



Finnish Center Association

FCA News

FOR MEMBERS OF THE FINNISH CENTER ASSOCIATION

March 2021

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Spring is on it's way and I am so glad as this has been a very long year with the battle of COVID and trying to get the vaccine. We hope that soon everyone that wants one will be able to get a shot.

With spring comes the hope of opening the Finnish Center, at least gradually, and the board has now decided on June 1, 2021. I think that since our gardens are so beautiful we will be having events outside. Be sure to watch your email and Facebook pages, for details as plans are not complete at this time.

The annual meeting turned out very well. A huge thank to all who participated in the Zoom online meeting format. The new board and committees are posted in this issue. Feel free to call or email any of us if you have a question. I plan on being at The Finnish Center on Mondays and Fridays until we fully reopen. If there is any way I can help, please let me know.

Now I want you to think spring! This will be a good year with warm days, smiling faces, and new activities. Stay safe and stay well.

Mary O'Brien

SOCIAL NEWS UPCOMING EVENTS

- April 7 - **Craft Day** 1:00 pm
- April 17 - **Gift Shop Sale** 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
- May 1 - **Vappu Party** 2:00 pm
- May 15 - **Mother's Day Celebration** Noon
- June 26 - **Juhannus** 6:00 pm
- August 14 - **Craft Show/Flea Market**
10:00 am - 4:00 pm

All events will be outside.

Our outside craft day is a new event this year. In an effort to help the Finnish Center we thought we could have a table with our handmade products. If you want to join us to paint flower pots, for sale at the Flea market, we can use some help. We will meet by the garage on April 7 to set up and get creative. Please join us.

Anyone interested in being a vendor for the Flea Market, please email Mary O'Brien via email at jeepinmary@yahoo.com.

More information will be in upcoming newsletters.

2021 ANNUAL ELECTIONS

The election part of the annual meeting went smoothly considering we did the majority of the voting over Zoom. Please see the results on Page 2 of this newsletter.

The three Alternates nominated to the Board of Trustees were Jerry Collins, Christina Lovgren and Ed O'Brien. The next day paper ballots were mailed out to those on the Zoom call to rank 1st, 2nd and 3rd Alternate. Later, Christina Lovgren withdrew her name for consideration. We will still have the pleasure of seeing Christina at our Board meetings in her role as Treasurer. We will list in our April newsletter who is 1st Alternate and who is 2nd Alternate. Our 3rd Alternate will be vacant.

I hope to see all of you in person at FCA next year for our annual meeting!

Kathryn Hill
Nominating Committee Chairman

FINLANDIDA FOUNDATION HONORS TWO FCA MEMBERS



This year, these Michigan folk artists with ties to Finlandia Foundation National have been honored for their talents. The Beaumier U.P. Heritage Center has selected folklorist Yvonne Hiipakka Lockwood, Ph.D. for a 2020 Upper Peninsula Folklife Award. As FFN Lecturer of the Year for 2013, Yvonne presented on “Traditional Material Culture in Modern Finnish America,” addressing the history and culture of “tangible things crafted, shaped, altered and used across time.” She talked about how, in the late 19th century when Finnish immigrants came to North America, they shared their skills in weaving, knitting, spinning, foods, woodworking and construction. Yvonne was curator of folk life at the Michigan State University Museum, and received a grant from FFN in 2009 to research rugs for her book *Finnish American Rag Rugs: Art, Tradition, and Ethnic Continuity*.

Paavo Nurmi was recognized with the Michigan Heritage Award for his wood carving skills, particularly the distaffs that he makes. These intricately carved ruginlapa (distaff of the spinning wheel), were made by Finnish men to impress young ladies they were courting. “The Michigan Heritage Awards are presented each year to honor master tradition bearers in Michigan who continue the folk traditions of their families and communities through practice and teaching,” explains Marsha MacDowell, director of the Michigan Traditional Arts Program. Paavo took up carving as a hobby in 1978, and has exhibited his creations at FinnFest USA. He does not sell his work because of the sheer number of hours that he invests in creating each piece. Paavo and his wife Nancy live in the Upper Peninsula and are members of FFN and the Finnish Center in Farmington Hills.



