

bridges



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from the editor

Dear readers,

We are starting the year 2020! It will be an exciting year as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the re-establishment of Lithuania's independence. There will several other anniversaries this year.

The Lithuanian Parliament has designated 2020 as the Year of the Vilna Gaon and the History of the Jews of Lithuania as this year marks 300 years since the birth of Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, known as the Gaon of Vilna, or Vilnius. In the resolution, the Lithuanian Parliament underlines that the Jews have been an integral part of Lithuanian society since the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 14th century and that the Jewish community has made a significant contribution to the development of Lithuania's statehood, its history, culture, and science.

In view of the upcoming celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of St. Pope John Paul II in 2020, the Lithuanian Parliament also decided to designate the year 2020 as the Year of St. Pope John Paul II. St John Paul II was the first pope to have ever visited Lithuania. His visit in 1993 provided substantial moral and diplomatic support to Lithuania in the early days after regaining independence.

The year 2020 was also declared as the Year of the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania as it marks the 100th anniversary since its first meeting on April 14-15, 1920.

In 2020 we will also commemorate the 25th anniversary since Vilnius historical center was put on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Kernavė archeological site, the Curonian Spit, and the Struve geodetic arc also on the UNESCO list, and therefore, 2020 was proclaimed the year of UNESCO World Heritage in Lithuania.

In addition, we will celebrate 2020 as the Year of Folk Art, the Year of Ateitis Catholic Youth Organization, the Year of School Communities, the Year of Children's Emotional Well-being, the Year of herbalist Eugenija Šimkūnaitė, and the Year of Chiune Sugihara, a consul of Japan in 1939–1940 in Lithuania.

The biggest event of the Lithuanian American Community will be the Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival in Philadelphia.

I hope we will have many interesting and uplifting moments this year as we celebrate all these anniversaries.

Karilė Vaitkutė
Editor

‘I see the Lithuanian American Community as a kinship of individuals based on beliefs, bonds, and aspirations to seek something of value’

Interview with Juozas Polikaitis, Chair of the Social Services Committee of the LAC National Executive Committee



Juozas Polikaitis. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

Juozas Polikaitis: According to the Lithuanian American Community bylaws, all Lithuanians living in the United States, as well as their non-Lithuanian spouses and the offspring of those marriages, are members of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc. (LAC). Thus, I was a member of LAC from the day of its establishment. However, my active participation and election to the LAC Board of Directors began in 1985. Before then, most of my activities were channeled towards education and especially towards activities with catholic youth of Lithuanian descent. Coincidentally, in 1985 I was elected president (vadas) of the Lithuanian Catholic Federation “Ateitis”, the major and most active catholic youth organization. Consequently, to accomplish my duties properly, I had to familiarize myself with activities of other Lithuanian organizations and Lithuanian community activities in general. I was encouraged to do so by several members of the Lithuanian community and members of LAC presidium, most notably Dr. Antanas Razma, Dr. Petras Kisielius, and Dr. Kazys Ambrozaitis. They encouraged me to offer my candidacy for the LAC Board of Directors in 1985. Since then, my active participation as a member of the LAC Board of Directors lasted until now.

Karilė Vaitkutė: The Lithuanian American Community was established in 1951, and has been in existence for 68 years. You were born in Lithuania before World War Two, and you are one of a few old-timers in this organization. What brought you into the organization?

KV: You've been in the organization for 34 years, in other words, for half of the organization's existence. What were its major achievements during the years you've been with it?



yra testamentinis įpareigojimas



Juozas Polikaitis in the documentary film „Lietuvių Charta“ by Arvydas Roneckis. The film was created in 2019. More than 30 members of the Lithuanian American Community participated. The documentary was viewed by more than 10,000 viewers on the Internet.

JP: The Lithuanian American Community, Inc. was founded on the principles set forth in the Lithuanian Charter (Lietuvių Charta) which was formulated and declared by the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania in 1949. This Lithuanian Charter obligates all Lithuanians to preserve and foster Lithuanian cultural heritage, language, and traditions and to preserve Lithuanian national identity for future generations. This was the main objective by the founders of LAC, however, a secondary objective was just as important. It was a long-term goal to reestablish the independence of Lithuania. It was considered a long-term goal since it was mostly beyond our control and it depended on opportunistic world events. These goals were at the forefront of all LAC activities.

During the 50-year occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union, LAC was instrumental in the establishment of Lithuanian educational institutions, known as Saturday schools, and authored appropriate textbooks and educational materials for Saturday school students. In anticipation

of future needs, young teachers were being trained to assume the roles of retiring ones. Presently, LAC Educational Council coordinates educational programs for forty five (45) Saturday schools with nearly (2,400) students and more than 425 teachers and their assistants. Similarly, cultural, religious, civic and social activities



Ateitininkų šalpos fondo vakarienės svečiai spalio 31 d. Ateitininkų namuose, Lemonte. Iš kairės: Juozas Polikaitis, Aušrelė Liulevičienė, dr. Arūnas Liulevičius ir Ramunė Kubiliūtė.

Nuotr. Valerijos Žadeikienės

Juozas Polikaitis (first from left) with the Ateitis organization. Archival copy from Draugas newspaper, 1988.



Irena and Juozas Polikaitis.

were organized. LAC was instrumental in initiating the joint USA and Canada song festivals, dance festivals, educational and scientific research symposiums, and other major programs starting in 1956. These programs maintained Lithuanian traditions, promoted and stressed the Lithuanian language skills by involving high school as well as college students in various LAC activities, including sports. LAC, in conjunction with other Lithuanian organizations and institutions, gathered and disseminated information to Americans about Lithuania, Lithuanian culture, and human rights violations, especially deportations and imprisonments of activists in occupied Lithuania.

On March 11, 1990, Lithuania re-established its independence, and the Iron Curtain was lifted. Many Lithuanians immigrated to the USA in search of a better life for themselves and their children. Without delay, LAC established contact with the newly formed government of independent Lithuania and offered financial, advisory, and governmental affairs activities. LAC as well as Lithuanian Americans greeted the influx of new immigrants with open arms and encouraged them not to deviate from the principles enumerated in the Lithuanian Charter – foster cultural heritage, language, and traditions, maintain contact with the homeland and help those in Lithuania by providing moral and financial assistance. After the re-establishment of Lithuanian independence, the primary goal of fostering Lithuanian cultural heritage as well as language and traditions did not change with the new influx of immigrants. LAC knew that in time, new immigrants will have to assume the responsibility of maintaining existing institutions, parishes, and facilities for future generations of Lithuanian Americans.

The long-term goal progressed from seeking to gain the independence of Lithuania to assistance to the newly-

independent, democratic government of Lithuania. The initial priority was to lobby the USA government for speedy recognition of the re-established independence of Lithuania. LAC, as well as all other Lithuanian Americans, participated in massive demonstrations at the USA Capitol, the White House, and other USA governmental facilities. Demonstration participants gathered from throughout the USA in solidarity with the organizers. Further assistance to Lithuania included the establishment of relations with political, professional, and educational institutions as well as emerging youth organizations, such as scouts and *ateitininkai*,

a catholic youth organization. I was privileged to participate in these activities as a member of LAC and especially as president of the Lithuanian Catholic Federation “*Ateitis*”.

KV: Today, the new immigrants from Lithuania are fully active in the Lithuanian American Community. Are there any statistics regarding the percentages of newcomers and old-timers or American-born Lithuanians?

JP: The most significant work in the LAC is being conducted by local chapters (*apylinkės*) established within each geographical location of the United States in which Lithuanians reside. They attend to the ethnic, cultural, and educational issues that affect Lithuanians living within its boundaries. Also, they support local educational institutions, local Lithuanian associations devoted to culture, youth, and sports and provide human services to Lithuanians in need. I do not have specific data as to how many of them are headed by the new immigrants. However, I would guess that it is more than 60 percent.

Local chapter activities are coordinated by the LAC districts (*apygardos*). Districts are established by the LAC National Board of Directors. They organize and promote the establishment of new chapters, address issues of general concern that affect Lithuanians living within district boundaries, support activities of chapters within their districts, and conduct and coordinate the election of members from their districts to the LAC National Board of Directors. Presently, there are ten districts and only two of them are headed by the old-timers.

The National Executive Committee is the highest executive body of the LAC. The Executive Committee organizes and oversees Lithuanian educational, religious, cultural, civic, social and other activities as needed. Presently,



The Lithuanian American Community annual session took place in Chicago in 2019. Photo by Sandra Ščedrina.

approximately 30 percent of the National Executive Committee members are immigrants that came to the USA after the reestablishment of independence in Lithuania on March 11, 1990.

The chief governing body of LAC is the National Board of Directors of LAC. The Board consists of sixty elected members and ten district presidents. They are elected to a three-year term. The Board determines the policies, goals, and activities of LAC as well as the means to achieve them. Nearly 60 percent of the National Board Members are recent immigrants. During the first annual session, the Board elects Presiding Officers (or Presidium) to conduct affairs of the National Board of Directors, such as to convene sessions of the Board, propose their agenda, chair session meetings, coordinate the work of the Board and maintain liaison with Executive Committee and other LAC Commissions. Today, Presidium consists of five National Board of Directors members and only the president is an old-timer. During the nine years that I had a privilege to preside over the National Board of Directors, the composition of the Presidium changed from nearly no new immigrants to nearly all new immigrants. It is very gratifying to see that new immigrants are willing to serve and participate in the activities of LAC.

KV: New immigrants became very active and took leading positions in the governing body of the LAC. Why not the children and grandchildren of Lithuanian Americans?

JP: A very good question. This same issue has been raised several times by previous Lithuanian American Community leaders. Some solutions were presented but without much success. Upon closer examination of your question, we begin to realize that we are not comparing equivalent groups of Lithuanians. Thus, let us examine the two groups.



