



Finnish Center Association

FCA News

FOR MEMBERS OF THE FINNISH CENTER ASSOCIATION

December 2020

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

The pandemic continues and we have had to make so many sad changes. One event cancelled is Independence Day celebration. This is always a lovely event and everyone looks forward to it. But we must do many things to save lives and I pondered it trying to think what could be done that would provide a little cheer for this very important day in Finnish history. There wasn't much that would be considered safe, but we must do something. Our plan became lights on the sign with special wording and luminaries around the sign. I know it isn't much but the Finns struggled hard to become independent and maybe this small gesture will also link the struggle it was for them and is for us this year. We are all proud to be Finns, strong people with much courage. **Let these candles stand for those Finns who died for Finnish independence.**

December is filled with good memories for all of us. Santa Claus is a big part of it. Santa is fun at any age. In Kaleva when I was little I remember going to a huge blue spruce tree in the middle of Kaleva and Santa would come with treats, peanut butter kisses, nuts and an orange in a brown paper bag. Christmas was very simple in those days. Kaleva was magical and must have reminded those early settlers of Finland. Finland is truly a magical place still unspoiled with the snow and wide open spaces. Let's try to think about some of the joys in our life even during this pandemic. There are joys but sometimes we have to look harder. I will think about that bag of candy and the magic Finland has brought me. I get to meet wonderful people and hear those stories and you have all taught us how Finnish people are. I love all of you and wish you a wonderful, happy Christmas.

Mary O'Brien

GENERAL MEETING

January 10, 2021

Meeting via Zoom

Information to connect to meeting will be posted in January newsletter.



FINNISH INDEPENDENCE DAY

This year we are unable to celebrate Independence Day as usual due to the pandemic.

In lieu of this we would like to commemorate the day with a display of luminaries by the sign in the front of the FCA property.

You are invited to drive by or pull into the parking lot to see our commemoration of Finnish Independence Day on **December 5, 2020 at 7:00 pm**



December 5 the Finnish Center will be a day sponsor on **WRCJ 90.9 FM**, Detroit's classical and jazz radio station.

This is to highlight Finnish Independence Day and the Finnish Center. Please tune in for delightful music.

A “CHRISTMAS” TREE DEDICATED TO A BELOVED FINN



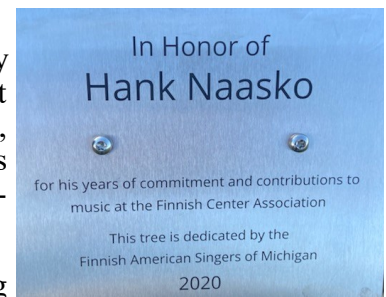
A small crowd of hardy folks gathered outside at the Finnish Center to celebrate one of their group on the afternoon of Sunday, November first. The weather cooperated by NOT snowing or raining, but it *was* bitter cold with a blustery wind that kept hats on, scarves fluttering, and coats buttoned up. Even the masks we all wore were welcomed to keep faces warmer! Gathering on the west side of the driveway near the pine “grove,” member of the Finnish American Singers of Michigan and a few friends admired the six-foot blue spruce purchased by the group and planted by Steinkopf Nursery. David Sharpe and the garden club completed the landscaping around the tree. Our intent was to honor Hank Naasko, our former choir director for his many years of music involvement at the Center. Hank’s wife Sandy, his daughters and their families and most of the choir members were on hand to see the tree, talk briefly to Hank, read the dedication plaque and hear brief remarks from Katy Koskela (choir president), Bill Gramzow (current director), and Hank himself.

With Hank standing in a position of honor by the tree and plaque, Katy greeted the group and stated the desire of FASM members to recognize Hank’s almost 30 years of music service, especially at the FCA, as a choir director for not only our group but also as the director of the Finlandia Male Chorus. Growing up in the Canton area, Hank’s ties to family and roots in the Upper Peninsula kept his pride in his Finnish heritage strong with unwavering support for its music at the fore.

As a Finn with an atypical penchant for loquacious storytelling, choir members had heard numerous stories about Hank’s many Christmas trees (seven at his previous home), preparations for the holiday, and his extensive collection of Christmas music. We knew his family expected to hear that music in late fall, often long before Halloween! It seemed appropriate to choir members therefore, that Hank have his own “Christmas” tree at the Center commemorating his service there.

Bill Gramzow, who was the choir accompanist when Hank was director, shared an accolade that was short but heartfelt. He thanked Hank for all he had learned when working with him and for his unswerving dedication to the choir, saying finally, “You deserve this!”

With listeners’ attention directed back to Hank, Katy pointed out how happy the choir was to be able to honor him now when he could be there to enjoy it rather than after his passing. Hank agreed heartily with laughter! The plaque, placed near the tree, in black script, reads: In Honor of Hank Naasko for his years of commitment and contributions to music at the Finnish Center Association this tree is dedicated by the Finnish American Singers of Michigan 2020.



