



March 2008

## EDITOR'S DESK

Get well wishes go out to Anna Dansavich who recently had a cataract operation.

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Society member and published author David Melesky has written another book. "I Remember Bethlehem" is a nostalgic look at Connecticut's Christmas town. David is also the author of "Practice Not Perfect" and "One Bar to Another."

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Happy belated birthday wishes go out to Vincent Zilinskas on his 90th birthday. Daughters Diane and Aldona held a special celebration for their father at the LeMont Restaurant in Mt. Washington on January 19 with friends and family in attendance.

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Our deepest sympathy goes out to the family of Nancy and Bill Binkney and on the loss of Bill's sister, Marjorie David. May she rest in peace.

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Fox News Reporter Greg Palkot was in Lithuania recently reporting on the 2008 Vilnius NATO meeting. This two day meeting discussed the War in Afghanistan, Ukraine and Russia. The meet was a warm-up for an 20th NATO summit in April to be held in Bucharest, Romania. Lithuanian officials said it was the biggest meeting of its kind ever held in capital Vilnius. (Note: Greg is a cousin to Editor Janet Petrauskas)

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Congratulations to Helen Katrencek who won the Basket of Cheer at the Lithuanian Independent Day Event. Congratulations also to Rita and Justin Emerick who won the 50/50 raffle at the event.

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Articles and photographs of all types are welcomed for publication in this newsletter. Submissions may be done through email at pittsburghlithuanians@yahoo.com or mail to Editor, Lithuanian Newsletter, 1010 Arch Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15234.

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B-I-N-G-O! Don't forget, Bingo is held at the Lithuanian Hall on South Side every Wednesday and Sunday evening and is open to the general public. We invited you to stop down one evening and play a few games with your friends!

## Message from President John Baltrus

A belated wish for prosperous and healthy 2008! I wish to thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as president for a second year. I also thank our newly-elected financial officers who stepped up and volunteered to help at this important time for our Society.



We face many challenges during 2008. As you are aware, the society took a large financial hit during 2007 due to a decrease in patronage of our bingo. There was a somewhat encouraging rebound at the end of last year that has continued into 2008, but we are still far from weathering the storm and should not plan on bingo being our salvation.

The good news is that we hope to have more membership and social activities in 2008. We started off in January with a small social on a Saturday night. In February, we had a very well attended Independence Day social. We will continue these socials on one Saturday night near the end of each month either on the South Side or at the Country Club as the weather warms.

We also plan to have our annual Jonines celebration and perhaps host more entertainment from Lithuania as finances and logistics permit. Please stay aware of these events through the newsletter, radio program, website and by word of mouth.

In order to be a viable organization and make our social events a success we need our members to participate and lead. The officers enthusiastically support the idea of having more activities, but can not organize them on their own. Please step up and volunteer even before being asked. If you have an idea for an event that you would like to help organize, just let one of the officers know about it.

As I indicated, the financial strength of our organization has seriously declined. We

need to think what is best for our future, not necessarily on preserving the past. There will be much debate about what direction we should take and not everyone will agree. However, we must work together to ensure our future.

If you wish to suggest a revenue-producing project, keep in mind the major questions that will be asked: Who will lead the project?; Is it viable given the current demographics of our membership?; How much of an investment will it require and how much revenue will it produce?

Right now we are awaiting the results of the survey that everyone received. Hopefully that will give us some basis on which to plan. The best way to take part in determining our future is to express your ideas to the officers while answering the questions raised above. The best way to find out the status of the organization is to attend the monthly meetings. I look forward to seeing you there!

## Lithuanian Easter Egg History



Easter will fall on March 23 this year.

Did you know....the oldest known decorated eggs, two colored goose eggs with decorative scratches, were found in a 4th century grave of a young girl near Worms, Germany. By the 12th century, decorated eggs were blessed in churches during Easter ceremonies and the tradition to decorate eggs at Easter were wide-spread in Saxony, Bohemia, Poland, Ukraine, Romania, and Hungary. By the 13th century egg decoration was also known in Lithuania: archaeological digs at the base of Gediminas Hill in Vilnius uncovered decorated artificial eggs made of stone, clay, and bone. In 1549, Martynas Mazvydas, the author of the first Lithuanian book - a catechism, mentions the tradition of giving decorated eggs as gifts, and it is believed that by this time the tradition of decorating eggs during Lent was wide-spread in all parts of Lithuania.

