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from the editor

Dear Reader,

At the start of the year 2023, we have two important dates to commemorate and celebrate. One is the 100th anniversary of the Klaipėda Revolt, the outcome of which was the annexation of the Klaipėda Region to the Republic of Lithuania in January 1923. Klaipėda, Lithuania's port city and the third largest city in the country, is also the oldest city in the present-day territory of Lithuania. It was established in 1252. However, it was not called Klaipėda at the time and for many hundreds of years later. It was called Memel, as was the Nemunas River. For centuries the city was ruled by Germans, and during the First World War, Klaipėda was occupied by the Russian Imperial Army. Under the Treaty of Versailles (1919), the city and the Klaipėda region were transferred to the Entente. On behalf of the Entente States, Klaipėda was governed by a French representative. In 1923, after the Lithuanian government and the Lithuanian Rifle Union staged a revolt of the inhabitants of the Klaipėda region, the city was captured on January 15, 1923, and formally annexed to the Republic of Lithuania shortly afterward. During the revolt, twelve Lithuanian men were killed. One of the articles in this issue is about one of those heroes, Algirdas Jasaitis.

We also commemorate and celebrate the 700th anniversary of the mention of the name of Vilnius in written sources. On January 25, 1323, Gediminas, the ruler of Lithuania, a country in between two cultures – Byzantine and European - wrote a letter to West European cities and their people inviting them to come to Vilnius, live and practice their trades and professions there. It was an attempt to westernize Lithuania. I will quote a portion of Gediminas's letter here:

"We open our land, dominion, and kingdom to every person of goodwill. To knights, arms bearers, merchants, healers, smiths, carpenters, cobblers, fur-makers, millers, storekeepers, and each person of mechanical arts — to all those named above, we want to distribute land to each according to his dignity. These colonists who will wish to come, let them cultivate our land for ten years without taxes. Let merchants come and leave freely without any taxes and duties, with all impediments completely removed. If knights and arms bearers will want to remain, I will grant them incomes and possessions, as is proper. Let all these people enjoy the civil law of the city of Riga."

Gediminas instructed the receivers of his letters to make copies of them and spread the news. And so, from his letters, we know that the glorious city of Vilnius was already standing in 1323, and it is older than 700 years. It is a city of many cultures. It is a city with a complicated history and it is also a city that many who visit fall in love with.

I hope that everyone who has not been there yet will have a chance to visit and enjoy its beauty and rich history.

Karilė Vaitkutė
Editor

Remembering the Heroes of the Klaipėda Revolt

Algirdas Joseph Jesaitis

Professor Emeritus

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January 15, 1923 is one of the most important dates in Lithuanian history. On this day, Klaipėda was captured by Lithuanian rebels and de facto annexed to the Republic of Lithuania. It was one of the bravest and most successful military operations and the reason why Klaipėda and its region are part of Lithuania today.

On January 1, 1923, the Supreme Committee for the Salvation of Lithuania Minor issued a petition to protect the Lithuanians of the region from German persecution. Under complete secrecy, a Special Detachment was formed in Lithuania, consisting of volunteer soldiers and officers and the riflemen of the Vilkaviškis, Kaišiadorys, and Panevėžys. The rebel army consisted of 40 officers, 584 soldiers of the regular army, 455 riflemen, and approximately 300 inhabitants of the Klaipėda region. The operation was led by a counterintelligence officer Jonas Polovinskas-Budrys.

Lithuanians killed in the Klaipėda Revolt: Capt. Eduardas Noreika, Lt. Viktoras Burokevičius, PVT Jonas Petkus, PVT Jonas Simonavičius, PVT Povilas Trinkūnas, PVT Adolfas Viliūnas, Military School cadet Vincas Stašelis, Militia School student Vincas Vilkas, Rifleman Algirdas Jasaitis, Rifleman Floras Lukšys, Rifleman Jonas Pleškys, and Rifleman Antanas Ubavičius.



The Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania Minor. Sitting, from the left: Vilius Šaulinskis, Jurgis Lėbartas, Martynas Jankus (Committee Chairman), and Jonas Vanagaitis; standing, from the left: pilot Steponas Darius, Antanas Ivaškevičius Aivas (both Lithuanian Americans), Aleksandras Marcinkevičius, and Juozas Pronckus.



Some participants of the Klaipėda Revolt

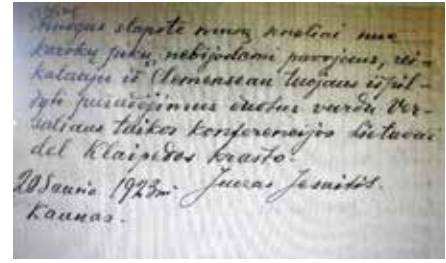
Algirdas Jurgis Jesaitis, born in Warsaw on November 27, 1907, died as a heroic Rifleman in Klaipėda in the early hours of January 15, 1923. His father, Juozas Palemonas Jesaitis (nee Jasaitis,) wrote the following telegram to the Paris government demanding freedom for Klaipėda after learning of the death of his second-born Rifleman.

“My son Algirdas, a 15 years old high school student, despite official government bans, volunteered to help Klaipėda residents to overthrow the 600-year-long yoke of captivity. On January 15, he was killed by a French weapon. When burying my dead son, in the name of the French soldiers who in 1812 were fleeing from Russia, starving and naked, and our ancestors hid them from cossacks spikes, in spite of the danger, I demand that Clemenseau would immediately fulfill the promises given in the Versailles Peace Conference to Lithuania regarding the Klaipėda Region. Dated: January 20, 1923, Kaunas. Signed: Juozas Jesaitis”

Algirdas, was a determined young lad, desperate for the love and respect of his patriotic father, Juozas Palemonas, and for his beloved new country. At age ten, in turbulent 1917 Vilnius, where Juozas was the Director of the Agricultural Machinery Firm, Vilija, he stepped on a German land mine along a railroad track. He survived but lost his leg below the knee to amputation. No doubt, this second-born son felt an urgent need to demonstrate to his dad, his older brother, and his schoolmates that he could walk unimpeded in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, Jurgis, of Stanaičiai.

And indeed, these steps were broad and brave. Juozas and Jurgis were arrested in 1897 by brutal Tsarist gendarmes for their book smuggling activities. Jurgis, at Sunday mass when Juozas was arrested, was later sentenced to house arrest on his farm. But Juozas, barely older than Algirdas when he fell, spent a year starving, brutally abused, in solitary confinement at the Tsar’s Kalvarija prison, only to be exiled to Odessa to await his potentially mortal sentence. But fate had mercy because the Tsar rescinded the Lithuanian language book ban, and Juozas was allowed to return to his native land, get his law degree in Warsaw, start his family, and give life to Kazimieras and then Algirdas.

Algirdas was the first to answer the call for volunteers



Letter by Juozas Jesaitis, father of Algirdas Jesaitis, a rifleman killed during the Klaipėda Revolt. Photo from the Jesaitis Family archive

by his commander, Capt. Eduardas Noreika. The mission was to take the Althof manor, where the French occupation force was quartered. After successfully taking the manor in a surprise attack, a French counterattack ensued. Algirdas was cut down by machinegun fire as the first to reach an enemy machinegun nest. He fell allowing his comrade to knock out the gunner so their commander could redirect fire back at the enemy. Algirdas was lost in battle in that bitterly cold and dark blizzard.

He was found only after daylight when it was much too late.

Juozas, Kazimieras, deep in their grief, sat with his mother Zofia Clementina Oginskaitė Jesaitienė, who openly wept through his memorial service at Aušra Gymnasium. Algirdas was buried next to his commander, Capt. Eduardas Noreika, in the Kaunas Municipal Cemetery near other fallen heroes of the new republic of Lithuania.

Algirdas' journey and the family's war with the Russian and German oppressors were not over. The Bolsheviks announced that they didn't want to allow Lithuanian heroes honor and peace of gravestones at the Kaunas cemetery and would turn it into a park. But before they leveled it and destroyed the memorials, Juozas retrieved and reburied his son in Garliava's Jonučiai Cemetery. He, Algirdas, and the oldest son, Rifleman Kazimieras, lie side by side, where Algirdas' Vyčio Kryžius [Knight's Cross] gravestone is now proudly and honorably restored.

Juozas and his sons Algirdas and Vytautas Jonas, also known as Justinas Jasaitis – Naktis, fought against the inhumanity of the German and Russian oppressors. They were joined by Juozas' brother Domininkas and Viktoras and their families in this cause. They all had to wait for close to a century in their graves to call out and celebrate Lithuania's Freedom. Now, I, Algirdas Juozas, who heard the allied bombs dropping on Germany from my mother, Jadvyga's womb, as our family fled, have the great privilege to tell their story in honor of Lithuania's brave son, Algirdas Jurgis Jesaitis.



