
Finger Lakes Finns

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NEWSLETTER

November / Marraskuu 2008

FinnFest 2008

By Lisa dC-Koski

Richard and I shared the spirit of Finland with five thousand other Finns and Finnish-Americans at FinnFest 2008 in Duluth, Minnesota from July 23rd to July 27th.

There were many activities constantly to choose from, including a very big tori with items for sale from Finnish-American vendors from all over the country. Some of our raffle items came from the tori.

Lessons were given on kantele playing, mandolin, and other instruments. Salolampi gave Finnish lessons to children and adults, with many participating. There were documentary films, and one-act plays, such as "The Search for Väinämöinen". At the poetry workshop, I gave a poetry reading with the poet laureate of Duluth.

There was a great variety of music ranging from folk, with such groups as the Finn Hall Band and Amerikan Poijat, to jazz, to the full Minnesota Orchestra conducted by Osmo Vänskä. Other music was provided by the Veteli Boys Choir and the Singing Strings, among many others. The Katirilli Finnish Folk Dancers from California presented a very entertaining and colorful dance performance. Richard performed on accordion at four different places, including as a duo with fiddler Carl Rahkonen.

The cafe was on duty almost constantly with coffee, pulla, foods, and an ice cream station for all to enjoy.

The highlight of the festival was the program of Tarja Halonen, President of Finland, receiving the Honorary Doctorate of Law degree from the University of Minnesota at Duluth. She gave an interesting speech, which stressed the value of education, the economy, social services, and human rights for all. It was warmly received by the audience of several thousand Finn-Festers!

All attendees seemed to agree that this FinnFest was one of the best. We were glad that we attended.



Finlandia Foundation National Meeting in Portland, Oregon

By Richard Ahola

President John Laine called to order the October 30 - November 2 meeting of the Board of Trustees. Attending were new trustees Peter J. Makila, Honorable Consul of Finland from Lake Worth, Florida and Richard Ahola from the Finger Lakes Finns.

Committee reports of interest included a discussion of finances and investments in this current climate of uncertainty. FFN has a defensive position including a 29% investment in cash. The Board approved to accept a \$200,000 bequest to invest in CDs or federal government securities. President Laine proposed a professionally led fund raising campaign to raise \$5 million by 2013 to support and expand FFN activities. The proposal was approved.

Rita Vermala-Koski welcomed Richard Ahola to the Grants Committee, which will deliberate in Palm Beach, Florida in March 2009. Directors were invited to a reception at the Finland Room at Portland State University to view the renovations funded by the Grants Committee. The reception hosted by the Columbia-Pacific Chapter, included food, punch, and delightful Finnish music.

Professor John Saari reported on a new printing of the history of the FFN with a second edition of the history to be completed by 2010. Professor Saari also reported on the Lecturer of the Year activities. Susan Saarinen and Mark Coin have been telling the Saarinen story throughout the US concurrent with the international architectural exhibit on Susan's father Eero. Susan and Mark's presentations have been well received in eleven venues with three more scheduled though March 2009.

Trustee Mervi Hjelmroos-Koski reported on youth activities including the new Soiva Camp at Salolampi. President Laine called the music and cultural experience a rousing success. A trademark application has been filed for the Soiva Camp name.

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Trustee Jacqueline Harjula announced the scholarship grant of \$3,500 was awarded to Ryan Saasto of Westbury, New York who is attending the Touro Law Center in Islip, New York. Performer of the Year coordinator Satu Mikkola reported on the extensive performances of 2008 POY accordion duo of Brent Buswell and Bert Stromholm. The 2009 POY was approved by the Board of Trustees with an announcement to be made in the near future.

Under old business, Executive VP Paul Halme reported on the activities of the Friends of Sibelius Academy. Paul is a lifetime trustee and instrumental in the continuing Paloheimo Contribution to Finnish American culture. Trustee George Sundquist reported on bylaw changes and office manager Christina Lin reported on chapter activities.

