



NEWSLETTER OF THE FINNISH AMERICAN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, INC.

January/Tammikuu 2008

“Window to the Past” presented by Darrel Nicholson

A Sociological Survey of the Finnish Settlement of New York Mills, Minnesota, and its Adjacent Territory, by Ralph Smith, is a rare window to the past. Completed in 1933, it provides an intricate cross-section of life during the most vibrant times of the so-called Finnish Triangle.

The work was accidentally rediscovered by Darrel Nicholson, himself native to the area, about 30 years ago. In the intervening years, Nicholson supplemented the compilation with previously unpublished parts and added new source material in the form of letters written from Karelia. This has culminated in the re-publication of the work in 2005 with profits going to the Timo Riippa Fund for Finnish American Studies at the University of Minnesota’s Immigration History Research Center (IHRC).

Ralph Smith was an Irish-American, an outsider, when he became the principal of a junior high school in New York Mills in 1929. Perhaps this outsider status sparked his interest in studying what was then the dominant ethnic group. He turned his research into a master’s thesis which was approved by the Department of Sociology at the University of Southern California in August of 1933.

While much has been written about Minnesota’s Finnish American community, Smith’s survey stands out for a number of reasons. Perhaps first and foremost is that it is a contemporary work of the era. All the information and data was collected first-hand by the author. The text is in present tense which

gives it a sense of immediacy missing in retrospective works. While many accounts of Minnesota’s Finns are written as memoirs or diary compilations, the survey is crisply factual. While being quite readable, there is also a certain detachment which one might expect from a master’s thesis. Finally, at 170 pages and containing numerous direct quotes, pictures, graphs, maps and tables, it has a tremendous depth and scope. The survey touches on almost every aspect of life and should be considered a source of information for future researchers.

We hope you can attend FACA’s January program where Nicholson will speak more about Smith’s remarkable work. Copies of the book will also be available for purchase.

JANUARY FACA PROGRAM

“Window to the Past”
Friday, Jan 18
7:30 p.m.
International Institute
1694 Como Ave., St. Paul
If you need transportation, call
Marianne Wargelin
at 612-374-2718

FACA 2006–2007 Board of Directors

President:

Alan Norgard

651-786-5988

norgard@winternet.com

Vice President/Program Chair:

open

Secretary:

Stella Arola

763-537-0559

hsarola@msn.com

Treasurer/Publicity:

Andreas Ostenso

651-646-9604

tostenso@yahoo.com

Hospitality/Special Activities:

Kaarina Kotkavuori

651-646-7783

Special Activities Director:

Barbara Nikula Owens

651-774-3551

barbnikulaowens@yahoo.com

FACA Newsletter Committee

Editor:

Mary Belanger

mary.belanger@dctc.edu

218-839-1566

Graphic Design:

Beth Jarvis

763-536-9561

brjarvis@umn.edu

Contributing Writers:

Tiina Watts, Al Norgard,

Luella Zibell, Joan Dwyer,

Gil Kinnunen

Mailing:

Urho and Pam Rahkola

President's Message

By Alan Norgard



As usual, December was a very busy month for FACA, starting with *Pikkujoulu* on December 1. As you remember, that day was also the first significant snowstorm of the season; so there were quite a few who were unable to make it. The ones who did plow through the snow were treated to Soile Anderson's Finnish Christmas dinner as their reward. Soile and her Deco Catering group always do such a wonderful job making this a special occasion, and their presentation is always beautiful. The program was provided by Finn Hall who did a great job adding a festive feeling with their folk music and also accompanying the carol singing. *Joulupukki* (aka Santa) had no trouble riding his sleigh through the snow and took many wish lists from both young and old. Dan Salin added a bit of *Finnlish* humor with his reading of the *Night Before Christmas* poem written by "Hap" Puotinen. This year's Sauna Bucket award went to a very deserving Luella Zibell for her many years of effort and work on the board as well as projects too numerous to mention. Thanks again, Luella! Three lucky people went home with gift certificates generously provided by FinnStyle. I was lucky enough to go home with some leftover beet salad – my favorite! We had a small but enthusiastic group, and I want to again thank you all for making the extra effort to be there.

Most of you already know our club lost a very special member in November. Dennis Jackson was one of the people this club has been blessed with, who, though he was not a Finn, donated his talents, humor, countless hours, and good will to FACA through the years. The *Kisarit* dancers, Finnaffair, and Festival of Nations were just a few of the projects I remember working on with him. He and Kathy are also past winners of the Sauna Bucket award. We will all miss Dennis; he was one of those who knew and lived the true meaning of *sisu*.

