

Almost every year, the Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania in Chicago organizes an outgoing mission of consular officers to the State of Colorado. Take a guess where the Consulate staff live and work while they are here. Yes, at the home of Arvidas Jarašius.

Arvidas is a long-term chairman of the CLC board and an avid event organizer. When I sent a volunteer invitation to the CLC to make a cross in commemoration of the Colorado Lithuanian Community's 60th anniversary, he was the first person to respond, prepare, and implement the project with the help of several other community members.

When I sent my questions for this article to Arvidas Jarašius, he asked what the purpose of this article was. I answered on behalf of all of us by saying that we were proud to have such a devoted person here, in Colorado, a great longtime leader, thanks to whom the fire of the Lithuanian spirit is being protected and nurtured for future generations. His answers to my questions may help us understand what the recipe of his passion for Lithuanian culture and heritage is.





**Congratulations on receiving the Medal of Distinction from the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. What does it mean to you?**

I am honored to receive this award. However, without my wife, Laima, I probably would have only accomplished a quarter of what we have done together. This award acknowledges the work of many in the Colorado community. It shows that big things can be done in small communities with the right amount of passion and commitment. We are small and do not have the resources of large centers like Chicago and Los Angeles. We have relied on our local talent to create opportunities to gather and be proud of being Lithuanian. The most amazing fact is that when something needed to be done, the volunteers appeared. We were never disappointed.

**It is said that everything comes from childhood. Could you share some memories about your family when you were growing up, and talk about your education, work, and hobbies.**

My parents were displaced persons who met in a camp in Germany after WWII. We spoke, ate, and lived Lithuanian at home. At the dinner table, if any of us three children (my brother, Edi, and sister, Rita) spoke English, we had to wash the dishes. It helped us focus. During my first and second grades, we lived in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and I attended Lithuanian school at St. Peter's. We then moved to Lansing, Illinois where there was no community or school. However, our neighbors and my friends

all knew we were Lithuanian. Most everyone was something in addition to being American: German, Italian, Polish, Jewish, etc. Weekends were spent with relatives in Marquette Park, Chicago, or at our house. We never attended Lithuanian school, but we were instructed by our mother. Through high school and college, everyone knew. It was just a part of me.

My father had graduated from the Lithuanian military academy. Maybe, that is what led me to attend the U.S. Military Academy (West Point) for college. After 5 years in the U.S. Army, I moved into an engineering and sales career.

In my free time, I enjoy hiking, climbing, woodworking, gardening, and of course, anything Lithuanian: folk dancing, collecting maps, etc.

**How and when did you become involved in Lithuanian activities?**

My first participation was folk dancing in second grade. The Army brought me to Colorado Springs in 1976. While skiing I saw a woman wearing a jacket with a Vytis patch on the sleeve. Outside of Chicago, Lithuanians were few and far between, and if you saw a Vytis you chased it. Having met, Regina Vaitaitienė proceeded to introduce me to the Colorado community. I soon joined the Rūta dancers. In Colorado Springs, there was only one other Lithuanian family, Algis and Mirga Vaitkus. We would drive up to dance rehearsals together on Sundays. Algis helped me appreciate being Lithuanian as an adult.

We had a very excited and energetic group. Antanina Bulota was our instructor. With the drive from her and Algis Liepas, we organized a trip to our first Šokių Šventė in 1980 in Chicago. Although that trip was met with skepticism by some in the community, not only did we have a successful performance, but it proved to be a turning point. We started performing for other communities, Omaha and Phoenix mostly, but also Lithuanian Days in Los Angeles twice. Because the great Lithuanian dance choreographer, Vyts Beliajus, lived in Denver, we performed many times locally.

**You are one of the founders of the Colorado Lithuanian School. For years, in the basement of your house, Lithuanian children were being taught the Lithuanian language, culture, and traditions. Why is it worth fostering Lithuanian language and traditions and passing them on to our children?**

Language, culture, and traditions help keep us grounded. Today it is more important than ever, especially for the children, to have something to identify with. In today's

fast-paced internet world, having a solid foundation to come home to provides a sense of security.

For us, it was important that our children converse with their grandparents and understand the struggles and challenges they faced and survived being displaced from their homes and families by WWII.

Although not always easy for our children (oi tos linksniuotės!), we persevered, our children learned, and today, as adults, they are grateful.

