

# Bridges

november 2004



. I T H U A N I A N - A M E R I C A N N E W S J O U R N A L

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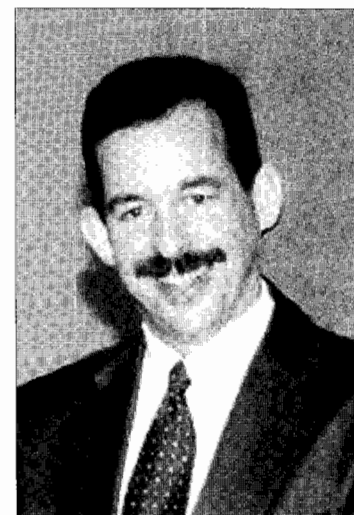
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\*Cover: "Village with a Church/Baznykaimis" wood cut 1939 by Antanas Kucas, his summary is on Page 29.

*Lithuanian-American Community Highlights*

Address to the  
National Board of Directors  
of the Lithuanian-American  
Community, Inc

Phoenix, Arizona  
Saturday, September 25, 2004



President Narusis, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to thank you for this opportunity to be with you this evening – and for the opportunity to be in Phoenix when it feels as if winter has already started in Lithuania.

I have had the privilege to serve in Lithuania for a year now. It has been an eventful year. Lithuania formally joined NATO and the European Union. It tested its democratic processes through the impeachment of a president and emerged with strengthened institutions. Lithuanians elected a new, though familiar, president, and for the first time elected representatives to the European Parliament. They face general elections just two weeks from now. I have told many visitors to Lithuania that when I was first nominated for the post of Ambassador, my friends congratulated me by saying that after the heavy workload in Indonesia, I should be pleased to be going to sleepy Lithuania where not much was happening. They were right about my delight to live and work in Lithuania, but quite wrong about its being sleepy.

*(The following two paragraphs were spoken eloquently in Lithuanian by Ambassador Mull)*

My first year in Vilnius left me with many memories. I will always remember having the opportunity to congratulate Seimas upon Lithuania's entrance into NATO in March of this year, and to congratulate President Adamkus – one of the Lithuanian-American Community's most respected sons – upon his reelection to the presidency in July of this year. And, how can I possibly forget that evening when American and Lithuanian basketball teams played against each other in Athens. I learned that in Lithuania you can even lose happily. Before the start of the first game I wagered a case of America's finest wine against a case of

Lithuania's best beer as to the outcome of the games. Even though America's Dream Team lost, President Adamkus graciously sent me a case of beer. That same evening the reveling fans came to our house and brought even more beer.

Learning Lithuania's beautiful language has also given me great joy. Through daily Lithuanian lessons I have made progress, but improvement has no limits. Not too long ago, at a wedding I spoke to a Lithuanian gentlemen standing next to me and asked him how am I doing (speaking Lithuanian) and where is he from. He looked at me quite puzzled and answered, "I don't speak English very well, could you repeat what you said?"

I would like to take a few minutes here to give you my impressions of Lithuania after one year serving as the U.S. Ambassador, which has to be one of the best jobs anywhere in the world. After giving you a list of my top ten favorite things about living and working in Lithuania, I would like to share some thoughts on my Embassy's priorities and then discuss some of Lithuania's future steps as it continues to grow into its role as an important player on the European and World scene.

**Top Ten**

1. First on my list of why I enjoy Lithuania so much is that it is the most **pro-American environment** in which I have ever had the privilege to work. Friendship and family ties have a lot to do with that as your group can attest. Lithuanian-Americans kept the flame of an independent Lithuania burning through those dark nights of the Soviet occupation. You gave hope and material assistance to those in Lithuania. The U.S. Government policy of non-recognition of the soviet annexation of the Baltics also played a big role in the respect we still receive – even today.

**2. Lithuania is a true friend of the transatlantic alliance.** Lithuanians believe that the United States is an important guarantor of their security. While they are integrating into the European Union and will continue to be drawn economically into Europe, Lithuanians still want the United States to be a partner in European security. We welcome this point of view and are convinced that U.S.-EU cooperation is a keystone to the vision of a peaceful Europe, whole and free.

**3. Lithuanians appreciate the fragility of freedom and the need to defend it.** Some in the West seem to take liberty for granted. Lithuanians, on the other hand, cherish their freedom. They know how hard it was to earn and what they had to do to get it. As such, they are sure allies in the war on terror. When we have come asking for help, the Lithuanian government has supported us politically and with boots on the ground.