It seemed fitting to close the ceremony with music, so thanks to familiar song sheets provide by our director, everyone was invited to sing both *Maamme* and *Finlandia*, two songs that are always part of the FASM concerts. Despite the cold, wind, and inclement weather it was wonderful to join voices with friends in celebration after several months without choir due to Covid-19 restrictions.

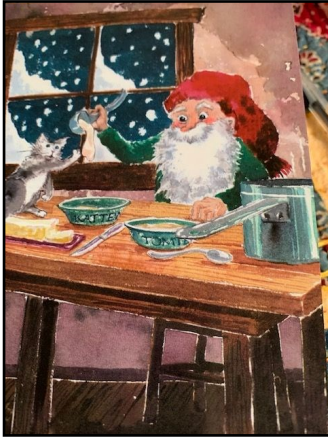
After singing, Hank thanked the choir saying, “This is the greatest honor I’ve ever been given.” He shared a few remarks regarding the impact the Center and our choir has had on him and then spoke with well-wishers and posed for pictures. People did not linger too long, eager to warm up in their cars and get out of the wind. Of course, since it is Michigan, we all were chagrined to find the next day was sunny and 30 degrees warmer. It had just been a test of SISU!

You might want to stop by the Center to walk around the gardens where the fall and winter views, though not as colorful as those in summer, are still compelling. If you do, stop by and admire Hank’s tree and the dedication plaque near it. It’s great that both will be there for all to enjoy in the years to come.

Katy Koskela, Scribe

THE TOMTEN

According to Scandinavian legends, the tomten is “protector of the farm”. He is very small, usually dressed in gray or blue, has a long beard and wears a red cap. His only demand is a bowl of porridge with butter every Christmas eve. Given this simple meal, he will faithfully take care of the farm animals as well as the farmer and his family.



Ah, but if the farmer happens to forget the tomten’s Christmas porridge, there will be trouble. Instead of protecting the farm family, the tomten will play tricks on them. Tomten is the Swedish name. In Finland he is known as tonttuu, in Norway nissan, and in Denmark nissemanden. The farm cat usually wants the tomten to share the Christmas porridge. If the tomten really has the Christmas spirit, you can be sure he will do that!

THE YULE GOAT

There are many different origins of Santa Claus. One of them was a figure known as “Yule Goat” which referred to his long white beard which resembled a goat’s beard. Straw goats are still used as Christmas ornaments throughout Scandinavia and use to be left at neighbors doorways as pranks. The red coat and reindeer and reindeer sleigh also originated from this figure.



HAUSKAA JOULUA

Ja Onnellista Untta Vuotta!

Marry Christmas and Happy New Year!

May the New Year bring you health and Happiness

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(248) 442-7250

GIFT SHOP

The gift shop has been moved to the lobby area. We have moved it there in an effort to make shopping more available to you in keeping with social distancing guidelines. We had intended to have 4 days when you could shop, however, we were unable to do that due to the rising numbers of the virus in Michigan. The December 13 shopping event is being evaluated by the board.

You can order online at the web site listed here: finnishcenter.square.site/. Your order can be picked up on a designated day or we can send to you at an additional cost. The other way is to call me at (248) 895-3231 and give me your order and pick up in the same ways. Thank you for your understanding.

Merry Christmas and stay safe.

Mary O'Brien



PANDEMIC PERSPECTIVES

Will our lives return to normality after the coronavirus has dissipated? We can only hope that will be true. What can we do in our own lives to enable us to successfully get through the coming winter? Many residents in the surrounding communities have already put out their Christmas decorations and at least one radio station is playing holiday music continually. The holidays bring back thoughts of better times for most of us.

An approach that can help is to consider the advantages many of us have in comparison to any people in other parts of the world. Access to clean water, the wide variety of foods available to us, warmth in winter, television, cell phones, books, puzzles, all can make this time tolerable. Also remember the loves we have had by reviewing our photos and videos. We can call friends and relatives, use social media and Zoom if this is in your skill set. Remember, most of us are experiencing similar loss from our normality. Connect with your spiritual sense to assist you during this trying time.

David Sharpe

FCA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR _____ RENEWAL

Date _____ Phone: _____ email: _____
 Applicant _____

Applicant/Spouse _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Signature _____ Are you of Finnish descent? _____

- Annual membership, single, one vote \$50.00
- Annual membership, senior* or youth*, one vote \$25.00
*Senior, over 65 years, youth under 30 years of age
- Annual membership, couple, two votes \$100.00
- Annual membership, family, one vote \$75.00
- Life membership, one vote \$500.00
- Life membership, senior, one vote (see membership for details)

Amount enclosed _____
 Please make check payable to FCA and send to Finnish Center Association, Membership, 35200 W. Eight Mile Road, Farmington Hills, MI 48335-5108
 Recommended by: _____

Visit us on "Finnish Center and Hall" Facebook page and "like" us to get the latest updates!



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