<http://www.lithaz.org/arts/eggs/lit/methods.html>



## In Loving Memory

### Gavin D. R. Bridson

On January 10, Gavin Bridson, husband of Society Member Marlene Aglinskas Bridson, passed away.

Gavin was well known for his work in the study of the history of printmaking. Most notably was the publication of his work in the 1986 Printmaking in the Service of Botany in which he co-authored with Donald Wendel.

He is survived by his wife Marlene, and daughter Stella Alexander (Danny) of London.

### William Kolicius Jr.

Bill Kolicius, long time member of the Lithuanian Citizen's Society, passed away on January 21, 2008. Bill, age 81, was the husband of Anne, and the father of Diane and John Galanko, Bill Kolicius (Society Treasurer), and John and Helen Kolicius. He was also the brother of Veronica Martello.

Bill was retired from the Army reserves where he served for 20 years. In addition to our Society, Bill was active with the Sisters of St. Francis and a member of the Knights of Lithuania.

### Eva M. Martin

Eva Martin, age 89 and member of the Lithuanian Citizens Society, passed away on February 13, 2008. Eva was the wife of the late Stanley, and loving mother of Nannette and Bruce Myers, Marlene Barton, and Mickey and Karen Martin.

Eva, was a long-time member of St. Sylvester Church.

### Edward K. Slavin

Edward Slavin, age 84, of North Huntingdon, died on February 14, 2008. He was the past president of the Lithuanian County Club and former Duquesne Lithuanian Club.

Ed was the husband of the late Ruth (Keenan) to which he was married for 60 years. He is survived by daughters Susan Lynn Proski and Amy Jean Corbett, and sons Edward Kurt Slavin and Niles David Slavin.

## 2008 Members Meetings

Cut and post these meeting dates for future reference.

Sunday, March 9, at 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 13, at 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 11, at 2:00 p.m.

(No Meetings held during the summer)

Sunday, September 14, at 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 12, at 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, November 9, at 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 14, at 2:00 p.m.

## Sisters, Knights Commemorate St. Casimir's Feast Day

by Len Barcoucky

Members of the Knights of Lithuania and the Sisters of St. Francis met for the feast day of St. Casimir on March 2 at the nuns' motherhouse in Whitehall.

A grandson of Jogaila, a Lithuanian grand duke and king of Poland, St. Casimir is the patron saint of both countries. His feast day is March 4.

Mass was held in the sisters' chapel and was followed by a brunch at the motherhouse.

This was the first year that the event was marked with a combined mass for Knights, their guests and the sisters. For this reason, the mass was scheduled at an earlier time than in past years.

## The Meaning of March (Kovas) in Lithuanian

Month names are derived from the names of ancient gods or Roman emperors. The names of the months in Lithuanian are unique and original. The months of an agricultural nation are named after natural phenomena or tasks performed at a particular time of the year. These names are typical of the Lithuanian nation, her nature and the Lithuanian way of life.

Kovas is a time of change, of struggle ("kova") between the cold and spring. One day it's snowing, the next it's freezing, the following day the weather again turns warmer. Hilltops begin to darken for the snow melts there the quickest. Some birds return, among them the rook. The rook (kovas) belongs to the crow family (Corvus frugilegus).

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## April (Balandis) Birthdays Listed

Dalia Yucius (1); Richard Marcavitch (2); Aldona Montanaro (5); Walter Pikunas (7); Nancy Patton (7); Arunas Nesavas (9); Charles Degrosky (9); Marcia Hurl (10); Sylvia Hraychuck (10); Jurgita Bakutyte (12); Emilia MacPhail (13); Leonora Kusleikiene (14);

Ann Hyman (15); Sheila Mollica (16); Barbara Degyansky (18); Niles Slavin (21); Alice Lewellen (21); Egidijus Petrauskas (24); Kathi Skalka (25); Olive Frances Zalesky (25); David Melesky (26); Jane Dansevich (27); Beth DeFilippo (29); Albin Vareha Jr. (30)

Linksmu Gimtadienių!



The Knights of Lithuania met at the Sisters of St. Francis motherhouse on March 2 for the St. Casimir's Feast Day. (Photo by Kathi Skalka).