The rededicated sunburst- and Vytis Cross-adorned gravestone of Algirdas Jurgis Jesaitis, (1907-1923) is flanked on the left by the gravestone of Jurgis and Ona Jasaitis and on the right by the great grandson of Jurgis and Ona, Colonel U. S. Army (retired) Andrew Victor Jasaitis. Algirdas, only 15 years old was one of the first to fall in Klaipėda one hundred years ago. He was the grandson of Jurgis and the second born son of Juozas Jesaitis and his wife, Zofia Oginskaitė Jesaitienė. Juozas changed his name from Jasaitis to Jesaitis after his return from imprisonment and exile in Odesa in order to evade persecution by the Tsarist and Soviet regimes for his Lithuanian patriotism. Virginius Jasaitis left, more distantly related, stands between Jurgis/Ona's gravestone and that of Katrytė Jasaitytė, Juozas' youngest sister and aunt to Algirdas. Algirdas Jurgis was the uncle of the author, Algirdas Joseph (nee Juozas) Jesaitis.



Members of the Chicago Riflemen Unit at the grave of Jonas Budrys in the Lithuanian National Cemetery



A medal and certificate were issued to Algirdas Joseph Jesaitis at the memorial service in Kaunas on January 13, 2023. Photo from the Jesaitis Family archive

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE LITHUANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY 23RD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Birutė Kairienė

In October 2022, the Lithuanian language could be heard spoken in St. Petersburg, Florida, as members of the Lithuanian American Community (LAC) were arriving to attend the Second Session of the LAC 23rd Board of Directors (the Board). Guests from Canada and Lithuania participated as well. In 2021, the new Executive Board Presidium was elected. Its members are as follows: Austėja Sruoga – President; Birutė Kairienė – Secretary; Almantas Galvanuskas, Gintautas Steponavičius, and Edita Bužėnienė – Presidium members.

The local Organizing Committee, Donata Koverienė, and members of the St. Petersburg Lithuanian American Community spent a great amount of time working so that the Session would be successful and memorable. Entertainment, such as boat rides on the Tampa Bay, sunset viewings, and a visit to Gintaras Karosas's homestead was organized. Mr. Karosas is a creator of artwork that features Lithuanian symbols. He has created around 100 different Vytis coats of arms. One of them is being used by the Lithuanian Railways.

The LAC Session participants were greeted by the event hosts. Three displays introduced everyone to the most active non-profit organizations: Lithuanian Research and Studies Center (Director Kristina Lapienyte), Lithuanian Athletic Union of North America (President Laury-

nas Misevičius), and the Lithuanian Foundation (Chairpersons Tauras Bublys and Audronė Pavilčius Karalius). The leaders of these organizations had an opportunity to acquaint the Session attendees with their activities.

Prior to the start of the Session, there was another surprise awaiting: the viewing of a truly noteworthy documentary film, "Lithuanian Liberty Bell", made by Arvydas Rencelis. (If you wish to show this film to the members of your LAC Chapter, please contact the LAC Cultural Board Vice President Giedrė Knieža by email: kultura@javlb.org.)

The need to adapt to the present times presents the LAC with many challenges. Those challenges were addressed in sunny St. Petersburg. The LAC National Board's main task is to determine the directions and methods of its activities in accordance with its rules, regulations, and bylaws. At the beginning of a new three-year term, the elected Board members can choose one of the ten Committees (Educational, Cultural, Financial, Organizational Affairs, Public Affairs, Human Services, Youth affairs, Religious Affairs, etc.) to serve based on their professions or qualifications. They work in their chosen Committee throughout the year trying to answer questions that arise. This year the Board approved a number of important resolutions and adopted one resolution relat-





ing to US politicians. All resolutions passed in this Session can be found in the publication following this article.

This year's session was special as electronic vote counting was used for the first time. This voting method was introduced by the Presidium member Almantas Galvanauskas; it was unanimously approved by all members of the Presidium and implemented during the Session. It should be noted that "the first pancake didn't burn," and, with a few improvements, this voting method will be used in future sessions. This year, another "first time" was the simultaneous activities of the LAC Session and the meeting of the members of the Lithuanian American Youth Association. Later, the representatives of both organizations met. It was extremely important for both, the Board and the Youth Association. It is expected that closer cooperation and a better understanding of one another will develop. The next LAC Session will take place together with the Youth Association annual meeting at the same place, presumably in Denver, Colorado, in the fall of 2023.

During the 2023 Session, Arvydas Urbonavičius, the President of the LAC National Executive Board, will provide a report on the work accomplished. He emphasized that the Board works in accordance with the LAC Development Plan adopted by the Board. At the present time, the most attention is being paid to boosting the activities of the LAC Chapters, encouraging young people to join the LAC, and searching for financial resources. The Development Plan Commission Chairperson Janina Udrienė introduced the Plan in more detail. Other LAC vice-chairmen also submitted their annual work reports. During the last meeting, participants summarized the results of the Session and talked about the problems that were encountered and the ways to improve the organization's progress. We are willing to cooperate and hope that we are all working toward the same goal.

More information about the LAC activities, structure, statutes, and rules, as well as contact details of the LAC Board, can be found on the website: javlb.org.

New Fund Established at the Lithuanian Foundation

In 2022 the Lithuanian Foundation celebrated its 60th anniversary. The anniversary year was generous for the Lithuanian Foundation and capped off by the newly established Adelė and Vincas Benokraitis and Ona and Pijus Vaičaitis Scholarship Fund. This donor-directed fund was established by Nijolė and Vitalius Benokraitis in memory of their parents, with a contribution of \$200,000. The interest earned by this donor-directed fund will be used for student scholarships. The Foundation currently has 118 donor-directed funds. Laima Apanavičienė spoke to the founders of the new fund, Nijolė and Vitalius Benokraitis, about what prompted them to set up this fund for students and why they chose the Lithuanian Foundation.



Nijolė Vaičaitytė waiting to bring home the family milk quota in Hanau DP camp, c 1949

At the end of 2022, you established the Adelė and Vincas Benokraitis and Ona and Pijus Vaičaitis Scholarship Fund at the Lithuanian Foundation. How did the idea to establish this fund come about?

When we were growing up, our parents always emphasized the importance of higher education as an avenue for upward mobility. Over the years, we have donated to our U.S. undergraduate and graduate alma maters, but finally decided to provide some resources for Lithuanian students. We established the scholarship fund in memory and honor of our parents, who made enormous sacrifices to support us and our sib-

lings throughout college, producing two children with PhDs, a physician, and two children with undergraduate degrees.

Why did you choose the Lithuanian Foundation?

We applaud education as one of the Foundation's top priorities "to ensure the continuity of the richness of our Lithuanian heritage." We liked its well-organized and informative Website, including the clear presentation of annual financial reports, modest administrative costs, and providing the names of students who have received scholarships, where they study, and so on. During our initial contacts, the staff, particularly Jūratė Mereckis and Laima Apanavičienė, were welcoming and responsive. (We hope that the low number of female board members at the Foundation is a fleeting situation.)

Commemorating your parents makes us want to hear the short stories of their lives.

After marrying in 1928, Adelė and Vincas Benokraitis lived on their farm in Keturkaimis near Kudirkos Naumiestis. They, their two daughters, aged 15 and 5, and 4-year-old son Vitalius fled Lithuania during the war to the French zone in Germany, avoiding the Displaced Persons (DP) camps in the American and British zones. Vincas worked on a farm in Germany, while Adelė was employed in a nearby bicycle shop. The younger children went to a German elementary school, while an older daughter attended a post-secondary school in Tubingen.

After getting married in Kaunas in 1936, Ona and Pijus lived on the intergenerational Vaičaitis family farm in Stakiai. They were relatively affluent farmers, a



Nijolė's family in Hanau DP camp in 1947

group that was targeted by invading Soviet Communist armies during World War II. Pijus was active in an auxiliary branch of the armed forces (similar to the U.S. National Guard), another targeted group. When they fled Lithuania, Ona and Pijus had a 5-year-old son and nine-month-old Nijolė. Another son was born in Germany en route to the (DP) camp in Hanau. Traveling from Lithuania by wagon, foot, and later by train, Ona, her younger brother, her mother, Pijus, and the children finally arrived in Hanau. At the DP camp, Pijus took advantage of limited training opportunities in auto mechanics; Ona took nursing classes.

Both families immigrated to the United States on the same Army ship in 1949, two months apart. The Vaičaitis family arrived with only one beat-up suitcase and settled in South Boston. (Nijolė remembers sleeping on the ground of the Grand Central Terminal in New York, with lots of gawking passers-by, until a train for Boston arrived the next day). The Benokraitis family first lived in very crowded quarters in Brooklyn with an aunt and uncle who immigrated to New York after World War I. A year later, they moved to and remained in Cleveland, always living near a Lithuanian parish even when parishes were being shuttered.

