

AJAKAJA

WINTER 2005

ALBERTA ESTONIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY

VOLUME 23

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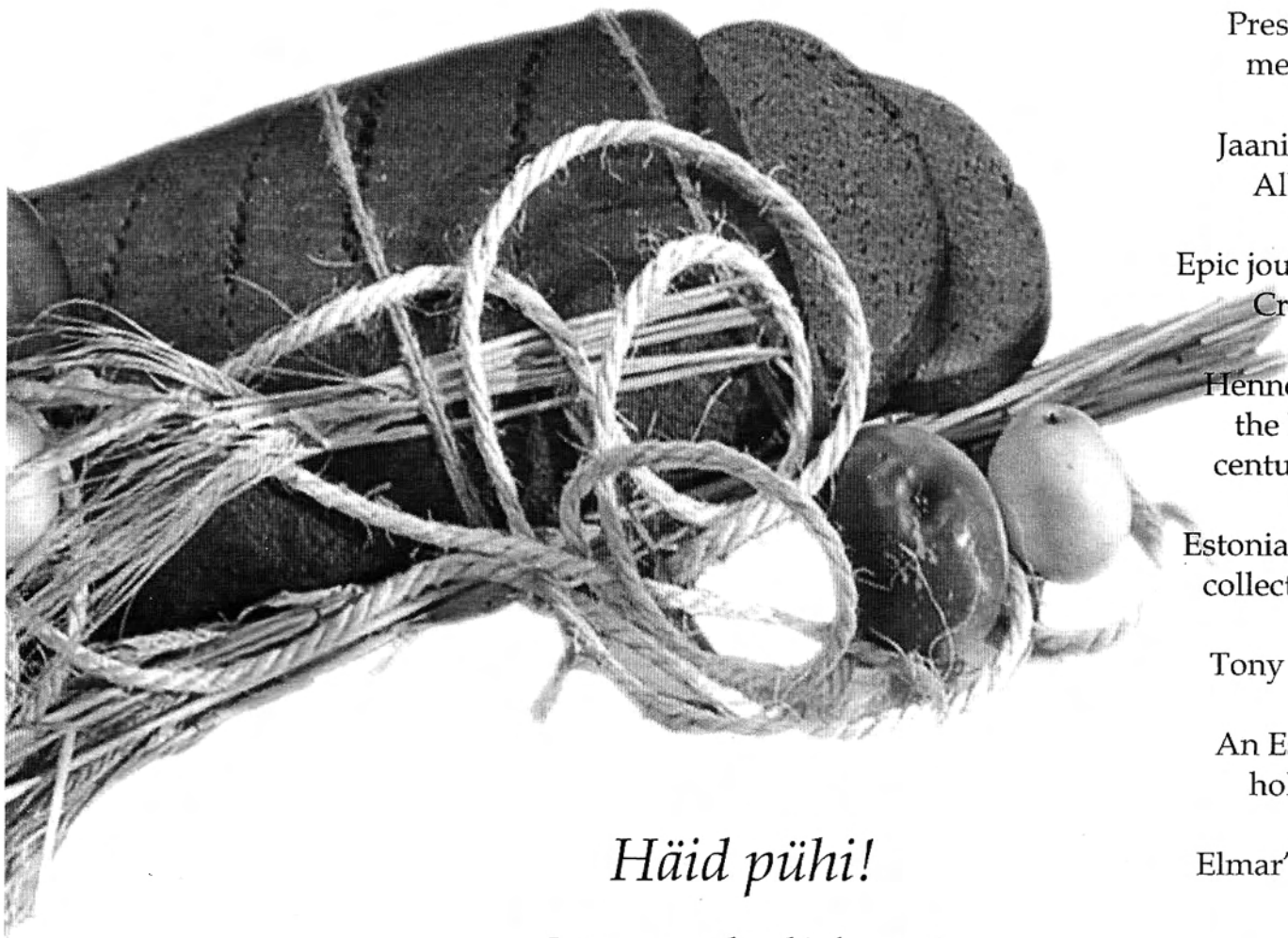
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Happy holidays!



Alberta Estonian Heritage Society
Alberta Eesti Kultuuripärandi Selts

Alberta Estonian Heritage Society

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The Alberta Estonian Heritage Society (AEHS) was established in November 2004 to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of Alberta's Estonian community, and to increase awareness of developments in Estonia.

Alberta Eesti Kultuuripärandi Selts (AEKS) rajati Novembris, 2004 Alberta eestlaste kultuuripärandi säilitamiseks ja laiemaks tutvustamiseks Eesti rahva elust-olust tänapäeval.

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Sõnumileht—Ajakaja—Newsletter

Ajakaja is published biannually to inform members about Society activities and heritage topics. Publication and distribution costs are covered by membership dues.

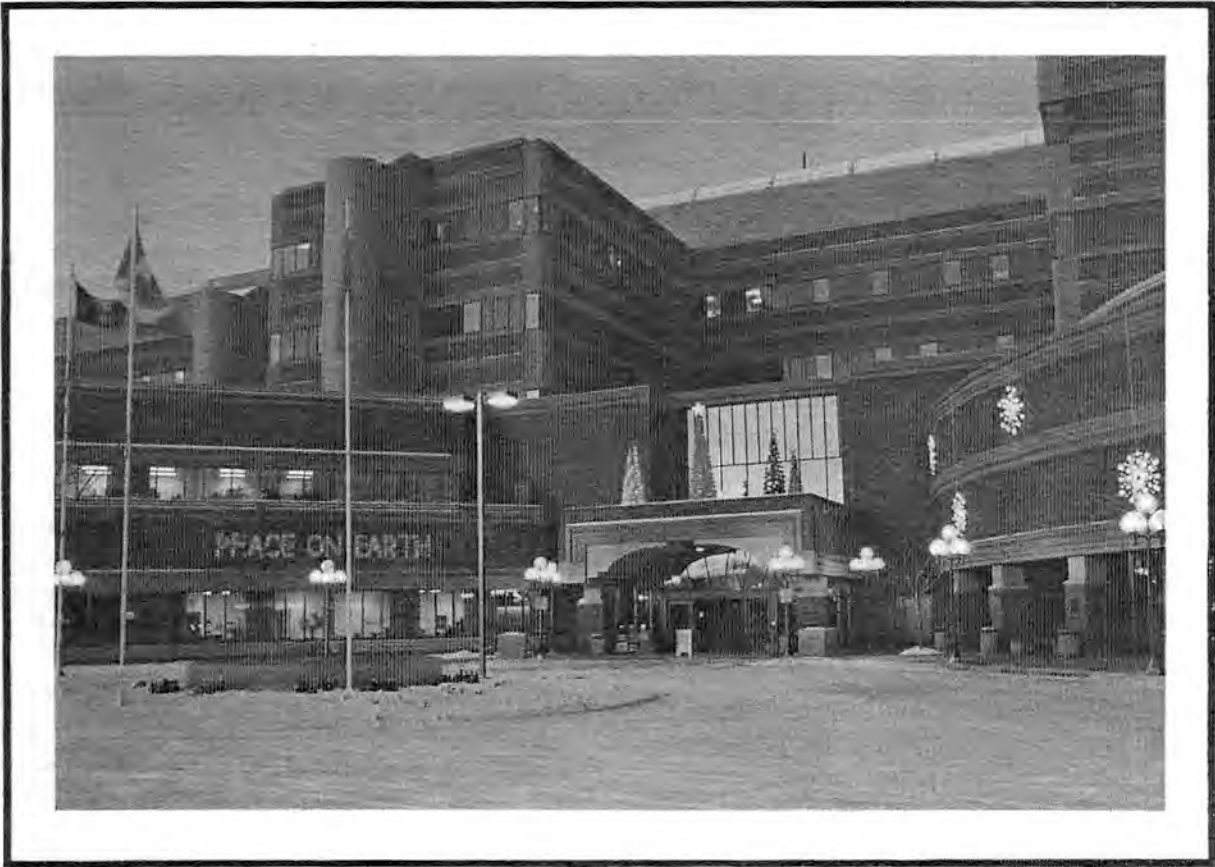
Non-members may purchase Ajakaja for \$5.00 per copy by contacting Eda McClung

Members and friends are encouraged to submit articles, photographs and heritage-related items to Eda McClung at emcclung@shaw.ca

Ajakaja ilmub kaks korda aastas. Sõnumileht teadustab Seltsi tegevusest ja eesti kultuuripärandi teemadel. Publikatsioon ja levitamine on sisse arvestatud liikmemaksusse. Teistel on võimalik sõnumilehte tellida \$5.00 maksuga Eda McClung'ilt.

Ergutame liikmetel ja sõpradel artikleid, fotosi ja teisi andmeid esitada. Palume neid saata Eda McClung'ile (emcclung@shaw.ca).

The cover page was designed by Mare Maxwell who was the first Editor of Ajakaja. The picture on the cover shows a decorative one-half-meter long Estonian bread loaf, baked in Paide and received by Mare as a gift.



Letter from the Editor:

This will be my last Letter from the Editor for Ajakaja. My husband and I will be retiring at the end of December, 2005 and moving to Parksville on Vancouver Island.

We have lived in Edmonton since 1984 so this will be quite a significant move. Our journey originally began in 1980 when we left Toronto, where I had lived since my family arrived there in 1949 as part of the influx of Estonian immigrants from Sweden that year, for a two-year stint in Inuvik in the Northwest Territories. We had planned to work and travel across Canada, but after another two years in Winnipeg we came to Edmonton, and somehow, we never left.

I have worked since 1987 in the Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Center pictured above. Praised as state-of-the-art at the time it is now in danger of being dwarfed by the new Don Mazankowski Heart Institute rising beside it.

The Edmonton that we are leaving is also much different from the city we encountered when we arrived here. It has grown beyond recognition in almost every way. Even the weather seems to have changed. On October 16 1984, the day after we moved into our house, an early blizzard closed the schools and it was -30 degrees on Halloween when I took my younger daughter trick and treating. Now at the end of November in 2005 we are enjoying days balmy enough to be the envy of the left coasters among whom we will soon be counted.

I will miss Edmonton and the former EES which enriched my life all these past years. But new challenges lie ahead for all of us. EES members have now become part of an Alberta wide organization and Ajakaja will soon have the talents of another Editor to take it to new heights. I would like to wish Merry Christmas to my readers and I hope to see some of you on the Island in the near future!

Greetings to all the members of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society



Bob Tipman welcoming AEHS members to Linda Hall

When I last wrote in Ajakaja, we were just preparing for the Jaanipäev celebration in Stettler which was held on June 25. The theme for the event was to honor the pioneer Kerbes family who organized many of the local picnics and were very active in the community with the 4K's orchestra. A Kerbes style family picnic featured outdoor events. The men's nail pounding event was won by Ron Hennel and the women's by Irene Kerbes. Evi Valge and her daughter won the women's log sawing event, and Larry Klaus and I won the men's event. It just goes to show that age and experience can beat the young bucks, at least once. The highlight event, where the ladies throw rolling pins at a stuffed dummy, was won by Helgi Leesment. She won the honor of being the "Queen of 4 AM".

