



Finnish Center Association

# FCA News

FOR MEMBERS OF THE FINNISH CENTER ASSOCIATION

February 2021

## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Let me say this has been a tough year at the FCA. Activities and rentals ended abruptly with much sadness. I spent a lot of time trying to keep the center going, and with the help of my son Ed, we accomplished many things! I also would like to thank David Sharpe for all his help keeping up the gardens and the holiday decorations, picking up the mail when I could not get in, and helping in many other little ways that added up! Sherrill Tedford was a great help with the inventory of the gift shop and sales etc. Our donation drive was successful due to the generosity of many members. Thank you!

In the spring we hired Christina Lovgren as treasurer. She is just wonderful and learned our systems extremely fast. She has been a big help.

Our biggest accomplishment was the gift shop. We made a temporary move bringing it into the Finlandia Room. It was a good move because if we did have someone come in they didn't have to come as far into the building. Masking and social distancing are observed. With the tech help of my son Ed, we were also able to put the gift shop online. This really helped, especially during the holiday season! We added a feature so that we could ship purchases to people. Holding two outdoor sales created fun and an opportunity to see some of our friends.

With the cancellation of Independence Day celebrations, we felt we needed to do something. Irene Lamanen proposed that on Independence Day the FCA sponsor time on a radio station between music segments. It was so nice and gave the Finnish Center exposure. I had an idea to have luminaries commemorating the fallen in the wars in Finland. The luminaries were beautiful lights surrounding the Finnish Center driveway and property. Truly a touching tribute!

Let me end by saying we have worked hard to keep people safe! We wanted people safe! Thank you for your patience and hopefully we will be back together soon.

Mary O'Brien, Chairman

### ANNUAL MEETING February 21, 2021 - 3:00 pm



Meeting via Zoom per  
Health Department  
restrictions.

If you want to participate in this meeting, contact Mary O'Brien at (248) 895-3231 or via email at [jeepinmary@yahoo.com](mailto:jeepinmary@yahoo.com) by Friday, February 19 with your name and email address.



**Finlandia  
Foundation  
National**

If you are not receiving the Finlandia Foundation National newsletter through the mail please email Mary O'Brien with your name and mailing address and we will get it to FFN.

## FCA BOARD OF TRUSTEES CANDIDATES 2021

### Roger Wanttaja

I have been serving on the FCA Board of Trustees for seven of the last eight years. Also, I've been serving as Building and Grounds Committee Chair, wherein I have implemented numerous equipment and facility repairs and upgrades that have been both heightened appeal and greatly reduced operating costs. I have been a volunteer and member of the FCA since my childhood and both of my parents were charter members of Finnish heritage. I am proud to be a part of the team in preserving the Finnish immigrants' heritage and culture in the greater Detroit area.

I enlisted in the US Air Force as an Avionics Electronic Technician (Sargent) during 1983-1988. Since then I worked in automotive engineering, first at Chrysler (1988-1990) as an EMC Test Technician and since 1990, a Senior Technical Specialist for a Tier I automotive supplier. I am honored to be endorsed by FCA Chairperson Mary O'Brien as she considers my contributions essential for our daily operations.

### Irene Lamanen

I am a Finnish American retired senior citizen whose parents were both Finns that migrated from the UP to the Metropolitan Detroit area for employment. Their first language was Finnish and they spoke, wrote and read the language, listened to Finnish radio, and attended church where Finnish was spoken. They did not, however, teach or use the language with my brother and me.

My professional career was in education first as a public high school teacher and then in various community college and university adjunct positions as well as administrative positions. This background is helpful to my current position on the FCA board and I wish to continue my support and service to the Finnish Center as a board member.

### Linda Poirier

My name is Linda Poirier and I am running again for a seat on the board of the Finnish Center Association. I am a graduate of Michigan State University, and hold a master's degree from Marygrove College. I am of Finnish descent; my mothers parents were both from the Iisalmi area of Finland. They emigrated to Canada in the 1920's, married, and raised three girls in what was then known as Port Arthur (today: Thunder Bay) Ontario. My mother's family moved to Windsor in the 1950s. My mother met my father at a church function and the rest has been history.