In Cleveland, Adelė worked for General Motors, sewing automobile seat covers, while Vincas was a bottler for a brewery. They enjoyed many years of watching and participating in the lives of their five grandchildren, who grew up in Cleveland and Chicago. Ona and Pijus toiled as dishwashers, laborers, and in sweatshops. Besides low wages, some of these jobs (for both families) were especially stressful because they were based on piecework (workers were paid a fixed rate for each unit produced). After decades of back-breaking labor at a sugar refinery, the company laid off Pijus a month before he was eligible for retirement to avoid paying a pension. In the early 1970s, he and Ona moved to Largo, Florida, to be closer to one of their sons, a physician, their daughter-in-law, and three young grandchildren.

Despite meager earnings and high tariffs, Adelė, Vincas, Ona, and Pijus routinely sent packages to relatives in Lithuania. All died in their 80s, never having had the opportunity and health to visit independent Lithuania. Their offspring, however, have enjoyed many trips to their parents' (and our) homeland.

What does it mean to you and your family to be Lithuanian? Is it easy to be Lithuanian in a foreign country?

Developing and maintaining our Lithuanian heritage has often been challenging. From elementary school to high school, we were constant translators, sometimes arguing with merchants who overcharged or otherwise cheated our parents and relatives. For Ona and Pijus, poverty meant eight people living in a three-room, dilapidated apartment overrun with cockroaches and rats, limited usage of electricity to save money, and walking up to five miles to school and elsewhere because bus fare cost a nickel. In South Boston, Nijolė and her brothers walked extra blocks from school almost every day to elude rock-throwing Irish kids who resented the most recent immigrants ("Go back where you came from, you dirty DPs!"). We often grumbled about going to Lithuanian school on Saturdays because our peers were playing outside, watching TV, or participating in local sports.

In adolescence, other Lithuanian activities such as scouts, folk dance practices (*tautiniai šokiai*), and church choral rehearsals competed with English-speaking after-school and weekend events. Vitalius played accordion for the Grandinėlė folk dance group and was a member of the Neo-Lithuania band in Cleveland. In adulthood, and especially because we lived far from our parents and relatives, it was very difficult to raise our children, Gema and Andrius, to speak Lithuanian, to celebrate holidays and endorse traditions that differ from the host society, and to navigate between both cultures. U.S. diversity has increased considerably over the years, but if we had a



Vitalius' parents with Nijolė and Gema, c 1973

dollar for every time that people mispronounced, misspelled, or hesitated to pronounce our names, we could have retired many years earlier.

Despite these and other difficulties, we are proud of our Lithuanian culture, history, values, and traditions. We thank our parents for their courage and fortitude in building a new life from scratch in a foreign land. Among many other benefits, our Lithuanian identity has greatly enriched our lives by giving us a sense of community, an appreciation of strong family ties, lifelong friendships, respect for other cultures, and tools to overcome adversity and make sacrifices in achieving personal and career goals.

Upon your request, the scholarships of the Adelė and Vincas Benokraitis and Ona and Pijus Vaičaitis donor-directed fund will be awarded to Lithuanian academic youth. Did you choose to establish the scholarship fund because you care about the future of Lithuanian youth?

We have been delighted to read about many young Lithuanians' accomplishments in publications such as

Draugas, Draugas News, Bridges, and Lithuanian Heritage. Nonetheless, assimilation into U.S. society can dilute crucial values, such as delaying gratification to achieve long-term goals and success, particularly through education.

We are especially concerned about talented but impoverished children growing up in Lithuania. Because of Russia's occupation and invasion of Ukraine, war is always imminent. Such looming threats create anxiety, deplete national resources, and encourage short-term gratification rather than long-term investments in education.

An interesting detail is that in the contract, you state that girls are to be given preference in the awarding of the Adelė and Vincas Benokraitis and Ona and Pijus Vaičaitis named scholarships. Why?

We support both sexes, but women typically experience more educational barriers and sexism and enjoy fewer resources despite their motivation, ability, and dedication. Even at professional levels, and with a Ph.D. in the higher-paying STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), women have greater difficulty advancing to higher ranks.

Adelė and Ona, especially, often said that one of their greatest disappointments was not being able to receive a higher education when they were growing up.

You have worked with young people for many years. What is it about today's young people that fascinates you?

Unfortunately, many U.S. youth experience poverty, drugs, health problems, gun violence, mother-only homes, inferior schools, and myriad related problems. Despite such obstacles, some of my best students



Nijolė's parents, Vitalius, Nijolė, and Gema, 1970



Vitalius, his parents, and Gema, 1969

worked hard, attended college while being employed, cared for aging parents and grandparents, paid their own expenses, and joined local community outreach organizations to help others. We have a great deal of respect for such determined and diligent youth.

We commend U.S.-born Lithuanian children who speak fluent Lithuanian, participate in many Lithuanian activities while maintaining stellar grades in high school and college, engage in politics, work on environmental issues, and volunteer in various charitable organizations that benefit the public.

We have also been very impressed with the Lithuanian-born youth that we have met personally and have read about in the Lithuanian press. Among other admirable traits, they prize close ties with their parents and extended family members, are politically and socially active, value national independence and self-reliance, are compassionate toward others, often speak three or more languages, and are optimistic about the future.

What would you wish for the future winners of your scholarship?

Congratulations to the past, current, and future recipients of the Lithuanian Foundation's scholarships! Well done! We wish you much success and happiness throughout your lives. Based on almost 40 years of being a university professor (in Sociology and Criminology), and Vitalius' shorter span in higher education teaching and directing programs in computing, I could write a chapter in response to this question but here is my abbreviated advice for academic success for future recipients:

1. **Priorities.** Always keep your goals in sight. Attending class regularly is essential because there is no substitute for classroom instruction. Don't let your social life and other distractions take priority over your academic life. Missing a party or other social get-together won't have the same consequences as missing an exam, assignment, or other academic deadlines.

2. **Tenacity.** Remember that you are in college to earn a degree. Don't give up if your instructors seem unreasonable or too demanding. No matter how tired you are, always complete all assignments and be prepared for class. View setbacks, such as an unexpected low grade, as an opportunity to learn and to change your study strategies rather than indicators of your ability, motivation, or worth.

3. **Patience.** Long-term goals worth accomplishing take commitment and time. Don't abandon your goals because of impatience or occasional failures. Instead, delay gratification, avoid temptations that can affect your performance and grades, and have faith that your perseverance will be rewarded.



The wedding of the founders of the Scholarship Fund in 1967. From the left: Vincas and Adelė Benokraitis, Nijolė Vaičiūtytė and Vitalius Benokraitis, and Ona and Pijus Vaičiūtis

4. **Civility and courtesy.** Civility and courtesy cost nothing, but bring many dividends. Don't interrupt, talk over others, and complain about or ridicule classmates, faculty, or administrators. Always come to class on time, don't leave early, and turn off your cell phone! Other annoying behaviors that many faculty complain about include disrespecting classmates whose attitudes differ from your own, hostility toward constructive criticism, side conversations during a lecture, grumbling about how hard college is, and begging for extra credit when you haven't done the necessary work. Avoid grumblers, whiners, and negative classmates. The students who deride faculty are almost always those who study the least, miss many classes, don't do the necessary work, and have myriad excuses for missing tests, exams, and other requirements (e.g., a grandparent always seems to die every semester just before final exams). Always feel free to consult instructors and ask for help, but do so during office hours or other times designated on your syllabi.

5. **Resources.** Take advantage of internships; tutoring, writing, and career centers; research and teaching assistantships; study abroad programs, and other campus resources such as your college library and health center. Whether you are native-born or an international student, include campus cultural events in your recreational activities.

The above advice can be summed up best by one of Adelė's favorite and often-repeated aphorisms regarding life in general and higher education in particular: *Nemesk kelio dėl takelio.*

War Refugee Family Archive Finds Home at the Prominent Library in Lithuania

Barbara Conaty

Anyone working on family history documents eventually has to face the problem of long-term conservation and preservation of the original archive created by all the participants. Over the years, I have published five books describing the Zavkevičius/Kongiel Family (ZKF) stories and shared them with the families and several libraries. In 2022, the work was completed. Because the originals are in the Polish, Lithuanian, German, Russian, and English languages, the archive needed an international home where researchers and interested members of the public would have access to them.

Because of a happy circumstance that occurred in 1994, the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (Lietuvos Mokslų Akademijos Vrublevskių Biblioteka – LMAVB) became the recipient of the ZKF archive in 2022. The saga began when I met LMAVB librarian Birutė Railienė when she was a Soros Fellow at the Library of Congress. As a catalog librarian, I volunteered to be her work mentor. We kept in touch with coffee dates when I visited Lithuania from time to time. In June 2022, I was able to tour the Wroblewski Library. In appreciation for the courtesy, I donated my most recent book to the Wroblewski Library represented that day by Ana Vencloviėnė, the assistant head of the Acquisitions Department.



