
Finger Lakes Finns

Volume 14, Number 2

NEWSLETTER

May / Toukokuu 2010

Finnish Memories

By *Sonja Passi Seamon*

My brother, Leo Passi, and I went to Finland back in August 2007. I can't believe it's been that long! This was my second trip to visit all the relatives and Leo's first. It's such an emotional time to meet all your relatives. Leo had a great camaraderie with everyone because he spoke Finn fluently.

When we were growing up, we were such a small family, since my mother, Mary Nordstrom, was the only one that came to America on the SS Drottningholm ship in June 1937 all by herself. The first thing we learned when we met our relatives in Finland was that it was such a sad day when our mother left Finland, that everyone vowed that no one would ever leave Finland again. And nobody did. All nine of my mother's siblings stayed in Finland. I often wondered what it would have been like if more of her siblings would have come here, and how big a family we would have had to grow up with.

My father, Niilo Passi, came from a family of eight children from Ishpeming, Michigan. When my dad was two years old, they moved to Kauhava, Finland. One of Dad's sisters, Ida Kunttu, moved to Interlaken, New York. They had one son, Henry. Now I had a cousin to play with. Daddy also had another sister and brother in Maryland; my Aunt Alma Bergroos had twin sons (Ray and Allen) and my Uncle Reino Passi had one child Henry. As you can see, we didn't have very many relatives here in America.

However, in Finland, we still have two aunts (Senja ja Lilja) and two uncles (Ollie ja Aate) on my mother's side, as well as hundreds of cousins and second cousins. On my dad's side we have three cousins and three-second cousins. My Christmas card list has grown. Once in awhile I get a phone call, but more often I get letters and cards. Next year (2011) the Nordstrom family is going to have a family reunion that we all hope to attend.

I have many fond memories from Finland. We had many wonderful meals in Finland. On the first day in Helsinki, our cousin, Asta and her husband, Oiva surprised us at the hotel! They took us to a large family meal at our cousins Pirkko and Ari's house where my brother said, "The food was so beautiful it should be hanging on the wall as a picture." We also stayed at the Harma Spa when we went to Kauhava to visit our father's beautiful, huge home and our cousins, Kaija, Sisko, and Sirkka.



We went to a huge market in Oulu called Kauppahallisto with all kind of specialty in fish, wild meats, breads, and seasonings along with a little restaurant. My brother was like a kid in a candy shop, but this was a fish shop. Leo and our cousin Sinikka picked out every kind of fish and wild meats to take home. I'll list a few here for you: lihahyytelö (Alatoopia), sillia, lohta, leipä, makkara, kahvia, juustoa, silakoita, poronliha, pulla, munkkeja, kotovalinta (Paavola), maitoa, porkkanoita, sian kylkeä, hedelmiä, jalattia, tomaattia, vi-

inirypäleitä, suolakurkkua, kaljaa, siideriä, limsa ja mehua, and jäätelöä. Are you hungry yet?

We made daily visits to my cousin Sinikka's old family home to get fresh potatoes, onions, carrots, and lettuce. The potato plants were two feet high, and there were acres and acres of them. I walked around the manicured lawn, while Leo and Sinikka would pick the produce for the day. But I would wash the potatoes, and Sinikka would cook them. Unbelievable how delicious fresh potatoes are!

It was also berry season while we were there. My cousin Pentti and his wife Kirsti came with mustikka. They had buckets and buckets of berries, and we made juice and berry cake. Our cousin has his own band, and he plays the accordion, which I find very entertaining. My brother Leo wants to learn the song *Sillä Terästettiin* (a very lively drinking song).

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The Finns have their own special hot dog called makkara that they usually grill and serve with mustard from a container shaped like a toothpaste tube. I went shopping for hotdog rolls, but the stores don't carry them. I also learned that one should take the clothes off the clothesline before cooking makkaras, because they end up smelling like smoke if you don't. At my cousin Marja's and her husband, Matti's home in Pattijoki, we cooked makkaras in a fireplace in their beautiful home. In their back yard, Matti also smoked fish, which was so delicious. My brother Leo's favorite memory was when all the men went out to the grill at 11 p.m. to cook makkaras. All the women were wondering what was taking so long. The men went to the cellar where the olut (beer) was stored.

This trip, I brought my own ice trays so I could have cold drinks. One of my aunts had never seen ice cubes before. One of the elders told the younger children not to put ice in their drinks because it's unhealthy. Soda, beer, mixed drinks, etc. are all served at room temperature. I ordered ice tea once, and to my surprise I got it with no ice. I often thought if I ever moved to Finland, maybe I would open an ice company.