## March (Kovas) Birthdays Listed

Among members with March birthdays are: Robert Savinis (1); Ruth Burdulis (3); Veronica Martello (3); Gerri Todd (3); Joseph G. Rozman (5); Paul C. Stanny (8); Mary Tamy (8); J. Raymond Sabo Jr. (9); Gladys Zimmerly (9); Janet Carlisle (10); Jane Sipp (10).

Paul Yucius (16); Lara Melesky (17); Ruta Trakumiene (18); Frances Petkunas (19); Jerome Kvederis (20); Gregory Baurnes (21).

John Kaclik (24); Amy Pederson (26); Nancy Hokay (27); Phyllis Poleski (27); Andrew Marculaitis (28); Joyce Ann Ruediger (28); Anthony G. Zusinas (29); Laima Spokauskiene (29); Bridget Lane (30).

Linksmu Gimtadienių!

## Lithuanian Citizens' Society of Western PA

President - John Baltrus

Vice President - Nancy Binkney

Recording Sec'y - Janet Petrauskas

Financial Sec'y - Don Martello

Treasurer - Bill Kolicius

Directors - Andrew Marculaitis,

Mathilda Milauskas, Kathie Skalka,

Halina Stabacinskiene,

Gerri Todd and Dalia Yucius

Sergeant-at-Arms - Rose Carroll and Kastytis Vaicenasa

Newsletter - Janet Petrauskas

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# *Lithuanian Independence Day a Successful Event!*

by Mildred Sukys

The 90th Lithuanian Independence Day celebration was held at the Lithuanian Hall on February 16, 2008, on the South Side. More than 140 people attended this successful affair.

Thank you to Dalia Yucius and Connie Zatek for beautifully decorating the hall. Dalia also served as Mistress of Ceremonies.

The event brought out people that had not been seen in years. Fresh off their travels to Lithuania, George Zilinskas and Juozas Rudzianskas shared tales of their travels. Everyone was in a festive mood.

Musical entertainment was provided by Ruth Thon, Nancy Binkney, Julia Stabacinskiete and Julia's friend before dinner.

Dinner was prepared by a team headed by Halina Stabacinskiene and included kugelis, sauerkraut, sausage, cookies, and coffee. All for just \$5!

After dinner, the dance group Slavjana performed and had everyone tapping their toes to the music.

Thank you to Halina Stabacinskiene for organizing such a successful event. Although the weather outside was cold, the mood inside was warm and jolly.



The dance group Slavjane provided the entertainment at the Independence Day event. (photo by Kathi Skalka).

## *Tale of St. Casimir, Patron of Lithuania and Special Patron of Youth*

Thank you to Nell Brazauskas for submitting the following article on St. Casimir.

It is said that saints are those who by their life and work make it clear and plain that God lives. We see this in the life of St. Casimir.

St. Casimir has the unique distinction of being the only Lithuanian-born saint. At the time of his birth in 1458, Lithuania and Poland were united as one vast kingdom. He is descended from the respected Gediminaitis clan. The great Lithuanian dukes Kestutis, Algirdas, and Bytautas the Great were also members of this famous family.

Casimir's father was King Casimir IV (Kazimieras Jogailaitis), who ruled Lithuania (and later Poland) from 1447. His grandfather was Jogaila and his grandmother Sofia was the duchess of Alsenai who grew up in the area around Vilnius, Lithuania's capital city. It was Jogaila who first introduced Christianity to Lithuania. King Casimir married Elizabeth of Austria, daughter of Emperor Albert II, of the Hapsburg family. Casimir was the third of 13 children. His brother, Ladislaus, eventually became King of Bohemia.

In 1471, when he was barely a teenage,

*con't next column*

### *Tale of St. Casimir con't.*

Casimir was pressed into the service of leading his father's army into Hungary. Casimir was unwilling but obedient. However, he refused to engage in battle and rejected the throne offered to him by Hungarian nobles, in favor of the rightful King. For this, Casimir earned the title of "Peacemaker" among the Polish and Lithuanian peasants.

King Casimir, however, was angered by the actions of his son and ordered him to return to Hungary. Instead, Casimir sold all of his possessions and gave the money to the poor peasants and went into seclusion in the castle in Dobzki, Poland. There he spent the remainder of his life in prayer. Sworn to celibacy, Casimir also refused to marry the daughter of the German Emperor, Frederick III, which would have created a powerful political alliance for his father.

