



May 2007

## EDITOR'S DESK

**Happy Mother's Day to all the Society members who are mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers!** Mother's Day in Lithuania is celebrated on the first Sunday in May and is known as Motinos diena. In Lithuania, Mother's Day is also included among family occasions, though it is also a community holiday created to honor mothers. The mother's role is so important in society that her day is celebrated outside the confines of the family as well.

All mothers, or those who assume the role of a mother, are extraordinary people. I am continually thankful for my own mother and all that she does in her role as mother and grandmother. She serves as my friend, confidante, baker of delectable deserts, fashion expert, and Lithuanian news seeker. On this holiday, I salute my mom, Mildred Sukys. *Thank you Mom for being my mother!*

--

The Pittsburgh Penguins may not have succeeded in progressing to the next round of the Stanley Cup finals, but this editor's second choice to win is placed on the Buffalo Sabres. To add to the excitement, Buffalo's newest acquisition in Dainius Zubrus, a native of Elektrenai, Lithuania. The 6'4" 28-year-old Zubrus has been called "a force to be reckoned with."

--

President John Baltrus has a limited supply of ruta seeds available to anyone interested. Seeds will be distributed on a first come, first served basis.

--

Congratulations to the April 50-50 winner Don Martello. This is the third time that Don has won in recent months! Graciously, Don donated his winnings back to the Society.

--

Don't forget that the membership drive is still going on. Sign up your friends and family for membership. A one-year membership is only \$15 per person. If you join now through June 2007, your \$10 initiate fee will be waived. Don't wait--see John Baltrus or Frank Ziaukas for your application.

--

The LCS Newsletter continues to seek stories of interest to the Lithuanian community. Contact Janet Petrauskas at 412-341-7925 or j\_petrauskas@yahoo.com with your story or photos for publication.

## Pittsburgh Folk Festival to include Performance by the Neris Dancers

by Frank Ziaukas

The Pittsburgh Folk Festival will be held this year at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center on May 25 through 27. The theme for this year's festival is "Travel to Lithuania" with *must-see* sites highlighted. More than 25 nationalities will be showcased with music, dance, and food from around the world. In addition, there will be cultural exhibits, folk crafts, and a global shopping bazaar.

The Neris dancers will perform on Saturday, May 26.

Tickets are available in advance for \$8 (adult) or may be purchased at the door for \$10 (adult) and Children 4-12 \$4. Children under 4 are free. **Advance ticket purchase is available until May 16 by calling Frank Ziaukas at 412-381-5502 or Dalia Yucius at 412-381-8669.** Each nationality group involved in the festival is expected to pre-sell 100 tickets. Purchasing your tickets in advance will help the Lithuanians meet their quota.

Volunteers are needed to help staff the Lithuanian Booth, to help move and set up the display booth both before and after the event, and act as guides for the school program on Friday from 9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.



"Street Team" volunteers are needed to distribute flyers and posters to shops in various business districts, such as Carson Street on the South Side.

If you can volunteer your efforts, please contact Frank or Dalia. Additional information may be located on the Pittsburgh Folk Festival website at <http://www.pghfolkfest.org>.

Come on out and support the Pittsburgh Folk Festival and our Lithuanian Dancers! We look forward to seeing everyone at the festival!

## Knights to Host District Meeting

The Pittsburgh Council of the Knights of Lithuania will host the Mid-Central District Spring Meeting and Bowling Tournament on Saturday, May 19. The schedule includes a morning meeting followed by bowling in the afternoon at Princess Lanes in Caste Village. Following a late afternoon evening mass, a dinner will be held at the Baltimore House in Pleasant Hills beginning at 6:15 p.m.

You do not need to be a member to attend the dinner as anyone wishing to join fellow Lithuanians from Cleveland, Detroit, Dayton, and DuBois are welcome.

*con't next column*

## Folk Festival Hours

**Friday, May 25**

Children's Program 9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
Festival Hours: 4:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

**Saturday, May 26**

Festival Hours: 12:00 noon - 10:00 p.m.

**Sunday, May 27**

Festival Hours: 12:00 noon - 6:00 p.m.

### Knights con't.

The cost of dinner is \$25 per person. **Reservations are required and can be made by calling Rita Johnson at 412-885-1965 by no later than May 11.**



## Documentary Film Preview "Red Terror on the Amber Coast" now available on youtube.com

Just released for your video review on [youtube.com](http://youtube.com), is a 6-minute preview of "Red Terror on the Amber Coast."

The premier of this extraordinary documentary film is scheduled for release early Fall 2007. This film project gives the story of Lithuania's Freedom Fighters and their valiant 10-year war for liberation against Soviet occupation forces and inhuman oppression of the Lithuanian nation. The film and its story is the product of the great work by writer and producer, Fr. David O'Rourke, DOM, Vilnius, Lithuania and Oakland, California. As O'Rourke notes, "the story (Lithuania's Freedom Fighters' struggle against Soviet rule) needs to be told." It has the potential to become an excellent teaching tool for high schools and colleges. This period of Lithuania's modern history by design and deception has been largely unknown. Now is the time to set the historical record straight. Every nation needs to honor its war heroes.

