



# FINLANDIA FOUNDATION®, INC.

## San Francisco Bay Area Chapter

October 2009

Miriam Leino Eldridge, Editor

Web Page: [www.finlandiasf.org](http://www.finlandiasf.org)

### Message from the President

On Friday July 3, 2009, the following article, titled "Landet som inte längre finns" appeared in the Swedish language newspaper Vasabladet in Finland. Written by Steven Frostdahl, it evoked memories about a region lost, and we wanted to share it with our members and friends.

#### Landet som inte längre finns

##### *(The land that no longer is)*

When one takes the time to explore the lost Karelia with an open mind, it is a rewarding cultural, historical and personal experience.

To discuss the lost Karelia is never undramatic. Karelia was the war zone for many years, and was in the end the most valuable payment Finland had to make in order to buy peace. Karelia still lives on in painful memory for many, as something forever lost. When the border was established at the end of WWII, Karelia's unfortunate location near the Soviet empire's second largest city, Leningrad, decided Finland's heart land's future. The second evacuation of the Karelian people, at the end of the war in 1944, marked not only the end of a culture that was hundreds of years old, but a potential economic expansion as well.

**On a beautiful summer day** in 1935, in conjunction with the singing festival in the city of Sortavala at the northwest shore of lake Ladoga, a monument was dedicated to honor the Finnish language. Elias Lönnrot's travels in Karelia resulted in his work "Kalevala", and it was no accident that the people in Sortavala wanted to honor this in a grand way.

In Sortavala there already existed a successful teachers' college and a theology college as well as advanced schools for girls and boys, located in impressive Jugendstil, or Art Nouveau, buildings. The administration for the Orthodox Church was also located in the city. All this in a city with a population of 4,500 in the year 1939.

The city was nourished by a rich cultural life, educational traditions and a strong industry. Finland's Bank had already in 1915 established



### 2009 Chapter Events

**October 18, 2 p.m.** : Concert by FFN POY Terhi Miikki-Broersma, First Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto (see story).

**October 24:** San Francisco Symphony with Osmo Vänskä and soloist Antti Siirala; reception following (see story)

**December 13:** *Pikkujoulu* at Isle Cove. Start thinking now about contributing to the Silent Auction! (See story.)

*\*2010: Annual General Meeting of Members, Sunday, February 14, 2010, 2 p.m., Isle Cove.*

a branch office in the city, in the same impressive style as in Helsinki and Turku. You can still today walk around the city with a travel guide from 1935, as well as one printed today, and find that most of the city's memorials are the same today as then.

If you arrive from the city's east side, you are met by the old dilapidated Finnish cemetery on the right, but soon you will be in a city grid that feels well known to a citizen of Finland.

**The Karelia that exists** north of lake Ladoga is rich in cultural history. Arriving at the former fork in the road at Suistamo, you can stop at the Lutheran Church, and looking around, soon find foundations and ruins from buildings bearing witness of a past dynamic and active area. The small villages you drive through bear footprints of a Finland we all know. Continuing past Sortavala, you soon arrive in Lahdenpohja, with the ruins of an impressive church building in red brick, designed by Engel. The church, destroyed by fire in 1977, seated over 1000 people.

The buildings in "funkis" (functional) design appear one after the other, and the white stucco buildings are here, just like in Sortavala. The Finnish-built buildings are in surprisingly good

*(continued on next page)*

condition, and many of the wooden buildings you drive by could as well be in the old towns of Jakobstad or Kristinestad.

**The most spectacular** experience of Finnish functional architecture is found when driving by the former military fort Huuhanmäki (now closed), about 1.5 miles past Lahdenpohja. In the mid-thirties, this was Finland's most modern military installation, newly built at a large cost. Barracks in impressive white stucco buildings are placed in very elegant military manner around the area.

For one who with open eyes and mind travels in the lost Karelia, in order to try to see and experience the Finland that no longer exists, it offers a magnificent mix of cultural history, architecture and personal experience.

**Lönnrot found what he felt** was the soul of the Finnish people in his walks through eastern Finland. The official Finland was, at the time of Lönnrot's explorations (1828-1842) a Finland culturally and linguistically attached to Sweden, and the Swedish language was, for the most part, the official cultural and educational language.

It is somewhat of an irony that the Finland that Lönnrot found, and that he and his ideological friends made the language and cultural foundation for the state of Finland, should be forever lost.

The lost Karelia's history is as much Finland's history as it is that of Österbotten's, Tavastland or Åland. It is a land that no longer is, but yet always will be.

*Loosely translated by GS*

**On another subject:** I am sure many like myself as well as other, more recent members, have asked the question: Who was Yrjö (George) Paloheimo? And how are the Paloheimo Foundation and the Finlandia Foundation connected?

In the June 2009 issue of the **Tupa Times**, newsletter of the Los Angeles chapter, an interesting and informative article on the Paloheimo family appears. It was written by Kalervo Halme. You can read it on our website ([www.finlandiasf.org](http://www.finlandiasf.org)). We are pleased to be able to share it with our membership.

