


Lithuanian Citizens' Society of W. Pennsylvania



NEWSLETTER

Serving the Lithuanian American
Community in Western PA since 1912

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May/June 2009

Lithuanian Radio Program exiting the airwaves

Dalia Yucius, host of the Echoes of Lithuania Radio Program, has announced that the half hour radio program featuring Lithuanian news and music will air its final broadcast on Sunday, May 31.

"It was a difficult decision to make after more than 40 years on air," said Dalia, "but the financial situation made it necessary."

Dalia's father, Vito Yucius, had started and hosted the program prior to Dalia. Also, Lorraine Yucius, Dalia's mother, had assisted with the program.

"Thank you for everyone's support over the years" said Dalia, "the radio program has always been a huge part of our family."

War and peace among the icons

The following article appeared in the 5/22/2009 issue of *The Economist* reviewing the book, "*Vilnius: City of Strangers*" by Laimonas Breidis.

Vilnius is an example to others -- a contested city, but not a divided one.

The choice of name for the capital of present-day Lithuania--Wilno, Vilna, Wilne, Wilda, Vilnia or now Vilnius--shows who you are, or were. In the 20th century along, it has been occupied or claimed by Germany, Russia, Poland and the Soviet Union, with only brief periods of Lithuania autonomy.

Vilne, in Yiddish, was home to one of Judaism's greatest rabbis, a saintly brainbox known as the Gaon (Genius) who gave his first sermon aged seven and kickstarted the great Jewish intellectual revival in the 18th century. "Vilna is not simply a city, it is an idea," said a speaker at a Yiddish conference

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Jonines Celebration planned for June 20 at LCS Country Club

The Annual Jonines Day Celebration will be held on Saturday, June 20, at the Lithuanian Country Club in Jefferson Hills from 3:00 p.m. until dark. The



The Neris Dancers performed at last year's Jonines Picnic.

monthly members' meeting will be held one hour before the picnic at 2:00 p.m. at the Country Club location.

The picnic is held in observance of the Feast of St. John the Baptist, the longest day of the year when all who are named John are especially honored.

Cost is only \$5/person and children under 12 are free. Hotdogs, Hamburgers and Kugelis will be provided along with lemonade, ice tea, and soda. Everyone is asked to bring a covered dish to share with all.

There will be musical entertainment as well as activities and games for the kids.

Past picnics have had children hunting through the nearby woods at dusk looking for glow sticks which represent fern flowers. The children had great fun doing this especially in the dark with only the light from the bonfire.

We suggest that you bring a folding chair and wear comfortable clothing. Remember, this is a traditional Lithuanian heritage picnic.

Please RSVP to Mildred Sukys at 412-341-7925 to make your reservation (and ensure that there's enough Kugelis made!).

In case of rain, activities will be held inside. Hope to see you there!

Upcoming Events

June 20, 2009, 2:00 p.m.

Members Meeting, to be held before the Jonines Picnic at the Lithuanian Country Club

June 20, 2009, 3:00 p.m. - dark

Annual Jonines Picnic, Lithuanian Country Club, Jefferson Hills

Every Wednesday evening, 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Bingo, Lithuanian Hall, South Side

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 Catherine Whitmer who had emergency gall bladder surgery in April. We hope Catherine is feeling better soon!

The 5th Annual Spring Fling will be held at St. Francis in Whitehall on Saturday, June 6, from 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. The event will feature an indoor and outdoor Flea Market with crafts and vendors, food, raffles, children's activities, a bake sale, a book sale and more!

Breaking from tradition, LCS members' meetings will be held throughout the summer months. June's meeting will be held at the country club at 2:00 p.m. before the Jonines picnic. July and August meeting dates to be announced.

Remember to sign up to receive your newsletter through email. Contact Janet Petrauskas at pittsburghlithuanians@yahoo.com and provide your email address.



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in 1930. It was the virtual capital of what some call Yiddishland, a borderless realm of east European Jewish life and letters in the inter-war era. At times, the majority of the city's population was Jewish. Their murder and the deportation of many Poles by Stalin meant that the city lost 90% of its population during the second world war. Present-day inhabitants of Vilnius may find much they did not know in Laimonas Breidis's subtle and evocative book about their city's history.

Poles mourn the loss of Wilno, one of their country's great cultural and literary centres. Poland's two great poets studied there: Adam Mickiewicz nearly two centuries ago, and in the pre-war years Czeslaw Milosz, a Nobel prizewinner. Yet both men saw their Lithuanian and Polish identities as complementary, not clashing.

