

Apologies to Darius and Girenas

I'm sorry
I never really understood
Your Monument in Marquette Park
Though I tried like every other kid
To climb its marble slickness,
Scampering up the steep incline,
Until, momentum spent,
I teetered tree-high, dizzy boy
Gawking at the concrete
Cracked and beckoning below,
And, heart aflutter,
Clutched the sides of the airplane's wing,
To slide down on my knees.

Darius, I never knew, you shed your blood
For America
When you fought the First Great War in France,
And I didn't know you went back home, to Lithuania,
To take up arms again, this time
To save your homeland's Baltic port.

Nor could I quite appreciate what you did, Stas Girenas,
Your expertise with aircraft in those early days of flying,
Your work with wrench and rivet gun to modify your single-engine plane
So little *Lituanica* could soar,
4000 miles across the broad Atlantic,
Carry men and dreams with pride above the stormy northern sea.

I must have read the bright inscription of your sacrifice and valor,
Gazed upon the globe of burnished bronze,
But I never felt the darkness and the danger in the night,
When you fell into the forest with a crash,
And I never knew the empty air of stillness that ensued.

But I am happy to report
I finally scaled your plane-wing monument,
Stood high atop the gleaming marble
Exulting through the leaf-tops of the dying south side elms,
Above the lapping waters of the Marquette Park lagoon,
Streets and bungalows and gangways spread below
A boy heroic poised in victory.