Secretary Anita Smiley reported on communications and took the notes of the meeting. Special thanks go to trustees Olavi Hiukka and Ossi Rahkonen on their insightful comments about FFN finances. The very successful meeting concluded with an announcement of the US and Canadian 2009 tour of Finnish pianist Janne Mertanen.



Toivo celebrates release of newest album *By Bill Chaisson*

Reprinted with permission from the Finger Lakes Community Newspaper article of 10/22/2008

Sometimes it pays to live in a small community. You run into the same people over and over again, although sometimes you can go for many years without really sitting down and finding out what they have been up to. And sometimes, new people move in and provide a catalyst for something new.

Rich Koski doesn't remember exactly when his Fenno-Tex-Mex band Toivo came together, but he remembers how it happened. "I was over at Peter Hoover's and he said, 'I'm going to have Jim Reidy come by,'" Koski recalled recently. "I'd never met Jim before, but the three of us sat down and played a lot of tunes together and at the end of it, I said, as people often do, 'We should do this again sometime.'"

A year later Koski called Reidy and they got together to play old Finnish tunes. Reidy is probably best known as the banjo-uke player for the Chicken Chokers, but he has an encyclopedic collection of old records, a wide-ranging interest in traditional music and an abiding affection for sitting down with his knees facing someone else's knees to play some tunes. He was more than game to wade into the Finnish canon.

"I happened to see Annie Campbell some place," continued Koski, "and we started talking about music." Campbell and her husband Harley had played in a Finnish band with Koski and his father back in the early 1980s. "We hadn't played together for over 20 years, but she was interested. This was all about three years ago, I guess."

Koski is a button accordion player. "I started the button accordion in 1979," he said. "I played the piano accordion for a few years before that and it was difficult to make the transition. I never went back." The piano accordion makes the same note whether you push or pull



Toivo, the band from Trumansburg playing Finger Lakes Traditional music, has a new CD! It's called "Laughing Shoe" and it's stepping out with lots of Rich Koski's original accordion numbers, some Finnish tunes, some Tex-Mex tunes, and some other nearly forgotten dance numbers from all over the place. The band consists of Richard Koski, button accordion; Jason Koski, mandolin; Jim Reidy, guitar; Stefan Senders, banjo; Harley Campbell, upright bass; and Annie Campbell, snare drum. Contact Richard at rkoski@zoom-dsl.com or phone (607) 387-4854. For band schedule, photos, and audio samples, visit the Toivo website at toivo.honkingduck.com.

on the bellows. With the same buttons depressed, the button accordion sounds a different pitch when pulled than it does when pushed.

"Back in the '70s pretty much everyone around here was learning to play old-time fiddle because of the Highwoods [Stringband]," Koski chuckled. "I was one of them, but I never got that good at it." Annie and Harley Campbell were part of the same scene: she a fiddler and he a stand-up bass player.

Reidy spent the '70s gravitating toward and ending up in the middle of the Boston old-time scene, eventually landing a recording contract at Rounder Records with the Chicken Chokers in 1985.

When Toivo began to play together Reidy contributed rhythm guitar; the Campbells added bass and a snare drum, and Koski's son Jason joined in on the mandolin. "Playing with this group keeps me in good shape," Koski said, "because I'm the only one playing the melody."

A year after their inception, another Chicken Choker, Stefan Senders, added his banjo to the mix.

Their new album, *Laughing Shoe* features all six players. 18 tracks were recorded, mixed and mastered by Chad Crumm (also a Chicken Choker) in live sessions between January and May of this year. Eight of the tunes are Koski originals, which are informed by his own Finnish heritage, but also his love of Tejano, Cajun and old-time traditions.

Most of the Finnish tunes are dance numbers from the 19th and early 20th centuries, but Koski also includes an 18th century polonaise. He has been interested in Tex-Mex music for 20 years. "It's a natural for the button accordion. The polkas, schottisches and waltzes are shared between the traditions," he said. "German and Czech settlers brought them to Texas."

Koski carries the melody on all the tunes, but sharp ears will hear Annie Campbell join him on fiddle for the "Podunk Two-step" and "Kävelypoloneesi," and Senders adds so much ornamentation to his banjo playing in "El Golfo" that it nearly amounts to a countermelody.