Casimir was said to have predicted his own death, and on March 4, 1484, he died at the age of 26 from tuberculosis. As a result of the many miracles that occurred at his tomb, Casimir was canonized in 1521. His relics were moved several times over the years to protect them from desecration at pagan or violent hands. Finally, in 1953, Casimir's relics were transferred to the church of Saints Peter and Paul in Antakalnis, a suburb of Vilnius.

St. Casimir is so cherished by Lithuanians that stories of his life and miracles have become legends. His first miracle is said to have taken place in 1518 during a war with Moscow. A small force of Lithuanians were ready to defend the city of Polotsk, but to

*con't next column*

### *Tale of St. Casimir con't.*

do so, they had to cross the swollen Daugava River. They prayed to the saintly prince who is said to have appeared on a white horse and led the small army across the roaring river where they defeated the Russian troops.

The miracle was investigated at the time and confirmed as authentic. As a result, St. Casimir quickly became a symbol of the Lithuanian's anti-Russian feelings through the ages. Later, under Russian and Soviet rule, the government made every effort to prevent veneration of St. Casimir, including banning celebration of his feast, but the enthusiasm of the Lithuanian people could not be squashed.

St. Casimir's patronage is claimed by both Lithuania and Poland, and his intercession is invoked in times of plague and misfortune. His feast day of March 4th, the date of his death, was first proclaimed on the Church calendar in 1602. On June 11, 1948, People Pius XII named St. Casimir the Special Patron of Youth.

### *The Meaning of Kovas con't.*

It is a large black bird with a blue and purple sheen to the plumage. They circle above the treetops settle on the fields in scores to march about in search of food. The air is filled by a chorus of caws and croaks as the rooks court, build their nests and mate. The cawing proclaims that spring has nearly arrived. It can thus be said that the month derives its name from two sources: the winter's battle (kova) with spring and the returning of the rook (kovas).

(source: www.javlb.org)

## Congratulations Christa Harmotto, Penn State Women's Volleyball Team Champion



*Penn State Junior Christa Harmotto*

Christa Harmotto, granddaughter of Society members Rich and Rose Mutkus, helped Pennsylvania State University Women's Volleyball Team clinch the NCAA Championship in January.

Christa, who is the starting middle blocker and captain, helped the team win

the 2007 Division I NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Women's Volleyball Championship in Sacramento, CA. Penn State defeated Stanford University 3-2 in the championship match.

The NCAA Title culminated a great season for Christa and the Team who also won the Big Ten Conference Volleyball Title for the 5th year in a row.

Christa's other personal accomplishments this year include being named the Big Ten Conference Player of the Year, First Team All American and ESPN Magazine Academic All American.

Christa is in her junior year at Penn State majoring in Education and holding a 3.34 grade point average.

Congratulations Christa and Penn State on the NCAA Title!

### What's Happening at the Club

**March 9, 2008 at 2:00 p.m.**

Monthly members' meeting.

**April 13, 2008 at 2:00 p.m.**

Monthly members' meeting.

**May 16-18, 2008**

The 52nd Annual Pittsburgh Folk Festival will be held at the David Lawrence Conven-

## Lithuanian Language Courses Offered at Michigan Camp

The 23rd annual Lithuanian language courses at Camp Dainava, Manchester, Michigan, will take place June 22-29, 2008. These one-week intensive courses, operating under the auspices of the Lithuanian Educational Council of the USA, are designed for beginners, intermediate, and advanced students, or those just wishing to refresh their Lithuanian. The courses are taught by experienced instructors in vacation-like surroundings and atmosphere. There are no limitations regarding age or formal education.

For more information, please contact Vytautas Jonaitis, 1332 Sprucewood Dr. N.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504; phone 616-453-7549; email: vjonaitis@juno.com, or search the web for Dainava language courses.

tion Center.

**Every Saturday**

The Lithuanian language classes are held at the Lithuanian Hall on South Side from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon. Classes are free of charge and open to anyone interested in learning the Lithuanian Language. The classes run each Saturday from September through June.

- Board of Directors Meeting  
Saturday, March 8, at 12:00 noon
- Members' Meeting  
Sunday, March 9 at 2 p.m.
- BINGO  
Sunday & Wednesday from 7 - 10 p.m.
- Echoes of Lithuania  
echoes98@hotmail.com  
WED 810 AM  
Every Sunday 12:30 to 1:00 p.m.

Lithuanian Citizens' Society  
Of Western Pennsylvania  
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