



LEADING STAR LEDSTJÄRNAN

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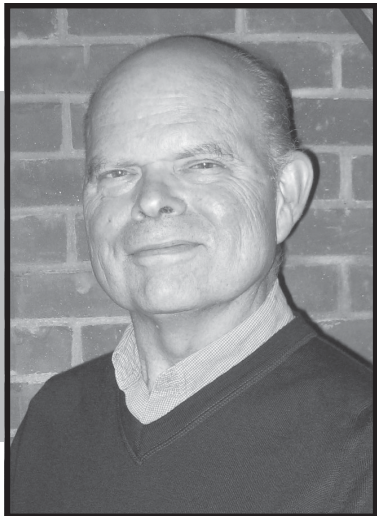
La Palma, California

March 2012

Number 1

www.orderofruneberg.org

International Order of Runeberg Supreme Board President's Message



Greetings to IOR members in Canada and the USA, and to Finlandia Order of Runeberg members. It is exciting that Finland is continually in the forefront of positive news. Two recent examples:

(1) Fisker Karma—made in Finland
Numerous news media have been reporting on the new Fisker Karma. A *New York Times* article describes the “coupe-like” fastback sedan’s design: “low-set body, with voluptuous

curves.” It’s a plug-in gas-electric hybrid, manufactured by Fisker Automotive, a California-based car company. Fisker partnered with Valmet Automotive (in Uusikaupunki), the experienced contract assembler of several Porsche models and other international brands. You can see a picture of this beautiful automobile at our website—from homepage, click “Cultural Topics,” then “Finnish Products,” then “Automobiles.”

(2) Finland’s Education Success

The Atlantic monthly journal is one of the most respected of American reviews. *The Atlantic* published (12/29/11) an article titled “What Americans Keep Ignoring About Finland’s School Success,” written by Anu Partanen, a Finnish journalist based in New York City. For this article she interviewed Pasi Sahlberg, director of the Finnish Ministry of Education’s Center for International Mobility and author of the new book *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?*—Here are some of the major points made by Partanen and Sahlberg in the article:

Finland has been attracting attention on global surveys of quality of life—*Newsweek* ranked it number one last year—and Finland’s national education system has been receiving particular praise, because in recent years Finnish students have been turning in some of the highest test scores in the world.

Compared with the stereotype of the East Asian model—long hours of exhaustive cramming and rote memorization—Finland’s success is especially intriguing because Finnish schools assign less homework and engage children in more creative play. There are no private schools in Finland. Only a small number of independent schools exist in Finland, and even they are all publicly financed. None is allowed to charge tuition fees. There are no private universities. Practically every person in Finland attends public school, whether for pre-K or a Ph.D.

Finland has no standardized tests, except for the National Matriculation

Exam, taken at the end of a voluntary upper-secondary school. Instead, the public school system’s teachers are trained to assess children in classrooms using independent tests they create themselves. All children receive a report card at the end of each semester, based on individualized grading by each teacher.

Finland is an education superpower because it values equality more than excellence—achieving excellence by focusing on cooperation and equity.

Reminder: If your lodge would like lodge-related information posted on your lodge’s web page, email or call me with the information you’d like posted, such as 2012 meetings schedule, meetings locations, etc.—and thank you to Nils Holm and Shea Teixeira for their lodges #101 & #124 web-pages editing.

Fraternally,
Stew Lyons

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Scholarship Donation Report

The International Order of Runeberg Scholarship Fund has received generous donations from lodges as well as individuals.

These donations have been received since the last report:

In Memory of Clarissa Holm	
Seattle Lodge #101	\$30.00
In Memory of Nils Fredriksson	
Ralf and Ulla Hogberg	\$70.00
John Bjorknas	\$100.00
New Haven Lodge #205	\$100.00
Ellen Lindstrom	\$11.00
In Memory of Boris Osterback	
Seattle Lodge #101	\$30.00

Thank you for contributing to the Scholarship Fund. We appreciate your support.

Scholarship applications **MUST** be received by April 30, 2012.



Lorene Mara
Scholarship Chairman

Old Leading Star issues

If anyone is wanting to get rid of old *Leading Stars* from the 1950s and 1960s, Eric and Lorene Mara would be happy to get them. Eric is collecting back issues and has almost a complete set from 1970 to present. You can get in touch with them at:

Eric or Lorene Mara
2021 Pallister Avenue
Coquitlam, B.C.
V3K 1W8 Canada

Phone: 604-939-5235

Email: moopeople@shaw.ca

Also, the Swedish Finn Historical Society is in need of very early *Leading Stars* for their collection. Their address is SFHS, 1920 Dexter Avenue N, Seattle, WA 98109 and phone is 206-706-0738.

All scholarship applicants, please remember that your application must be received by April 30. Allow extra time for mailing to Canada.

—DH

Please submit all news, resolutions, and articles by May 18 for publication in the June *Leading Star*

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To correct our listing of your address, fill in the requested information in the form below and send your old mailing label to:

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Finland's New President



Finland's new president Sauli Niinistö, who takes over from incumbent Tarja Halonen for a six-year term in March, has a track record of service both at home and abroad. The frontrunner since he lost the 2006 election to Halonen, Niinistö is set to become the first National Coalition Party president since Juho Kusti Paasikivi left office in 1956.

