Front cover: To commemorate Lithuania’s Independence Day, floral wreaths are carried to the graves of the signatories of the February 16, 1918, Act of Independence of Lithuania. Photo: © Robertas Dackus, courtesy of the Office of the President of Lithuania

Back cover: The Christmas season officially ends in Lithuania with the coming of the Three Kings. To mark the day, people chalk the tops of their doors with the letters +K+M+B (for kings Kasper, Melchior and Baltazar). In addition to the annual Trijų Karalių eisena (Three Kings procession), it also is the day that most Lithuanians take down their Christmas trees and decorations. Photo: © Alfredas Pliadis, pliadisfoto.com
from the editor

25 Years On

This year marks the 25th anniversary of re-establishment of Lithuanian independence. On February 24, 1990, the first democratic elections to the Lithuanian SSR were held. Lithuanian Reform Movement candidates won an overwhelming majority in the elections to the Lithuanian Supreme Council, setting the stage for the March 11, 1990, signing of the Act on the Restoration of the Independent State of Lithuania.

But the path to independence stretches well back beyond 25 years—all the way back to 1939, and the moment it was taken away after an all-too-brief 20 years of freedom from tsarist oppression after World War I.

The Lithuanian spirit never gave up along the hard road to regaining independence, enduring through the effects of 1939’s Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the 1940 occupation and annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union, the 1941 invasion by Nazi Germany and the second brutal Soviet occupation in 1944.

From the underground “war after the war” that Lithuanian freedom fighters waged into the 1950s to the nonviolent actions of the Sąjūdis reform movement in 1988 and 1989, Lithuania never lost its focus on freedom.

In this issue, we examine some different aspects of Lithuania’s tumultuous journey to independence. Ellen Cassedy relates how Lithuanian and Jewish women lived in relative harmony in the 19th century, both dreaming of an end to tsarist oppression, and afterward in the inter-war period of independence, until inter-ethnic tension began to rise on the eve of World War II. In her diary, the late Rožė Kriauciūnienė chronicles the dark days after freedom slipped away during World War II, when she and her family fled occupied Lithuania, fearing for their lives. Dr. Dovilė Budrytė brings to light a little-known “dangerous art”—vizitėlės—created by Lithuanian women imprisoned in Soviet gulags and prison camps, and introduces us to a woman who was a courier for the partisans and established a museum in their memory. We meet Sigita Šimkuvienė, president of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., who grew up in Soviet Lithuania and strives today to instill an appreciation of independent Lithuania among youth living in the United States. And finally, the Portland Lithuanian community runs to remember the lives sacrificed in order to achieve independence.

Long live a free Lithuania!

Terese Vekteris, Editor

readers respond

Football Footnote
After reading Mr. Domalakes’ interesting article “American Professional Football Stars of Lithuanian Descent” in Bridges December 2014 issue I offer two more NFL players for inclusion in that category:

Fritz (Francis) Barzilauskas was a guard from 1947 to 1951 for the Boston Yanks, N.Y. Bulldogs and N.Y. Giants. Fritz was born on June 13, 1920, in Waterbury, Conn., and died on November 30, 1990.

Carl Barzilauskas played DT for the N.Y. Jets (1947-1977) and Green Bay (1978-1979). Carl was born on March 19, 1951, in Waterbury, Conn. His nickname when he played for the Jets was “Brontosaurus Barzilauskas.”

Best Regards,
Kestutis Bileris, via email
... The Lithuanian Prosecutor General’s Office has opened an investigation into a Facebook page titled “The People’s Republic of Vilnius,” for suspected crimes against Lithuania’s independence, territorial integrity and Constitutional order. Prosecutors are working to identify the administrators of the Russian- and Polish-language account, which seems to advocate seceding from Lithuania. Founding of anti-Constitutional groups or organizations is a criminal offense in Lithuania.