The preview may be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYET4bk0gbU>

## Welcome New Members!

Congratulations to the following new members who were voted in as Society Members at the April meeting.

Beth DeFilippo  
Susan Bowman  
Barbaralee Sass  
Spencer Austin Sass  
Paul Savolskis  
Michael Vidunas  
Darryl A. Wisbar

Please welcome our newest members with a big warm **LABAS** when you see them at the next Society event!

### Lithuanian Club Bingo

#### May 2007 Specials!

May 2 - Monthly Drawing  
May 13 - Gift for Mother's Day  
May 16 - \$15 discount night  
May 27 - Good Neighbor Night  
\*\*\*Save your April and May admissions tickets for a drawing in June for one 6 months admission



## 93rd Annual Lithuanian Days Event to be held in Schuylkill County near Harrisburg

Lithuanian Days will be held at the Schuylkill Mall in Frackville, Pennsylvania, on August 11 and 12. The event is slated to include the Malunas Dancers from Baltimore, Zilvanus Dance group from Philadelphia, and the Lynn Cox Troupe (singalong).

Lithuanian food is served during the event along with vendors selling a variety of goods from clothing to jewelry to cookbooks.

If you are interested in attending and staying overnight, there are several hotels in the area including Holiday Inn Express, Granny's Motel & Restaurant, Victor Prep, Econolodge, and Country Inn Suites.

The event is held on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.

If you need additional information, contact Larry Domalakes, President of Knights of Lithuania Anthracite Council 144, at [domalakes\\_ins@hotmail.com](mailto:domalakes_ins@hotmail.com).

## Receive your LCS Newsletter On-Line!

The LCS Newsletter started on-line distribution with the April issue. The response has been very good so far with more than 30 recipients signed up to receive a digital copy of our newsletter.

If you are interested in receiving a digital copy, please contact Editor Janet Petrauskas at [j\\_petrauskas@yahoo.com](mailto:j_petrauskas@yahoo.com). Provide your email address and phone number in case there are any questions.

For the present time, all members will continue to receive a hard copy in the mail.

As a reminder, archived issues of the LCS newsletter for the past year are available in digital format on our website at <http://www.pittsburghlithuanians.com/newsletter.htm>.

## May (Geguzė) Birthdays Listed

Among members with May birthdays are: Paul Vitartas (1); Joseph Fluharty (8); Ausra Cunningham (9); Roberta Stackawitz (9); Elaine Lozada (12); Leatrice Ziefel (12); John Stokes (15).

Joanne Karcher (16); Kurt Valenta (19); Erika Maciulis (20); Viola Stanny (23); Karen Tarasenkova (23); Rosanne Majcher (25); Alford Ponce (27); Jeanne Sidoruk (31).

*Linksmų Gimtadienių!*

## Article Helps Explain Efforts of Americans who have Worked to Restore Lithuanian Independence

by Frank Ziaukas

The March/April 2007 issue of Lithuanian Heritage laments the fact that the efforts of Lithuanians abroad to help restore Lithuanian independence were not known or appreciated by the people of Lithuania. To help fill this information gap, an article authored by William Kvetkas appears discussing the efforts of Lithuanian Americans on behalf of their homeland.

Kvetkas notes in his article that the Lithuanian American Congress, established in 1941 to support the movement to free Lithuania, held its first national convention in Pittsburgh. Many other ethnic groups were attempting to aid their countries as well, and they began to have meetings among themselves. One organization - the Fraternal Society Congress - held such a meeting in Pittsburgh. After this meeting, a small group concerned with the plight of the Displaced Persons held another meeting. After prolonged lobbying, they helped in convincing the State Department to permit other nationalities, including Lithuanians, to enter the country.

The article includes several photos of Lithuanians meeting with past presidents including Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy. Paul Dargis and Peter Pivaronas are two readily recognizable Pittsburghers in the photos.

We hope that this article is only the first of many articles to come which will help enlighten those in Lithuania and our younger Lithuanian Americans who may also be uninformed of that sustained effort to help free Lithuania.

### Lithuanian Citizens' Society of Western PA

.....  
President - John Baltrus  
Vice President - Nancy Binkney  
Recording Sec'y - Ausra Cunningham  
Financial Sec'y - Frank Ziaukas  
Treasurer - Greg Baurnes  
Directors - Andrew Marculaitis,  
Mathilda Milauskas, Janet Petrauskas,  
Kathie Skalka, Halina Stabacinskien ,  
and Gerri Todd

.....  
Sergeant-at-Arms - Rose Carroll and  
Kastytis Vaicenais

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

# A Surprise Visit to Lithuania

by Ausra Cunningham



Society member Ausra Cunningham with husband Dennis and Ausra's family in Lithuania.

The email read, "What if we spend a few days in Lithuania? I can get us tickets with Ryan Air." It was a few weeks before our trip, when my husband and I got this surprise message. We were getting ready to visit our son Denis in Ireland. He had been spending a semester abroad, studying at Trinity College in Dublin. We had planned on nine leisurely days in Dublin with a few side trips to other parts of Ireland. Little did we imagine that one of those side trips would lead us to Lithuania. What an opportunity to see my relatives and to show my son and husband my parents' homeland!

