



Uutiset

Newsletter of Finnish American Cultural Activities, Inc.

January/*Tammikuu* 2023

Hei hei ja nähdään taas!

By Dan Haataja

After twenty years of teaching Finnish at the University of Minnesota, I have graded my last quizzes and essays and all that's left to do is to turn in my keys and laptop and do a final cleaning of my office. Next month I begin a new chapter of my life as an associate professor of Finnish at Umeå University in Northern Sweden.

My association with UMN has spanned five decades. I first came to the university as a bright-eyed freshman in 1982, after having spent a year as an exchange student in Finland through the Rotary Youth Exchange Program. I enrolled in Börje Vähämäki's Advanced Finnish course and ended up majoring in Finnish (and Russian). Little did I know then that one day I would come to teach all the Finnish courses at UMN myself. Reclaiming the language spoken by my immigrant great-grandparents but lost to me over the generations has always been very personal, and has always felt like a kind of triumph. If they were alive today, my ancestors would likely smile to themselves and marvel about what their progeny decided to do with his life. In crossing the pond and moving to Sweden, I am in a way retracing in reverse the footsteps of my great-grandmother Emma Kristina Matti, a Finnish-speaking Tornedalian who was born in Kukkola, Sweden in 1874 and came to the US at the age of 19.



I consider myself very fortunate to have had such motivated and fantastic students over the years, both at UMN and the American Swedish Institute. You have all brought me joy not only via your active presence and engagement in the classroom, but also via the way Finnish has transformed many of your lives. After all, when you study a new language, not only do you learn the language, but you get direct access to an entire culture and worldview different from your own. You gain the ability to read, listen, and participate in that culture in the same language it functions in with no filters or go-betweens. Knowing Finnish is a superpower!

Heartfelt thanks to all my students and everyone in the local Finnish American community for all the moments we've shared over the last 20-plus years. I hope our paths cross again in the future!

Daniel Haataja

farewell

FACA Event Cancellation Policy

If St. Paul public schools are canceled due to bad weather, then a FACA event scheduled for that day will also be canceled. FACA members may contact any board member if they have a question.

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President's/Interim Editor's Message

By Louise Morgan

Well, “the weather outside is frightful.” That song is definitely in my head right now. I am writing this as the snow falls. But we do live in Minnesota, right? I am one of those who actually enjoys winter. I love the four seasons. I have lived in many places, many that did not have four seasons, and I always longed for Minnesota.

Happy New Year! I can't believe that it is 2023!

I hope that everyone had a wonderful holiday season.

I thought I would do a quick recap of 2022 and FACA.

We started off the year, still under the Covid umbrella. Our meetings continued via Zoom. Our first meeting was with Amy Hultberg from Salolampi. We kicked off our first ever FACA sponsored Salolampi fundraiser. Our wonderful members donated more than \$4,000!

We held three outdoor events—a *Laskiainen* celebration with a bonfire and sledding, a mid-summers picnic with music by Laulu Aika, and our third Finn Fun Day with music by Steve Solkela.

We also were able to hold two indoor programs. Both took place at the Danish American Center. Diane Jarvi was going to perform in May, but due to illness she had to cancel. We were fortunate to have her perform in October. Everyone I talked to enjoyed the music and especially enjoyed meeting with old friends.

We have been collaborating with other Finnish organizations on events. *Laskiainen*, Finn Fun Day and *Kauneimmat Joululaulut*—Magical Christmas were all collaborative events. We hope to do more of this in the future. We are stronger together!

I am excited about 2023. We will be kicking off our FACA Salolampi fundraiser again. And we will be joining Suomi-koulu and Finn Source for another fun *Laskiainen* event. In March, we will celebrate St. Urho's Day with music and dancing!

So...as you see, it takes a Finnish Village to keep our group busy and active. *Kiitos* to our wonderful volunteers. *Hyvää uutta vuotta!!*

FACA Book Sale!