... Lithuania marked the 24th anniversary of Freedom Defenders’ Day on January 13, commemorating victims of the Soviet aggression in 1991. In the morning, all schools, state institutions and embassies lighted candles in memory of the victims. During a solemn sitting of Seimas (parliament) Polish dissident editor-in-chief of the daily Gazeta Wyborcza Adam Michnik received the Freedom Prize. After a flag-hoisting ceremony on Independence Square, the freedom fighters were honored at Antakalnis Cemetery.

... The population of Lithuania on January 1, 2015, was estimated to be 2,921,000, a 0.7 percent decrease from 2014. According to Statistics Lithuania, while the birth rate increased in 2014, there were 8,900 more deaths than births. There was little change in the emigration rate, which has been improving since 2011 as more people decide to return to Lithuania.

... Lithuania has adopted amendments to its Law on Tobacco Control to regulate electronic cigarettes. The amendments restrict sales of e-cigarettes and refill containers to minors. Those under 18 are prohibited from smoking/consuming and holding e-cigarettes or refill containers.

... India has opened an honorary consulate in Vilnius, a step toward opening an embassy there. The Indian ambassador to Lithuania currently resides in Warsaw.

... According to January 1 data from the Lithuanian Labor Exchange, Lithuania’s unemployment in 2014 among people from 16 to 29 years old fell from 7.8 percent to 5.6 percent.

Business

... The majority of the winners in Lithuania’s first-ever “Top Employer” awards, held in Vilnius in February, were foreign investors. Of the more than 300 companies nominated, the overall winner was Western Union Processing Lithuania, with CSC Baltic second and Girteka group third. Ikea Lietuva won in the trade category, Swedbank in finance, TEO in IT, Lithuanian Railways in transport and Coca-Cola HBC Lietuva in industry.

... Lithuania’s state-controlled natural gas supply and trading company LITGAS has entered into two agreements to provide Estonia with natural gas supplies. LITGAS will begin to supply gas to Reola Gaas in February and to Eesti Energia in March from its new LNG terminal at Klaipėda seaport.

... Anva Polytech, a rubber component producer from Sweden, is setting up a production facility in Biržai, with the aim of creating 50 new jobs in the next five years.

... Phillip Morris has announced plans to significantly expand its production facility in Klaipėda. This year’s expansion is part of a new EUR 40 million investment project by the international tobacco company, reports BC Invest Lithuania.

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January/February 2015
**MARCH 2015**

**March 6-15**

*No Home To Go To: The Story of Baltic Displaced Persons 1944-1952*

Consulate of the Republic of Lithuania, 44 Coconut Row, #T10, Palm Beach, Fla.  
Info: www.balzekasmuseum.org

**March 8, 11 a.m.**

Verbov- Making Workshop  
Annunciation Church, 259 N. 5th Street, Brooklyn, N.Y.

**March 8, 1-5 p.m.**

Independence Commemoration and "Invisible Front" Screening  
200 Mosier Hall, Miami University, 1601 University Blvd., Hamilton, Ohio  
Info: sallyzdannov@gmail.com

**March 11, 5:30-9 p.m.**

Lithuanian Cultural Evening at Anthology Film Archives, 32  
Nis 11. Visa Galva Auksciau”  
March 11

**Info:** lithuanianmha.org

**March 15**

Film Premiere: "Arydas Sabonis 11. Visa Galva Auksciau"  
Anthology Film Archives, 32  
Second Ave., New York, N.Y.  
Info: 732-939-5334 / 630-464-5000

**March 15, 3 p.m.**

*Dainava Ensemble Concert, “Iš arto ir iš toli” (From near and from far)*  
McAninch Arts Center, College of DuPage, Fawell & Park Blvds., Glen Ellyn, Ohio  
Jazz pianist Arturas Anusauskas and soloists from across the U.S.  
Info: dainava.us

**March 19-22**

*Women’s Weekend*

Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
Info: neringa.org

**March 29, 9:30 a.m.**

*Easter Celebration*

Latvian Hall, 10705 W. Virginia Ave., Lakewood, Colo.  
Info: coloradolithuani ans.org