The 4K's orchestra gained its name from three Kerbes family members and one Klaus. One of the original members, Charlie Klaus was present, as was Marguarite Kerbes who played with the band for a long time. Recorded music from the 4K's was played during the afternoon, and later, Larry Klaus (nephew of Charlie) and Marlene Kuutan played and Evi Valge and Evelyn Shursen, two very talented singers, sang a few of the old melodies. Later in the evening, Marguarite's son Hal Kerbes and his daughters, along with one other band member put on a most inspiring show of classic Kerbes tunes and a few numbers from their own performances. It was a fun filled afternoon of games, singing and entertainment which was a true

tribute to the Kerbes family and the 4K's who led and inspired social activities in the Linda Hall community for over 50 years.

Over 100 people attended the event from Edmonton, Calgary, Eckville, Red Deer, Stettler, Medicine Hat and locations as far away as Toronto, Saskatchewan and even Estonia. There were several good articles written about the event and published in the local newspapers. The Red Deer Advocate published an excellent article that included excerpts of interviews with many of those that attended.

We were all saddened to hear about the passing of Rudolph Hennel on October 2. He was in good spirits at the Jaanipäev celebration, and was looking forward to the article about his family farm to be published in this AjaKaja. He was the last sibling of the 10 Kristjan Hennel children and lived on the homestead that his family has farmed for 100 years. He along with his brother Edward Hennel inspired Marian Collin (nee Hennel) to start recording the Hennel Family tree, which has so far grown from 256 names in 1980 to over 2000 names so far. His sons Ron and Allan Hennel will continue to farm the old homestead, so the farm will still be in the Hennel family for many years to come.

On October 26, the Calgary members of the AEHS executive held an informal meeting on the activities that have taken place since Jaanipäev. Our society is now registered under the Societies Act with both Alberta and the Federal Governments. Most of the discussion was concerned with the development of the AEHS website which is being ably undertaken by Bob Kingsep. A workshop would be held in the next month to introduce AEHS members on how to access and use the website. The workshop would also give Bob an opportunity to solicit ways to improve the site.

All the AEHS members were all asked to give suggestions on what should be our next year's activity, and where it might be held so we can continue to build on the success we have had so far in our first year of existence.

Tervitust
Bob Tipman, President, AEHS

Jaanipäev in Alberta

On Saturday June 25, 2005, approximately 100 people of Estonian descent gathered at the historic Linda Hall, near Stettler, Alberta to celebrate Jaanipäev, or Midsummer Day. This was the first event organized by the newly formed **Alberta Estonian Heritage Society**. Opening ceremonies got underway with the song “Eesti lipp” broadcast via loudspeakers as Otto Nicklom raised the Estonian flag. The location of the three flagpoles just outside the entrance to Linda Hall looked especially attractive as a cement patio had been added a few weeks earlier, thanks to several of the Hennel brothers whose farms are located immediately next to the Hall property. Flowering pots further graced the area. The president of the new Society, Bob Tipman, gave the welcome, reminding all that this event honoured the local Kerbes pioneer family of Estonian descent, as well as the ancient Midsummer traditions of Estonians.



Hal Kerbes leading a sing-song

Participants at the Jaanipäev event came from Toronto and Estonia, as well as Edmonton, Calgary, Eckville, Barons and other parts of Alberta. Advance articles in local Stettler and Red Deer newspapers brought additional attendees who otherwise would not have been aware of it. A local radio station and newspaper interviewed and photographed the first part of Jaanipäev. This resulted in a very positive article occupying most of a page in the Red Deer Advocate where the year 2000 visit by

former Estonian president L. Meri was prominently discussed.

The registration table was busy. Society members picked up their summer issue of the newsletter *Ajakaja*, made donations toward the restoration of the Estonian cabin at the Stettler outdoor museum, and looked at a display of Kerbes family photos.



The 4K's Band on stage at Linda Hall

Over approximately five decades, the Kerbes family had been a social and musical focus of the central Alberta Estonian community. Among other activities, they formed a very popular band, “The 4K’s”, hosted many social events and organized various friendly competitions including log-sawing, nail pounding and the “Queen of 4:00 AM” contests. Despite a drizzle of rain, these same traditional games got underway with enthusiastic cheering and laughter as part of Jaanipäev, with several “pound offs” and “saw downs” needed to determine winners. It all happened under the watchful eye of games director Ferdie Nicklom. By the time the rolling pin contest took place, the rain had increased sufficiently that this event was held partly indoors and partly outdoors. The ladies throwing the rolling pin stood inside a wide doorway, aiming at a stuffed male dummy some 35 feet/over 10 meters away on the grass. The winner of this contest is traditionally crowned by the previous winner of the “Queen of 4:00 AM” contest.



Helgi Leesment was crowned "Queen of 4 AM".

This year, Marguarite Kerbes crowned Helgi Leesment. Ron Hennel and Irene Kerbes were the winners of the men's and women's nail pounding contests. The ladies log-sawing contest was won by Evi Valge and her 12 year-old daughter Ella Valge-Saar; the men's log sawing champions are Larry Klaus and Bob Tipman.

As the rain pelted down, Jaanipäev celebrants ate their picnic meals at the tables, snug inside Linda Hall. The organizers of the Linda Hall event brought two huge, locally baked, blue-black-white cakes, one vanilla, one chocolate, honouring the 4K's Band as well as their ethnic heritage - a wonderful dessert for all. Musical entertainment was provided by Marlene Kuutan of Toronto (formerly Marlene Tipman of the Linda Hall area) and Larry Klaus, also from the Linda Hall area and now living in Edmonton. Evi Valge of Calgary charmed all with her lilting voice, singing Estonian as well as English language songs, accompanied by the band. Other well appreciated soloists were Evelyn Shursen and Roy Klaus.

After dinner, the crowd honoured Rudolph Hennel with applause, recognizing him as the oldest Estonian pioneer descendant still living in the area; his family has farmed the same land for 100 years. Strains of "Happy Birthday" honoured long-time member of the Calgary Estonian Society, Arne Matiisen

and Hannah Kerbes, 14-year-old member of the "Special K's" band.

The "Special K's" band played later in the evening. These members are all different generation descendants or spouses of the original Kerbes members of the "4K's" Band. The band name reflects the members' last names, either Kerbes or Klaus, thus all starting with the letter "K". This particular day the musicians chose mostly the tunes played and sung by their husband/father/grandfather/great-grandfather.

When the notes of the "Perekonna valss" sounded, most of the people in the Hall joined in the traditional circle dance. At one point, members of the extended Kerbes family and band gathered in the middle of the Hall; and a circle with crossed arms formed around them - another tradition set by the Kerbes family mostly at weddings where they used to play. There was great sincerity in the voices as everyone honoured this family and their late pioneer members by singing "For they are jolly good fellows".



Cheerful participants in a sing-song

A rousing sing-song (indoors, minus the bonfire because of driving rain) led by the Kerbes family band, cheerfully rounded out the day's event.

Helgi Leesment and Bob Tipman

Let the good times roll....



Part of the crowd during the opening ceremony at Linda Hall, Stettler



Bob Kingsep during the nail-pounding contest



Kerbes's leading a sing-song



Margarite Kerbes cutting the 4K's cake



Betty Ann and Lisa Kiil supporting "George".

Photos: Dave Kiil



The wet weather posed no threat to the log-sawing contestants. Barbara Gullickson in action.

Photo: Bob Holokoff

Toronto Estonians visit Stettler pioneer sites

A bus tour of Estonians arrived in Calgary from Toronto on June 28th and that evening were warmly greeted by Estonian Calgarians, at the Ranchman's Restaurant.

Thank goodness Canada's greatest Honky Tonk and Country Night Club was quiet that evening, otherwise we wouldn't have been able to enjoy speaking with the numerous people who had come to make our first evening away from home a memorable one.

The following day, our group, which consisted of 20 Estonians, 1 Latvian, 1 Dutch and 2 "regular Canadians" (the bus driver and the tour guide), headed toward the Badlands, Hoodoos, Drumheller and to visit historic Estonian sites near Stettler.

None of us were prepared for the emphatic, clear, cheerful greeting of "Tere, tere, vana kere" given by Evelyn Shursen upon her entry into our bus.

Evelyn proclaimed there and then, that her Estonian vocabulary didn't extend much further than that. Instantly, we all sensed that her pride in her Estonian roots was considerable.

She, along with another lady, was our initial welcoming committee and guide. We were taken to road 56 N, where a plaque printed in English and Estonian, commemorates the pioneer of Estonian heritage.

A short ride took us to Linda Hall, which is a community centre proudly flying our blue, black and white beside Canada's flag. Inside is a roomy versatile kitchen, a stage and plenty of room for dancing and partying (typically Estonian).

As we stepped off the bus, we were greeted by several men and women and were given a County of Stettler, No. 6 lapel pin by Ron Hennel. Last year, the Hennel family celebrated their working homestead's 100th anniversary.

We then visited the nearby well-cared for Estonian Cemetery that has a small, painted white chapel, which is no longer in use. The gravestones carry surnames like Rahu, Kerbes and several others with birthdates in the late 1800's and death dates starting in the early 1900's.

We then were led to the Community Museum in Stettler. Among donated articles from other times and cultural groups is an authentic Estonian log cabin, contents and all, donated by one of the families. Here, we were served

refreshments by yet more Canadians, whose ancestors came as pioneers from Estonia. People who had married into the community were there as well, to make us welcome.

A few older persons spoke Estonian, the younger ones did not...but they were all proud of their roots. They still make "jõuluvorst" at Christmastime! The ingredients are somewhat different from what we use to day, but nevertheless, they carry on their tradition as well as others, including the celebration of Jaanipäev.

Touring these sites, meeting and talking with these descendants of Estonian great-great grandparents was awesome, enlightening and heartfelt with many emotional moments.

AO

(Text from Estonian Life)



Toronto Estonians and descendants of Estonian pioneers in Stettler.



Evelyn Shursen and Astrid Ustina welcomed the Toronto Estonians at their arrival in Stettler

The Epic Journey from Estonia to Crimea –1861

From information obtained in an interview with Gustav Erdman and his sister, Liisa (Erdman) Silbermann, at Gus's daughter's home at Barons, Alberta, in 1963; from Emigration of Estonians to Crimea by Otto Laaman; and from The Salman Family in Estonia and Crimea by Leongard Salman of Simferopol, Crimea written in March 2005.



The farm house at Albu Estate, Estonia, (near Paide) where Jakob Erdman lived as a child. This photo was taken in 1927 and sent to Jakob in Barons by relatives.

This is a typical farm house – the left half of the building was the house, and the right half, the barn. The well was usually in the middle of the yard. There were additional buildings for storage of grains, cattle feed and household goods.