Sixty-three-year-old Niinistö has an impressive resumé in Finnish politics. Most Finns remember Niinistö as the hard-nosed finance minister, a position in which he gained respect as a politician willing to take tough decisions. He served in that post for seven years from 1996

to 2003 rescuing Finland from the grip of recession and taking the nation into the euro.

Tumultuous personal life

The president-elect is no stranger to tragedy. In 1995, his first wife of 20 years died in a road accident and later he himself clung on to life in the Indian Ocean tsunami by climbing up a tree in Thailand to escape the waves. These experiences have helped temper his no-nonsense attitude and undoubtedly endeared him to voters of all ages.

Before marrying his party's communications manager, Jenni Haukio, Niinistö was engaged to an ex-beauty queen turned parliamentarian, although that relationship ended a year after the engagement.

Niinistö has been married to Haukio, 29 years his junior, since 2009. He has two adult children from a previous marriage and is an uncle of Green League Chair and Environment Minister Ville Niinistö.

Legal training

The keen roller-blader is the last of four children born to working class parents in southwestern Finland. Niinistö, who earned his law degree from Turku University, first entered politics in the town of Salo as a councilor for the National Coalition Party. At the same time he ran his own law practice until 1988.

He quickly rose to prominence in the party's ranks, becoming an MP in 1987. Just nine years later he became Finland's longest serving Finance Minister from 1996 to 2003. Prior to this he was Finland's Minister of Justice from 1995 to 1996. He also held the chairmanship of his National Coalition Party.

Niinistö first had the presidency in his sights six years ago when he challenged incumbent Tarja Halonen. He narrowly lost the race, but settled into people's minds as the conservative frontrunner.

International service came with his selection as Vice President of the European Investment Bank from 2003 to 2007 and chair of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development 1999 to 2003. After returning home he rejoined Parliament as its Speaker from 2007 to 2011.

Finland's 12th president is described as being "brash and forthright."

"I'm a real Finn at heart," he told audiences on election night.

On the job, he will be involved with foreign policy but without real influence on EU matters following the handing over of powers on that issue to the government.

Presidential powers have been gradually curtailed in recent years. That said, no major shake-ups are expected as Niinistö takes office.

"We don't face any sudden changes—actually, the president can't do that," Niinistö told YLE News of his role in the face of diminishing presidential powers.

First indications on what might occupy Niinistö point to an initial social course. On election night, Niinistö suggested setting up a working group to investigate methods to combat the alienation of youth in society.

YLE, AFP

What to do with the \$...?

This question is directed toward members of Lodges in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. As you may or may not remember, Order of Runeberg, Western District, Circle #1, was made up of Lodges from the above States & Province. We had our own treasury to pay the officers, travel expenses, mailing costs, etc., for our Bowling Tournaments & Songfests. I think it is 'fair' to say, that these gatherings probably will not return, because of our aging membership. I have not done the final calculation, but there should be approximately \$250.00—\$260.00 left in the treasury. I think this money should be "donated" to the Runeberg Scholarship.

Let me know of your opinion. Leave a message on my answering machine: 425-868-4713. The machine is on 24/7!

Nils Holm
Seattle Lodge #101

Genealogy Corner



June Pelo, A Dedicated Genealogist

Over 100 Years Family Homestead

Grace Johnson weaves together the industrial progress of the region into which she was born, with her family history. As a result, we got not only a picture of what her family did, but the larger cultural context in which her family survived. We see the coming of the railroad to a formerly remote Northern wilderness, the timbering of “trees too big to put your arms around” and small enclaves of mostly Scandinavian families getting together for the church suppers. What is here written is verbatim from Grace. Nothing has been altered. The spelling, chronology, etc., are precisely as she wrote them.

Text:

“Proving” a homestead in 1913 was a way of life for the early immigrants to the remote northern Minnesota wilderness. To “prove” your homestead you brought a witness to the Federal Land Office in Duluth and “proved” you had lived on the land for five years and in that timespan had made specified improvements to the property. The property was then given to you free of charge, but with the understanding you had to pay the taxes on it.

In the year 1910, when the “New Duluth, Winnipeg and Pacific Railroad” opened up the big timber country north to Canada, a lot of small towns sprang up along its route. One of these small towns, forty miles north out of Duluth, was called Shaw. Here the steam locomotive stopped to rewater, and here is where a small post office and general store materialized, and of course the giant water tower to supply the train with its water. It was here that my parents, Irene and Albert Overfors, “proved” their homestead a few years later. Irene and Albert had immigrated from Finland in 1913 and with six young sons settled in a hastily built, one room log

cabin that Albert and his brother-in-law had set on the edge of a forty of land. The only access to the cabin was a tote road used by the Martin Timber Company to supply the saw mills of Duluth and Cloquet. We did not have a car or any means of transportation, other than what could be transported on the passenger train to set up housekeeping for the six youngsters.

The cabin was lit with kerosene lights, heated with a home-made wood stove, and the nearest water was a spring “near-a-forty” away through the thick woods. You had to exist by merely living off the land. The first winter in the homestead was bleak, as our parents had arrived late in the summer and there had

not been any time to lay up any crops or to prepare yourself for what lay ahead. They got fresh cow’s milk from a neighbor “in-trust” that they would somehow be able to pay them back. The temperature dropped to -45 degrees that first winter, but somehow everyone made it through, small baby and all.

