

bridges

A black and white photograph of a window with a flower box and a street lamp. The window is a double-hung style with a flower box underneath. To the left of the window is a large, ornate street lamp. The scene is set against a light-colored wall.

october 2005

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Washington, DC 20033-3464

Tel: 410 663-0158

Fax: 815 327-8881

E-mail: LithuanianUSA@yahoo.com

BRIDGES Consultants

Jeanne Dorr Editor
Gema Kreivenas Design & Production
Ramas Pliura Treasurer,
Lithuanian American Community, Inc.,
and Subscription Manager.

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Address all editorial correspondence to:

BRIDGES

Jeanne Dorr
4 Shrewsbury Yard
Riverton, NJ 08077-1038

E-Mail: Jeanneshalna@aol.com

For subscription and advertising
information, please contact:

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Ramas Pliura
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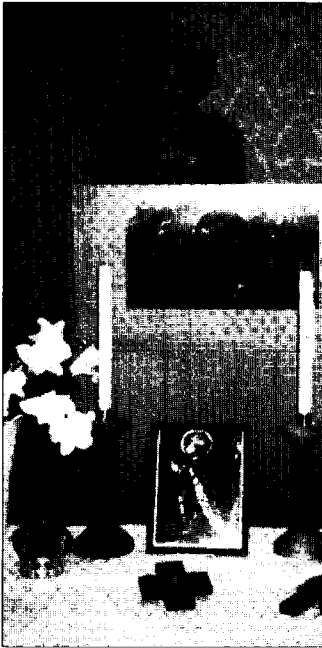
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Calendar
of
Events

*Cover: Photo of Bernardinų Street in the Old Town Vilnius by Julie Skurdenis

KNIGHTS OF LITHUANIA ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION

“Faith, Freedom and Fraternalism”



President Agnes Mickunas, HM, addresses the delegates.

The Knights of Lithuania is a national Roman Catholic organization consisting of men and women of Lithuanian ancestry. Its motto is - “For God and Country.” The Knights of Lithuania’s primary focus is to foster, maintain and nurture an appreciation of the Lithuanian language, customs, traditions and culture among its members. The Knights are actively involved in programs to assist their less fortunate brothers and sisters in Lithuania. There are four charity groups within the organization: Aid to Lithuania, Inc., K of L Foundation, St. Casimir’s Guild, and Our Lady of Šiluva Fund.

There are currently 51 councils in the United States with approximately 3,000 active members. A National Convention is held annually at different state sites. Council 19, located in Pittsburgh, PA was host to the 2005 convention.

August 11-14, 2004, Council 19 hosted the 92nd convention in Pittsburgh, PA. Nearly 100 delegates, clergy, guests and youth converged to participate in the 4 day long meetings, cultural activities and banquet celebration. Prior to each day’s sessions and meetings, Mass was celebrated.

August 11, 2005, Thursday

The opening 92nd National Convention Mass was celebrated at the Wyndham Pittsburgh Airport Hotel, by the Knights of Lithuania’s Supreme Council spiritual advisor

Monsignor Rev. dr. Joseph Anderlonis and Rev. Anthony Markus of Chicago, IL. The theme for this year’s convention - “Faith, freedom and fraternalism.”

The first convention session was held at the hotel (as were all subsequent sessions). The Supreme Council Officers processed into the meeting room and were introduced. The National anthem and the Lithuanian and K of L Anthems were sung. K of L National President Agnes Mickunas, HM, opened the convention and gave a

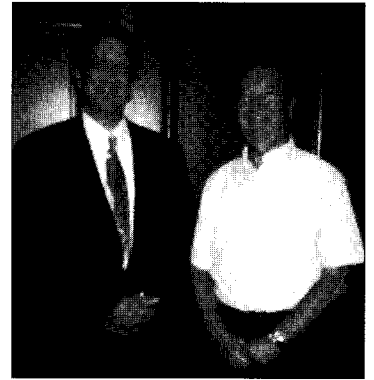
comprehensive state of the organization report. Greetings from organizations and individuals were read. Among the numerous (20) greetings received were those from President of the US George W. Bush, President of the Republic of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus, Cardinal Audrys J. Barkis, Archbishop of Vilnius, Edward G. Rendell, Governor of Pennsylvania, US Ambassador to Lithuania in Washington Vygaudas Usackas and Mgrs. Algimantas Bartkus, Rector from the St. Casimir Pontifical College in Rome.