The 90th Anniversary of Finnish Independence celebration was held in Minneapolis last month and proved to be a great success. About two hundred people came to take part in the evening. The evening was a fitting tribute to Finland's independence and was enjoyed by all.

Finnish Family Fun Weekend

The Finnish Family Fun Weekend or *Perhejuhla*, at Salolampi Finnish Language Village, is scheduled for Presidents' Day Weekend, February 15-18. The cost is \$225 per adult, \$110 per child 6-17, and \$50 per child 0-5. This special program focuses on families learning Finnish culture and language together. *Perhejuhla* is a great way to brush up on your Finnish, ski on beautiful wooded trails, learn crafts, dance, and eat authentic Finnish dishes. Lodging is in five cabins accommodating up to 16 people each. For more information or to register, call 800-450-2214, or see www.salolampi.org.

Minnesota Orchestra Earns Grammy Award Nomination

Osmo Vänskä and the Minnesota Orchestra recently received a Grammy Award nomination for their recording of Beethoven's Ninth (Choral) Symphony. The Orchestra's first nomination comes in the Best Orchestral Performance category. Beethoven's Ninth is the third release in a five-disc cycle of the Beethoven Symphonies. The CD was recorded at Orchestra Hall in January 2006. It features the Orchestra under Vänskä's direction along with Finnish soprano Helena Juntunen, mezzo Katarina Karnéus, tenor Daniel Norman, bass-baritone Neal Davies; and the Minnesota Chorale, the Orchestra's principal chorus.

Osmo Vänskä became the Minnesota Orchestra's music director in September, 2003. In 2005 he was named "Conductor of the Year" by Musical America.

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is available in stores, at www.minnesotaorchestra.org and as a music download on major internet music sites.

The Grammy Awards ceremony will be held live on CBS, February 10, at 8:00 p.m.

Laskiainen Celebration

Laskiainen Celebration is set for Sunday, February 3 from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. at Como Park Ski Chalet. See calendar for more information.

Conversational Finnish Class

Tuesdays, 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.
St. Anthony Library
Corner of Como and Carter Ave.
St. Paul
Everyone is welcome.
For more information, please call
Floyd Niskanen at 763-540-0121.

Board Notes *By Stella Arola*



L-R: Barbara Nikula Owens, Andreas Ostenso, Stella Arola, Alan Norgard, Kaarina Kotkavuori

The November Board meeting was convened by President Al Norgard on November 13th at the home of Stella Arola. The Secretary's minutes and the Treasurer's report were reviewed and approved.

The remaining details for *Pikkujoulu* on December 1st were finalized. The Finnish Independence Day program for December 8th was passed around and everyone was urged to attend this gala.

Future programs for 2008 FACA meetings were discussed. A possible potluck for the February *Laskiainen* celebration was approved by the Board.

Junelle Bernard has agreed to be in charge of the Festival of Nations cafe and is awaiting menu suggestions.

Our next Board meeting will be 7:30 p.m. on January 15th at the home of Kaarina Kotkavuori.

FACA Membership

A one-year membership provides you with eight issues of this newsletter plus other benefits for \$25. To subscribe or renew, complete this form and mail with your check to FACA, P.O. Box 580708, Minneapolis, MN 55458-0708. (Check mailing label for membership expiration date.)

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

90th Gala Evening

by Al Norgard

Finland celebrated its 90th anniversary of independence this year; and to mark the occasion, the Twin Cities Finnish Network sponsored a Gala Evening on Saturday, December 8, at the First Unitarian Society in Minneapolis. It was an evening to remember, with dining, dancing, and entertainment provided by local groups.

The night began with a social hour featuring music by the Singing Strings violinists led by Helinä Leino-Pakola and Hilpi Leino Kantola. Their selections included folk and classical numbers that provided a very fitting backdrop to the occasion. In another area of the church, people could watch the recorded broadcast from the Presidential Palace Independence Day Reception in Helsinki. This reception broadcast is always a large part of many parties in Finland as people can see all the invited dignitaries and, most importantly, what they are wearing to this formal event.

Dinner started with a flag parade by Finnish studies students from the University of Minnesota, accompanied by several members of the *Ameriikan Poijat* brass ensemble. Soile Anderson and Deco Catering served the formal dinner. Guests were treated to a wonderful roast beef dinner, which was a treat to both eye and appetite, with tables prepared beforehand that set the tone for the evening. Pastor John Lehtola offered the opening prayer, and Marianne Wargelin, Honorary Consul for Finland, gave her opening remarks. M.C. Dan Karvonen introduced the *Ameriikan Poijat* and *Saana* Ensemble, as they performed *Porilaisten Marssi* and *Finlandia*, respectively.

