

Lithuanian Citizens' Society of W. Pennsylvania



NEWSLETTER

Serving the Lithuanian American
Community in Western PA since 1912

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January/February 2009

Kucios celebration brings many people together



Santa (Len Barcoucky) presents a present to Aiste Vaicenas. (Photo by Len Barcoucky)

December 13 marked the date for the LCS annual Kucios and Christmas Party celebration held at the Lithuanian Hall. More than 80 people were in attendance to partake in the festivities.

The event included a visit from Santa who brought gifts for all good children. This is the first year that a bake sale was held in conjunction with the event and proved to be very successful. Also, there was a 50/50 raffle, basket of cheer, and grab bag raffle for everyone.

If you missed the event, please plan to attend next year!

LCS Dues Increase Announced for 2009

The General Membership voted on a recommended dues increase for 2009 at the January members' meeting. The new dues structure for a member has been raised to \$30/year, which includes many benefits such as a subscription to the newsletter plus a meal after every meeting.

Social membership also increased to \$15/person per year.

You may mail in your dues or submit payment to Bill Kolicius at the next meeting.

Vilnius announced as a 2009 European capital of culture

VILNIUS - Lithuania's capital Vilnius has rung in 2009 as a European Capital of Culture, sharing the title this year with the Austrian city of Linz, with plans for 12 months of concerts, art and multi-media events.

"This puts us back on the European cultural map," says Elona Bajoriniene, events coordinator for the city's special year.

A member of the European Union since 2004, Lithuania was an unwilling Soviet republic until 1990 when it reclaimed its independence and much of its indigenous cultural heritage suppressed by Soviet overlords for half a century.

Founded in the early 14th Century by the Grand Duke Gediminas, Vilnius quickly became a cultural centre in north-eastern Europe, seeing the creation of its university in 1579.

For centuries the city was a meeting point of the Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and Jewish cultures.

With its winding, narrow medieval cobble-stoned streets lined by an impressive

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2009 LCS Officers Announced

The new LCS officers were announced at the December members' meeting. Congratulations to the following persons upon being elected for the 2009 term.

President: John Baltrus
Vice President: Nancy Binkney
Recording Secretary: Len Barcoucky
Financial Secretary: Don Martello
Treasurer: Bill Kolicius
Directors: Janet Petrauskas (09-10)
Ray Sabo (09-10)
Mildred Sukys (09-10)
Kathie Skalka(08-09)
Gerri Todd (08-09)
Dalia Yucius (08-09)

Congratulations to the winners!

Upcoming Events

January 11, 2009, 2:00 p.m.

Monthly members' meeting, Lithuanian Hall, South Side

February 8, 2009, 2:00 p.m.

Monthly members' meeting, Lithuanian Hall, South Side

March 2009 -- Date to be announced

Lithuanian Independence Day event, Lithuanian Hall, South Side

May 1 & 2, 2009

Pittsburgh Folk Festival. David L. Lawrence Convention Center

Every Saturday September through June, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Lithuanian language classes, Lithuanian Hall, South Side

Editor's Column

Get well wishes go out to Porky Chedwick who is recovering from prostate surgery. Good wishes may be sent to Porky at: Porky Chedwick, c/o Ray Sabo, 307 Kennedy Avenue, Duquesne, PA 15110.

Speaking of Porky, there will be a birthday celebration in his honor being held on Saturday, February 7, from 7-11 p.m. at Anthony's Lounge on Ohio River Blvd., Avalon. RSVP to Suzie at 412-821-1988.

Get well wishes go out to Bill Binkney, husband of Society member Nancy Binkney. Bill is recovering at home after a stay in the hospital.

Remember to sign up to receive your newsletter through email. The greatest benefit of doing so allows you to receive your newsletter up to two weeks sooner than delivery through US Mail. Contact Janet Petrauskas at pittsburghlithuanians@yahoo.com and provide your email address. (NOTE: Newsletter sent in PDF Format. Download the newest PDF reader at <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>)



In Loving Memory

Bernard "Ben" Burdulis

Former LCS President Ben Burdulis, age 78, passed away on Saturday, December 27. Ben was the active with the Pittsburgh Lithuanians for many years.

He was the beloved husband of Ruth (Saveikis), father to Craig and Joanne Burdulis, and grandfather to Craig Jr. and William.