For Russians, Vilna had harsher echoes. Fyodor Dostoyevsky stayed there briefly, detesting the subversive pro-Polish sentiment of what was the third-largest city in the tsarist empire. Earlier it was centre stage in Napoleon's disastrous invasion of 1812. Mr. Briedis neatly sums up the city's appearance in Tolstoy's "War and Peace." "A crossing through Vilna was like a passage of honour: to the east...lay Russia--a familiar land offering spiritual comfort and self-respect; to the west--Europe--a foreign territory prompting national self-doubt and embarrassment."

In any of the dozen possible renderings of the city's name, its roots evoke mystery. Wilda, its old German label, comes from the word wild. In Lithuanian come hints of the words for devil (velnias), the departed (velionis) and ghost (vele). That ambiguity is fitting. In its 700-odd years of recorded history, the city has been both captial city and provincial backwater. Outsiders have been struck by its filthy streets and shameless women, and also by its glorious architecture and heights of scholarship. Pilgrims flock to the Gates of Dawn, its most holy Catholic shrine. It has been the epitome of tolerance and a crucible of the Holocaust.

In a modern Europe, Vilnius can seem peripheral. Mr. Briedis, however, begins by noting that when French geographers recently plotted the mid-point between Europe's cartographical extremes, they found the continent's true centre was a derelict farmhouse just outside the city.

Foreign visitors have left few written accounts, but Mr. Briedis uses them all as sources. A hapless papal delegation provides the first. In 1324 it tried and failed to persuade Lithuania's great pagan ruler, Gediminas, to adopt Christianity. He showed no desire to forsake Perkunas the thunder god, berating his visitors for their intolerance. "Why do you always talk about Christian love?" he asked the pope's men. "Where do you find so much misery, injustice, violence, sin and greed,

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Lithuanian Items donated to LCS

Our Society recently received a donation of Lithuanian items from the estate of long-time member Marian Bartkus, formerly of Duquesne. Marian passed away a couple of years ago. Her niece, Margaret Kuhn, kindly donated the items, which include a large variety of new patterned linens, jostas, wall hangings, wooden plates and other folk art plus about 3 boxes of various types of books. The books can be viewed at the Lithuanian Hall where the folk items will be on display on a rotating basis. The Society thanks Margaret for her generous donation.

Autumn Gala fundraiser sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis

The Sisters of St. Francis will hold their annual Autumn Gala fundraiser at their Motherhouse on Thursday, September 17th. The event includes a reception, delicious dinner and a Chinese auction. The MC will be Mary Robb Jackson, former Academy graduate and reporter for KDKA. Our Society has been asked to show its support by putting together a table of 6 members to attend the event. If you are interested in attending, please contact John Baltrus at 412-233-2764 to reserve a seat at the Society's table. The cost will be \$58 per person.

The Sisters will also be holding their annual raffle in conjunction with the event. Prizes range from \$250 to \$1,000. Tickets are 1 for \$5, 3 for \$10, 10 for \$25 and 25 for \$50. They are available by contacting John Baltrus.

Doo Wop Dance planned for June 27 at Lithuanian Hall

A Doo Wop oldies dance will be held on June 27 at the Lithuanian Hall on South Side. Hosts will be Dr. Doo Wop along with LCS Member and infamous DJ Porky Chedwick. The dance will be a fundraiser for the Lithuanian Citizens' Society.

Cost is \$7/person. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. with dancing starting at 7:30 p.m. Reservations are required. No tickets will be sold at the door. Snacks and cash bar will be available.

For more information, contact Ray Sabo at 412-889-8027

May & June (Geguže & Birželis) Birthdays Listed

May Birthdays: Paul Vitartas (1); Pam Martello (4); Joseph Gluharty (8); Ausra Cunningham (9); Halina Stabacinskiene (9); Roberta Stackowitz (9); Elaine Evosevic Lozada (12); Leatrice Ziefel (12); John Stokes (15); Joanne Karcher (16); Kurt Valenta (19); Ericka Maculis (20); Viola Stanny (23); Karen Tarasenkov (23); Rosanne Zusinas Majcher (25); Al Ponce (27); Jeanne Sidoruk (31);