Irena and Juozas Polikaitis participating the Baltic Way 30th anniversary commemoration in Chicago, IL. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

Immigrants arriving in the United States after the Second World War understood that Lithuania is destined for a long occupation by the Soviet Union. They realized that future independence of Lithuania, in part, will depend on our effort not to allow World powers to forget the illegal occupation and atrocities that were being inflicted upon Lithuania. The first generation of WWII immigrants began to implement principles set forth in the Lithuanian Charter. The Charter obligates all Lithuanians to preserve and foster their cultural heritage, language, and



The Lithuanian American Community annual session in Chicago, IL. Photo by Sandra Ščedrina.



Participants of the Lithuanian American Community annual session visited the BVM Nativity church in Chicago, IL. Photo by Sandra Ščedrina.

traditions and to preserve the Lithuanian national identity for future generations. To better achieve these goals, the Lithuanian American Community, as well as many other organizations, were established. Young leaders began to emerge and take over leadership positions from their parents. New leaders were developed. Soviet Union occupation lasted fifty years. During these same years, the American “melting-pot” phenomenon was doing an effective job and took a significant toll on young Lithuanians.

They got assimilated into American culture and slowly their Lithuanian heritage flame began to flicker. Many parents and Lithuanian community leaders realized the danger and formed various cultural, educational and social organizations to minimize their effectiveness. Saturday schools were established, youth organizations and clubs, such as *ateitininkai*, scouts, folk dance groups, various ensembles, art groups, youth camps, parish social clubs, and many others were organized. Their goal was to foster the love of Lithuanian language, traditions, folklore, history, and geography in young people. Many of them became leaders of these organizations and effective leaders in the Lithuanian community. They were not as interested in assuming leadership positions in LAC. Many Lithuanian-American children and grandchildren are active, contributing and supporting members of LAC programs. Here are some examples. Summer camp facilities, such as *Dainava*, *Rakas*, *Neringa*, are headed by them as well as folk dance groups, ensembles, choirs, parish councils, and many other activities. They are not in the leadership positions of LAC. However, their contribution to the LAC programs is immeasurable.

Most new immigrants arrived in the United States within the past twenty-five years. They experienced Soviet occupation, deportations, imprisonments, religious persecutions, and free thought and expression

was curtailed. They were active members of the Sajūdis movement (perestroika), they were part of the Singing Revolution, they joined hands during the Baltic Way, and they experienced the joy of reestablished independence of Lithuania. These experiences and memories are still fresh, their love for their homeland is still strong. Many have parents or grandparents living in Lithuania. They want to make sure that their children learn about their heritage by maintaining the Lithuanian language, culture, traditions, and history as well as its beauty. New immigrants desire to contribute and maintain activities that foster these values. Many began to join folk dance groups, choirs, and ensembles, attend summer camps, send children to Saturday schools, scouts and ateitininkai. To them, LAC appeared to be more like an umbrella group for other organizations. Thus many joined various LAC chapters, became active members, and progressed to leadership positions.

We must remember though, that they are first-generation immigrants. Their children and grandchildren are still too young. The “melting-pot” phenomenon has not affected them to the same degree. It is still too early to compare the two immigrant groups and it is too early to predict to what extent they will be affected by the “melting-pot” phenomenon. Nevertheless, an increase of Lithuanian-American children and grandchildren in the LAC leadership positions would be welcomed.

KV: What were the goals of the last year's annual assembly of the Lithuanian American Community? Were these goals met?

JP: The chief governing body of the Lithuanian American Community is the National Board of Directors. They determine the policies, goals, and activities of LAC and identify the means of how to achieve them. In addition, the Board approves budget proposals, plans of action, ratifies financial accounting statements and reviews annual activities reports of the National Executive Committee and its institutions. The Board convenes to deliberate and resolve issues at least once a year. The LAC National Executive Committee is the highest executive body of the LAC. The Executive Committee implements decisions, executes directives and action plans approved by the LAC Board. Executive Committee organizes and oversees Lithuanian educational, cultural, religious, civic, social and other activities. It is accountable to the Board for its activities, finances, as well as for the implementation of goals established by the Board during its annual meetings. The first annual session of the twenty-second National Board of Directors was convened on September 28-30, 2018 in Portland, Oregon. During the session, 2019 goals were developed and formulated by eight individ-

ual standing committees of the Board and presented for approval. Goals were formulated in areas of Lithuanian education, culture, public affairs, civic affairs, finances, youth activities, and religious and social activities.

Public affairs standing committee stressed the importance of being able to vote via the internet in the Lithuanian presidential, parliamentary or local elections by members of the diaspora and urged its safe and speedy implementation. Lithuanian citizenship question and upcoming voting to change an amendment of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania so that citizenship acquired by birth would be protected in dual citizenship cases received proper attention. The Committee urged to solicit greater involvement of young Lithuanians in the LAC activities. They urged the Executive Committee to inform all chapters on how to sign up to receive Baltic Initiative updates from the Foreign Policy Research Institute, which is ranked as number one think-tank. Its scholars are regarded internationally.

In the area of Lithuanian education, the Board addressed the need to secure the funds for textbooks for high school level students, the lack of appropriate textbooks and teaching aids to teach Lithuanian history in a virtual mode and the lack of videos to teach Lithuanian folk dances. Greater use of Youtube portals was stressed. The lack of professionally-trained teachers with special skills to teach in Saturday schools and especially the lack of teaching methodologies for new and younger teachers was also stressed.

In order to make sure that song and dance festivals, theatrical presentations, and other grandiose events continue, the cultural affairs standing committee urged to create a permanent standing committee consisting of representatives of the Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute, choir/ensemble directors and theatre directors. Among other objectives were the need to increase the exposure of Lithuanian culture and art to American audiences and non-Lithuanian speaking Lithuanian-Americans youth. The dissemination of information about upcoming cultural events anywhere in the United States is to be distributed via normal channels plus new technology means, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.

The financial standing committee addressed mostly internal financial issues of the Executive Committee, their institutions and especially LAC chapters and districts. Chapters were urged to make sure that annual financial internal audits by their respective audit committees were completed. Audit reports are to be issued and copies submitted to the Executive Committee vice-president on finances.

The organizational structure committee recommended that the LAC strategic plan study summary, presented during the session, is to move forward with its implemen-



The biggest event of 2019 was “The Legend of Žygimantas Augustas and Barbora Radvilaitė” musical. Photo by Sandra Ščedrina.

tation. Also, they urged to renew and distribute a video that explains “What is LAC?” and to expand the LAC website to include a list of members of the Board, minutes of the annual LAC sessions, a list of goals of previous sessions.

The human services (social) standing committee recommended that larger chapters search for volunteers or social worker that would work several hours a week. They would assist those, especially elderly, that need assistance by filing various governmental forms, documents, help those that are alone, suffering illnesses, and answer questions of importance to the seniors. Additionally, the committee recommended that a questionnaire be prepared and forwarded to all LAC chapters, asking what kind of assistance their members need.

The youth affairs committee recommended that a closer working relationship is developed with the World Lithuanian Youth Organization, utilize new social media capabilities (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to publicize youth activities, and recruit new members into the LAC Committee. It was strongly recommended to improve the distribution of LISS (Lithuanian International Student Services) information to all LAC chapters and districts and via social media. This program provides an internship program for the diaspora Lithuanian students in Lithuania during the summer months.

During the second session of the twenty-second

National Board of Directors on October 11-13, 2019 in Chicago, the completion of these goals was assessed and a new set of goals established. To answer your specific question, approximately two-thirds of these goals were either completed or partially completed. Partially completed goals were extended into 2019 goals.

KV: The dance festival will be the biggest event in 2020. In 2019, the biggest event was the staging of the musical, “The Legend of Žygimantas Agustas and Barbora Radvilaitė“. What did you think of that show?

JP: Celebrating Lithuania’s centennial and having the Parliament of Lithuania declare 2019 as a year of Lithuanians in the diaspora, a historical musical “The Legend of Žygimantas Augustas and Barbora Radvilaitė” was staged in Chicago’s Auditorium Theatre. It was a collaborative effort between artists and dancers from Lithuania and ensemble “Dainava” from Chicago. The total cast consisted of more than a hundred twenty performers. That was an outstanding and fitting closure of centennial celebrations of the independence of Lithuania. This venture was very much worthwhile and demonstrated that there are no differences between Lithuanians in Lithuania and Lithuanians in the diaspora. We are all an important part of Lithuania. It was an unforgettable experience to participate in the musical as a member of “Dainava”.

This unity was again demonstrated some six months later in Kaunas, Lithuania. To celebrate the year of Lithuanians in diaspora and to encourage citizens of Lithuania to support amendments to the Constitution, the same musical was staged in the Žalgiris Sports Arena. The audience of more than three thousand attended. The same cast participated as in Chicago, and it set a record of the number of performers in a performance in the Žalgiris Arena. Additionally, it demonstrated to Lithuanians the importance, potential, and patriotism of the diaspora and displayed all-encompassing and widespread activities of LAC.

KV: Will this kind of collaboration continue?



A scene from "Šnekučiai" musical. Photo by Sandra Ščedrina.

JP: Yes, the collaboration between artists from Lithuania and artists from the United States will continue. They may not be of such a magnitude as the aforementioned musical but it will continue. If we look back, we will realize that collaborations have been occurring since the re-establishment of independence in 1990. Folk dance groups and ensembles participated in song and dance festivals; performances and concerts organized by LAC, other organizations or private groups, included guest singers, dancers, and poets from Lithuania. Just recently, another musical, "Šnekučiai," was of a collaborative nature. Singers and dancers were from Chicago, while soloists and other staff members were from Lithuania. Lack of collaboration is not a problem. The greatest difficulty is the availability of suitable musicals or plays and associated financial obligations. One thing is clear, it will occur in cities with the largest Lithuanian-American population.