Ben was a veteran of the Korean Conflict and Cub Scout Leader of Pack #3 of Lincoln Place. He will be sorely missed by all his fellow Lithuanians.

May he rest in peace.

Anthony "Tony" Verbalis

On December 23, former LCS member Tony Verbalis passed away at his home in Bethesda, MD, at the age of 95. He was the husband of Michaline Verbalis for 64 years, two sons, Anthony of Bethlehem and Joseph of Bethesda and grandfather to Alyssa and Michael. Tony lived in Pittsburgh from 1985 through 1995.

May he rest in peace.

Albert Savolskis

On November 3, Albert Savolskis, age 91, of Munhall passed away. He was one of the directors in the Savolskis-Wasik-Glenn Funeral Home in Munhall. Albert is survived by his wife Dorothy of 68 years, daughters Nancy Funa, Dotty Wasik, Lulu Glenn, and Sue Sonsock. Also, a brother, Edward and sisters Victoria Savolskis, Josephine Senatt, Eldona Sabo, and Mildred Veslany.

May he rest in peace.

Frances Pukass

Frances Pukass, wife of the late past LCS President Kostanty (Connie) Pukass, passed away on December 28 in Clearwater, FL. Frances is survived by two daughters, Monica Gambino, and Denise Herdman, and a son, John Pukas. Also, two sisters, Dorothy Black and Georgia McKnight and four granddaughters.

May she rest in peace.

Vilnius announced con't next column

mix of Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and classical-style buildings, in 1994 Vilnius's tourist-magnet old town was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site.

In the year ahead Vilnius promises 900 special events, 60 percent of which will be free of charge and open to the public.

"It's an invitation to rediscover Vilnius," says Bajoriniene.

Organizing concerts in a district of Vilnius inhabited by the city's Roma, or gypsies, Augustinas Beinaravicius hopes they will also raise local awareness of and tolerance towards the city's small communi-

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International Water Skiing Tournament brings together participants from all countries



Society member Nancy Patton submitted this photo of her daughter Suzan and husband Marc who were in Spain to attend the International Water Skiing Tournament. The tournament was opened with a parade of nations. When Suzan saw the Lithuanian banner and flag, she went up to the participants and told them she was of Lithuanian heritage. Since there were only two skiers from Lithuania, Suzan invited them to join the USA group. The Lithuanians, Ignas Lazhinskas and Valentelis Vytautas, explained that they had to personally fund their trip to the competition, which resulted in just two attendees from Lithuania. Members from the USA group do the same or secure sponsors. During the week of competition, a cordial friendship developed and as a parting gesture Ignas gave Suzi his hat that she wore during the ceremonies.

Vilnius announced con't from Col. 1

ties of ethnic minorities.

In January a series of concerts is planned paying homage to the celebrated Jewish violinist Jascha Heifetz, born in Vilnius in 1901.

"We want some of the events to become annual ones," says Sandra Adomaviciute, coordinator of several music events, including a street music festival in early May and the Lux festival of light during December, the darkest month of the year.

In June, the National Art Gallery will open an exposition focused on 19th Century Lithuanian composer and painter Mikalojus Konstantinas Ciurlionis (1875-1911) and his contemporaries.

Organizers hope this year's cultural extravaganza will attract three million visitors to Vilnius, population 542,000.

Its tourism and service sectors are expected to boom by at least 15 percent during 2009, a year in which a 4.8-percent contraction of GDP has been predicted after years of robust economic growth.

As the global financial crisis bites, Lithuanian legislators slashed the organizing budget for Vilnius culture capital events from 40 to 29 million litas (11.6 to 7.25 million euros, 16 to 10 million dollars).

"I hope this year of cultural events will make the outside world get to know our city better," says Sandra, a Vilnius resi-

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Society Member Designs Award-Winning Website

Congratulations to Society Member Janet Petrauskas and the Allegheny Intermediate Unit for receiving the 2008 Ektron All Star Award for the Best K-12 Educational web site. Janet was the lead designer for the project and, along with a team of six, created the web site that includes more than 1,000 pages.

After receiving hundreds of nominations from around the country, Ektron, a New Hampshire-based software company, selected All-Star winners in 24 categories. Judges scored the websites on several criteria including advanced online strategies, satisfied visitors, business/technical goals and return on investment. The AIU's web site, designed to provide information in an attractive, easy to navigate format, allows a myriad of users to quickly find a variety of current information about the AIU's programs and services.