The evening get-together, a special private dinner cruise of Pittsburgh’s Three Rivers on the Gateway Clipper, was held for the Knights. The summer night was warm and the illumination of the city was just spectacular! An enjoyable evening was had by all.

August 12, 2005, Friday

During the second plenary session, guest speaker Karl Altai, managing director of JBANC, gave a presentation of his organization’s activity. He relayed greetings from

Saulius Kuprys, president of the American Lithuanian Council and the Latvian and Estonian Committee councils. In the past, JBANC’s role was to organize and assist the Baltic States in regaining their independence from Russia. But since the Baltic States regained their freedom and have



Karl Altai, managing director of JBANC and K of L’s Lithuanian Affairs Chair John Mankus.



The K of L juniors with 3rd Vice President Maryte Bizinkauskaitė (1st left).

been accepted into NATO and the EU, the focus must shift. It is vital to work to keep the Baltics secure and watch for any undue threats that the three countries may face. Last year JBANC drafted a letter for the House and Senate committees for Russia to formally apologize to the Baltic States for 50 years of occupations and suffering caused to the people of the countries. Efforts continue to be promoted in the European Union to achieve the apology. Fundraising efforts have commenced to build the "Victims of Communism" Memorial in Washington, DC. It is anticipated that the project will be completed by end of 2006. Mr. Altau requested support from the Knights in the effort to complete the memorial. He also spoke of the "adopt a country caucus," where the Baltic States would be paired with states in the US for the purpose of promoting education. Lithuania and Pennsylvania, Estonia and Maryland and Latvia and Michigan would work together in promoting various education partnership projects.

An evening of Lithuanian poetry (Maironis, Basanavicius and Degutytye), folk songs and dances (by the Pittsburgh "Neris" dancers) entertained the Knights and guests. The evening proved to be both cultural and most enjoyable.

August 13, 2005, Saturday

The organization's ancillary groups - Aid to Lithuania, Inc., Foundation, St. Casimir's Guild and Our Lady of Šiluva fund, presidents gave updates about the past fiscal year's activities and projects.

Maryte Bizinkauskas, the organization's third vice-president (working with the junior/youth members), gave a comprehensive report about the junior K of L members' activities. The youth were busy and active during the convention. They held a fund-raiser by selling raffle tickets for a beautifully dressed Lithuanian doll. The money received (\$353) would be forwarded to the Lithuanian Children's Relief, Inc. for ongoing projects. Also, the K of L juniors

sold greeting cards created by a young girl Simona Pauzeraite in Lithuania. The profit (\$115) realized from the sales will be sent to her in Lithuania.

Elections of the new 2005-06, Supreme Council were held. Agnes Mickunas, Council 3, Philadelphia, PA, a member since 1955, who has held various local, district and Supreme Council offices, was unanimously re-elected for a third term, as president to lead the K of L organization. The formal sessions were concluded.



*"Friend of Lithuania"
Sister Margaret Carney and
Lithuanian Affairs Community
Chair John Mankus.*

Banquet

After every K of L National Convention completes the working sessions and elects a new Supreme Council for the next year, a celebratory banquet is held. So, too, the 92nd National Convention celebrated with a formal banquet. Approximately 150 delegates, guests and family participated. The host for the evening was Len Barcoucky, of C-19 and active convention committee member. The Supreme Council elect marched into the banquet hall and were introduced to the guests.

