



LITHUANIAN HERITAGE

SUPPLEMENT TO DRAUGAS NEWS
JAN / FEB 2016 VOL 4 (\$1)

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Lithuanian Portraits



Young LT patriots from Punksas, Poland

LITHUANIAN HERITAGE

Volume 4, Number S1
Jan / Feb 2016

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by Mindaugas Sereičikas

During 1932-34 two gliding schools were established in Lietuva. Gregorius Radvenis, a military pilot, was the first to become professionally proficient in gliding and to teach this sport to others.

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For the past 16 years, a group from the Strasbourg area of France has been publishing a journal in French about Lithuanian art, culture, and history, edited by M. Edel. We ask him why.

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Ludwig Heinrich Bojanus was a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, comparative anatomist, and zoologist. From 1806 to 1824 he worked at Vilnius University where he was a superstar in his field.

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Located close to the source of amber in Lietuva, this museum, located in the palace of Count Feliksas Tiškevičius, has been hosting exhibits and cultural events since 1963 and is one of the most popular in the country.

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Baltic academics, all refugees, managed to create a university in the city of Hamburg, at a time when it seemed to be impossible to find any housing, equipment, furniture, or even lightbulbs!

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June married Arūnas and they decided to live the country life in Lithuania. June grows much of the food that they eat, and publishes an award-winning blog. Here she describes her way of making curd cheese doughnuts.



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Cover Credits:

FRONT and BACK COVERS: Blue fir trees. Photo by Vytautas Knyva

INSIDE FRONT COVER: Punksas kindergarten, 2012. YouTube@punksas.pl

INSIDE BACK COVER: Block of amber. Photo from K. Mizgiris

I'm Flying!

Each issue of *Lithuanian Heritage*, I'm finding out, impacts me in a deeply personal way, and sometimes brings back memories from a distant past. As a child, I would listen in wonderment to stories by my late father, Kristupas; he would regale me with stories of how he and his friends would hitch up a glider to a car, tow it to speed, and then launch it off a hill or cliff, letting the lucky pilot soar for hours. In response to a reader's suggestion to publish more articles regarding aviation in prewar Lithuania, I came across a fabulous website, www.plienosparnai.lt (*plieno sparnai* meaning "wings of steel"), and began communication with the site's creator and curator, Mindaugas Sereičikas. It turns out he is an expert on the history of gliding in Lithuania during the 1930s, and graciously agreed to write an article for us about Cpt. Gregorius Radvenis.

Another intersect of *Lithuanian Heritage* with my personal life has to do with my longstanding love of all things French. This led me to attend McGill University in Montréal, back at a time when Québec was developing its identity and flirting with independence from Canada. Browsing the Web one day, I came upon a magazine about Lithuanian art and culture written entirely in French: *Cahiers Litvaniens* (which means "Lithuanian Notebooks"). It turns out that this is published in a region of France known as Alsace-Lorraine. Its chief editor is Philippe Edel, who also happens to be an expert on a famous zoologist / anatomist who studied the anatomy of turtles at Vilnius University around the year 1820. One thing leads to another, and this is how we collected some of the extremely interesting articles for this issue.

January-March marks several important dates relating to Lietuva's independence and nationhood, including February 16, 1918, March 11, 1990, and January 13, 1991. We live in uncertain and turbulent times, and I trust that everyone is following the continued efforts of Lietuva to maintain and ensure its freedom. On the inside front cover there is a heartwarming picture of kindergarten children from Punkskas, a region that was once in Lithuania and is now part of Poland, celebrating March 11th. May these children remind us to keep the love of Lietuva burning in our hearts forever.

Jonas Daugirdas, Editor

LITHUANIAN HERITAGE

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Lithuanian Catholic Press Society
Chicago, IL

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COPY EDITOR

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Wondering about your Estate Plan?

Remember the **Draugas Foundation** and assure the future of our Lithuanian-American Press. Since 1992, the Foundation has served to sustain the Lithuanian language *Draugas*, and now comes to the aid of *Draugas News* and *Lithuanian Heritage* as well. Over the years, it has supported capital improvements and invested in printing hardware and computers. When times were especially rough, it helped pay operating expenses. The **Draugas Foundation** is our lifeline and guarantor of the future of *Draugas's* unique set of publications.

For the **Draugas Foundation** to fulfill its mission, it needs your support and involvement. A few legacy gifts of moderate size will ensure the health of *Draugas News*, *Draugas*, and *Lithuanian Heritage* for years to come.

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For questions, please call: Marija Remienė, President, Draugas Foundation, tel. 773-585-9500.



Lithuanian Heritage is published by the Lithuanian Catholic Press Society (DRAUGAS), 4545 W. 63rd Street, Chicago, IL 60629-5532. *Lithuanian Heritage* is available only as a bi-monthly (six times per year) supplement to *Draugas News* (<http://www.draugasnews.org>). Please consult our website or the back page of this magazine for subscription information. Copyright 2015 by the Lithuanian Catholic Press Society.

Heritage Mailbox



Correction: Vytautas Bireta

In the Sept/Oct issue, in the “Lithuanians Around the World” section, we wrote about how Gabija Juozapavičiūtė Petrauskienė organized a funding drive for Lithuania in 1991-92 along with “Stasys Bireta”. There is no such person. His name is Vytautas Bireta. Our apologies for this mistake.

Correction: Mushroom dumpling dough needs an egg?

In the Nov/Dec issue, in the recipe for “ausytės” mushroom dumplings, one or two eggs added to the dough will make the dough come together better, and a bit of salt might also be added to the dough for taste.

Alminas or Alminas at the Battle of Durbė?

The Samogitian warlord credited for defeating the Crusaders in Baranauskienė’s article is named “Alminas,” as is the name on the portrait illustrating her article. For obvious reasons I have done a considerable amount of research on this name and found that other historians, including Inga Baranauskienė herself, have used the spelling “Algminas” in their writings. The History of Lithuania credits Duke Algminas for the Durbė Lake victory. Furthermore, the nearly completed monument in Telšiai prominently portrays Duke Algminas as the leader of the Samogitian warriors.

LEO L. ALGMINAS
Wilmette, IL

Editor’s response:

The above is a shortened version of a letter published in the Nov issue of *Draugas News*. I sent it to the author, Ms. Baranauskienė, for her response. She writes:

Mr. Leo Algminas has raised an important issue. Indeed, the conventional form of the name of the man who led the Samogitian fight against the Teutonic Order in 1253-1261 has not been settled, yet. The German spelling *Aleman* has been interpreted in different ways: *Alminas*, *Alminas*, *Algminas*, *Almenas* etc. All of these forms are possible in theory, because all of them were preserved in modern Lithuanian surnames. The form *Algminas* is popular, especially among the enthusiasts; however, it looks the least credible. Publishers of the recent Lithuanian Encyclopedia decided to use the form *Alminas* as the closest to the German spelling (*Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija*, Vilnius, 2001, T. 1, p. 376). My proposal would be to follow the Encyclopedia, if possible. Maybe, not a perfect solution but I cannot think of anything better.

Inga Baranauskienė

Too much religion!

I have been a subscriber since the very first issue and have enjoyed this magazine very much. I even gave several subscriptions as gifts. However, I do not like the changes that you have made since you took over and therefore I will NOT be renewing my subscription. I was born in Lithuania, have been back numerous times, and my heritage is

very important to me. But I am not Catholic and don’t like the focus of where the magazine is going!!

AN UNHAPPY SUBSCRIBER
Somewhere, USA

Editor’s Response:

Draugas, *Draugas News*, and now *Lithuanian Heritage* are published by the nonprofit Lithuanian Catholic Press Society. The newspaper was set up as a collaboration between lay people and priests, and the Marian Fathers have been instrumental in supporting the paper and are a key part of the press society. So there will continue to be Catholic content and a Catholic perspective in these 3 publications. Having said this, there tends to be less religious content in a cultural supplement like *Lithuanian Heritage*. We now have enabled an option where one can get only *Lithuanian Heritage* without *Draugas News*. This can be marked on the renewal form that can be printed out on-line from www.draugas.org/news or you can phone the *Draugas* office to mark this preference. I would urge those who do not agree with what they read in *Draugas News* or *Lithuanian Heritage*, to send their thoughts in for publication as a letter to the editor. This feedback and sharing of opinions will be helpful to both other readers and to us as editors.

We welcome letters and comments from our readers. Please address correspondence to: **Lithuanian Heritage**, c/o **Draugas News**, 4545 W 63rd St., Chicago, IL 60629; Fax: 773-585-8284. email: draugolaikrastis@gmail.com. Include your full name, address, and telephone number or email address. Letters may be edited for space or clarity.

Lithuanians around the World



Kotryna winning her award.

(Austin Ginn)

Kotryna Staputyte

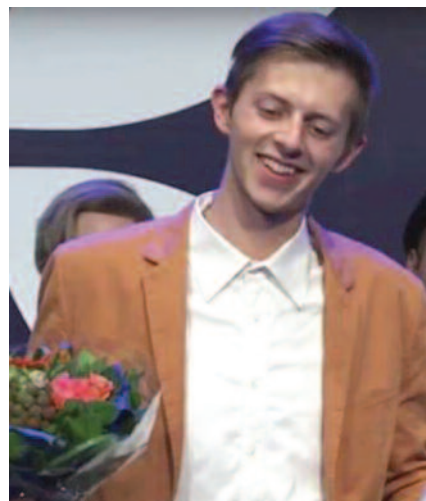
Kotryna, a 20-year old student from Naperville, Illinois, managed to score a \$100,000 scholarship by participating in, and winning, the Dr. Pepper Tuition Giveaway. To win, during half-time during the PAC-12 championship football game in Santa

Clara, California, she had to throw as many footballs as possible through a giant Dr. Pepper can near the end zone. And win she did, making 17 'baskets' in 30 seconds, one more than her opponent. Kotryna says she will use the scholarship money to further her dream of be-

coming a doctor and helping people with disabilities.

Milda Mitkutė and Justas Janauskas

Why are the two founders of *vinted.com* walking on air? Perhaps it's because this startup internet community marketplace, that allows people to buy and sell used clothes, just received 27 million dollars from a German billionaire to help it spread like wildfire across the U.S., U.K., and a number of European countries, particularly France and Germany. This is after having received 40 million dollars previously in two venture capital financing rounds.



Dominykas Budinas. (fb|dizainokatedra)

Dominykas Budinas

An international design competition was recently held in Helsinki, sponsored by Electrolux. And Dominykas won 2nd place, with a design for an "Air Shield" baby carriage with a built in air filter. We assume that these will sell like hotcakes in Beijing, based on recent photos



Milda and Justas.

