



American Legion Lithuanian Post 154 For God and Country



May & June 2010

Legionnaire

Commander's Message

Hero: "a person noted for feats of courage or nobility of purpose, especially one who has risked or sacrificed his or her life." This definition fits a deceased member of Baltimore's Lithuanian community, Father Casimir A. Pugevicius. Here was a man who exhibited a love of God and country who by his actions worked to make Right the master of Might. He and his associates smuggled documents out of Lithuania that exposed the atrocities, religious persecution and other human rights violations committed by the Communists during the Russian occupation.

And where do we look for heroes today? Selflessness and dedication to moral and ethical principles are scorned and generally disregarded in today's society. We live in a "hooray for me" and "the end justifies the means" atmosphere.

The official recognition of Father Pugevicius' work came on February 28, 2010, ten years after his death. On that date the Lithuanian Ambassador to the United States, Audrius Bruzgdga, posthumously presented to Father Pugevicius the Medal of the Order of The Grand Duke Gediminas, one of the highest honors bestowed on a civilian by Lithuania. Besides the medal, other statements recognizing his work are included in the tableau that hangs in the vestibule of St. Alphonsus Church in Baltimore.

Though Father Pugevicius was not a member of American Legion Lithuanian Post 154, many of us knew him as a friend and member of Baltimore's Lithuanian community. We are proud and honored to have had such a selfless patriot among us. It is up to us to keep the memory of his works alive in our Legion activities. If any member wishes to share any memories of Father Pugevicius, please send them to the Editor of the Legionnaire for possible inclusion in a future issue.

It is that time of the year! Nominations and election of delegates to the American Legion Department of Maryland Convention will be held at the May General Meeting. Also, nominations for Lithuanian Post 154 officers will be at the May and June General Meetings followed by election at the June meeting. I urge you to consider running for one of the offices.

I hope to see you at a Post General Meeting or at the Lithuanian Festival scheduled for May 22 and 23.

John Maskavich
Commander



Dinner Honoring National Commander Clarence Hill

Lithuanian Post 154 members Vincent Dulys, Vacys Laukaitis, Gintaras Buivys and Joe Jankevicius attended a dinner hosted by Greenbelt Post 136 honoring National Commander Clarence Hill.

After dinner, Commander Hill stressed the importance for The American Legion to grow its membership. With nearly 3 million members, the Legion has exerted significant influence in Washington. Recent increases in the Department of Veterans Affairs' budget can in large measure be attributed to the influence of The American Legion and other veterans groups. He encouraged members to become more active in their recruiting efforts. He said that less than 20% of eligible veterans are members of The American Legion, thus there are plenty of prospects available for recruiting.

Commander Hill reported that The American Legion National has implemented technology initiatives that provide better communication, efficiency and appeal to new members. Our younger future members serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are accustomed to accessing any information they desire directly from the Internet. The American Legion National Web site has been revamped with links to information of interest to veterans. A computer program has been implemented that allows Post adjutants to update members' records directly through the Internet. Commander Hill urges all American Legion members to become proficient at using computers, and noted that many libraries have them available for public use.



**National Commander
Clarence Hill**

Department Convention

The American Legion Department of Maryland Convention will be held July 12th -16th in Ocean City, Maryland. Accommodations for delegates and alternates are available at "Bradley on the Bay" condominium building A, unit 304 - 3901 Ocean Highway. The room phone number is (410) 524-0470. Free parking is available on the overflow lot at Convention Center next door. Please stop by even if you don't go to the convention but just decide to visit Ocean City during the week. Anyone wishing to stay at Bradley must coordinate with Adjutant Vincent Dulys - (410) 960-7874 cell, (410) 987-5275 home.