"I have a bunch of tunes that we haven't included in the Toivo repertoire yet," Koski said. He will keep teaching his vast store of Finnish tunes to the rest of the band a few at a time, and last year at the library book sale he found an old album of Norwegian galops. "I'm not adding any more Tex-Mex for now, but I'd like to get back to the Cajun and explore it a bit more."

...

Toivo will appear on November 25 from 6-10 p.m. at Maxie's Supper Club, 635 West State Street in Ithaca. [Ed.]

Näkemiin, *Lokakuu - So Long October

It was this day one sunny afternoon
she sat on a wooden retaining wall
waiting
a warm October sun, fell gently on her back
casting long shadows, an omen,
she wondered

the excitement was building, the trip
was grinding, this was the icing on the cake
the sore, aching muscles, mattered not
she had waited a life time for this.

Then she, almost in a dazed state of mind
saw the shape of her dreams approaching
drawing closer with each step, she could
not contain her calm and jumped up to
run toward the figure, and he was real

alive and warm, full of nervous energy
wanting to turn and run, but wanting to stay.

Stay he did for a short page in time
the years roll by, her walk is slower
she no long runs toward him, but
waits for the mountains to call her back
for the taste of honey, coming from
just over the mountain, and a huge
glorious lokakuu moon, shining down

waking to a warm day awaiting the joy
of her heart and the quaking of the Aspens
on the mountains.

Leona M. House
10.10.2008

*Finnish lokakuu means October in English.





Who's Howling?

Yowling,
Or is it growling?
On a cold moonlit night,
All animals out of sight.

The piercing howls
Of a group or troop
of travelers.

Wolves? No!
This pitch's not that low,
Dogs? Not a real bark.
Hark! Listen!
Communicating coyotes.

Lisa dC-Koski



My mother wanted us to make her cards instead of giving her presents when we celebrated her 90th birthday in April this year, so I wrote this light-hearted poem that she really liked.

Paula

90th Birthday Poem to Mom
(Toini Kaartinen)

At decade nine, you sure look fine.
What's your secret? A glass of wine
In the evening, and in the day,
An active paintbrush and a busy mind?

Was it those steamy saunas?
Or an abundance of sisu?
Pulla and coffee or rutabaga in the stew?

Your girlhood on a farm, healthy and rustic?
School in Van Etten, absorbing and hectic.

Having four children five years apart?
Raised in Yonkers,
They kept you fit, young and smart.

Classes at Cooper Union, magazine ad retouching
Your days became even more interesting.
A midlife career in the big city?
It had to end when you moved -- seemed like a pity.

Moving upstate meant a new kind of life;
There was history here, the area was rife
With Finnish people, culture and talk
Card parties were always a memory walk.

Square dancing and gardening
In bucolic Spencer;
Your life with Dad got better and better.

Mandolin playing, sewing and crochet,
Finger Lakes Finns on monthly Sundays,
Kaartooning for Finn papers and Broader View,
Your secret is clear – you do all you do.

A Word from Our President
Lisa dC-Koski



We've enjoyed great fall weather for several weeks, ideal for outdoor activities, apple picking, and getting pumpkins, among other fall harvest produce.

I wish to thank the many donors, helpers, and buyers of our silent auction fundraiser for making it such a big success. Twenty percent of the proceeds go to the scholarship fund and the rest goes to our general fund. A member suggested we do a silent auction next year.

The trip Richard and I made to Duluth for Finnfest 2008 is reported on in this issue. We were the only Finger Lakes Finns to attend the festival.

The election of officers for 2009 took place at the October meeting. It promises to be a smooth transition, as our members voted to keep the same officers as in 2008.

Our members have considered whether we would host the FinnFunn Weekend. At our October meeting we voted in favor of it, to be held the first weekend of October 2009 in Ithaca. Jean Lindblad will chair the event with a large supporting team. Offer her your input in the next few months, and then again in Sept. and Oct. 2009.