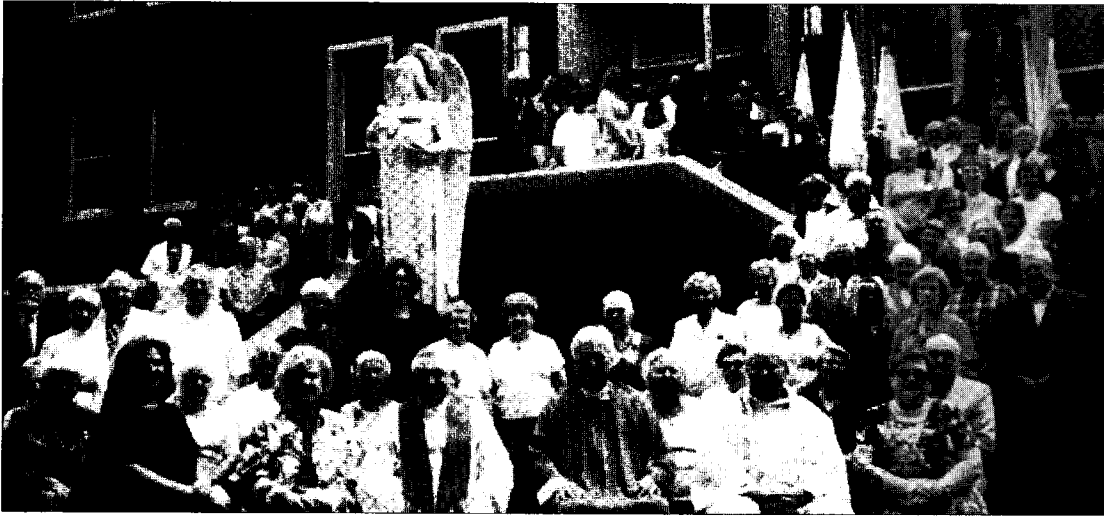
John Baltrus, K of L Scholarship committee chair presented this year's scholarship monetary awards to: Ericka Fryburg, C-103, Providence, RI- for \$2,500 and Adam Westerling, C-136, Hudson-Mohawk, NY. Due to serious health reasons, Alexander Mockus, recipient of the K of L Honorary Membership of 2005, could not participate and

Continued on page 17



2005-2006 Supreme Council at the Banquet.

Continued from page 5
K of L ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION



The delegates of the 92nd Convention at the Mary Immaculate Chapel.

receive his honorary medal. It will be bestowed upon him in the near future in Chicago, IL.

Lithuanian Affairs Chair John Mankus presented Sister Margaret Carney, OSF, STD, with the "Friend of Lithuania" award for her outstanding contributions to Lithuania and her people. Sister Margaret Carney is the current President of St. Bonaventure University.

The formal portion of the banquet closed with words from the K of L re-elected president Agnes Mickunas. Musical entertainment for dancing livened the rest of the evening.

August 14, 2005, Sunday

The closing Mass was concelebrated at the Mary Immaculate Chapel on the grounds of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God facilities, by Msgr. dr. J. Anderlonis, Msgr. A. Bartkus and Rev. A. Markus.

Prior to the celebration of the Mass, the organization's members who earned their 4th degrees gave the oath and received their medals. The Supreme Council elect gave their oath of office.

The 2005, National Convention and sessions were productive and fruitful. It was good to see and nurture special friendships of members known for many years and establish new acquaintances and contacts. It was a special time of sharing and catching up.



Honorary Members who were present at the Convention.