(Vinted)



Budinas' baby carriage design.

(fb|dizainokatedra)

of the degree of air pollution on the city streets there. In recognition of his award, Dominykas received a 6,000 euro prize. Note that there were 1500 contestants from 56 countries that vied for these awards.

Darius Sasnauskas

Darius became an internet sensation when he posted a short video on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eStXV_TYFFw of how he rescued and rehabilitated an aban-

doned fawn in Wyoming, close to Yellowstone Park. His video first shows a mother doe walking through his back yard with two fawns, and then abandoning one of the fawns who apparently had a lot of trouble walking. He takes the baby deer into his home, makes a leg brace for it, and teaches her to drink from a bottle while his dogs and cats watch. The deer gets better, and Darius prepares to release her, but the fawn at first will not leave



Darius.

(Darius Sasnauskas/honeysada)

his side, but ultimately, all is well, and the deer returns to the wild with his mother. As of mid-December, this video has been viewed more than 6 million times!



Giedrė.

(www2.arch.cam.ac.uk)



"Ushtogaysky Square" mound structure in Kazakhstan.

(Google Earth)

Giedrė Motuzaitė Matuzevičiūtė

Giedrė is an archaeologist from Cambridge University, and also lectures at Vilnius University. She was recently featured in a Nov 3, 2015 article in the *New York Times* that discussed mysterious mound structures organized in geometric patterns (like the square pattern in the figure) found in Kazakhstan. These patterns are huge, and the figure shown was copied from Google Earth. Giedrė has visited these structures and analyzed their age, and she discussed her findings at a meeting of European archaeologists last year in Istanbul.

Gliders on the Dunes: Gregorius Radvenis – Pilot and Instructor

by Mindaugas Sereičikas

The name of military and glider pilot Gregorius Radvenis and his contributions to the sport of gliding in Lithuania have been unjustly forgotten, since the word which best describes him and his accomplishments is “first.” He was the first Lithuanian to become professionally proficient in gliding. He was the first to teach this sport to others in Lithuania, the first to head newly-created gliding schools and the first to achieve new local records in this form of flight.

As with many aviation initiatives in Lithuania, the sport of gliding is closely connected with the aviation design engineer Antanas Gustaitis. On August 11, 1931, on Gustaitis’ urging, the Aeronautics Club of Lithuania organized a visit to the Rossitten Gliding School, located on the German side of the Curonian Spit peninsula. Impressed with what they saw, the club decided to send a few gifted pilots to the school to practice gliding techniques and then share what they learned on their return.

A search began for an experienced pilot with excellent flying technique and the ability to speak German. At the time there were no experienced civilian pilots in Lithuania, and so the search was limited to military pilots. Junior Lieutenant Gregorius Radvenis, a pilot from the 3rd Squadron of the Lithuanian Air Force and of German background was given the nod. Radvenis had

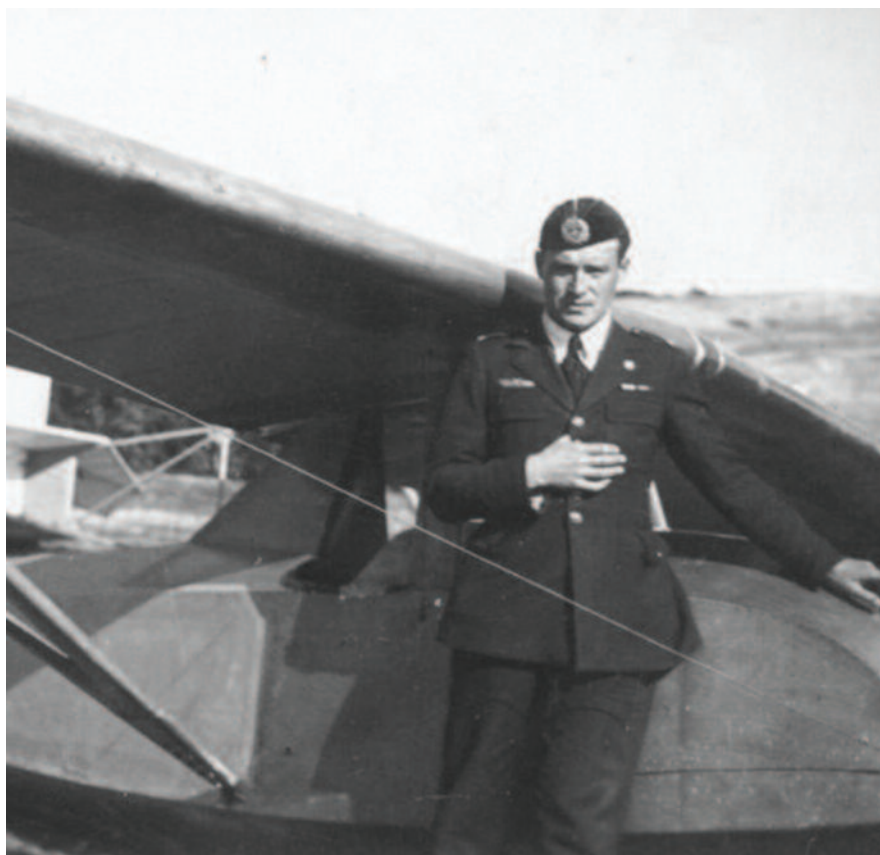


RRG Zögling (“gandras”) glider at Nida, 1933-34.

served as a volunteer in the Lithuanian Army during the struggles for independence and, since November of 1920, had served in the Lithuanian Air Force where he had over seven years of flying experience and logged over 570 hours in various types of airplanes. Captain Antanas Stašaitis, Radvenis’ commanding officer, held him in high esteem: “His flying technique is of high quality, and he can be entrusted with important responsibilities as a military pilot.”

On October 2, 1931, Radvenis left for Rossitten on his own motorcycle. Glider pilot training at the school was divided into three stages. A pilot would receive “A level” qualification (first stage) when he was able to remain aloft for at least 30 seconds. The second “B level” qual-

ification not only required the ability to fly straight but also to maneuver the glider and complete five flights with turns. Upon acquiring more advanced gliding technique and upon being able to remain aloft for no less than five minutes, a pilot would receive “C level” qualification. In a letter to his friend, aviator Viktoras Ašmenskas, Radvenis wrote: “Since I had almost eight years of flying experience, I could have satisfied the requirements for ‘A’ and ‘B’ pilots with my first flight, but that would have gone against all the rules.” A training glider and a rubber cable, which could be stretched to get the glider aloft, were all that were needed for the preliminary requirements. To achieve “C level” qualification and to graduate gliding school, one more feature was required: a favorable east



Lt. Gregorius Radvenis, Nida, 1933.

wind. On October 20th, a day with such a wind, Radvenis satisfied all of the requirements for “C level” qualification, flying a glider named *Falke* (falcon) made by the German firm Rhön-Rossitten Gesellschaft. Thus, Radvenis became the first professional Lithuanian glider pilot.

Radvenis returned promptly to Lithuania and helped spur the development of gliding in his home country. An aviation club was established at the Kaunas College of Technology (KCT), and, in the winter of 1931-1932, Radvenis organized courses there. Students were taught gliding theory, gliding methods and how to construct these non-motorized flying machines. Military pilot Lt. Vladas Adomavičius, a member of the Aeronautics Club of Lithuania, also taught there.

Once the courses got going, the Aeronautics Club gave the KCT club a set of construction drawings detailing how to build a glider model

called the *Zögling* (the word means “trainee” in German, locally called “*gandras*”). These drawings had been obtained from the Rhön-Rossitten Gesellschaft (RRG) company. Radvenis was appointed to oversee the construction of this

glider. Bronius Oškinis, a member of the KCT Aviation Club, suggested improvements to make the flyer more aerodynamic and to lessen its wind resistance. Since construction was supported using only local funds, it was important to use materials economically. Radvenis took advantage of opportunities available to him and obtained materials needed for construction of the glider from factories operated by the Lithuanian Air Force. These included bolts for the steering wheel and other parts of the glider that needed to be braced, as well as cutters and braided steel-stretching tools. The metal parts were the most expensive items needed for the building of gliders. Once these items had been obtained, construction of the glider moved forward quickly.

As summer approached, courses on gliding theory concluded and construction of the glider neared completion. The final assembly was done at a field outside Petrašiūnai. Due to local improvements in design, the finished plane took on a form somewhat different from the original RRG *Zögling*. The adapted and improved glider was given the name *Technikas-1* (or T-1 for short). On August 14, 1932, Radvenis flew



Building a hangar at the Nida Gliding School, 1933.



Glider in the air after a successful launch, Nida, 1933-34.

the newly constructed glider, taking off from one of the sand dunes in the area.

Petrašiūnai Gliding School

The Petrašiūnai Gliding School, the first gliding school in Lithuania, thus began operation the next day – August 15th. Professor Zigmas Žemaitis, the president of the Aeronautics Club of Lithuania, came to the inauguration ceremonies. Canon Juozas Tumas –Vaižgantas blessed the glider, and Radvenis regaled the guests with a demonstration flight. Radvenis became the Head of this school and its only instructor. At first there was only the one glider. However, soon thereafter the Aeronautics Club of Lithuania donated two RRG *Zögling* gliders which had been constructed in Lithuanian Air Force factories. The Club also gave the school funds to build a small wooden hangar. The gliding pilots used the hangar when they needed to get out of the rain, and sometimes they even stayed there overnight.

During the first season of the school's operation, only three "A-level" gliding pilots were graduated:

Bronius Oškinis and two members of the Aviation Club – Leonas Kinaitis and Antanas Paknys. Granting a higher level certification was not possible at the Petrašiūnai Gliding School because the sand dunes found in the area were not sufficiently large.

Gliding Days

As the first gliding season drew to a close, events known as "gliding days" were organized, which in later years were enormously successful. They popularized the sport of gliding in many of Lithuania's cities and towns. The first gliding day took place in the market square of the city of Panevėžys in October of 1932. A second was held in November in the city of Marijampolė, in the exercise field of the 9th infantry regiment of the Lithuanian Army. At both events, Radvenis, with the assistance of members of the KCT Aviation Club, gave gliding demonstrations. These demonstrations were received enthusiastically in towns far from Kaunas. This was the first chance most spectators had to see a glider and watch it in flight.