The central and only heated room in the threshing-barn-house was the threshing room with high, smoke stained walls. At harvest time the grain was dried in this room on top of the cross beam to prevent spoilage. (Modern farmers BUY expensive grain drying equipment to achieve the same results!) The unique taste of bread made

from this wheat was prized. In one corner of the threshing room was a large limestone oven. Food was prepared for the family on this hearth. During the long, dark winter, the whole family gathered here, sitting on low stools, (below the smoke) to do their tasks; the women spun and knitted, the men repaired harnesses and footwear and made furniture, etc., from wood.

From early spring to autumn, the family life took place outside the dark and smoky threshing-room and food was prepared in the summer kitchen. Animals which were stabled in the barn half in the winter, were in

pastures during the spring and summer. Also, during the summer, and after cleaning, the barn area was used as a work shop. It was also used on festive occasions such as weddings, for dancing and partying.

The Erdman Bear Story

As told by my mother, Ellen (Erdman) Johnson, Jakob's granddaughter. The story is about Juri Erdman, Jakob's father.

"Juri went out hunting in the Estonian marshy-land. He spotted a large black bear beside a hillock and shot it with his muzzle-load flint-lock gun. The hunter only wounded the bear and he went up to it to complete the kill. However, the bear, not badly hurt, came to meet him. Before Juri could run, he was caught in a bear-hug. Since the gun was useless, he dropped it and it landed on the bear's foot. The bear just grunted.

To save himself, Juri shoved his fist into the bear's mouth and struggled mightily to keep it there until the bear choked to death. Juri managed to pull his bleeding arm from the bear's mouth and live to tell the story.

Siim Erdman remembered seeing the gun in his father's shop for many years."

(I thought this was an amazing and unique happening, but then a relative told me that every family had a 'bear story' in their history.)

Until the beginning of the 1800s, Estonians were actually farmer-serfs, whose lot was especially hard under Russian domination. Russia gained Estonia from Sweden in 1721 through the *Peace of Uusikaupunki (Nystad)*, the resolution of the *Great Northern War*. The Estonian serfs' lives were even more difficult when Russia came under the control of Katherine II. Slavery

had been abolished in Estonia by the Russian government in 1816 and 1819.

Their economic situation was actually worse than when they were serfs. As serfs, they had a plot of land from the landlord, on which they could grow some food and have an animal or two. In return, they were required to work for the landlord and take up arms on his behalf when he engaged in military combat. Although the Estonians now were legally 'free', they were not given any land, so they had no way to make a living.

As free men, they had to pay rent to the German landlords, which was more onerous than when they were serfs. Also, the Estonian girls were very attractive and were often used by the overlords for their pleasure.

One result of this economic oppression was that uprisings occurred in many places. These were severely suppressed by the Russian military. Because of the severe poverty of the people many Estonians left the country, so many, in fact, that the German overlords were concerned about having enough people to take care of their crops.

Another consequence was that Estonians tried to find some kind of respite in religious movements. One of these was headed by Juhan Leinburg, uncle of Gustav Malts who became known as 'Prophet Maltsvet'. Many dissatisfied Estonians gathered to await the 'White Ship' which was to take them away to the Promised Land.

It never did arrive.

By 1860, the Estonian people had gained more freedom of movement. There was also the possibility of emigrating to the southern provinces of Russia; Samara, Saratov and

Crimea. There were rumours circulating among the farmers: the Russian government was giving free land to settlers coming to these provinces. In Crimea, land was available because the Tartars fled to Turkey after the Crimean War, 1853-1856, in which Russia was the victor.

Gustav Malts, his uncle Juhan Leinberg and Mr. Tynisson, who acted as interpreter as he was a former soldier and knew the Russian language, traveled to Crimea to make arrangements. This was not an easy process: travel was difficult and slow, at Perekop the land was 'a salt plain', and officials were only partially helpful and competent. Finally, in Simferopol, villages were assigned and arrangements for immigration completed.

Each male was to receive 12 to 15 'tenths' of state land, each family or couple would receive 100 rubles in silver as a loan, and bread and seeds for a year. In case of crop failures for 3 years, there would be bread and seeds from treasury. The Estonians would gradually pay back the loan. During the first 8 years, they would be released from personal and property taxes, and during the first 3 years, exempt from military duty. It was promised that permission would be forthcoming for building houses and digging wells.

Returning to Estonia, authorization to move to Crimea was granted by the Russian government, but they still had to get permission to leave from their German overlords. They did not want their 'free' labour to leave, so the requirements were onerous; each adult between 20 and 40 years was required to pay an extra tax – or take 20 lashes. Everyone took the lashes (if they had any money, they would need it) except one man who took 40 lashes, his portion and his wife's, because she was pregnant. The

treatment for these dreadful wounds was regular applications of salt water. It was a month before the man was healed enough to travel.

So, in 1861, 23 families were ready to leave. In this group were Jaan and Mari Erdmann with son Jacob, Madly (Erdmann) with husband Otto Sesler and Mari Tint, Jacob Erdman's future wife, with her family. Jacob was 10 years old and Mari was 7. Other Estonians were Siim Erdmann and Siim Salman, who was 7 years old. (*I do not have the names of the others.*)

Most walked, some had carts, some baby carriages and a few had horses, which pulled the carts. One man had 8 rubles from the sale of his farm – he was rich! Another man had 2 cows. When one got lame, the shoemaker made shoes for it from the people's shoes. Only the very young and the very old rode in the carts. They traveled 2,400 kms (1500 miles), through Vyru, Pskov, Vitebsk, Mogilev and Kiev. The journey took 3 months. It was very hard and many died along the way, especially the old and very young.

No food was taken along. As they went through the land, the Russian people on the farms they passed through gave them food – bread, sour milk and cider.

When they Estonians arrived in Crimea, they were bitterly disappointed; the fields looked barren and unproductive. They were not, however, discouraged.

This was their land and it meant a new start for them as **Free Land Owners**.

(A family note: I am indirectly related to Prophet Malts through Grandmother Magda Lik Erdman.)

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A century later, Hennels still work the land

Deane and Irene Kerbes
Stettler, Alberta



The Hennels (circa 1899)
L-R: Kristian, Annie, William and Ida

A milestone was celebrated last year by the ancestors of one of the many Estonian families who settled in the Linda Hall area, south of Stettler, Alberta.

In August, 2004, the Rudolph Hennel family, who farm southeast of Linda Hall, was given the distinction of being a Century Farm, a farming operation that has stayed in the same family for a monumental 100 years. "Family farms are starting to go by the wayside and to have lived and farmed the same land for a century is a big deal," said David Hennel, Rudolph's grandson.

The Hennel farm had its beginning when Rudolph's grandfather, Kristian, who was born in Estonia, emigrated from Russia to Canada. Kristian came with his wife and oldest son in 1903. They stayed with friends until Kristian obtained his homestead in 1904. By 1908 Kristian had broken 15 acres of land and had 22 cows and four pigs.

Six generations of Hennels have lived on the homestead. Four of the generations were born in Canada and are alive today.

William Hennel, Rudolph's father, joined his brother Joseph and father Kristian in 1909. He and his wife, Ida, and their seven children made the journey from Russia via Ireland. "They had nothing at the time," said Rudolph Hennel "so my father took care of the livestock on board to pay for passage". William and his wife had three more children in Canada. Rudolph, the youngest, was born in 1916. His father died when Rudolph was only nine months old, leaving Ida in charge of the farm. Even though he was the youngest of the siblings, Rudolph took over the farm. "By the time it came to taking over the farm, everyone else had moved on or away," said Rudolph.

Shortly after William and his family arrived, Kristian sold his homestead to William and left for Australia, only to return a few years later.

Rudolph married Doris Mulbach in November, 1945. They lived in an 'old shack; of a place until they moved into their current home in 1953, which is a short distance away from the original homestead. Ida Hennel lived with Rudolph and Doris during the winters, but moved back to her house on the original homestead for the rest of the year. When Ida passed away, the house was used as a granary. It was demolished in the mid 1970s when Rudolph's son, Allan, moved to the original homestead. 100 years after this homestead was established, the family continues to experience the odd reminder from the past. For example, Allan and his wife Rita have discovered old wire baskets and beer jugs on their property. "And rocks! Everything was made of rocks," said Rita. "We were breaking up land for a garden and had to get rid of an old rock sauna made by Rudolph and his brother John".

The Hennels are very proud of their Estonian heritage. Rudolph can speak the language fluently, and still has an Estonian song book of his mother's.

The pride in their origins and profession is part of what has kept the Hennels on their land for over 100 years despite the trials and tribulations the have befallen farmers in the last century. This spirit has survived into the third and fourth generations of Canadian-born Hennels. Rudolph's grandson is named after the Estonian capital - "Tallinn".

"I have seen a lot of changes," said Rudolph. "Farming is now a lot different. We started with horses - all they needed was oats to make them happy. It also didn't take as much land to make a living". David says he worries about his son being able to continue farming because of the state agriculture is in. Though he helps his father, David also has to work outside of the farm to supplement the family's income.



The Hennel Family 2000

Back Row L-R: Jo, Manley Peterson, Bunny Peterson & Rita Hennel
 Front Row L-R: Ron, Rudolph, Doris & Allan

Even with doubt as to the future of agriculture, on phrase sums up the family's feelings about making it 100 years – "we're proud!"

Rudolph and Doris, along with their family, have been very active in the Linda Hall community. Rudolph has held many positions within the Linda Hall Men's Society, "Eesti Põllumeeste Selts", and is still an honorary member today. Sons, Ron and Allen, also held positions within the men's club. Their wives, Jo and Rita, are actively involved with the Linda Ladies Group. Doris is an honorary member of the same group, and was instrumental in forming the English side of the club. Rudolph and Doris' grandson David, and his wife Leslie follow in the same footsteps.

Rudolph was always available when work or renovation was needed at the hall of the cemetery. He spent many hours working alone on various projects. Sons, Allan and Ron, and grandson David are also readily available for such tasks. They helped to prepare the hall and its ground for the first celebration of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society in June, 2005.

True to their Estonian heritage, the Hennels were very strong in their belief of the cooperative movement. Doris was secretary of the association for many years.

The Hennel family also served their community in government. Rudolph was a County Councillor from 1965-67. Ron followed this tradition and served as Councillor from 1986-1995, being Reeve from 1992-95.

Rudolph and Doris say, "It makes our family happy to be able to help with any project for the good of the people and for the benefit of Linda Hall". When called upon, the families of Rudolph and Doris Hennel are reliable and competent in their efforts for the Estonian community and the community at large. The Hennel family are proud of their Estonian heritage and continue to support and work for the benefit of Linda Hall and the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society.

Note: Sadly, since this article was written, Rudolph Hennel passed away at Stettler, Alberta on October 2, 2005. Alberta's Estonian community extends their deepest condolences and their gratitude to the Hennel family for their extraordinary support through the years.

WE REMEMBER...

Margarete Pääsuke passed away on June 24, 2005 in Calgary. She was 104 years old.

Margarete was a member of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society.

We express our heartfelt sympathy to sons Toomas and Rein with family.