Having commented positively on a collaborative process with artists from Lithuania, we must remember our own artists, choirs, ensembles, theatrical groups, folk dance groups and support them just as much as the artists from Lithuania. This is one of the goals of the LAC cultural council – foster talents and art groups of various forms by enabling and creating for them performance opportunities throughout the United States. Let us not forget the "home-front".

KV: Chicago, of course, has a huge Lithuanian presence. However, there are chapters of the Lithuanian American Community in which they only have several hundred Lithuanians. They cannot see such grand shows

as "Žygimantas and Barbora" or "Šnekučiai." What do they do?

JP: Your observation is quite correct. Of fifty LAC chapters, only half a dozen would be able to sponsor similar grand performances, and the rest could handle downsized versions. One solution for smaller chapters is to attend these performances in neighboring cities that are within driving range. In such instances, only a limited number of members could travel, even if tour buses are used. Nevertheless, this possibility exists.

A more practical method is to invite local talent. Smaller groups of performers from any part of the United States could be financially attractive and their performances could be and usually are very appealing. LAC cultural council is utilizing this technique to invite performers from Lithuania. They invite soloists, actors, poets, dancers or small groups to come to the United States for a series of performances over several weeks. Their visits are announced by the Cultural Council, and individual chapters could request for their visit to their communities. It has been done in the past with great success. In some cases, financial assistance is also provided. For example, earlier in the year, soloists Vytautas Juozapaitis and his wife volunteered their performances to whoever would invite them during their stay in the United States. Some chapters expressed interest, and their visit to their communities was a great success. In short, LAC chapters should maintain a close working relationship with the Cultural Council to find out what is available and what would be available in the future.

KV: From the standpoint of an old-timer, are there any things that you would do differently than it is being done by newcomers today?

JP: Before answering your question, the readers should first consider this question: “If I had an opportunity to do something over again, would I do it in a different way?” In most cases, the answer would be “yes.” One can always do better or differently, or not do it at all. Therefore, the answer to your question depends on the activity, the subject matter, the intricacy of activity, the historical context and traditions. Let us examine this question from a different perspective.

It is not a secret that new immigrants and Lithuanian-Americans (post-WWII immigrants) grew up in entirely different environments and developed individual characteristics based on cultural, social, and political environments. Invariably, both groups look at things from different perspectives, experiences, and traditions. Historical background and historical knowledge are significantly different between the two groups. It is understandable that newcomers may not understand the inner workings of organizational structure, scope, purpose, and objectives. They may lack an understanding of why things are being done the way they are, and they may not be familiar with requirements imposed by the United States government. Only time will erase these differences. Until such time, it is important to have a good blend of old-timers and newcomers in the leadership and governing positions. It is not healthy to have a monolithic group of leaders with respect to immigration as well as age. By having a

good blend, we all can improve, develop new ideas based on past experiences, avoid pitfalls and thus foster greater cooperation, benevolence, and meaningful service to the Lithuanian diaspora and Lithuania itself.

You are asking, “are there any things that I would do differently from the way newcomers are doing?”. The answer is probably “yes,” however, that does not mean that my way is the right way. We know that things change, and we also know that things need to change. If we do not change, we become stagnant, ineffective, and weak as leaders. We should discourage diminutive and petty disagreements and work together for the common good of all members of LAC and diaspora.

KV: Would it be fair to say that you feel fulfilled, and your work in the Lithuanian American Community was not in vain?

JP: The word “fulfilled” implies that one has completed a task, a mission, a goal and is ready to ride into the sunset. The work is done. In my view, the work is never done; the end of the road is reached only when we begin to travel down the eternal road. I view LAC not as an organization, but as a movement, as an idea, as a group of individuals with common goals, similar ideas, and common purposes. Movement is a kinship of individuals based on beliefs, bonds, and aspirations to seek something of value. That is the Lithuanian American Community. We seek things of value as they are enumerated in the Lithuanian Charter, to preserve and foster Lithuanian language, family, culture, schools, religion, mutual aid and especially solidarity.

Two movements have influenced my life: the Lithuanian Catholic Federation “Ateitis” and the Lithuanian American Community. The former taught me the value of religion, patriotism, community, family, and intellectual knowledge. With all of them working in a synergistic effect they molded me into a person that I am.

The Lithuanian American Community is where these lifelong principles are being applied. Therefore, nothing that was done was done in vain and nothing that still will be done will be done in vain. Our task, our mission, our goal last a lifetime. Nothing should keep us from feeling young and nothing should compel us to sever our relationship with our chosen mission.



Chicago Lithuanian Saturday School students drawing pictures of their school.

Autobiography: My Cousin Stasys

Excerpt from *Marriage for Love: A Nineteenth-Century Lithuanian Woman's Fight for Justice*

By Žemaitė

Translated by Violeta Kelertas and Maryte Racys



Zemaite by Jonas Sileika.

We drove home from church and found a horse harnessed to a wagon, standing in the yard. There was a guest, who said he was Father's brother's Domininkas's son, Stanislovas. A handsome young fellow. We had already heard Barbora's story about Domininkas's Stasys whom his mother's brother, the Šiauliai attorney Paulauskis, had brought to his house, when he was small and sent him to school. Stasys said that he'd been sent by the aunt to come tell us not to take me to study this fall yet. She couldn't take me in because even without me there would be six students. Poliusia wouldn't be able to teach so many. She was leaving me for next year: I would be older and grasp the schooling better.

Whatever the aunt said, that's what we'd have to do.

This year even my clothes would not be a cause for worry.

From our first meeting we all loved Stasys and wouldn't let him leave. He told us how his uncle Paulauskis wanted him to graduate high school and live with him and learn how to be an attorney from him. He intended to leave his house and all his possessions to Stasys, since the uncle was a bachelor.

But Stasys didn't want it: he was determined to go to Moscow University and study to be a doctor. The uncle got angry at his disobedience and sent him packing. Now he was at the aunt's house in Šėmos. He got fifty rubles from his uncle for his schooling in Moscow. Maybe he'd get more support from somewhere, and when he became a doctor, he'd return it all.

My father agreed to his studying to be a doctor, but he didn't approve of his disobeying his uncle.

"You have to think," he said. "Uncle is wealthy and single; you'd have your own house in the city, other buildings yet, maybe even some money—to reject everything for some idea about schooling—that's not practical."

Stasys quieted down, he didn't argue and that evening there was no more talk about his uncle.

He said he'd left Šėmos very early, but he arrived at our house only toward evening: it was hard to make the horse go, he couldn't force him. It was a Sunday. I got curious as to where Stasys went to church today, in Žarėnai or Plungė. But I was too shy to ask. We were always told that on a holy day it wasn't proper to do any work or set out on a trip. If we went somewhere far for the holy day, then we had to go to mass somewhere along the way. And if that was not possible, one had to say the rosary during the trip. Stasys set out in the morning and drove on a holy day for a long time. Where did he go to mass?—the question kept bothering me.

He stayed with us for a few days. We went for walks, ran through the meadows and the woods, picked berries, rolled around on the grass in the orchard. I got my courage up and asked:

"Stasys! Since you traveled here on a Sunday, did you go to church or did you say the rosary on the way?"

"What a stupid question," Stasys started to laugh. "I could scarcely get the horse to go with the small wagon, but if I had harnessed it up for church, how could it have pulled me?"

Getting embarrassed at being made fun of, I tried to defend myself:



Šateikių church in 1900.

"Yes! The trouble is that we were taught that it's forbidden to travel without attending mass in church."

"And look at me, I arrived safe and sound without church and mass," he laughed, "and nothing happened to me."

"Probably you said the rosary, that's why?"

"Yes, I said the rosary by cursing out the devil, when I couldn't get the horse to go," he laughed. "You see, my rosary is better than yours."

I was horrified at Stasys's jokes: making fun of the devil. How come he wasn't afraid of going to that terrible place called hell?

Stasys's jokes didn't sit well with me; I would observe him more.

Once we came home from picking nuts late; tired and hot from climbing the hazelnut trees, we hurried to get to bed. But you had to say your prayers. It occurred to me to see what Stasys was going to do. Through a crack in the door I watched to see if he was going to say his prayers. Wouldn't you know it! Throwing his clothes off,

he fell into bed without even crossing himself. Sneaking up to his bed quietly, I whispered:

"Stasys, you won't be able to go to sleep without your prayers. The devil will come at night and snatch you away."

"How stupid! He'll catch you with your prayers first. Off to bed with you!"

Going back to my bed, I imitated Stasys, quickly throwing off my clothes, falling into bed and going right to sleep.

This was the first seed of godlessness in my life. Although the thought often occurred to me: What did it matter to God, if people didn't eat meat or drink milk? Or—what difference did it make to God if people wagged their tongues saying Hail Mary or Our Father and other prayers? God must get bored hearing the same thing over and over again from so many people in so many churches. How could He even manage to fulfill all those requests? But you couldn't ask questions like that out loud, not even whisper them. It was a sin, you'd

go to hell ... you had to go to confession for such questioning, and if you didn't stop, you'd get the whip on top of it. You'd hear such threats from your parents and from Barbora. And take Stasys; it wasn't enough that he made fun of me, and didn't even say his prayers, but on top of that he claimed that he'd never fasted. For him it was a fast, when he couldn't find any food: and if he did get some, he'd even eat meat on Good Friday and herring on Easter.

After Stasys left, I became more daring about getting out of my prayers. During a fast, if I happened on some meat, cottage cheese or sour cream, I'd hide and eat it. I wasn't afraid of being caught by the devil anymore. One fear did remain though:

"What happens after you die? What will God say at the Last Judgement?"

Fearful of that, I'd sometimes go back to praying. I was very good at getting out of saying my prayers. On a summer evening I'd kneel on the soft grass under the maple in the yard just to cool off. Bored with kneeling, I'd beat myself on the chest with my fist, kiss the fragrant grass, kiss the bark of the maple to which God's crucifix was nailed, then I'd roll around on the dewy grass and jump across the yard on one foot. Then I'd claim that I'd repeated the entire rosary.