A Second Gliding School at Nida

The Aeronautics Club of Lithuania thought that gliding had a potentially favorable future in Lithuania and decided to create a gliding school that could prepare gliding pilots of all three levels of qualification. One area suited for such a school was the sand dunes near the town of Nida. The naturally formed eastern slopes of the dunes were perfect for gliding. On August 2, 1933, members of the Aviation Club of the Kaunas College of Technology loaded a barge with gliders and materials needed to build a hangar for the school and set off on the Nemunas River for Nida. On the same day, Radvenis left for Klaipėda on his motorcycle. In Klaipėda he found a good location for the gliding school and arranged for the necessary transport. On August 9th construction of the aviation hangar began. Viktoras Ašmenskas, a member of the Aviation Club who had to supervise the construction, remembers that construction work alternated with gliding lessons. If it became windy, the men working on the construction of the hangar would go to the sand dunes to fly.



Radvenis (center, in uniform) with students at Nida, 1934.

The Nida Gliding School was officially opened on August 4, 1933, even though the construction of the hangar had not yet been completed. Radvenis was appointed the first Head of the school and its first instructor. Gliding training proceeded faster and more intensely than it had in Petrašiūnai because the natural conditions in Nida were more favorable. Gliders could stay aloft longer thanks to a backwind that developed when the east wind was favorable. While the hangar was still being built, Radvenis achieved the Lithuanian record for time aloft in a glider, staying aloft in *Sakalas* for 3 hours and 10 minutes. On page 7, he is pictured next to the glider in which he broke this gliding record.

Thanks to the instruction which Radvenis provided, the school prepared some of the best gliding pilots and future glider builders in Lithuania. During 1933 a total of 220 flights were made. Flight time totaled about 60 hours. The first grad-

uates were Bronius Oškinis and Leonas Kinaitis, who completed "C-level" qualification. In addition, that same year, the school prepared seven "B-level" and three "A-level" glider pilots.

A major expansion of the Nida Gliding School began in 1934. Construction of a dormitory, designed by architect Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, which included a classroom and a cafeteria, began in early spring and was completed on August 1st. The number of students grew rapidly, and so Radvenis appointed his most experienced students – B. Oškinis, V. Paknys, V. Butkevičius and L. Kinaitis – as gliding instructors. As the gliding season progressed, Radvenis surpassed his previous year's record time for staying aloft, when on June 26, 1934, he kept the glider *Sakalas* aloft for 5 hours and 14 minutes.

Political unrest cut short Radvenis' promising gliding career. He remained Head of the Nida Gliding

School until July of 1934. On July 11th, Major Jonas Pyragius took over leadership of the school, having been demoted and put on reserve after an unsuccessful military coup against President Antanas Smetona. Radvenis returned to his earlier employment at the Zokniai airport near the city of Šiauliai and did not participate in the sport of gliding after that time.

The author wishes to thank Edvardas Radvenis, the son of Gregorius Radvenis, for providing information and illustrations, and Gytis Ramoška, the head of the History and Press section of the Lithuanian Aviation Museum (www.lam.lt). Anyone who has information about the history of Lithuanian aviation is urged to contact the author by e-mail at info@plienosparnai.lt.

Translated by Rimas Černius. All photos courtesy of the Lithuanian Aviation Museum.

AN INTERVIEW WITH PHILIPPE EDEL - EDITOR OF *CAHIERS LITUANIENS*

M. Edel, would you tell us something about yourself?

I was born in Strasbourg in an Alsatian family, which has always lived in this French region, the population of which originally spoke German.

I studied political science, history and economics at the universities of Strasbourg and Munich. I have been working for the Chamber of Commerce of Strasbourg for several years as the Director of Economic Information Services. I am involved first of all with European questions, notably in Brussels.

How did you become interested in Lithuania? What ties do you have to Lithuania?

Apart from my professional work, I have always been interested in two subjects: Central and Eastern Europe, especially during the period of communist dictatorship, and the emigration of Alsatisans throughout the world.

When Soviet power struck a hard blow in Vilnius on January 13, 1991, leading to the death of 14 civilians, I took the initiative, along with my friends, in organizing a demonstration of solidarity with Lithuania the next day at the Kléber plaza - the largest plaza in Strasbourg. Somewhat later, after having met Vytautas Landsbergis and other Lithuanian leaders in Strasbourg, we - some Frenchmen who sympathized with Lithuania - decided to continue our actions in an Alsace-Lithuania society that we founded in the spring of 1991. It was within this context that I met a Lithuanian woman who became my wife and who is very active in our work.

How did you get the idea to publish a journal about Lithuania in French - *Cahiers Lituaniens*?

It was in 2000 that we decided to publish an annual journal so that the art, history, language and literature of Lithuania could be discovered by the French-speaking public, and so that historical, political and cultural relations between France and Lithuania could be discussed. At present very few French people know about Lithuania, and no other journal of this type exists about this subject matter. Even today *Cahiers Lituaniens* is the only French journal devoted entirely to Lithuania.

How many copies of your journal are published?

We print 500 copies of the journal. We have 200 paying subscribers, principally French, Belgian and Swiss. 120 public libraries and universities in Francophone countries receive the journal without payment. The remaining copies are sold individually.

What kind of articles do you publish in the journal?

The first ten issues of *Cahiers Lituaniens* concentrated on the art, language and literature of Lithuania, as well as the history of Lithuanian resistance to Soviet annexation. Since 2011 we are focusing more on the historical and cultural relations between Lithuania and France - and Alsace - as well as on the history of Lithuania during the epoch of the Grand Duchy and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.



Philippe Edel.

Who writes articles for the journal? Are the authors mostly from Lithuania or from outside Lithuania?

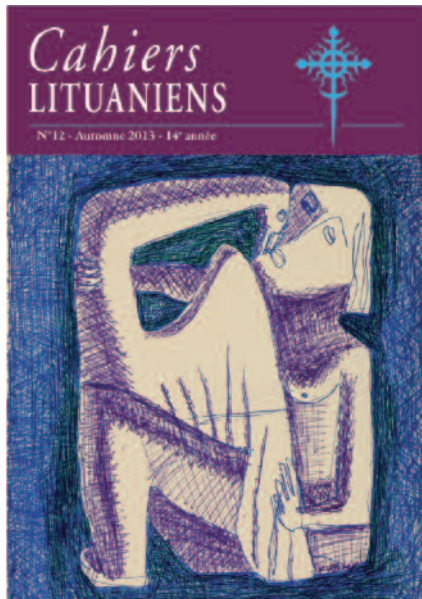
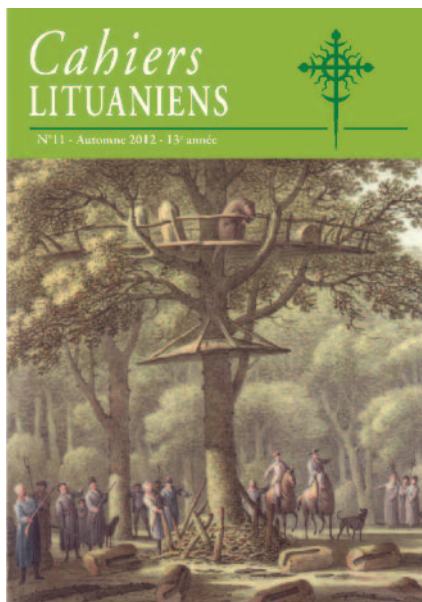
Most of the authors come from universities or the world of academia. About a third of them are Lithuanian, another third are French, and the last third are Polish, Belarusian, German, Italian or Belgian.

Do the articles have to be translated into French? Who does the translations?

Original Lithuanian texts and sometimes Polish or German texts are translated by volunteer translators in France or in Lithuania. All of the texts are reread and corrected, then approved by their authors.

You are president of a society called Association Alsace-Lituanie. How did this organization come to be? What is its purpose?

Alsace-Lituanie was created in 1991. For the first ten years the association has primarily organized



Cahiers Litvaniens, 2012 and 2013 issues.

conferences, concerts and exhibitions to make Lithuania better known. It has also organized exchanges by welcoming young Lithuanians into Alsatian families during the summer to learn the French language, by organizing professional internships for Lithuanian doctors in hospitals in Alsace, and by organizing trips to Lithuania for French tourists.

In 2010 the association decided to refocus its activities on historical research. Now it is called *Cercle d'Histoire Alsace-Lituanie* (The

Alsace-Lithuania Circle of History). Its two principal activities are the publication of *Cahiers Litvaniens* and research about L.H. Bojanus.

What are the ties between the Alsace region and Lithuania?

The historical ties are old. Since the 16th century Lithuanian students have been coming to study at the University of Strasbourg.

Many important Alsations have played an important role: the physician Nicolas Regnier (1723-1800) founded the Medical School of Vilnius in 1781; the painter Jean-Henri Müntz (1775-1838) made the first drawings of the fauna of Lithuania; the naturalist Jean-Philippe Graffenauer (1775-1838) published the first monograph in French about Baltic amber; the diplomat René Ristelhueber (1881-1960) was one of the first ambassadors of France in Kaunas during the inter-war period; the linguist Raymond Schmittlein (1904-1974) created the first Lithuanian-French cultural association in

Kaunas; and of course, the scientist Louis Henri Bojanus.

You have written an article and a book about the scientist L.H. Bojanus (1776-1827). What got you interested in this scientist?

It was in Lithuania during the 90s that I discovered the existence of this scientist, who was originally from my region of France, where he was almost unknown. After this discovery I did a lot of historical research, and I published several articles about Bojanus in France and also in Lithuania (in the journals *Mokslas ir gyvenimas*, *Darbai ir dienos*, etc.). In September of 2015, Piotr Daszkiewicz, a historian of science at the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, and I published the first book in French devoted entirely to this professor of the University of Vilnius.

Editor's Note: All *Cahiers Litvaniens* PDFs are available at this Web link: www.cahiers-litvaniens.org/acces.html



The executive committee of Alsace-Lituanie meeting in Issenheim (Alsace), 2008.

Ludwig Heinrich Bojanus, a Great Naturalist Scholar in Vilnius

by Philippe Edel

One of the greatest zoologists of his time Ludwig Heinrich Bojanus (1776-1827) was a professor at Vilnius University for twenty years. He is considered to be the pioneer of veterinary science and comparative anatomy in Lithuania and in Poland. Even today, most students of natural science worldwide know his name thanks to Bojanus' organ (excretory gland of a mollusc). Where did this scientist with German given names and a surname with a Lithuanian -sounding ending come from to Vilnius?

L.H. Bojanus was born in 1776 in a Protestant family from the little town of Bouxwiller. At the time, Bouxwiller was the capital of the Hanau-Lichtenberg County situated in the north of Alsace. In the 18th century, Alsace was both a province of the French Kingdom and a German speaking territory. It was mostly populated with Catholics, but there was a strong Protestant minority (30% of the population) and many Jewish communities too. The civil state was administered by parishes, thus certificates were issued in Latin by the Catholics and in German (the language of Luther) by the Protestants. This explains why this French man by birth was given names of German origin. However, during his scientific career these names were often translated: Liudvikas Enrikas or Liūdvigas Heinrichas in Lithuanian, Ludwik Henryk in Polish, and

Ludvig Genrikh in Russian. He signed his own public lectures in French, Louis Henri or simply Louis, and academic works in Latin, Ludovicus Henricus. As for his surname, it was his great-great-grandfather Georg Boye (born in 1620) who, following his appointment as the rector of a Latin school, latinized his name changing it into Bojanus.