**You have also opened the doors of your home to the Rūta folk dance group. All rehearsals, including preparation for the Šokių Šventė, take place in your home. Could you share the most memorable events associated with this activity?**

Rūta has always been comprised of volunteers. We are by no means a professional group. That first trip to Šokių Šventė, 1980 in Chicago was probably the most memorable.

Many attendees did not know there were Lithuanians in Colorado. Our walk-in with our cowboy hats left an impression. Most of all, we all had that wonderful feeling of success and accomplishment. It carried us for many years.

**What do you find interesting and important about your community today? What do you think Lithuanians living in the diaspora need most today?**

Our Colorado community is growing. We have many energetic people who have taken the reins. New blood, thoughts, and ideas are always a good thing. We are living in a melting pot called America. Lithuanians in the diaspora need patience and tolerance. The Lithuanian American Community includes members from all three waves of immigrants. None of them should be disregarded. Some may never have learned the language, but they are proud of and maintain the culture as best they can.

**Let's talk about the passing of the Lithuanian culture from generation to generation. Priorities are changing, and Lithuanian activities are not the main weekend activities anymore. Do you see any changes? What are they?**

The newly arrived Lithuanians came for different reasons than those 70 years ago. There are many more Lithuanians now than before. The Community is changing to a more socially oriented group.

**What is your vision of the future of the Lithuanian Community?**

It will be difficult because there are more and more distractions. With strong volunteers like we have now, it will continue to grow. Just like when it was founded, the Colorado Community's future will be defined by the vision of the most active people. It will be defined by those that place a priority on a strong Lithuanian American community above their own needs. The Community must focus on what makes us Lithuanian.

**What do you wish for the Colorado Lithuanian Community on its 60th anniversary?**

The Community was started 60 years ago in a meeting that included first and second-wave Lithuanians. Their purpose was to maintain Lithuanian customs and visibility. I hope that 60 years from now, the Community will be able to look back and say, "we are so thankful that the descendants of the first, second, and third waves of Lithuanians stayed together and made our community stronger."



# our community

## Kūčiukai Baking Class in St. Petersburg, Florida



On December 5, 2021, the Lithuanian American Community St. Petersburg Chapter organized a Kūčiukai baking class for the students of the Saulutė Lithuanian School. The class took place at the Lithuanian Center in St. Petersburg. The St. Petersburg Chapter chairman, Akvilinas Kovera, vice-chairman, Vidas Daukas, and the chairwoman of the revision committee, Eugenija Dauka, participated in the event alongside with the students, their parents, and teachers. Everyone had fun making Lithuanian Christmas Eve biscuits and passing the tradition along to the next generation. The children not only tried to roll out and cut the kūčiukai themselves, but also listened to the Christmas Eve stories told by Mrs. Aldona. A big thank you goes out to Mrs. Dalė for preparing the dough and the Lithuanian Club kitchen manager, Nomeda, for her help in making the biscuits!





## Creative Activities for Lithuanian Children in Colorado

By Aura Juškevičienė

With the sun setting earlier behind the Rocky Mountains and the Christmas holiday approaching, the Colorado Lithuanian School invited families to creative workshops on candle making, card making, and advent wreaths.

When fall transitions to winter and the lights in the homes have to be turned on earlier in the day, we enjoyed the workshop called "When the candlelight shines." With the help of their teacher Dalia and parents, the children learned how to make candles out of honey-scented beeswax plates. To make them more beautiful and interesting, they decorated them with lavender branches, lace ribbons, and colored linen thread. The children learned that in ancient times, people used to make candles at home. Linen thread was used for the wicks; beeswax, sheep's fat, and cow fat were used to make the body of the candle. Oh, how long and painstakingly they had to work. The fire warms us, helps us cook, and lights up the house. Watching the candlelight creates a very cozy atmosphere. And ours still smelled of honey when we were taking down the decorations before lighting them up!

We created Advent wreaths, a symbol of Christmas anticipation, in the schoolyard on an unusually warm first Saturday afternoon in December. Spruce, pine, thuja, juniper branches, dried orange slices, cranberries, straw toys, ribbons, and other materials were transformed into wreaths and bouquets of stunning beauty. The children worked patiently and with enthusiasm, and with the help of teacher Dalia. In the carving workshop, the children, together with their teacher Janina, learned how to cut candlesticks out of paper. The children learned the secrets of how to fold the paper correctly and cut out the most beautiful snowflake and various symbols. The children glued these on colored paper. Wonderful!

