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William Wolkovich-Valkavicius. **Lithuanian Fraternalism: 75 Years of the U.S. Knights of Lithuania.**

Brooklyn: Knights of Lithuania, 1988. 303 pp.

The work is a monograph on the first 75 years of the history of the Knights of Lithuania in the United States. It conforms to the original meaning of the word history, "Histos" from the Greek meaning to weave a web, because the author does just that — he weaves complex strands into one web. The strands, woven together, shed light on the issues of religion, ethnicity, inter-ethnic marriage, dual allegiance, organizational struggle, assimilation, clash with second immigration wave Lithuanians, finances, culture and the question posed by themselves on whether they are Lithuanians or Lithuanian-Americans. These issues carry the discussion into historical dilemmas on a personal and group level for the descendants of not only the original Knights of Lithuania but for the descendants of all those with roots in the pre-World War I and post-World War II Lithuanian community in America.

There are many surprises presented not for the sake of sensationalism but as part of a design to share historical facts. The first surprise, at least for this reader, was the complex character and life of the founder of the Knights, Mykolas Norkūnas. Norkūnas had been a book-smuggler in Lithuania during the Czarist era. Hence, he had been active in the linguistic and cultural struggle prior to coming to America. Once in America, he moved in Polish circles, organized Polish societies and married a Polish woman in 1903, recording "Narkun" on his marriage certificate and using Polish for his church and home life. However, soon after his inter-ethnic marriage, he immersed himself solely into Lithuanian activities for the rest of his life. Affectionately called "Gerbiamasis Vyčių Tėvas", Norkūnas (1869-1951) founded the Knights in 1913 in Massachusetts at the age of 43. Many of the original members were in their 20s and some in their teens.

Valkavičius does not shy away from sensitive issues. He deals with the issue of inter-ethnic marriages. For example, he uncovers a 1943 Knights Yearbook essay on inter-ethnic marriage which states, "The founder himself forty years ago had already formed such a mixed (ethnic) marriage. Unable to undo his own error, he wanted to protect others from such a mistake." In the body of his work, Valkavičius points out that marriages outside the Lithuanian fold were seen by pre-World War II Knights as a danger to preserving ethnic identity. This danger was first voiced in print as early as 1912, echoing across the years to as late as 1950, when Knight Helen Shields openly stated: "When you are contemplating marriage, choose your own." After decades of resistance, this strand of thinking appears to have come to an end for the Knights in 1959. It was in that year that the organization granted an associate basis for non-Lithuanian spouses. He also puts into context the pitfall known as the "mobility trap", a situation faced by upward-bound professional individuals.

These, as well as many other issues, must be read in context. Chapter by chapter has been carefully conceived in that each deals with process and resolution that is not normally seen in a work that restricts itself to nostalgia and picture records. At the same time, by focusing on a sub-community which lived within a larger American community, Valkavičius outlines the function of an ethnic community: to keep cultural traditions alive, to provide members with preferred associates, to help organize the social structure, and to enable men and women to identify themselves in the face of threatened chaos by a large and impersonal Anglo-American community beyond the fragile sub-community.

While the bulk of Valkavičius' monograph centers on the first immigration wave, he offers new information on the relationship between the Knights and organizations, as well as officials in pre-World War II Lithuania. The relationship continues into the Displaced Persons' camp era and ends with the clash between the Knights and the new arrivals from Europe in their midst after 1949. The author states the Knights' case via primary records, without losing sight of the traumatic experiences of the newcomers, yet he spares nothing in describing the mutual hostility between the two groups. He strikes a sensitive chord when he makes the point that "Some newcomers soon forgot those who took legal responsibility as their sponsors, seldom if ever sending so much as a greeting card."

Valkavičius converts his monograph on a fraternal organization into a historical statement. Past, present and future are not isolated from each other by the author as he sees past, present and future generations faced with the same issues

looming over them — namely, the central issue of preserving a Lithuanian heritage for themselves and future generations in America. Consequently, there is another dimension not to be overlooked: a craving to be historically recognized. Valkavičius does not use the monograph as a forum to propagate ideas or point fingers at detractors of the Knights — but rather, he shares and re-lives experiences using original documents.

Valkavičius is long on history and short on theory — refreshingly so for the reader with a specialized frame of reference. The author's style leaves room for the reader to follow developments as they unfold and to draw conclusions according to his own frame of reference. For example, one of these frames of reference could include sociologist-ethnic historian Andrew M. Greeley's theory on the six steps in ethnic assimilation. Greeley's outline may be kept in mind when reading **Lithuanian Fraternalism**. The "Six Steps to Ethnic Assimilation" theory consists of:

1. Culture shock (first experience by new immigrants)
2. Organization and emergence of self-consciousness
3. Assimilation of elite
4. Militancy
5. Self-hatred
6. Emerging adjustment.

All six of these steps can be traced in Valkavičius' monograph of the Knights' sub-structure within the first wave sub-community. Thus, his style is centered more on triggering thoughts on the level of the reader who is interacting with an epic narrative covering 75 years.

Historical food for thought is offered as material that historians can use to reinforce controlling concepts and to apply to theories of assimilation. In other words, one may read this work in a number of ways, each valid within its own right: a history of Knights of Lithuania, a window on the first wave of Lithuanians, a work in the field of American ethnic history, or a work that can be utilized by historians in analyzing and applying the group's experiences in terms of theories of assimilation.

The appearance of **Lithuanian Fraternalism** creates the opportunity to read and internalize a record of a fraternal spirit articulated by the author, both as an outsider (M.A. Boston College, 1980 in American Studies), and an insider (born to Lithuanian immigrant parents in Hudson, Massachusetts, in 1929). It may well be worth noting the thoughts of former Chairman of the Harvard University history department, David S. Landes, who observed during a discussion on "What is history?" that "Ethnic criteria of the validity of historical research and teaching are unacceptable because they are anti-intellectual. It may well be that some things are knowable only to 'insiders'; but then there are other things that are especially perceptible to 'outsiders' precisely because they are outside." As Valkavičius traces the various issues confronting the Knights, he allows all sides to present their case in their own words. In the process, he creates conditions for the reader to follow strands in a historical process of accommodation.

This 1988 first printing of 2,000 soft cover and 500 hard cover books is, it is hoped, only a first printing. A second printing should include a short paragraph in an appendix on "prime movers" mentioned in the text. For example, as it stands, historical figures such as Antanas Kaupas, Fabijonas Kemėšis, Kazys Pakštas, Jonas Šliupas, Antanas Staniukynas, Antanas Milukas, Adolfas Darnušis, Juozas Laučka are assumed to be familiar to the reader. This may not always be the case. This procedure is a proven aid to the general reader and future researcher. At the same time, the procedure becomes a history lesson in itself to the uninitiated without interrupting the narrative within the text.

It is indeed tempting to offer an in-depth interpretation of the work in terms of intellectual history and, in the process, step outside my role as a reviewer of a monograph. Valkavičius began, I trust, to write a history dealing with issues, inner workings and structure of the Knights. All this appears in the work. However, to his credit, he has published a historical work opening a new chapter in the life of the Knights and the Lithuanian experience in America. With this book, Knights may not only look back but also forward to enhancing the lives of many Americans of Lithuanian descent who have little or no command of the Lithuanian language but wish to learn about their Lithuanian heritage.

Lithuanian Fraternalism has the potential to speak to present and future generations based in a historically verbalized past in which the historical players never fade from the scene but rather "live on" as protagonists of a drama that reaches into our time and beyond.

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