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Finlandia Foundation National

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

Board of Trustees

1 Year

Cynthia Haffey, Sherrill Tedford,
Austin Strobridge

2 Year

Kathryn Hill, Mary O’Brien,
James Lee

3 Year

Irene Lamanen, Linda Poirier,
Roger Wanttaja

Alternates

#1

#2

#3

Financial Review

Paul Rajala
Annikki Kurvi
Olli Lmmminen

Committee Chairpersons

Building & Grounds

Roger Wanttaja

Cultural

Yvonne Lockwood

Education

Ilona Takakura

Finance

Mia Lamminen

Gift Shop

Mary O’Brien

Mailing

Alice Manley

Membership

Sherrill Tedford

Publicity & Publications

Ed O’Brien

Social

Mary O’Brien

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Tapiola Village

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

Freedom Square

Theresa Show, Manager
(248) 442-7250

BEING FINNISH

This morning I woke up with memories of what it means to be Finnish. Let me tell you about the strong Finns I knew as a child. They were strong immigrants and the pillars of the Michigan town of Kaleva. I remember the faces: Solomon Phil, Otto Puustinen, Jacob Pasanen, Mr. Johnson and John Waino. They didn't speak English, Finnish was their language. These workers used their strength and carved the village for others. They worked with their bare hands that were dirty and cracked building saunas and a church, stores, and their homes. They came from a small country in Northern Europe that few had heard of and landed in Ellis Island and Canada; they struggled to get to a new land without war where there was plenty of food. Then the second generation came: Elmer Kuuttila, Fred Jouppi, John J. Makinen, the Mannisto brothers, Weikko Phil, Ferdinand Kaskinen, John E. Makenen, Fred Asiala. Again they worked hard. Now they had learned the new language, English. They were builders and farmers and businessman and educators. It was important to give their children the best education they could and they built a four-room school. They preserved their heritage without complaining or arguing. They just did what needed to be done. They wanted to keep the culture and they did. It was important to not forget they came from Finland with all its values and culture. I know what an immigrant was, my grandfather raised a big family alone after my grandmother died. He worked as a farmer and mailman.

This brings me to the Finnish Center. This was built by strong immigrant families. Just like the immigrants in Kaleva, they made their homes and towns and worked in the mines in the UP. I don't know many of the original names but I know families: the Rajalas, the Wanttajas, the Lempalas, the Lemppanens, the Mattalas, the Niemis and the Hills. These people worked to make a place where all could enjoy. They made pasties and cooked dinners. They worked together to build a social life for their culture, Yes, maybe they didn't all agree on things but they came together for all. People ask me, "Why do you volunteer so many hours"? My answer is, many worked much harder to preserve their culture. I want people to come here and I want to see some of my elderly friends back and I want people to understand who the Finns are: strong resilient people who care about others. They will fight to protect all that has been established for them. Let's get though this pandemic and preserve what we Finn's have.

Let us be proud of Finland and all it stands for, always remembering we are also Americans.

Submitted by Mary O'Brien

THOUGHT OF THE MONTH

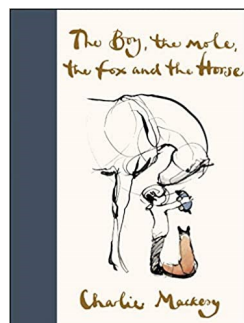
"Do you have any advise " asked the boy.

"Don't measure how valuable you are by the way you are treated" said the horse.

"Always remember you matter. You are important and you are loved, and you bring to the world things no one else can".

From *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*

by Charlie Mackey



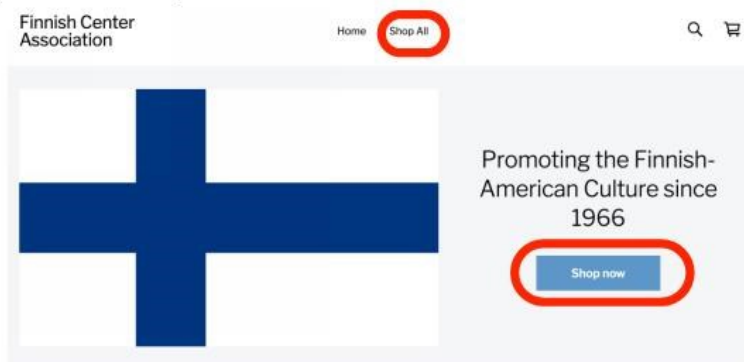
CHUCKLES

1. There's a fine line between a numerator and a denominator. (...Only a fraction of people will get this clean joke.)
2. What do dentists call their x-rays? Tooth pics!
3. Did you hear about the first restaurant to open on the moon? It had great food, but no atmosphere.
4. What did one ocean say to the other ocean? Nothing, it just waved.
5. Do you want to hear a construction joke? Sorry, it will be done in two weeks.
6. What's the difference between a hippo and a zippo? One is really heavy and the other's a little lighter.