Bojanus' father was the County government official in charge of forest registers. It was an important post as forest exploitation represented the lion's share of the



L.H. Bojanus. (Motiejus Psibilskis)

County's economy. The father's occupation might have encouraged young Bojanus to develop an interest in nature, which was particularly diverse and rich in the County, especially in fossils. Young Bojanus attended the local gymnasium (high



Map showing Bouxwiller and Strasbourg at the extreme east end of current France and also showing Darmstadt. (Google Maps)

school) at Bouxwiller, a real breeding ground for lawyers, doctors, and theologians. It was one of the Protestant gymnasiums in Alsace where lessons were given in both French and German. Natural sciences was one of the taught subjects, which was rare in France. The years at the gymnasium were one of Bojanus' early assets and a natural door opener to the University of Strasbourg, in a large city in Alsace.

The French Revolution unsettled Bojanus' life. He was 13 when it broke out in 1789. The troubles shook up Bouxwiller and the entire County as worship was banned and a new order was contested. The university in Strasbourg was shut down in 1793. During the Terror, the French revolutionary leader Elie Lacoste sent over from Paris threatened with retaliation and menaced with summary executions and deportations. Frightened, like the thousands of inhabitants of the County, the Bojanus family fled to the right bank of the Rhine. They found refuge in Darmstadt where the father joined the Landgraviate administration of Hesse-Darmstadt thus definitively taking the young Bojanus away from Alsace.

Thanks to the financial support of the Landgrave, he completed his medical studies at the University of Jena, then at the University of Vienna under the famous professor Johann Peter Frank. On his return to Darmstadt, local authorities asked him to create a school of veterinary medicine. To prepare for the task, for two years he visited the most famous veterinary schools in Europe: Berlin, Copenhagen, Dresden, Hanover, London, Lyon, Paris, and Vienna. The collected information inspired his work on the usage and organization of those schools, that would bring him his first recognition. On his return, he discovered that the school creation project was



Vilnius University pictured at the beginning of the 19th century.

abandoned. That is when he replied to a call for applications from Vilnius University, which was looking for candidates for its newly established department of veterinary medicine.

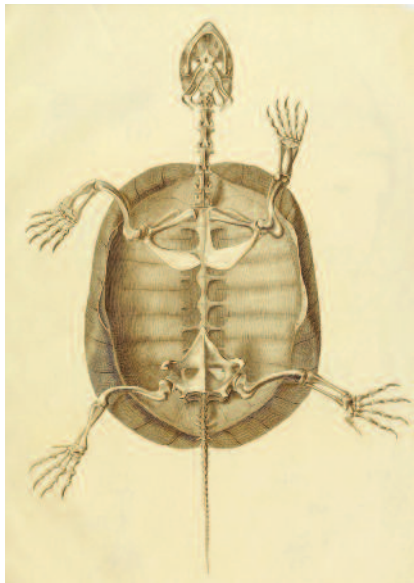
At the time, Vilnius had just been annexed to Russia. It had become the third biggest city of the empire. The university was re-founded in 1803 by Tsar Alexander I and endowed with imperial status as the leading university in Russia in terms of the number of students. It was looking to hire many foreign professors. The languages of teaching were mainly Latin and Polish.

It is at this renowned university that Bojanus spent the most important part of his academic career. From 1806 to 1812 he taught veterinary art and from 1814 to 1824 comparative anatomy, which he introduced as a new discipline in the Tsarist Empire, that is, in Russia and in Poland-Lithuania. In 1815 he also set up a course in veterinary surgery for which a special veterinary theater was constructed. His main course of lectures in veterinary art was obligatory for students of the 4th year of medicine. His lectures were

very popular as on top of his erudition, they were illustrated with detailed sketches. Bojanus tried to avoid the magisterial style he had observed elsewhere during his European travels from 1801 to 1803. Other university professors and the erudite of the city also attended his lectures in comparative anatomy.

Bojanus' anatomy course was one of the most innovative at the time and developed the theory of living nature where perpetual and uninterrupted transformations took place everywhere starting with the basic organs and finishing with the most developed ones. According to him, there were no ruptures in nature, so much so that even flora and fauna were impossible to differentiate clearly, there being numerous intermediary forms called *zoophyta*. Affinities between fauna and flora were illustrated by examples still cited today: some plants' capacity to move, similarities between certain plants and invertebrates, etc.

Appreciated as a teacher and researcher, he was elected a member of the Academy of Sciences of Russia and developed close relationships with scholars in all Europe. He



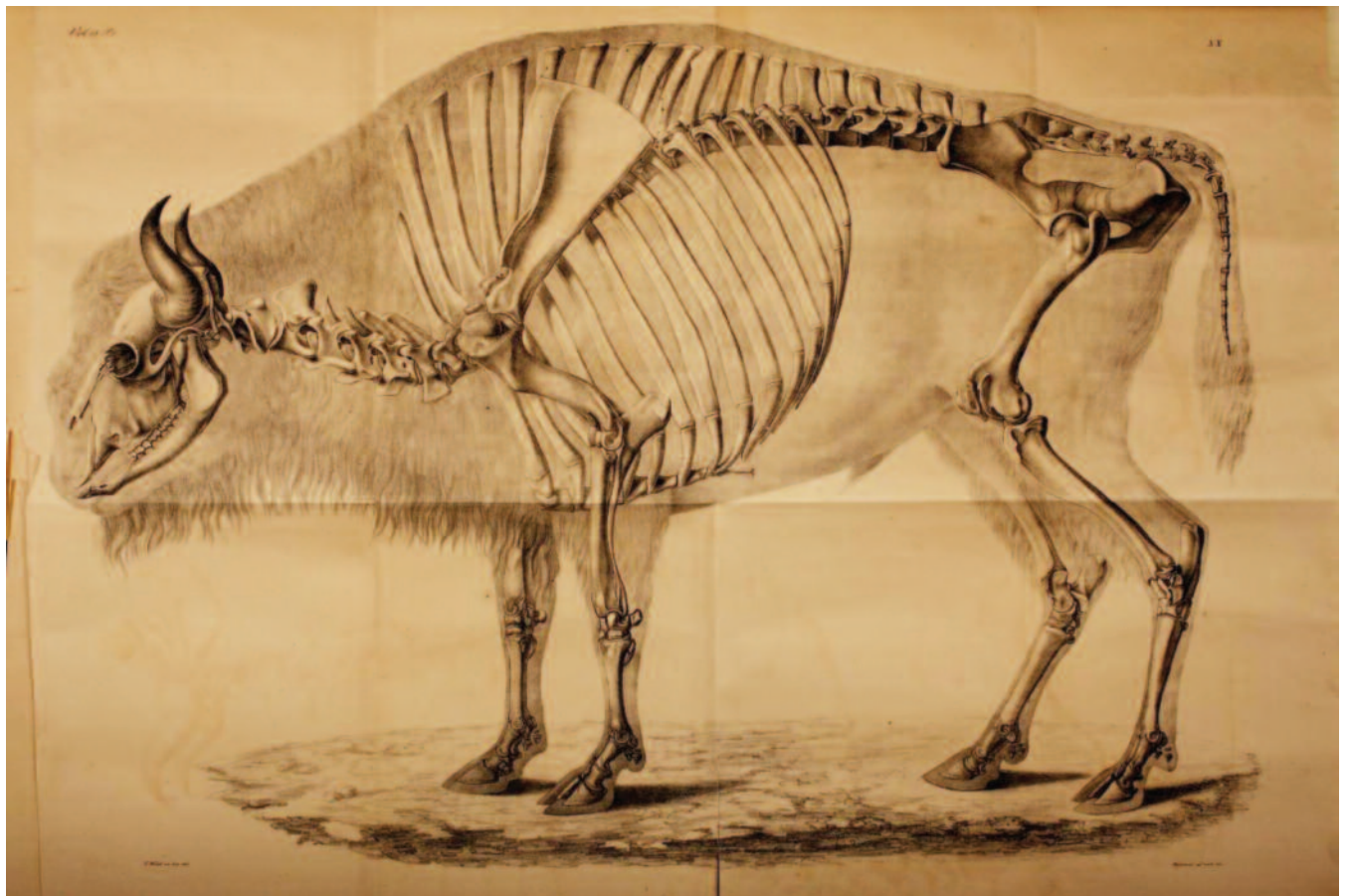
Drawing from "Anatomy of the European Terrapin", published in Vilnius, 1819.

joined many scholarly associations in Berlin, Halle, Paris, Edinburgh, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Moscow and other cities.

During the 18 years spent in Vilnius, Bojanus made many discoveries and published more than 40 works and scientific studies, including the brilliant *Anatome Testudinis Europaeae* ("Anatomy of the European Terrapin"). Nearly two hundred years on, it remains the most exhaustive work on the subject. It includes 40 plates and 213 illustrations that detail the anatomy of terrapin, a water tortoise. Bojanus spent a decade on this project and dissected around 500 tortoises. He used all the anatomic techniques known at the time to complete this work: maceration and boiling in different kinds of solvents, color injection, coloring with mercury and gelatin, etc. He drew the original pictures himself, had copper engravings made by an engraver whom he had come especially from Darmstadt, and self-funded the publication of the original edition, of which 80 copies were

printed. The exploit cost him a considerable sum at the time, 5000 roubles or the equivalent of a two-year salary. The work was reprinted twice in *extenso* in the 20th century, first in Germany in 1902 and then in the United States in 1972 by the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles (Athens, OH). Today one can consult it online thanks to the Ernst Mayr Library of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University (Cambridge, MA).

The second domain that contributed to Bojanus' scientific fame is associated with his research of the ancestor of our domestic bovine: the aurochs. At the beginning of the 19th century the aurochs was not yet differentiated from the bison, that is, the bison of the steppes, the ancestor of the European bison. Working on the skeletons in Vilnius, Paris and Vienna, Bojanus managed to demonstrate the existence of two



Drawing of a bison by Bojanus, circa 1827.

distinct species in his study published in 1827. Since then, the two species appear in the universal scientific classification under respective names of *Bos primigenius* (Bojanus 1827) and *Bison priscus* (Bojanus 1827).

