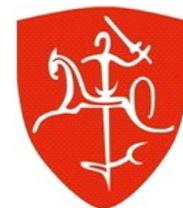




The American Legion Lithuanian Post 154
For God and Country



1st Quarter 2021

Legionnaire

Commander's Message

I hope you and your family have stayed well during this pandemic. Thankfully, due to President Trump's "Operation Warp Speed," several vaccines have been developed and deployed in just 9 months as opposed to the 2 to 3 years initially predicted by medical experts. I can't imagine the impact of the Chinese virus on our society and economy if the US would be locked down for 3 years.

Vaccines have already been administered to millions of Americans and are expected to be distributed to all Americans who want it by this summer. Medical experts predict the pandemic will not be under control until most of the population is vaccinated. So, continue to be cautious by avoiding large gatherings. I plan to get the vaccine when it is available and urge you to consider doing the same.

Other than participating in the Lithuanian Independence Celebration at Lithuanian Hall last March, Post 154 did not have any of its typical events during 2020. Because of restrictions on gatherings, I suspect we will have to continue in this mode for most of 2021. Medical experts are predicting the US will start back to being "normal" this fall. If that is the case, the National Commander's Banquet in March and the Windmills International Dance Festival in April will probably be cancelled or postponed. Check the American Legion Department of Maryland website and Lithuanian Hall website for updates. While on your computer, look at our website, www.lietuvis.net for a new Historian's Page. Our Post 154 Historian, Henry Gaidis, has for decades been researching and writing Lithuanian related military history articles for Lithuanian magazines such as *Draugas* and *Lithuanian Heritage*. He has provided some of them to our website. You can find many hours of interesting reading there.

I wish to thank Adjutant Vincent Dulys and Vice Commander Gintaras Buivys for keeping our Post's administrative obligations with the IRS and American Legion Department of Maryland and National in good order during our lockdown.

On behalf of the officers of Lithuanian Post 154, I wish you and your family a safe, happy, healthy and prosperous 2021.

Joe Jankevicius
Commander

Another Gift to Lithuania

On the occasion of Lithuania's 100 year independence anniversary in 2018, Lithuanian Post 154 Historian, Henry Gaidis, loaned and then subsequently donated to the Lithuanian Sea Museum in Klaipeda the only known surviving flag from "*Prezidentas Smetona*," Lithuania's only warship during the first independence period of 1918 - 1940.



Henry Gaidis

In 2019, Henry decided to downsize and needed to find a good home for his extensive Lithuanian Military Collection. If you have ever been to Baltimore's Lithuanian Festival, you most likely have seen a small sample of his collection on display. Though he considered donating to the Lithuanian museum in Chicago, he decided his collection would get broader exposure in the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius. The museum plans to have a separate room or section dedicated to Henry's collection. Of special interest to us, his collection includes an American Legion Lithuanian Post 154 uniform.

The preparations for exporting Henry's collection to Lithuania became a year long project. Several members from the Lithuanian National Museum spent over a week inventorying and packing the collection.



Since his collection includes firearms, Henry needed to obtain a permit from the US Government to ship them to Lithuania. Fortunately, the Lithuanian Embassy was able to get help from the State Department to smooth the way. Initially, the plan was to have the Pennsylvania National Guard transport it with them when they travel to Lithuania for exercises. Because of the pandemic, the military exchange program was suspended and Henry's collection was stuck packed in his home for months. Finally, a Lithuanian Embassy's contracted mover picked up the 30 boxes containing thousands of items on September 15, 2020 and they arrived in Lithuania on November 6th.

When you visit Vilnius, make certain you go see Henry's collection at the Lithuanian National Museum.

Membership

Fiscal Year "2021" started July 1, 2020 and ends June 30, 2021.

As of December 31, 2020 our records show we have 79 members that have renewed for Fiscal Year "2021". Membership cards that are "2020" will have expired and will not be valid to visit other Posts.

There is still time to renew on-line using the link on our website www.lietuvis.net using a credit card or mail me your \$30 renewal check payable to American Legion Lithuanian Post #154 to my address. I will mail you your Fiscal Year "2021" card.

Membership is important not only to our local post but also to the State and National organizations. Each year the number of our members as well as American Legion programs for Veterans and communities are reported to Congress. Truly, there is strength in numbers. Your membership positively affects proposed legislation for Veterans Benefits.

We appreciate everyone's support of The American Legion programs in the past and hope we can count on everyone's support in the future.