We went to spend the day at our cousin Raimo Nordstrom's home in Vihanti. It's so wonderful to watch his family all cooking together. They made the best salmon soup and fruit salad. We got the recipe for the soup, but mine wasn't as good as Raimo's. Most families in Finland have a little building outside, which they call huvimaja, where they have a pit and grill in the center of the room and bench around the inside of the building where you sit and talk. Raimo and his wife Maare made pancakes call lattyja, which we ate with berries and hilloja (jam). Our mother would make those same pancakes for us when we where young. They also had this old coffee-pot, with which they made the best coffee ever. It put Starbucks to shame.

The old family home in Vihanti is now our uncle Aate's. There, still standing in the backyard, is a huge tree that my mother used to climb as a little girl. My mother told me how much she loved to climb and play in that tree. And next to the sauna is a little barn that held all the trunks that my mother sent to Finland over the years. When growing up, our mother would pack huge trunks with clothing and gifts. My cousin Paula in Kopsa showed us some of the dresses that my mother had sent to them more than forty years ago. They treasured them, and they were still in excellent shape.

The Finns are the best when it comes to entertainment. The food is non-stop and delicious! I can't wait until the reunion scheduled for 2011.



Beautiful Finnish food at Pikko and Ari's home



Tree at Sonja's Uncle Aate's home that her mother played in as a child



Little building, a *huvimaja*, at the Nordstrom home

ALBERT BOSK CELEBRATES 104

By Lawrence Backlund

Albert Bosk, formerly of Spencer but now living in Van Etten, celebrated his 104th birthday on February 23 this year. This means he has seen more than a century and has certainly lived an eventful life. Here are some highlights from an article written by his friend Rainer Langstedt.

Bosk's parents, John and Emilia, who came from different communities in Finland, met and married in Escanaba, Michigan, where Albert and an older brother Arvid were born. A third child was born in 1909.

They were not to live their lives in that part of Michigan that had been so attractive to other immigrants from Finland. The family moved back to Finland in 1908. Conditions there were so bad, however, that John returned to the United States in 1909. Then, with few prospects here, he returned again to Finland in 1915, in the midst of the First World War, to eke out a living on the farm Emilia had bought in the community of Petalahti.

Bosk experienced the consequences of the 1918 Civil War in Finland, including famine. Albert can still taste the bread made from the grain the Hoover Commission shipped to Finland—for a price.

Because there were few prospects for someone like young Albert in Finland, he decided to emigrate to the United States, following his brother Arvid, who returned to Escanaba in 1924. He was 22 in 1926, when he traveled from Göteborg on the Drottningholm to Canada and New York. Because he was a U.S. citizen, he did not have to be processed on Ellis Island.

In New York, he made a momentous decision. He decided not to travel to Escanaba, where his brother was earning less than a dollar a day. He remained in New York, lived with another immigrant from Petalahti in Brooklyn, and found work paying five dollars a day.

In New York, he met his wife Silvia Jauhianen at the Finn Hall in Brooklyn. The family grew to include two daughters and a son, and Bosk carried on his life of work as a carpenter and floor layer.

Bosk's work as a floor layer especially kept him busy, even during the Great Depression. He laid floors in the Empire State Building, worked on the George Washington Bridge, and he recalled doing a job for Donald Trump's grandfather. During the Second World War, he built barracks and a hospital on Greenland. After the war, he helped erect a refinery for Shell Oil in Venezuela. The petroleum company then sent him to Aruba. Shortly afterwards, he was sent to Liberia in West Africa.

He tired of the travel. It was time to work closer to home and to watch his children grow. In the 1950s, he worked steadily in the New York area while his children grew older and, as children do, moved away.

Once the nest was empty, he and Silvia decided to leave Brooklyn and the couple bought a 147 acre farm in Spencer, New York. For the next two decades, he worked the farm and had several jobs in Ithaca.

Silvia died in 1979, and Albert lived alone until recently, when he moved into a privately owned group home in Van Etten.

His friend Rainer Langstedt asked him what was the secret of long life. Without hesitation, Bosk replied: staying in motion (he walked three miles a day until very recently), a healthy diet including buttermilk, and no alcohol. Not bad advice at all.

Congratulations to Albert Bosk!



Rosemary Rowland, Deputy Historian of Newfield and manager of the Archives Alive Project, spoke about "avoiding pitfalls in genealogical research" at our February meeting.



Jean Alve spoke to our April meeting about the history of the Finnish people in the Spencer area.



Hot Stuff!
This is our new Finger Lakes Finns coffee urn.

Sincere thanks for Jeanne Frandsen's shopping and for the generous contribution of Claraneal Creighton.

Wildflowers Whispering

*Asters spinning delicately in their circle, perhaps,
quietly gossiping ...*

*Daffodils daringly boasting of spring's early arrival,
glowing golden, passing lowly, white, silent
snowdrops by -*

While cattail guards spin tall tales.