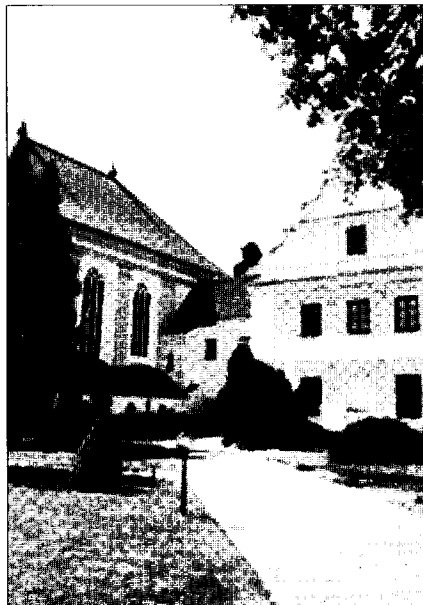


Pittsburgh's "Neris" dancers.

The 93rd National Convention will be hosted by the Supreme Council on August 3-6, 2006, in Lake Buena Vista, FL. Hope to see everyone there!

*Regina Juska-Svoba
K of L Public Relations Chair
All photos are by R. Jusla-Svoba

Kaunas Seminary



Commemorates 140 years of its establishment

To study for the service of God is an important duty. This article focuses on the 140-year anniversary of the founding of the Kaunas Seminary.

Jesus Christ entrusted his Apostles and Church with a mission to announce the Good News to all people. There are people who follow this mission – priests and other of God's servants. For the Lithuanians who live far away from their homeland it is very important to have a Lithuanian Mass and a Lithuanian priest in the churches they attend while residing in different countries. To hold Lithuanian Masses priests are invited directly from Lithuania. We have to be grateful for men who help us interact with God in our native language. One of the seminaries the priests are studying in and come from is the Kaunas Seminary, which last year celebrated its 140th anniversary. The history of the Seminary for Priestly Formation has always been closely related to the history of the Church and Lithuania.

The present-day Seminary of Kaunas traces its beginning into the city of Varniai, in response to the declaration of the XXIII session of the Council of Trent of 1563. This decision of the Sacred Council encouraged every cathedral and metropolitan church of all dioceses to establish their own seminary school (seminarium clericorum) for young men determined to follow the call to discern and develop the priestly vocation. The Seminary was moved from one town to another. And only in 1864, after the suppression of the Lithuanian-Polish uprising (in 1863) against the Tsarist occupation, the Russian government transferred H.E. Bishop M. Valančius with his entire office and Varniai Seminary to Kaunas. The Seminary was given the grand architectural buildings of the former Bernardine monastery and St. George's Church. H.E. Bishop Valančius appointed Canon J. Račauskas the first rector of the seminary. It was a difficult period for the Seminary as it was under the

Russian government's control. But later, under the leadership of the great priest and poet-laureate Rector Canon J. Maciulis-Maironis the Seminary became a center for the rebirth of the richness of Lithuanian culture, language and ethnic identity.

During World War I, the seminary was temporarily moved to the Vašuokėnai Estate in the District of Troškūnai. However, after the Declaration of Lithuania's Independence in 1918, the seminary returned to its former premises. Much work was needed to restore the seminary that had been converted into a military hospital by the German occupational forces of World War I. In 1922 the Kaunas Seminary was consolidated with the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the University of Lithuania in Kaunas. The students of that time were greatly inspired by the most prominent professors of Lithuania's intellectual history who were lecturing at the University in this era of cultural and spiritual rebirth.

During the years of Soviet occupation (during and after World War II), when the country's entire structure was destroyed, the Church's activity was also severely impaired. Other seminaries in Telšiai and Vilkaviškis were closed at the time. Kaunas Seminary remained the only functioning seminary in Lithuania. But still it had a very difficult time, as its functioning was controlled and suppressed.

In the early 1980's small elements of soviet repression began to recede and touched upon the life of the seminary. On February 17, 1982, H.E. Bishop L. Povilionis consecrated anew the Church of the Holy Trinity, which was restored after being returned by the soviet government. Little by little, until the collapse of the soviet regime, the nationalized seminary buildings were being returned and restored. After the reestablishment of Vytautas Magnus



Photos from the Kaunas Priest Seminary calendar issued to commemorate 140 years of its establishment.