Alberta Estonian Heritage Society

Musings about my holiday in Estonia

Lisa Kiil

As I embarked on my second journey to my dad's homeland last July I had surprisingly sketchy memories of my first visit there in 1992. What I did remember was a very damp place with a lot of dilapidated buildings. There didn't seem to be much going on. People wore Adidas tracksuits. Our chauffeur for much of that five-day trip was a relative of some sort who drove a rusted yellow Lada and smoked foul smelling Russian cigarettes.

The highlight of that initial trip was when my dad located the old homestead where he was born, near Lümända on the west coast of Saaremaa. Very few improvements had been made to the farmhouse over the years. The current occupants graciously allowed us to look around, though, and presented my dad with a jar of what appeared to be pickled eel, and looked pretty repulsive. Moments later we found the old windmill on their property. Although in disrepair, the stone structure spoke of the history of the family and the country.

I knew that things would have changed in the country in 13 years, and so I went hoping to have some new memories, hopefully of a more lasting variety. And this time, with 13 relatives on the same trip, there was guaranteed to be a few stories told, a few more translators to explain things, and a few more beers consumed.

We arrived in Tallinn exhausted, and made our way to the guesthouse in the Kriistine neighborhood. It was a modern place with pine interior, and freshly tiled washrooms. My cousins Tiit and Andres had already visited the corner *kaubamaja* to stock up on Saku beer. Our first meal was at nearby restaurant. The menu was in a photo album format, which was helpful for my nephew and me, as the non-Estonian speakers in the group that night. The food styling wasn't exactly from the pages of *Canadian Living*, but I chose the pork dish. My plate arrived with several pieces of deliciously moist meat, a few fried potatoes and two slices of cucumber (to ward off scurvy?). The Lonely Planet guide had described Estonian cuisine as "meaty." I had a pretty good idea why, as I came back home craving a tossed salad.

We left for Saaremaa the following morning, taking the short ferry ride after the short car ride to Virtsu. For a Canadian, the distances in Estonia seemed trivial. Our B&B in Kuressaare was also modern and comfortable, although the bathroom was small, and I came close to burning the place down when I tried to use my hair dryer with an adapter. The hosts were particularly friendly, and they chatted up my dad at every opportunity, sometimes practically chasing us out the door to say hello. Their breakfasts were a multi-course extravaganza, but otherwise we spent very little time in their home, and more time traveling the dusty gravel roads of Saaremaa. I'd heard from my dad's more recent trips that Kuressaare had become a bit of a tourist mecca for Finns. It was certainly set up better for tourists than in 1992, when

we'd stayed at a clean but run down old sanitarium with toilet facilities down the hall for \$4 a night. The central part of the town was filled with restaurants and gift shops. The marketplace was much the same as it had always been, selling juniper wood souvenirs, hand knit woolen goods, and in season produce. We lucked upon strawberry season, and enjoyed the soft and sweet treats on the lakeside beach at Karujärve one afternoon. However, the town was still in no way what I would call crowded.



Four clans-Riis, Niitsoo, Paara and Kiil-in Kihelkonna during a visit to the final resting place of many of their ancestors

I had my first opportunity to swim in the Baltic Sea this time. This hadn't been possible in the rainy cold of late September 1992. It was a gloriously hot and dry day filled with sightseeing, most of it spent driving around in our red rental car devoid of air conditioning. In late afternoon we found our way to the cottage of my dad's cousins at Atla. Located a few hundred metres from the juniper-laden beach area, we availed ourselves of their log outhouse, built conspicuously up about 15 feet, and with a picturesque view front and back, apparently showing no discrimination for either gender. We hit the beach for a surprisingly warm and salty bath. The slippery rock bottom as we entered the sea was reminiscent of a similar beach in Georgian Bay, where I've spent several wonderful vacations since childhood.

Earlier that day we'd dined at a country restaurant in Lümända, and visited the school where my aunts had attended. It seemed strange to me that the large country school with all the amenities, including computers and other supplies was left wide open without a soul around on a summer day. It was almost as if they were expecting us. After going through the building, we met in the schoolyard and took turns trying out the *kiik* style platform swing.

That evening, we drove back to Pilguse Manor, just up the street from the Kiil family's old farmhouse. The old windmill on the property was now under restoration, and hidden behind scaffolding. After another heavy meal with the entire clan, we walked down to the water again, this time to see the

spot where the family had left in a boat one night in 1944. I'm pretty sure they had no idea at that time that it was the beginning of their journey to Canada. Although I was tired from the long days and almost sick to my stomach from over-eating, we dawdled and explored the area, including the huge wood burning sauna, not in use that night. It seemed that the atmosphere that evening was ripe with contentment, as if we were all coming home after a prolonged absence.



The author and nephew Ranek Kiil at a bus stop shelter on the Kuressaare-Kihelkonna road.

The next day we left, for me rather begrudgingly, for the mainland again. The long, sun-filled, warm evenings, tranquil countryside and simplicity of the straw-roofed country homes had me dreaming. Saaremaa seemed a great place to hide out. A short ferry ride later, and we were on our way to a farm outside Pärnu to meet an Estonian beach volleyball player who was to stay at our home in Edmonton only two weeks later during the World Masters Games. Tiina had two blonde-haired, blue-eyed pre-school aged sons with summer-bronzed skin. Her husband took us on a whirlwind tour of the city, about 20 km away, and then she served us a snack of traditional Estonian open-faced sandwiches on rye bread, some with homemade wild boar sausage. She also brought out a large pitcher of *kama*. This thick drink, an old fashioned version of a smoothie, was enjoyed by all of us. It had a unique tangy taste of soured cream and various grains. Our hostess declared it "very healthy" in English.

The last few days in Tallinn were full. We ate, went to museums, climbed to Toompea to see the Estonian flag flying atop the medieval fortress tower and visited the Kalev chocolate shop to stock up. When our rental car broke down after circling the

downtown Tallinn area delivering copies of Ajakaja we witnessed a more westernized version of customer service when an apologetic young man arrived in less than an hour with a new Toyota Camry. It was larger than the original rental, and possessed the by now highly coveted A/C!

The tourist district of Tallinn was a shock to me. My memories of the *kesklinn* from 1992 were of a more deserted area, with a single outdoor café. I am still looking for an old photo to confirm this impression. Now, it was an ocean of people and activity. The perimeter of the area is full of trendy restaurants, and all the streets leading from the area are gift shops selling amber, linens and the usual tacky tourist fare. Gone were the Adidas track suits—thin, pretty women with long, straight blonde hair sold local strawberries, wearing "WelcomeToEstonia" t-shirts. Evidently the long, slim legs of the local women are hiding ankles of steel. They all seemed to wear high-heeled shoes, and yet tackled the ancient cobblestones with ease and at a brisk pace.

The trip concluded on another warm summer day. I finished my shopping in the morning; we took a brief tour in the Museum of Occupation, where an old bust of Lenin lay on the concrete floor in the basement of the building, as an unwelcome relic of communist times. That afternoon we headed to the beach one last time. It was jammed with a scantily clad, mostly Russian crowd. The water was so shallow for so long, it seemed we had to walk half a kilometer before it was above waist level. Having been buoyed by uttering my first restaurant order in Estonian when I asked for a glass of water at lunch-time and was understood, I felt confident enough to try the same tactic on the pre-pubescent ice cream vendor on the beach. Unfortunately she was Russian, and didn't seem to understand *kolm*, or at least not my version of it, so I had to revert to English to get my three vanilla cones.

Later that evening we attended a classical musical concert at the old Kadrioru presidential palace. The grounds were lovely, although for some reason many of the grander buildings in Estonia, including Parliament, are pink. After the concert we had a lovely and expensive meal at a nearby restaurant. The interior looked like any of the swanky, fusion type places found in the west, but was not busy for a summer Saturday night.

And so I was loathe leaving the next day, even though it was raining for the first time. Whereas after the 1992 trip I had no real inclination or intention of returning, this time my mind was racing with the possibility of it. Next time, I hope to find the "true Estonia", which I suspect lies somewhere between the damp grayness I remember of 1992, and the sunny hopefulness and sense of belonging I experienced in 2005.

Lisa Kiil is a first-generation Canadian of Estonian descent on her father's side. She lives and works in Edmonton as an accountant.

The compelling story of Gulag 113: documentary on DVD

Gulag 113 tells the story of a young Estonian, Eduard Kolga, who was mobilized by the retreating Red Army and transported to a distant Soviet labor camp in Siberia in July, 1941. He survived three punishing years in the labor camp system and, against all odds, escaped to Estonia by slipping through the Soviet lines at the battle of Velikie Luki.



Eduard Kolga, left, in front of the prison in Vologda where he was held 60 years ago for stealing and collecting a few cabbages

Eduard's grandson Marcus, who produced the documentary, says "that he aimed not only to raise awareness of Stalin's brutality but to humanize the "statistics" his totalitarian regime saw simply as a consequence of war". Eduard's journey of some 60 years earlier is retraced from his home in Canada to northern Russia

Marcus Kolga responded to several of my questions about the production. His comments are as follows:

"First and foremost, the film is a tale of one man's survival in conditions that were generally impossible for any human being to remain alive in. The hope for me is that viewers will be able to identify with Eduard and his experience, so as to break down the unfathomable statistics associated with Stalin's death camps".

"The second goal of the film is to raise awareness of Stalin's criminal actions in 1940-45. Few westerners know that between 1940-41 a quarter of the entire population of the Baltic States disappeared as a result of Stalin's program of ethnic cleansing in the Baltic States".

"The people we met with in Russia were incredibly gracious and very open. They were as interested in meeting with Eduard as we were in meeting and speaking with them".

"One of the activists who met with us, Tatjana Melnik, had, in fact, researched the

Estonians who had been sent to the Archangel Oblast in 1941 and published an article in the Russian journal "Karta" a few years ago!"

"Eduard also met with some local Kotlas school children who had, with the help of a \$300 grant from the Ford Foundation, set up a GULAG museum in one of the classrooms in their school. Eduard was quite moved by the 13-14 year olds who showed him artifacts, photos and other items that they had gathered from around the area".

"There were few restrictions if any on access to materials and locations. In the Kotlas region, any potential obstructions were cleared with a small gift to the city's mayor. Any other potential barriers were lifted by one of the local activists, Irina Dubrovina, who is known in the Archangel Oblast as a tough human rights advocate (she and her parents were interned at the camp in Vorkuta in the early 1950s). Her crusades to record and build awareness of Soviet crimes in the region are legendary, as are her ongoing campaigns to improve living conditions for residents of the region".

"The only other trouble we had was obtaining footage from the State Archives in Moscow. Prices for westerners looking for footage are outlandish and the process for researching the material is an impossible bureaucratic maze. Most of the historic material came from the Estonian State Archives, where my research was facilitated by the incredibly helpful staff and a good collection of historic photos and film from the period.

I'm currently working on a documentary about the 1945 sinking of a German refugee ship -The Wilhelm Gustloff - and the flight of East Prussian refugees to the West. The film focuses on survivors and the present day politics of memory in Germany and here in North America.