Studying horses and their illnesses was one of the reasons that brought Bojanus to Vilnius. His main work on the subject was first published in 1819 in Riga, then reissued in Vilnius, Leipzig and finally in Warsaw in Polish. He published other works on horses that turned out to be real publishing successes. Also, by studying the anatomy, fertilization, and reproduction of one species of bivalve Mollusca. Bojanus discovered its kidney, which to this day and in all languages carries the name of the man who first described it, Bojanus' Organ or the Organ of Bojanus.

In Vilnius Bojanus amassed a large collection of fossils, a zoological cabinet of 3800 items and a very rare collection of parasite worms of Lithuania and Belarus. On his death, his testament revealed another area of his interest: a large personal collection of minerals. His decision to include it in his last will suggests that it must have been sufficiently significant or precious. Nevertheless, there remains no trace of it, which is hardly surprising if it had been left behind in Vilnius, as in 1831, Tsarist authorities closed down the university and dispersed the biggest part of its collections.

Bojanus was ennobled and appointed a state counsellor by the Tsar for the prestige that he had brought to the academia of the empire. He was also appreciated for his qualities as a scholar and his exemplary attitude towards the university by his colleague professors and students alike. In 1821 against his own will authorities assigned him to preside over a commission investigating clandestine activities of a group of

students called the *Philomath Society*. In his report he made sure that the students were exonerated and later liberated. Let us note that among the *Philomathes* was the great future Lithuanian poet of the Polish language, Adam Mickiewicz.

Bojanus started to suffer from poor health, most likely due to long hours spent in the laboratory. He still managed to create a veterinary school in Vilnius in 1823, the first establishment of this type in Poland-Lithuania and the predecessor of the present-day Kaunas Veterinary Academy. In 1824, seriously ill, Bojanus was given permission by the university to retire and stay with his sister's family in Darmstadt. This is where he died three years later, at the age of 50. In Darmstadt he left behind a young Catholic girl he had adopted with his wife in Vilnius.

What is L.H. Bojanus' legacy today besides his numerous scientific publications and discoveries that he left for posterity? It is in Lithuania that we find the most traces. A commemorative plaque in his name (*Lithuvigas Bojanus*) in the Grand Courtyard at Vilnius University, his bust by Jonas Jagėla at the prestigious Little Aula and his effigy by Antanas Kmieliauskas on the vault of the bookshop *Littera* mark his past presence. His portrait by Maciej Przybylski is on display at the Lithuanian National Museum in the gallery of the great men of the 19th century. In Kaunas, an enormous bust by Danielius Sondeika dominates the auditorium of the veterinary Academy. Numerous objects: a commemorative medal, philatelic envelope and a pocket calendar among others have been produced in his memory in Lithuania during the last decades. Tomas Venclova quotes him in his book *Vilniaus Vardai* published in 2006. In Poland, a technical school in Łomża, in Masuria, is called after him. His portrait attributed to Jan Rustem is stored at the National Mu-



L.H. BOJANUS (1776-1827) * VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETO PROFESORIUS, LYGINAMŲ MOLLUSCORUM ANATOMIJOS TYTUVOJE RUSIJOS IR LENKIJOS PRADININKAS, GAMTININKATYRŲ EVOLUCIONISTAS *** ** FOTOGRAFIJOJE LIETUVOS PRADININKAS (1819 m.) ***



Lithograph by Antanas Šakalys (1986) honoring L.H. Bojanus.

seum of Warsaw. Vienna, the capital of Austria and the city of his studies, named a street after him, the *Bojanusgasse*. Even the municipality of his native town, Bouxwiller, is rediscovering him: there they plan to erect his bust at the city hall.

Translated from French by Eglė Kačkutė-Hagan. Mr. Edel's book on Bojanus, "Louis Henri Bojanus. Le Savant de Vilnius" published by Vent d'Est in 2015, is available from www.ventdest-editions.com.

Manor Houses and Castles of Central Lithuania

by Miltiades Varvounis

Photos by the author and Saiva Ziogaite



The peaceful 19th century manor house in Veliuona, a rare example of Lithuanian wooden architecture.

On each of our trips to the most romantic country of Europe – Lithuania, my family and I try to discover the well-known or hidden glorious past of this mystic land. From the heart of Lithuania – Kaunas – where we always base ourselves and spend most of our time, we travel throughout the Lithuanian lands and explore their thousand years of documented history. This time, in August 2015, what most riveted our attention were several manor houses, castles and other historic sites located in central

Lithuania. Some of them might not be well-known even to Lithuanians themselves. This little, proud country has lots of secrets to reveal to ambitious travelers and lovers of the past.

Raudondvaris

On the first day of our exploration we visited the popular manor house at Raudondvaris, a few kilometers west of Kaunas. We had been there before, but the beauty of this majestic place convinced us to pay another visit. Currently visitors

enter a breathtaking park that encloses an impressive 19th century horse stable, an ice house and servants' quarters before reaching the red-brick manor house, dominated by its tower dating from medieval times. While now weddings and christenings take place inside this harmonious setting, centuries ago this was a castle involved in the ruthless war between Lithuanians and Teutonic Knights. Raudondvaris is first mentioned in a German chronicle of the late 14th century. After the Battle of Gruenwald (*Žalgiris*),



Panemunė Castle is a great place for families and their children to enjoy a fairytale experience (In the photo are author's children and nephews).

a castle built by the Teutonic Knights became the property of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes. In the mid-16th century the red brick castle belonged to the legendary Barbora Radvilaitė (Barbara Radziwill), wife of Grand Duke Žygimantas Augustas (Zygmunt II August). In about 1650 the Radziwill family reconstructed the castle into a manor house, but little of the original architecture remains, because the building was again reconstructed in the 19th century by the wealthy and influential Polish-Lithuanian Tiškevičius (Tyszkiewicz) family. Damaged during World War II, the estate was restored in the 1970s.



The picturesque Zypliai estate, a hidden gem of central Lithuania.

Veliuona and Raudonė

On our way to Raudonė we made a brief stop at lovely Veliuona, just a few kilometers away from our destination. This small town was a strategic settlement back in the Middle Ages. Located near a steep hill, it is another reminder of the Lithuanian-Crusader wars. According to legend, in that hill is where Grand Duke Gediminas, the founder of Vilnius, lies buried. Near the hill and not so visible from the road, stands a neoclassical estate built by the noble Zaleskių (Zaleski) family in the early 19th century. It's a wooden manor house that harbors the Veliuona regional history museum, which includes a room with an exhibition on the life of the writer Petras Cvirka. However, instead of the museum we chose to pay a visit to the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which was built in the 17th century and is located a few hundred meters away from the Zaleski estate. This Baroque church includes interesting works of art, such as an epitaph portrait of one of the owners of Veliuona, Jan Kazimierz Brzostowski and a painting by the celebrated 19th century Polish-Lithuanian artist of Italian descent Michal Elwiro Andriolli.



The Labunava tower reminds to each traveler that Lithuania is full of fairytale monuments.

Picturesque Raudonė Castle, like Raudondvaris, began its rich life as a timber fortress built by the Teutonic Knights in the 14th century. This romantic residence acquired its neo-gothic appearance after reconstruction by Russian count Platon Zubov in the 19th century. The original brick castle was built in the 17th century. The tower has stairs leading to an observation deck, which offers a majestic panoramic view of the endless Lithuanian countryside. This building was converted into a school that still operates today. How lucky are those kids who attend this school, once a castle owned by the wealthiest families of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Tsarist Russia.

Panemunė, Zypliai and Zapyškis

West of Raudonė is Panemunė Castle, barely visible through the trees along the Kaunas-Jurbarkas road. This residential castle-type building with its tiny windows and dark walls stands near ponds surrounded by romantic woodlands. The core of the present-day building was built in the beginning of the 17th century by a wealthy merchant from Hungary, Janusz Eperjesh. Lithuanian family Gelgudas acquired the Renaissance-Baroque castle in the 18th century, but a century later it was confiscated by Russian officials in reprisal for the family's role in the unfortunate 1831 rebellion.

The building underwent conservation work in the 1960s, and there is ongoing restoration of a section of the castle. This historic site now belongs to the Academy of Art in Vilnius and the visitors have the chance to climb one of its towers, visit the residential quarters, and walk around the lovely ponds that surround the building.

On the way back from Panemunė, we headed to the lovely Zy-



The unknown lovely villa of Terespolis, surrounded by an exotic park.



The majestic estate complex of Burbiškis, which every spring a famous tulip festival is held.

pliai estate, constructed in the mid-19th century. Several of the estate's buildings have been restored and the park is well maintained and is popular for use by wedding parties. Finally, our last stop was Zapyškis, a small village on the left bank of the Nemunas River along the Kaunas-Šakiai road. There you can see one of the oldest churches in Lithuania, the romantic red brick gothic Church of St. John the Baptist, sitting in an open field along the blue waters of the Nemunas. Zapyškis church dates back to the 16th century and is a reminder to the locals and travelers why Lithuania is indeed one of Europe's fairytale countries.

Labunava, Dotnuva and Terespolis

On our second day we decided to visit several manor houses north of Kaunas and Kedainiai. The first historic site to see was the priceless Labunava thick-walled tower in the middle of nowhere. This building is the only structure left of a manor complex built in the 16th century.

Post-war partisans used this tower as their headquarters for the struggle against the Soviet occupants. For those who are looking for authen-

ticity, peace and harmony, and a Lithuanian connection with nature, Labunava tower is the ideal place to hear how the earth is permeated



One of the most neglected manor houses of Lithuania, the elegant Apytalaukis residence.

with the singing of birds. Definitely a place not to be missed if you are travelling from Kaunas to Kėdainiai!

Heading further north, we stopped at Dotnuva. A visit to this place will put you in the geographic center of Lithuania. There you can see the Baroque Church of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (late 18th century). Also worth knowing is that the Agriculture Academy founded in the 1910s is located there, which has a villa behind the main building of the Academy. Further north, we saw the estate of Terespolis, the architecture (1909) of which is reminiscent of a suburban villa, owned by the Polish family Chrapowski. The villa has a neglected but exotic park, designed by a German gardener from Riga, Georg Kuphalt.

Baisiogala and Burbiškis

Baisiogala, which means “terrible place” is a small town near Šeduva. One of the most beautiful manor houses of northeastern Europe, built in the mid-19th century, is located in this town. The building’s lovely circular vestibule makes a deep impression on visitors, while a park and ponds surround the manor house. Its previous owners were the Komaras family, once central Lithuania’s wealthiest landowners. Today the building functions as a research center for breeding cattle.