Barbara Conaty and her sister Stefanija Chreptavičienė review the contents of the donated ZKF archive. Kaunas, November 6, 2022. Photo by Joe Conaty



Deputy Director for Science Dr. Rima Cicėnienė greeted Joe and Barbara Conaty at the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. Vilnius, November 7, 2022



Stefanija and Barbara with Dr. Birutė Railienė, head of the Bibliography Unit, connected Barbara to Library staff, thus leading to the donation a few months later.

Realizing my work was based on a significant amount of documents and photos, she asked about my plans for preserving the family's archive. Her query came just in time, as I had been considering reaching out to American institutions to identify a new home for these unique materials. The cardboard boxes and informal filing system that worked for me for decades were about to be transformed.

In short order, it was agreed that I would inventory the family archive in careful detail and create finding aids for its major components. It was confirmed that the director

of the library, Sigitas Narbutas, authorized the creation of Fund 448 as the new home for the ZKF archive.

On November 7, 2022, I delivered five archival containers to the Wroblewski Library. In my group were my husband, Joe Conaty, indispensable computer manager of the family history projects, my young nephew-in-law and driver Valentas Dudutis, and my sister Stefanija Chreptavičienė who was born and still lives in Kaunas. We delivered 85 document folders and 448 photos made during Lithuania's tsarist era and the independent interwar era. The years of Soviet and German occupation until the advance of the Red Army in October 1944 provided many documents. Finally, the years spent in refugee camps and subsequent immigration and naturalization in the USA provided another major category of documents and photos. Letters, genealogical records, journals, diaries, personal artifacts, and audio recordings demonstrate the variety and range of these interesting family materials.

Because many of the documents were recreated in electronic format for publication purposes, all the electronic materials were stored on a flash drive as a virtual "mirror image" of the paper resources.



The ZKF archive included documents and other papers from the World War II period.

Representing the Library was Dr. Rima Cicėnienė, the Deputy Director for Science, Erika Kuliešienė, Head of the Manuscripts Department, Dr. Gita Drungilienė, assistant head of that department, Dr. Birutė Railienė, now head of the Bibliography Unit, Jūratė Jakubavičienė, Head of the Reading Unit, and Vika Petrikaitė, staff photographer.

I described individual items and highlighted the old-



Joe Conaty, Dr. Cicėnienė, Valentas Dudutis, Barbara Conaty, and Stefanija Chreptavičienė at the Wroblewski Library with five boxes of papers and photos transported as carry-on baggage from Falls Church, Virginia to Vilnius, Lithuania

est photos. I went through documents with official Nazi stamps and orders showing the family's evacuation from Jurbarkas. I talked about my mother's education and practice as a pharmacist and the loss of these credentials when her Lithuanian degree was not recognized by the Illinois pharmacy commission. I included the Laptev Sea branch of the family that was exiled to Siberia in 1941 and how contact with those cousins had been lost and regained.

My sister got her turn to speak too. Everyone understood my English but you could tell they were



The open book shows the detailed inventory of the archive with a total of 453 documents and 448 photos, as well as several personal artifacts belonging to Stefanija and Vaclovas Zavkevičius. From the left: Erika Kuliešienė, Dr. Gita Drungilienė, and Barbara Conaty. Photo by Joe Conaty


happier in Lithuanian because they piled on the questions and comments. In the end, Valentas declared his appreciation for having a part to play in this donation activity. The librarians reminded him that the archive stays open - material can be added in the future and will get the same care and attention as the original cache of family treasures.

The agreement arrived with the updated contents notes, and four individuals signed with a flourish.

My group and I were given ardent thank-you hugs



The ZKF archive included 448 photos. Zavkevičius infants and their aunt and parents from the early years of the 1900s.


LIETUVOS MOKSŲ AKADEMIJOS VRUBLEVSKIŲ BIBLIOTEKA
 Biudžetinė įstaiga, Žygmonto g. 1, 01103, Vilnius
 Duomenys kaupiami ir saugomi Juridinių asmenų registre, kodas 191379828
 Tel./faksas (8-7) 262 85 37, el. p. biblioteka@mb.lt, http://www.mab.lt

Tyrimu:
 Direktoriaus pavaduotoja mokslui
 dr. Rima Cizienė:
R. Cizienė, 2022-11-05
 (parašas)

RANKRAŠČIŲ PRIĖMIMO AKTAS
 Nr. 10

VILNIUS
2022 m. lapkričio 7 d.

Rankraščių skyriaus darbuotojai: E. Kuliešienė, dr. G. Drungilienė, J. Jakubavičienė
(visi asmenys parašė)

Priėmė: *Barbara Conaty*
(duomenys saugomi atskirai)
 el. Barbara.Zavkeviucia.Conaty@evyenas.com, 255 Gaudry Drive, Falls Church, VA, JAV, tel.: 011-703-8632273, bcon9876@gmail.com
85 dokumentų vienetus, steigiant Zavkevičių šeimos fondą F448.

Dokumentai atspindi B. Conaty tėvų, lietuvių, emigravusių į JAV Stefanijos Kongiulytės-Zavkevičienės ir Vaclovo Zavkevičiaus gyvenimą Lietuvoje ir JAV, yra visų keturių jai senėlių genealoginiai žiniai, gauti iš istoriko Laimono Gryvos anklų tyrimų. Jie sudaro apie 453 lapų dokumentų ir 448 fotografijų.

Dokumentų sąrašas pridedamas.

Turtinės dovanonų dokumentų teisės perduodamos LMA Vrublevskių bibliotekai.

Registracijos Nr. 321
Priskaita saugoti: F448-1-48

Įteikė: *Barbara Conaty*
Priėmė: *E. Kuliešienė, G. Drungilienė, J. Jakubavičienė, B. Rymušauskaitė*

The agreement states that the Wroblewski Library will preserve the ZKF archive and offer it for research to the general public. Photo by Joe Conaty

and invitations to return soon and often.

(All photographs are courtesy of Vika Petrikaitė, staff photographer of the LMAVB Library, except as indicated.)

Volunteers Needed in Lithuania

Dorothy Minkus

As the world becomes more global, more middle and high school students are studying English. Lithuania is no different, with English classes beginning in the first grade. One of the options for an overseas English-teaching experience is WIESCO, a non-profit that for almost 50 years has provided youth immersion-English programs primarily in Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.

WIESCO instructors provide fun and engaging lesson plans plus project-based learning. It offers instructors the unique opportunity to develop their own curriculum. WIESCO programs do not teach English; they give youth the opportunity to use the English they are learning in an “everyday” context outside the formality of their classroom instruction. Examples of lessons and projects include: Creating a Newscast, US Based Travel Itineraries, Poetry, Music Festival Promotion, City Planning, Improvisational Skits, and after a presentation on American food the students build their own Chicago-style hot dog for lunch.

The Šiauliai program is for middle and high school students, ages 10 to 17, with a solid background in English. The objective is to improve and enhance their overall skills in English through interactive classes in the morn-



ings and a variety of fun activities in the afternoons. Students who attend this program are highly motivated, bright, and eager to learn. They take pride in sharing their Lithuanian culture with the American teachers.

WIESCO volunteers are teachers, college students, nurses, lawyers, veterans, businesspeople, retirees, and others. This variety provides students with a broad experience of backgrounds in the lessons, activities, and casual conversation, plus the opportunity to meet “real Americans”.

A great location: Šiauliai is the fourth largest city in Lithuania with a population of just over 100,000. It is known as the gateway to the Hill of Crosses, a symbol of Lithuania's non-violent struggle for freedom from Russian and Soviet regimes.

The Šiauliai tourism center has an informative website featuring places to see and things to do in the city. Also very close at hand to visit are Vilnius, Lithuania, and Riga, Latvia nothing to mention the cities varied shops and access to nature.

In 2023, Šiauliai will mark its eighth WIESCO program which will take place from June 23rd to July 8th (including travel). Please note that room, board, and some sightseeing are provided by the host school. If you are interested, more details can be found at <https://www.wiesco.org/> and by contacting Robert Pine at rmpine@wiesco.org.



current events

Security

The Seimas has approved a revision of the Law on Rifleman's Union, providing that it reports to the national government instead of the defense minister. The new version integrates the Rifleman's Union into the national defense plans more closely. It currently has about 13,000 members (including Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė) and is expected to increase to 50,000 members. Members will be divided into kinetic-rifleman platoons for armed resistance, able to protect facilities, fight against sabotage and ensure area protection in municipalities. There will also be non-kinetic riflemen for unarmed resistance. Next year's budget is pegged at 7.2 million euros, with an additional 50% increase (3.6 million euros) planned for the following year.

Lithuania is preparing to build barracks and warehouses to support a German brigade of 3,000-5,000 troops by 2026. Germany has led an international battalion of about 1,000 troops since 2017. A brigade consists of 3 battalions. In October 2022, a permanent German Brigade Forward Command Element staffed with a few dozen people was established to allow it to move a full German brigade to Lithuania within 10 days. Up to now, NATO has elected to keep thousands of troops on standby in non-frontline areas to not provoke Russia.