Currently I'm negotiating another documentary about Stalin's GULAG system: one that will encompass the entire territory and history of the camps".

Gulag 113 and the upcoming documentary were made possible with 100% funding from OMNI's Independent Producer's Initiative.

Additional information about the production is available on the OMNI website: <http://www.omnitv.ca/ontario/tv/docs/episodes/gulag113/> and www.realworldpictures.ca

Dave Kiil

Estonian pianist returns to Calgary

Helgi Leesment

Marko Martin, who is well known to Canadian-Estonians as an accomplished musician, presented a solo piano concert on September 20 in Calgary, having arrived directly from Tallinn the previous day. His program included Franz Liszt's *Vallé d'Oberman*, *Funéailles* and *Rigoletto:paraphrase du concert*. Following intermission, he played *Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition*. After enthusiastic applause, he treated the audience to Liszt's *Chasse-Neige* for the encore. Evi Valge presented a bouquet of blue roses to Marko on behalf of Calgary Estonian music fans who were present at the concert in surprisingly large numbers considering the relatively small size of this ethnic group in the city. The event was held in the acoustically excellent Rozsa Centre at the University of Calgary

The concert was part of the series titled *Honens Music as a Second Language: Laureate Marathon Weekend*. As has been outlined in articles in previous issues of *Ajakaja*, Marko is a laureate of the year 2000 Honens international piano competition. Albertans have had several opportunities since then to hear this talented pianist. Over the years he has presented concerts at Lethbridge, Edmonton, Banff and Calgary, including a couple of concerts as the featured pianist with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra. Marko also spent time at a

Calgary high school, introducing students to various aspects of classical music. It was wonderful to hear Marko Martin once more this year.

The Honens organization has released a CD by Marko - a suitable Christmas gift for classical music fans.

The program consists purely of compositions by Franz Liszt, including all of the selections presented at this September concert. Length of disc 69:28, cost \$18.00 plus shipping charges. Available online at www.honens.com, or info@honens.com, or contact:

Honens
888 Tenth Street SW
Calgary, AB T2P 2X1
Tollfree tel. 1-800-249-7574
Tel. 403-299-0130, Fax 403-299-0137

Commentary regarding the disk on the Honens website: *Marko Martin is clearly a young pianist to watch. Laureate of the 2000 Honens International Piano Competition and prize winner at the 1998 Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition, Martin is gaining a reputation for his inspired balance between energy and lyricism, especially in the works of Brahms, Liszt and Schubert. He is equally admired for his interpretation of music of the 20th century.*

Liszt Verdi: *Rigoletto*, *Paraphrase du concert*
 Chasse-neige (from *Douze Etudes d'exécution transcendante*, No. 12)
 Vallée d'Oberman (from *Années de pèlerinage*, First Year: Switzerland, No. 6)
 Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude (from *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, No. 3)
 Funéailles (from *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, No. 7)
 Après une lecture de Dante - Fantasia quasi sonata (from *Années de pèlerinage*, Second Year: Italy, No. 7) "Dante Sonata"



Estonian pianist Marko Martin in Calgary



Cover of new Marko Martin CD recently released by the Honens organization

"25,000 Sing"-2004 Song Festival in Tallinn

Omni Television provides the following information about this 30-minute DVD documentary

Every five years, the small, northern European nation of Estonia hosts the world's largest combined choirs on one stage in a 2-day song festival called "Laulupidu". Laulupidu engages virtually every Estonian- in fact, almost 1/5 of the country shows up and most of the rest watch the live broadcast. It is a celebration of cultural identity with deep historic and political meaning that emotionally connects with every Estonian, whether or not they live in Estonia. This massive ritual of song is unrivalled in the world. In Toronto, the extra-curricular Estonian School forms a choir of 60 second-generation Canadian youths of Estonian heritage with the hope that they'll become good enough to sing at the 2004 festival. This film follows the kids as they rehearse, get accepted to the festival (with 25,000 singers, you'd think everyone who applies would be

accepted- not so!) and travel to Estonia to participate in this massive manifestation of cultural expression. The film allows these youths to anticipate what this trip will mean to them and, upon return, reflect on how it affected their view of their heritage.

Languages: English, Estonian

This DVD is available from:

Omni Television Video Store,
545 Lakeshore Blvd West,
Toronto, ON, M5V 1A3

Price: \$29.90 including taxes and shipping costs.

How to order:

1) Mail your request with:
Name of documentary: "25,000 Sing",
payment of \$29.90, and your mailing address.

2) Internet: www.omnity.ca
Choose "Omni Television Ontario", choose a show and scroll to "Omni Television documentary specials". On next screen, elect the documentary by title and click on "25,000 Sing".

Estonian Athletes Collect Medals at World Masters Games

Dave Kiil

It seems to me that Estonians, with less than one-half the population of Alberta, participate very actively on the world stage, be it music, politics, or sports. This notion was reinforced during recent visits to my birthplace and contacts with Estonians participating in the World Masters Games in Edmonton during July 22-31, 2005.

While touring Estonia in July, I met Tiina Põldmaa, one-half of an Estonian beach volleyball team, at her home near Pärnu. Her husband took our small group on an informative tour of the resort city. In Tallinn, I met two Estonian triathletes, Mart Haruoja and Aado Liblikmann, and enjoyed a sauna during the visit. It was a great opportunity to compare lifestyles in the two countries with their families. We were later able to reciprocate by providing accommodation for these two groups in Edmonton.

Tiina and teammate Ela Lillemaa competed in the beach volleyball event and emerged with a gold medal. Mart and Aado raced to a Bronze Medal and a fifth-place finish, respectively, in the men's triathlon.

With some 20,000 competitors, it was no easy task to track down other participants from Estonia. Individual athletes and teams registered on their own and made their own travel and accommodation arrangements. Five basketball teams- Estonia Women (40+), Kalev (65+), Tallinn Wombats(35+), and Sameko (55+, 60+)- accounted for most of the Estonian contingent with some fifty athletes. These teams were very

successful, accounting for three gold and two silver medals.

Many of the basketball players are businessmen and seasoned veterans of World Masters Games venues. Some of them played on Estonia's national teams in bygone years. The Women's Team showed their patriotism and enthusiasm by waving Estonian flags at their own as well as other games! The visitor's were also heard to compliment the Edmonton Games organizer's for a job well done.

Various scheduling events precluded arrangements for a reception for the visiting Estonians but we did manage to organize a tour of Fort Edmonton with about a dozen basketball players. Eda McClung, her brother Arne Matiisen and his wife Caroline from Calgary, and Helmut Langeste, served as excellent ambassadors of the Alberta Estonian community.

At the end of the walk-about, the group enjoyed refreshments in the Lord Selkirk Hotel and broke out into a well-known Estonian song *Õlle Pruulija* (Beer Brewer), a fitting punctuation to an enjoyable afternoon in historic Fort Edmonton.



A group of Estonian basketball players and tour guide Eda McClung leaving Lord Selkirk Hotel at Fort Edmonton

A gallery of Estonian medalists in Edmonton



Tallinn Wombats (35+): Front L-R: Peep Kubber, Toomas Linamäe, Ivar Valdmaa, Erkki Raidma; back row L-R: Eero Leisna, Olaf Orgse, Ivo Saksakulm, Hannes Reinola, Ülo Merisalu, Aivar Toomiste, Heikki Boode



Estonia (Eesti) (40+): L to R: Kai Jürme, Ülle Järv, Sirje Kikas, Piret Jahiloo, Moonika Koitme, Epp Jürme, Eve Lust



Beach volleyball players Tiina Pöldmaa and Ela Lillemaa following presentation of gold medals



Sameko (55+) : L-R: Mart Juksar, Avo Mae, Ilmar Kütt, Hinno Puhm, Kanep, Toomas Tuul, Jaak Loon, Ants Järv, Mati Kaalma, Aadu Paist



Triathletes Mart Haruoja (bronze medal) and Aado Liblikmann



Kalev (65+) Front Row L-R: Kaido Hääl, Valdo Janisoo, Valdur Tamming, Avo Viil; Back Row L-R: Udo Asmus, Viktor Indrikson, Heino Härsing, Tarvo Villoman, Jaak Karus, Enn Rae, Aadu Kana

Estonian Winter Sport Heroes

Helgi Leesment

Calgary, Alberta

The 2006 Winter Olympics are just a few months away in Italy and various winter sport World Cup events are already underway in many parts of the world. Are there any Estonians to watch for?

You bet!

Being a northern country, Estonians have excelled in winter sports. Of course, these activities didn't start out as organized competitions; for centuries they were merely a mode of travel during long, frozen, snowy winters. Estonians have been best at cross-country skiing. When that sport became combined with other disciplines, Estonians

gleefully participated in those as well, at times making them champions or top finishers in Nordic Combined (cross-country skiing plus ski-jumping) and Biathlon (cross-country skiing plus shooting with rifles carried on the skier's backs).

You may be unaware that some past major medal winners were Estonian; as they are not listed as such in official standings. Because of Estonia's complicated political history, ethnic Estonian participants in various World Cup and Olympic competitions have competed under the Russian flag (up to 1918), Estonian flag (1918-1939), Soviet Union flag (1940-1990) and Estonian flag again as of 1991, the year the country regained its independence.

The Estonian Olympic medalists are:

<i>Olympics 2002, Salt Lake City</i>	Cross-country skiing Andrus Veerpalu, 15 km classic race, gold
	Cross-country skiing Andrus Veerpalu, 50 km classic race, silver
	Cross-country skiing Jaak Mäe 15 km classic, bronze
<i>Olympics 1988, Calgary</i>	Nordic combined Allar Levandi, bronze
<i>Olympics 1964, Innsbruck</i>	Speed skating Ants Antson gold

Considering the relatively small number of Estonians and the number of international sports medals won by them, this country is an amazing hot-bed of winter sports heroes!

A sampling of Estonian names to watch for in sports news this winter:

Kristina Smigun, age 28, rose to international prominence in cross-country skiing as of 1999. Since then she has won 39 World Cup medals (14 gold, 12 silver, 13 bronze). In World Cup overall season standings, Kristina has rated 10th in 2001, 5th in 2004, 4th in 1999, 2002 and 2005, 2nd in 2000 and 2003. She has been Estonian women's champion 26 times between 1991 and 2005, plus she has been selected Estonian Athlete of the Year 7 times. At her first World Cup competition of the 2005-2006 season, Kristina Smigun won the Gold Medal.



Kristina Smigun

Andrus Veerpalu, age 34, rose to international prominence in cross-country skiing as of 1999. At the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, Andrus won a Gold Medal in the 15 km classic style, and a Silver medal in the 50 km classic style competitions. He has won 11 World Cup medals, including 7 Gold, 1 Silver and 3 Bronze. In World Cup overall season standings, Andrus was rated 7th in 2003 and 2004, 13th in 2005. He has been Estonian men's champion 20 times between 1990 and 2005, and has been voted Athlete of the Year in 1999, 2001 and 2002. At his first World Cup competition of the 2005-2006 season, Andrus Veerpalu took 6th place.