**4. Lithuanians persevere.** If they say they will go the distance, they will go the distance. Lithuania did not back down when things became difficult in Iraq. They worked quietly to reinforce their contingents and keep on with the job. Lithuanian-Americans showed this same perseverance as they kept Saturday schools open to pass on language skills and cultural heritage to the next generations.

**5. The Lithuanian people are hard-working and well-educated.** I know I'm stating the obvious here – that's why our country is filled with so many successful citizens of Lithuanian descent. But I think many European commentators seeking to decipher the so-called mystery of Lithuania's Europe-leading rate of economic growth ignore the obvious. Lithuanians comprise a highly skilled workforce that is the envy of many countries. These characteristics bode well for Lithuania finding the right niche in the European and world economies. It also means it is a pleasure to work with Lithuanian colleagues who do what they say and say what they mean.

**6. Lithuania's vibrant and open democracy** is a marvel to watch. There are so many moving parts and power sources that Lithuanian democracy can look very messy sometimes. BUT IT WORKS. The impeachment of former president Rolandas Paksas showed that the important concept of due process was respected even as emotions rose high over the impeachment. We all know Winston Churchill's famous line that democracy is the worst form of government with the exception of all the others. Well, Lithuania has given us another example that an open society can best deal with political turmoil while staying true to its ideals.

**7. Lithuania plays a constructive role in regional stability.** Friendly with all its neighbors, Lithuania strives

to maintain normal relations with all bordering states – even as border control regulations change. With Lithuania on line to become a member of the Schengen agreement sometime in 2007, this has meant particularly sensitive negotiations with the Russians who want easy transit through Lithuania to reach the Kaliningrad exclave. The Government of Lithuania handled those negotiations with care, finding a balance between Lithuanian/EU requirements and Russian sensitivities.

**8. Lithuania has an activist diplomatic strategy.** Like the United States, Lithuania does not wait to be told what needs to be done in the diplomatic field. The Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs routinely proposes policy initiatives not just to take care of regional infrastructure, health security and economic issues in Belarus, the Baltic Sea, or Kaliningrad but also to assist those farther afield such as in the Caucasus. Lithuania currently supports a robust exchange program with countries of the Caucasus including training military officers at the academy in Vilnius as well as the Baltic Defense College in Tartu, Estonia. This kind of outreach helps export Lithuania's successful democratic lessons to countries that can identify with Lithuania in size, and recent history. Lithuania's shining example can give hope and provide a roadmap for democratic reform to others.

**9. Cultural life in Lithuania is vibrant.** Nowhere in my life have I been able to so often attend such high-quality musical, dance, opera and other cultural performances. My wife, Cheri Stephan, really loves the performances and we bring our 9-year-old son Ryan with us whenever we can. We are thrilled at being able to expose him to such rich and wonderful events. All this and at the fraction of the price of cultural events back home in the States!

**10. Lithuania has a pro-investment policy.** Developing a welcoming investment climate is key to Lithuania's future development. Its comparative advantage in education is likely to stay with Lithuania for now, but we expect salaries to rise thus eliminating a current advantage Lithuania has versus other EU countries. As salaries increase to match expectations of a higher standard of living, Lithuania cannot count merely on what is comparatively cheap labor to help it remain attractive to business. Indeed, Lithuania is not stuck in that path. Lithuanians know that a favorable pro-growth business climate and a commitment to competitiveness are key to maintaining the dynamic growth needed to "catch up" with wealthier members of the European Union.

### Five Priorities

The U.S. Mission in Vilnius has set for itself a number of

Continued on page 6

important goals to pursue in this very favorable climate. Lithuania has been a friend in need for us in the **global war on terror**. We work hard at our mission to maintain Lithuania's support in that war. We do this not only through open exchanges and policy support, but also through military education and exchange programs. At this time twelve Lithuanian cadets and midshipmen are studying at U.S. military academies. The commander of Lithuania's land forces is a recently returned graduate of our National War College. Our contact work with Lithuania's military units also helps to build a special relationship. Our Special Operations Command has given the highest of praise to their Lithuanian colleagues serving side by side in Afghanistan.

We want to work with Lithuania as it continues to **integrate itself into NATO and the European Union**. But "more EU does not mean less U.S." Indeed, our relationship has expanded because of Lithuania's membership in the EU. We now have to discuss not just issues of bilateral importance but also anything that affects U.S.-EU relations as well so we have even more on our agenda with Lithuania. We hope Lithuania's friendship means that they will consider carefully in any policy discussion how EU policy will affect Europe's relations with the United States.