Lithuania has passed the 2023 budget of 18.63 billion euros which includes a deficit of 3.09 billion euros; it allows a defense budget of 3% of GDP, which is higher than the original 2.52%. NATO suggests at least a defense budget of 2%.

The U.S. will sell 8 Lockheed Martin M142 High Mobility Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and 18 missile pods of the Army's M57 Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) for \$495 million. Delivery is expected in 2025-26. The HIMARS are mounted on a standard M1140 truck with six rockets that can reach 70 km; the single missile ATACMS has a range of 300 km and also uses an M1140 platform.

Fifty additional Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTV) from American Oshkosh Defense are scheduled for imminent delivery. In November 2019 Lithuania signed a 145-million-euro contract to purchase 200 JLTVs but recently upped the number to 500 for 334 million euros, with 5% coming from the US assistance funds. The new units come with the capability for the shooter to remotely control a 12.7 mm heavy machine gun.

Lithuanian border guards have sent about 18,000 people

back to Belarus since August 3, 2021, when they were given the power to deny entry to irregular migrants.

Ukraine

Lithuania is repairing German-supplied self-propelled 155 mm Panzerhaubitze (PzH) 2000 howitzers damaged in Ukraine in its fight against the Russian invasion. At least 12 PzH2000 are expected to be repaired.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis and Foreign Ministers from Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, and Sweden visited Kyiv to meet with the CEO of UkrEnergo, Ukraine's electricity transmission system operator. The CEO told the ministers that Ukraine needed not only weapons but also power generators and transformers, which have been targets of Russian strikes. Landsbergis said that Lithuania was the first country to supply power generators and transformers to Ukraine, but it needs much more.

The Lithuanian Ministry of Energy has sent Ukraine 6 trucks with 114 transformers of various capacities valued at 2 million euros. It plans on sending 252 transformers with an estimated value of 3 million euros for a total of 5 million euros. The Minister, Dainius Kreivys, said that Russia is deliberately destroying Ukraine's energy infrastructure. In a press release, he said: "To our knowledge, 40% of the infrastructure has been damaged. That is more than 400 critical facilities across Ukraine." He said that Lithuania is one of the few countries where Russian equipment used in Ukraine can still be found.

Lithuanian energy companies have sent 130 tons of fuel and most of the planned 550 tons of firefighting foam to Ukraine since the start of the war.

A Ukrainian singer who is popular in Russia, Svitlana Loboda, has been banned from Lithuania. Currently she lives in Latvia but planned a concert tour with performances in Panevėžys, Šiauliai, Klaipėda, and Vilnius. She has been performing in Russia since the Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014.

Covid -19

The current Covid-19 status is that 88 persons are hospitalized, with 7 in the ICU. The 14-day primary infection rate has increased to 113.4 cases per 100,000 people, with the 7-day percentage of positive cases unchanged at 15.9 %.

Business

Lithuanian opened its Trade Representative Office in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan. The head of the Office, Paulius Lukauskas, noted that it takes more effort to sell high-added value and high-tech products than to sell food. Food import permits have been issued for dairy, fish, and egg products, and beef permits are expected. A demonstrational Lithuanian laser laboratory will be launched at the Industrial Technology Research Laboratory in Taiwan. Taiwan Capital, with assets of \$200 million, will invest 3.5 million euros in a Lithuanian laser company, Lilit. Other high-tech areas that Lithuania has products for sale in Taiwan include biotechnology and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Taiwan's Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI) is working with Lithuania's Teltonika in the development of semiconductor design and development. Taiwan supplies 93% of the advanced semiconductor chips used in the world. The Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs has provided 27 scholarships for Lithuanian students. According to Taiwan's representative office in Vilnius, Lithuania's exports to Taiwan increased by 30% in the first half of 2022 compared to 2021.

A Latvian software testing company will be hiring more than 25 quality assurance engineers and developers for their newly established office in Lithuania. TestDevLab, a Riga-headquartered company founded in 2011, now has 500 skilled software QA engineers working in Latvia, Estonia, Spain, North Macedonia, and now Vilnius. It services clients such as Microsoft, Orange, Discord, and Twilio. Besides looking for experienced engineers, it has internships for those starting their IT careers and runs an IT education organization, the TDL School, where individuals can improve their technical skills.

Mediq, based in Utrecht, the Netherlands, will locate a business service center in Vilnius. Founded in 1899 and established in 13 European countries and the U.S., it provides medical devices and care solutions to patients and healthcare organizations and has a chain of pharmacies. Among its products are diabetic supplies, ostomy products, wound care items, and IV therapy systems. Since 2013 it is part of Advent International. Also under consideration were Tallinn and Gdansk, but Vilnius won because of its talent pool, Scandinavian language capabilities, proximity to its markets, and local business environment. The Vilnius team will drive digitalization and robotic process automation (RPA).

The international green energy company, Ignitis Renewables, has purchased Plunge Wind Energy, which is

developing a 218 MW wind turbine park located in the Plunge district northwest of Klaipeda and plans to invest 300 million euros. Ignitis Renewables, a division of the state-owned energy company Ignitis Grupė, operates in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania with developments in wind turbines, solar energy, and cogeneration, producing heat and electricity from burning waste and biomass. Its goal is to produce 5000 MW of renewable energy by 2030.



General

The European Union's 2023 budget includes payments worth 168.6 billion euros. Lithuania is slated to receive 2.5 billion euros and will contribute 0.666 billion euros (a net flow into Lithuania of 1.834 billion euros). Lithuania also expects to receive around 1.1 billion euros from EU cohesion policy funds, 0.9 billion euros from EU common agriculture policy funds, 0.347 billion euros for major infrastructure projects, and 60 million euros for the closure of the Ignalina nuclear power plant.

Prime Minister Šimonytė requested and received the resignation of Mantas Staškevičius, Director of the Lithuanian State and Veterinary Services (VMVT). Law enforcement officials suspected the Director and three other VMVT officials of demanding bribes from businesses. During searches, officials found 300,000 euros in cash.

In 2011 Lithuania allocated over 37 million euros to compensate Jewish communities during a 10-year period for the property that was expropriated in the 20th century. With that program now completed, a new bill will allocate the same amount of money to Jews whose private property was expropriated by totalitarian regimes. The bill sets a deadline of December 31, 2023, for individuals or heirs to submit applications and documentation.

our community

Santa Claus and Nine-Horned Reindeer visit Colorado for Christmas

Kornelija Viečaitė

On the third Saturday of December, the Colorado Lithuanian School and the Colorado Lithuanian community celebrated Christmas. The celebration was full of magical mood, gifts, and, of course, Lithuanian spirit. The children performed the play "The Nine-Horned Reindeer Comes" for parents and guests, the Colorado folk dance group Rūta danced Lithuanian folk dances, and the celebration was topped off with a visit from Santa Claus, which delighted not only the children but also the adults.



Christmas is a time to decorate the tree and share gifts. Also, this is the time when longer days start coming back. Ancient Lithuanian mythology tells us that at the summer solstice, the nine-horned reindeer takes away the sun on its horns and brings it back at the winter solstice. That is why the winter solstice celebration is also known as the Nine-Horned Reindeer Festival. For the occasion, the children of the Colorado Lithuanian School showed a play by Vytautas V. Landsbergis, "Atbėga elnias devyniaragis." The stage was decorated with a portrait of a reindeer



and paper snowflakes, but the most beautiful things on the stage were the children, who played the characters of the nine-horned reindeer, bunnies, a pair of swans, the princess, and the prince.

After the children's performance, the Lithuanian folk dances were performed by the Colorado folk dance group Rūta. After greeting the audience with their first dance, "Kepurinė," the dancers continued to entertain the audience with their fun dances: the "Krikoniškės Kadrilis," "Polka op op," and "Žiežmarių Polka." Dancers of all ages, including three students from the Colorado Lithuanian School and two teachers, dance in the group.

The Lithuanian gathering was topped off with a visit from Santa Claus, which delighted young and old alike. The children enjoyed Santa's company and the presents they received,





while the parents also received gifts from their children - handmade items made by the students. The celebration was also attended by mixed martial arts athlete Rose Namajunas and her family, making the Lithuanian community in Colorado even happier.

During the holidays, being away from family, the longing is especially strong. Memories of Christmas Eve with grandparents and Christmas morning by the family Christmas tree come flooding back. However, when you have people around you who become like a second family, it definitely becomes easier.

A day with martial arts star Rose Namajunas

Kornelija Viečaitė

On December 3, 2022, the Colorado Lithuanian School was visited by Lithuanian-born American athlete, mixed martial arts fighter, and UFC champion Rose Namajunas. Together with Rose came her brother Nojus and their grandmother Emilija, who currently lives in America. Rose is a true pride for Lithuania and for all Lithuanians living outside Lithuania. Those who have followed Rose's career have probably not been surprised by her warm communication style, sincerity, and openness.