Passing Šeduva with its old windmill, which was transformed into a well-known restaurant in 1967, we headed for the Burbiškis estate complex that belongs to the Daugvenė Cultural History Reserve. The 19th century building is surrounded by a picturesque landscape park with several ponds, white bridges and sculptures, among them – Vytautas the Great and Adam Mickiewicz. They provide an unforgettable experience about the lost world of Lithuania’s aristocracy dur-



A taste from the 18th century Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the grand Žeimiai manor house.

ing those romantic times. The interior of Burbiškis’ main building has not been cleared of its furnishings, library and paintings, so by visiting this place you get the “full package.”

Bistrampolis, Apytalaukis and Žeimiai

On the way back to Kaunas we stopped at the Bistrampolis estate. This is considered one of the most beautiful manor houses in Lithuania. Its neoclassical two-story building built in the 1840s has a porch decorated with arcades and columns, while the outbuildings include a granary and stables. Cultural events as well as wedding celebrations often take place at the Bistrampolis estate.

The Apytalaukis estate mansion from the late 19th century with its elegant architecture was unfortunately neglected and not in the best condition. It was designed by notable Polish architect Karol Kozłowski for the Zabiello family who owned the estate until WWII. The empty building, without doubt one of Lithuania’s loveliest manor

houses, awaits better times. Such a pearl cannot remain neglected by the state for long.

The last historic site seen during our trip was the 18th century neoclassicist manor house of the bishop of Livonia, Jozef Kazimierz Kosakowski at Žeimiai, 15 km north of the town of Jonava. The imposing two-story manor house had centuries-old charm surrounded by a grand horse stable, granary, ice-house and an unusual octagonal stone chapel.

A Lost Fascinating World

The roads are fine and the driving is pleasant, especially for passengers who get to enjoy the harmonious Lithuanian countryside. Exploring these estates, you get to experience the lost Polish-Lithuanian aristocratic world, a world that has vanished but has managed to leave its stamp in these priceless historic sites.

The Palanga Amber Museum

by Regina Makauskienė

The Palanga Amber Museum was established in 1963 in the palace of Count Feliksas Tiškevičius. The palace was built in 1897 and designed by German architect Franz Heinrich Schwechten. Surrounded by a beautiful botanical garden designed by the landscape architect Eduard François Andre, the museum has been in operation for over 50 years. It is one of the most popular museums in Lithuania, hosting not only amber exhibitions but also a variety of cultural events, including a summertime series of evening serenade concerts.

In 2013-15 the museum underwent a major restoration funded by

the European Union and the Lithuanian government. Finding reliable historical sources for authentic reconstruction of the palace was an important concern. Fortunately, an archive of technical drawings for the original palace construction project was found in Berlin, at the Secret Archives of Prussian Cultural Heritage (*Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz*), and this guided the restoration. Visitors to the museum are now treated to newly restored palace interiors. According to Romualdas Budrys, Director of the Lithuanian Art Museum, “Even though more than a hundred years have passed, this

palace still astounds us with its elegance and the impressive concordance of luxurious European architecture and its natural surroundings.”

Seven exposition halls are open to the public: the Hall of Special Events, the Red Hall, the Grand Hall, the Parlor of the Countess, the Blue Hall, the Young Count's Parlor, and the Small Hall. These representative spaces recreate the atmosphere of an aristocratic residence. The halls are decorated with works of art dating from the end of the 18th through the 19th centuries. Much of the art comes from the personal collections of Count Tiškevičius and other Lithuanian noblemen, while period furniture and additional art has been acquired from private sources.

How amber was formed

The amber exhibits in the museum recount the history of amber within the context of the earth's evolution. Because of the unique process by which it was formed, amber is an important source of information about the climatic conditions and the flora and fauna of the Eocene Epoch (56 to 34 million years ago). The amber forest grew in a warm and damp climate on the old Scandinavian continent between 40 and 55 million years ago. Conifers from the pine family, known in scientific literature by the name *Pinus Succinifera*, grew in a forest rich in subtropical plants, insects, and other



Palanga Amber Museum from the botanical park.

(Museum archives)



Grand salon at the museum, showing period furniture.

(Tomas Kapočius)

fauna. As the climate became warmer, the amber forming trees could not adapt to the new atmospheric conditions and they became very resinous. As these conifers died, large deposits of resin accumulated in the soil. With time, the build-up of overlying layers of sediment produced forces of sustained heat and high pressures, which gradually turned the resins to amber.

The museum preserves a unique collection of amber with inclusion—insects and impurities that fossilized in the hardening amber. On display are artifacts that span thousands of years, from amber and metal adornments recovered from archeological sites of the Neolithic period, to amber objects from 2nd to the 13th centuries, and more recently, 17th to the 19th centuries. Visitors can also see over 70 pieces of unusual amber that are valued for their impressive size, their form, for the material imbedded in them, or for their exceptional nuances of color. The largest piece of amber, called “Saulės akmuo” (the Sun Stone), weighs 3,524 grams (that’s 7.8 pounds!).

Amber inclusions

The Amber Museum’s collection of artifacts with inclusions (about 15,000 objects) is one of the largest and most scientifically valuable in the world. The resin of the conifers which grew 50 million years ago was a trap for insects and arachnids. One of the rarest pieces in the museum is a block of amber containing a small lizard! Even ancient

flora, such as blossoms, pollen and leaves have been found imbedded in resin.

While the internal organs of these “inclusion” organisms do not survive, surface structures have been preserved in minutest detail. Looking at one of these ancient creatures, it’s easy to mistake it for a momentarily still, but living insect, and one forgets that it’s actually 50 million years old. These inclusions allow scientists to describe and identify the living organisms that existed in the past. By comparing the morphology of current species with those that have been preserved in amber, scientists can trace the evolutionary process of the organisms. The museum displays its most unusual examples of these amber inclusions in modern showcases equipped with built-in magnifying lenses for the visitors.

Treasures from the Baltic coast

The oldest amber artifacts and raw material from the Neolithic period are displayed in the Hall of Archeology. They were discovered by Dr. R. Rimantienė, who was studying Neolithic camp sites near



Inclusions on display at the museum.

(Museum archives)



Amber with a plant inclusion from long, long ago. (Antanas Lukšėnas)

the coastal city of Šventoji. These amulets, ornaments and other examples of applied art expressed in amber give us a glimpse of ancient people and their world. Stone Age artifacts found in the town of Juodkrantė are on display. The northern edge of Juodkrantė, on the Curonian Bay, is also the source of the Richard Klebs collection, which was gathered during the years 1862-1899, when the German company *Stantien und Becker* was mining amber in the seabed. The so-called *Palangos lobis* (The Treasure of Palanga) provides more fascinating examples of amber artifacts from the Stone Age. Count Feliksas Tiškevičius collected this treasure trove over several years while digging for amber in coastal marshes.

Raw amber and amber artifacts produced by people living on the Baltic Sea were important for commerce with northern and southern neighbors. The many archeological discoveries on display in the museum help scholars determine which trade routes were used from Neolithic to more recent times.

Amber in art, jewelry and the world

A 17th century amber-inlaid monstrance from a church in the town of Seda, and a small amber al-

tar from an old church in the town of Tytuvėnai, dating to the 16th-17th centuries, occupy a place of honor in the museum. The museum also holds a collection of ancient documents about the craftsmen who worked in the amber workshops of Palanga. These workshops were important for the amber industry in czarist Russia. The museum also exhibits a late 19th century amber processing machine of Vladas Žilius and amber articles from Palanga from the period between the two World Wars.

The museum has a large hall dedicated to the works of modern master amber craftsmen and professional artists. A visitor to the museum can view amber adornments and fine works of art created by artists who have made Lithuania well-known in exhibition halls around the world. The works of these amber artists exhibit exceptional craftsmanship and design, incorporating carved details, silver and precious metals.

In 2015 the museum celebrated the 100-year anniversary of the birth of Feliksas Daukantas, a renowned



Amber brooch. (Alfredas Jonušas)

Lithuanian designer and jeweler. A retrospective exhibit of his works, titled “*Švytėjimas*” (Radiance), opened on April 26, 2015. Daukantas laid the foundations for a Lithuanian national school of design and his works have been exhibited throughout the world: in 1967 at EXPO-67 in Montreal; in 1970 at EXPO-70 in Osaka; in 1973 in Paris and Salzburg; and in 1974 in Linz and Vienna. Most recently, his work was on display at EXPO-2012 in South Korea, at which the Lithuanian pavilion received a silver medal.

Visitors to the Palanga Amber Museum can buy scientifically certified pieces of amber with inclusions, jewelry with amber, or other amber artifacts as well as a variety of souvenirs. There is wide selection of “Lithuanian gold” to suit any taste, and these treasures will always serve to remind visitors of Lietuva’s ancient archeological past and its beautiful living seashore.

Museum website: www.pgm.lt
Translated by Rimas Černius.



Spider in amber.

(Antanas Lukšėnas)

The Story of Baltic University (1946-1949)

by Helga Merits

Who would imagine that refugees who had lost everything would create a university so soon after WW II in an almost totally devastated city? The story is not widely known, so I decided to make a documentary film about it: *The Story of the Baltic University*. At the beginning of my research I only had the small study book from the Baltic University, which I had found among my father's papers. My father had passed away when I was still very young, so there was no possibility to ask him

for information. People whom I knew who had knowledge of the Baltic countries had not heard about it, and there was little to be found on the Internet. Happily, Estonians of my father's generation knew where to find information and some of them had been students at the University. I also tried to find Lithuanian and Latvian students who had attended, although it was not always easy to trace them. People from the three communities helped me with research and support. It was a joint effort. The

Lithuanian ambassador in Holland, Darius Semaška, forwarded the names and addresses of people who might know more about the Baltic University. Very soon I received the name of Pranas Jurkus, a former student living in Chicago. He not only had gathered material about the Baltic University, but Mr. Jurkus had kept in touch with former students. Every year on the 14th of March, the anniversary of opening day at the University, he would invite them to a celebration. In this way, Pranas Jurkus and other former students kept the memory of the Baltic University alive – even after all those years, as it had been so important to them.

How it all started

Baltic University was created in the city of Hamburg shortly after the end of WWII by academics from the three Baltic countries. Post-war Germany at the time was divided into four occupation zones, the British zone being one of them, and Hamburg was in this British zone. Hamburg was so heavily bombed during the war that some British officials called it the Hiroshima of Germany. Most of the city had been destroyed.