All the children's creations will decorate the school's Christmas event. The activities were attended by children from 3 to 16 years old, so we took the children's ages and abilities into special consideration when choosing the tools and techniques. The workshops, which took place on the first Saturdays of November and December, are part of the project "Four Ethnographic Days in Colorado," supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania.







Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Kansas City Lithuanian Community!



Left to right: Lauren Kliukevičius, Evelina Lebedevienė, Susan Paulauskas, and Inga Petrusevičiūtė. Photo taken by Tom Paulauskas

From our toasty homes in the rainy northwest, the Washington State chapter of the Lithuanian American community wishes our dear LAC friends a beautiful Christmas holiday season and a happy, prosperous, and healthy new year!



Traditional Lithuanian tree decorated by and with the ornaments made by the Lithuanian Community Seattle Chapter Chair Rasa Raišytė. Photo by Rasa Raišytė



Christmas tree decorated with ornaments made by Lithuanian and Latvian community members at the Linas Lithuanian School Christmas celebration in Seattle. Photo by the Lithuanian Community Seattle Chapter secretary Silvija Comeaux



Portland Lithuanian Community Christmas tree was decorated with the ornaments hand-made by the Community members and the Atžalynas Lithuanian School students under the direction of Vilius Žalpys. Ben Church, Brett Bolstad, Luana Žalpys, Julija Kazilas, and Giedrė Babarskienė decorated the tree. The photo by Milana Koroteev

## Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

May Christmas brings peace and joy and crown all that has been achieved, and may the coming New Year be meaningful and generous with new ideas.

The Board of the Portland Lithuanian Community

# 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

### 31. SOWING

Life was slowly inching forward. Food supplies became depleted. It was hard to exchange clothing for any sort of food. Even the old inhabitants warded off hunger with great difficulty. Clothing and shoes became worn out. It was not possible to trade them in exchange. Nonetheless, the snow was melting. Nettles began to spring up through the ground, and, in the forest, "honeys" - small bluish-violet flowers with luxuriant stems. Their stems were not bitter. All the children would run into the taiga to pick and eat them. Later appeared the "kolba," - wild garlic.

The women, ignoring the curses of the superiors, ran into the taiga and carried back bags full or as much as they could carry, brought them home, marinated the garlic, and ate it.

There were no working men left, they had all been mobilized. Together with the men, - the better horses and wagons. All able-bodied women were driven out to remove stumps, to prepare the fields for the sowing of wheat. How much of that earth could those hungry, ragged women dig up? But, what could one do? It was the plan. An order from above. The norm was 5 ares (500 square meters). No one was able to complete that norm.

The stronger women were sent to carry seed to Shmirich. Shmirich was 12 kilometers away, but it was only possible to drive there in the winter when the marsh froze. The seed was not given out until spring so that it would not "get spoiled," or, God forbid, that the hungry would not steal it. Therefore, in the spring, when the snow was already melting but underneath there was still frost, they poured 15-20 kg of seed for the women and the line of women waded through the slush, and, in parts, even through water, with that load on their back. Those who had carried seed or dug earth were given 300 grams of bread.

The order to plant tobacco was received (!!!), in the North, where a summer without frost lasts only about 35-40 days. But an order is an order, a plan is a plan. More about that later.

### 32. COLLECTIONS AGAIN

Again, the tax agents swooped down on us. Again, a verbal battle. I saw that, as much as one gave, they wanted still more. The former collections had been "voluntary," but now, the "war tax" was obligatory. As hard as I fought, nonetheless, having sold my down comforter, I had to pay 300 rubles. It meant, that for about a month, we had put them off. And when they demanded more, I answered that I had given money for my husband. Otherwise, the commandant would not give him permission to go to the farther settlements to trade for some food. And my sons agreed to give up their entire earnings.

In the summer, it was easier with food. Our vegetables and potatoes had grown a little. Even though we were very thrifty, we ate them little by little.

One time, a local Tatar boy, - there were three families of them here, - seeing that I had pulled out some turnips for the children, jumped in surprise:

"Auntie, what are you doing? It's still not grown. In the fall, it will be three times as big! And they are so sweet, so good!

And the boy swallowed, his mouth watering. I cut a little slice for him.

"It's all right, Zachir, maybe the war will end in the fall, and we won't need them. We'll go to Lithuania, and there's plenty of everything there."

"We also want to leave here but the militiamen say:

"You will croak here," said the boy in a sad voice.

My heart was heavy to see a child already so hopelessly disposed.