The site may be viewed at www.aiu3.net.

Quick Facts

Amber, formed by resin from ancient trees and insects in the resin, is found on the Curonian Spit.

January (Sausis) & February (Varsaris) Birthdays Listed

Among members with January birthdays are: Stephen Waymart (2); Vytautas Miselis (4); Janet Weisberg (5); Richard Mutkus (6); Dalia Valceniene (8); Benedict Savinis (9); Edward Silkroski (13); Albert Zimmerly (15).

Mathilda Milauskas (16); Victoria Caldwell (16); Joseph Rozman (18); Helen Katrencik (19); Melanie Mars (19); Stanley Mikeska (19); Janet Petrauskas (19); Robert Waylonis (19); Vincent Zilinskas (21); Arvydas Plioraitis (23); Rob Medonis (23); Rytis Spokauskas (23); Kastytis Vaicenenas (24); Gelme Rahall (25); Alice Calabro (25); Joe Valenta (26); Victoria Spieler (26); Cynthia Kaufold (28); George Zilinskas (28); Dolores Kalklik (29); Stanley Yarulis (31)

Among members with February birthdays are: George 'Porky' Chedwick (4); Sean Stanley (4); Jeffrey Cepaitis (5); William Kolicius (5); Tillie Silkroski (7); Thomas Zemaitis (10); Vince Cizauskas (14); Ed Savolskis (15).

Gintaras Antanavicius (19); John Kuncas (19); Aldona Zilinskas (19); Diane Zilinskas (19); Viktorija Petrauskaite Stith (20); Suzann Zizza Kuntch (22); Johanna Esch (23); Marlene Bredson (24); Beverly McKinney (25).

Linksmu Gimtadienių!

Religions in Lithuania

Thank you to Society member John Kuncas for submitting the following article.

During Communist times there was religious freedom, but teaching religion was against the law. And those who attended services were denied advantages. At any service there might be someone making note of who attended as well as any negative comment made about the government.

There was only one Roman Catholic seminary, and only those approved by the Ministers of Sects were enrolled. This was an opportunity to compromise a student. If he would report what was said and by whom at the seminary, he would be approved. This was an opportunity to undermine the strength of the Church by approving limited IQ and psychotic young men into the seminary. In some measure, that succeeded. A young Lithuanian woman reported that she attended a party where many priests and their girlfriends attended. After Independence, another woman told me she saw on television a priest stating he would not give up his wife. That condition does not exist today. Several years ago Pope John Paul II appointed Archbishop Backis to head the Church

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in Lithuania. To the undesirable priests, for they were well known to those in authority, Archbishop Backis gave them a choice: surrender their priestly vocation or be assigned to a monastery. The approved priests were given remedial instruction in Lithuania and abroad. Reportedly, some of those priests didn't even know how to pray.

The question arises as to why would a young man choose the priesthood under Communist conditions. To quote a young Lithuanian lady, "Money". I assume she was referring to the collection plate because the priests were paid by the state and the amount was minimal. There may have been some truth to the statement. Correspondence with a priest during Communist times revealed that he was moved from one parish to another and he purchased a home for himself. An explanation was never given.

Today in Lithuania there are several religions freely holding services: Roman Catholic, Jewish, and a few Protestant churches.

After regaining independence, the Catholic Church was quick to begin its mission. Public schools were organized by the government and religious instruction was permitted in public schools. Catholic grade schools, in comparison to public schools, were few in number (a dozen versus 500). Today there are only three Catholic high schools in Lithuania. In the early days of returned self government, the government provided money to the public schools for preparation of meals, but not to the Catholic schools. Brazauskas was Prime Minister during those times. Lithuanian Catholic religious authorities called to overseas Lithuanians for help and they did help. The appeal for help brought world attention to Lithuania and in time, government lunch money was provided to Catholic schools also.

Religious education in public schools continues today but the methods and materials are antiquated. Nevertheless there is a reawakening among the people. It was demonstrated with the celebration of the 400 year anniversary this year of the appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary to shepherd children in the fields of Siluva. She appeared to the children standing on a stone in an otherwise empty field. She said to the children, "You plow and seed here where formerly my Son was honored." A local Protestant cleric testified that indeed there had been a church on that site. Today a church again stands over the rock upon which the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared. In celebration, thousands of people gathered around that church in Siluva, young and old from every corner of Lithuania and from nations neighboring Lithuania. A group of students walked from Mariampole, Lithuania, accompanied by adults, to Siluva,

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a three day journey. Likewise students from the Hill of Crosses walked to Siluva, a one day journey. The gathering was an impressive sight.