June Birthdays: Georgiann Zoog (1); Clare Doran-Kolat (2); Wanda Jankoski (3); Karen Pasquini (3); Len Barcoucky (4); Joanne Moore (5); Steve Rozman (5); Eleanor Kondrot (8); Annette Parker (9); Eldona Sabo (9); John McCloskey III, (11); Patricia Macey (11); Mary Moore (12); Nancy Sukys (15); Stanley Kondrot (20); Bernard Slancauskas (22); Nick Knight (23); Ann Zusinas (24); John Kolicius (24); Daina Vis (25); Lisa Pini-gis (26); Alphonse Vaina Jr. (27); Helen Zappa (29); Arvydas Adomavicius (29); Frank Bucholtz (29); Albert Yanushefsky (30).

Linksmu Gimtadienių!

Folk Festival cancels venue for 2009, set to return in 2010

After careful consideration a decision was made on March 31, 2009, to cancel this year's Pittsburgh International Folk Festival.

With the event already planned, the decision was based on the current economic conditions. Like other non-profit organizations, the Pittsburgh International Folk Festival and its Multicultural Education Program has felt the downturn of the economy and reduction of donor support for the event.

"It was a very difficult decision that was not easily made. We have been holding the festival for fifty two years. We looked at our current funding stream against our potential expenses and it just wasn't possible," said Karen Hall, President, Board of Directors, Pittsburgh Folk Festival, Inc.

While trying to produce a worthwhile event for the region, planners looked at alternative solutions; however, it still did not come close to closing the financial gap.

"It is disappointing to our organization, participating nationalities and cultures and to our patrons who attend and support the festival every year", Ms. Hall said. However, she did add that the organization plans to hold the annual festival in 2010 although no location or date has been chosen yet.

In Loving Memory

Victoria Savolskis

On March 17, 2009, Victoria Savolskis of West Homestead passed away at age 99. Victoria was the sister of Josephine Senatt, Edward Savolskis, Eldona Sabo, Mildred Veslany and the late Alex, Willie, Peter, Albert Savolskis, Ruth Buby, Pauline Zilner and Helen Dimperio.

May she rest in peace.

Sister Assisi Yurgelaitis

Sister Assisi Yurgelaitis, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God in Whitehall for 75 years, died at the Motherhouse at the age of 92 on April 18, 2009. She was born in Detroit and was preceded in death by her parents, Vincent and Antoinette, and her brother, Edward.

Sister Assisi was a primary school teacher for 44 years at the schools where the community served, including Mt. St. Peter, New Kensington, and St. Valentine in the Pittsburgh area. Sister was also a talented musician, seamstress and artist.

May God Bless and keep her in his tender loving care.

George Zilinskas

Long time LSC member George Zilinskas, age 94, passed away unexpectedly on April 27, 2009. George was the beloved husband of the late Elizabeth Zilinskas, brother of Vincent Zilinskas and the late Anthony Zilinskas and Martha Lisivick. Also uncle to Aldona and Diana Zilinskas, Audrey Brennan, and Carl Lisivick.

George was always present at LCS functions with a smile on his face. He will sorely be missed by many of his friends.

Peace, prayers, and blessings.

Emilija Anna Mickus

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Neris Dancer Emilija Mickus, age 19, on May 12. Emilija was the daughter of Vytautas Mickus and the late Karen Lynn Eisenhauser Mickus; sister of Janina Mickus; granddaughter of Patricia Collsen Benedetti of Florida and the late Edward Eisenhauer, Albinas and the late Antanina Mickus of Cicero, Illinois.

Our hearts go out to the Mickus family during this time of sorrow.

Meaning of the Lithuanian Flag

The flag of Lithuania consists of three equal sized horizontal stripes - the top stripe is yellow; the middle one is green; and the bottom stripe is red.

Lithuanian's flag colors are based on the country's traditional national dress - the yellow stripe represents the sun, Lithuania's fields of wheat and prosperity; the green symbolizes the coun-

Funds sought for emergency-call pendants for nuns

The following article appeared in the April 23 edition of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette. Below is an excerpt from the article written by Jim McMahon

An appeal drive is raising money to buy new personal emergency call pendants for the aging sisters who live at the sprawling 33-acre campus on McRoberts Road.

Our staff knows that the older we get, balance is always a concern, along with problems associated with osteoporosis," Sister J. Lora Dambroski said.