Once an agent came, led by the regional chairman. I was sitting in the office and was preparing the account. And again, the old song:

"Žukauskiene, give me the money!"

"I don't have any. Take everything I've earned. We

haven't received a single kopek for our work yet."

"Don't try to be clever! Do you know how much "interest" has accrued? Pay up right now!"

And I, having run home, so to speak, to get some money, pulled out an I.O.U. from the Soviet government still from the year 1918 for my unpaid salary of 1010 rubles, and I stuck it under the collectors' noses:

"The resources of the Soviet government are not like mine, and even they did not have the means with which to pay me and instead of money, gave me a promissory note. Just calculate, how much "interest" the Soviet government has to pay since 1918? Together with the principal, it would be 72,000 rubles. If the Soviet government pays me my salary, I'll pay you not 600 but 6000 rubles!"

They became confused. But they had to yell and use scare tactics because they were yelled at in turn by superiors for their "inactivity."

"Why do you keep her in the office?" he shouted at the chairman of the collective farm, "Send her to clean toilets, to uproot tree stumps! Such types have no place in an office!" The chairman, always rather favorably disposed towards me, looked at me in confusion, while I, not at all intimidated, fired back:

"Your orders do not touch me, you are not my superior," I pronounced the last word with emphasis.

They were surprised at my insolence and became even more furious, while I was happy that he was powerless to frighten me.

"So, who is your superior?! I am the regional chairman!" he yelled.

I shrugged my shoulders coldly with indifference and said:

"Don't you know that I am a member of the collective farm? Well, I admit that: I am a collective farmer, and here is my superior," I indicated the chairman of the collective farm with my eyes.

"Where he sends me, there I shall go. He sent me to pull flax, - I went; he sent me to the drying-room, - I went; he sent me here to the office, - I work; if he sends me to uproot stumps, I shall also go.

Big deal. 'She uprooted stumps; she didn't complain.' Whatever another person can do, so can I."

The chairman of the collective farm was looking at me on the sly. I could see that he could barely keep from smiling. While the collectors, having exhausted all of their attempts, obviously disarmed, did not know how to keep their dignity, and, as always in such circumstances, they only said:

"Go quickly, look for some money, and bring it here!"

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The Soviet Army defended Moscow successfully, but Leningrad was still blocked, and the Germans were still mov-

ing southeast.

Although the Information Bureau was announcing the victories that our army had withstood the onslaught, elsewhere it withdrew in an orderly fashion, leaving one or two points to the several times more numerous enemies, but still, we had the feeling that something was not quite right. Working in the office, I would frequently snatch a newspaper sent to the commandant or the chairman. I was not able to read much on the sly. But, once in the newspaper, "Sovietskaja Sibirj," I found an article (I don't remember the title), in which was written:

"Our friends, the Americans, are not pleased that the Soviet press is informing its people very little about 'our (understandably, the American) support to the Russian Army..' And to that, we announce that our overseas friends have sent us: (a listing of how many tanks, how many cannons, how many machine guns, ammunition, telephones, electrical wire - everything in the tens of thousands)." I remember only distinctly - two million pairs of shoes.

For us, this was a sensation. I informed our Lithuanians about this immediately. I did not hide it from the Russians either.

From that time on, the commandant strictly forbade the letter carrier to show the newspaper to anyone, but to bring it directly to his apartment.

### 33. UNACCUSTOMED WORK

The sowing was over. What kind of sowing! Into soil that was somehow scratched out, they poured in seed, according to the plan. Whether it would grow or not, the collective farmers cared little. They would get nothing from it in any case, although the plan had been established beforehand, how many Hundredweights\* a hectare must produce.

One day, the chairman and the team-leader, having come to the office, began to count whom to send to uproot stumps, to clean the forest clearing for seed corn. They began to count out the stronger women. They came up with twelve.

"Pyotr Osipovich," I addressed the chairman, "allow me also to go dig up stumps. After all, it's necessary to know what kind of work it is."

The team leader and the chairman were surprised, having looked at me, glanced at each other quickly. It was surprising for them that I, being able to sit in the office, where I earned 1.25 workdays, where no physical strength was needed, where no gnats bit me, was asking to go into the taiga to uproot stumps.

Because all the ones, who were assigned to this work, would cry, try to get out of it, beg not to be sent, while here?

"You don't know what kind of work it is," said the chairman.