If you have any questions or concerns please call or text me at 410-960-7874

Vincent Dulys
Adjutant Post # 154

Sick Call

Joseph Astasauskas
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Hanover, MD 21076

Vincent Dulys
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Crownsville, MD 21032

John Potts
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Baltimore, MD 21230

Happy Birthday

January

Patrick Dohlus
Charles Gross
Bernard Milosavich
William Morrison
Stephen Mueller
Ronald Price
John Potts
Vytautas Ramunas

February

Kirk Bauer
Jeffrey Burton

March

George Adams
Richard Leffler
Gediminas Naujokaitis
Augustinas Uleckas

TAPS

I am sorry to inform you that John Maskavich, 93, a member of Lithuanian Post 154 for 44 years, passed away peacefully at his home on October 2, 2020. Though there were capacity limits at the funeral home due to COVID restrictions, Lithuanian Post was allowed to say farewell to John with a Post 154 Poppy Service. Also, a few members were able to attend John's funeral at Crownsville Veterans Cemetery.



John Maskavich

John enlisted in the US Army at the end of WWII and served at Sugamo Prison in Tokyo, Japan where Japanese prisoners accused of war crimes were detained for trials. (See on page 3 John's military service autobiography that he wrote for the March 2006 issue of the *Legionnaire*).

For decades after his military service ended, he maintained contact with many of his Army buddies. For many years he was very involved in the activities of the Sugamo Prison Reunion Association.

After leaving the Army, John utilized the G.I. Bill to earn his bachelor's and master's degrees from Loyola College. He spent the first two years of his 25-year career in education in Howard County before moving to schools in Baltimore County. There, he taught English, Social Studies, Latin, and Spanish at Catonsville and Arbutus junior high schools. He later moved into administration and spent the final 17 years of his education career as vice principal at Arbutus Junior High School.

John was an active member of Baltimore's Lithuanian Community. He was a member of Lithuanian Hall's board of directors, served on a variety of committees and as a Trustee for several years. John was also heavily involved with Baltimore's annual Lithuanian Festival. He served in a variety of roles including chairman of the committee for several years. Probably his most active Lithuanian community participation was with The American Legion, Lithuanian Post 154. John was a member of the Lithuanian Post 154 for 44 consecutive years and was the Post Commander from 1995 to 1996 and again from 2004 to 2013. He was named the Department of Maryland's Outstanding Commander in 2009-2010. He also served as Lithuanian Post 154 Chaplain from 2016 until his time of his death.

May he rest in peace.

John Maskavich's Military Service Autobiography, - Oct 1946 - Jan 1954

I enlisted at Fort Meade, MD and after basic training at Fort Dix, NJ traveled by train to Seattle, WA and Fort Lewis to board a troop train to CAMP Stoneman, CA to board a ship that docked for one week in Honolulu, HI and another week in Guam. I arrived at Yokohama, Japan and spent two weeks at Camp Zuma (the Japanese equivalent of our West Point) before being assigned to Sugamo Prison in March of 1947. The prison no longer exists except in the Official American and Japanese records and in the memories of those who served there. In its place now stands a very expensive housing project - Sunshine City. The tallest building in Japan is located there along with a small park where a large stone marks the location of the prison gallows. On the stone in Japanese are the words "Pray for Eternal Peace".

The prison was both infamous and at the same time famous. Infamous: it held "political" prisoners - American agents were taken to Sugamo, interrogated and executed by hanging in November of 1944. Famous because it housed the twenty-five (25) major Japanese war criminals indicted by the International Military Tribunal Far East. The most well known was Hideke Tojo. The prison also housed Tokyo Rose until she was returned to the USA.

I was first assigned to the jailers section for duty in various cell blocks, there were 6 in all - including several months in the cell block housing major war criminals. Other cell blocks housed the Class "C" or minor criminals as well as those scheduled for execution by hanging.

I experienced my first earthquake on the midnight shift on death row.

I was later assigned as Chaplain's Assistant in early 1948. During this assignment Chaplain Captain John Ryan was murdered. The person charged was a member of the prison personnel. This was the first such murder charge in US Army history.

A memorable event was the execution of the seven Class "A", major war criminals, by hanging at 12:01 am on December 23, 1948. Only one convicted war criminal died by firing squad, the sentence by a Philippine court.

There was one humorous event though. One day, at noon; the prison was put on alert and sirens were sounded. Full security measures went into effect - all exits and entrances were sealed. At the noon headcount, a prisoner on a work detail outside the prison but within fenced perimeter, was missing. Therefore,

on signal, all Japanese nationals stopped dead in their tracks! However, at the entrance desk to the cell blocks, some female Japanese visitors and a lone male in G.I. OD's were trying to get the attention of the desk sergeant, but they were being ignored. Only when the male turned around and showed the 'P' on the back of his shirt, did the desk sergeant realize that he was the missing prisoner and the alert was called off. Seems the prisoner had fallen asleep behind a pile of debris and didn't hear the whistle to stop work and fall in for lunch inside the prison.