Another priority is **trade and business development**. The United States is currently the fourth largest investor in Lithuania and I believe there are good reasons for U.S. investment to increase. Lithuania's booming economy and potential for continued growth suggest that Lithuania, dubbed the "Baltic Tiger," will continue to offer trade and investment opportunities for Americans. Of course, there are lots of factors that go into decisions on where to invest, but I think Lithuania merits a serious look. And to the extent we can help fill in any information gaps you might have, I would urge you to talk with us at the Embassy for thoughts on the contemporary business climate. We also try to play a **constructive role on WWII legacy issues**, and here Lithuania has already done a superb job. Holocaust awareness and education are standard now. More difficult is the issue of property restitution but the Lithuanian Government has committed to resolving the problem through a dialogue with the communities involved. We work to urge all parties to come to a conclusive settlement that will bring equitable closure to this painful chapter of Lithuania's history.

Looking to the future, we work to strengthen relations so as new international issues come up, the United States and Lithuania will see things similarly and take a **common approach to issues of key importance to us**. That

involves not only having close ties with the whole spectrum of political and opinion leaders in Lithuania, but also reaching out beyond the elites in the capital to the people to get America's message out to all our Lithuanian friends. Cultural and educational exchanges play an important role here as do family connections. You can play a key role through the Lithuanian-American Community's contacts with the old country. Keeping our links strong for the next generation is crucial and nobody can work this aspect better than you all.

### What Next?

Now a few thoughts on where I think Lithuania is going and how you all can get involved in maintaining our strong bilateral relations.

Your presence here already speaks positively for your contribution to the heroic Baltic States. That you came shows your concern for Lithuania and her future. You are interested in Lithuania's democratic progress. You are particularly interested in securing Lithuania from any aggression that could ever threaten its independence again. I, too, share a concern for Lithuania's future. That is my job, but I come to work every day grateful for having that job. The outlook is bright.

We want our relationship to be vibrant. And it is. That does not make it perfect.

I have already mentioned that I think **we can do more on the investment** front and I will look for your support on this. Lithuania will have to do its best to attract investment for the long-term. This will require a commitment to policies that boost Lithuania's competitiveness and support its comparative advantages.

We also have to face the reality that **Lithuania will dedicate more and more of its attention to Brussels**, not Washington. This is to be expected. Lithuania's daily business transactions will be conducted under EU regulations. Many of Lithuania's government officials will be traveling more often to Brussels, leaving less time for our issues.

Our job is to preserve the fundamental strength of the bilateral relationship. I am confident we can do that because of our historic ties to Lithuania and, even more importantly, because Lithuania has learned it can trust the United States above all others. Especially in the field of security, there is no one whose guarantee means more to Lithuania than when the U.S. President visited Vilnius in November 2002 and stated that "Anyone who chooses Lithuania as an enemy also makes an enemy of the United States." Every interaction with the United States will help

Lithuania stay engaged with us on our issues. High-level visits are a particularly good way to keep the government focused on U.S. issues. I also continue to meet with the full range of political leaders to discuss issues of importance to the U.S. Finally, we have a proactive media shop which tries to publicize most of our activities in the country to keep our profile high.

Lithuania will hold its parliamentary elections in two weeks. It has been a very political year, what with an impeachment, presidential elections, European Parliamentary elections and now general elections. Throughout this period, stories about campaign finance scandals and other improprieties have dominated the press. Lithuania is still a young democracy, and frankly some times it shows. All friends of Lithuania, including all of us in this room, should support our Lithuanian partners in their efforts to develop a democracy that is tolerant and transparent; one that limits the potential for abusive campaign finance; and one in which state institutions, particularly in the law enforcement field, are secure from political influence.

The media in Lithuania is independent and boisterous, and many say it sometimes goes too far in editorializing on its news pages — ignoring facts that go against the editor's opinions. The media's role in a democracy is crucial in helping citizens make key decisions and serving as an important check on the powers of government. That's why we at the U.S. Mission work very closely with the press in promoting its professional development, by bringing several leading editors and reporters to make contact with counterparts in America every year. Your support of these efforts would be most welcome. The question of visa issuance has undoubtedly become more complex since the terrible events of September 11. We recently installed finger-scanning equipment in our Consular Section for visa applicants, in line with the U.S. government's plan to implement such a procedure at every Embassy in the world. This will provide security against identity theft as well as security at our borders without being too intrusive on our applicants.