"I don't know, that's why I want to find out if it's really so terrible, as the regional chairman threatened you. Next time he comes, you can tell him that I also uprooted stumps. I want to earn money for the taxes.

"Fine! Try it and this... It's the plan. We have to enlarge the plot for the seed-corn."

We must enlarge the plots for the seed-corn. The plan... And the technique? The hands of a few ragged women, some shovels, some axes and one saw. Do the ones who make up these plans know about this?

The next day, I put on my husband's pants, I put on his military shirt, I wrapped my head and neck with a long towel, and I went to the "horse yard."

From the "new contingent" there were neither Poles nor Lithuanians. The local women had put on heavy shirts made of sackcloth and long straight skirts of the same material and had also made bands of birch bark to put on their heads and were waiting for the command.

We got three axes, three saws...thirteen people (!!! that was the whole technique). Led by the team leader we started through the brushwood of the taiga into the work area.

Having gone about four or five kilometers, we found a clearing with a mound of last year's straw. The women immediately began to cackle like geese. They ran towards the mound and plopped on it to rest. Where did they get this speed from, since going through the taiga, they had barely dragged their feet?

"Hey, you devil broads! You walked a kilometer and already you want to rest! When you get there!" yelled the team leader.

"Don't yell at us! You sit on a horse like Herod... You, of course, don't get tired. You trudge through the taiga together with us, then you'll know what a 'kilometer' is," yelled all the women at the same time.

"Sit, Jaroslavna, don't pay any attention to what he's yelling," offered the women to me. I couldn't make up my mind. The straw was damp, beneath it, the snow hadn't melted, it smelled strongly of mold. Besides, I was afraid that there might already be awakened snakes. Having looked around, I saw a fallen tree not far away. I went and sat down.

"Come on, girls, that's enough, that's enough. When we get there," urged the team leader a little more gently.

"When our legs get us there, then we'll get there," threw back the lithe Fonia.

After a few kilometers, another clearing with straw. Again, all of them chattering ran to the rotten mound. Again, the haggling.

"Well, if we go at this pace, then we won't have time to order lunch at the field camp," the team leader was cle-

erly manipulating. When they heard the word 'lunch,' they all jumped up and began to march. They stepped lively. The field camp came into view. They all wanted to stop over, but the team leader knew that he would not be able to get them out, so he did not permit it. We turned aside. After a few kilometers, we found a stumpy clearing, loaded with fallen trees. This was our workplace.

The team leader rode off to order lunch for us. Those who worked so far away from the settlement and did such a hard job were given "lunch": 200 grams of bread and soup. And the soup was water with some wheat barley, some garlic leaves, and heavily salted.

As soon as the team leader was a way off, at once, the women sat down again: some on a stump, others on a fallen tree, of course, they looked to see if there was no curled-up snake.

I glanced at my watch. It was already 11 o'clock and we had left at 7.

"O.K., women, maybe let's begin because while we sit here, the gnusky will eat us alive."

"Hey, hey, we have a smart one here! Maybe they sent you here from the office on purpose to order us around! You'll work and you'll see how much a pound of trouble costs," and again the women began to chatter. Only the high-school senior, eighteen-year-old Tania, was silent.

"O.K., babyj, let's light some bonfires," commanded Viera.

All got up. They loaded on branches, ripped off birch bark, and soon in a few areas at the edge of the clearing bonfires began to smoke. Some women took up axes, others, saws. There were tools for nine women. Four of us remained empty-handed. The nine "armed ones" chopped the branches of the fallen trees, the sawyers cut the stumps into pieces, while we four, "unarmed ones," dragged everything to the edge of the clearing. When there were large, heavy trunks, all of us women would jump to it. We would all grab onto it, shove levers under a joist, and rolling it on, like ants, would carry it to the edge.

Having "overcome" such difficulty, they all fell on the grass and cried:

"Babyj, let's smoke!" A rather dirty talk would start about those who weren't there.

I avoided those smoking breaks. I would go there, where young birches had been cut down for joists and from their fresh, flexible little twigs, I bound together brooms with hair grass.

The lame Kosta Samoylov, our field team-leader, having hobbled up, started to yell at the women, of course, without sparing the Russian "matj."\* While the women, without restraint as to their expressions, in "strong" words would fire back at him, but, nevertheless, would get up and go back to work.