*George*

## **POY RECITAL ON OCTOBER 18: Terhi Miikki-Broersma**

The Chapter is privileged to present Terhi Miikki-Broersma in recital on Sunday, October 18, at 2

p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church, 1140 Cowper St. (at Lincoln), Palo Alto.



The new Finlandia Foundation National POY is a multi-talented musician who earned a Master's Degree in Music at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and worked full-time as a cantor-organist before moving to the United States.

Ms. Miikki-Boersma is an exceptionally talented and versatile performer. As a soloist, she performs on organ, piano, bassoon and accordion. Chamber music has always been close to her heart, either accompanying on piano, organ or cembalo or playing bassoon, her favorite instrument. She has been a member of Wind Ensemble in Finland and is at present a member of Whatcom Symphony Orchestra, Bellingham, WA.

Terhi is also an accomplished and enthusiastic organizer of numerous music events and concerts both in Finland and in the United States. When it is time for lively Finnish music, she entertains her audience with singing and playing the accordion.

## **Finnish Artists at SF Symphony**

On Saturday evening, October 24, the Chapter has reserved a block of tickets for the San Francisco Symphony concert featuring two Finnish artists: **Osmo Vänskä**, conductor of the Minneapolis Orchestra, and **Antti Siirala**, pianist.

The seats, in the first tier, cost \$60.00 each. A gala champagne reception for the two artists will be held after the concert at the Inn at the Opera on 333 Fulton St., a stone's throw from Symphony Hall, the venue for previous Chapter receptions for Finnish musicians Karita Mattila and Juha Uusitalo. Admission to the reception is free for members and \$10 for non-members. Checks should be sent to Gunnel Pero, 1365 Green St., #204, San Francisco, CA 94109.

Conductor Osmo Vänskä, the enormously popular Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra, will lead the San Francisco Symphony in two weeks of concerts October 22-31. These concerts feature two works by living composers, John Adams' *Slonimsky's Earbox* and the first SFS performances of Aulis Sallinen's Symphony No. 1. Pianist Antti Siirala will perform Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor in Davies Symphony Hall.

Born in Helsinki in 1979, Finnish pianist Antti Siirala made his orchestral debut at the age of seven and won the Juvenalia Chamber Music Competition at the age of thirteen. He is the first prize winner of three international piano competitions, including the prestigious Leeds International Piano Competition in 2003. Siirala makes his San Francisco Symphony debut with these performances.

## Fall BBQ and Picnic

September 12 saw our annual BBQ at the Sundquists' home, which was enjoyed by about 40 people.



*Juhani and Rhoda Linna enjoying the BBQ.*

The featured entertainer was Jim Underwood, who was formerly married to a Finn and seems to have absorbed a great deal of music, vocabulary and general know-how. He performed on a variety of instruments, including a *jouhikko* which he had made himself (now, there's dedication) and also sang, with impeccable pronunciation of the Finnish lyrics.

Jim was accompanied on the accordion by Anne McChesney.



*Musicians Jim and Anne*

The food ladies, as usual, outdid themselves with sumptuous hors d'oeuvres, salmon, sausages, salads and scrumptious apple pie.

## Mertanen Recital

This year's Nordic Concert featured internationally-known Finnish concert pianist Janne Mertanen. The event took place at the newly rebuilt Green Hills Country Club. Some 75 people attended and enjoyed a social hour with cocktails, followed by a delicious dinner of stuffed pork chop or salmon.

After dinner, Mertanen played a one-hour recital, just the right length for the occasion. Starting with Sibelius' Impromptu Opus 5, he continued his recital with two Polonaises and a Sonata by Chopin.

That evening there were no golfers outside the floor-to-ceiling windows who might have distracted us from the view of the Millbrae hills, which at that misty evening hour reminded one of Brigadoon. The piano was placed in that windowed alcove. There was no doubt we were in the presence of a master. His command of the keyboard was aristocratically absolute, with nothing tentative.

One member, who is also a connoisseur of classical music comments, "I thought Mertanen's renditions were sublime. I would say he obviously has great technical mastery and infuses Chopin's pyrotechnics with sensitivity."

The Chapter is grateful to those who helped us to make this event possible with their financial support:

- Finlandia Foundation National
- Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation
- SWEA of San Francisco
- Norwegian Club of San Francisco
- The Katchadourian Family Trust

## Helvi Sipilä Remembered

Anja Miller writes: "Recent news from Finland announces the death of Mrs. Helvi Sipilä (94), who held the highest worldwide office any Finnish woman has ever had -- at least so far.

"In 1976, when Mrs. Sipilä was Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, our Palo Alto Chapter invited her to be the speaker at our Kalevala Day dinner, which was also the kickoff of the year-long Finnish-American Bicentennial programs in the SF Bay Area. She accepted, came, and gave a wonderfully inspiring speech.

I'm attaching two photos taken that evening, February 28, 1976. The first one shows her speaking, with Trustee Emeritus Pertti Lindfors seated on her right; in the second she is in conversation with Chapter members Minerva Massen and myself.

"It's always nice to remember the best moments of our past..."



