

# Where Do I Belong? An Immigrant's Quest for Identity

by Tony Mankus

Self-published, 2013, 249 pages plus appendices.  
A book review by James M. Boubonis (Baubonis).

As more and more of the Lithuanian *dipukai* generation publish their memoirs, it is interesting to compare one story with another to see how their experiences differ and to what extent they are similar. Tony Mankus has written a thought-provoking and rewarding book based on his life as a Lithuanian DP (Displaced Person), from childhood through the flight toward freedom to life as an American.

From the beginning, Mankus uses the question put in the title as a thread that unites the book and enhances its purpose. Without becoming verbose or too scant in detail, he explores the common problem of the DP—the question of self-identity.

Born Algis Monkevičius, Tony Mankus grew up in Plungė, about 50 kilometers east of Palanga. Robbed of much of his childhood by the horrors of the initial Soviet occupation of Lithuania, Mankus had barely spent enough years in the country of his birth to establish his identity as a Lithuanian in his young mind, when the Red Army returned from the east to push out the occupying German army and begin the lengthy second Soviet occupation of the Baltic States. Mankus's parents, like many thousands of other Lithua-

nians at the time, made the heart-rending choice to leave their homeland in hope of better prospects in the West. The first Soviet occupation had been a nightmare, but they feared worse from a second.

Fearful and miserable as their trek to relative safety in Germany was, in terms of transportation, the Monkevičius family seems to have fared better than many others who fled at the time, judging from other accounts I've read. The family arrived in Germany after traveling all the way by rail, whereas many other families suffered through several phases of their journeys, using various modes of transportation, losing most of their belongings to theft or barter and sometimes barely escaping death. The Monkevičius family endured bombings from Allied planes and abuse from the retreating German army, including a brief period when one of Mankus's older brothers was forced into the Hitlerjugend, which would have put him in the German army as a forced conscript had he not escaped. The family also suffered near-starvation at times, until the American army finally got the refugees organized into camps and started feeding them.

The author's family eventually received permission to emigrate to the



Tony Mankus, circa 1956.

United States and left for the New World on an old troop ship. They set up their first home in Elizabeth, New Jersey, where Mankus describes the joys, temptations, and pitfalls of a Lithuanian DP growing up in urban America—getting along with American kids, dealing with people of races he'd never encountered before, and his interactions with church, jobs, girls, gambling, and alcohol. Yet Mankus was always searching for something more, a sense of true belonging and a set identity. Was he Lithuanian, American, Lithuanian-American, or what?

During his young adulthood, Mankus strove to find the right career, sometimes getting the necessary education and sometimes simply trying to work his way up the ladder. The description of his experiences with early forms of computer programming while working for a bank is a true period piece and makes for some of the best reading in the book.

Mankus's college education progressed in fits and starts until he finally buckled down in his mid-twenties and completed his bachelor's degree. He describes this part of his life as yet another conflicted period, during which he tried his best to fit in but mainly failed.

Throughout the narrative, Mankus keeps us up to date with

members of his family and how they managed their own adaptations to American society. By way of various scenarios throughout the book, he constructs an interesting study of human motivation and character, though that was not his main intent. Mankus is a born psychologist and no doubt would have succeeded in psychology as a career.

After graduating from college, Mankus serves in the Peace Corps for a couple of years, and his travels spur a wanderlust that, curiously, numbs his feelings of lack of belonging. After the Peace Corps, he embarks on a career as a globe-trotting Internal Revenue Service officer, after which he settles down in Chicago to work at his final career choice: to live with his wonderful wife and daughters.

The gist of the book, Mankus's lack of belonging to some specific group that identifies with him as much as he does with them, is addressed deliberately and regularly—though not mechanically—throughout the book. At all points in his life, he keeps us, the readers, aware of this central enigma.

His depictions of the foreign cultures he came to know during his official travels are informative and captivating. The three appendices pertain to his travels and amplify some of the extraordinary experiences he had. For example, he draws from his memories of starving as a Lithuanian DP child to identify with the suffering of the people he encounters in foreign lands.

Mankus writes in a clear prose with a vocabulary that is neither overly challenging nor mundane. The book is printed in an attractive font with double-spacing so the chapters go by quickly. This book will interest all Lithuanians and anyone who believes in achieving the American dream the old-fashioned way—through hard work and persistence.

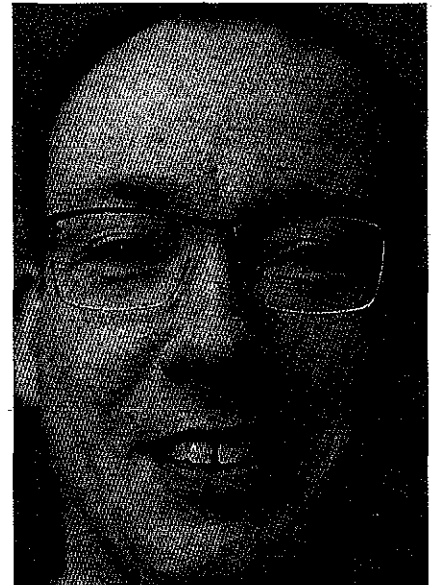
# Lars Marius Garshol's Lithuanian Beer: A Rough Guide

by Kazys Ozelis

Lars Marius Garshol (pronounced **Gars.hol**) is a Norwegian information systems researcher and technology consultant who happens to enjoy beer, especially traditional or little-known styles that are often underappreciated and not easily found. He has been blogging about beer for almost a decade and has rated more than 6,000 beers from 89 countries. He's a certified beer judge and has judged beer for festivals, newspapers, and the national homebrewing championship.

His new e-book, *Lithuanian Beer: A Rough Guide*, is available by following this link: <http://www.garshol.priv.no/download/lithuanian-beer-guide/>. In his book, Garshol argues that Lithuanian beer and the culture that surrounds it are unique and deserve greater attention. He is careful to note that this is a work in progress, just a rough guide to Lithuanian beer and breweries. Yet this work seems far more detailed and explanatory than past attempts at characterizing Lithuanian beer.

Garshol describes Lithuanian beers as recognizable and distinctive because of the flavors and aromas that they evoke. He believes the ingredients, techniques, and equipment used in Lithuanian brewing contribute to specific flavor and aroma profiles not found in any other beers. Part of this may stem from most Lithuanian brewers' adherence to tradition (or at least to the rationale for traditional brewing practices) and their goal to provide



Lars Marius Garshol.

fresh beer meant for quick consumption. While Lithuania has mega-industrial scale breweries that produce varieties of beer with long shelf-lives, Garshol notes most breweries deliberately make beers that should be enjoyed soon after they have been brewed. Such brewers largely eschew the use of preservatives and pasteurization that may rob beer of its more subtle and delicate elements.

Styles of Lithuanian beer are described for the benefit of those not entirely familiar with Lithuanian beer. Garshol suggests there is a fluidity in how these styles are defined, and many breweries create beers without adhering to a particular style, which makes it a bit more difficult for the consumer who is searching for a beer to fit a certain type or