Of course, as you might imagine, the biggest concern I hear from my Lithuanian friends is not about the risk of identity theft, but about their unhappiness with the numbers of visas that are refused. While more than two out of every three applicants for a tourist visa receive them in Vilnius, those who are not successful are often understandably not happy. The law puts a very heavy burden on our consular officers to determine the eligibility of every person they interview, and while those who are not successful are often not happy with the final

decision, it is my staff's and my strict policy to treat every applicant with dignity, respect and with the clearest possible explanation. If you ever believe that is not the case, I would like to know about it directly from you, and I pledge to address such cases swiftly.

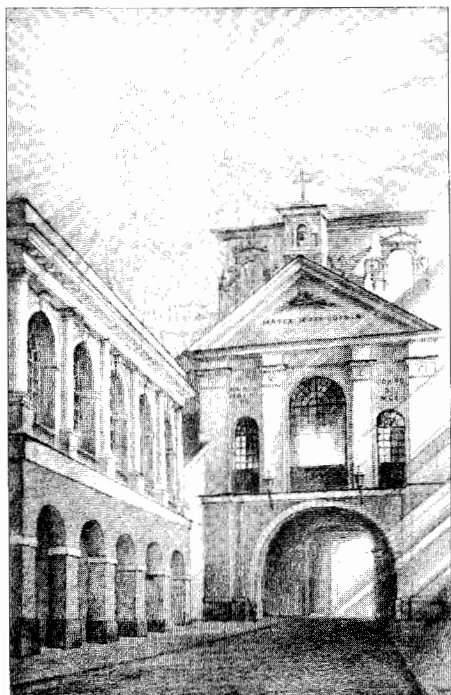
Many European Union countries participate in what we call the visa waiver program. This allows travelers from a visa waiver program country to enter the USA without a visa under certain restrictions. Lithuanians naturally would like to be included in this program but the visa waiver program can only start after meeting certain conditions related to reducing patterns of overstays and illegal work in the United States. Lithuania right now does not qualify, and the program itself is undergoing a comprehensive interagency review in Washington. We remain in close contact with the Lithuanian government to hear its concerns about visa policy. For our part, we also work hard to get the word out to the Lithuanian public about the legal ways to work temporarily in the U.S. But I would also welcome your advice in how best to approach this sometimes painful issue in our bilateral relationship so that we can enforce America's laws in a way that our Lithuanian clientele will understand and appreciate.

### Conclusion

I have listed some of the reasons that I have come to love Lithuanians and the stout country they so proudly represent. It is a great place to work and live and I am truly fortunate that President Bush selected me to represent him and our wonderful country.

I have also mentioned some challenges that Lithuania is facing as it continues to make up for all the lost time of the occupation. It has come a long way and shows no signs of stopping. As Americans, we have no greater friend than Lithuania. Help me as I work to continue to keep our relations at such a high level.

*Ambassador Stephen Mull  
United States Ambassador to Lithuania*



Nestled snugly into the winding and narrow streets of Vilnius is one of the most inspiring and sacred shrines of the Lithuanian nation - the chapel of Our Lady at the Gate of Dawn.

For centuries the chapel has attracted the curious, charmed the tourists and confused the atheists. But above all, it has inspired faithful believers. The tiny chapel contains a painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary believed to be miraculous.

The only source on the history of the painting is a work written in 1761 by Hilary, a Carmelite monk. He wrote that the Carmelite monks, who established themselves in Vilnius in 1620, built a monastery and the church of Saint Theresa near the Gate of Dawn between 1621 and 1650. The picture of the Virgin at the Gate of Dawn attracted their attention. When the city of Vilnius, attacked by the Muscovites, burned for 17 days in August of 1655, the painting remained undamaged. In 1671 they built a small wooden chapel over the

# The Gate of Dawn

*Mary, the dawn,  
Christ, the Perfect Day.*

*Mary, the Gate,  
Christ, the Heavenly Way!*

ancient city gate and placed the painting in it, now adorned with a precious silver covering.

The painting of the Virgin of the Gate of Dawn became known for its reported miraculousness in the 17th century. The monk Hilary wrote that 17 miracles, sworn to under oath, were recorded between 1671-1761. From the 18th century both the Bishops of Vilnius and the Popes acknowledged the painting's miraculous character. In 1773 Pope Clement XIV granted an indulgence to worshippers at the Gate of Dawn. In 1927 Pope Pius XI allowed the painting to be solemnly crowned and granted the title of "Mary, Mother of Mercy".