This is the perfect time to get cozy with a good book! We have a broad variety—all Finnish-related. Take a look on the FACA web site! Click here for the inventory of titles: “FACA Library Listing” <https://finnfaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/FACA-Library.pdf>

Donations: We are asking whatever you think is a fair price for each individual item, with a minimum of \$2 for softcover and \$4 for hardcover. This is a FACA fundraiser! If you see something you'd like, please email KathyMJorgensen@yahoo.com providing the **ID number and Title**. The items are available on a first come, first served basis. You can pick them up, or if you prefer, I can ship them via media mail for the cost of postage.

FACA appreciates your support!



Greetings from Lappeenranta!

By Emma Mulhern

Despite the cold and the darkness that came to Finland during the late fall months, student life was more active than ever. On Halloween, I participated in my first ever student excursion. During an excursion, a group of university students take a coach bus together to another city. The students usually visit different companies to learn more about them and have a social program during the evening. The excursion program is normally kept a secret from the participants.

Our excursion bus left Lappeenranta at 6 a.m. sharp. During the bus ride, we told bad jokes, played excursion bingo, and convinced our bus driver to do a full circle around a roundabout.

We first visited Loviisa where we learned about Fortum and its nuclear power plant there. Then we visited Ramboll, an engineering consulting company, at their office in Espoo.



Finally, we went to Aalto University where we met with some electrical engineering students and saw some of the campus area. In the evening, we went to a student party organized by Aalto freshman students before heading home at midnight. On the ride back, we listened to excursion songs and told more bad jokes. We ended up getting back to Lappeenranta at around 3 a.m.

In November, our university organized DuuniDay, a career fair for students. There were almost 100 companies in attendance and the campus was packed.

I talked with a few companies about master's thesis opportunities and the possibility for full-time positions upon graduation. Some of my friends also attended to look for summer internships.

In December, I ended my term as the ESN Lappeenranta President by attending our farewell sauna

evening and party. I'm looking forward to the spring semester when I will write my master's thesis and take one more course before graduating this summer.

2022 Sauna Bucket Award Request for Nominees

By Kendra Kauppi

A sauna bucket serves an important function in containing water to be ladled onto hot rocks to generate steam or *löyly*—spirit, breath or soul. Do you know someone who is the spirit behind FACA? Someone who generates the steam at member gatherings, volunteer events or board meetings? Please consider nominating that individual for the **Sauna Bucket Award**.



The Sauna Bucket Award has been given out annually since 1980 honoring dedicated FACA volunteers and contributors to the local Twin Cities area Finnish Community. Twenty-four individuals, 12 couples and two groups have won the prestigious Sauna Bucket. Martha Lindgren (1983 and 1992) and Betsey and Alan Norgard (1993 and 2009) have been the recipients twice for their service to FACA.

Nominations will be accepted through January 2023 by filling the form/questions (below or at the FACA website) and submitting electronically or via postal mail.
Mail—FACA, PO Box 580708, Minneapolis, MN 55458
E-mail—louise.morgan21@gmail.com

1. Name and contact information of **person submitting** nomination;
2. Name and contact information of **person being nominated** for his/her dedicated service;
3. Provide a narrative as to why the person is being nominated. Why do you think this individual should receive the sauna bucket award? In what FACA activities has the nominee been involved? What impact has the individual made to FACA/Finnish community? How have other individuals benefited from the accomplishments? What has the Finnish community gained from the contributions? Provide specific examples.

FACA Board—No December 2022 Meeting

By Louise Morgan



Board Members: Louise Morgan, Nate Hoch, Kendra Kauppi and Katja Zarns.



Comedian Ismo and Kathy Jorgensen



John Morgan, Ismo and Louise Morgan



Dan and Delores Salin with Liisa Ojala

Hilarious Finns and Friends!