## Honey Rye Cake (Meduolis)

Honey cake is an old, traditional Lithuanian cake. Soft honey cake made with rye flour is known to be most characteristic of the cuisine of the Suvalkija Region, the south-west of Lithuania. The main ingredient in honey cake is, of course, honey. To make the honey cake fluffy, bakers add sour milk and sour cream or even cottage cheese to the dough. Just as important as honey are the spices used to bake the honey cake. The traditional spice mix used to be prepared in the following proportions: 2 to 3 teaspoons of cinnamon, 2 to 3 teaspoons of allspice, 1 to 1 ½ teaspoons of cloves, 1 to 1 ½ teaspoons of grated orange peel, 1 to 1 ½ teaspoons of ginger. Of course, this ratio does not have to be followed 100%, and other spices can be used (nutmeg, cardamom, etc.), or you can leave out a spice you do not like, but it is important to remember that it is the mixture of spices that gives the honey cake its rich flavor and aroma. The honey cake was stored in an airtight box at a cool temperature. It can be kept up to a couple of weeks.

### Ingredients

- Honey: 2 cups
- Eggs: 3
- Sugar: 3.5 oz
- Sour milk(kefir): 1 cup
- Sour cream: 1 cup
- Flour: 7 oz rye, 7 oz wheat
- Soda: 1 tsp
- Cinnamon, allspice, ginger, cloves, cardamom, cloves, orange peel to taste

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 °F. Place the honey in a medium-sized saucepan and heat over medium heat until it boils. Cook for a few minutes, then remove from the heat and cool. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs with the sugar until fluffy. Add the sour milk and sour cream and whisk again. When the honey has cooled, add it to the whipped eggs and sugar and whisk again until smooth. In another bowl, combine the flour, baking soda, and all the spices. Add to the batter and whisk again until smooth. The batter should be the consistency of sour cream. Pour the prepared dough into a baking dish lined with baking paper. Bake in a preheated oven for about 50-60 minutes. You can check whether the cake is baked with a wooden skewer - it must be clean when inserted and removed from the center. Once the cake is baked, turn off the oven. Leave the cake to cool in the baking dish for about 15 minutes. Then remove from the baking dish and cool on a wire rack. Cut into slices or chunks and serve.



## current events

### Security

...The Lithuanian Armed Forces Strategic Communications Department (LAFSCD) identified 405 instances of hostile information in one month. Most of the negative information was related to Zapad 2021, the joint Russian-Belarusian military exercise. One version of the disinformation labeled NATO as a terrorist organization that tries to provoke Russia and Belarus by aggressive actions. An opposite version of the story is that NATO is an outdated redundant organization that is not relevant to today's issues. The LAFSCD noted increased attention from Chinese propaganda sources stemming from the opening of a Taiwan trade office in Vilnius under its own name, concern about Chinese smartphones, and concern regarding human rights of the Uyghur minority in China.

...A page 4 article in the New York Times, highlighted Lithuania's advice to scrap Chinese Xiaomi cellphones, which contain a dormant feature that censored 449 terms banned by the Chinese Communist Party, such as "Free Tibet". The article noted Chinese interest in Lithuania's 1990 declaration of independence from the Soviet Union and its eventual collapse, an action by the grandfather of the current Foreign Minister, Gabrielius Landsbergis. China is concerned that Lithuania is the vanguard of an anti-Chinese movement in Europe.

...The Lithuanian military base at Pabradė has been upgraded with an investment of 7 million euros into Camp Herkus to entice the U.S. to convert the rotational troop deployment into a permanent presence to deter Russian forces that often deploy and exercise in Belarus, less than 10 miles away. The upgrades include a PX selling U.S. items, a gym with a weight room and treadmills, bunk beds, and a game hall with shooter video games. The U.S. was non-committal on the possible expansion, which runs counter to the NATO-Russian Founding agreement signed in 1997 after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Pentagon officials are in the middle of a worldwide assessment known as the Global Force Posture Review, which is expected to be finished by the end of the year. Lithuania is not the only country trying to entice American troops. In 2018 Poland offered to name one of its military bases after President Donald Trump in exchange for a permanent presence of American troops.

...Lithuania has completed the first portion of the 14-meter high fence on the border with Belarus near Druskininkai. By the end of the year, all of the most important points should be fenced. The first stage of 100 km will be finished by April 1, 2022. The first phase border will be completed by September 1, 2022. Tetas, a state-

owned company of the EPSO-G group is doing the first phase work for 30 million euros/36.3 million with VAT. The pyramid-shaped fence consists of 5 turns of Concertina-type barbed wire with blade-like edges topped by a spiral barbed wire. The total length of the Lithuanian border with Belarus is 679 km. However, more than 100 km run along rivers and lakes and will not be fenced.