Photos by Joana Misevičienė, Kaunas: "Bridges" correspondent Laurynas R. Misevičius together with Msgr. Vaičiūnas and other priests.

University in 1989, the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology resumed its work in 1990. In 1994, the Vatican Congregation of Catholic Education authorized that the Faculty of Theology at Kaunas Interdiocesan Seminary and the Faculty of Philosophy and University would be unified into one Faculty of Catholic Theology at Vytautas Magnus University. Since September 1, 1999, on the basis of the decree issued concerning the reorganization of studies in the Faculty of Theology by the Archbishop Metropolitan of Kaunas and the Grand Chancellor of the Faculty of Theology H.E. Sigitas Tamkevičius, seminarians have been attending classes together with other University students. Today, after successful graduation and reception of a Bachelor's degree from Vytautas Magnus University, alumni of Kaunas Seminary may continue their studies at the Master's and Doctorate level. In the course of time, bishops and priests, who, due to their rich life experience and high moral qualities, have successfully fostered the spiritual growth of many generations of future priests, have governed the seminary of Kaunas. Today there are four seminaries in Lithuania. The second largest Lithuanian city seminary is not the biggest one, but it has a good aura. Let's look at how the seminarians live today. There are 53 seminarians in Kaunas. They study many hours a day. They study church law, construction, dogmatic and fundamental theology and liturgy, attend Bible studies and other subjects. Some classes, such as English, are held in the seminary itself. Those who fail three courses are eliminated from the seminary with no exceptions.

The most difficult subject for seminarians is informatics. The regime in the seminary is strict. The day starts at 7 a.m. At 7:30 a.m. the seminarians must be in the church for the Morning Prayer. Then they have a very delicious breakfast, usually prepared by an experienced cook, Aldona Kaušylienė, who tries to make them feel like they are eating their mothers' home cooking. After breakfast they go to lectures at the VMU. After classes, between 12-2:45 p.m.,

they come back to the seminary to have dinner. After the meal they sit in the auditoriums again. No later than 5 p.m. all of the seminarians have to come back to the seminary. After supper they are expected for choir rehearsal, then at 7:30 p.m. – Mass. After the evening Mass it is a quiet time for relaxing and individual studying and reading. At 10 p.m. – it is time to get ready for the night sleep. But it doesn't mean that exactly at 10 p.m. all of the yet-to-be-priests fall asleep. They talk for a while, think, meditate... Some of them would read longer. However, a

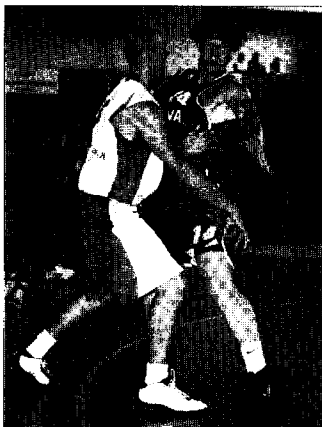
seminarian's room has only basic furniture: bed, table, bookcase and a wardrobe. However, they are permitted to make their rooms a little more comfortable. They are allowed to bring in a carpet, flowers, music center or computer (there is still no Internet usage in the room). They can get connected online in a special computer room with 6 PCs in it. Sometimes they can watch TV in the special room. There are special instances when they are allowed to watch TV later-especially when it's... an important basketball game of Lithuanian teams!

Unfortunately, the numbers of seminarians nowadays is not as high in any of Lithuania's seminaries, probably even throughout the world. Even worse, about one of two students changes his mind and leaves the seminary... As they study together at the regular university (VMU) with female students, some fall in love. Almost every seminarian has a crisis during his studies, and only those who have a real calling, stay. Life is like that - one day it goes to the right direction, unfortunately, another of those days it's quite opposite. But a crisis often helps you become even stronger. It is difficult for the seminarians to live like they are in a closed world, but future priests understand that their calling is a treasure, an invaluable gift from God. "God respects a human's freedom, but we don't have to trespass on it"- says Rev. Msgr. Dr. Vytautas Steponas Vaičiūnas, also an Associate Professor, who is the Dean of the Catholic Theology faculty in the Vytautas Magnus University. So let's wish our future priests patience and the will not to lose their calling to follow a heavenly mission!