During the winter there wasn't anything for me to study: I could read in Polish and Lowland Lithuanian very well; I could read in Russian quite well already and I knew the letters in German; I knew how to write and count a bit. And there was no use always writing the same thing over and over, just to mess up a pile of paper: "It all costs money," Father decided. So as not to waste time uselessly, they gave me coarse flax to spin until I learned how to do it and got used to the spinning wheel. When I got bored with spinning, I would knit socks with needles and I also knit in the summer, as I was keeping the geese away from the crows. I was told that I had to know how to make everything for myself. I learned to sew, too. Mother told me that every girl has to know how to use the needle, to mend or to fix anything—not to rely on others. Supposedly, a dying tailor asked for a needle to be brought to him. Picking it up, he kissed it and thanked it for getting him into heaven. So, you see, sewing was not only necessary here on earth, but you could also be redeemed through the needle.

Throughout the winter I spun, sewed and knitted. In the spring I was with the fowl again—feeding and tending them.

In spring the aunt came to our house with her three little daughters and Stasys, all together. Since he was a student, he had a blue collar on. We were so happy and loved them to death, treating them to everything



The old church and belfry in Plungė, close to Žemaitė's home.

we had. The days were very hot, so we went swimming in the brook beyond the mill. When the mill was turning, the water ran across the stones swiftly. At night all of us, including the aunt's girls slept in the barn on the hay. It was so much fun to run around with the girls and Stasys all day long. And I was most pleased that the bondsmen could all see what a rich aunt we had: she even arrived in a carriage. Now the aunt wanted me to come in the fall, when school was to start. She told mother to make clothes for me, similar to what her girls wore—short skirts with bloomers. They counted up twenty-five rubles a year for my room and board. And father would bring me home to stay for Christmas, Easter and summer.

The aunt and the girls left. Stasys stayed with us a couple more weeks.

What interesting and amazing things Stasys related from his journey back home from Moscow.

From Moscow to St. Petersburg an iron road was laid out, smooth as a table and straight as a string, for the wagons to roll along on. It traveled without a horse, there was just an iron furnace: they ignited it, made steam and that pulled a whole row of connected wagons. And those wagons were bigger than the serfs' cabins, with ceilings, a roof and windows. A wagon like that could hold more than twenty people: benches were made for them to sit on and it went amazingly fast.

"Just think," he exclaimed, "from Moscow to Petersburg is a hundred miles and it took us only three days on the iron road. It's such great fun. Whenever it stops, you can run out to the station or the town to buy yourself something to eat, some bread and cheese or other snacks. Several students were riding on it; they got something to eat, but there was nowhere to sleep, so at night they crawled under the benches and slept soundly on the



The house in Bukantė where Žemaitė lived.

floor. There were some young ladies who were also on board, but they were too timid to crawl under the bench, so they had to doze sitting up."

We listened with our mouths wide open at such wonders—a wagon with so many people in it rolling along without horses!

"If Stasys is telling the truth," said Barbora, "then the prophecies of the Judgment Day are coming to pass and the Antichrist has arrived after all, and he will soon drive around with his iron furnace and burn people. See, it's already happened! That's because there's so many people overflowing with sin!"

"You might feel sick, your head could spin going so fast," gasped Mother, "I wouldn't get into such a wagon for anything."

And I thought: "Just let me on it!"

Stasys had gone from St. Petersburg to Riga by boat—it was also great fun.

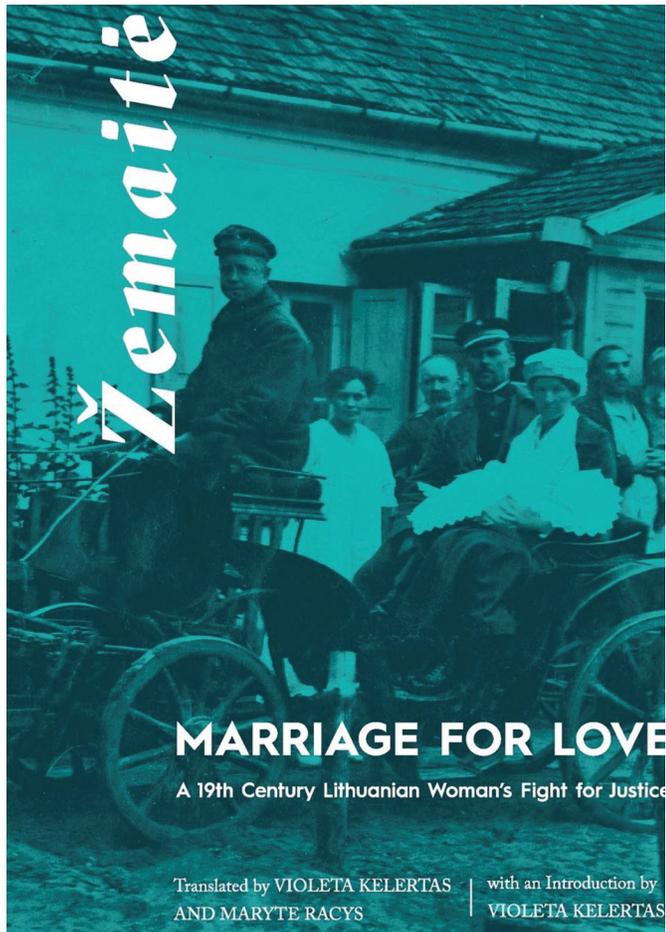
"You can't see land anywhere," he said, "It's just water,

water everywhere. You bob up and down on the water like a goose and you can't tell if you're moving or standing in place. The wind just rocks you back and forth, sometimes it's a bit too much."

"It's such a long way," said Stasys, "but with good navigation the trip took only two weeks, and I estimate the distance is about two hundred miles."

From Riga he came home by means of the Post. Stasys brought many books with him and set them out on the table. He took others into the orchard and read them while sitting there. Touching those books, I was green with envy, but they were all in Russian, and I couldn't read Russian very well and understood even less of it.

Then Stasys made friends with our neighbor Endrijauskis who had a collection of all kinds of books, mostly in Polish. Stasys would bring home several books and let me read them. Then in the next year even without Stasys's help I borrowed books from Endrijauskis.



How did a penniless nineteenth-century farm woman with an alcoholic husband, seven children, and little education, living in a rural backwater of the tsarist Russian empire far from any centers of culture manage to become the initiator of literary prose fiction in the Lithuanian language and write six volumes of stories, plays, and letters? Not only that, but she also distinguished herself as a feminist activist against patriarchy, especially the centuries-long tradition of arranged marriages. During the First World War she traveled the United States for five years, giving speeches from Chicago to New Hampshire for the cause of relieving the famine and suffering of her war-torn country.

"Zemaitė is a Lithuanian Virginia Woolf. She created her own self, becoming a pillar of the national literature and a source of inspiration for generations of women."
---Dalia Leinarte, UN CEDAW Committee, Chairperson

"In an age when women's rights around the world are increasingly threatened, *Marriage for Love: A 19th Century Lithuanian Woman's Fight for Justice*, serves as timely inspiration, showcasing how one woman successfully challenged patriarchal norms and ideologies and

helped bring about change. Zemaitė was a revolutionary thinker, writer, and activist who unflinchingly depicted the plight of women and other members of the underclass through her short stories and speeches. The selection of works in *Marriage for Love* is admirable, serving as an excellent introduction to individuals unfamiliar with Zemaitė and deepening the knowledge of those who have been reading her for years in their native Lithuanian. The translations are masterful, no mean feat given the fact that Zemaitė wrote her short stories in a complex and colorful Lithuanian dialect. The two translators, Violeta Kelertas and Maryte Racys, are to be commended for bringing Zemaitė the wider audience she so richly deserves." ---Daiva Markelis, Professor of English at Eastern Illinois University

Professor Violeta Kelertas/Kelertienė holds a PhD in Comparative Literature and Translation from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For some 25 years she taught in the PLB Lithuanian program at the University of Illinois at Chicago and was its Endowed Chair from 1992-2008. Currently she is Affiliated professor at the University of Washington in Seattle, also in the Baltic program there. She is a well-known literary critic, translator and editor, having also taught at the Vilnius Pedagogical University and at Kaunas's Vytautas Magnus University. She has edited several books: one about the Chicago writer, Marius Katiliškis (1986), also *Baltic Postcolonialism* (2006), an anthology of translated stories, "Come into my Time": Lithuania in Prose Fiction 1970-1990 (1992), and her articles in Lithuanian are collected in *Kita vertus* (published in Vilnius by baltos lankos, 2006). She was editor in chief of *Lituanus* for 11 years, co-editor of *Metmenys*. She has been translating since the age of 18 and published her first translation, that of Vytautas Mačernis's "Visions" in 1959. Currently she is translating the novel *Brydė*, by Valdas Papiėvis, about the partisan movement in Lithuania and the rise of *Sąjūdis*.