**March 29 - April 5**

*ŠALFASS/LAUNA/ALGS Annual Lithuanian Ski Trip*

Snowbird Ski Resort, Utah  
Reservations: linda@ski.com, 1-800-525-2052, ext. 3329.  
Identify yourself as part of the Lithuanian Ski Group trip.  
General info: edmickus1@aol.com or vsaulis@abcglobal.net

**APRIL 2015**

**April 3**

*2015 Sporto Sventė*

Prec-registration deadline  
Send pre-registration info to ptitas@hotmail.com and to primary contacts below:  
Basketball: ptitas@hotmail.com  
Volleyball: rytasroc@gmail.com  
Table tennis: ecapas@hotmail.com

**April 11, 2 p.m.**

*Benefit Concert for Neringa*

600 Liberty Hwy., Putnam, Conn.  
Featuring Eglė Jarkova on violin  
Info: neringa.org

**April 11, 6-11 p.m.**

*2nd Annual Kugelis Cook-Off*

Lithuanian Music Hall, 2517 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia  
Info: lithuanianmha.org

**MAY 2015**

**May 1-15**

*Lithuanian American Community National Congress Elections*

Info: agrybas@nylithuanian.org

**May 9, 6 p.m.**

*Grandis Annual Folk Dance Concert*

Lithuanian World Center, 14911 127th Street, Lemont, Ill.  
Info: grandis.vadova@gmail.com, 630-254-4953

**May 9-10, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.**

*43rd Annual Baltimore Lithuanian Festival*

Catonsville Armory, 130 Mellor Avenue, Catonsville, Md.

**May 12, 6:15 p.m.**

*Between Shades of Gray: Reading by Rūta Šepetys and U.S. Premiere of Piano Compositions by Gavin Mikhail*

Nashville Public Library, 615 Church St., Nashville, Tenn.  
Info: nashvillepubliclibrary.org/nashvillereads

**May 22-25**

*Song Festival Youth Seminar*

Camp Dainava, Manchester, Mich.  
Info: liudaslands@gmail.com

**JUNE 2015**

**June 5-7**

*2015 Sporto Sventė*

Cleveland, Ohio  
Pre-registration deadline April 3  
Basketball: ptitas@hotmail.com, Volleyball: rytasroc@gmail.com, Table tennis: ecapas@hotmail.com, Chess: TBA

**June 6-7**

*Talko Work Weekend*

Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
Help get camp ready for summer.  
Info: regina@neringa.org, 978-582-5592

**June 8 - July 17**

*Lithuanian Language Course*

University of Pittsburgh  
Info: sl.pitt.edu

**June 20-27**

*Detroit Lithuanian Scouts Camp*

Camp Dainava, Manchester, Mich.  
Info: dainava.org

**June 27 - July 1**

*Heritage Family Camp - English (younger children)*  
Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
Info: neringa.org

**JULY 2015**

**July 1-5**

*Heritage Family Camp - English (older children)*  
Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
Info: neringa.org

**July 3-5**

*X North American Lithuanian Song Festival*

University of Illinois at Chicago  
Pavilion, 525 S. Racine St., Chicago  
Info: dainusvente.org/en

**July 5-11**

*Family Camp for Lithuanian Speakers*

Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
Info: neringa.org

**July 6-18**

*Moksleivų Ateitinkų Stovykla*

Camp Dainava, Manchester, Mich.  
Info: mesmas.org

**July 12-26**

*Children’s Camp for Lithuanian Speakers ages 7-16*

Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
Info: neringa.org

**July 18-26**

*Jaanujų Ateitinkų Stovykla*

Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
Info: ritarack@gmail.com

**July 26**

*Lithuanian Friendship Day*

*“Putnam Picnic“*

600 Liberty Hwy., Putnam, Conn.  
Info: neringa.org

**July 26-August 1**

*“Third Week“ Youth Camp for Lithuanian Speakers ages 12-16*

Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
Info: neringa.org

**AUGUST 2015**

**August 2-9**

*Lithuanian Heritage Camp*

Camp Dainava, Manchester, Mich.  
Info: rmapolikaitas@aol.com, dainava.org

**August 2-15**

*Heritage Children’s Camp in English ages 7-16*

Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
Info: neringa.org
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