

LINAS ANTANAS SIDRYS, M.D. - MAN OF THE YEAR 2009



*The Balzekas Museum
of Lithuanian Culture
requests the honor of your presence
at
The Forty-Third Annual
Excellence Award Dinner
honoring
Linas Antanas Sidrys, M.D.
for his dedication to
Lithuania, Lithuanians, and
humanitarian work.*

*New Year's Eve,
Thursday, December 31, 2009
Reception 8 p.m. Dinner 9:30 p.m.
Amber Ballroom
Balzekas Museum
6500 South Pulaski Road,
Chicago, Illinois*

Dr. Sidrys and his family in 1997.
From left, standing: Vincas, Lina, Rimas,
Vija, and Gintas. From left, seated: Gaja,
Dr. Linas Sidrys, Ziba, Mrs. Rima (Briedyte)
Sidrys, and Saule.

Linas Antanas Sidrys, M.D. is an ophthalmologist practicing on the Southwest side of Chicago for 27 years. Together with his wife Rima, he has raised eight children, all of whom participate in Lithuanian-American community activities. He was the first American intern allowed to work in the Soviet Union in 1977, in Vilnius. Subsequently, he made many trips to occupied Lithuania, where he performed 120 free eye surgeries in Kaunas, Vilnius and Panevezys, funding and bringing with him much needed medical supplies, antibiotics and surgical equipment. While there, he often trained ophthalmologists in the latest surgical techniques. After Lithuania regained its independence in 1990, he was a strong voice for reforming the outmoded Soviet medical system, writing numerous articles in the Lithuanian press and "Draugas," and publishing a book entitled "Ar Laukti Stebuklo?" (Should we wait for a miracle?)

Linas Sidrys started his education in the Philippines, in Clark Air Force Base, where his physician father, Rimvydas, was a Major in the American Air Force. They were the only Lithuanian-speaking family in the officers quarters. Although his parents had fled Lithuania due to the Communist occupation, they could see from Clark the volcanic mountains where local communists were entrenched, agitating for revolution. However, Clark base was surrounded by friendly Philipinos living in bamboo huts on stilts, farming rice fields with water buffalos. The American missionary priests made a big impression on Linas, who made his First Communion at age six, learning from eighth-grade religious textbooks, the only ones available.

The family returned to the USA in 1958 and lived in Beverly Shores, then moved to Streator, 90 miles out of Chicago, surrounded by International Harvester tractors and cornfields. His mother Giedre Salcius-Sidriene was also a physician, but did not practice as she was raising nine children. All became proficient in speaking, reading and writing Lithuanian, without the benefit of Saturday school. This large family traveled extensively, visiting most U.S. National Parks and many countries in Europe.

Linas attended the University of Notre Dame '73, then University of Chicago, Pritzker, for medical school and residency. After medical residency, he did a Corneal Transplant Fellowship at the University of Florida, Gainesville. He established private practices in Streator, IL, Marquette Park in Chicago, and Chicago Ridge,

IL. More than twenty Lithuanian physicians visited his practice and observed eye surgery at Holy Cross Hospital. Dr. Sidrys contributed to the publication of the most recent textbook of Ophthalmology in Lithuania. In 1992, Dr. Sidrys established the first optical factory in post-Soviet Lithuania located in Vilnius which introduced Western quality eyeglasses.

As a student in 1973, Linas accompanied Rev. Stasys Yla to Poland, to dedicate the gravestone of Rev. Lipniunas, a victim of the Stuthoff Nazi concentration camp. In 1977, he was the first foreigner to reside in Kaunas since it had been closed to outsiders after the death of Romas Kalanta. In 1981, he was asked to take the microfilm of the underground publication, "Chronicles of the Catholic Church in Lithuania," to the Secretary of State, Monsignor Audrys Backis, at the Vatican. Since the 1980's Dr. Sidrys has been the President of Lithuanian Roman Catholic Charities, and he was the President of the 1987 Lithuanian Christianity Jubilee in Rome. Dr. Sidrys is a member of Ateitininkai, and he was an editor of "Ateitis" magazine for five years. He has lectured and written numerous articles about Christian marriage and the Catholic education of children. In 1992, Linas, together with Rima, established the first Catholic teenage summer camps, two for boys and two for girls, in post-Soviet Lithuania. These Lithuanian summer camps, sponsored by Opus Dei, are still successfully giving Catholic formation to high school students, seventeen years later. Some of the Sidrys children have worked at those camps, and most of them have been to Lithuania on various occasions. The Sidrys family has provided assistance to many families in Lithuania, especially large ones, giving financial, material and moral support.

For his twenty years of dedication to improving healthcare in Lithuania, Dr. Linas Sidrys was awarded the Order of Gediminas by President Valdas Adamkus at the Presidential palace in Vilnius, Lithuania on August 7, 2008. On that occasion, the President remarked that he was proud that "Dr. Sidrys, a fellow Lithuanian American from Chicago, was one of the first people who ventured into Lithuania to regularly assist her during the difficult and dangerous Soviet times and also during her struggle for independence."

Dr. Sidrys was born in New York City, June 13, 1951 and resides in Palos Hills, IL. He has been married to Rima Briedyte since April 8, 1978.