Four Chaplains Service

The American Legion Baltimore District held its annual Four Chaplains Service at St. Alphonsus Church on Sunday, March 7th. This service was postponed from the original date of February 7th due to inclement weather. This was the 47th consecutive year that Baltimore District has hosted this service. Past Department Chaplain Rev. Anthony Dranginis started this service in 1963 at the War Memorial and since 1978 it has been held at St. Alphonsus Church. The Balladiers choir from Parkville Post 183 have participated in this commemoration for the past 32 years at St. Alphonsus Church. Monsignor Arthur Bastress, pastor of St. Alphonsus Church, and Deacon Hugh Mills, who is also a member of Lithuanian Post 154, have supported this and other American Legion services at St. Alphonsus Church for many years. St. Alphonsus Church, on the corner of Saratoga Street and Park Avenue, is one of the most beautiful historic landmarks in downtown Baltimore.



The Balladiers

Vincent Dulys
Chairman - Baltimore District Four Chaplains Service

Membership

Lithuanian Post 154 reached Three-Star membership status this year. Three Star membership status is granted by Department for exceeding the prior year's membership count. With your cooperation, we should be able to reach this goal again next year. You should be getting membership renewal notices from National at the end of June for fiscal year 2011. When you get your renewal notice, please respond promptly. After you renew, your membership will be valid until December 31, 2011.

If you have any questions, feel free to call or e-mail me.

Vincent Dulys
Membership Chairman

Sick Call

Edmond Bartas
8 Robins Nest Ct.
Randallstown, MD 21133



Lithuanian Festival

Baltimore's annual Lithuanian Festival will be held at the Catonsville Armory Saturday and Sunday, May 22nd and 23rd, from 11 AM to 6 PM. The Catonsville Armory is located at 130 Mellor Avenue in Catonsville. Lithuanian Post 154 will present the Colors on Sunday at 1 PM. Traditional crafts, Lithuanian folk dancing, music and Lithuanian food and drink will be available.

Happy Birthday

May

Bernard Galinaitis
Frank Giannino
Joseph Jankevicius
Algimantas Siugzda

June

Walter Cooper.
David Cunningham
Gintaras Dambrava
Stasys Kligys
Gilbert Miller
Albert Penkauskas
Anthony Snipas

Letter to the Editor

I'm a registered Democrat.
I have served under 2 Democratic Presidents - Commanders in Chief.
Through the years, I have campaigned for Democratic Governors and Mayors.
During all this time, I have never been fearful that our Nation would not survive as a democratic Republic. I am now.
Instead of praising and trumpeting the heroic actions of millions of our comrades in arms, and the ultimate sacrifice made by hundreds of thousands of them while fighting to preserve our American Way of Life, our current Democratic President - Commander in Chief (who has never served in our Armed Forces) has apologized to the world for what they did. And has implied that what they did was evil.
He has insulted the British, our longtime ally.
He has snubbed the Israeli Prime Minister, refused to allow Israeli scientists to visit the United States, and has sided with militant Muslims against the Israelis, our most loyal ally in that part of the world.
He has issued Rules of Engagement to our troops in Afghanistan that have seriously hindered their efforts to defend themselves against attacks by militant Muslims.
He has ordered an end to the development of new, more effective nuclear weaponry.
He has agreed to reduce our arsenal of nuclear weapons.
He has cancelled construction of an anti-ballistic missile defense facility in Poland.
He has cancelled construction of a defensive radar facility in the Czech Republic.
He has issued orders banning drilling for oil in vast areas in and offshore the United States, orders which will make certain our dependence on foreign oil far into the future.
Here at home, he is pushing hard to rapidly establish complete Government control over every aspect of our lives.
He has seized control of a major portion of the Nation's auto manufacturing industry.
He has seized control of the Nation's health care system.
He has seized control of the Nation's Student Loans system.
He plans to use the global warming hoax to gain dominion over every commercial operation in the United States.
He plans to allow the Bush tax cuts to expire, and thereby further increase taxes.
He plans to muzzle dissent by regulating talk radio out of existence.
He plans to provide citizenship rights and benefits to millions of illegal aliens now in our country.
And yet, faced with overwhelming evidence of this man's determination to "remake America," to transform it into a Socialist-Marxist State, the National leadership of The American Legion has, as far as I know, remained silent.
Why?
Remember, as Edmund Burke is credited with saying: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."