Not only the students but also their parents came to meet Rose. They admired her exceptional character and achievements. The children greeted Rose with posters they made, with words such as "Rose is the best" and "Rose will win." For the children and their parents, Rose (in Lithuanian!) and her grandmother gave a short talk about her family history, her Lithuanian roots, her early career, and her love for Brazilian jujitsu.



Although her grandmother says she cannot watch Rose's fights, there is no lack of pride and love for her granddaughter in her words. In response to the parents' questions, she also shared her thoughts on what it takes to become a professional athlete and UFC champion. According to Rose, the most important thing is to be clear about your goals and what you want to achieve, as well as the reasons why you want to achieve them. After the children had left for their classes, Rose, her grandmother, and her brother stayed and interacted with the Lithuanians in Colorado until the afternoon.

When asked about her favorite Lithuanian dishes, Rose praised Lithuanian *cepelinas* and *balandėliai*,

and the one she praised the most was soup. According to Rose, there is no better food than a well-prepared soup. Coincidentally, the same evening the community of the Colorado Lithuanian School was gathering for a *cepelinas* evening, so of course, they invited Rose too. Everyone made and then ate traditional Lithuanian meatballs together.



It is wonderful to see how important Lithuanian roots are to Rose and her brother, how they both try not to forget the Lithuanian language, and how much they value family values. We cannot help but feel happy and proud to see such a world-class martial

arts star of Lithuanian descent, with her feet firmly planted on the ground, communicating warmly and sincerely with her compatriots.



our community

The annual run to honor the victims of January 13th

Kornelija Viečaitė

On January 8, 2023, Colorado Lithuanians commemorated the tragic events of January 1991 in Vilnius with the annual Life and Death Run. The event was organized by the Colorado Lithuanian School and the Colorado Lithuanian Community. It was open to Lithuanians in any part of the world. Those who participated virtually recorded their distance and shared it on social networks, while those who ran in Colorado recorded and enjoyed their results live.





Before the run, participants had some hot tea, coffee, and cocoa in Carpenter Park, Colorado. As they got running, their freezing limbs got warmer, and soon the sun came out from under the clouds to warm them up. Although this race is not about who runs first, one of the youngest runners, Antanas, a little Lithuanian boy of just four years old, crossed the finish line fastest of all.

In such moments, it becomes obvious what the most important goals of such symbolic events are. Tell children about history, teach them to commemorate important dates and events for Lithuania and its people, and make them realize how precious freedom is and how much pain it cost to win it for Lithuania.



UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

Memoir of a Siberian Deportee

By Juzė Avižienytė Žukauskienė
Translated from the Lithuanian by
Giedrė Kumpikas, Ph.D., niece of the
author, and Isabel Kumpikas, sister of
the author



Siberian Sky. Photograph by Rolandas Žygas

51. A "TERRIBLE" THEFT

The weather became warmer. The last remnants of snow melted. The steamships came puffing up - the tugboats pulling barges, bringing the Station salt and flour for the simple mortals and boxes with American bacon, canned food, and some other things for the "chosen ones," that is, the Party members and the "honored" officials. There were set up for them "private" shops and "private" restaurants, where ordinary mortals had no right to even cross the threshold. While we unloaded the delivered merchandise, and through the slits between the boards, we could see the contents. We grew faint just thinking about a drop of some fat and here there was bacon, which the local inhabitants had never even seen because they did not raise pigs, - they had nothing with which to feed them.

Into the emptied barges we loaded grain, while we ourselves didn't even smell the aroma of bread. The workers in the Regional Center, - there was a bakery there, -received their ration of baked bread according to their coupons, while we only received 300 grams of flour per worker and 150 grams per dependent child. Stasys and I and Juozukas, who were going to school, received 750 grams every day.

It was not possible to bake bread with this amount of flour. We tried to save. But how could we? In cooking nettle soup how could I not mix in a handful or two of flour? Sometimes I would steam the nettles, would press out the water, and, mixing in some flour, would bake patties. It was very "tasty" and more filling than watery soup. At times, we succeeded in begging and obtaining a liter of milk

from the old residents (the price was 15 rubles per liter).

Then we had a "feast."

For night work, they would give an extra supplement of 100-200 grams of flour. In this way, we accumulated two kilograms of flour, from which I prepared bread dough. In truth, that supplemental ration we received only for unloading the flour of the Regional Cooperative Union at night from the barges.

The sacks with flour were unloaded for the Zagotzern Territory since there was no room at their base and they left one girl to guard it. Having unloaded sacks from the evening through the night, she became hungry. Not being able to stand it, she ripped open slightly the corners of a couple of sacks and "milked out" about two kilograms of flour. Having eaten about a handful of dry flour, she decided to go to one of the inhabitants and ask them to bake some bread. Since our chata stood the closest and on the shore of the river itself, the girl came running to me and asked me to bake some bread.

"Fine! Here, I have a little cup of leaven mixed for myself already. I'll add yours and I'll bake it."

"But mine is rye flour," explained the girl as if justifying herself.

"Ours is rye also. It will come out quite well. Come around noon, it'll be ready," I shouted after the running girl.

From that mixture, came out a couple of small loaves, like little bowls. At noon, the girl came to get her bread.

"Didn't they bring you anything to eat?" I asked.

"Nothing! Who will bring me anything?" and she greedily grabbed and started eating the little fragrant and still warm loaf. With that, I poured her some tea of dried black currants, without sugar, of course. As soon as she had devoured one loaf, she took the other one away with her.

The following day, she came running up again, and again from the same kerchief, which she untied from her head, and in which she had three or four double handfuls of flour, and asked me to bake some bread.

"I can't, little one, I'm not baking for myself, I haven't saved up any flour, and from yours, there's not enough to bake. It's not even worth heating the stove for one little patty.

By the way, what's your name?"

"Fonia," answered the girl and asked me to lend her a pot to heat some water to wash her sweaty shirt and dusty blouse.

I lent it to her and went to work. She made a small bonfire on the riverbank; she was heating the water and washing. There was no soap, in its place she used river mud. When I returned, I found the "chugun" - a cast-iron pot with a pointy bottom - placed by the door, but I did not see her anymore.

After a couple of days, I received a summons to go to the militia. I went. I was received by the Chief in person. He asked:

"Do you know Bolobanova* for a long time?"

"I don't know him at all. I have never met him. This was the name of a superior of a distant region. I had heard about him.

Not him, but her, the girl," said the Chief sternly.

"A girl? I don't know anyone by that name."

How so? You baked bread for her," stated the Chief with angry derision.

"Ah! So, the girl who, two days ago, asked me to bake a small loaf of bread, is Bolobanova?" I didn't ask her last name. I met her only twice all in all: the first day, I baked her some bread, but the second day, I refused because I had not saved up any flour of my own. And for those couple of handfuls, which she had brought, I didn't want to bother or heat the stove. She told me her name was Fonia, but I did not know her last name," I explained, but the Chief said:

"Do you know what a good-for-nothing she is? She's not 18 yet and she is so immoral already."

I did not understand the connection between her "immorality" and my baked bread.

"She's a thief, she stole flour! She was left to guard it, and she steals!"

"Yes, but she had not eaten. It seems to me that here, the superiors are also to blame who left a girl on guard duty, who had been dragging sacks from the barges almost until morning, and no one relieved her for 48 hours and no one inquired if she had eaten anything. You know yourselves that no one has anything to spare, whatever they have is barely enough for themselves. The store is also empty. Besides, they only sell to their own workers and at that, only bread for coupons and salt once a month."

I would have told him a lot more about work, order, and the condition of the workers, but he cut me off, angrily, almost threateningly:

"Ah! You justify stealing?!"

"I did not inquire, nor did I know from where the girl had gotten the flour. I thought they had given it to her for work."

"It is difficult to believe, that you would not know how much flour a worker gets for two days' work." the Chief interrupted me with irony.

I did not answer anything although my chest was boiling with the desire to say much more. Yes, I knew, that a Soviet worker had the right to buy, according to ration coupons, 600 grams of rye flour for two days' work.

After three weeks, there was a trial. I had to attend as a witness. Again, the same questions and the same answers from me. But here, one of the three people's counsels asks such a question:

"Did it not occur to the witness from where the defendant obtained such an amount of flour?"

"It did not! If that girl had brought a gold wristwatch, I would really have thought it was stolen, but two kilograms, - and I doubt that there was so much, - of flour, it seems to me that a Soviet worker can obtain it in a legitimate fashion."

The other counselors and the judge glanced at me, then at the author of the unfortunate question. They were embarrassed to say, aloud and in public, that a Soviet worker cannot earn so much flour in a legitimate fashion.

The judge, glancing angrily at the questioner and at me, stated sternly:

"Witness Žukauskiene, sit down!"

And here was the judgment of the court: "For stealing government bread, F. Balobanova is sentenced to 8 years of loss of liberty."

And so, in Siberia, or perhaps also in the entire Soviet Union, the price of bread was greater than liberty or even life.