The next year went much better. Some baby chickens were bought, and two young calves. Some land was cleared, fencing put up, a small barn and chicken coop to house the animals, and ground broken up by hand and a garden put in. It must have been an endless job, and you had to put your priorities as to what should be done first. Rainwater was saved from the roof to wash clothes in and to water the garden. Dad had borrowed a 30-30 rifle that was a real necessity to get wild game. The bullets were really rationed, sometimes just a half a box was bought, and you never wasted them. The deer were plentiful, partridge, a lot of prairie chicken, rabbits, and fish. The meat and fish were canned and stored in the new root cellar.

I guess there isn’t any modern day invention that has the keeping-qualities of those root cellars. The “Green Mountain” potatoes kept until late spring and some used for seed that summer. The carrots and rutabagas were still crisp well into April.

When evening came and because of the darkness your other outdoor activities slackened, you took the kerosene lantern to the root cellar and sorted through the produce, as you couldn’t spare the chance of food spoilage spreading through the root crops. The shelves contained jars of berries that had been picked among the tree cuttings, vegetables from the garden and crocks of sauerkraut and dill pickles. The smell in that root cellar was just great; the damp

floor, the veggies, and the kraut a-brewing. A lot of time when jars couldn’t be spared, the venison was prepared in stoneware crocks with a solution that was called “Morton’s-Tender-Quick.” It did a curing job on the meat; however, if it were kept a period of time it became slimy and had to be washed before cooking. To us, it was a “last resort” meal and no one liked it. Sometimes the butter was prepared ahead of time also, when the cows were still milking good, and without refrigeration it got pretty rancid.

A well was dug close to the log cabin, and the water didn’t have to be carried so far. The calves, now grown, produced our own milk, and butter and cream. The chickens shelled out eggs (pardon the pun). The need for larger fields to produce the hay and grain for the animals set everyone to working pretty hard. A few turkeys were given to us and a real self-sufficient atmosphere developed.

There were some close neighbors and everyone had a lot of children. Most of the immigrants in Shaw were of Swedish or Finnish descent; however there was a Danish and an Italian family, also. Everyone was poor, but no one knew it. A school was built in 1927 with 30 or so students attending. The teachers were boarded out at different homes for the school season. A community church was built and a ladies aid established. One of the greatest events was the church suppers. Everyone brought something that was their specialty and you really got a true smorgasbord of national foods. The immigrants insisted on speaking English; after all, they were in their new land and it was only right!

Our preacher was a fire-and-brimstone, pulpit-pounding go-getter. He scared the living Jesus out of us younger kids. Once at a funeral for a bachelor, we were assured by our parents that it would be a quieter-type funeral. But true to course, he got a-yelling again and one of his punch lines was, with the reverend pointing into the casket—“Look at him, look at him! He doesn’t feel a thing! You know why? Because he is dead!” One small voice in the rear of the church said, “We already know that, that’s why we are here.” That was the only time we had a short sermon.

Timber brought an influx of bachelors into the community. Some of the locals found they could hire some of these lumberjacks to cut some of the big stands of pine that grew in the area, sell to the lumber companies, and still make a profit. Getting ahead of my story, I can still remember a “last stand” of pine in the late 1930s.

That couple acres of pine was so awesome, and when you walked into it daylight became almost darkness. The trees were so tall and thick, the canopy so high above you. The lower branches because of no sunlight were all dead, and the pine

continued on page 7



LODGE NEWS



Lodge #106 Tacoma, Washington

"December 6, 2011, Finland's Independence Day—94 Years Ago"

A very Happy New Year to all Runeberg members and their families. Also, a warm "Welcome" to the four new members that joined Tacoma Lodge #106 this past year. They are Bill Carlson, Robert Ostrand, Lawrence Sandell, and Marilyn L. Thompson. Visitors today were Patty Backman of Olympia and Lee Thompson of Bellevue. Another good turnout today with 32 of us present.

Lee Thompson has been working on a proposed trip to Finland this coming June 2012, together with the Swede Finn Historical Society. Many positive responses to the earlier trip survey have been received—with emphasis on western Finland—Helsingfors, Österbotten, Åbo, and the Åland Islands.

Lunch was served and then Lee passed out some brochures to the OR members to look over the proposed trip and those who were interested in learning more about this trip joined together at a couple of tables. Patty Backman was very excited telling them about her trip to Österbotten this past summer 2011 and plans to sign up, also, for this trip in 2012.

Another interesting program and group we have learned about is a group of young girls from Swedish Österbotten that will be visiting the West Coast this coming June. They call themselves "Jepo Kryddorna" and are a small group of young girls who sing and play the violins. Many of our Order of Runeberg members are very interested in having them perform for us. More information is needed when and if they would be available. Hopefully, we will have some more info by the time we meet on February 18, 2012.

We were sad to learn of the death of our longtime Order of Runeberg member Paula Rex. She passed away in early December at her home in Oravais. Paula was very active in IOR for many years here in Tacoma #106 and later in Österbotten IOR. A wreath of flowers was placed at her funeral by Greta Lindroos of Vasa, Finland, from the Tacoma #106 Lodge members. "Thank you, Greta." Greta is the sister of Martha Cederberg of Tacoma #106 Lodge.