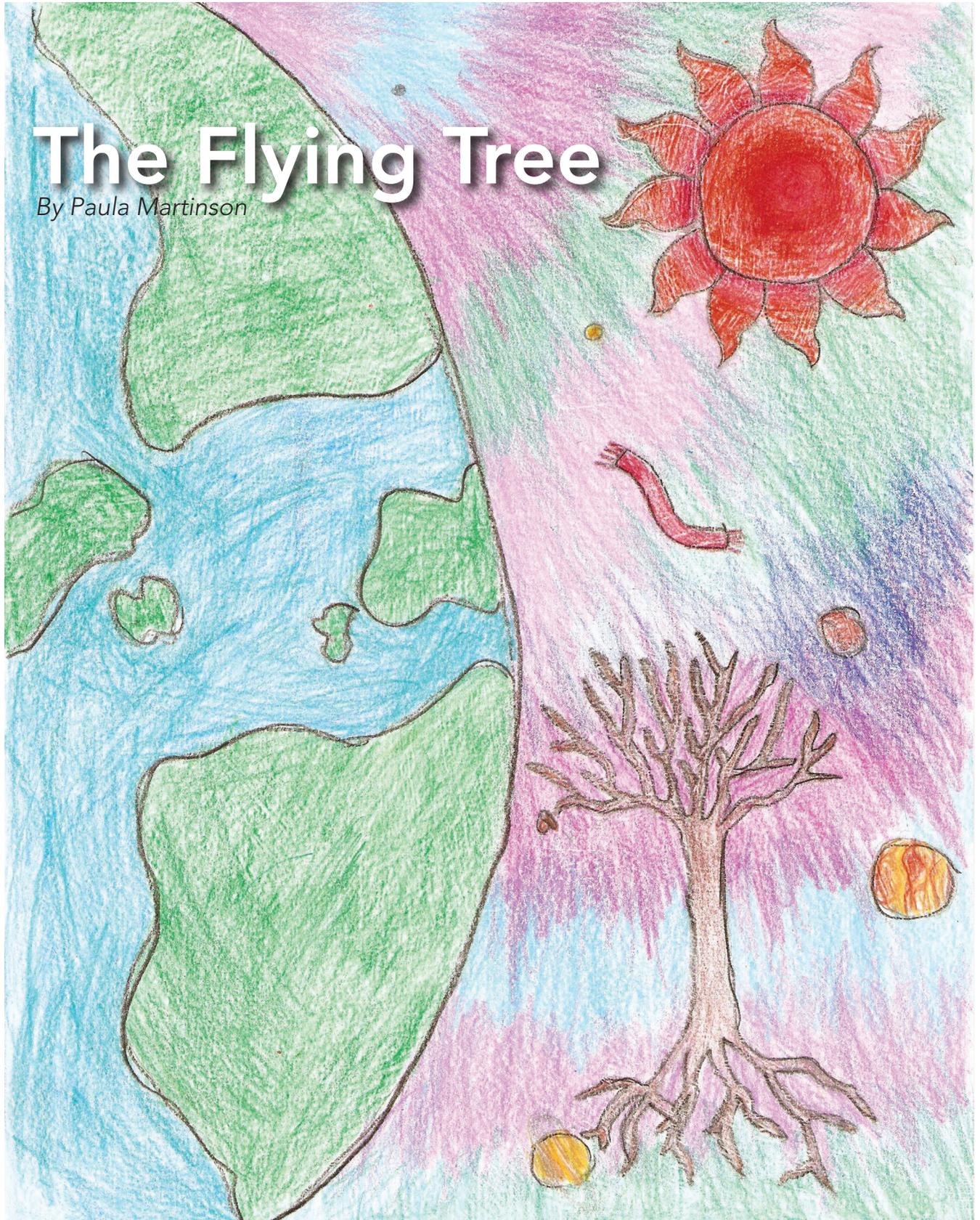


Prof. Violeta Kelertas

Maryte Racys is a librarian at the Seattle Public Library. She studied English Literature at Victoria University Toronto and completed graduate studies in Library Sciences at the University of Toronto. She has been a professional librarian in two countries for forty-five years. She completed training at the Academy of Theater Arts in Toronto, Canada and has had a lifelong interest in Eastern philosophy.

The Flying Tree

By Paula Martinson



The little boy clutched an acorn in his hand, not wanting to let go. He stared down at the hole he had dug. Could the little seed really grow into an oak tree? Hesitantly, he dropped the acorn into the hole, packed dirt on top of it, poured some water on it, and walked into his house.

Every day the little boy went out to water the seed, caring for it. Sometimes he even talked to it. In time, the seed grew into a seedling, which eventually grew into a sturdy, strong tree. The two grew up together. As the boy became an old man, the tree kept on growing, bigger and stronger. One evening the old man limped outside, clutching to his cane. He watered around the tree and sat next to it as his thoughts wandered far and wide. The man closed his eyes and leaned against the tree, his hands shaking. He took a deep breath and with his eyes glassy with tears, he hugged the tree. His hug surprised the tree. It didn't understand. The old man pressed up against the tree harder and whispered: "Goodbye old friend." A few moments later the man tied something around one of the branches of the tree, a scarf.

The man hobbled back inside, his head hanging low. As night approached the tree calmed. It swayed back and forth, letting the breeze control how it moved. Little white dots twinkled across the peaceful black sky. As the tree dreamed of a bright summer's day a scream rang through the house. The scream came from the old man's wife, whom the tree did not see very often. Sometimes the old man's wife watered around the tree if the old man was too sick to come outside. Sometimes she would just sit on the back porch to read a book. The scream startled and panicked the tree. What happened? A few minutes later, trucks with bright lights appeared and the trees thinking blurred. The tree didn't know what happened that night. What the tree did know, it's best friend

did not return. Sorrowful weeks followed. Only the old man's wife now came out to water around the tree. She did not speak. She did not even look at the tree. Every minute the tree thought about its best friend. Where did he go?

Many more weeks passed and the tree's leaves dried up, turned brown, and most fell to the ground much too early for autumn. The scarf remained as the only thing the tree kept from the old man besides his memory. One day the wind blew very hard. The tree's few withered leaves blew off leaving it bare and cold. The wind loosened the scarf little by little and as much as the tree tried to hold onto it, the wind won the battle.

The scarf flew away, rising into the sky. The only thing the tree had left of its best friend drifted far away. The tree wanted to get the scarf back. The tree needed to find its friend. It swung its branches back and forth, desperate to get out of the place it lived since changing from a tiny acorn to a mighty tree. The tree put all its force into swinging its branches, but it realized that did not work. It tried to think of any other way to follow the scarf. There just didn't seem to be a way. A tree is a tree. It stays where it is planted. The red scarf flew farther and farther away, slipping to the horizon. All the while, the tree watched, helpless. Sadness overpowered the tree and it stopped trying to go after the scarf. The tree just let go. After all the struggling and grieving over his friend and the scarf, the tree relaxed. The wind began to pick up and blow harder. Lost in its thoughts, the tree didn't even notice it at first. As the wind rushed by stronger and stronger the tree only became more tired. The wind shook the tree, twisted it, and blew dust and debris at it. The tree did not care. It felt hopeless. The wind clawed at the soil surrounding the tree. It dug so deep, it loosened the tree's roots! The wind tugged at the tree, and finally, uprooted it.

Instead of falling to its side the wind pulled the tree into the air. The tree caught a glimpse of its old home, the place it grew and lived for so long, now a dot on the land below it. As the tree went up into the clouds, it saw a scarf. A red scarf, making its way down toward earth. There it is! The tree thought. Though the wind did not cooperate to bring the scarf back. As the tree rose higher and higher, snow and ice pelted its branches. The tree watched the world below fade away. And in a split second, the wind stopped. The tree fell down to the earth among the snowflakes. Oh it was a sight to see for the onlookers who gathered below. The tree watched as the little red scarf on the grass became bigger and bigger with snowflakes gathering around it. The tree smashed into the ground. Pieces of wood chips flew everywhere.

People rushed out of their houses to see what all the commotion was about and they pulled over their cars to see the damage. The obliterated oak laid over the red scarf, buried under the wood. An acorn from the tree survived the journey. Upon impact it bounced off a sidewalk, and rolled to a grassy patch near a tombstone. The acorn had no choice but to grow where it landed, next to the tombstone. So the little acorn grew into a sapling. Next to the sapling grew something else though. A red rose plant. The two plants grew together. The tree grew strong and sturdy, while the rose wrapped around the tree, hugging it, happy to be reunited with its friend!



Paula Martinson

current events

Security

...NATO will conduct a "forcible entry" combat exercise called DEFENDER in Lithuania, Georgia, and Poland in April-July 2020 with 20,000 U.S. Army soldiers and as many as 17,000 allies from 17 countries including Germany, U.K., Norway, Sweden, Italy, and Canada. New emphasis includes dispersed combat networking, Air-Ground-Sea coordination, allied interoperability, and new technologies that span air, land, sea, cyber, and space domains throughout Europe.

...Vytautas Žukas, former chief of the Lithuanian Armed Forces and now chief advisor to President Gitanas Nausėda, advised the immediate development of a plan for unarmed civil resistance by the public and state institutions in response to possible military aggression.

...President Nausėda pardoned two convicted Russian spies which resulted in the release of two Lithuanians and a Norwegian held by the Russians on espionage charges. Norway did not offer anything to facilitate the swap but the Norwegian Prime Minister thanked Lithuania for the release of the 64-year-old former border inspector who admitted to acting as a courier for Norwegian intelligence but denied the charges of spying. One of the Russian spies tried to recruit the bodyguards of former President Dalia Grybauskaitė to bug the President's office.



...Google and Delphi, the media group headquartered in Vilnius, have developed software that searches for the origin of fake news. Labeled "Demaskuok" or debunk in Lithuanian, it sifts through online Lithuanian, Russian, and English posts for the likelihood they are disinformation and tracking back to pinpoint the origin. Demaskuok searches for words that stir emotions such as rape, poverty, societal splits, health scares, and poor governance. Demaskuok also measures the "virality", the number of times readers share or write about an item and which websites host an item, such as Sputnik and rt, Russian 'news' outlets. There are about 4,000 Lithuanian volun-

teers, known as "elves", who scan the web for disinformation. Apparently, fake news is disproportionately posted on Friday evenings when many people, including elves, may be out partying. Demaskuok has been used for almost a year and under human scrutiny half the items that it flags have been deemed disinformation. It is now working to detect beyond total fabrication to flag exaggeration and omission where facts are technically correct but presented in a manner to mislead.