Richard Seymour

Lithuanian Independence Day, March 11, 1990

"11 March 1990 is deemed to be remembered as one of the most important days in Lithuanian history. It was on this day 20 years ago that the Lithuanian parliament declared renewed freedom and independence for Lithuania, after the country had been occupied by the Soviet Union since World War II. 124 Parliament delegates voted for the declaration, while six were absent.

The Parliament elected at the same time Professor Vytautas Landsbergis, the leader of the liberation movement Sajudis, as Parliament President. He won over the Communist Party leader Algirdas Brazauskas with a 91 to 38 vote.

March 11, 1990 became a milestone in Lithuania's history because the Lithuanian politicians that day clearly demonstrated the country's willingness to again become free and independent. Although it took another 18 months before the international community approved the nation's independence from the Soviet occupying power, it was the 11 March actions that made it clear to the world that Lithuania no longer accepted to be incorporated into a system and a Commonwealth it had been involuntarily incorporated into when the World War II drew to an end.

11 March 1990 was in many ways the day when Lithuania's new freedom began, and we must believe that this country now will remain free and sovereign for all time based on democratic principles and values corresponding to those having been developing in Western Europe after World War II ended in 1945.

While this March day 20 years ago was the beginning of the new time in and for Lithuania, the day was also symbolizing that nearly 200 years of tragedies of and for this country had come to a final end.

Through more than 500 years, from the 1200s when King Mindaugas declared Lithuania one nation, until it was occupied by the Russian Empire in 1795, Lithuania had been a proud and free nation, through some 300 years also one of the world's greatest powers, stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea (known as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania).

The 123 years of occupation from 1795 to 1918, however, became a long and sad chapter for Lithuania, since much of the good qualities this nation once represented in the world community were attempted to be systematically broken down by the Russian Empire occupants.

When Lithuania at the end of World War I (1914-1918) on February 16, 1918 again could declare itself a free nation, most Lithuanians probably believed that the newly won freedom would remain, but sadly, the new freedom lasted only for 22 years. Vilnius and the surrounding area was occupied by Poland already in 1920 and remained under Polish rule until the Second World War started in 1940, and Kaunas was therefore the capital of Lithuania for the years 1920 – 1940. Nevertheless, Lithuania grew to become a strong nation during the interwar years, guided by, among others, the most famous Lithuanian leader of those days, President Antanas Smetona.

World War II and the years just after became extremely tragic for Lithuania, when the nation was torn apart under alternate German and Russian occupation, and virtually all



American Legion Lithuanian Post 154 Legionnaires Vacys Laukaitis, Vincent Dulys, John Maskavich, Balys Brasauskas, Toivo Tagaments and Gintaras Buivyis post Colors at the Lithuanian Independence Day Celebration at Lithuanian Hall on March 7, 2010.

the large Jewish population was wiped out, and Lithuania thereby lost a population group that had meant so much for this nation since the 1300s.

Also, during the war, tens of thousands of Lithuanians fled to the west, many who today live in the United States, Australia and other countries. Lithuanians were also exposed to extremely tragic abuse from Stalin's Soviet troops and his secret police (known as the KGB), when more than a hundred thousand Lithuanians were deported to Siberia and other areas in the Soviet Union where many of this country's great citizens were killed or died during very shameful and cruel conditions.

Already during the WWII years a strong resistance movement occurred, known as the Forest Brothers, who until the middle of the 1950s fought a heroic struggle against the Soviet power from their hiding places in the Lithuanian forests. It is suggested that around 20,000 Lithuanians and 70,000 soldiers from Stalin's Red Army and the KGB were killed during those post-war years.

Lithuania became in 1990 - 1991 the first country that managed to detach itself from the Soviet Union. Latvia and Estonia followed soon after. We should all today be proud that this little country so bravely dared to stand up against the powerful Soviet powers. We should all be extremely happy that this little nation again enjoys freedom and democracy under the principle of equality for all its citizens, and we should be happy about the fact that 11 March 1990 was the day when Lithuania could finally put behind itself nearly 200 years of atrocities and suffering for its people – a people that had deserved so much better due to its proud history".