After dinner, the program and musicale started with the student flag parade setting the flags on the stage and *Maamme* and the *Star Spangled Banner* were sung by the guests as *Ameriikan Poijat* provided the music. Featured guest Osmo Lipponen, Consul General of Finland in New York, then gave his address. He focused on the history of Finland and how it has always worked and struggled to remain free. One of the ways it has been able to do so is by concentrating on talent and innovation to make Finland one of the world's leaders in the free market.

Hilpi Leino Kantola, a classical pianist, played selections of *Sibelius* and *Merikanto*. Jonathan Rundman, a Finnish-American singer/songwriter, performed several of his own songs. Even though his songs were not specifically "Finnish," he was able to relate them to various aspects of Finnish character. The program ended with a vocal performance of several songs by the *Saana* Ensemble. Their numbers showed the wide variety of styles this group can perform and was a great way to end the program.

Dancing to the music of Finn Hall in the banquet room followed the program, and many of the guests danced past midnight to the wonderful ballroom and folk music of this group. Soile Anderson created a wonderful cake for dessert that was served as part of the dance program—a fitting end to a very special evening.

November Program Recap

by Al Norgard

November's program started out with a little popcorn and dimming of the lights for the showing of the film *Letters from Karelia*. This documentary was made for the National Film Board of Canada and told the story of Aate Pitkanen, a Canadian Finn who went to Karelia in 1931. His story is revealed through his sister Taimi, and his son, Alfred. They meet for the first time sixty years after Aate's death in a Finnish prisoner-of-war camp. The film was made in Canada, Finland, and Russia, and included both archival and real life footage, as well as acted segments woven together to tell this fascinating story. It took me two viewings to realize that some of the actors were actually people I knew—Börje Vähämäki, as the Finnish prison warden, and Varppu Lindström, who provided a lot of the research for the film are familiar to many of us in FACA. One of the musicians, Arto Rinne, has been here in Minneapolis several times performing with several groups.

After the movie ended, several members recounted stories of people and family members who had also gone to Karelia during the 1920s and '30s. This topic has as many stories to tell as people who went to Karelia and it seems that most people are very interested in them. The response from many of the FACA members to showing films makes me think we might have another film night soon. Let the board know if you have suggestions.

Art from Finland Featured at American Swedish Institute



A small gallery of Finnish paintings became the central theme of FACA's Christmas music room exhibit at the American Swedish Institute. This year's theme, *Art and Music from Finland at Christmas*, portrayed an opening reception for an exhibition of art from Finland. Ten and five string *kanteles* were displayed representing an ensemble ready to perform. The exhibit included a colorfully decorated tree with a garland of Finnish flags, a wine service, and coffee table display with Finnish *korvapuustit*, *lusikka-leivät*, pirouette cookies and Fazer mints.

The art was on loan from FACA members and friends. Paintings of a scene from Sibelius' home by Laura Järnfelt, and a Gulf of Finland seashore by Johannes Gebhard were loaned by Liisa and Reino Ojala. Soile Anderson and Sari and Jay Knutson shared recent still life paintings by Johanna Oras. Sari's grandfather, Väinö Koistinen, painted a country home scene. Stella and Harvey Arola shared a gift they had received, *Rovaniemi*, a winter scene in Lapland, by A. Ketola. A black and white enlarged framed photo of *kantele* musician, Joyce Hakala, illustrated playing a 41-string instrument to the viewing public.

Credits for the display go to Curt Pederson, ASI curator, for suggesting a theme to honor last autumn's Minneapolis Museum of Art Scandinavian art exhibition, to those who loaned art, FinnStyle for display items and Marlene and Ernest Banttari for design and set up.

Fun, Friends and Finnish

by Tiina Watts

Suomi-koulu, or the Finnish School of Minnesota, is starting a new semester January 19, 2008. There are four levels of classes: a class for parents and babies (they don't do a lot of speaking in this class, but they enjoy singing, dancing and other rhythmic activities in Finnish), a class for preschoolers, a class for school-aged children who speak very little or no Finnish, and a class for school-aged children who speak some Finnish. We meet the first and third Saturdays of each month from 10:00 a.m. to noon. The cost is just \$50 per semester.