...Estonia's Finance Minister Martin Helme accused Swedbank of facilitating the Russian special services efforts to destabilizing several countries by ignoring money laundering. He also wants to tap into fines imposed by the U.S. for such actions because Estonia was the victim of these actions. Swedbank ignored the fundamental banking rule of knowing your customers, which in these cases were Russian oligarchs with suspicious backgrounds, some of whom were allegedly under international sanctions.

...The Lithuanian Ministry of National Defense has signed a Letter of Offer and Acceptance with the U.S. Government to purchase 200 Joint Light Tactical Vehicles manufactured by Oshkosh Defense in Wisconsin. The Ministry has budgeted 145 million euros for the JLYVs, personnel training, spare parts, and support in 2020-2024. Purchasing via the U.S. Government enables Lithuania to pay a significantly lower price since the U.S. placed a large order on its behalf. The all-terrain vehicles will be equipped with turrets and 12.7 mm M2 QCB machine-guns and deployed with the Iron Wolf and Griffin Brigades. The Lithuanian Armed Forces currently use HMMWV ("Humvees") made by AM General.

...Russia, China, and Iran plan joint naval war games in Iran's southern waters in the vicinity of the northern Indian Ocean in December 2019. Speaking to Mehr, an Iranian News Agency, Iran's Navy commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khazadi said, "It is no longer viable for a country to resort to force and bullying tactics to sanction another country's oil by restricting its passage through international water." adding "They need to realize that those countries with common interests have close military cooperation with one another in a bid to achieve a desirable level in their collective security.

...Another evidence of Russian - Chinese cooperation is the completion of the first road bridge connecting the two countries in the Far East over the Amur River with a 1700 ft., a \$295 million cable-stayed bridge that also carries a natural gas pipeline.

...Lithuanian Defense Minister Raimundas Karoblis expressed concern over China's desire to purchase controlling interest in Lithuania's port of Klaipėda as part of China's President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative to the Baltic Sea. Chinese officials have tried to push the investment by offering to increase cargo from a Chinese owned Belarus facility while threatening to invest in an alternative Baltic port if they are denied controlling interest. A NATO official told the Washington Examiner "Foreign ownership of ports, railroads, and airfields could also be a factor for NATO's ability to quickly move forces across Europe."

...The Russian state-owned company Rostec has developed two killer drone systems to counter unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). One system is capable of tracking an intruder drone, catching up with it and capturing it with a net; the other utilizes a gun to direct an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) to disable a drone's electronics and its control/communications links. The EMP system, developed by the Kalashnikov division of Rostec, was demonstrated at the Dubai Airshow 2019 and is effective within a radius of 1 kilometer.

Business

...Vinted, a Vilnius startup online marketplace for second-hand clothes, has attained "unicorn" status with an evaluation of \$1 billion. Started in 2008 it is riding the wave of countering the throwaway society by recycling quality fashion. It has 25 million users in 11 European countries including Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United States. An August 2018 offering raised 50 million euros and a November 2019 offering raised 128 million euros. The new funds will be used to double Vinted's product and technology staff to 600 employees and they anticipate the platform will enable the sale of about 1.3 billion euros of reused clothing this year.

...President Nausėda and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed a Declaration of Strategic Partnership for 2020-2024 to foster joint actions in economy, trade, investment, and scientific, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation between Lithuania and Ukraine. Lithuania has received assurances that its fertilizer manufacturers will have free access to sell their ammonium nitrate and compound fertilizers in Ukraine. In another agreement, the respective Ministers of Defense signed a Declaration of Intent for Cooperation in Cyber Security to work on the exchange of information on cyber threats and attacks and to develop a joint training plan.



President Nausėda and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

...The Board of Directors of Klaipėdos Nafta voted to borrow 136 million euros from the Nordic Investment Bank for 26 years to finance the purchase of the Independence, the storage and regasification ship. At present, the ship is leased from Norway's Hoegh LNG.

...The German manufacturer, Leesys of Leipzig, will open a new plant in the Panevėžys Free Economic Zone with 40 new jobs over the next 3 years. The company makes electronic components for the automotive market and will focus on the Repair, Maintenance, and Overhaul (RMO) processes. The new site will adapt, adopt, and improve its processes for the production of Printed Circuit Board Assemblies (PCBA), plastic parts and assembled electronic devices and systems. Leesys CEO, Dr. Arnd Karden, said that some of the factors in choosing Lithuania for its expansion was the presence of a skilled talent pool, openness to technical progress, adequate infrastructure, and support by the investment agency, Invest Lithuania.

...Chicago based SAI Global, a multinational provider of risk management solutions, assurance, and property services, will open a Center of Excellence in Vilnius to provide software development and related back-end services. During 2020 they plan on hiring 50 professionals to add to the current 2,000 global employees who serve locations in Africa, the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, and the Pacific.

...President Nausėda is in favor of considering a Lithuanian state commercial bank because of diminishing presence by Scandinavian commercial banks, SEB and Swedbank, fewer cash services, fewer ATMs and higher mortgage interest rates than elsewhere. He comes to this

current events

opinion despite his former position as Chief Economist at SEB. The Seimas' Committee on Budget and Finance, which is investigating the lack of supervision of financial institutions during the 2009-2010 financial crisis is also in favor of investigating the possibility of establishing a commercial state bank. Opposing the idea are the Lithuanian Finance Minister, Central Bank Governor, and the Business Confederation because of the large investment needed, a history of such banks failing because they eventually assume too much risk, and then requiring a state bailout.

General

...Lithuania's Ministry of the Interior and the Fire and Rescue Department has allocated over 250,000 euros to reward the 254 firefighters who fought the Ekologistika tire recycling facility fire in Alytus. Residents also ran fundraisers to thank the firefighters and raise money to compensate farmers for their losses resulting from the banning of food sales, including milk.

...VFS Global has opened Lithuania visa services in Chicago to assist U.S. travelers visiting Lithuania. In the coming months, they plan on opening offices in Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Washington DC, and San Francisco. Since 2013 they have worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide Lithuania visa services from 13 countries. In June 2019 the arrangement was extended to 71 countries including the US. Submission hours are 9 AM-3 PM, Monday - Friday.

...The Lithuanian Seimas has approved the guarantee of full reimbursement for medication and medical supplies for persons 75 and over and low-income people beginning in July 2020. This benefit comes per the recommendation of the World Health Organization. The Lithuanian Health Minister, Aurelijus Veryga, estimates the annual cost at 4.1 million euros.

...In celebration of the 300th anniversary of the birth of Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, known as Vilna Gaon, a noted Jewish rabbi, Lithuania will issue a 10 euro coin, the first with Hebrew lettering. The coin includes a stylized menorah, which unfortunately has been of a design commandeered by neo-Nazis.

...The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) studied its 36 member states and 8 other countries and Lithuania still ranked first in alcohol consumption per capita for people over 15 drinking 12.3 liters of pure ethanol per year. For comparison, Estonia was 10.3, Latvia was 11.2, Finland was 8.4, Russia was

11.1, and the U.S. was 8.9 liters per year. Alcohol consumption has gone down in recent years due to increases in excise taxes, raising the legal drinking age, restricting selling hours, and banning advertising.

...The Lithuanian Sun and Sea (Marina) opera, winner of the Venice Biennale Golden Lion award, was seen by 87,000 visitors during its 6-month run at the Lithuanian pavilion. Plans are to stage it in Lithuania in 2020 and perform the opera in Australia, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the US over the next couple of years. The opera focused on issues of climate change, ecology, and consumerism.

...Teachers in several hundred schools staged a two-hour warning strike to press their demand for more funding next year. A two-year-old agreement between the Lithuanian Education and Science Trade Union (LSMPS) and the Education Ministry, called for allocating 117 euros in additional funding for education in the 2020 budget. The government's 2020 budget only included about half the agreed amount (about 55 million euros) which precipitated the walkout.

...President Nausėda had a two-day visit to Rome where he met Pope Francis and Italian President Sergio Mattarella and Prime Minister Giuseppe Conti. He also visited members of the local Lithuanian community and visited the Pontifical Lithuanian St. Casimir's College.



Portrait of Vilna Gaon.

Advent Reflection Eve with Bishop Lionginas Virbalas

By Gražina Kazilienė

Portland Lithuanian Community Representative for Public Relations



In the evening of December 18th, the religious members of the Portland Lithuanian community gathered for the prayer and reflection eve with bishop Lionginas Virbalas from Lithuania and father Tomas Karanauskas from Los Angeles parish. Bishop Virbalas is currently visiting Lithuanian parishes, catholic sites in the United States.

Christian world slows down a month before Christmas while waiting for the birth of the Savior. Advent is the time to spend time with family, reflect, share peace and kindness. A lot of these traditions can be traced back to the very old times. This is the time to be with others, be close to family, thank others, ask for forgiveness, and make peace. It is a time to remember the real, eternal values, reflect on changes needed within oneself and around oneself so that the next year is better..

The mood was special at the hospitable home of Portland Community President Giedrė Babarskas and her husband Vilmantas. It felt like everyone gathered at the festively decorated living room after work on that rainy evening was one big friendly family waiting with hope for the birth of baby Jesus and the most beautiful holiday of the year- Christmas.

Father Tomas Karanauskas invited everyone for group prayer, and Bishop Virbalas blessed the plentiful holiday table before we tried delicious cepelinai prepared by Vaida, Samogitian pancakes, and other Lithuanian treats. This reminded us of the time when all of us were children and believed that animals speak and miracles happen on Christmas night. We remembered the anticipation and

preparations for this holiday in our homeland Lithuania at the homes of our parents and grandparents, the holiday traditions, food, games, and songs.

Then Vilius Žalpys, the former president of Portland Lithuanian community who has been tirelessly fostering Lithuanian culture and traditions, started distributing the lyrics of the Lithuanian Advent songs. The first song goes: " We welcome you, Jesus, born saint God's infant..." , then followed by "The voice hummed in silent night..." , "Today the Expiator of humankind lays on the stack of hay..." . One song followed another in the warm glow of candles. We exchanged nice memories. The coziness it created made it hard to leave.