...An official Taiwanese trade delegation visiting Lithuania has pledged 10 police drones and 400 blankets to Lithuania. Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the drones could be allocated to border security tasks, and the blankets could be distributed to refugees.

...Russia severed ties with NATO and closed its Moscow office in retaliation with NATO's expelling 8 Russian officials who had access to NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium because it claimed that they were working as intelligence officers. NATO reduced the Russian team from 20 to 10. Contacts between NATO and Russia would now be handled via the Russian Embassy.

### Covid-19

...With two-thirds of Covid related deaths being for Lithuanians over 75, an effort is underway to target this group. The Lithuanian government will pay 100 euros to those 75 and older who get fully vaccinated by December 1 or receive a booster by April 1, 2022. Nearly one in ten Lithuanians (270,000) are over 75 and nearly 80,000 are unvaccinated. In a typical day, 2200 new cases are found and 18 deaths occur, with 14 being unvaccinated or only partially vaccinated (78%).

...Another senior program is aimed at municipalities. Municipalities that vaccinate more than 90% of their seniors by December 1 receive financial prizes that would enable them to pay workers a 30% bonus.

...A 23-year-old unvaccinated woman gave birth to a healthy baby girl through cesarean section but later died due to severe lung damage. It was the first such death in Lithuania. The head of the Maternity Unit at Kauno Klinikos Hospital of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences said that the jab would have no effect on pregnancy.

...Among European Union members, Lithuania continues to rank worst in terms of 14-day Covid cases - 795.5 per 100,000 people. In terms of 14-day death notification rates, Lithuania ranks third with nearly 100 Covid deaths per million inhabitants. Non-EU Iceland and Lichtenstein both report zero 14-day death notification rates.

...It is reported that Lithuanian hospitals are not admitting patients who can stand on their feet.

### Business

...Saldo Finance UAB, a subsidiary of the Finish fintech Saldo Finance Plc. has been granted a Special Purpose Bank (SPB) license by the European Central Bank, following a proposal by the Bank of Lithuania. The company currently has 19 employees in Vilnius and expects to add more during the next three years. Saldo is the eighth company to be granted an SPB license in Lithuania. Founded in 2006, it has offices in Finland, Sweden (since May 2020), and Lithuania (since March 2021). It uses an automated scoring system employing artificial intelligence and machine learning to assess customers' solvency to make loan decisions in less than a minute. Growth has been self-funded by profits and has more than 500,000 customers and 34 million euro turnover in 2020. It is looking for new employees for the Vilnius office with skills in software development, digital marketing, analytics & scoring, risk management, Anti-Money Laundering (AML), and Know Your Customer (KYC) processes. Saldo has relationships with Aalto University in Finland and Vilnius Gediminas Technical University for R&D-related projects.

...Lithuania's Gambling Supervision Service has fined UAB Baltic Bet 12,450 euros for violating gaming regulations, which included offering erroneous odds and not limiting players' bets. Last month the regulator imposed a similar fine on Unigames, which offered a BetBuilder game that is not permitted in Lithuania. BetBuilder is an automated sport betting calculation based on odds that the player has predicted on multiple games. Lithuania may change its gaming laws by permitting online-only gambling licenses, whereas currently, online operators must partner with a land-based licensee.

...A Swiss company specializing in sustainable construction using wood has selected Rudamina just east of Vilnius for an investment of 30 million euros for its new production facility. NOKERA had received the highest ESG (environmental, social, and governance) rating by Sustainalytics. NOKERA currently employs 500 in Germany and Switzerland and is looking to hire about 300 for manufacturing, marketing, and management to produce high-standard residential housing at affordable prices. Lithuania won out over Poland and Croatia for the plant.

...Ignitis Grupė AB, the Lithuanian energy company, reported adjusted net profits of 77.7 million euros for the first half of 2021 compared to 54.6 million for 2020

(+42.3%). The group benefited from the new Kaunas combined heat and power (CHP) cogeneration plant and another CHP facility in Vilnius. A Kaunas hydropower plant benefited from higher electricity prices. In Poland, the group's wind farm commercial operation date (COD) was delayed by Covid-19 restrictions and its solar project had failed to secure the needed tariffs in the last two auctions.