The religious order, which has been based in Whitehall for more than 85 years, serves missions in the United States, Brazil and Lithuania. Of its current total of 76 members, more than 50 -- with a median age of 80 -- live in Assisi Hall, the order's home for its retired and infirm members.

In addressing ways to provide a healthier and safer environment for its retired members, Sister Dambroski said a "Falls Committee" was formed several years ago to review the number and location of incidents and to identify those more susceptible to accidents.

"It became obvious of the need for a new system," she said.

The 28 sisters who require the most medical attention live on the ground floor and first floor of Assisi Hall, which has an old emergency call-bell system consisting of pull cords located next to beds and in bathrooms. When activated, an alarm sounds in the on-floor nursing station. The order maintains a 24-hour nursing staff.

The system requires considerable maintenance, and replacement parts are hard to find and expensive. Plus, no system is in place on the second and third floors, where another 26 sisters live who require some assisted care.

The annual appeal drive started last year has been extended this year to obtain the estimated \$80,000 to install a new system. A total 24-hour monitoring and emergency call system is planned for Assisi Hall. The project includes retrofitting the ground and first-floor call-bell system and installing one on the upper floors. New emergency dome lights and a central monitoring console also are planned.

New emergency pendants will allow calls from anywhere on the property. The system also will have pocket pagers for

try's forests, flora and hope; and the red stands for the blood spilt for independence, courage and the people's love for Lithuania.



Sister M. Felicita Butrim models the current emergency call button pendant with nurse Lonna Brown.

staff members and a pager interface.

"The new system will give our Sisters, as well as their families and friends, reassurance that support and care staff can be notified quickly in the event of falls, injuries and other emergencies," Sister Dambroski said.

A \$20,000 grant for the project has been received from Support Our Aging Religious, an organization dedicated to serving the needs of retired religious persons throughout the United States.

Nick Rodi, director of development, said that two-thirds of the needed funds have been raised.

"We're trying to address the changing health needs of our sisters and we want them to be as independent as they can be," Sister Dambroski said.

Lithuanian Citizens' Society of Western PA

.....
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.....
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.....
Newsletter - Janet Petrauskas
1010 Arch Avenue
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Mozart's Requiem a moving experience



Southminster Presbyterian Church of Mt. Lebanon was host to a choir performance of Mozart's Requiem on March 29. Denis Cunningham, husband of LCS member Austra Cunningham, was part of the choir. The 50 minute performance was beautifully done and Denis was exceptional in his performance. (photo by Janet Petrauskas)

Lithuania elects woman president

The European Union's budget chief was poised to become Lithuania's first woman president after a landslide victory yesterday in a vote overshadowed by the Baltic country's ailing economy, preliminary official results showed.

Dalia Grybauskaitė, the EU budget commis-

sioner and a karate black-belt, had 69 percent of the vote with more than 95 percent of ballots counted. The election commission said the preliminary turnout was 51 percent, just enough to avoid a runoff. Ms. Grybauskaitė is a political independent. (source: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 5/18009)

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if not among the Christians?"

Lithuania eventually adopted Christianity, along with a dynastic deal with Poland, in 1387. A cathedral was built on the pagan temple, the holy fires doused and the sacred groves felled. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania flourished. At its height in the 16th century, it was a vast multiconfessional empire, stretching to the Black Sea, with no fewer than six legal languages, including Hebrew and Armenian. Even as that declined, the Vilnius style of Baroque architecture ripened in glory, a "splendid autumn" in one of Mr. Briedis's many well-turned phrases, that paid "a gracious farewell to its phantom golden age."

The most poignant chapter is on cemeteries past and present, many of which were desecrated by the Soviets. Mass graves are still unearched in Vilnius. They hold victims of Stalin's NKVD, of the Nazis, and -- as in one recent example-- thousands of fallen soldiers from Napoleon's shattered Grande Armée. Vanished Civilisations and lost empires leave a city stalked by horror and steeped in wonder.

Did you know?

Homeowners in all three Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia are obliged to fly their national flags on the Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian independence days. Failure to fly the national flag could result in a fine.

Lithuanian Citizens' Society of W. Pennsylvania

1725 Jane Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15203

• Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, June 11, 5:30 p.m.
July meeting TBA.

• Members' Meeting

Saturday, June 20, at 2:30 p.m.
Members meeting will be held
before the Jonines picnic.
July meeting TBA.

• BINGO

Wednesday from 7 - 10 p.m.

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