Father Tomas Karanauskas invited Bishop Virbalas to bless the crosses that were brought by the members of the Portland community. All of the attendees and their families receive the blessing as well.

According to Bishop Virbalas, Christmas Eve dinner is the most beautiful Lithuanian tradition. However, not everybody can afford to celebrate or has someone to celebrate it with. Therefore, the bishop encouraged everybody: " Stop, ask for their name, invite, call, devote time..."

"Today we are happy and congratulate each other receiving the merry message of Christmas: "The Savior was born". Angels announced to the shepherds that his birth will be a great joy to the whole nation and wished peace to people loved by God. What they saw was simple: "They hurried and they found Mary, Joseph, and the

our community

baby in the manger” (Luke 2, 16). The son of God did not come with power and luster- he came as a weak and poor infant. He is not here to coerce us, he wants to invite us with his love. He does not want to show his power, he wants to win hearts”. This was stated in the Christmas letter to the religious community by Kaunas bishops which was also signed by Bishop Virbalas.

Bishop Virbalas’s visit was a special celebration for the Portland Lithuanian community during Advent. His encouraging words, his devotion to God, and his example of serving people inspired peace and hope that the year 2020 will be better, lighter, and more generous.

We are grateful to Portland Lithuanian Board and its president Giedrė Babarskienė for this spiritual and warm evening. A special thanks goes to Giedrė’s mother Vaida Basinskienė who always makes sure everybody is taken care of and spent long hours in the kitchen preparing for this and other community events. We are grateful to have such a harmonious Catholic family that welcomes everybody to their home with the soul of the family- grandmother Vaida.



Colorado Lithuanian Community Participated in the "On the Path of Life and Death" Tribute Run

By Simona Bataitytė



Participants of the run at the start line.

On January 11 the international tribute run called "On the Path of Life and Death" was held to honor the defenders of Lithuania's freedom and in memory of the tragic events that took place 29 years ago. The annual tribute run is organized to express respect and gratefulness to the victims of January 13, 1991. When the independence of Lithuania was re-established and the path of freedom needed to be defended, the events of January 13 claimed lives of Loreta Ašanavičiūtė, Virginijus Druskis, Darius Gerbutavičius, Rolandas Jankauskas, Rimantas Juknevičius, Alvydas Kanapinskas, Algimantas Petras Kavoliukas, Vytautas Koncevičius, Vidas Maciulevičius, Titas Masiulis, Stasys Mačiulskas, Alvydas Matulka, Apolinaras Juozas Povilaitis, Ignas Šimulionis, Vytautas Vaitkus.

A special spirit of unity and patriotism connected participants of the traditional international tribute run. Runners in eleven countries, namely, Afghanistan, Denmark, Spain, Italy, U.S., UK, Mali, Netherlands, Finland, Switzerland, and Germany, participated in the run.

Early on the morning of January 12, students and teachers of the Colorado Lithuanian School and members of the Colorado Lithuanian community gathered for the January 13th event, "The Path of Life and Death Tribute Run. The day was sunny and beautiful, and everyone enjoyed being together. Dressed in Lithuanian colors and singing the Lithuanian national anthem, we started running. We finished the five-kilometer route, reminding one another of the importance of freedom and the power of unity.



At the finish line.



Participants were awarded diplomas.

After the run, participants were awarded diplomas. Hot tea, coffee, and snacks were served. This way, Lithuanians who live 8500 kilometers away from Lithuania, celebrated Lithuania's freedom. We rejoiced at being able to be free and foster Lithuanian culture. Thanks to everyone who came and contributed to the event! Hope to see everyone next year!

Lithuanian Film Night in Colorado

By Edita Buzeniene, Principal of the Colorado Lithuanian School



On November 22, 2019, the Colorado Lithuanian School together with the Colorado Lithuanian Community launched a Lithuanian Film Night project. The first film the audience was watching was "The Secret of the State," directed by Donatas Ulvydas. It told the story of President Dalia Grybauskaitė. We are delighted that a large group of Colorado Lithuanians gathered for the first night of Lithuanian cinema. It was fun to meet everyone before the movie and have some coffee and snacks. While the parents watched the movie, the children had fun in a playroom, specially prepared for them. We are grateful to the teachers of the Colorado Lithuanian School who provided child care during the event. We are grateful to the Lithuanian Community of Colorado and the Lithuanian Foundation, who were sponsors of the event. All funds raised during the event went to the Colorado Lithuanian School. We'll be waiting for everyone at another movie night.



All photographs by Tomas Demenis.



January Anniversary

473 years ago



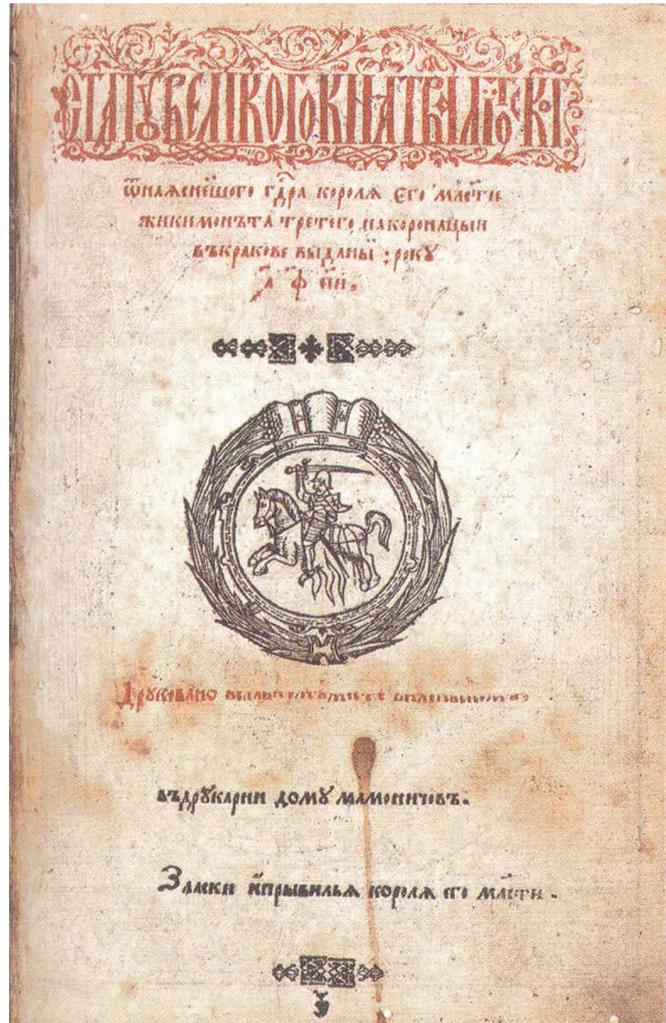
On January 8, 1547, Martynas Mažvydas (1510-1563) published the first printed Lithuanian book, the Catechism, that marked the beginning of literature and printing in Lithuanian. The book was printed in Karaliaučius (Königsberg). It consists of the dedication in Latin to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, two prefaces: one in Latin (in prose), and one in Lithuanian (in verse), a primer, the catechism, and the book of songs. The rhymed preface in Lithuanian, The Appeal of The Small Book Itself unto Lithuanians and Samogitians, is the first authentic verse in Lithuanian. An acrostic, the initial letters of its lines from 3 to 19 downwards, form the name of the author, Martinus Masvidius, thus confirming his authorship. Approximately 200 copies were printed; only two have survived. One is held at the Vilnius University Library in Lithuania, and another at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń Library in Poland.

Mažvydas was a prolific 16th-century Lithuanian author, who is associated with the beginnings of Lithuanian literature. He was of Samogitian origin, born near Žemaičių Naumiestis (now in Šilutė district municipality) in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; his parents were said to be indigent townspeople. Mažvydas spent his youth in Vilnius, where he worked together with other pioneering Lithuanian authors from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Variants of his name include Martinus Masvidius, Martinus Maszvidas, M. Mossuids, Waytkūnas, Mastvidas, Mažvydas, Mosvidius, Maswidsche, and Mossvid Vaitkuna.

431 years ago

On January 6, 1589, the Third Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania came into effect. The Third Statute was printed in 1588 in response to the Union of Lublin, which created



the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The main author and editor of this statute was the great Chancellor of Lithuania Leonas Sapiega. The statute was the first one to be printed (in contrast to the handwritten statutes before) in the Ruthenian language using the Cyrillic alphabet. Translations of the statute were printed in Muscovite Russia and also in Poland, where at that time laws were not thoroughly codified and the Lithuanian statute was consulted in some cases where the corresponding or comparably similar Polish laws were unclear or missing.

The statute reorganized and modified existing law, and also included new laws. Novel features included a tendency toward severe penalties, including capital punishment, which was in line with the general reactionary retributive trend in contemporary European law (cf. Malleus Maleficarum). The statute also provided that crimes committed by or against people from different social ranks were pun-

this month in history

ished alike, following the idea of the equal worth of human life. Yet the hurdles for a peasant to have a noble tried and convicted were higher than the other way around. The statute was supported by Lithuanian magnates, as it granted them special powers and privileges allowing them to keep the lesser Lithuanian nobility and peasants in check. As a token for being acknowledged as Grand Duke of Lithuania, Sigismund III Vasa revised the Union of Lublin and approved the Third Lithuanian Statute.

Many features of the statute were not in line with the provisions of the Union of Lublin, which is not at all mentioned in the statute. In this category fall e.g. the provisions about distributing local offices only to native people (or to people who had bought that status). So, too, do the many, detailed provisions about the Lithuanian estates' assemblies which eventually were abolished by the Lublin union treaty. Thus, in everyday legal practice, the statute trumped and even usurped the union treaty.