Eugenija Fedosejeva

Eugenija Fedosejeva is a graduate student at the University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport. Eugenija is an active member of Lithuanian American Community, was elected as a treasurer of its Bridgeport (CT) Chapter. She enjoys participating in amateur sports, fitness and basketball being her favorites and belongs to the Lithuanian Sports Club of Connecticut.

THE 7th World LITHUANIAN GAMES



Lithuanian American basketball team in Vilnius.

The VII Lithuanian World Games took place in Vilnius on June 30, 2005. These Games were by far the largest Games to date. There were over 5,000 athletes-4,086 from Lithuania., 600 from another 18 other countries. Of the 600, 118 came from the USA and 117 from Poland.

There were 27 sporting events - and not surprisingly, the biggest and most popular one was basketball with 43 teams and 667 athletes participating. This was followed closely by soccer with 507 participants.

The VII World Games were the fourth Games to be held in Lithuania since 1991 (its Independence). Prior to 1991 three Games were held outside Lithuania; 1978 in Toronto, 1983 in Chicago and 1988 in Australia.

Basketball Venue

The USA team performed very well. It won medals in swimming and tennis. But it was in basketball that it performed outstandingly. Its 19U Team surprised everybody by defeating a very powerful Sabonis basketball Team. As surprising as was this victory, the Men's A Team's victory over Vilnius' powerful, talented, but cocky PERLAS was even more amazing. This was a team that nobody picked to win any medal, yet it won the gold medal!

How did they do it ?

The Team, the Players, the Coach.

The team was formally organized a mere

three weeks prior to departing for the Games. Its players came from all over the USA. They were first, third, and fourth generation Lithuanian Americans, who did not meet each other till they arrived for their first practice session in Vilnius.

The players, as individuals, were very talented, but they lacked the cohesiveness of a team. Molding them into a team fell upon the broad shoulder of Bob Hodgson, a third generation Lithuanian who is a no nonsense high school coach from New York. From the very first practice session, he made it very clear that if a player missed or came late to the practice or did not like any of his other rules, that player would not be playing in the next game. He told them all that the team came to Lithuania to play basketball, to make the Lithuanian Americans proud of them.

During the next practice session several players came late or did not show up at all. They did not play the next game. The message got through loud and clear and was understood by everybody.

In its first game the USA soundly defeated the team from Siberia. Its second game against Druskininkai was more competitive. It was not until the fourth quarter that the USA pulled away. After the game, Coach Hodgson telephoned me and said, "We won, but the refs were totally for the home team. The road towards the gold medal will be difficult." How prophetic were his words!

Entrepreneurs

Forbes

Author: Phyllis Berman

According to an article in FORBES magazine written by Phyllis Berman and entitled *The Three Marketeers*, the Ortiz brothers — George Jr., 40, Oliver, 38, and Nicolas 36, the great-grandsons of Simon Iturri Patino, a Bolivian tin baron, have created a little empire of their own: Iki (literally, “till the next time”), the second-largest supermarket chain in Lithuania. Last year Iki's 67 stores, plus 51 discount units called Pigiiau Grybo (“cheaper than mushrooms”) and 15 convenience stores, earned \$16 million pretax on revenue of \$377 million. over. This in a country with only 3.5 million people and a per capita GDP of \$12,500. The Ortiz brothers tapped into the Baltic nation's long-suppressed appetite for luxury foods and added a few tricks of their own. It started in August 1991 as the brothers, recent college grads (George went to Harvard, Oliver to St. Andrews and Nicolas to the University of Pennsylvania) sat around their parents’ kitchen table in Geneva, wondering what to do.