A beautiful white landscape greeted me this morning. At least 14 to 16 inches of white powdery snow blanketed our whole neighborhood. Brought back a lot of memories from my childhood in Oravais.

A special thank you to Mary Lou and Dale Hjort as co-editors of the *Leading Star*.

Warmest greetings to all OR members near and far.

Marita Agnew

President of Tacoma Lodge #106

October 2011—Enjoying each other's company over coffee and tea.

From left: **Jim Agnew, Roy & Martha Cederberg of Tacoma (O.R. #106 members), and Martha's sister, Greta Lindroos of Vasa, Finland. Marita Agnew, photographer.**



Paula (Norrback) Rex, was a very active member of Tacoma #106 Order of Runeberg. She enjoyed singing in the O.R. Choir, both in Finland and here. Her husband

Ken and wife plus two grandchildren survive her in Finland. Paula was laid to rest January 5, 2012, in Finland.



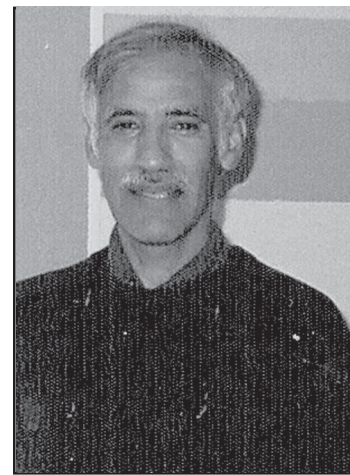
New Members: Tacoma #106 Lodge, December 2011

From left: **Bill Carlson, Marilyn Johnson, and Robert Ostrand**



Continued at the Agnews' Marita Agnew (Hostess) and Brian Magnusson

At the Agnews'
Standing from left: **Jim Agnew, Carolyn Nelson, Tom & Monica Mason, Brian Magnusson (Sweden), Larry Sandell, and Jan Ely**
Sitting from left: **Shirley Anne Sargent, Marge Kunschak, and Gilbert & Rhea Linden (All Tacoma O.R. members)**



Our guest speaker in October: Robert M. Goldstein, author.

• The Gentleman from Finland, Adventures on the Trans-Siberian Express
• Riding with the Reindeer

The December 2011 Leading Star pretty much tells the story.

These are just a couple of his books about some of his travels and adventures.

"Orvas Båoar" October 2011 O.R. #106 Meeting (We all have connections to Oravais Parrish.)

Sitting from left: **Martha Cederberg, John Sandstrom, and Greta Lindroos, Martha & Greta are sisters, Martha, John, and Greta are cousins.**

Standing from left: **Marita Agnew and Roger Gustafson (sister and brother), Ed Brannfors and Monica Mason (Monica is cousin to Marita and Roger.)**

Six of us are Tacoma O.R. members. Five of us are born in Oravais Parrish; two of us in America. Six of us speak Swedish fluently (dialect), and one speaks and understands a little. ▼



At the Agnews': Shirley Ann's 85th Birthday! We sang Happy Birthday to her in both English and Swedish—and Brian Magnusson led us in a special Swedish birthday song for Shirley Ann, also.



LODGE NEWS



Lodge #130 New Westminster, B.C., Canada

Once again we are at the start of a new year. The Chinese celebrate their Lunar New Year of the Dragon with excitement and intensity. Let's hope that this will hold true for all of us this year.

Instead of holding a Christmas Potluck, our lodge members went for a nice turkey dinner at the Pantry in early December. After dinner we went to Nils and Evelyn's home for coffee and Christmas treats. Our Christmas baskets this year were won by Saga Backlund and Lillian Wilson.

Former member, Else Gullmes, passed away last year at the age of 90. She was predeceased by her husband, Eskil, in 1994. They both had been active members of Lodge #130 for many years. Else discontinued her membership during her last years. One of her grandchildren held an open house for relatives and friends to come and commemorate her life.

The Canadian Friends of Finland hosted Runeberg's concert on February 5, 2012. The president for C.F.F., Dianne Kilback, welcomed everyone to the program, which was held at the Scandinavian Centre in Burnaby. The Runeberg Chorus, conducted by Janet Mowatt, sang several Runeberg songs. Choir member, Yasushi

Ishimura, entertained us on flute and clarinet, also with songs by Runeberg. Three members read a main division from the poet's epic "The Moose Hunters" (Älgskyttarne) with introduction by Bob Poutt in an English translation by Anita Fagerlund.

Coffee and Runeberg tårtor topped off an enjoyable afternoon.

In early January our lower mainland became awash in snow and freezing temperatures. There may be another cold snap; but fear not, Spring is just around the corner!

Sincerely,
Nancy Snickars



O.R. Runeberg Chorus, Burnaby, B.C., February 5, 2012



Rene Music performing. Photo by Janet Mowatt



Readings from "The Moose Hunters," by Narrator Bob Poutt, Ron Poutt, Anne Davis, and Mark Desjardins. Photo by Janet Mowatt



Yasushi Ishimura performing. Photo by Janet Mowatt

Lodge #205, New Haven, Connecticut

The New Haven lodge held its traditional wintertime "Bowling and Pizza" gathering on January 14th. There was excellent member turnout for duckpin bowling, and additional members joined us for the pizza and meeting following bowling.