My entire childhood was blessed with Finnish language and culture. My grandfather, Ukki, built a cottage in Ontario, where we spent our summers growing up. The first structure he built was the sauna; heating up in the sauna and running out to jump in the lake was such a thrill! My grandmother, Mummu, baked the best bread, donuts, and pulla; I must admit I wasn't crazy about mojakka, but everything else Finnish was great. We all learned that drinking coffee was an art; placing a sugar cube in your mouth and slurping up coffee between your teeth. That is how my grandparents did it! Now that my mother's parents have passed on, my sisters and mother and I have visited our family home, the Hoikkola, in Finland several times. We have had the chance to get to know both sides of my mom's family, and eagerly watch for their Facebook posts. Once the pandemic is over we plan to return to explore more of Finland's beautiful countryside and meet up with our families again.

Today I am a retired educator, having spent 37+ years teaching Spanish and as a high school administrator. Being retired gives me the opportunity to do what I love most, and among the things I truly love is being a member of and being involved at the Finnish Center Association. I have served on the board for the past three years, and I hope to be able to continue to do so. It has been difficult this past year, navigating through our world with the coronavirus and the challenges it brings. I look forward to being able to reopen the Finnish Center as soon as it is safe, and helping it return to champion the Finnish language and culture.

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### Officers

Mary O'Brien, Chairman  
Cynthia Haffey, Vice Chairman  
Christina Lovgren, Treasurer  
Linda Poirier, Secretary & Asst. Treasurer

### Board of Trustees

#### 1 Year

Irene Lamanen, Linda Poirier,  
Roger Wanttaja

#### 2 Year

Cynthia Haffey, Sherrill Tedford,  
Austin Strobridge

#### 3 Year

Kathryn Hill, Mary O'Brien,  
James Lee

### Alternates

#1 Ed O'Brien  
#2 John Hookana

### Financial Review

Paul Rajala  
Annikki Kurvi  
Roger Wanttaja

### Committee Chairpersons

#### Building & Grounds

Roger Wanttaja

#### Cultural

Yvonne Lockwood

#### Education

Ilona Takakura

#### Finance

Mia Lamminen

#### Gift Shop

Mary O'Brien

#### Mailing

Alice Manley

#### Membership

### Publicity & Publications

#### Ed O'Brien

#### Social

Mary O'Brien

### SENIOR CITIZEN HOUSING CORPORATION

Olli Lamminen, Chairman

#### *Tapiola Village*

Laura Fultz, Manager  
(248) 471-3802  
tapiola@ameritech.net

#### *Freedom Square*

Theresa Show, Manager  
(248) 442-7250

## FCA SENIOR CITIZENS HOUSING CORPORATION BOARD CANDIDATES 2021

### **Nancy Hanson**

It has been an honor and pleasure to be part of the enormous renovation that is transforming Tapiola Village, and I would like to be considered for re-election at FCA Senior Citizens Housing Corp.

While my involvement has been very limited, I have taken on several small projects to enhance the visual appeal at the entrance: buying and planting planters, trimming bushes, and buying wreaths for the holidays. I have also submitted research on new benches for the entrance and patio areas, and if I am re-elected, intend to continue restoration of the beds to the left and right of the entrance and will provide any other support that I can.

### **Mia Lamminen**

Having been a member of Finnish Center since 1976, I have been actively involved at Finnish Center and FCA Sr. Citizens Housing Corporation since my retirement in 2010. My first assignments were Membership and Finance Committee Chair and subsequently Trustee and Chairman for Finnish Center. I have been a Trustee of FCA Sr. Housing since 2012. Presently I am its Treasurer. I have been actively involved in the current renovation that is going on at Tapiola and would like to continue to be involved to bring it to conclusion.

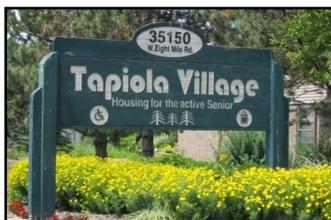
I would be honored to continue serving another term at the FCA Senior Citizens Housing Corporation.

### **Mary (nee Mäkinen) O'Brien**

I was born in Detroit but at a very early age moved to a small Finnish community in Northern Michigan called Kaleva, Michigan. In Kaleva I learned many of the values of the Finns with many immigrants from Finland living there. My parents were both 100% Finn and my mother was born in Oulu, Finland.

Standish became my home next with my husband and 3 children. During my time in Standish we owned a variety store. As times changed our store closed and in 1996 we moved to Farmington Hills and took a job with Freedom Square Apartments. At Freedom Square I was the onsite manager. This included all paperwork involved with the apartments along with rentals, social events and emergency calls. During this time I learned a lot about seniors and their needs. I was there for 16 ½ years. After my retirement I started volunteering at the Finnish Center which I really enjoy. There were many things to do and eventually I became Gift Shop Committee chairman and Social Committee chairman, for these two jobs I had experience to contribute. For the last two years I have been chairman of the Finnish Center. Another enjoyable position and learning experience.