A propos, Pertti Lindfors writes, "It's always sad to learn about the passing of someone you admire and respect. Those words certainly apply to the late Helvi Sipilä, who was truly the pride of Finnish womanhood."

## 2009 FinnFest Cruise

Chapter members who sailed on the Holland-America Line's MS Westerdam Alaska cruise in May included George and Marion Sundquist, George and Amanda Cechini, Sue Walima and John Hodges, Mae Kaven, Bob Serina, my daughter Lisa Eldridge and I.

FinnFest attendees accounted for more than a third of the people aboard – over 600 people, according to Marianne Wargelin, FinnFest President—and the programs, workshops and lectures that they arranged were too many to take in. Sue Walima presented her lecture on the reflections of **Kalevala** in modern Finnish culture.

Particularly well attended were the *kahvieskustelut*—morning round-table discussions over coffee—which featured freewheeling discussions and reminiscences of many aspects of Finnish and Finnish-American life and culture. And of course, in addition to these, there were shipboard programs presented by the cruise line as well as shore excursions at the four ports of call (Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka and Vancouver, B.C.). Sitka was of particular interest because of the old Finnish church there.

Arne and Dorrit Blomqvist, friends of the Sundquists', joined us on the cruise. Before returning to Finland, they donated \$200.00 to our chapter music fund. We gratefully acknowledge the gift.



*Mae Kaven, Lisa Eldridge, Miriam Eldridge, and Bob Serina at one of the two "formal" dinner evenings. The food, as usual, was superb.*

***(See the next page for other Alaska Inside Passage scenes.)***



*A view of the outskirts of Juneau.*



*A view from the cruise ship.*



*Mountain seen from Glacier Bay*

## Otto Heino, Famed Potter

Otto Heino, the Ojai-based master potter, educator and symbol of the midcentury California studio crafts movement who along with his late wife, Vivika, reformulated a lost-to-the-ages Chinese glaze that made him a multimillionaire, has died. He was 94.

Heino died of acute renal failure at Community Memorial Hospital in Ventura, said George Gemmingen, a friend.

The Finnish American Heino, who worked in collaboration with his wife until her death in 1995, earned an international reputation for robust yet

beautiful wheel-thrown stoneware with artistically applied glazes that included glossy cobalt blues, silky reds and raspy earth tones.

*(adapted from the Los Angeles Times)*

## First Finnish Astronaut

In Finland they don't call Tim Kopra an astronaut. He is a *sisunaut!*

On 15 July 2009, Timothy Lennart Kopra and six crew mates blasted into space from Cape Canaveral, Florida, to the International Space Station. Tim's heritage reflects the international background of the six residents with whom he is staying on the Station.

When a language needs thirteen letters for a sunset, but only four letters for "sisu," you can be sure that courage and determination are important values in Finnish culture. One has to believe that these are values that Tim inherited from his father, Lennart Kopra.

Lennart was a pilot in World War II, flying dangerous missions over the Himalayas as a young man in his early twenties. Lennart's father, Antti Kopra, emigrated from Finland to the northern United States and Canada in 1915 as a Lutheran missionary.

*(adapted from reminiscences by Tim's mother, Martha Withhoff Kopra, and his brother Andy.)*

## Patrick Swayze

Film actor Patrick Swayze, 57, died recently after a courageous struggle against pancreatic cancer. He was the husband of Lisa Niemi, to whom he had been married since 1975. Her parents came from Finland.

Lisa was a fellow dancer who took lessons with his mother; they met when he was 19 and she was 15. A licensed pilot, Lisa Niemi would fly her husband from Los Angeles to Northern California for treatment at Stanford University Medical Center.

Patrick danced his way into moviegoers' hearts with "Dirty Dancing" and then broke them with "Ghost." Here he is with his wife Lisa:



## On Chapter Web Page

Please look at our web page, [www.finlandiasf.org](http://www.finlandiasf.org), for two interesting articles.

The first one is a brief biography of Yrjö "George" Paloheimo, whose influence on the Finlandia Foundation (along with many other Finnish-American organizations) cannot be underestimated and is here described in interesting detail. The author is Kalervo Halme, chronicler of Finnish-American history and brother of FFN Trustee Paul Halme.

Also, Prof. Mika Roinila of Bethel College in Mishawaka, Indiana, has kindly sent us an article entitled *More Information on Finnish Americans*, which shows the percentages of Finnish Swedes who immigrated to the U.S. in different years.

Look for links to both of these on [www.finlandiasf.org](http://www.finlandiasf.org).



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## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

To: Gunnel Pero  
1365 Green St., #204  
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(Dues: \$20 individual, \$25 couple)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Email (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

I (we) wish to (join/renew) (my/our) membership in the Finlandia Foundation's San Francisco Bay Area Chapter for the calendar year 2009.

Check enclosed for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please make check out to "Finlandia Foundation—SFAC")*

**Note:** Membership dues are tax-deductible because Finlandia Foundation SFAC is a 501c3 not-for-profit corporation under Federal tax law.

**Please let us know by checking the appropriate box:**

I prefer to receive the Newsletter as (check one)  Email attachment (with any color material, including photos)  Hardcopy (black and white)