A very nice aspect to the event was the significant turnout of younger members. Of special note was Christian Bjork, age 9, insisting that he did not want to bowl in the bowling lane that had gutter "bumpers"—and he bowled very well, without the assistance of gutter bumpers. Also of special note was a young member of our lodge traveling all the way

from home, in Manhattan, NY. Anne-Lilja Rentof and her dad, Pekka, traveled the 100 miles (approximately 2-hour drive) to participate in our afternoon and evening bowling and pizza event.

For the "pizza dinner" portion of our event, we were hosted by Brenda & George Nousiainen. In addition to the pizza, the dinner included Brenda's wonderful garden salad and many members brought delicious desserts.

All-in-all—a fun day!

**"Bowling & Pizza—
Christian & Kirsti bowling"**
Left-to right: *Anne-Lilja,
George (partial),
Ken (keeping score), Ryan,
Kiersten, (Liisa & Klas in
the background)*
Bowling: *Christian
(closer to camera) & Kirsti*



"Team Picture" Left-to-right, front row: *Liisa Lindholm; Brenda Nousiainen; Kiersten Bjork; George Nousiainen; Peter (Pekka) & Anne-Lilja Rentof; Kaarina Lyons; Inka Sunila* Back row: *Kirsti Longbein; Dottie & Klas Bjork; Ryan Connell; Doug Davie; Ken, Christine, & Christian Bjork; Tim Connell; Lise Rondum; Roy Kosnen*



"Desserts" pictures:
Desserts galore!



Resolutions

Lodge # 101 Seattle, Washington

It is with deep sorrow that we report the loss of

Boris J. Osterback

who passed away suddenly on January 23, 2012, two months short of reaching the age of 92. He leaves behind his wife Anni; sons Gustav (Sherry) and Ralf (Carita); grandchildren Kaj and Ann-Marie; sister Greta and her family in Finland.

Boris was born March 21, 1920, in Overmark, Finland. He lost his mother to

TB when he was 9 months. He served in the Finnish Army from early 1940 to early 1944; some of that time was spent on Russian soil. Boris and Anni married in July of 1946. They built a small house, even though materials were hard to come by. He inherited a small farm from his birth mom; however, it was too small to support a family, so he was a deliverer for a local store and also drove a van for a store, selling groceries directly to customers.

The family emigrated to the Seattle area in July of 1961. Not speaking any English, Boris did odd jobs, eventually working some years at Young Iron Works, a ma-

chine shop. Eventually, he ended up in the construction industry, working as a carpenter.

Boris joined Lodge #101 in September of 1963. He enjoyed 30 years of retirement. With the money from the sale of the small farm, Anni and Boris bought a condo in Overmark, where they resided when making trips to Finland.

Graveside services were held on January 27.

Lodge #101 extends its sympathy to Anni and her family.

Resolution Committee

Lodge #126 Coos Bay, Oregon

It is with deep sorrow that we report the passing of our brother,

Manfred Chester Olson

who passed away August 22, 2011, in Kansas. His memorial service was held on October 8 in Coos Bay.

Manfred was born October 24, 1913, in Beaver Hill, a Coos County coal mining town. His parents were William Manne and Kerstin Maria (Sjogren) Olson. He was

raised in North Bend. His parents came to Coos County from Sweden. Manfred served in the United States Navy for six years and was a Pearl Harbor survivor. He was a World War II veteran and a proud recipient of a Purple Heart. After the war, he married Madge Danielson. They were married for 45 years when she passed away.

He worked as a longshoreman for 30 years. He also enjoyed fishing, crabbing, digging clams, duck and pigeon hunting.

Manfred was an OR member for 23 years. He loved bowling and going on the bowling trips with us.

Manfred is survived by his son, Christopher; daughter-in-law, Sui Sum; his grandson, Timothy of Overland Park, Kansas; his sisters, Kriss Morris of Shoreline, WA, and Ann Marie Curtis of Staunton, VA; and numerous nieces and nephews.

He will be missed by all. Members of Coos Bay Lodge #126 extend their deepest sympathy to his family.

Resolution Committee

Heidi McCarthy
Clara Robinson
Gary Robinson



FinnThunder 2012

Thunder Bay will be hosting FinnThunder 2012, the 73rd annual Finnish Canadian Grand Festival, during the weekend of July 27 to 29, 2012. We wish to extend an invitation to everyone from near and far to join us in this event to:

DISCOVER Thunder Bay and its beautiful surroundings on the shore of Lake Superior.

ACQUAINT yourself with our Finnish community, including the historic Bay Street, the newly renovated Finlandia Hall and the beautiful Hilldale Lutheran Church.

LEARN to make a himmeli or bake pullapulla.

EXPERIENCE culture in the children's play area and youth activities.

CHALLENGE yourself in sporting events.

PARTICIPATE in tango lessons, sing-alongs or dances.

JOIN in defeating a *Guinness Book* record in the group Nordic Walk.

STROLL through our Art Exhibit and Marketplace.

ENJOY a weekend of meeting old friends and finding new ones.

CELEBRATE all things Finnish through food, music, drama, lectures, films, and dance.

On behalf of the FinnThunder 2012 Festival, we look forward to welcoming each one of you to Thunder Bay July 27 to 29, 2012!

See www.finnthunder2012.com for more information. Tervetuloa!