The class for non-Finnish speakers is a perfect class for former *Salolampi* students who would like to keep up on their Finnish language throughout the year. We play lots of games in Finnish, sing songs, learn grammar and phrases through repetition and interaction with each other, and practice writing Finnish on worksheets, coloring pages and on the chalkboard. This class is geared toward beginner and beginner-intermediate level students ages five to 12. For more information, contact the teacher, Tiina Watts, at (763) 323-6690 or tiiwatts@usfamily.net. You can also see www.minnesotafinnish.org for more information on *Suomi-koulu*.

For *Suomi-koulu's* Christmas party this year we had performances by each of the classes, as well as by the teachers. We ate the traditional *riisipuuro* (rice mush), *pulla*, cookies, Karelian pies and other tasty treats, and we had 4 special visitors: Consul General Osmo Lipponen and Cheryl, his wife, from New York; Honorary Consul, Marianne Wargelin from Minneapolis; and *Joulupukki* (Santa Claus), from Korvatunturi, Finland, of course!

Come join the fun in 2008!



In Memoriam: Dennis Jackson

by Urho Rahkola

Dennis Jackson, a long time *Kisarit* dancer and FACA member, died November 25th after a lengthy battle with a brain tumor. He was born in Camrose, Alberta, Canada. Dennis was a cowboy, landscaper, fisherman, curler, woodworker, dancer and lover of good food. He met his wife Kathleen Mannila in Bozeman, Montana. They were married in Palo, Minnesota, and settled in St. Paul where he studied Animal Science at University of Minnesota. While working with a landscaper to earn college money, he discovered his passion—landscaping— and eventually started his own landscaping business. Dennis was always ready when people were in need of help, whether it was a friend or one of his employees. Dennis and Kathy received the 1988 FACA Sauna Bucket award for all of their hard work over many years. The couple has been a member of the *Kisarit* Dance group since its inception in 1972. The *Kisarit* have toured throughout the U.S. and Canada and have made several trips to Finland.

The memorial service in Palo included the song *In the Garden* and some great stories of Dennis's past. Delores Salin sang *Great is Thy Faithfulness*. Memorials will be used to honor Dennis by expanding the garden at the Palo Congregational Church.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

FACA needs your ideas and your helping hand. If you can help with any of the committees or events, please return this form. Thanks!

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program | <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting Hospitality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor Hospitality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Laskiainen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scholarship | <input type="checkbox"/> Pikkujoulu |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property | <input type="checkbox"/> Festival of Nations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website | <input type="checkbox"/> Information Phone |

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Return to FACA, P.O. Box 580708, Minneapolis, MN 55458-0708 or bring to the next program.

Christopher U. Light Lectureship Concert II: Music of Alex Freeman

Selected solo and chamber works of Carleton College's new composition professor will be held on February 8 at 8:00 p.m. at the Carleton College Concert Hall. Brian Lee will perform Freeman's one-movement *Piano Sonata* and *Three Pieces*. Eva Alkula will perform *Magnolia* for the Finnish traditional *kantele*—and comes all the way from Helsinki to do so. The program will conclude with two mixed chamber pieces: *Intermezzo*, a short work for clarinet, violin, cello; and *Blueshift*, written for the same ensemble (*Pierrot*) plus percussion.

Professor Freeman comes most recently from an extended stay in Finland, where he was on a Fulbright fellowship. He researched Jean Sibelius's music, sketches, and compositional process and studied at the Sibelius Academy with the composer and writer Eero Hämeenniemi.

The compositions on this program represent a cross-section of Freeman's instrumental chamber works of the last seven years. *Sonata*, for piano, and *Magnolia*, for the Finnish national instrument, the *kantele*, are performed by the very musicians for whom they were composed.

The mixed ensemble pieces on the second half of the concert offer a contrast to the solo works featured on the first half. *Intermezzo*, composed for the wedding of two friends of the composers, is a light, melodic piece tailored to the occasion for which it was written. *Blueshift*, loosely based on the astronomical concept of the same name, contains aspects of minimalism and pays homage to Steve Reich in the year of his 70th birthday. This work was part of an expansive minimalist festival in Helsinki and was a joint commission by the U.S. Embassy in Finland and the Sibelius Academy.

Christopher U. Light, Carleton class of 1958, is a freelance writer and composer, record producer, and musician with a dedication to promoting the arts at Carleton.

Pikkujoulu

by Beth Jarvis

The 2007 *Pikkujoulu* party was held December 1 at the Brooklyn Center Community Center. Attendance was off a bit, because the first snowstorm of the winter had just dropped about 5.5" of snow that afternoon and evening.