On Wednesday after three days of sight-seeing in Dublin, we departed on our three hour flight to Kaunas, the second largest city in Lithuania. It was amazing to hear so many people talking Lithuanian on the plane. When we landed, my mother's family greeted us at the airport with hugs, kisses, and flowers. After we checked into our lovely bed and breakfast, Alanta, we were taken for sightseeing and lunch in the old town section of Kaunas. That evening we met more relatives at my aunt Eleonora's home for a beautifully-arranged and delicious Lithuanian dinner.

The next day, Thursday, my cousin Alvydas, who took off from work to drive us around for our visit, drove us to visit my father's family in Vilkaviskis. There we spent a wonderful afternoon at my cousin Adolfas' home over a lunch of cepelinai and other delicacies, and getting acquainted with my cousins and their families.

con't next column

## Surprise Visit con't.

Since my visit in 1979, there is a third generation of cousins. During our short visit, we met dear Egle, Zilvinas, Monika, and Vytautas. Another longer visit beckons so that we can meet more of our wonderful family.

Before we left, we visited my grandparent's farm and the cemetery where they were buried. The farm is now a meadow. All the buildings were destroyed during the war. Our final stop was at the Vilkaviskis Cathedral. When Saint Casimir's on the South Side was closed, the generous Lithuanian parishioners donated their church's artifacts to the Cathedral in Vilkaviskis.

On Friday, we squeezed in one more visit with my aunt and were treated to another feast for lunch. My little cousin Gabriele entertained us with her pet bunny, Tikis. The time flew by too fast, and soon we were back on the plane. I was so fortunate to renew contact with my family and to come away with dear and precious memories of our visit. And all this is thanks to our dear son, Denis, and his desire to see our family and Lithuania.

## La Belle Epoque in Vilnius

*The following is an excerpt from the Litanus Magazine written by Laima Lauckaitė and summarized and submitted by Society member John Kuncas.*

Vilnius in the late 1800's, early 1900's was still under Tsarist rule, and its population was approximately as follows: Jews 40%, Poles 31%, Russians 20%, Belorussians 4%, and Lithuanians 2%. Tsarist laws prohibited Jews from settling in central Russia. Their number prompted Vilnius to be labeled "Jerusalem of the North." The Lithuanian-landed gentry favored the Polish language and culture. In those days, a Lithuanian was a person born in Lithuania, who spoke Lithuanian, was of peasant origin, and had not experienced "Polonization." Most of the parish priests who came from Poland spoke only Polish. All but one Bishop was Polish, the exception was Bishop Valancius. Press censorship continued until the 1905 revolution in Russia. Nicholas II issued the reform decree on civil liberties, and the Roman alphabet was permitted.

La Belle Epoque was the result of capitalistic prosperity, with leisure time, and an artistic and entertainment culture. There were theaters, restaurants, and cabarets. People strolled along boulevards, through parks, and had picnics and summer outings. Night life was prominent.

Beneath it all, the people of Vilnius were concerned with national survival. Women writers, doctors and teachers played an

con't next column

## Just where did that term "Bluetails" come from?

*At the April members' meeting, the question was raised where the term "bluetails" originated. Seems as though there are a few explanations. Here is one that was found in the December 19, 1978, issue of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.*

Lithuanians in Pittsburgh -- but nowhere else -- are nicknamed "bluetails." Different explanations are given for the tab, which Lithuanians themselves use and enjoy.

Mrs. Viola Stanny says a group of Southsiders once organized an all-Lithuanian fishing and hunting club by that name.

Another version comes from Frank Wenslovas, longtime Southside funeral-home director. In the Roaring Twenties, he says, a group of Pittsburgh Lithuanians went to New York to attend a Jack Sharkey world-championship boxing match, dressed in outfits with blue tails which flapped in the wind, thus creating the nickname.

Father Walter Karaveckas of St. Casimir's believes the name traces to Holy Week adoration processions. A St. George's group in Soho wore Price Albert coats with a blue lining, crossing the Brady Street Bridge (then called by some "Lithuanian Park" because it was an oft-used passageway across the Monongahela between Lithuanian enclaves in Soho and Southside). As the men processed on the Brady Street Bridge, their coattails flapped in the wind, revealing the lining and arousing the welcoming cry, "Here come the bluetails."

*Do you have another definition for "bluetails?" If so, we'd love to hear from you. Contact Janet Petrauskas at j\_petrauskas@yahoo.com or 412-341-7925.*

## La Belle Epoque con't.

important role in the national rebirth activities in Vilnius. These were the times of the Russian Governor Murayev, "The Hangman."

In the late 1800's, the underground publications AUSRA and VARPAS were circulated, activating feelings of national unity. The authors advocated that Lithuanians play a larger role in government and business of the city. Alcoholism among the general population was a problem. Bishop Valancius started a campaign promoting sobriety. The loss of revenue therefrom prompted the Tsarists to move against that campaign.

There was great activity in the political, social, and artistic arenas, which faded with the coming of World War I.