Ulla Ahokas, Chair



2012 FinnFest USA Festival

Tucson, Arizona, will be the site of the next FinnFest USA Festival. The festival dates, November 8–11, 2012, will permit the festival to commemorate Martti Ahtisaari Day, an official day now in Finland, a day that Finns use to honor and consider the subject of international peace mediation. For FinnFest USA, International Peace will become the theme of the 2012 FinnFest USA festival. Attendees will see its influence in all elements of program planning.

The FinnFest USA Board of Directors will function as the organizers of the festival. Local residents in the Phoenix and Tucson area will assist as they themselves decide to define their participation. They will be meeting with Ryan Braski, festival chair, in early September. At this point, it can be said that festival attendees will find that America's Southwest will indeed become part of the festival. However, holding the festival in Tucson, while organizing it with leadership living elsewhere, means that the 2012 festival administration will have a different look and feel.

FinnFest USA is now 28 years old, and the original organizing format needs to respond to audience requests for changes in programming and administration. Wanting to stay far away from competition with more traditional "FinnFest" style festivals, the FinnFest USA Board chose a location far away from festivals already in place. The intention is to develop a festival with programming that specifically appeals to contemporary concerns and programming approaches.

The FinnFest USA Board decided to use 2012 and Tucson as a time and space to explore how these new programming formats and festival administration can work with the traditional programming that attendees have come to expect and ask for at FinnFest USA festivals.

Not to worry! The long-standing tradition of FinnFest USA festivals will continue. Already set your calendars for a large national gathering to occur in 2013 when FinnFest USA returns to the Upper Peninsula, this time to the Keweenaw Peninsula and a Juhannus centered festival, June 19–23, 2013.

Look to the FinnFest USA website for updates and further information: www.finnfestusa.org

Eleven communities proposed for Swedish Finland

The 33 Swedish and bilingual municipalities in Finland today will be reduced to 11 bilingual communities according to a proposal of a working committee on community reform. The committee proposes that the number of communities be reduced from 320 to about 70. The number of bilingual communities would also be larger than it is today.

In Egentliga, Finland, the committee proposes that Pargas and Kimitoön merge and that a group of communities that are near Åbo be merged into the city. In Nyland it is proposed that Ingå, a large part of Sjundeå and Kyrkslätt become one community, while the northern part of Sjundeå would merge with Lojo—despite the fact that Sjundeå has already decided to merge with Lojo, Nummi-Pusula, and Karislojo.

Hangö is proposed to merge with Raseborg as well as Ingå if the Kyrkslätt merger doesn't happen.

The capital will become a large metropolitan area with Helsinki, Vanda, Esbo, Grankulla, and Sibbo as one community. Kyrkslätt would be included if the merger with Sjundeå doesn't happen. A second alternative for Sibbo is that the northern part will merge with Kervo, Träskända, and Nurmijärvi.

A community is proposed east of Sibbo composed of Borgå, Askola, Mörskom, Lovisa, and Lappträsk. As an alternative Lovisa and Lappträsk would become a single community.

Pyttis would go with the Kotka region. The working committee proposes a change to the language of the Act to secure the Swedish service.

Österbotten = 3 new municipalities:

- Vasa, Korsnäs, Korsholm, Malax, Laihela, Lillkyro, and Vörå would merge together.

- Jakobstad, Pedersöre, Nykarleby, and Larsmo would merge into one community.

- Kaskö, Kristinestad, and Närpes would merge into one community.

Mellersta Österbotten:

- Karleby, Kannus, Kaustby, Halso, Lestijärvi, Perho, Toholampi, Vetil, and Kronoby would become one community.

Protests to these changes are coming from all over Finland.

Four Swedish Österbotten communities in the future?

The changes proposed are radical. In the future there would be only 4 Swedish Österbotten communities instead of the 14 there are now.

In the Vasa region there would be a city of over 100,000 residents composed of Vasa, Korsnäs, Laihela, Malax, Korsholm, Vörå, and Lillkyro. According to the planning committee Vasa, with its growing population, would be one of Finland's most vigorous areas. The new community would be bilingual with Finnish as the majority language. Swedish would still be evident since 38% of the population would have Swedish as their mother tongue. Vasa could also profile itself as a uniquely bilingual city in Finland.

The proposal for the Jakobstad region would establish one community consisting of Jakobstad, Pedersöre, Larsmo, and Nykarleby. The new community would have a population of about 43,000 people. According to the committee, a merger would give the area a more stable economy. Today residents in the Jakobstad region have a high tax rate and large debts per resident. The new community would be bilingual with Swedish as the majority language.

Around Karleby a new city with 75,000 residents would appear. Kronoby would have the possibility to choose whether to merge with Karleby or Jakobstad. Today there is a lot of cooperation and commuting between Kronoby and Karleby. A divided Kronoby is not a tempting alternative. Nedervetil has stated a preference to be associated with Karleby rather than Jakobstad.

For the South Österbotten area, a community consisting of Krinestestad, Närpes, and Kaskö is planned. The area would have about 18,000 residents. Today the population growth of the region is troubled since fewer children are being born. The situation is especially difficult in Kaskö and Kristinestad. It will be difficult to plan basic services for the population in the future. A merger will improve the economic situation.