### General

...While the increase in the price of electricity may be good for Ignitis, consumers face a 41% increase in cost to 124 euros per megawatt-hour (MWh), the highest in the Baltic region. Vilnius heating bills could increase 60-70 percent due to an increase in consumption, and electricity delivered from Sweden decreased by 47% and from Russia by 19%.

...In California, Clint Eastwood won a \$6.1 million judgment and \$95,000 in legal fees against Lithuanian cannabidiol (CBD) seller (Mediatonas UAB) for falsely using his name and image to endorse their product via faked interviews. Last year three CBD companies, Sera Labs Inc., Greendios, and For Our Vets LLC, were implicated with phony endorsement articles included. Similar fake celebrity endorsements have misrepresented George Clooney, Oprah, and Tom Hanks.

...Members of the European Parliament have decided to award the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 2021 to Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny. Chairman David Sassoli said: "The European Parliament has chosen Alexei Navalny as the winner of this year's Sakharov Prize. He has campaigned consistently against the corruption of Vladimir Putin's regime. Through his social media accounts and political campaigns, Navalny has helped expose abuses and mobilize the support of millions of people across Russia. For this, he was poisoned and thrown in jail."

...The National Olympic Committee of Lithuania (LTOK) rolled out month-long projects to enhance physical activity, healthy eating, emotional health, and cooperation to 30,000 children in primary school. Olympic Month is supported by runners Eglė Balčiūnaitė and Vaida Žusinaitytė-Nekrošienė; rower Dovydas Nemeravičius and canoeist Ričardas Nekrošius. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) developed the Olympic Values Education Program, which was translated into Lithuanian by the LTOK. On the eve of International Teachers' Day, First Lady of Lithuania Diana Nausėdienė presented awards to 10 physical education teachers.

# subscription rates 2022



Dear Bridges readers and subscribers,

We have felt the effects of inflation! Ever since April, 2020, the price of a ten-issue yearly subscription was \$40 and a two-year subscription was \$75. At this price we were able to cover printing and mailing costs. Printing costs were slowly rising and there was a postal increase in August. Now, the cost of paper has increased due to inflation. Our publication is costing us more than we collect. Therefore, we are forced to increase our subscription rate. We have to raise the cost of the yearly, ten-issue subscription to \$50 and a two-year subscription to \$95.

I would also like to promote the electronic subscription feature of Bridges. E-subscribers to Bridges will be able to access the current and archived editions of Bridges through the website. We can keep the electronic subscription rate at \$30 per year. Also, all subscribers that pay their subscriptions through PayPal will be able to register for access to the website archive. Please visit our website, javlb.org to setup an account for the electronic version.

The Lithuanian American Community (LAC) has been publishing "Bridges" magazine since 1977. The magazine has stories about Lithuanian-American activities, history, culture, as hopefully acts as a bridge between the many diasporas of Lithuanians in America. We design the magazine with many high-quality photographs, and print on good paper stock, for an enjoyable reading experience. We hope that you, as part of the Lithuanian-American community, continue enjoying Bridges.

Sincerely,  
Marius Naris  
Bridges Administrator  
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December 2021

Dear Lithuanian Americans,

Allow me to wish you merry Christmas and a very happy New Year. May you experience the perfection of the world and the beauty of each day in the hustle and bustle of Christmas, when time stops and the sky lights up with stars. May the wings of the Angel of Happiness follow you throughout the coming year.

Dalia Asanavičiūtė, Member of the Seimas, Chairperson of the Seimas and World Lithuanian Community Commission



Mieili JAV lietuviai,

Nuoširdžiai sveikinu Šv. Kalėdų ir artėjančių Naujųjų metų proga  
ir linkiu

Šv. Kalėdų žymuly, kada sustoja laikas  
ir užsidega žvaigždėm dangus,  
Pajuskite pasaulio tobulumą ir grožį  
Kiekvienos ateinančios dienos.  
Te Laimės angelo sparnų plėkimas plevėna paskui Jus  
visus ateinančius metus.

Seimo narė,  
Seimo ir Pasaulio Lietuvos  
bendruomenės komisijos pirmininkė  
Dalia Asanavičiūtė



Thank you for a great anniversary year, for the joys, challenges and achievements, for growing and working together.

As we approach the biggest holidays of the year, we wish you a sincere appreciation of what we have, to continue what we have started, and to achieve what we have dreamed of.

**May peace, health, and success be with you and your loved ones!  
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

Lithuanian American Community National Executive Board

# bridges

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