I am very proud of my Finnish heritage and have traveled to Finland a few times. The culture and history are both amazing and so interesting. I found the Finnish people quiet but so warm. My goal is to help make Finnish Center and Senior Housing better and help in any way needed and will do everything in my power to do so.



### FCA SENIOR CITIZENS HOUSING CORPORATION NOTICE

Annual Meeting on February 21, 2021 at 1 pm  
Meeting via Zoom due to Covid restrictions

If you would like to participate in this meeting, contact  
Christine Manninen, Secretary via email:  
[gol4grl@gmail.com](mailto:gol4grl@gmail.com) or call or text: (734) 560-8598  
by Friday February 19, 2021

## From Finland to the Michigan's Upper Peninsula to Soviet Karelia by Douglas D. Karttunen

**Editor's Note:** *The author of this story, Douglas D. Karttunen, is a cousin to FCA member Sandy Gersky, and a resident of Kingsford in the U.P. He tells the tale of his great-uncle Waino's immigration from Finland to the U.S. in search of a better life, just like the ancestors of many of us here at the FCA. However, Waino's quest took an eventual turn so different. Read part I of the story in this issue.*

MY GREAT-UNCLE VÄINÖ FERDINAND PIETILÄ was born January 30, 1892, in the village of Niinijoensuu, Alastaro, Finland. He was the third of five children born to Edvard Ferdinand Peltomattila and Amanda Pietilä on the Johannes Pietilä farm: Hilda, Kalle, Väinö, Emil, and Aarne. When he was seven years old Väinö's mother died of tuberculosis. His father remarried the next year and in 1906 the family moved to the Reinikka farm in the neighboring village of Lauroinen. Five more children (half siblings to Väinö) were born to the new couple, all taking the surname Reinikka: Velma, Alvari, Alli, Arvo, and Antero. Väinö attended four years of public school (*kansa koulu*) in Lauroinen and spent the summers of 1907 and 1908 doing field work at the Reinikka farm. On June 9, 1909, at the age of 17, he left Finland for America.

He departed Hanko, Finland, on the *Titania* for Hull, England, and then sailed from Liverpool on the *Ivernia* to Boston, Massachusetts, where he arrived on June 24. The passenger list shows his destination in the United States was Painesdale, Michigan, where he knew an old friend and neighbor from Niinijoensuu, Oskar Kraatari. Painesdale was a copper mining town located in Houghton County in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Later in 1909 Väinö was already living in Ontonagon County and working at a lumber camp in Green, near Lake Superior. Once in America he began using the anglicized version of his name, Waino Pietila. His sister Hilda came to America in 1910 and their brother Emil joined them in 1913. The Calumet & Hecla Mining Company began exploration and construction of a new copper mine at White Pine, about 12 miles from Green, and Waino found employment as a laborer there in 1915.

Waino continued to work at the White Pine until he was drafted into the army in September 1917 as a result of World War I. On September 19 he was assigned to Company B of the 337<sup>th</sup> Regiment, at Camp Custer near Kalamazoo, Michigan. From there he was transferred to Company F, 125<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 32<sup>nd</sup> Division, at Camp MacArthur in Waco, Texas, for additional training. On January 18, his regiment left for Camp Merritt in New Jersey, and on February 9, 1918, they sailed from Hoboken for France. After arriving there Pvt. Waino Pietila was transferred to Company C of the 128<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 32<sup>nd</sup> (Red Arrow) Division. He served with this regiment in the trenches of Alsace. On July 2 he was captured by German soldiers and taken to the Giessen prisoner of war camp in Germany. He remained there until after the Armistice, being released on December 6, 1918, and returned to his regiment in France. On April 27 his regiment boarded the *George Washington* in Brest for the return trip home, arriving at Hoboken on May 5, 1919. From there they were transported to Camp Mills on Long Island, New York, then back to Camp Custer in Michigan where Waino was mustered out of service.

After his service in the war Waino returned to Ontonagon County. He most probably spent the summer of 1919 at his sister Hilda and brother-in-law Kalle Korvenpaa's farm in Green helping with the summer chores there. In September he went to work at the Michigan Copper Company mine in Rockland, Michigan. After just a few weeks there he returned to the White Pine Mine where he stayed until shortly before it closed operations in 1920.