The working committee along with the Ministry of Finance that works with community reform wants the regions to work together on the proposal. This large reform cannot be carried out without cooperation. According to the proposal, the number of communities in Finland will be reduced from 320 to about 70.

Norden, Feb. 23, 2012

Translated by *June Pelo*

Genealogy Corner

ÖVERFORS Family Homestead

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needles were 7–8 inches thick on the forest floor. An adult could not possibly put their arms around those trees, and the feeling you got there was something else, a different world. All the trees were felled with just cross-cut saws, the logs skidded out of the woods with teams of horses. The labor was done in the wintertime when the ground was frozen. When you had to cross a low spot, a courderoy was laid down. This consisted of logs cut lengthwise, and then water was poured over that to freeze. Skidding the logs over that was easier. Several spur lines from the railroad were re-routed into the area, making more accessibility to more timber.

Along with the arrival of the bachelors and lumberjacks came the need for their type of entertainment after a long day's work. Some of the locals learned how to make moonshine and in turn sold it to the lumberjacks. I'm sure the alcohol content was near 100%. Mother never allowed any liquor, ever, near her domain, and was very much against it. It was simply from the devil! Dad, on

the other hand, would go on his 4–5 day benders with the boys, and believe me, after four days on that stuff, he was pretty hard to deal with. The mash from the stills that were hid in the woods was dumped away from the still-buildings. Once when I was a kid, I came upon four bears that had gotten into the mash. What a comical sight watching four drunk bears, running as best they could, hitting trees, and stumbling around each other. They all knew they should run, but had forgotten how. The men, on the other hand, were never so funny!

Lice and bedbugs came with the lumbercamps. Because a lot of lumberjacks came to visit, buy eggs or cream, or get haircuts from Mom, us kids ended up with lice. Because this was long before D.D.T. and aerosol sprays, we got our hair shampooed with kerosene. Man, did that smart! The bedbugs were really difficult to control; it finally became a game as to how many new blood splotches were on your pillow in the morning; the wall splotches didn't count.

The table in the cabin could accommodate six people. The younger kids knew their pecking order and we waited until the older ones were through eating before we got our chance. We were always assured enough food left by the older ones, no worry. When times were lean there wasn't too much to eat, but now in the '30s you could spare a cream can a week (that held 25 gallons of cream) and that cream was shipped by rail to market. In return, a few days later,

you got a small cream check. That helped you buy salt, sugar, flour, and other staples. You could always trade with one of your neighbors, also, if there was something you needed, in trust, if necessary. When those 1930s were here, there were eight boys now and one girl, Martha Georgiana. The boys really worshipped this gift of a little sister. However, tragedy befell our family. In the summer of 1932, a sickness everyone called summer-complaint hit a lot of families up there. Two of the younger boys and Martha became quite ill. Martha, five years old, lived but a few days from the onset. Her funeral was held up for quite a while because no one expected the younger boys to live, either. This was before antibiotics and not much hope was held out for recoveries from so severe an illness. But the younger boys did survive. Mother and Dad never got over Martha's death and it left such a big void in everybody's life. It was a cruel blow.

Mother was pregnant again and I was born in 1933. Only by "the Grace of God" would she have another girl." I was named Grace.

My earliest recollection of life was musing around the barn and chicken coop, and trying to find one brother or another's lap to crawl up on—there were alot of laps around! We had alot of chores to do with all those children and animals to care for, gardens to weed, hay to rake, barns to clean, etc. I learned at an early age, with all those older broth-

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OVERFORS

Family Homestead

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ers, to hunt and fish, and how to set a trap line. The fur market was now lucrative and you could ship your furs to Sears and Roebuck. The running of the trap line was a lot of work, trying to squeeze most of it in during daylight hours after you came home from school. You had to rely on a kerosene lantern for light to finish off your line.

One time when I was about nine years old, about a mile from home, my lantern blew out. My matches were wet and I couldn't rekindle it. The snow was really coming down and obscuring my tracks. It was so cold! Only hearing the whistle from the train that cut through the lower edge of our homestead did I eventually get my directions to find home. It was an early lesson of caution with Mother Nature.

The new school in Cotton, a near-by town of about 75 families was being built. I started school there in 1939. This was a 1½ hour ride in a school bus over the much-improved roads. We left home at 7:10 and got to school about 8:40 am. We got home from school about 4:50, weather permitting. It was a pretty long day, especially for the younger kids.

Mother had another girl in 1939. Dad was out with "the boys" for four days. This particular evening he came home pretty well moonshined and laid down on the ground along side an old garage we had. Mom had been in labor for most of the day; none of the older kids were around. Mom began to deliver and my brother, who was two years older than I was, was sent down the road by mother to get the midwife. Now, it was getting dark and Harvey had a deathly fear of darkness. Rather than go, he had hid behind a shed. When Mom began to scream from pain, he was more afraid of what was happening, closed his eyes, didn't look or listen and ran and fell most of the way to the neighbors. I tried to get Dad up, but he was out senseless, so I had to help Mom the best I could. The lamp I moved down, and got the scissors and rags. The baby was born breech and did not live (I was only six years old). The midwife came, there was nothing to be done, and again everyone was in their own grief; the house was silent for weeks. Dad dug another small grave in the cemetery and I still remember that little white casket that he lowered down. We picked ferns and wild roses and put on her grave.