Source: Aage Myhre, editor of VilNews



Independence Celebration in Vilnius



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SERVICE OFFICER
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(410) 551-2369

Post General Meeting
8 PM every 2nd Wednesday
of the month at
Lithuanian Hall
851 Hollins Street.
Baltimore, MD 21201

Executive Comm. Meeting
7:30 PM on the 4th
Wednesday of the month at
Cockeyed Cow Saloon
900 S. Carey Street
Baltimore, MD 21223

Please send your comments,
suggestions and articles to :

Joe Jankevicius
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Lowe's discount

Lowe's Companies, Inc. recently announced that it is expanding its support of the military by offering a 10% discount to all military personnel who are active, reserve, retired or disabled veterans and their family members, with a valid, government-issued military ID card. All other military veterans (non-disabled) will receive the 10% discount only on Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Veterans Day weekends.

Lithuanian Post 154 web page is on: <http://www.lietuvis.net> - click on Lithuanian Post 154.

Calendar & Reminders

<u>May</u>			
Sat	01	Several Post members will participate in ceremony honoring Gen. Tadeusz Kosciuszko at West Point Military Academy in NY	
Fri	07	Unconditional surrender of all German forces signed (1945)	
Sat	08	Victory in Europe Day - VE Day (1945)	
Sat	08	Motorcycle Poker Run to benefit Children's Miracle Network at Post 277	
Sun	09	Mother's Day	
Wed	12	Lithuanian Post 154 General Meeting - Lithuanian Hall - 8 PM - Additional nominations, and election of Lithuanian Post Delegates and Alternates to the Department Convention - Initial nominations of Lithuanian Post 154 officers for 2010 - 2011	
Thu	13	Baltimore District Meeting - Federal Post 19 - 7 PM	
Sat	15	Armed Forces Day	
Sun	16	Department Executive Meeting - hosted by Victory Post 155 - Westernport, MD - 1 PM	
Sat	22	Lithuanian Festival - Catonsville Armory - 11 AM - 6 PM	
Sun	23	Lithuanian Festival - Catonsville Armory - 11 AM - 6 PM Official Opening Ceremony with Lithuanian Post 154 Color Guard - 1 PM	
Wed	26	Lithuanian Post 154 Executive Meeting - Cockeyed Cow Saloon - 7:30 PM	
Sun	30	Traditional Memorial Day American Legion Baltimore District Service at National Cemetery - 5501 Frederick Ave. - Catonsville - 10:45 AM	
Mon	31	Memorial Day (Observed)	
<u>June</u>			
Wed	09	Lithuanian Post 154 General Meeting - Lithuanian Hall - 8 PM Nominations and election of Lithuanian Post 154 officers for 2010-2011	
Mon	14	Flag Day	
Sun	20	Father's Day	
Tue	22	Pledge of Allegiance recognized by Congress (1942)	
Wed	23	Lithuanian Post 154 Executive Meeting - Cockeyed Cow Saloon - 7:30 PM	
<u>July</u>			
Sun	04	Independence Day	
Mon-Fri	12-16	American Legion Department of Maryland Convention - Ocean City, MD Convention Itinerary:	
Mon	12	Fish Fry behind Convention Hall - 4 - 6 PM	
Tue	13	Legion College classes at Convention Center - 8 AM - 12 Noon Official Opening of Convention - 8 PM	
Wed	14	Convention meetings - 8 AM Memorial Service - 8 PM	
Thu	15	Convention meetings - 8 AM	
Fri	16	Convention meetings - 8 AM	
Wed	14	No Lithuanian Post 154 General Meeting	
Wed	28	Lithuanian Post 154 Executive Meeting - Cockeyed Cow Saloon - 7:30 PM	

Scholarship

Lithuanian Post 154 will be awarding two \$1,000 scholarships to students graduating from high school in 2010 and entering college this fall. Application forms may be picked up at Post

meetings. Applications are also available by contacting Commander John Maskavich. Scholarships are open to children, grandchildren, stepchildren, step grandchildren, nephews, nieces and adopted children of an active member in good

standing or of a deceased member who was in good standing at time of death. Commander John Maskavich must receive scholarship applications for 2010 by July 20, 2010. Applications will not be considered if they are incomplete or late.