The Front was rolling towards the west. Even the skeptics did not doubt that the Red Army was moving forward. But...the end of the war was not in sight. The people, we the deportees and the majority of the locals, barely managed to ward off starvation. There was nothing in the stores: neither food nor clothes. One could only buy diluted alcohol, matches, and, on rare occasions, some sort of footwear, and even that with an allotment. And who could get that? Actually, that diluted alcohol, called whisky, was sold freely at 156 rubles a liter. Who could buy it? No one bought it either by the liter or by the half-liter, but only some workers would occasionally buy 100 grams for rubles they had scraped together with great difficulty. It was really bad with clothing. The workers who worked in the grain storage rooms, would sometimes "swipe" an empty sack and would sew themselves a pair of pants or a little skirt. There was no dye anywhere. So, the local women would "process" - they would wrap tree bast around the cloth, soak it for a long time, later simmer it in a pot, soak the cloth in that brownish liquid and simmer it again for a long time. The cloth would take on an enduring brown color. But the sacks were stamped with indelible dye and the "process" did not color them. Even though they were faint, they still remained noticeable.

But the "superiors" made believe they did not notice. It was not a kilogram of bread for whose theft the penalty was long years of imprisonment. A naked person could not go to work. A sack or two could be written off for patches.

The weather became warmer. Our hopes revived that perhaps we would be able to say that we would go back to our country. In the garden, a little plot of potatoes and vegetables was already growing. Towards autumn, we hoped, just like the "old contingent," to have a little additional food of our own.

In the summer, there was no work in the storehouses. The grain had been taken away, the storehouses washed clean, and sometimes, a group of us women would break away from the hay-mowing and repairs and would hurry into the taiga to pick berries. No one dared to go by herself, first, so as not to encounter a bear and; secondly, not to get lost. There always had to be a leader and a sunny day. The leader knew the spots very well, where black and red currants grew, and in the fall - cranberries.

We dried the berries, but the local women knew how to soak the black currants in such a way, that they would last until the frost, and the ones frozen later, would last them sparingly throughout the whole winter. Here no one knew anything about the making of preserves, since there was no sugar.

52. MIKHAILOVA

Both Liudas, father and son, were still working in the manufacturing enterprise in the center of the region. In the mill, both the wool and the work would end in the spring, so the workers were assigned to other jobs. There were no days of rest. Sometimes, having asked to "do some laundry," they would come home to Melstroi. They would bring home bread they had saved. I would pull out from under the bushes one or two tiny potatoes, and I would cook a "delicious" soup with some flour beaten in. On such an occasion I would beg for and get a liter of milk. Mikhailovna, who had received us with great hostility when we moved here, was not antagonistic any longer. She saw that, contrary to what she had expected from hungry people, we were not thieves, not vengeful or mean. In response to her intrigues, we not only did not seek revenge, but we often even helped. Our men would fix a fence, chop some wood, or carry a heavier sack.

"Good boys" she would say and, for the work, would give them some potatoes or a liter of milk. She was considered "rich" because she had a cow, and a well-cultivated garden, but she was unhappy. Her family was scattered: her husband was in jail, her oldest son - in faraway mines, her daughter married - in a faraway place to an alcoholic husband who was in the army; she struggled alone on a collective farm and was raising a brood of children.

Mikhailovna could not forget her three children

whom she had buried in the swamps of the taiga, shortly after her family had been forcibly driven here from the Altai Region. She constantly talked to me about it and cried and cried. At present, she only had her youngest ten-year-old son Kolya by her. There were many of these lonely women with children, - all the husbands were at the Front.

One morning, around four o'clock, a very terrified Mikhailovna came running over and started banging on our door. We all jumped.

"What happened, Mikhailovna?"

"Oh! Oh! Help me! The cow is bloated! Oh, what a calamity! What will happen?" she was wailing, wringing her hands.

We jumped up from our plank beds and hurried to give assistance. When we arrived, we already found a neighboring forester pressing the cow's belly with his knees.

I remembered, in my childhood, when cattle had eaten bedewed fresh clover and became bloated, my father would forcibly make the animal drink a bottle of strong salt solution, bridle it with a piece of rope whose knot would be deep in the snout. The animal would begin salivating, coughing, heaving, wanting to spit out the obstacle. The gas was expelled, and everything ended well. I dictated my method immediately.

Fortunately, there were two men - Stasiukas and the forester. They tied together a bridle from hay and shoved it into the throat of the cow. The cow began to heave, cough, started to toss about, and tried to stand up. The men pulled her up, she jumped to her feet, and everything ended well.

"Mikhailovna, you drive her about, don't let her lie down until she drops her dung," advised the "doctors." Mikhailovna, her hands shaking, grabbed a switch and started chasing the cow around the garden. To lose her cow would have been a great tragedy. She was striking the cow on her sides and while crying aloud was praying: "Svietaja Bogorodica y vse svetyje, pomogite, otgonite etu tushu!" (O Holy Mother of God and all the Saints, help to take away this threat!)

Mikhailovna pronounced the word tuchu in the regional dialect tushu which meant slaughtered meat. The forester began to laugh:

"Mikhailovna, drive her yourself before she becomes 'slaughtered meat'..."

We, who saw that the danger was past, started to laugh at this double meaning, but Mikhailovna was far from laughter. But that saying stayed with us for a long time. As soon as something not too tragic took place, we would advise them mockingly: "otgoni etu tushu."

The cow recovered and Mikhailovna, out of gratitude, brought over a whole earthenware pot of milk. From that time on, she remained very friendly. She told everyone,

"If it weren't for Natasha (that's how she called me), I wouldn't have my "Burianushka."

53. HAYMOWING

One bright morning towards the end of July, on their way to mow hay in a distant corner of the taiga, a group of workers from the manufacturing enterprise stopped by us at Melstroi, and together with them my son Liudas.

Liudas was very worried, while the others joked, that his teeth were "sharp" and his mouth "wide:"

"Kak chvatil, tak v dva prijom vsiu buchanku chleba y sozhral..." - When he grabbed it, with two bites, he devoured the whole loaf of bread.

Poor Liudas did not feel like laughing. They were sent to mow hay for a week and for the whole week, they were issued bread that was even enriched. A person who has not starved does not know what it means to take a warm, fragrant, freshly baked loaf of bread into his hands. As soon as he got it, he broke off a corner to taste it. It was good. Another small piece. The appetite grows. He sees that very little is left; it won't be enough anyway. And... he finished the first loaf. One more small loaf remained.

Another 15 km were left until they got to the workplace, the second one might not last either. And what would he eat the whole week? He talked his co-workers into stopping by his mother's. Mother would think of something, anyway, that would help in some way.

But how can a mother help? She only has tears and heartache. But tears will not help in any way. I ran to Mikhailovna and begged her for a liter of milk; from the garden, I dug up a good bag of small potatoes, but not having experience, I washed them clean, and the young skin came off.

After five days, my poor Liudas returned barely dragging his feet, eaten up by mosquitoes, his face, hands, and feet swollen. He staggered into the chata and cried:

"Mommy, help me! I have such pains in my belly and I feel so weak, I can barely stand it. I didn't think I would make it home."

I knew that the most important reason for this was, - hunger. Again, to Mikhailovna, to ask for milk. She gave me a whole earthenware pot, about 1.5 liters. I was cooking potatoes. While they were cooking, Liudas drank almost the whole pot of milk.

"I don't know, Mommy, if I should eat potatoes. I got food poisoning from the others."

"???"

"The washed ones turned green, shriveled, and became rancid. Everyone yelled, 'Don't eat them, you'll drop dead.' But I ate them anyway, I had nothing else. I said to the Team Leader: 'From potatoes or from hunger I'll drop

dead anyway.'

The remaining ones, he took away from me, squashed them with his shoes, and stamped them into the dirt saying: 'Go about 3 km into the taiga, there are gardens. Dig up some good potatoes for yourself.'

Mommy, I have never stolen. Nobody has enough potatoes. Whoever planted, did not do it for thieves but for themselves.

I couldn't work, - my intestines ached, and I was doubled over. Then the Team Leader, having cursed me out with all the 'F____' words and whatever else he knew, told me to go home."

Back to the hospital. I excused myself from work one day, went to the hospital on account of my own aching legs, and visited my son.

"How are you feeling, Liudeli!" I asked.

"At night, I can't sleep, I wait for breakfast. At eight o'clock, when they bring me a cup of warm water and 100 g of bread after I eat it, I feel hungrier than before and wait for lunch. Lunch is at 12 o'clock. I get "soup." In a little bowl of salted water, are floating a few thin small pieces of potatoes, and a pinch of leaves. I get 200 g of bread. I am insatiable, I feel hungrier and impatiently wait for supper. Again, a cup of water and 200 grams of bread."

"Can't you sign yourself out of the hospital? Perhaps you would get well at home? At least I would stuff more leaves into the pot."

"If I sign myself out, I'll have to go and work. And you see what my legs look like," and he pulled up his pants. His legs were swollen and had sores; they were painted with "zelionka"- brilliantine of alcohol. -

"I won't be able to work so I won't even get the 500 g of bread."