Andrus Veerpalu

Jaak Mae, age 33, rose to international prominence in cross-country skiing as of 2002. At the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, Jaak won a silver medal in the 15 km classical style competition. He also won Silver in a 15 km World Cup race in 2003. He has a total of 5 World Cup medals, two silver and three bronze. In overall World Cup standings, Jaak has rated from 33rd to 6th this century. He has been Estonian champion 10 times. At his first World Cup competition of the 2005-2006, Jaak Mäe took 7th place.

Tiiu Nurme, age 23, born in Montreal of Estonian parents. Has been accepted as a

competitor on Estonia's Alpine Ski Team for the 2006 Olympic Winter Games at Torino, Italy.

Diana Rennik & Aleksei Saks, ages 20 & 24 respectively, ice-skating competitors in the Pairs category. Placed 16th at the March 2005 World Championship. Qualified as one of 20 pairs to compete at the 2006 Olympic Winter Games at Torino, Italy.



Jaak Mae

Jana Rehema The 2005-2006 World Cup cross-country ski season has two stops in Canada, Vernon, BC December 10-11 and Canmore, Alberta December 15-18 (no competitions on the 16th). Because the Estonian Ski Federation is putting most of this season's resources towards the February 2006 Olympics in Italy, it is sending only one skier to compete at Canmore. She is 26 year old Jana Rehema who is currently in her last year of the International Affairs degree program at the University of Colorado, on an athletic scholarship. Quips Jana "In order to win this scholarship, I merely had to ski better than the others". She became seriously interested in skiing at age 12; since then has been Estonian women's champion a couple of times. Internationally, she placed 10th at a World Junior Championships. Her coach in Estonia is Anatoli Smigun, her uncle, who also coaches his daughters (Jana's cousins) Kristina and Katrin Smigun.



Jana Rehema

Jana will compete at Canmore on Thursday December 15 in the women's 10 km freestyle race and Saturday December 17 in the women's 15 km Classic style race.

Albertans are encouraged to go to Canmore on Dec 15 & 17, pick a spot at the side of the competition trail and cheer the Canadian skiers as well as Jana! If you have any flags, wave them as you cheer the skiers! Specific times for the races will be publicized closer to the competition dates.

Jana Rehema

Photo courtesy: Univ. Colorado CUBuffs.com

Mae, Smigun and Veerpalu photos courtesy of Estonian Ski Federation: Jüri Järve

Estonian Santa wins title in Winter Games

Santa Clauses from all over the world were in Gallivare, Sweden in late November, 2005 for the annual Santa Claus Games. This year's competition included Santa's from seven countries.

More than 50 Santas competed in classic events such as sleigh and reindeer racing, porridge eating, singing, and chimney climbing. Last year's winner from England relinquished his crown to the Santa from Estonia.



A happy Estonian Santa Claus following the presentation of the gold medal

Photo by Kalev Lilleorg

The Estonian newspaper Õhtuleht, in its November 23, 2005 edition, reports that Aare Rebban won the gold medal at the recent Santa Claus Games in Gallivare, Sweden. According to the article, the golden Santa started to practice his craft in elementary school. As Santa, he traveled back-and-forth on the local bus line for hours and rewarded poetic passengers by handing out cigarettes and candy to appreciative adult passengers.

Aare participated in the Santa Claus Games for the first time this year. In the sleigh race, he reached the finish line ahead of the reindeer but lost some style points! In another event, the contestants had to climb up to a rooftop chimney. Playing his accordion, he entertained the audience by singing "White Christmas" in Swedish for the benefit of the appreciative crowd.

Dave Kiil

A story about Elmar's library: Part one

Anti Liiv

It is easy to visit Estonia today. Being in Estonia, it is sometimes hard for visitors with Estonian roots to understand local Estonians' mentality. It is even hard to understand each other before consuming at least 4 bottles of local Saku¹ beer. The reason: we have similar roots, but different cultural backgrounds. That is why it is so hard to understand local Estonian anecdotes, jokes, and opinions. Of course, it also depends on educational level² and personality. Maybe it will be easier to understand and communicate next summer with relatives in Estonia if you read this and possibly a future article. I'll try to explore the average Estonian mentality by reviewing a selection of childhood books for middle-age Estonian males. Let us start to find similarities in the mental background of Estonians.

Elmar's childhood

A present-day, a fifty-year-old man in Estonia, born approximately 10 years after the end of WWII, cannot remember the war or the cruel deportations to Siberia. When Elmar went to elementary school, life in Estonia changed gradually to be more liberal even under the Russian occupation. One important point to understand: Elmar received all his education, from the first grade to university, in Estonian.

Books and movies

His first foreign language was Russian, the second was English or

German. It is true, there was a political³ impact on education. But all education was in Estonian⁴ and he could read hundreds of books written in Estonian. At that time social differences among Estonians were minimal compared with contemporary Estonians. Estonians read the same newspapers, the same magazines, and saw the same TV programs⁵. The small Estonian community⁶ at that time was very homogenous.

Since movies and TV were popular among boys, Elmar saw hundreds of war movies. However, they reflected the Russian viewpoint of World War II.

Elmar didn't see WWII movies involving the US and Canada until he was already 30 years old. Until then, American involvement in WWII was unknown. Extremely popular in these times was a Russian TV-series "17 Spring Moments" about a Russian spy operating in Berlin. Heroes of this TV series (as symbols) are still present in different anecdotes. Colourful and raunchy political anecdotes (Russian-American-French guys or Russian-Armenian-Tshuktshi guys, etc.) were very popular at this time. Elmar saw a black man in Estonia for the first time when he was 35 years old! It is hard to believe, but it is true.

Compare the books you read at the same age.

³ Soviet Russian

⁴ In all of the USSR, only the Baltic States managed to educate their young in their national language.

⁵ All in Estonian language

⁶ 1/3 of the inhabitants of Estonia were Russian-speaking, but they lived in north-Estonian towns and family-to-family contacts were very rare

¹ Popular beer and famous brewery about 10 km from Tallinn

² This paper describes those Estonians with at least secondary school education background.

In his childhood, Elmar read “boy-books”. They can be divided into 3 groups:

A. Books supporting the Estonian national mentality even in the time of Soviet occupation:

1. *Fr. Kreutzwald (1803-1882)* ‘*Eesti rahva ennemuistsed jutud*’, (*Old Estonian fairy tales*) – Estonian fairy-tales for 5 to 10 year- old boys and girls
2. *Eduard Bornhöhe (1862-1923)* ‘*Tasuja*’, (*The Avenger*) - This is a very famous Estonian novel about the last big revolt (Jüriöö ülestõus in 1343) against German knights. Probably hundreds of Estonian boys between 10 and 15 dreamed of acting as Jaanus, the hero of this novel.
3. *Enne Koppel (1901-1942)* – ‘*Meelis*’, (1941), (*Meelis*) – also describes Estonians in the war against the German knights. It is the book for 10-15 year-old boys. One might ask why Russians allowed these books supporting a very strong Estonian nationalistic mentality? The answer is easy: during the post-WWII years the Russian mentality was focussed on the war against Germany.
4. *Oskar Luts (1887-1953)* – ‘*Kevade*’, (*Spring*), (1912-1913) is still popular in Estonia, both among males and females. This book describes life in elementary school in a small Estonian village at the end of the 19th century. There are also some nationalistic ideas against the local German nobility. The movie based on this book is still popular in Estonia. Perhaps everybody in

Estonia has seen the movie as a “national monument”.



Cover of “Spring”

5. To better understand the Estonian mentality it is useful to read *A.H. Tammsaare (1878-1940)* ‘*Tode ja Oigus*’ (*Truth and Justice*) (1926), which describes the life of an Estonian farmer at the end of the 19th century. There are several volumes, but the most important one is the 1st volume. This book generated many “slogans” about Estonian life: eg. “Work hard, then love will come!”

B. Books for 15 year-old boys, perhaps common throughout Europe.

There are at least 30-50 of these books printed in Estonian. They were very popular in Estonia from the 1960-1980s, but are of limited interest now. Examples include:

1. *Mark Twain* – “*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn*”.
2. *R.L. Stevenson* – “*Treasure Island*”.

3. J. Verne – “Captain Grant’s Children”.
4. A. Dumas – “The Three Musketeers”.
5. I. Molnar – “The Boys from Pal-Street, Budapest”.

Perhaps the last book (I. Molnar) was not famous in Europe, but it was already popular before WWII in Estonia and after WWII in Eastern Europe. It describes the life and problems of young boys with their own heroes and dreams.

C. This list includes some interesting books, known primarily in Eastern Europe due to their specific irony and humor. These are difficult to understand without knowledge of the social background of Eastern European society. I mention two examples which are still popular in the Baltic States, especially among the middle-age population.

1. Jaroslav Hasek (Czech) – “Vahva sõduri Svejki juhtumised.” (*The Adventures of Brave Soldier Svejk*).

This book describes the funny adventures of stupid soldier Svejk during WWI while with the Austrian troops. But the situation was similar to the Red Army as well as Soviet society. Not only in the Army, but in society too. There is a Svejk beer-pub in old Tallinn now. Several sentences from the book are used in Estonia as “passwords”. The book was popular also because it was important that a 50-year-old man during this time not be recruited into the Red Army.

Ilja Ilf and Jevgeni Petrov (Russian) – “12 tooli.” (*12 Chairs*). This book by Russian

authors describes Russian life in 1920s. Joke after joke describes the absurdity of Russian life.



Cover of “The Adventures of Brave Soldier Svejk”

I acknowledge that Elmar’s library reflects my personal imagination. But if you read these books you may better understand the mentality of your relatives in Estonia. You may find these books as bridges to greater understanding between us.

After re-independence of Estonia, people’s interests started to change rapidly, particularly among young Estonians⁷. They have become more European and less Estonian in their outlook. Reading of books is not as popular as it was 20-30 years ago. This is not a specific Estonian problem, it reflects the global impact of TV and Internet.

A current bestseller in Estonia, especially amongst 40-60 year-olds, is the Estonian version of “The Da Vinci Code”

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Anti Liiv is a psychiatrist in Estonia.

⁷ Today’s generation up to 30 years of age

Europe's Spookiest City, Hallowe'en 2005, Tallinn, Estonia

October...and there's a chill in Old Tallinn's foggy air. But it doesn't simply herald winter's onset. Estonia's gloriously gothic capital lays claim to being Europe's spookiest city.

Tallinn comes straight from the pages of the Grimm Brothers' darker fables: dragon-headed gargoyles and squat stone towers with russet-colored caps...needle-thin spires colored black and copper...gilded weathervanes adorned with mythical creatures. Names like Long Leg Street, Goldfoot Tower, Hanging Hill, and the Wall of Hatred all add to the dark magic.