Most of the enlisted men stationed at Sugamo were in their late teens or early twenties. All had completed at least some high school or college. None had relatives who fought in the Pacific theater! We had considerably more time for recreation than duty time. I played right end on the 1949 season football team. We had a 9-0 record that season. We had the first bowling alley in Japan, a post theater, an enlisted men's club and an officer's club as well as a service club. There was plenty of time to visit well known historical and cultural areas.

Upon returning to the states, I was assigned to the 716th MP Battalion at Fort Dix, NJ as Operations/ Training NCO and later honorably discharged in January of 1954.

VA MISSION ACT UPDATE

As part of the VA MISSION ACT, the VA is giving more family caregivers access to the Caregiver program.

The program is expanding in 2 phases.

1. On October 1, 2020, the program included family of eligible veterans who were seriously injured in the line of duty before May 8, 1975.
2. Two years from this date, the program will expand to include family caregivers of eligible veterans from all eras who were seriously injured in the line of duty.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE VETERAN

The veteran must be enrolled in the VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM and have a VA disability rating of 70% or higher. The veteran's service connected disability must have been caused or made worse by their active duty service before May 8, 1975 or after September 10, 2001.

The veteran must have been discharged from the U.S. military or have a date of medical discharge with 6-months of continuous in person care services.

Eligible caregivers may receive a monthly stipend.

For more information you can contact the Caregiver support line at 1-855-260-3274.

Contact Information

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EDITOR

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Meeting Information

All meeting dates & times are subject to change during the COVID19 uncertainty. Members will be notified by email of any changes.

Post General Meetings

are held at Lithuanian Hall, 851 Hollins Street, Baltimore, MD 21201 at 11 AM on the 2nd Wednesday of January, March, May, June, August, September and November.

Exec. Committee Meetings

are held on 4th Wednesday of every month except December at 1 PM at Spirits West Country Club, 2601 Wilkens Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21223

Calendar & Reminders

January

Fri	01	New Year's Day
Wed	13	Lithuanian Post 154 General Meeting - Lithuanian Hall - 11 AM
Thu	14	Baltimore District Meeting - Virtual - 7 PM I
Sun	17	Persian Gulf War Began (1991)
Mon	18	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Wed	27	Lithuanian Post 154 Executive Committee Meeting - Spirits West Country Club - 1 PM
Wed	27	Signing of Vietnam Peace Accord (1973)
Thu	28	US - Vietnam Cease Fire (1973)

February

Mon	01	National Freedom Day
Tue	02	Groundhog Day
Mon	08	Boy Scouts of America founded (1910)
Fri	12	Lincoln's Birthday
Sun	14	St. Valentine's Day
Mon	15	Presidents' Day
Wed	17	Ash Wednesday
Sun	21	Department Executive Committee Meeting - Laurel Post 60 2 Main Street, Laurel, MD 20707 - 1 PM
Mon	22	George Washington's Birthday
Wed	24	Lithuanian Post 154 Executive Committee Meeting - Spirits West Country Club - 1 PM

March

Wed	03	"The Star Spangled Banner" made US National Anthem (1931)
Wed	10	Lithuanian Post 154 General Meeting - Lithuanian Hall - 11 AM
Fri	12	Girl Scouts of America founded (1912)
Sun	14	Daylight Saving Time Begins - Set clock ahead one hour
Wed	17	St. Patrick's Day
Fri	19	Iraq War began (2003)
Sat	20	Spring begins
Wed	24	Lithuanian Post 154 Executive Committee Meeting - Spirits West Country Club - 1 PM
Sat	27	National Commander's Banquet - Francis Scott Key Post 11, 1450 Taney Ave, Frederick, MD 21702 5 -9 PM
Sat	27	Passover begins at sundown
Sun	28	Palm Sunday

April

Thu	01	April Fools' Day
Fri	02	Good Friday
Sun	04	Easter Sunday
Tue	06	US entered WW I (1917)
Sat	10	Windmills International Dance Festival - Lithuanian Hall - Noon - 7 PM
Thu	15	Income Tax Returns due
Wed	28	Lithuanian Post 154 Executive Committee Meeting - Spirits West Country Club - 1 PM
Fri	30	Vietnam War ended (1975)