The fame of the miraculous painting spread beyond the boundaries of Lithuania. Before World War II Masses were said in the Gate of Dawn chapel from sunrise until noon, and devotions were prayed and sung to Mary in the evenings. During the Masses and devotions the pilgrims filled the tiny chapel and overflowed into the street below. The street where the Gate of Dawn is located was open only to pedestrian traffic. Even during the soviet-occupation, when many churches and shrines experienced closings and desecration throughout Lithuania, the chapel at the Gate of Dawn remarkably remained opened. Today independent Lithuania preserves the tiny chapel overlooking the street

below as a national and sacred monument.



While Saint Casimir's Church in south Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is far from Vilnius, it is closely linked with daily devotion to Our Lady at the Gate of Dawn. Several years ago, I brought back from Lithuania an amber picture of

*Continues on page 25*

*If you would like your intentions included in the daily prayers by the parishioners and students at St. Casimir's Church before the image of Our Lady of Vilnius, you may send them to:*

Rev. Peter Burkauskas  
St. Casimir's Church  
324 Wharton St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19147

*A copy of the daily prayers will also be sent upon request. Any donations received will be greatly appreciated and used to keep the school open.*

## Treasurers Among Us

# Lithuanian-Americans of Cape Cod

The Lithuanian-American Chapter of Cape Cod was established thirty years ago. The majority of its members were retired Lithuanians who chose Cape Cod as an ideal place for retirement. Many of the original members have passed away and most are interned at the Xavier St. Francis cemetery in Centerville. The chapter is shrinking and still made up mostly of retirees. The younger generation appears to be busy building their future. Heritage, customs and past do not seem important to them.

The community's activities are limited and generally consist of helping member families to bury their loved ones and provide moral support in their hour of grief. Members visit the cemetery on Memorial Day to read the names of the deceased, pray and sing a Lithuanian song or reading and visit the grave sites.

On the brighter side we celebrate Lithuania's Independence Day with formal and artistic segments. We participate in an International Cultural Day at a local college showing Lithuanian art, literature, women's national costumes and general information about Lithuania. We participate in an annual international dinner with

program and dancing-each year a different nation organizes this affair.

The two highlights of our activities are the annual meeting with luncheon where we discuss our accomplishments, goals and plans and elect new leadership. The second highlight is our fall pot luck picnic where we enjoy ourselves, have a raffle and try to raise money.

We support a golf tournament to raise funds for purchasing medical equipment for Lithuanian hospitals. We make donations to the care of orphans and other worthy causes. We actively encourage our American political leaders to support Lithuanian causes.

That is who we are and what we do. Our future activities are: Pot luck picnic in September. Independence Day celebration in February or March, retreat in March or April, Memorial Day and the annual luncheon meeting in May or June.

Our hope is to have more, especially younger members, to continue the work and propagate our customs, language and maintain our heritage.

*Submitted by Eugene Uzpurris*





# Lithuanian Kitchen

## Kugelis

- 10 lbs. grated potatoes – Idaho are best
- 16 oz sour cream
- 6 whole eggs
- 1 lb sliced bacon

Onion salt and pepper to taste

Grate potatoes, strain, then add sour cream, eggs, onion salt and pepper. Line a large square baking pan (non-stick) with 1/2 lb. of bacon, pour in potato batter, and then cover with remaining bacon. Bake at 400 degrees for 2 hours. Cut into squares and serve.

Angele

## Red Beet Salad with Onions

- 4 medium red beets
- 2 medium onions
- 1/2 cup diluted vinegar
- 1 bay leaf
- 6 peppercorns
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Salt to taste

Peel boiled beets and grate coarsely. Add chopped onions, pour marinade over the mixture and let stand several hours in a cool place. Add salt to taste, sugar and a couple tablespoons of oil. Mix and place in a salad bowl.

**Marinade:** Boil water with spices; add vinegar (wine vinegar) to taste, salt and sugar. Cool and pour over beets.

Beet salad is served with dark meats and herring.

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- Be sure to furnish all circulation information called for in item 15. Free circulation must be shown in items 15d, e, and f.
- Item 15h, Copies not Distributed, must include (1) newspaper copies initially stated on Form 3541, and returned to the publisher; (2) estimated returns from news agents; and (3), copies for office use, leftovers, spoiled, and all other copies not distributed.
- If the publication had Periodicals authorization as a general or requester publication, this Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation must be published in any issue in October or, if the publication is not published during October, the first issue printed after October.
- In item 16, indicate the date of the issue in which this Statement of Ownership will be published.
- Item 17 must be signed.  
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PS Form 3526, October 1999 (Reverse)