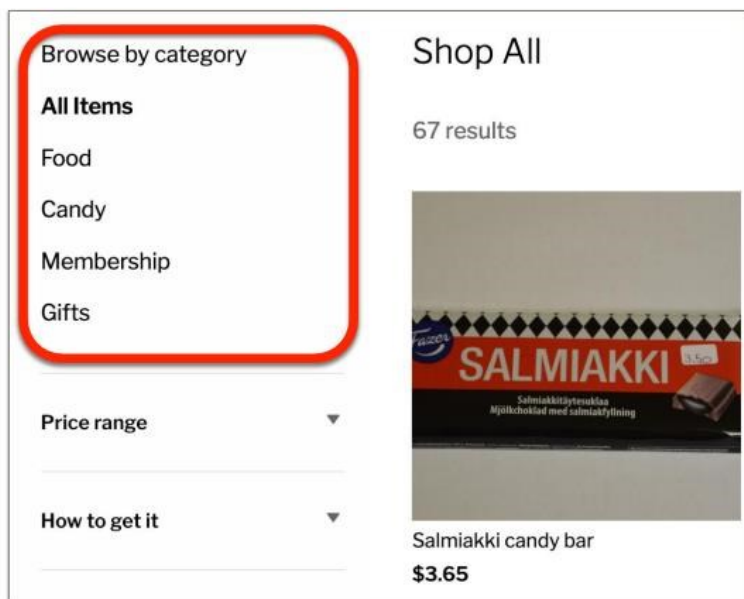
FCA Gift Shop Online Store!

In case you haven't heard, the FCA gift shop is now available online! Due to the challenges of COVID-19, we wanted to have another way to connect with our members and broader community. We offer curbside pickup and delivery for a nominal (\$9.95) fee. It is very easy to use the site, but here are a few simple steps to get folks started:

- 1) Go to the following site: <https://finnishcenter.square.site/>
- 2) Click on "Shop All":



- 3) This will show a listing of all products. There are a few options here to filter your selections.



Click on a product to view the product page.

- 4) Once on the product page, here are the steps to order a product:
 - 1) Select the flavor or color, etc. This can be selected via the drop-down menu.
 - 2) Select either "shipping" to have the product sent to you, or "Store Pickup". If you select shipping, please provide an address.
 - 3) Pick a quantity and select Add to Cart!

Fazer candy bars

\$7.35

Flavor *

Dark Chocolate 1

How to get it

Shipping

Store pickup 2
Finnish Center
35200 W. Eight Mile Road, Farmington Hills,
Michigan

Quantity *

- 1 +

Add to Cart 3

Shopping Cart

×



Fazer candy bars
Flavor: Dark Chocolate

\$7.35

1

Remove

Shipping or pickup

Subtotal

\$7.35

[+ Add a coupon code](#)

Pickup - Wednesday after 11:00 AM

Finnish Center

35200 W. Eight Mile Road, Farmington ... [Change](#)

5) In the final step, confirm your shopping cart and click the "Checkout" button.

Thank you for your support!

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

Editor's Note: This is part II and the conclusion of the story by Douglas D. Karttunen, a cousin to FCA member Sandy Gersky, and a resident of Kingsford in the U.P, about 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. The tale here resumes after Waino has moved to Soviet Karelia and he writes letters to relatives back in the U.P.

A frequent topic of discussion in his correspondence was the economic conditions in Karelia and how it was getting better. Things were still somewhat backward in Karelia with scarcity of many food products such as meat, sugar, and butter. In 1934 butter was costing 30 rubles per kilogram, at a time when he was earning a salary of 10 to 15 rubles per day. The ruble was worth about \$0.88. Two years earlier it was worth only \$0.51. Waino always expressed optimism that things were continuing to improve: "If there is enough time for peace, then in a couple of years there will probably be the same standard of living as you have there. And if war comes again, and it's not far away, then it's better to be here." He often mentioned who among those from Green were becoming dissatisfied with the conditions and were planning to go back home or across the border to Finland. Waino was disappointed with them for being too lazy (Luoma) or constant complainers (Metsala and Hill). But as for Waino: "I am not leaving. I have confidence being here."

Waino would often send packets of Karelian magazines back home for his sister and brother to read. Sometimes Russian paper money and coins were sent as souvenirs. Waino would also on occasion request that some money he had left behind be wired to him. He was interested in and following the status of the Bonus Act passed by Congress in 1935 (but vetoed by President Roosevelt in January 1936) which would have provided additional compensation to WWI veterans based on their time of service. On June 24, 1935, he wrote, "I have not seen how the bonus thing ended in the Senate. There is a man from Minnesota here. He would get almost as much as me. We thought that if it was approved, then we would make a pleasure trip there." He went on, "I will never flee from here, as so many who have left. I will make a pleasure trip if I get a round-trip visa, and yes I will. So, then there will be talking and laughing again, if I come to visit." The Bonus Bill was vetoed, there would be no round-trip visa, and the pleasure trip never came to be.