Come twilight, old-fashioned lamps add a delicious menace to the cobbled alleys and stairways. But even in daytime, you feel shadowed by otherworldly footsteps. Skeletons have been found sealed in the walls of more than a few medieval houses. And one street is actually called Vaimu, Estonian for "ghost."

Tallinn's spectral inhabitants include the Stable Tower's phosphorescent bone-man and a drunken monk who haunts the mischievously-named "Maidens' Tower," where medieval prostitutes were imprisoned. The gate tower on Luhike Jalg (Short Leg Street) is apparently haunted by a fire-spitting dog, three monks (one dressed in red), a woman in old-fashioned clothing, and the unquiet spirit of a town executioner.

Don't linger too long on Rataskaevu Street. Passers-by often hear inexplicable noises coming from No. 16 after midnight. This 15th-century inn (now a sushi restaurant) is rumored to be the devil's party place. A cloaked man rented a top-floor room for the night, insisting on complete privacy. Following what sounded like the noise of a hundred people, one luckless servant peeked around the door and saw the devil himself. Look up and you'll see the room--it's the one with the bricked-up window and false painted curtains.

Cornering Rataskaevu and Dunkri streets is the Wheel Well, also known as Cat Well. Tallinn's medieval citizens believed a demon dwelt at the

bottom--a hungry demon that needed appeasing with animal sacrifices. Rather than giving it pigs and chickens, they fed it pussy-cats.

A demonic builder constructed St. Olav's church, which at one time boasted the tallest spire in Europe. The story goes that a stranger turned up, saying he would build the church in record time, if paid a huge bag of gold. However, if the townsfolk guessed his name, he would forego payment.

The church got built in the blink of an eye, and someone did indeed guess the stranger's name: Olav. He was up the spire at the time, and hearing his name called, he tumbled to his death. A toad and a serpent crawled out of his mouth--a sure sign of devilry.

In a corner of Toomkirik, the Dome Church, is the tomb of Pontus de la Gardie. A French mercenary, he led Swedish forces during one of their Estonian forays. De la Gardie had a reputation for cruelty: his favorite punishment was skinning prisoners alive. It's said he wanders Tallinn at night...and won't rest until enough unsuspecting strangers have bought the skins from him.

Are you sure you want to venture out after dark tonight?

Ghost-finder General. International Living Steenie Harvey

Reprinted with permission from www.InternationalLiving.com "The best places in the world for you to live or retire"

A virtual holiday in Estonia

Google Earth, an Internet site, provides high-resolution aerial and satellite imagery globally. Recently I downloaded Google Earth and went "sightseeing" to various destinations in Estonia, including a look at Tallinn's red rooftops and my ancestral homestead on Saaremaa. It was fascinating.

ADK

Destination of the Week: Tony Estonia

Sophia Banay
Forbes Magazine
September 30, 2005

The breakup of the former Soviet Union has had benefits around the globe. Tyrannies have been overthrown, markets opened, culture exchanged and borders crossed. While not quite on par with, say, institutionalizing democracy in many parts of the world, one of the fringe benefits of the dissolution of the Eastern bloc is that many of the world's most beautifully preserved medieval cities suddenly became accessible to international tourism.

One of the prime examples is Tallinn's Old Town, which was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997, six years after Estonia gained its independence. In 2004, Estonia's accession into the European Union received public support from the majority of the country, who hoped to welcome a previously untapped travel market. Today, Tallinn is approaching international party-city status on the level of Prague, with Brits on "stag holidays," American and British cruise passengers, real-estate hunting Swedes and Russians and, lately, even EU commissioners dominating the tiny Old Town center.

The Tallinn hotel is the obvious destination for visiting businessmen, diplomats and even international celebrities, like **Sting**, **Prince Charles** and **Duran Duran**. The **Schlossle Hotel**, located at 13 Pühavaimu Street in the historic town center, is the poshest address in the city. In 1363, this complex of buildings was home to a Tallinn Alderman who resided in one lavish property and also owned the adjacent stone storage buildings. Conveniently located between the city harbor and the central market, the property was passed down from merchant to merchant through the centuries. Today, the original medieval base walls still stand on the narrow cobblestone street where they were initially built.

Despite the Schlössle Hotel's quaint appearance, there is nothing old-fashioned about the hotel's room rates, which start at \$370 per night. But from the moment the valet opens the cab door, it is clear that this is a world-class hotel. And considering the level of service that is provided, its rates are thoroughly justified--and are consistent with a comparable hotel in Manhattan or London.

Upon entering, two staff members are present to escort you through the check-in process: One does the actual checking in and procures your key--complete with a leather tag embossed with the room number in gold--and the other guides you to your room, carrying your luggage over the ancient spiral staircase while pointing out the hotel's facilities, which include a sauna in the original 13th-century cellar, a sheltered open-air courtyard and a Great Hall with concave limestone walls and a ceiling that looks like it came straight out of a fairy tale.



The roof supports in the living room of this suite date back to the 13th century.

The lobby itself is decorated in striking colors: red sofas, limestone walls and dark, wooden furniture. Oriental rugs, handmade

in Eastern Estonia, are placed tastefully throughout. The low wooden ceiling, medieval roof supports, green apples in a bowl on the end table and burning fire all add to the sense of elegance and decorum: It feels like the living room of an extraordinarily wealthy resident of the 13th century--which, in fact, it was.

Guest rooms, of which there are less than 30, are decorated just as lavishly. Each room is unique--some with beamed ceilings, triangular windows or slanted walls. Each room does have a television, as well as Molton Brown toiletries in the bathrooms, heavy white bathrobes and an enormous bed. In-room fax machines and Internet access can be arranged on a case-by-case basis. Otherwise, there is a computer kiosk on-site and free wireless Internet in the lobby.

By far the hotel's best room is the Schössle Suite, which goes for \$1,080 per night and has its own sauna and Jacuzzi in the bathroom. A dramatic living room, decorated with satin chairs and antique furnishings, sports an 800-year-old medieval roof support, and an ancient crest--the profile of a man--is imprinted on the wall. The usual TV, stereo system and DVD player are included as well, hidden discreetly in an ancient cupboard. The suite is rented about three times per month--usually for board meetings by companies like Netherlands-based **United Motors Europe** and Princeton, N.J.-based **NRG Energy** (nyse: [NRG](#) - [news](#) - [people](#)), or for diplomatic conferences.

The hotel can support conferences for up to 40 people in the Boardroom, and other conference and banquet facilities are available. Private dinners, served in the Boardroom, the Great Hall or the Schössle Suite, are catered by the sublime **Stenhus Restaurant**, where a rich European menu of duck and pork paté or roasted scallops in artichoke sauce might distract you from the business at hand.



Burning candles and concave ceilings make every meal romantic.

Life in 13th-century Estonia was not easy. Lithuanian neighbors to the North were frequent aggressors, while Teutonic knights invading from the Germanic states capitalized on the region's weakness and colonized it in its entirety. Harsh Baltic winters made growing crops difficult. Today, Estonia and its capital Tallinn are much more pleasant places to visit, and the Schössle Hotel makes for an elegant and comfortable home base.

Forbes Fact

In the 13th century, the fortified town of Tallinn was a thriving trading port. Horse-drawn carriages and ships from as far away as Africa converged here. The city was especially critical to the Hanseatic League--a merchant association based in Northern Germany and the Baltics. The prosperity brought to Tallinn through the league is still evident in the distinctive architecture built of limestone, which was a staple Hanseatic building material. Today, Tallinn remains a major economic center for the Baltic region, and real estate, especially in the UNESCO-protected Old Town, is the major industry.

Rummu Juri

H. Langeste

His proper name was Jüri Rumm (Jüri is pronounced Yury) but he is known as Rummu Jüri because Estonians have the habit of referring to familiar persons in the old folksy way, pronouncing the family name (in genitive case) before the forename. In the old country everybody knows about him but in Canada few know his name, so I would like to introduce Rummu Jüri.

Rummu Jüri was a notorious bandit, the biggest robber and horse thief in 19th century Estonia. But he was also very popular and storytellers have turned him into a folk hero. His persona has inspired people to write books and stage plays. A beer brewed at Pärnu has his name on the label. One operetta (in 1954) and two Estonian movies have been produced about Rummu Jüri's adventures, the latest having its premiere in 1993. It is said to be an exciting adventure story about plundering, fighting and how the idol escaped from custody - plus some romantic interludes involving a peasant girl and a baron's daughter.

There are few hard facts about Rummu Jüri. But this has not stopped anyone from writing about him. Andres Ehin published a novel in 1980 titled *The "Memoirs of Rummu Jüri"* though the title comes with the author's own commentary: "freely distorted". Critics say, that historical truth and reality were evidently not the author's objective. Rummu Jüri never kept a diary himself, which could have been used for judging the dependability of the other writings. His reputation spread orally and like rumours, all things said about him, did not necessarily happen exactly as written. But who cares? They created a legend of Rummu Jüri, as though he was the Estonian Robin Hood.

Baltic nobleman Count Alfred von Keyserling mentions him in his memoirs. Keyserling was a prison superintendent in

Irkutsk region and they met when Jüri was serving his 15-year sentence in Siberian exile. Jüri waited upon the nobleman during his sauna baths - massaged and whisked him with birch twigs and as a pastime, told stories about his own life. He had said that he took from the rich and gave to the poor. He had been welcome in any cottage and was treated with the best food they had. And women had adored him, girls liked to hang their arms around his neck.

We know that Jüri Rumm was the oldest son of a tenant farmer in Kehtna, born on August 2nd 1856. For centuries country folks had resented the oppressive land owning Baltic Barons, but after Rummu Jüri was flogged with 15 strokes for petty thievery, that feeling turned into deep hatred. Jüri wanted revenge and turned into an outlaw. One story is that young Jüri was whipped when, as a servant-boy in Kehtna Manor, he snatched a piece of meat from the larder for his poor and ailing father. Another story is that he had stolen wine from Valtu Manor, where he worked as a gardener's helper. He rode away from Valtu with the best riding horse from the stable, leaving a message for the baron: "Good bye sir, you shall not see me again, but I will be back and take your gold and silver". He is said to have returned one night at supertime and set fire to the barn. After everybody rushed out to the burning barn he emptied the house of valuables, leaving a note: "Jüri kept his word".

Jüri pillaged other bluebloods' mansions too, forcing the nobility to take the persistent housebreaker seriously. When he hit the Sausti Manor house, he openly threatened to do the same thing in every nobleman's home in Estonia. The landowners association posted 100 roubles reward for his capture and the city council of Tallinn added 75 roubles to it. That amount of money was about 6 months wages for

skilled tradesmen in St. Petersburg's construction industry. In a newspaper he was nicknamed "Fra Diavola" (the Devil's Brother) after Daniel Auber's opera by that name. He was also considered the Estonian equivalent of "Rinaldo Rinaldini", a fictional character created earlier in the century by the German writer Christian Vulpius. Vulpius' Rinaldo Rinaldini was a noble minded Corsican bandit, who fought against the French overlords, but stole only from those who deserved to be plundered.