By Kevin Morgan

Finns and friends have done it again! We were out on the town for great pizza and beer and roared with laughter. All ages of Finns and friends filled the Camp Bar comedy club, twice, on Monday night, December 12, in St. Paul, Minn. A Finnish American Chamber of Commerce sponsored event, FACA members joined with people of all ages to eat, drink and laugh during two comedy shows by Finland's very own, internationally renowned, comedian and "ultimate observer," Ismo Leikola.

On his website it says, "ISMO is able to make people see familiar things anew through his unique perspective. ISMO uses his outsiders' point of view to find the humor in the most ordinary things. He is most well-known for his unique perspective on dissecting languages, and in 2019, the comedian teamed up with Merriam-Webster to release a digital comedy series roasting the English language."



His hilarious "schtick" left the comedy club filled with laughter as we realized what he was telling us about ourselves was true and hilarious. You'd hesitate, think, then laugh out loud as the humor washed over you. Ismo told us the only thing exported from Finland was the word "sauna." Not even the name of his country was exported. Known worldwide as "Finland," the real name of his country is "Suomi," and he thinks Sweden did this to his country. He said in school he was taught English "words" but not all the acronyms we use. Acronyms are confusing like the acronym for his flight on KLM, which really means Royal Dutch Airlines. Whaaaaat?!

If you're interested in Finland, Finn culture, Finns or just want to have fun with young and old alike, join us, join FACA! (Only \$25 a year!) PayPal Online: <https://finnfaca.org/join-faca/> Watch for our newsletter in the mail, on our website, and on Facebook.

Finnish American Cultural Activities (FACA):

Website: <https://finnfaca.org/>

Newsletter: <https://finnfaca.org/uutiset-newsletter/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/116365755059161>

Finn Source: <https://www.finnsource.org/>

Finnish American Chamber of Commerce MN:
<https://www.facc-mn.com/>

Learn more about Ismo, his tour dates, videos, store, and more: <https://www.ismo.fun/about>

Kauneimmat Joululaulut 2022

By Ruth Erkkila

FACA and others in the local Finnish community joined together at 2 p.m. on December 10 in our annual Christmas sing-a-long event, *Kauneimmat Joululaulut 2022* (Most Beautiful Christmas Songs 2022). Planned and organized by Finn Source and FACA, the event took place at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Roseville.



Enjoying Kauneimmat Joululaulut 2022

We sang eight songs from the same songbook as used throughout Finland. The songbook and the singing were all in Finnish, a slight handicap for some of us. But, this year Lotta Kiuru-Ribar, vocalist with the Finn Hall Band, was on the microphone and that helped a lot. We also received a printed English translation of the eight songs we sang and could have sung in English, but many of us just read the translation afterwards. We were joined by the entire eight-member Finn Hall Band and the Suomi Finland 100 choir.



Finn Hall Playing at Kauneimmatt Joululaulut

Finn Hall was seated in the front of the sanctuary; they performed a few songs on their own and then accompanied the singing. The choir was in the choir loft and sang a few songs on their own and then joined in with the rest of us. The program was introduced and narrated by Milla Mykrä from Finland and now a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant at the University of Minnesota.

After the singing we moved from the sanctuary into the fellowship hall for coffee and *pulla*. Around the edge of the

hall several vendors had tables with Christmas items for sale; it was a miniature bazaar. In the center of the hall tables were set up where we could sit down, relax and visit with others as we enjoyed the coffee and several varieties of *pulla*. I sat at a table with a few women from St. Michael's Church and not FACA members. There was plenty of room for the large crowd of more than 170. But, the coffee ran out! It's hard to believe there was a Finnish event where the coffee ran out. I ate my second piece of *pulla* with a cup of water. I survived and the second piece of *pulla* still tasted good.



Full House Enjoying the Tori, Pulla and Coffee!

Louise Morgan, President of FACA (Finnish American Cultural Activities) and Mirja Hanson of Finn Source welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. Louise Morgan promised more coffee next year. Then Mirja introduced Daniel Haataja, Senior Lecturer in Finnish at the University of Minnesota. Haataja announced that he is leaving the University of Minnesota and has accepted a position teaching Finnish at Umeå University in Umeå, Sweden, 319 miles north of Stockholm. We are sad to see him go. Many of us have taken Finnish classes from him. He has been our authority on Finnish language and could often be called on to give a lecture or short lesson. We wish Daniel well and hope he will send news once in a while.