So the religious instruction has been influential despite antiquated materials. A Lithuanian lady of my acquaintance, Roze Somkaite, has started a drive to renew the materials in all the public high schools. The Lithuanian National Foundation is cooperating. She has contacted publishers and religious authorities for a proper selection of books. A donation to the Lithuanian National Foundation (tax deductible) of \$100 will purchase and send the selected printed materials to one high school. There are 500 or so high schools. Lesser amounts are gratefully accepted also.

Send your check made out to The Lithuanian National Foundation to Roze Somkaite, 386 Hillside Place, South Orange, NJ 07079. Roze will know what your intention is and see that it is properly used.

Vilnius announced con't from pg. 2

dent who was among the tens of thousands gathered near the city's impressive cathedral to gaze at a spectacular New Year's Eve light show in the night sky by German artist Gert Hof.

"It's a very charming city, with beautiful Baroque architecture and very warm, welcoming locals." (Source: Yahoo! news)

Amber Jewelry Sale

There will be a selection of amber jewelry for sale at the next members' meeting on Sunday, February 8. Items for sale include various estate jewelry pieces of polished and unpolished necklaces and bracelets.

If you are interested, please attend the meeting. The sale will be conducted through a silent auction.

Lithuanian Citizens' Society of Western PA

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 President - John Baltrus
 Vice President - Nancy Binkney
 Recording Sec'y - Len Barcoucky
 Financial Sec'y - Don Martello
 Treasurer - Bill Kolicius
 Directors - Janet Petrauskas,
 Ray Sabo, Kathie Skalka,
 Mildred Sukys, Gerri Todd,
 and Dalia Yucius

 Sergeant-at-Arms - Kastytis Vaicenenas

 Newsletter - Janet Petrauskas
 1010 Arch Avenue
 Pittsburgh, PA 15234
 412-341-7925

Hockey Opponents but Friends too



Andrius Petrauskas (l.) and Andrius Burnelis (r.) share more than just a first name. They are both Squirt B level hockey players in PAHL. Petrauskas plays for the Mt. Lebanon Hornets, and Burnelis plays for the Pittsburgh Aviators. Andrius and Andrius are good friends too!

Andrius Petrauskas is the son of Society member Janet Petrauskas. Andrius Burnelis is the son of former Neris dance group members Alan and Vida Burnelis.

Heritage Holidays held at Heinz History Center

by Len Barcoucky

Several hundred people came through Heinz History Center on November 15 to learn about Lithuanian customs and culture.

The Lithuanians were one of about a dozen groups represented at the inaugural event.

The Neris Dancers performed folk dances, and Ana Bird played traditional tunes on the konkeles.

Gerri Todd prepared ausukes -- the Lithuanian cookies that are supposed to look like little ears.

On display on the table, sponsored by the Lithuanian Citizens Society, was a Sakotis, a spiked cake made over an open flame. It was donated by Dzeneta Rothenback of West Virginia. Frank Ziaukas, John Baltrus and Len Barcoucky answered visitors' questions.

The History Center hopes to make Heritage Holidays an annual event.



Displaying Lithuanian documentation at the Heritage Holidays are (left to right), Frank Ziaukas, John Baltrus, and Len Barcoucky. Photo by Len Barcoucky.

~ Quick Food Facts ~

Traditional Lithuanian cuisine includes soups (beet, sauerkraut and sorrel), stews, sausages, smoked meat and rye bread.

Main meals consist of meat (pork, chicken and duck) or fish (eel, pike and herring) served with potatoes and vegetables such as beans, beets, cabbage, carrots, cucumber, mushrooms, onions, radishes and turnips.

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Pittsburgh, PA 15203

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• Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, January 8, 5:30 p.m.
Thursday, February 5, 5:30 p.m.

• Members' Meeting

Sunday, January 11, at 2 p.m.
Sunday, February 8, at 2 p.m.

• BINGO

Sunday & Wednesday from 7 - 10 p.m.

• Echoes of Lithuania

echoes98@hotmail.com