One of the first texts I read about the University was written by Robert Riggle, an UNRRA employee who was involved in the organization of the Baltic University for two years. Before the war he had been a teacher at a university in Ohio and therefore knew how difficult it was to have a good working university even in times of peace and plenty. He was incredulous when he heard about the plan of the Baltic professors. *"Frankly, I was aghast at such bravado. ... I must make it plain that at this time we hadn't a sheet of paper or pencil, nothing except the idea. I was immediately impressed with their courage and their will to survive and to achieve. ... As an American*



Students and faculty, 1948, Pinneberg. Professor Stanka is standing in front in the middle (with the hat or cap); on the right is professor Õpik, the Estonian rector. (VEMU archive, Toronto)

used to an abundance of everything, their fortitude and above all their determination to go forward, was amazing.” In this text Mr. Riggle describes how the Baltic academics, all refugees, managed to establish a university in the city of Hamburg, where it seemed impossible to find housing, equipment, furniture or even lightbulbs.

The Hamburg History Museum, which was only partly damaged in the War, was given to the University for lectures. Two camps consisting of wooden barracks were given to students and staff for dormitories. The barracks were in bad condition, but at least there was a place to sleep. On the 14th of March, a couple of months after the academics of the Baltic Countries had first been given permission to create a university, the Baltic University opened its doors. It consisted of eight faculties with 17 departments. There was a lack of coal to heat the rooms, books were still missing and paper was scarce, but students and staff were eager to start learning once again.

Professor Vladas Stanka and Joseph Laučka

One of the Lithuanian academics involved in the creation of the Baltic University was the famous law professor and barrister Vladas Stanka. He wrote to one of his friends in the spring of 1946, “And if you ask of us, how we are, then I would say: half-hungry, three-quarters shabby, and as a matter of fact, we should have been wholly hopeless. But we are not hopeless! ... if the peace could be maintained, then one or another of our hopes will be possibly realized.” In the same letter he writes about the Baltic University: “... I’m even elected as Lithuanian rector. But this position is connected with too many troubles, and I decided to renounce it. I’m accustomed to live quietly: to dream, to

write ...” He wanted to dream, but realized that practical things needed to be organized. As soon as the British authorities together with UNRRA agreed about the creation of the Baltic University, Prof. Stanka wrote to the United Lithuanian Relief Fund in the United States, asking for help. In a letter dated February 1946, the director of the Lithuanian Relief Fund, Mr. Joseph Laučka, wrote that he had informed American, Latvian and Estonian organizations about the Baltic University, and that they were exploring ways to organize a special committee named the American Committee for the Baltic University. Very soon the first shipment of books arrived in Hamburg.

Prof. Stanka, though he initially refused the position, became the Lithuanian rector, then one year later Vice-President, and in 1949, President of the Baltic University.

Problems

The Baltic University started out with promise, but soon problems appeared: not everyone liked the idea of a university for students of the Baltic countries. It was felt that people from the Baltic countries could and should go home. The word Baltic was dropped from the University’s name, and it became the Hamburg DP (Displaced Persons) University. Viktor Lapinskas, a former student, recounted in an interview about how Lithuanian Independence Day was celebrated in 1947: “*On February 16 we were not allowed to celebrate. We couldn’t gather and celebrate in a big group. We were encouraged to celebrate in each group separately. Each room had a celebration, and the American and British officials went from room to room to congratulate us, but never in the entire group, as they didn’t want to upset the Russians, as the Russians were allies.*”

By February 1947, the University had moved to Pinneberg, which was



Students hoisting Robert Riggle on their shoulders in appreciation, 1947. (Archive of Jacobs Ziedars)

not very far from Hamburg, into former *Luftwaffe* barracks. This was actually a huge improvement as the large buildings available at the site were still in good condition. Every nationality was housed in one building, where they studied and slept and where they could organize some of their own activities. There was time for sports, dances and music. Student Pranas Jurkus organized a Lithuanian student quartet. Eugenijus Čuplinskas, a violin player, formed a trio with other students. Eugenijus wrote about his friendship at the University with Jonas Švedas, pianist and composer, and Kostas Ostrauskas, a baritone singer. Together they gave concerts in the Lithuanian students’ residence hall and also in nearby Lithuanian DP camps.

Aldona Šmulkštys, who studied for three years at Baltic University, remembered it as the most beautiful place she could think of: “*We were young, we were very poor, the food was very bad, and we practically didn’t have anything. But this didn’t matter. We were idealistic. We believed in our future.*” According to the Lithuanian students living together in Pinneberg, the atmosphere was one of being together in one big family. The Lithuanian professors lived in the

same building as the students. Some of the faculty members were quite renowned. Pranas Jurkus remembers: *"There were the three professors Biržiska; Viktoras, Vaclovas and Mykolas. You have to imagine that Mykolas was one of the signers of the Act of Independence of Lithuania in 1918. Such a person, such a personality, and then, at the Baltic University you lived in the same building, you were eating together, and you were talking with him."*

The staff of the University, who had hoped that the move to Pinneberg would mean that they could continue and expand their activities, faced a difficult struggle to keep the University open. Great Britain was in need of cheap labor, and in the spring of 1947, students were urged by British authorities to stop studying and to find jobs in England. Only a few students left. In the summer of 1947, the University staff received a message that fewer students would be allowed to study and that teachers had to be dismissed.

The rectorate understood that the future of their university would not be in Germany, and they had to look for other options. The United Lithuanian Relief Fund of America tried again to help. Rev. dr. Joseph Koncius travelled across the United



Prof. Vladas Stanka (Šiaurės Rytai)

States looking for empty farms, offices, buildings – a place where the University could move to. The idea was to transplant the whole of Baltic University to the United States. Father Koncius found an empty town called Quoddy Village, which seemed to be a perfect fit. A hectic period of meetings, discussions and correspondence followed. But all these efforts were in vain: the War Assets Administration did not accept the bid to move the University to the Village. Further attempts to move the University also failed, and slowly, students and staff started to emigrate.

For a time, lectures continued and the staff managed to keep the University open. But in November

1948, a caravan of lorries appeared suddenly at the gate of Pinneberg: students were to be taken away to other camps. Professor Stanka wrote in a letter: *"We have had a rather stormy fortnight behind us: the fortnight of the desperate struggle for our existence ... the existence of our university. ... the lorries, which had to take away students, were already waiting, and the cause seemed to be hopeless. But then a miracle happened: the higher authorities came to Pinneberg, and after discussing the matter, we were allowed to continue our activities until October 1st 1949..."*

Finally, at the end of 1949, the University closed its doors. Students emigrated to Canada, Australia and the United States. Quite a few students received American scholarships. Aldona Šmulkštys received a scholarship from the Newman Foundation to study further at the University of Illinois at Urbana. There she received credits for her work at the Baltic University. She was not the only one to receive credits. The Baltic University was considered a good university. Professor Vytautas Černius, once a student at the Baltic University, recounts: *"When I started to study there I was young, I was kind of anxious, uncertain in some ways, and so the University provided a warm environment, where I felt comfortable. It directed me to the German University and from there to the American University."* Aldona Šmulkštys: *"I spent the best three years of my life at the Baltic University. It opened the gate to further knowledge, to further studies, to what I have achieved in life."*



2006 reunion of former Lithuanian students, with wives and guests. From left to right. First row: Ona Tunkūnaitė, Eugenijus Gerulis, Mrs. D. Bendikas, Jurgis Bendikas, Pranas Jurkus. Second row: Lilė Juozaitis, Danutė Eidukas, Marion Karalis, Eugenija Barškėtis, Karolina Kubilius, Aldona Čepėnas, Irena Levickas, Mrs. Miknaitis, Mrs. Baukus and Mindaugas Baukus. Third row: Mrs. Skiotys, Leonas Maskaliunas, E. Eidukas, Ed. Skiotys, V. Lapatinskas, (hard to see) A. Lingis, (high up with glasses) Vytautas Černius, (hard to see) Eligijus Kaminskas, Zigmąs Jakimčius, R. Butkūnas, Sigtas Miknaitis, V. Čepėnas.

Helga Merits' documentary film, "The Story of the Baltic University" will be shown in various cities in the United States and Canada in February of 2016. A screening of the film and discussion with the director and producer will be held as follows: February 6th, New York, Estonian House; February 13th, Toronto, Tartu College; February 20th, Chicago, Balzekas Museum; and February 21st, Chicago, Estonian House.

Living the Good Life in Lithuania (and making spurgos)

by June Molloy Vladička

I remember both of my grandmothers vividly. They were very different and yet had so much in common. My paternal grandmother was a rotund and jolly woman who loved her food and a glass or two of whiskey. She rarely brushed her hair and had no interest in fashion or make-up. She ate what might today be considered an unhealthy diet, unafraid as she was of butter, bacon lard, cream cakes and sweet jam on thick-cut bread. She lived a long and healthy life before her sudden passing at 85. I am convinced that her longevity and good health were centered around her in-souciance and the fact that she grew her own fruit and vegetables and made everything she ate from scratch. I remember the joy of picking raspberries in her garden, and how she would cut onions and lettuce for salads as she needed them. I dreamt that one day I would have a garden like hers and make delicious jam from plump, ripe fruit.

My maternal grandmother was stunningly beautiful and always well presented. She was full of love and would shower us with hugs and kisses whenever we would visit. She had a large family to feed on little means and was one of the most creative people I've ever encountered when it came to stretching what ingredients she had to make tasty and satisfying meals. She didn't have the luxury of space to grow her own food but shopped carefully and frugally, opting for cheaper cuts of meat, which she would transform

over many hours into dishes full of flavour. Her jello contained a touch too much water, and her ice cream was cut wafer thin, but she would never have guests for dinner without serving a dessert. She died quite young, at only 72. I wish I'd known her for longer but it is one of life's absolute certainties that we will lose the ones we love along the way. It was many years later, when I lost my own mother, that the reality of our impermanence really hit home, and I resolved to pack as much love and laughter into my life as possible.

I fell for Arūnas the first moment I saw him. He was tall and tanned, muscles bursting from under a snug-fitting white t-shirt. He'd been in the army, had lived in Portugal and had travelled extensively through Poland and Germany with his own business. He was only in

Ireland for a brief stint, taking the place of a friend who needed to go back to Lithuania for an extended trip. My window was short, so I pounced.

His brief stint in Ireland turned into ten years. We married and lived in Dublin, both working hard to pay the bills. We visited Lithuania often and, each time we came, we were drawn to the slower pace of life here. Arūnas is from a small country village where almost everyone grows their own vegetables and many people keep animals for milk, eggs and meat. For various reasons, including my mam's illness, we had become very conscious about the food we ate. Keeping up with what foods are and aren't good for you is dizzying but at the core of all the advice is one simple message – eat as little commercially processed food as pos-



The author in her greenhouse.

sible, opting instead for home-prepared foods. An opportunity arose to buy a house with a small plot of land here in Lithuania, and we decided to give country life a try. We haven't looked back since.