***FACA Members
Preparing the Pulla:
Marlene Moreno,
Ruth Erkkila and
Judy Mikkola***

Setting Up the Tori



Why Did Finnish Immigrants Come to Minnesota? (And No, They're Not Scandinavian)

Continued from Eric Roper's *Star Tribune* article that appeared in the November-December *FACA Uutiset*

Finnish communities were most prevalent in the Mesabi Range northwest of Duluth, like the mining towns Virginia, Hibbing, Chisholm and Eveleth, according to the book. Finns also comprised the largest group of immigrants living in Duluth, which Alanen said became known as the "Helsinki of America."

"That was really a key city for people to go to and then perhaps branch out from there later on," Alanen said. Some arrived in Duluth on trains from the south, he said, but later on many arrived by ships traversing the Great Lakes.

Saunas and politics

Whether on farmsteads or on main streets, saunas were a must-have amenity for any Finnish settlement. The sauna was where Finns bathed, before modern plumbing.

Early saunas involved heating a wood-burning stove in a chimneyless building and allowing the smoke to vent before users entered the darkness and—as remains the custom—swatted themselves with handfuls of small branches, according to Alanen's book.'

"The Finns' sauna rituals could appear strange and even bizarre to outsiders, some of whom believe that magic and "witchcraft were practiced inside the huts," he wrote.

Finns were also known for their left-leaning politics, possibly derived from the Russian persecution they endured in their homeland, according to "Finns in Minnesota."

This materialized in a multitude of Finnish Socialist clubs in the northland. The Finnish Socialist Federation, a nationwide Socialist Party association founded in Hibbing, had 47 Minnesota chapters at its peak in 1911, according to "They Chose Minnesota."

"That led to a lot of the unionization and, of course, to a fair amount of labor unrest in time, as well," Convery said. When workers began initiating strikes on the Iron Range, some mining companies blacklisted Finns "they identified as militants and 'troublemakers,' " according to "Finns in Minnesota."

The Finns also became known for establishing cooperative business enterprises, particularly retail stores, according to "Finns in Minnesota." The Finnish Socialist Federation encouraged the so-called consumers' cooperatives, which multiplied amid mining strikes when other stores stopped selling to Finns, the book stated.

"At one time...there were over a hundred of those little stores dotting the landscape—mostly in northeastern Minnesota, but wherever there were Finns," Alanen said.

Not all of Minnesota's Finns spoke Finnish. Texts on Minnesota's Finnish immigration often highlight the Finland Swedes or Swede-Finns, a Swedish speaking group that emigrated from the western portion of Finland. By some estimates, six percent of Minnesota's Finnish immigrants spoke Swedish, according to Alanen's book. It notes that Swede-Finns often felt isolated from other immigrant groups.

Finnish culture lives on in Minnesota today. The state's Finnish heritage is documented in museums in Cokato, Esko, Embarrass, Finland and New York Mills. FinnFest USA, a Minnesota-based organization, hosts an annual festival honoring Finnish culture in locations across the country—the 2023 event is in Duluth.

In March every year, Finns celebrate St. Urho's Day, based on a mythical figure devised by a Bemidji State University professor in the 1950s, or in a basement in a Virginia department store*. Prominent St. Urho statues are on display in Menahga and Finland, Minn.

"It's just one of those things that Finnish Americans have invented to display their Finnishness," Alanen said.

* (added by *Uutiset* editor).

FACA Membership

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

Name _____

Email _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

I prefer to receive my FACA *Uutiset* (please check one)

☐ electronic copy via email ☐ paper copy

[Note: choosing the email copy saves FACA both printing costs and postage.]