*Violets hesitating to whisper about perfume to
their fragrant lily-of-the-valley neighbors.*

*Tiger lilies silently providing tall cover for the
long awaited master ...*

*Sunflowers sighing as they slowly turn away
from companions, as the earth turns slowly from
the sun.*

*Mature milkweed's exploding pods send silk flying
for birds' nest lining, while the pink flowers await
the monarch butterflies touchdown.*

*Dame Rockets brilliant prolific pinks, lavender
and fuchsias indicate she's moving stories fastest
of flowers.*

*Was Queen Anne's lace used in her costume?
That question undoubtedly passed from flower to
flower, awaiting lion's teeth.*

*The loudest flower, way above the whisperings
nearby, are the tall orange trumpet vine flowers,
giving a blast before falling groundward, as a dying
battlefield soldier.*

*What did the wildflowers whisper? I do not know.
The sound, it seems was way too low.*

Lisa Koski

A Word from Our President
Shirley Barton



At last, the promise of warm weather is upon us, and with it, the anticipation of events such as our annual Juhannus celebration, June 26th, at Huttunen's Southview tree farm.

Our cold weather events were a welcome respite to the long winter. In addition to the ever-entertaining Finnish quiz bowl, we learned about genealogy, local history, and even viewed a Finnish movie.

We look forward to learning about the Seneca Pure Waters Association at the May meeting. Also, plans are under way for a Finnish Festival on September 19th when we will announce the high bidders for our silent auction fundraiser.

Mission Statement
of the
Finger Lakes Finns

The Finger Lakes Finns is organized to promote cultural and educational appreciation of Finnish heritage and customs, to provide a social setting for enjoying old and new friendships in the Finnish tradition, and to pursue charitable community activities.

Membership shall consist of persons of Finnish descent, those married to persons of Finnish descent, and any other persons interested in the work and activities of the society.



Donations to the Finger Lakes Finns

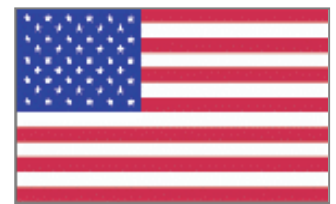
If you would like to make a monetary donation to the Finger Lakes Finns, please indicate whether you want it to go to the scholarship fund or the general fund. If you want the donation to be made in memory of someone, please indicate who it should be in memory of and to which fund it should go.

We would like to acknowledge your gift in our February 2011 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, Helen Sunderlin, 3065 N. Triphammer Rd., Lansing, NY 14882.

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: Shirley Barton

Vice President: Virpi Loomis

Treasurer: Helen Sunderlin

Secretary: Jeanne Frandsen

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Scholarships: Lisa Koski

Membership and Change of Address Coupon

Join Change Renew

Name: _____

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To join/renew Finger Lakes Finns membership, send \$10 annual dues per person, payable to

Finger Lakes Finns,

c/o Richard Winkky,

819 Veteran Hill Rd.

Horseheads, NY 14845-7262

Please send address changes to the same address.

Calendar of Coming Events

May 9, Sunday 10-12 pm: Toivo performs Finnish, Tex-Mex, and Cajun music at the Ithaca Farmers' Market. Also, May 28, 5-8 pm at Felicia's Atomic Lounge, State St. Ithaca; June 4, 6 pm at the Ithaca Festival; July 11, 10am-noon at the Ithaca Farmers' Market; July 25, 4pm at the Grassroots Music Festival in Trumansburg. Details at Toivo's website: toivo.honkingduck.com

May 16, Sunday 1 pm: FLF dish-to-pass luncheon, business meeting, and program. Richard Ahola will speak on Seneca Lake water quality.

June 26, Saturday 5 pm: Juhannus at Huttunen's Southview Farm, 630 South Danby Road, Spencer. Bring a dish to pass and a lawn chair. There will be a kokko, sauna, swimming and hayrides. Bring an instrument, poem, or story and be part of the entertainment. Phone Hemmo and Patty at 589-6620 for information.

July 15, Newsletter deadline for submission of articles, poems, and notices for the August 2010 issue. Send to Jim Loomis, Editor, 19 Upper Clark Ave., Van Etten, NY 14889 or email loomis@htva.net

July 18, Sunday 1 pm: FLF dish-to-pass luncheon, business meeting, and program.

Membership

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 **Richard Winkki, 819 Veteran Hill Rd., Horseheads, NY 14845-7262**. 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 covers membership only for the remainder of that calendar year.

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

* Published February, May, August, and November. 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]. Newsletter Editorial Committee is Jim Loomis, Richard Koski, and Shirley Barton. **Submissions for the newsletter are due on the 15th of the month before publication.**

Finger Lakes Finns Newsletter
c/o Jim Loomis, Editor
19 Upper Clark Avenue
Van Etten, NY 14889