I left the hospital with an aching heart. I asked some people if they had any milk. Who will have any? Still, in the morning or in the evening, if a liter is left over, they sell it to their steady clients. The obligation to the government was great and the little cows, after the winter, were barely dragging their feet. In the summer, they are eaten by all sorts of pests, from which they protect themselves only by kicking, they have no time to graze. That is why there is so little milk.

54. HARSHIPS LESSEN

Summertime. The potatoes had grown, and the onions also, once in a while I would break off a small cabbage leaf (we had very few cabbages), or pull out a little carrot. The scepter of starvation was retreating from us. Thanks be to God, no one in my family died, and we did not bury anyone in the swamps. Liudukas got well.

The father, even though he was in poor health, managed to hold on. They were both sent to the mill of the free collective farm at Varonicha to mill for the winter. The head of the collective farm would write out an order for them for milk at the government price, and they received an increased ration of bread (600 g), besides, in their store, there would be from time to time something more besides bread.

August 25th. The name's day of both Liudas, my husband, and my son. They came home and brought back not only a couple of loaves of bread that they had saved but even 200 grams of candy! It was a "reward" for good work. I steamed a pot of potatoes, smelling sweetly of onions, and I cooked some vegetable soup. Even though it was without any fat, it was a thick, normal

soup. I got some milk from Mikhailovna.

The whole family got together: our three sons and my husband and me. It was a rare happiness, which not too many people could enjoy at that time. We were "having a party," we were celebrating the name's day of both Liudas, and we were singing melodious Lithuanian folk songs.

I thought I heard someone sobbing. I went outside. It was Mikhailovna who was sitting pressed against the wall and crying aloud.

"What happened now, Mikhailovna?" I asked.

"Och, Natashenka, Natashenka! How lucky you are, - you are all together! And I?... I had such a family, now I don't know where they are. Some I buried. I know that they are gone, but the others..." and again streams of tears.

I became very sad and I pitied her greatly. I asked her to come in, but she refused and trudged home, our feast was clouded over by the misfortune of another.

55. THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA WAS RISING

Winter was coming but, for us, it was not as terrifying as the previous one.

Once again, we had our own potatoes and vegetables and bought a liter or so of milk, I had some dried berries. At least, it was not plain water. Only, it was very bad with clothes.

The Russian Army was marching forward without being stopped. All of Lithuania and Poland had been "liberated." The deported Poles had been freed for a long time from the commandant's office. The majority had already left. Only a few families remained, who had no news about their region.

The people of America, among them also Lithuanians, were sending donated clothing through the Red Cross. A certain amount of this also made it to the Parbig Region. Polish citizens received some, the widows of the

Red Army war dead, some from the "higher spheres." The Lithuanians received nothing.

I was again suffering from my swollen feet. I received a five-day release from work. On this occasion, a Polish woman asked me to alter the clothing she had received. I earned a fantastic amount for that, - she sold me, for 40 rubles, a coat, of good warm wool, lined to the waist, and a flannel robe, the outside of which was shining like silk. I altered it into a very dressy dress. Oh, how fashionable I became! Even my feet got better. Some of the Lithuanians began to write letters to relatives in Lithuania, but rarely did anyone receive a reply. Terrible rumors were circulating about German wrongdoings, about the massive destruction of Jews. We did not even want to believe it and many did not. But...the reality appeared more terrible than the scarce news, which used to reach us then. I, too, wrote a letter to my hometown, to my sister in Marijampole, because their home was their own, and it was possible to believe that the letter would reach the addressee. But, the mail from us to Tomsk would take months. When could one expect a reply from Lithuania? While I was awaiting an answer every nerve in my heart was trembling: who was left there, and who was not? where were all the other dear, close people?

To my youngest and oldest sisters, I did not write, since they were teachers, one at Dotnuva, the other at Šeštokai. The place where they lived was not permanent, I did not expect that they would receive my letter. I wrote to the neighbors. Silence...

Neither the letters returned nor did I receive a reply. And my family, as soon as I would return from the post office, would look at me with restless eyes, and always the same question:

"Did you get any mail from anyone?"

"No..." was my constant response.

They would bow their heads and sadly go their way, and my breast was burning with pain and hopelessness. Where were they, my loved ones? Where was my dear Mother? Where were my beloved sisters? Did their husbands remain with their families or were they mobilized? Were they alive, did they all survive? Why did no news reach them? We even wrote to the village where my husband was born. Only an old and ailing sister had remained there by herself. There was little hope that she was alive. Where were his brothers? They also did not have a permanent place of residence. A rented apartment is not permanent.

Starvation was retreating. We dug up our own potatoes and pulled out some beautiful, juicy carrots, and onions. We could eat our fill, but our spiritual starvation was growing. Our restlessness and moral suffering were increasing. Even though I had little hope, I wrote to my oldest sister, J. Slavėnienė, in Šeštokai and to my co-

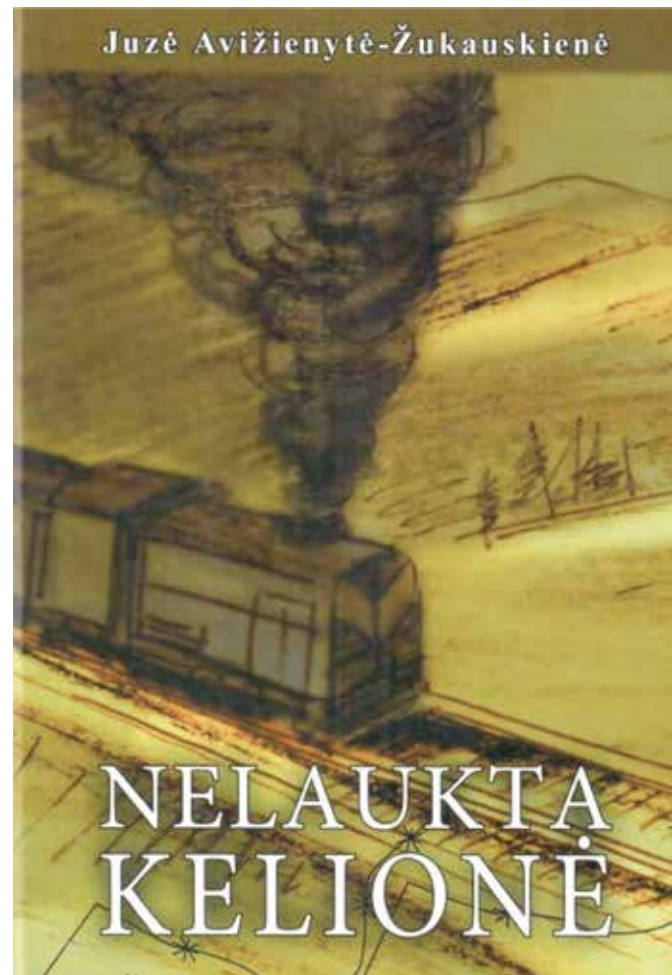
workers in Kaunas, to the Government Bank, although I doubted that a school or a bank was left there.

After a couple of months, I received an answer from there and from elsewhere. Who could describe that joy?! Where to find those words, with which one could describe that warmth of the heart, that hope, which those two small bits of news gave us?!...

With this news, I dashed off to Parbig. Everyone was astir. This one and that one had also received news of their people. It meant that not everything had been lost.

A second Front had opened. The Germans were being crushed from the East and from the West. The War was nearing its end. We had survived. We would return to our homeland. We would be free again, we would be human beings again.

Almost all the Jews had already united in the regional center. The majority of Lithuanians also were no longer living on the collective farms but had moved to the center. Hopes and dreams were growing, but how fragile they were!



The book is available in Lithuanian at the Balzekas Museum Gift Shop.

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

The LAC invites you to donate to Ukraine, which is in great need of help this winter. To date, more than \$100,000 has been raised in a special LAC Ukraine Relief Account. These funds are used to purchase basic necessities, formula for babies in maternity homes near the front lines, medicines for the front lines, specialized clothing, and more. These goods are purchased in Lithuania with the help of non-profit organizations and transported directly to Ukraine. Together with the Lithuanian Rotary Club of Chicago, a large number of wheelchairs, walkers, and medical supplies were collected and sent to Ukraine in containers. The shipment was made in cooperation with Ukrainians and their organizations in the USA. Energy sources were purchased for members of the Lithuanian community living in Ukraine, which will be transported to the Lithuanian Embassy in Kyiv, where they will be sent to the people. Military power allows you to win battles, but the will to defend one's country determines who wins the war.



Our country has experienced this in the struggle for Independence, in partisan resistance in the post-war years, and in the bloody events of January 13th. Today, the people of Ukraine are also fighting for freedom for us all. Therefore, we must help those who are fighting and surviving the horrors of war. In order for this support to reach Ukraine as quickly as possible and to go where it is most needed, we invite you to donate here. All funds raised will be used for humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

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