No letters from Waino exist after July 1935. His sister Hilda died in January 1936. Did he stop writing after she passed away or are the letters simply lost? No one knows anymore. And for decades no one knew what happened to Waino after this. In 1939 the Winter War between Russia and Finland began, the Continuation War followed on its heels, and WWII on top of these prevented any communication with people in Karelia. After WWII I remember my mother fervently waiting for word from her uncle Waino. None came. She would dream of him coming up the driveway, unannounced, and all that "talking and laughing again". He never came.

In 1970, however, a different surprise visitor from Karelia came to visit. Dagne Salo, a close childhood friend of my mother who had left Green with her family to Karelia in 1931, returned after nearly 40 years to see her old home. She brought news that Waino had been arrested by Russian police in 1938 and had never been heard from again. The same fate had befallen her own father just days before they took Waino. In 1976 Viola Metsala Jääsekläinen also made the journey from Karelia to Green. Viola was the daughter of David and Lyyli Metsala and had left Green with her mother and brother on exactly the same date as Waino. Viola was also my father's cousin. She confirmed the story told by Dagne, but neither knew what happened to Waino after his arrest. Was he executed? Did he die in prison? They did not know. Viola's father, she told, had avoided arrest and execution by escaping to Finland in September 1938. Her mother and brother Hugo were left behind in Karelia. Hugo, unfortunately, did not escape Stalin's reach – probably paying the price for his father's freedom.

(continued on page 6)

From Finland to the Michigan's Upper Peninsula to Soviet Karelia

(continued from page 5)

In the 1990s Mayme Sevander (a resident of Petrozavodsk and the daughter of Oscar Corrigan, one of the recruiters who convinced hundreds of Finnish-Americans to go to Karelia in the 1930s) wrote a series of books about the Karelian experience and the fate of many of those who died as a result. I had the privilege of meeting with Mayme at Finnfest 1996 in Marquette, Michigan. She offered her assistance in seeing if she could find any more information regarding Waino's death from the Prosecutor General's office in Petrozavodsk. In June 1977 an official document sent from the Embassy of the Russian Federation, Washington D. C. arrived in the mail. It was entitled: "CERTIFICATE OF REHABILITATION". The document confirmed Waino had indeed been arrested on October 4, 1938, for "counter revolutionary activities" and had been sentenced to ten years in prison. But, it went on, "the criminal case was dismissed by the conclusion of the prosecutor of the KASSR [Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic] on 13.04.89 due to lack of evidence for the actions of Pietilä". However, no explanation relative to Waino's time or cause of death was offered.

The cover letter accompanying the certificate of rehabilitation did, however, advise: "You can obtain a certificate of his death from the Office of Civil Registry which operates in the City of Petrozavodsk in the republic of Karelia, if you can prove that you are a relative of V. F. Pietilä." This seemingly simple requirement has proven to be so fettered by bureaucratic red tape that no death certificate has been able to be gotten over the past 23 years. But, like Uncle Waino, I shall remain forever hopeful.



I never knew my great-uncle Waino. He disappeared in Karelia in 1938. I wasn't even born until 1947. However, I grew up hearing a lot about Waino and his worldly exploits from my mother, Viola (Korvenpaa) Karttunen. Waino was her *eno*, i.e. maternal uncle. In Finnish culture there is a distinction between one's maternal uncle and paternal uncle, or *setä*. Somehow there is a closer and more familiar bond to one's *eno*. Indeed, Waino was a very favorite uncle to my mother. She often remarked how Waino was kind, funny, strong and handsome, possessed a fondness for travel, for adventure, and hard work. The topic of his going to Karelia and his disappearance there was openly talked about within the family but perhaps not as much publicly, given McCarthyism and the Cold War of the '50s and '60s. There was always a certain sadness associated with the story of Waino's going to Karelia. It seems he went there in a sincere effort to help build a better place and system but was ultimately and bitterly betrayed by it. My mother's stories stirred an interest to learn more about our family history in general and more about Waino in specific. Researching genealogical records in Finland and United States fleshed out much of the rest of Waino's story.

I wish to also acknowledge my cousin, Marja-Liisa Levomäki of Loima, Finland, for translating all of Waino's Karelia letters and for providing much insight and information about our Pietilä family. Waino, you see, is also Marjo-Liisa's maternal great-uncle. It was she who first made me aware of the Finnish Literature Society's "Memories of Stalin's Persecution" project and encouraged me to submit our Uncle Waino's story. I also thank my wife, Sally Karttunen, for proof reading and offering her valuable suggestions on the content of this story.

Prepared for the Finnish Literature Society by:

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May 29, 2020

FINNISH CENTER ASSOCIATION



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Applicant _____

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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 _____
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Membership, 35200 W. Eight Mile Road, Farmington Hills, MI 48335-5108

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