During the 1920s Waino typically spent summers as a farm hand on the Korvenpaa farm along with his brother Emil. During the winters he and the other men would go to logging camps in the area to earn money. On at least one occasion during these years Waino traveled to Butte, Montana, for a time to work at the Anaconda copper mine there. Before the war Waino had also bought a parcel of farmland just north of the Korvenpaa farm on the Halfway River Road in Green. He did cut some trees from the land but never built a home or did any farming of his own there. Sometime in the '20s he purchased an Essex automobile which he kept in a garage at the Korvenpaa farm. He never married. On Waino's 1917 WWI draft card it is stated that he was

(continued on page 4)

**From Finland to the Michigan's Upper Peninsula to Soviet Karelia** (continued from page 3)

still an alien but had filed his first papers toward becoming an American citizen. The 1920 United States Census indicates he became a naturalized citizen in 1918. His 1919 employee records from the White Pine Mine give the following physical description for Waino: 5 feet 8 inches tall, weight 180 pounds, blue eyes, brown hair, and 27 years old.

Sometime in 1932 during the depths of the Great Depression, Waino made the fateful decision to make the move to Karelia in the Soviet Union. Times were tough and work was hard to find. The copper mines in the area had closed a decade earlier followed by the sawmill that depended on the lumber camps to supply it with logs. Even the rails on which the logs made their way from the logging camps near Green were being pulled up. The promises of work for anyone who wanted to work made by Soviet recruiters, who traveled from town to town through the Upper Midwest recruiting local Finns, no doubt sounded enticing. Green had already been a bit of a hotbed of socialist and communist thinking at the time, with the Green Farmers Hall being a center for these activities. Waino was just one of several residents of Green who decided to take the historic plunge to Soviet Karelia. As early as May 1928 seven people from three families left nearby Ontonagon to make the journey: Mr. and Mrs. Valentine Haukkala, Joseph and Mary Juntunen and son Arnold, and Sam Saviniemi and son Osmo. Among the first to leave from Green in April 1931 were Mr. and Mrs. Simon (Liina) Talikka, and Mr. Arthur Wesa and three sons Arthur, Jr., Walter, and Elmer. A farewell party was held for them at the Green Farmer's Hall. Others leaving Green in 1931 were Arthur and Mary Salo and their children Dagne and Toivo; and Hannes Utter. David Metsala departed for Karelia in January 1932, and wife Lyyli and their children Viola and Hugo left a few months later in May. It's probable that Lyyli and her children traveled together with Waino Pietila as both parties departed on May 5, 1932. Also leaving for Karelia that year were Lauri and Mary Rautanen and their daughters Helen and Lily. Lauri and Sylvia Hokkanen left from Sugar Island, Michigan, in May 1934. Lauri was a cousin of Lyyli Metsala and had grown up in Green before his family moved to Sugar Island in the 1920s. Other Green residents who went to Karelia included John and Alma Hill, Nick Luoma, John Niemi, and Kalle Maki.

What is known about Waino's life in Karelia comes mostly from letters he wrote to his sister, Hilda, and other family members he left behind. Waino was a fairly prolific writer and fortunately a few of his letters from 1934 and 1935 still exist. The first word of his arrest and imprisonment came in the 1970s when two of the 1930s Green emigrants to Karelia returned to visit their former homes in Green. These two people were Dagne Salo and Viola Metsala.

While in Karelia Waino primarily lived in Petroskoi (Petrozavodsk) although his work took him to outlying areas for periods of time. His mailing address in 1935 was: Traktori Baasa, Parakki No. 13, Petroskoi, Karelia.

Waino brought his previous expertise as a lumberjack to Karelia, and his occupation there was listed as a carpenter. In his letters he described how he worked building equipment for logging operations (such as jammers for hoisting logs) and teaching the local Karelians how to use them. He taught them how to handle teams of horses and mechanized equipment. As an example, he introduced jammers to the logging operations near Suurlahti to lift logs floated to that location and load them onto railcars. All of this was new to the people there. Previously this work had been done by men using nothing more than ropes and the strength of their own backs. When in Petroskoi he worked as a carpenter at the Lososinski Garage, it appears under Arthur Salo. Apparently Waino was an exemplary worker because he was awarded a week-long all-expenses-paid trip to Leningrad to view the gala Russian Revolution Day celebrations held on November 7, 1934. The journey from Petroskoi to Leningrad was made on a special railway carriage.

*Editor's note: The conclusion of this story will appear in the March issue of the FCA News.*

**FINNISH CENTER ASSOCIATION**



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- 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
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- 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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