A group often opposing the statute was the Polish nobility, which viewed such inconsistencies as unconstitutional, particularly since the Union of Lublin stipulated that no law could conflict with the law of the Union. The statute, however, in turn, declared the laws that conflicted with itself to be unconstitutional. Statutes of Lithuania were also used in territories of Lithuania annexed by Poland shortly before the Union of Lublin. These conflicts between statutory schemes in Lithuania and Poland persisted for many years.

The third variant of the Statute had particularly many humane features, such as double compensations for killing or hurting a woman; prohibition to enslave a free man for any crime; freedom of religion; and a recommendation to acquit the accused when there is a lack of evidence, instead of punishing the innocent. It was in force in the territory of Lithuania until 1840 when it was replaced by Russian laws.

185 years ago

On January 17, 1835, Antanas Baranauskas, a Lithuanian poet, mathematician and Catholic bishop of Seinai was born in Anykščiai. Baranauskas is best known as the author of the Lithuanian poem Anykščių šilelis. Before Baranauskas, the main "respectable" languages in the area were considered to be Russian and Polish, so Baranauskas was one of the few primary individuals responsible for re-legitimizing the Lithuanian language, and by extension, Lithuanian culture. Referring to Baranauskas in a lecture, the early 20th-century Lithuanian poet Maironis once said, "Without him, there might not be us".

Anykščių šilelis (1858–59; The Forest of Anykščiai) is a 342-line poem, written in East High Lithuanian dialect. It



describes the former beauty of a pine grove near his village and its despoliation under the Russians, it depicted in symbolic form the plight of Lithuania under the tsarist regime. Baranauskas' interests included dialectology and mathematics; he provided the most detailed classification of Lithuanian dialects up to his time.

Extract about Puntukas:

Nuo Puntuko lig Šlavei ažuolų daugybę
Laikę žmonės lyg kokią didžią šventenybę./ [...]
Nešęs velnias akmenį, didumo kaip gryčios,
Ir sudaužyt norėjęs Anykščių bažnyčios
Arba užverst upės; bet kaip tik išvydęs
Ažuolyną pašvęstą ir gaidys pragydęs,
Tuoj iš nagų paleidęs ir smėlin įmušęs:
Net žemė sudrebėjus, senos griuvę pušys (Baranauskas 1985: 70, 72).

The translation by Nadas Rastenis in 1956:

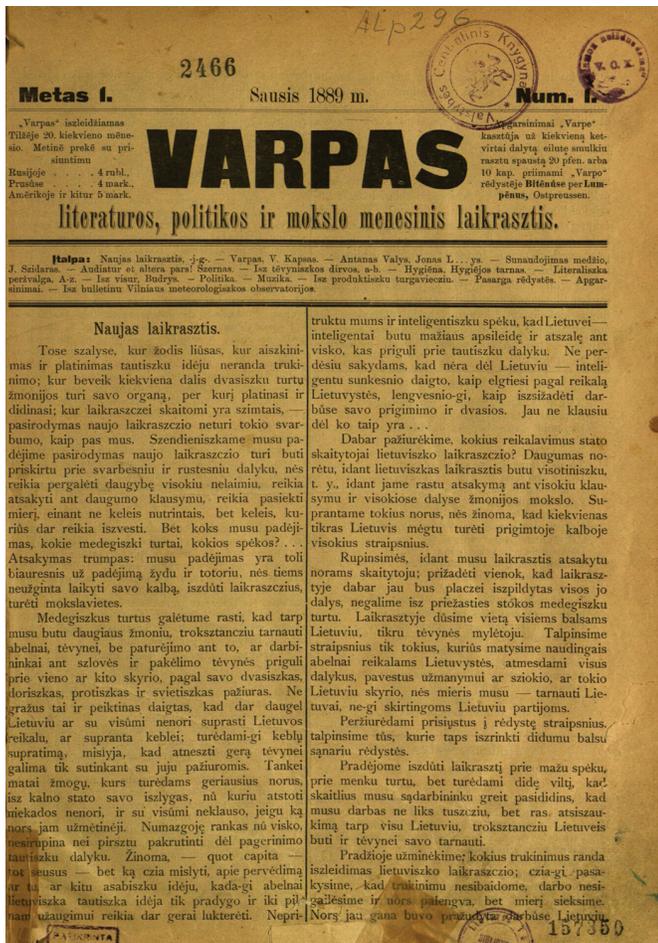
Near the Puntukas, in the green leas,
All oak were revered as sacred trees./ [...]
Spurred by a wicked midnight carouse,
Satan, with a rock big as a house,
Once flew in haste and fury to smash
The Holy Church in a mighty crash,
Or dam the stream; yet seeing a row
Of sacred oaks, and hearing cocks crow,
He dropped the rock, which fell to the ground,
And shook the earth and wood all around.

The same extract translated by Peter Tempest in 1985:

From Šlavė to Puntukas many an oak
Was as a shrine by country folk/ [...]
This giant boulder once a devil bore
Intent to wreck Anykščiai chapel or

To damn a stream, but then he saw below
An oak grove and a cock began to crow.
He dropped the rock. So heavily it fell
Earth shook, it brought down aged pines as well...

131 years ago



On January 14, 1889, the very first issue of Varpas was printed. Varpas (literally: The Bell) was a monthly Lithuanian-language newspaper published during the Lithuanian press ban from January 1889 to December 1905. Because its publication was illegal in Lithuania, then part of the Russian Empire, it was printed in Tilžė (Tilsit, current Sovetsk) and Ragainė (Ragnit, current Neman) in East Prussia and smuggled into Lithuania by the knygnešiai (book smugglers). Varpas, with the circulation of about 500 to 1,000 copies, played a pivotal role in the Lithuanian National Revival. Tautiška giesmė, one of the poems by the founder and editor, Vincas Kudirka, written to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Varpas, became the Lithuanian national anthem.

75 years ago



On January 3, 1944, Jurgis Baltrušaitis, a Lithuanian Symbolist poet and translator, died in Nazi-occupied Paris. He is buried at Montrouge Cemetery. In addition to his important contributions to Lithuanian literature, he was noted as a political activist and diplomat.

Baltrušaitis was born in 1873 to a family of farmers in Paantvardys village near Jurbarkas, which was then under Imperial Russian rule. In 1885, he entered Kaunas gymnasium, and graduated in 1893; he then entered the Faculty of Physical and Mathematical Sciences at Moscow University. At the same time, he attended lectures in the Faculty of History and Philology, and studied foreign languages; Baltrušaitis learned 15 foreign languages during his life.

From 1895 onwards, Baltrušaitis began to take part in editing Moscow-based literary magazines, and he began his creative work in Russian. He joined the Symbolist movement. Baltrušaitis published three collections of poetry in Russian and another three in Lithuanian. Between 1900 and 1914, Baltrušaitis lived in Italy and Norway and spent much time traveling in other countries in Western Europe. During World War I and the subsequent Russian Revolution he was in Russia, where he actively participated in the Lithuanian political struggle for independence. After Lithuania regained independence in 1918, Baltrušaitis was appointed Lithuania's ambassador to Russia in 1920 and held this position until 1939. In 1932 he was honored with a doctorate by Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. In 1939, Baltrušaitis was appointed a counselor of the Lithuanian embassy in Paris. Following the annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union, his son, Jurgis Baltrušaitis Jr., an art and art critic, served as a diplomat for the Lithuanian diplomatic service which continued to represent Lithuanian interests in some Western countries.

calendar

2020 Ski and Winter Trip

This year's snow ski and winter trip is to the beautiful Steamboat Resort in Steamboat Springs, Colorado during February 27th - February 29th, 2020, and come ski with us February 29th - March 2nd at Aspen Mountain Resort in Aspen, Colorado!

The trip is being organized by Siaures Amerikos Lietuviu Fizinio Auklejiimo ir Sporto Sajunga (SALFASS) aka Lithuanian Athletic Union of North America (LAUNA).

As in the past, there will be many sports enthusiasts from the USA, Canada & Lithuania attending and having a great time. Both skiers and non-skiers and their families are welcome. We will be having organized SALFASS ski races that week for all who wish to participate!

Accommodations and other information:

Please contact Jamie Bangerter who is a "Mountain Vacation Specialist" to make your hotel reservations. Her email address is: jamie@ski.com, or you can call her direct at: (866) 265-7490 x3306. She can also assist with any ground transfers, lift tickets, and/or airfare. In order to receive special rates, please identify yourself as part of the Lithuanian Ski Group trip.

The Steamboat Grand is the preferred hotel for our group while staying at Steamboat Resort.

Please contact Jamie Bangerter at ski.com to confirm booking ASAP as this is a heavy travel week.

Schedule of Events:

The 2020 SALFASS ski championships will be held at Steamboat Resort and has tentatively been set for Saturday, February

29th at the race course. Race registration will at race course on ski day. More information coming soon!

Come ski with Linas Vaitkus, former Olympian with the Lithuanian Ski Team during the 1998 Winter Olympic Games. He will be stopping by to ski with us at Steamboat Springs and Aspen! More information coming soon!

Any general questions can be directed by email to either Ed Mickus at edmickus1@aol.com. You are urged to make all your travel reservations now as this is a busy travel period.

The Annual Aspen Lithuanian Independence Day Celebration

You are also invited to come to Aspen to celebrate this occasion on Sunday, March 1st at 4PM - 6PM! Please RSVP for this event to: ltaspenconsul@gmail.com

Sponsored by Hon. Consul and Dean of Aspen Consular Corps J. Prunskis M.D. The LT Consulate in Aspen is the highest elevation LT Consulate in the world and the first diplomatic mission approved in Aspen by the US State Department.

Medical conferences shall take place at Steamboat Resort on February 27 - 29, 2020.

Sincerely,

SALFASS-gos slidinejimo valdyba

Dr. Jonas Prunskis, President
Ed Mickus, Vice - President

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