



FINLANDIA FOUNDATION®, INC.

San Francisco Bay Area Chapter

March 2011

Miriam Leino Eldridge, Editor

Web Page: www.finlandiasf.org

Message from the President

A MAN AND HIS VIOLIN

Albert Helsing was born on April 2, 1907, in the village of Vexala in Munsala Parish, Finland. With many country fiddlers in the extended family (Albert was the cousin of Arne Helsing's father, Gunner), he was exposed to music from an early age and fell in love especially with violin music. Although his father Wilhelm had made a violin, Albert was not allowed to touch the instrument. One hundred years ago it was still considered by many to be a sin to play at dances, and I remember my own grandmothers condemning card-playing as very sinful.

At the age of seventeen, Albert, together with many others from the village, emigrated to New Zealand. Arriving in a new country after three months of travel, he purchased his first violin with the last money he had left. Albert was now free to play the violin to his heart's content. And, he said, "I played every day when I had the time."

After a few years in New Zealand, clearing brush and cutting cocksfoot grass on the big sheep farms, Albert returned to the Old Country. But the Helsing farm in Skrivars, Vexala, was not big enough for three brothers, and in 1938, with WWII looming on the horizon, he decided again to emigrate, this time to the United States, where he already had a sister living in San Francisco.



Albert and Arne Helsing in Palo Alto, 2001

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2011 Calendar of Events



Sunday, March 27, 3 - 6 p.m.

Afternoon with Finlandia Foundation's POY and LOY:
Wilho Saari (kantele) and Carl Rakkonen (lecturer)
First Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto, Social Hall
Refreshments will be served
Admission \$20

Saturday, April 30, 6 - 9 p.m.

Vappu-Valborg Party at Picchetti Winery
featuring Chef Pelle's Smörgåsbord
Admission \$65 per person, includes wine

Saturday, October 22 (time TBA)

Gala Concert with Former Finlandia Foundation
Performers of the Year
First Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto

Sunday, December 11, 2 p.m.

Pikkujoulu/Lilla Jul/Christmas Party
Lucie Stern Center, Palo Alto
(More details TBA)

**For reservations to these events:
Please call 650-548-5371. RSVPs are strongly
recommended, especially when food must be
prepared!**



2011 Pikkujoulu

This is an advance notice to you that this year's Pikkujoulu will be bigger and better. For one thing, we have a new venue: the Lucie Stern Center in Palo Alto. The social rooms there are more spacious, and the kitchen is bigger and better than the one at Isle Cove. (Don't get us wrong: Isle Cove is unique and lovely, but we think the Chapter has outgrown it.) Stay tuned!

(Albert Heising, continued)

Around 1948 Albert decided to move down to the Peninsula and build a house in Palo Alto. He would live in the Palo Alto–Redwood City area most of his life.

After retirement he purchased an older home in Menlo Park, on a large lot with a fruit orchard, and best of all, a detached workshop in the rear. Here Albert could devote his retirement years to the hobby he loved most: building violins.

I used to visit Albert now and then, and one time, when I was there admiring his craftsmanship, he asked, "Would you like to have one?"

"Of course," I quickly replied. Since we had been working together several years in my early years in California, I thought it would be great to have one of his handcrafted violins hanging on the wall as a memento. "I have an old case you can have with it," he added.

The violin hung in our house for many years. Then one day I said, "I think we should give the violin to Arne (Helsing)." Besides being a close relative of Albert's, Arne is a Finnish Master Fiddler and Champion, and both his daughters are professional musicians.

So last year we took the violin to Finland and presented it to Arne as a memory of his dad's cousin Albert and a fellow fiddler.

But the story does not end here. We all wondered, Arne included, what sound would this homemade violin have? Although the instrument was nicely crafted, the sound would probably be average at best. And Arne added, "I have tested homemade violins, and most of the time they have a very bad sound quality, but this is a very special memento to have of Dad's cousin Albert."

On a rainy day several weeks later, Arne finally decided to restring the violin with old, quality strings he had at home (the original ones had been cut away due to US security regulations during the flight over). After completing some fine tuning, he picked up his famous Vainio bow and started playing. It took only a few strokes, and the sound blew us all away. Albert's homemade violin, handcrafted in a garage in Menlo Park, came alive, producing a clear and deep melodic sound, even surpassing Arne's own favorite instrument that he had been playing for over fifty years.

Albert Helsing made nine violins before he passed away at the age of nearly 97, but his love of music lives on through his violins.

George Sundquist

Correction

In the February newsletter, Board member Juhani Linna was listed as a Ph.D. Juhani is actually an M.D. The editor regrets the error.

Pertti Lindfors on Heroes

(This item refers to Memorial Day, but there will probably not be a May newsletter, so we are running it in this issue. Thanks to Pertti for calling this to our attention.)

"Usually forgotten each Veterans' Day is a group of heroes, forgotten because their branch of service, the US Life Saving Service, was absorbed by the US Coast guard in 1915. On Memorial Day, however, Point Reyes National Seashore rangers honor four deceased surfmen who, in the early 1890s, perished in the perilous waters of Point Reyes, California."