After watching Boris Yeltsin on TV, staring down the coup leaders in Moscow and the same Soviet tanks that had fired on Lithuanian civilians back in February, something clicked, and the three young men decided to start something of their own in the newly liberated East.

They arrived in Vilnius, in the near-dead of winter in 1992, the trio stood in long lines in minus 22 degree Fahrenheit weather to buy necessities. That prompted the idea of opening a supermarket. Using \$20,000 of their savings, they leased a store in Vilnius' Old Town and stocked it with home-grown produce and domestic sausages, and cheeses and fish imported from France. Within weeks they had a visit from the fire brigade, threatening to close down the operation unless the Ortizes applied a coat of fire resistant paint-or paid a bribe. The brothers aired a story that persuaded the govern-

ment to keep the store open. When their employees stole food, the brothers dealt with the problem by offering the manager a small equity stake, just enough incentive to keep an eye on his subordinates.

With hard currency, the only coin accepted at first for imported goods, the brothers were able to buy or rent their pick of sites. Most of their competition came from stores once owned by the state, offering drab items and day-old baked goods that couldn't compete with fresh Camembert and Crest toothpaste. By 1997 there were 17 Iki outlets. They offered novelties such as discounts on food via customer-loyalty cards and lotteries for prizes that included a \$150,000 Ferrari Modena 360. That year the Ortizes borrowed \$3.5 million at 10% from the Lithuanian Development Bank to build a 110,000-square-foot warehouse.

In 2000 they opened their first discount stores. They added corner markets-Ikiukas (“little Iki”)-in 2002 offering staples as cigarettes and vodka. This year they developed a line of private-label goods-free-range chickens and gourmet mushrooms among them. “If we had to do it again, we would have done it much earlier,” says George. The margins on these items are double what they are on other brands.

Lithuania's entry into the European Union last year has been a big boon, and a slight bane, for Iki. New regulations forced the chain to spend \$10,000 in each of its supermarkets. It was necessary to build a separate entrance for fresh meat delivery. But membership has also helped to lift sales, as the nation's per capita GDP grew 7.4% in 2004, the fastest rate of any country in the EU. And it has attracted the notice of Western capital. Earlier this year Citigroup's global equity investment arm put up \$50 million for a reported 25% stake in Iki. That money will be scattered around the Baltics, as the brothers move into Latvia and Estonia.

Information submitted by: Anthony Matulinis

The 7th World Lithuanian Games

In the semi finals the USA handily defeated Great Britain. Now the stage was set for the meeting of the two top teams – PERLAS from Vilnius and team USA. Right from the start the game was a nail-biter. The lead changed hands frequently and with 3 seconds left in the game, the score was tied. The USA player had the ball, he shot the ball, the ball went in the hoop, the USA won!

Right?

Wrong!

First the referee said that the shot was made after the time ran out. Wrong! There were .03 seconds left on the clock after the basket. Then

he said that the USA player was fouled before the shot – two foul shots. The player missed them both And the game ended in a deadlock.

Overtime!

The USA team was shocked and demoralized. It was here that Coach Hodgson's many years of coaching experience came into play. He told the team to forget the referees. “We can't do anything about them. We have to go out and make the first shot. If we do, the victory is ours.”

The team went out with renewed confidence. It made the first shot; it made the second shot. It defeated

PERLAS 103-90 !!

Lituanica's 19U team's victory; the Men's A team's victory showed home crowds and the experts that the Lithuanian American teams understand and know how to play the GAME. Never underestimate them.

Future of the World Games.

The next Games will be held four years from now—in 2009 in Lithuania.

Rimas Gedeika

*Photos by Alfridas Pladis

Rimas Gedeika lives in New Jersey and is active in the Lithuanian Sports Community.