Luella Zibell,
Sauna Bucket winner

After Al Norgard welcomed the attendees, Kaisa Taipale read the Christmas story in Finnish. Luella Zibell then gave the dinner prayer, first in Finnish then in English.

Dinner, catered by Soile Anderson's Deco Catering, included prune-stuffed pork, sweet potato casserole, rutabaga casserole, beets, coleslaw and other salads, bread, gravlax, herring, and headcheese. A multi-layer raspberry and chocolate torte followed.

FinnStyle donated three gift certificates for door prizes. Lucky winners were Pam Rahkola, Martha Lindgren, and Lois Ewert.

Dan Salin read a humorous "Finglish" rendering of the *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*. Finn Hall then played five numbers, including the *Kulkurin Valssi*. (You may not recognize the name but you have probably heard it.)

Joulupukki arrived to find no little ones but a 'tween and teenager or two. He then invited the young at heart to sit on his knee, and about a dozen pairs took him up on it.

A few Christmas carols were sung. Then it was time for the Sauna Bucket winner to be announced. Luella Zibell, a long time board member, was this year's winner.

Silent Night was sung and the evening concluded to a chorus of ice scrapers in the parking lot.

Pieniä Paloja

- All ten city run **Helsinki museums** are eliminating admission fees as a way to entice new audiences.
- **Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen** is set to visit the U.S. in mid-January. This will be his first visit since his appointment in 2003. Vanhanen is to meet with Vice President Cheney in Washington D.C., and Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft, in Seattle.
- **Finland's healthcare** and social care sector will need a labor injection of up to 200,000 new workers by 2040 to cope with a rapidly aging population, according to the Government Institute for Economic Research. The sector currently employs about 375,000 people.
- The **Finnish Air Force** has made a short recruiting movie, *Taivaan varjot* (Shadows of the Sky) to attract mechanics, flight controllers, and pilots into Finland's compulsory armed service. The film can be found at www.framegraphics.fi/



Soile Anderson, serving.

Next month, space permitting, we'll have more images from the Pikkujoulu party!



Finnish American Cultural Activities, Inc.
P.O. Box 580708
Minneapolis, MN 55458-0708

FACA

Finnish American Cultural Activities, Inc. is an organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the cross-cultural heritage of Americans with Finnish ancestry.

Information

612-374-2718

www.finnfaca.org

FACA CALENDAR

January 10-21 *Heikinpäivä* celebration in Hancock, MI. Events throughout the week, include: parades, cross-country ski racing, *kantele* classes, polar bear dive, and *tori*. Go to www.cityofhancock.com for updates.

January 15 FACA Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m., home of Kaarina Kotkavuori.

January 17 FACA Program with "Window to the Past" with Darrel Nicholson, speaker. (See p.1)

January 18 *Karhun Tanssi*, featuring Finn Hall, South Range Community Center, Hancock, MI. Tango lessons at 6:00 p.m., dance at 7:15 p.m.

January 23 Newsletter copy deadline. Copy to Mary at mary.belanger@dctc.edu

January 25 Diane Jarvi and Friends, 8:00 p.m. Cedar Cultural Center, Mpls. www.thecedar.org

Jan. 26 Finnish Genealogy Group: Marjatta Gabriel speaking about life in Karelia. Meeting begins at 9:30 a.m. Program follows. Plymouth Apostolic Lutheran Church, 11015 Old County Road 15, Plymouth, Minnesota. For directions: www.minnesotafinnish.org - click on Finnish Genealogy Group.

February 8 Christopher U. Light Lectureship Concert II: Music of Alex Freeman, 8:00 p.m., Carleton College Concert Hall, Northfield, MN; a lecture and concert of solo and chamber music by Carleton's new composition professor, Alex Freeman. See p.6 for more info

February 3 *Laskiainen* celebration and potluck. Como Park Ski Chalet. 2:00-6:00 p.m. Sledding, cross country and downhill skiing, plus snow hockey. Pea soup and laskiaispulla in the chalet. More info or to help organize, contact Ann or Risto at suomikoulu@minnesotafinnish.org or (651) 489-8036.

February 15-18 *Salolampi* Family Weekend. www.salolampi.org See p. 2 for more info.

March 10 *Salolampi* scholarship application deadline for FACA and *Kisarit* Finnish American Folk Dancers scholarships. More information and applications, contact Kathy Jackson, (651)739-3102.

May 1-4 Festival of Nations, RiverCentre, St. Paul

July 23-27 "Sharing the Spirit of Finland," Finnfest 2008, Duluth, MN