Lithuania is a modern country with modern infrastructure (it has the fastest broadband in Europe), but I can't help but draw inspiration from my two grandmothers in my new life here. We grow most of our own vegetables, and I make jam and wine from our fruit. We live on a relatively tight budget, so I have grown adept at creating delicious meals from simple and inexpensive ingredients. Many traditional Lithuanian dishes seem to be built around this approach. Although I don't know any vegetarians, people here eat lots of meatless meals, using curd cheese as a protein alternative. Even meals that contain meat typically contain less of it than would meals back in Ireland. Slices of pork are flattened and coated with seasoned crumbs to make crisp and delicious *karbonadai*. Ground meat is mixed with cooked rice to fill cabbage leaves for *balandėliai*. *Kugelis* can vary depending on what's available, ranging from meat-free to containing small pieces of meat or maybe chicken wings or drumsticks. No one is afraid of butter, lard or sour cream. Food is humble, wholesome and extremely tasty.

Curd cheese doughnuts or spurgos

When I first heard about curd cheese doughnuts (*spurgos* in Lithuanian), I thought they sounded very strange. I had a vision of a chunk of cheddar sandwiched between two sides of a sugary ring doughnut, similar to a filled bagel. I'd been making cheesecake with cream cheese (which is really just curd cheese blended with cream) for years, so I don't know how it was so difficult for me to get my



Curd cheese doughnuts, spurgos.

head round. It wasn't until I tasted one of the little fluffy delights freshly made at a farmers' market here in Lithuania that I was sold on the idea.

Lithuanian curd cheese doughnuts are actually much easier to make than their American counterparts as they don't use any yeast and so don't require any time to rise. Instead, they get that wonderful airy centre from a combination of whisked egg and a little baking powder. The batter can be whipped up and ready for frying in less than 15 minutes.

The hardest part about making these doughnuts is probably going to be sourcing Lithuanian-style curd cheese. Also known as quark in Eng-

lish, curd cheese comes in a variety of styles and can vary considerably from country to country. Lithuanian curd cheese is quite dry and fine. It is available in many countries in Baltic, Polish, Russian or Eastern European food stores. Look for *varškė* (Lithuanian), *twaróg* (Polish) or *biezpienu* (Latvian). It comes in a variety of packaging, from loose bags to little blocks—a bit like Philadelphia cream cheese.

Recognising that true Lithuanian curd cheese might not be universally available, I set to finding some alternatives. I have often seen Lithuanian curd cheese translated into English as cottage cheese but really the two are nothing similar. Cottage cheese is usu-



Deep frying the doughnuts.

ally covered in a milky liquid and the pieces are quite large. That said, the tastes are similar, so I decided to test the recipe using cottage cheese, strained and mashed to resemble the consistency of Lithuanian curd cheese. The results were not good. While the flavour was similar, the batter was too wet, and so the balls did not hold their shape. They were also quite heavy with grease. I tried to adjust the consistency with more flour, but the resultant batter was gluey and the doughnuts tough and chewy. My conclusion – cottage cheese does not work as an alternative to Lithuanian curd cheese in these doughnuts.

I asked a group of Lithuanian cooks in the US what they used as alternatives to curd cheese and suggestions included farmers' cheese, ricotta and Spanish queso fresco. Unfortunately I couldn't get my hands on any of these to test them, so I can't vouch for the results, but from what I can see farmers' cheese looks like the best alternative.

Lithuanian doughnuts are much smaller than American doughnuts and are almost always round balls. They are so light and airy it is very hard to eat just one!

INGREDIENTS:

For the dough:

400 g | 14 oz Lithuanian-style curd cheese or farmers' cheese

50 g | 2 oz sugar

4 eggs



They're just too good!

200 g | 7 oz all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking powder

To fry:

1 liter | 1 quart sunflower oil

Note that you will need either a deep fat fryer or a candy thermometer to perfectly fry your doughnuts.

To serve:

Powdered sugar, for dusting

METHOD:

1. Place the curd cheese, sugar and eggs in a mixing bowl. Whisk together until smooth, pale and creamy – about 5 minutes.

I use an electric hand mixer for this, but you could also use a stand mixer or even a hand whisk. Do not use the blade of a food processor, as this will blend the ingredients but not incorporate the air required for a fluffy doughnut.

2. Add the flour and baking powder and gently fold into the cheese mixture with a metal spoon.

3. Attach a candy thermometer to the side of a 2 quart saucepan, add the oil and set the pot over a high heat until the temperature reaches 340° F. If using a deep fat fryer, ensure your oil is clean and has not previously been used for frying meat or other strong-tasting foods, as this will alter the taste of your doughnuts.

4. Taking 1 tablespoon of dough at a time, form the dough into small balls about the size of a golf ball. This quantity of dough should make twenty 1.5 oz doughnuts. Use slightly damp hands to smooth the edges of the balls so that they form an even crust.

5. When the oil has reached the required temperature, carefully place your dough balls into the oil with a metal spoon. Don't overfill the pan as the doughnuts will move about and expand while cooking.

6. Cook the doughnuts for 7 minutes, ensuring the temperature

of the oil does not fluctuate – adjust the heat as needed to maintain the temperature. Due to the baking powder, the doughnuts will “fizz” quite a bit and move around the pan. They will also turn themselves over several times during cooking, ensuring even cooking on both sides. (If you notice that any of your doughnuts are not flipping by themselves, just tip them over with a metal spoon.)

7. When the doughnuts are cooked, carefully lift out of the oil with a metal spoon. Transfer to a plate lined with a paper towel to drain and cool.

8. Continue to cook the doughnuts in batches until they are all cooked. Note that the mixture keeps well in the fridge for 1-2 days, so if you prefer you can keep some dough and make a fresh batch of doughnuts another day.

9. Allow the doughnuts to cool for at least 20 minutes before eating. This ensures that the outside is dry and crisp and the inside light and fluffy.

10. Just before serving, dust the doughnuts generously with powdered sugar.

11. These doughnuts are best eaten on the day they are made. However, they will keep until the next day if stored in an airtight container once fully cooled. Ideally, don't dust them with sugar before storing, but instead dust them just before serving.

12. When the oil has fully cooled, pour it back into a container (ideally a glass bottle), close the lid tightly and save for another use.

Editor's note: All photographs by the author. For more information visit June's blog, www.myfoododyssey.com, winner of the “Best Blog by the Diaspora” prize at Blog Awards Ireland 2015.

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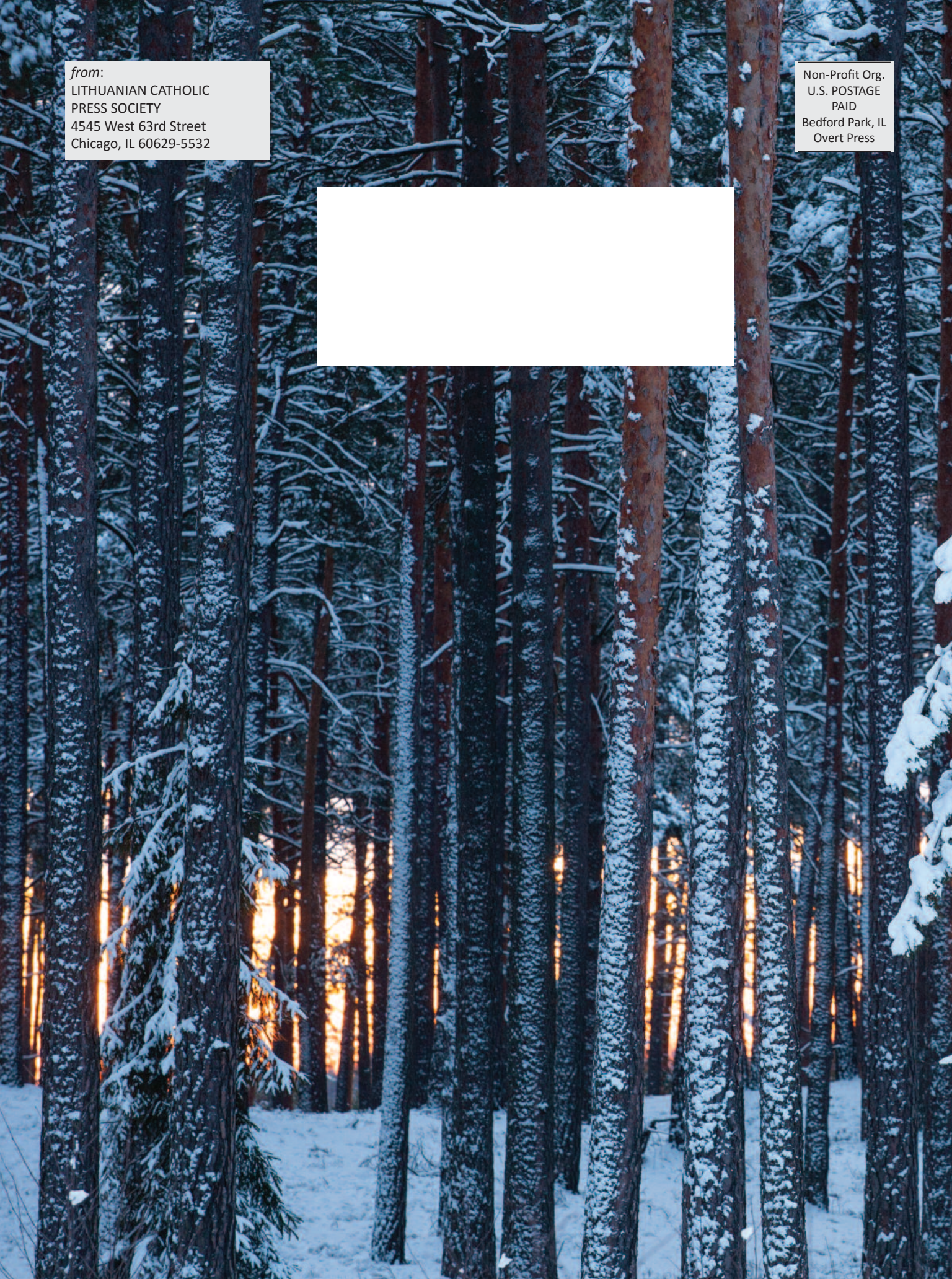
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Lithuanian Portraits



The “Perkūnas” amber lump, weighing 3,820 g. The largest sea-derived piece of amber in Lietuva. (*Mizgiris Amber Museum in Nida*)

That's a spicy amber ball !

A photograph of a snowy forest. Tall, thin trees with dark bark are covered in snow. In the background, a warm, golden light source, possibly the sun, is visible through the trees, creating a soft glow. The ground is covered in a layer of snow.

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