In the beginning of the war years, the older brothers began to enlist in the service of our country. Most all the young men did that; they wanted to! My first brother to leave was Walter, when he was not yet 18. He became an officer in the Air Force and a pilot on a B-24 Liberator Bomber. Soon, George, Alford, Bertel, Carl, Harold left. They were all overseas at once, some seeing action in

the South Pacific, some in Europe. A flag with six blue stars was hung in the window (that signified how many members of your family were in service). In the winter of 1943 a gold star replaced a blue one. Walter had been killed on his 33rd bombing mission. The quota was 35 and then you were sent home. Mom tried to hold onto faith that there was some mix-up or mistake, but a telegram from the War Department and a letter of condolence from General McArthur confirmed what had come previous. Shortly after that, another telegram from the War Department stated that another son, Alford, had been seriously wounded. He was a tank driver in Patton's Fourth Armored Division in Europe. This division made a wild, fighting dash across Europe. A young lieutenant in that unit rose to fame, so to speak. The fighting was heavy, our tanks had run out of fuel. When they stopped to refuel, the German attack intensified—the young lieutenant was wounded severely. Alford, himself wounded, exposed himself to more enemy fire and carried the unconscious officer under the safety of the tank. They were later moved to a hospital in England. The lieutenant, in years to come, became the governor of the state of Minnesota. When Alford passed away in 1965, Governor Karl Rolvaag came to Shaw to pay his respects to Alford and the family.

Carl and Bertel met by chance in Linz, Austria. Carl's unit happened to be pulled over along side a road. He had no knowledge that his brother's unit was anywhere in the area. He happened to see a convoy with his brother's battalion number on it going by. He stopped the convoy, looked up Bertel, found him, and had a good visit.

The war took the boys away from home and the farm seemed like a different place. There was just the three younger of the kids home. When peace was finally declared, our battery-run radio beamed out the news. We were so excited and didn't know how to express ourselves. Whooping and shouting didn't seem to make much impact. I remember Dad saying, "Oh, hell." He grabbed the 30-30 and shot 5 shots in the air! Our precious bullets, but things were better now, and we could afford a whole box. Now we didn't have to worry about going to the post office and walking in with hopes of mail from the boys, but dread also, for that yellow War Department envelope. One by one the boys began to come home. They got married and went their own ways.

In 1947 we began to replace the log cabin with a new home. Dad dug the 24 x 24 basement by hand, mixed and carried the cement in a wheel barrow, and finished the house by fall. The lumber was obtained from an old school that was being torn down. Most of the nails we salvaged, also, and we simply straightened them up and reused them. A new well was dug, and for the first time, Mom had water inside the house. Dad and I varnished the blonde flooring with seven coats of varnish. We had a modern-looking icebox in the kitchen. (There wasn't electricity yet.) I had my own bedroom now. I was 14 years old and tired of going around a corner to get dressed. We had our first couch ever, with a match-

ing chair. Trapping had been super, so I had enough money to buy a new bed, mattress, and bedspread (my first) and a bedspread for Mom and Dad. We had a modern looking woodstove in the kitchen. The biffis (outhouse) was still down the trail a bit, but heck, you can't progress all at once. We had five milking cows, 25 chickens, and 2 pigs. All was going great!

In late 1948, Dad found out that he had tuberculosis. He was sent to a sanitarium to recover. Later that year, Harvey, my youngest brother, was bored with the country life and the work it involved. He tried to convince Mom to "sign" for him so he could get in the service, and finally he wore her down and he left, followed by his older by two years, brother Melvin. Now it was just Mom and me on the farm. One by one we began to sell the cows and use up the chickens. The feed and upkeep for animals was too much for two women. I was still in my senior year of highschool and Mom had a disabling stroke. I wanted to leave the farm and get a job in town where she could get the proper medical attention. I got a job in the Standard Oil office. One of my brothers who was still single came home and helped during the week and I took the passenger train home on weekends. I saw Mom was not too happy with the arrangement; she was pretty lonely. Dad was still in the sanitarium, the days were long for her, and her physical condition was certainly frustrating. In that following year we vacated the farm and rented a small house in Duluth. That following June, I met my husband-to-be. We were to be married that September. Mother died three weeks before the wedding.

It was a good childhood, a lot of physical hardship, but coming from a large family, there was more happiness than most small families can experience. You learned to share, and that material things were not all that important. There was much comfort in Mother's peacefulness, her close tie to God and nature, and most of all—"there was always room on somebody's lap!"

One by one, within a matter of a few years, the boys passed away in their '30s and '40s from heart disease. Carl, 68, and I are the only ones left. I'm 54 years old now, and recalling and reflecting in my older years: the log cabin that so many of us shared at once, the kerosene lights, the wood stove, frozen water pails in the morning, the good smell of the hay in the barn, the wonderful root cellar, and all the great hunting and fishing trips shared with my brothers and special people.

I remember the beauty of the virgin land, with its glistening lakes and rivers, the hayfields swaying in the wind, how happy the cows and chickens were to see you. I came to love and respect the unspoiled wilderness of my youth, the magnificent trees, the uncultivated swamps, the virgin highgrounds. Our children and their children's children will never have that experience, and they have missed out on alot."

Grace Overfors Johnson, 1987
June Pelo

This story was sent to me by Grace's cousin Ken Jennings, who gave me permission to reproduce it.