January–March 2023 Calendar

No membership meeting in January

FEBRUARY

February 5 (Sunday). 2 p.m. “A Recital of Finnish Vocal Art Music.” Mimmi Fulmer, soprano, Craig Randal Johnson, piano.

Mindekirken/Norwegian Lutheran Memorial Church
924 East 21st Street, Minneapolis, MN 55404.

Free admission; there will be a free-will offering.

Mimmi Fulmer, voice professor at the University of Wisconsin Madison, is a specialist on Nordic vocal repertoire. She is editor of a three-volume anthology of songs from Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. Her discography includes six CDs of American music and a CD of songs from Finland, Sweden and Norway. Minneapolis-based pianist and conductor Craig Randal Johnson has performed with Mimmi Fulmer on several occasions. He has been honored as ‘Knight of the Order of the Lion of Finland’, for his promotion and performances of Finnish music.

February 25 (Saturday). *Laskiainen* celebration.

Lebanon Hills 860 Cliff Road, Eagan, MN 55123.

Collaborative event with Suomi-koulu and Finn

Source. A traditional Finnish *Laskiainen* celebration!

MARCH

March 17 (Friday, tentative). St. Urho’s Day

Celebration. Yes, that is St. Patrick’s Day, but hey...
St. Urho rules!

The *Uutiset* is seeking a new editor. If interested,
call President Louise Morgan at 612-590-1673.

Conversational Finnish Class
Every Tuesday—2-3:30 p.m.
Participation via FACA Zoom Meeting
For more information, please call
Urho Rahkola at 651-429-3319

In Memoriam

Ruben James Besonen Jr., a long-time member of FACA, passed away on December 2. He was born to Ruben Besonen Sr. and Ada (née Salmela) Besonen on November 20, 1942. He was raised in Menahga, Minn. and graduated from Menahga High School in 1960. He married



Barbara (née Salmela) of Duluth, and they made their home in New Hope where they raised their family. Ruben was a graduate of the Dunwoody Industrial Institute and the Mpls LU 539 Pipefitters Apprenticeship program. He worked 40-plus years as a pipefitter and later as the Chief Inspector for the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. Ruben is survived by his wife of 54 years, Barbara; sons Jon Paul (Stacy) Besonen, Daniel (Tiffany) Besonen; daughter Maria (Jaimeson) Wennerstrum; grandchildren Anna, Julia, William, Reed, Landon, Nina and Annika and many dear friends and relatives. Visitation was December 16 followed by a private funeral. Interment will be in Embarrass, Minn. Ruben’s grandson William spoke to FACA about his time at Salolampi.

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This space is blank. We
need your stories and or
ideas! This is your
newsletter and we need
your help! Help us make
this a wonderful
newsletter! Send your
ideas or articles to
louise.morgan21@
gmail.com



Finnish American Cultural Activities, Inc.

P.O. Box 580708

Minneapolis, MN 55458-0708

*Finnish American Cultural Activities
is dedicated to exploring and preserving
Finnish and Finnish American heritage.*

www.finnfaca.org

Kantele Lessons

Kantele Lesson/Workshops

By Diane Jarvi

Winter is coming and what could be more warming than sitting down with a *kantele* (Finnish folk harp) and playing some tunes?

Maybe you have one sitting on a shelf, a mantel, stored in a case somewhere.

Or maybe you are a world music fan looking for a new instrument to try?

Kanteles have a soothing, haunting sound that is meditative and conjures up a shimmer of ancient bells.

Five-string *kanteles* are very user-friendly. I have taught four-year-old to 84-year-old students.

I'm offering lessons for beginning 5-, 10- and 36-string *kanteles*.

Lessons usually run 45 minutes. Zoom lessons are an

option as well.

There will be more info on workshops.

Contact me at jarvi@usiwireless.com for more details.

For those in the Twin Cities area, there is an option for 5-string rentals.

Discover the unique and haunting sounds of this beautiful Finnish instrument!



www.dianejarvi.com