Soon we'll be planning our Christmas party. As always, we welcome your ideas and suggestions for entertainment. At our November meeting we'll be making Christmas decorations for our shut-ins. Please bring evergreens, small pine cones, red ribbon, other appropriate material, and small tools.

Membership dues for the 2009 calendar year are now due. Send your \$10 to Jeanne Frandsen. See details on the last page. Thank you.

Martti Ahtisaari Receives
Nobel Peace Prize
By Lisa dC-Koski

Finns and people all around the world can proudly rejoice about the news that Martti Ahtisaari, former president of Finland, has been selected by the Nobel Committee to receive this year's Peace Prize.

For 30 years Ahtisaari has worked with war-torn countries in Bosnia, Kosovo, Herzegovina, Namibia, and other nations to resolve serious problems.

Well done! We are justifiably proud!

Donations to the Finger Lakes Finns

If you would like to make a monetary donation to the Finger Lakes Finns, please indicate whether you want it to go to the scholarship fund or the general fund. If you want the donation to be made in memory of someone, please indicate who it should be in memory of and to which fund it should go.

We would like to acknowledge your gift in our next newsletter. We will not print the dollar amounts of the gifts. *If you wish your donation to be anonymous, let us know and we will not print your name.*

Make checks out to Finger Lakes Finns, and send to our Treasurer, Barbara Twombly, PO Box 435, Spencer, NY 14883.

Thank you.

As a non-profit organization, contributions to the Finger Lakes Finns are deductible to the full extent of the tax law.



Finger Lakes Finns Officers

President: Lisa Koski

Vice President: Virpi Loomis

Treasurer: Barbara Twombly

Secretary: Jeanne Frandsen

Membership and Change of Address Coupon

Join ___ Change ___ Renew ___

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail: _____

To join/renew Finger Lakes Finns membership, please send \$10 per person, payable to **Finger Lakes Finns**, c/o the Membership Chair: **Jeanne Frandsen 502 Donalds Dr. Ithaca, NY 14850**
Please send address changes to the same address.

Calendar of Coming Events

Nov. 16 – Sun. 1 p.m. – Dish to pass luncheon, business meeting, and program (making Christmas decorations for shut-ins). Newfield Fire Hall.

Nov. 25 – Tue. 6-10 p.m. – Toivo band plays at Maxie's Supper Club, 635 West State Street, Ithaca.

Dec. 21 – Sun. 1 p.m. – Dish to pass luncheon, business meeting, Pikku Joulu Christmas party, entertainment. Newfield Fire Hall.

Jan. 15 – Thurs. – Deadline for submission of articles, poems, photos, and notices for the February 2009 issue of the FLF newsletter. Send to Jim Loomis, editor, Upper Clark Ave., Van Etten, NY 14889 or email: loomis@htva.net.

Jan. 18 – Sun. 1 pm – Dish to pass luncheon, business meeting, and tentative program, music of Laurie Hart and Stefan Ohlström. Newfield Fire Hall.



Mission and Membership

Membership in Finger Lakes Finns is open to anyone of Finnish origin or with an interest in Finnish culture. Dues are \$10 per person per calendar year. Payment may be made at any time during the year, but only covers membership for the remainder of that calendar year.

Help us provide information and activities for Finns and Finn friends to enjoy. Although you do not need to be a member to attend our meetings and activities, your dues entitle you to continue receiving this newsletter and to vote on all FLF business at our meetings.

For membership please use the form in this issue or at www.FingerLakesFinns.org. Mail the form with your check or money order, payable to Finger Lakes Finns, c/o **Jeanne Frandsen, 502 Donald's Drive, Ithaca NY 14850**, or you may use a credit card at our web site.

The Newsletter is produced four times each year. We welcome members to contribute content sent to: FLF Newsletter, c/o Jim Loomis, 19 Upper Clark Ave., Van Etten, NY 14889 [Email loomis@htva.net]. The Editorial committee is Jim Loomis, Richard Koski, and Lisa Koski. **Submissions for the newsletter are due on the 15th of the month before publication.**

Finger Lakes Finns Newsletter
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Van Etten, NY 14889