There was a Finn among them.

Pertti's entire article accompanies this newsletter.

\$1000 Contribution from Katchadourians

Members Stina and Herant Katchadourian recently donated \$1,000 to the chapter. President George Sundquist expressed the sentiment of all of us when he wrote them as follows,

"Thank you for the generous \$1,000.00 donation to our chapter. Again you have shown your confidence in our FF Chapter and in our mission, working to preserve our Finnish culture, heritage and customs for future generations in the United States."

Finnish Artists Featured in SF Symphony Fall Season

The San Francisco Symphony has announced its 2011-2012 season. Four concerts will feature Finns, as follows:

Nov. 11, 12, 13 (2011): Juho Pohjonen, Schubert's Piano Quintet .

Dec. 8, 9, 10: Esa-Pekka Salonen, guest-conducting his violin concerto plus Sibelius' "Pohjola's Daughter" and other pieces.

April 27, 28 (2012): Susanna Mälkki, guest-conducting the Sibelius Symphony No. 1 among others (she seems to be one of Finland's young rising stars).

May 24, 25, 26, 27: Osmo Vänskä guest-conducting. No Finnish composers on the program.

Particulars on these concerts may be obtained from <http://www.sfsymphony.com>.

Mark your calendars!

Absentee Voting for Finland's Elections

We have received this notice from Thuong.Tan@tekes.fi:

For your information:

Absentee voting for the Finnish Parliamentary Elections will occur as follows:

Date: Saturday, April 9

Time: From 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Place: 3945 Freedom Circle, Suite 110, Santa Clara CA 94054.

If you need more information, we suggest that you email Thuong Tan at the address above.

Finland's First 5-story wooden building is announced

From the website "Good News from Finland" comes this account:

Finland's first five-story wooden building is being built in Vierumäki, Finland. With a small carbon footprint, the hybrid wooden apartment building is being constructed as a passive house. There will be a total of 27 homes in the five-story building.

...

The wooden building system being implemented under the PuuEra name will support the municipality of Heinola's goal to become a center of excellence in wood construction. The builders see the new wooden building as a worthy example of functional cooperation between the price [they must have meant to say "private"] and public sector. The project will be completed in 2011.

Finnish companies participating in the project are Rakennusliike Reponen Oy, Versowood Oy and Koskisen Oy.

Finland in Our Hearts

Finland's Institute of Migration has arranged a festival called "Finland in Our Hearts" for expatriate Finns and their friends, taking place July 1–4, 2011. This year, Turku is the European capital of culture (along with Tallinn, Estonia). They welcome Finns from near and far to take part.

The festival program includes a parade, lectures and seminars, *pesäpallo* [the Finnish version of baseball] and golf tournaments, a film festival, folk dance festival, *tori* (market place), music and dance.

Additional information on the festival is available at http://www.siirtolaisuusinstituutti.fi/us/Tiedotteet/Tiedote_englanti.pdf. Information there should be in Finnish, English and Swedish,

2011 AGM

The 2011 Annual General Meeting of Members was held on Sunday, February 13, at the First Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto. In the business portion of the meeting, the slate of officers that had been prepared by the Nominating Committee (Mae Kaven and Stina Katchadourian) was unanimously approved by the members attending. The new Board members are listed on page 4 of this Newsletter.

A guest from the Los Angeles chapter, Cathy Carlson, described to us the annual Scandinavian Festival held on the campus of California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks. It would be nice if we could do something like that here in cooperation with the other Scandinavian organizations in the area. The idea was left open for later discussion.

The Finnish movie, *Postia Pappi Jaakopille* [Letters to Father Jacob] (a bit of a tear-jerker) was shown after the business meeting. This movie was a winner of the Finnish *Jussi* (equivalent to our Oscar) award in, I believe, 2009. The usual tasty refreshments were served.

Here are two pictures from the AGM, or should I say from its social hour. Credits: George Sundquist, Mae Kaven.



Yum!



The Carlsons, parents of our speaker.

2011 Board Members Elected

Executive Board:

George Sundquist	President
Tuttu Tucker	1st Vice President
Marion Sundquist	2nd Vice President
Valerie Richardson	Secretary
Gunnel Pero	Treasurer
Miriam Eldridge. Ph.D.	Newsletter Editor
Mae Kaven	Media Relations

Board of Directors:

Sue Walima, Ph.D.
Annamaria Rapakko
Stina Katchadourian
Kaj Rekola, M.D.
Don Fidler
Lars Lenck
Pirjo Polari-Khan
Susanne DeSelover-Sallie
Juhani Linna, M.D.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

To: Gunnel Pero
1365 Green St., #204
San Francisco, CA 94109

(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 2011.

Check enclosed for \$ _____

(Please make check out to "Finlandia Foundation—SFBC")

Note: Membership dues are tax-deductible because Finlandia Foundation SFBC 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)