This was an accurate characterisation really, because Rummu Jüri was a notorious bandit too, but to most of the common folks he was good hearted and likeable. He did not kill people and only stole from the big estates. He robbed the aristocrats in order to harm them, not because he wanted to get rich. He never touched folks of his own extraction - the tenant farmers and landless peasants. Often he shared his loot with the needy people. Once he had bought a chicken from a poor widow and paid the fantastic sum of 25 roubles for it. For comparison, a seamstress seldom earned more than 100 roubles a year.

Rummu Jüri was caught several times but managed to escape from custody, either on the way to being locked up, or from inside the jailhouse. People helped him to hide from the authorities. Finally his luck ran out when someone betrayed him.

A simpleminded peasant with a loose mouth had said to a buddy in a tavern, that Jüri was at his place. Someone overheard it and told to the police. They captured him for good in 1879, when he was only 23 years old. Jüri Rumm was arrested at his home turf in Kehtna community. No chances were taken. Jüri was handcuffed and tied with ropes to a sleigh. With one man sitting on either side of him they rode him to jail in Tallinn. In the cell he was handcuffed onto a steel bar, thus making it impossible to break out. This way he could not eat by himself and he had to be fed by the guards like a little baby. A picture of Jüri was taken for the records. They took him to the photographer's place with a nine-man escort, one of them a horseman. He was sent to Siberia to spend the next 15 years there.

Soon after his deportation some newspapers published rumours about Rummu Jüri escaping from the railroad car where he was transported, which caused some panic among the Baltic Barons. However, the prisoner was well guarded on the train too, and the rumours proved to be false. The Trans Siberia railway had not been built yet, so the prisoners had to be moved by other means. Quite likely there was a fair amount of walking involved. Years later Rummu Jüri returned to Estonia for a short visit, but then he returned to Siberia voluntarily. Jüri had said that he now enjoyed a good life there.



Kehtna Manor

Rummu Jüri worked here as a servant-boy

Estonia and Slovenia

When small is beautifully successful

LJUBLJANA AND TALLINN

The richest state in ex-communist Europe wants to copy the fastest-growing one

SMUG, small and thriving, Estonia and Slovenia share a lot. Both escaped in 1991 from large communist entities in which they were the richest bit: from Soviet occupation in Estonia's case, and from federal Yugoslavia in Slovenia's. That left both of them with marked superiority complexes: Estonians (all 1.3m of them) love explaining how much more western, wired and competitive they are than their ex-Soviet counterparts. For their part, Slovenians (2m) relentlessly underline their Alpine and central European heritage. (Never, ever call them Balkan.)

To be fair, each has a lot to be proud of. Brushing off outsiders' scoffing, they have created stable, prosperous countries with strong institutions. Slovenia is much the richest post-communist country, while Estonia's economy showed 9.9% year-on-year growth in the latest quarter—Europe's fastest rate. Both are in the EU and NATO. By 2007, both want to adopt the euro.

Estonians, twitchy about Russia, have long envied Slovenia's wealth and security. But now the tables are turning. Slovenia wants Estonian-style growth. The current rate, a projected 3.9% this year, will not match west European levels fast enough. Worse, other post-communist countries are catching up. "We are losing our first place," says the prime minister, Janez Jansa. He blames the gradualist approach of past governments. Having just returned from the Baltic states, he speaks of Estonia as "a good example for us".

One thing he would like to copy is Estonia's flat tax of 24% on personal and corporate income. Filing an annual tax return online, as 80% of Estonians do, takes a few

minutes. "Our tax system is so complicated that even experts can't understand it, let alone foreign investors. And it takes from March to October to have it processed. In Estonia it's five days," says an envious Slovene official.

The second thing that struck Mr Jansa was Estonia's economic openness. That dates from 1991, when it had to start from scratch after the Soviet collapse. It privatised almost everything, shunning tariffs, subsidies, bail-outs and restrictions on foreign ownership. That brought huge foreign investment and a manufacturing boom, as well as thriving service industries and a large niche in the new economy. Skype, an internet telephony company, is based on software developed in Estonia; its development centre in Tallinn employs 100-plus geeks, and its Estonian shareholders are now multi-millionaires. There is talk of a \$1 billion stockmarket launch for another company, Playtech, which designs internet gambling software.

Strong export businesses made Slovenia so rich in the Yugoslav era that it didn't seem quite communist. Now it doesn't feel quite capitalist. Although it boasts the region's best port, plus world-class makers of furniture, domestic appliances, and medicine, it has pampered, wobbly banks and creaky service industries. One reason is continuing state influence in the economy. Another is that insiders, not foreigners, are the main owners. Competition is weak and innovation lags; there is nothing like Skype. Mr Jansa blames, with some justice, the cosiness of "old networks" from Yugoslav days. Some, he says, are linked to the former intelligence services.

Fast hare, faster hare

GDP, % change on a year earlier



Sources: Economist Intelligence Unit; Bank of Estonia; Statistical Office of Slovenia

Mr Jansa's third big idea is reform of public administration. He was impressed with what Estonia calls e-government: the idea that mouse-clicks, not queues outside offices, are the best way for citizens to meet the state. That often impresses outsiders, at least on the surface. Many votes in this weekend's local elections in Estonia, for example, will be cast online. Yet the system is far from perfect: though Estonian institutions set up from scratch do indeed tend to be ultra-efficient, those inherited from Soviet days—like the xenophobic immigration authority—are anything but.

Mr Jansa, a fan of Estonia's administrative "simplicity", is trying to catch up. He has introduced online registration for entrepreneurs, and a law to cut form-filing: "If data is already in the system, it is the state's duty to find it, not the citizen's duty to provide it again."

Slovenia's sleepy and inward-looking public institutions are certainly ripe for change. In the global higher-education market, for example, Estonia boasts dozens of institutions (admittedly, of varying quality) offering competitively priced, multilingual courses. Some attract students of medicine and veterinary science from next-door Finland; increasingly, Asians come too. By contrast, independent higher education in Slovenia is held back by gruelling bureaucratic obstacles. The main university insists stodgily that all courses be taught in Slovenian.

Some reform-minded Slovenes doubt Mr Jansa's commitment to change. He was elected on a radical liberalising manifesto last October, but so far there has been little to show for it. And many features of Estonia, such as run-down health care, bad roads and a wholly deregulated labour market would horrify Slovenes, who pride themselves on high-quality public services. Estonians themselves fret about corruption and government complacency.

For all that, it is rare and welcome for a post-communist politician even to consider learning from another country. Most of them, especially those in big countries, insist that their problems are unique. That is almost always wrong. ■



Baltic Blues

Tallinn and Warsaw

An unusual problem: labour shortages

Since the collapse of communism, it is jobs not workers that have been in short supply. But that's changing. Employers in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, where growth rates are over 7%, now complain of labour shortages. Last month Elcoteq, the country's best-known investor, started busing 150 workers from Narva in Estonia's hard-up north-east to work at its big mobile-phone plant in the capital of Tallinn. When it opened in the early 1990s, would-be workers from the city's grim suburbs queued overnight to apply.

One reason is a boom in labour-thirsty business: Latvia's construction industry, for example, jumped 16% in the first half of 2005. Membership of the European Union is bringing foreign investment and outsourcing. That stokes manufacturing. Tourism is soaring, meaning more jobs in restaurants and hotels. And wages are growing by around 10% annually, meaning higher spending power and more jobs in shops.

Officially, unemployment is still around 8% in all three countries. But some of the jobless are not easily employable: "Too old, too drunk or too lazy," says one official unkindly. More importantly, many are working, either illegally at home or elsewhere in the EU. When Latvian teachers recently demonstrated for higher salaries, one placard threatened "see you in Ireland"-which, like Britain, has opened its borders to workers from the EU's newest members.

Indeed, in Britain there may be 100,000 workers from the Baltic States (combined population: under 8m). Poland, with nearly 40m people, reckons that 300,000 of its citizens are working in Britain. Polish building firms are complaining of labour shortages-though unemployment is officially 19%.

One solution is better labour mobility: if money can tempt workers across a continent, it can also shift them around at home. But though higher wages please voters, they worry governments. Central and eastern countries need to nudge inflation still lower if they are to qualify to adopt the euro. Higher labour costs may also threaten competitiveness. A big Lithuanian knitwear firm, Utenos Trikotazas, has shifted production to low-wage Ukraine.

But the most controversial idea is to import extra workers. Poland has tens of thousands of illegal immigrants, chiefly from Ukraine: now the talk is of making it easier for them to work legally. In Latvia, VP Market, a retail chain, wants to hire staff from neighboring Belarus; other firms are thinking along similar lines. That may make business sense, but in the small Baltic States, where many still see Russian migrants as a lasting and unwelcome reminder of Soviet occupation, such notions are regarded with horror.

Source: The Economist, September 24, 2005

Estonia first country in the world to introduce Internet voting

In local government council elections to be held on 16 October 2005, voters in Estonia will be the first in the world to have the choice of voting either from their homes over the internet or in a traditional booth.

In a controversial move, Estonia has changed its election laws to allow its citizens to vote via the internet. If this first try is successful, Estonia will extend e-voting to all other kinds of elections. In the regional elections, 21% of Estonians want to make use of e-voting, but it is not expected to boost the turnout of voters, usually pretty low in these kinds of elections in the sparsely-populated country.

Estonia is the only country in Europe where access to the internet is a constitutional right. Sixty per cent of the country's 1.33 million inhabitants have internet-connected computers at their homes. Those who also have an electronic identity card can use it

to vote via the internet in the local government council elections.

Estonia's President Arnold Rüütel has opposed the introduction of e-voting, arguing that the original plan favoured internet voters over traditional voters. According to the scheme, e-voters could have changed their votes until the very last minute of the election period while voters in booths could not have done the same. On Mr. Rüütel's pressure, this withdrawal option was dismissed.

The UK has just shelved plans to introduce e-voting due to concerns that the security and confidentiality of the vote could not be guaranteed, the costs were going to be too high and the turnout would not rise. A Commission in Ireland came to similar conclusions.

<http://www.euractiv.com>

Newborn girl in Pakistan named 'Estonia'

Oct 19. Besides treating the injured, medics of an Estonian rescue team working in quake-hit Pakistan have also helped to deliver babies. Her parents named a newborn baby girl who Estonian medics helped to deliver "Estonia".

Meanwhile the chief of the rescue team, Tauno Suurkivi, said the number of victims of the catastrophe is huge and the need for medical aid is growing steadily.

On Sunday medics received almost 1,500 patients and in 200 cases some surgical procedures were needed. This week an ambulance was placed at the disposal of the Estonian field hospital. Patient numbers stayed big in subsequent days, too, and in addition Estonian rescuers drove to a nearby village to clear rubble from collapsed buildings.

Last week the Estonian Rescue Board sent a team of six medics, eight rescuers-logisticians, a liaison officer and a logistics specialist to Pakistan.

The head of the team, Suurkivi, is deputy chief of the rescue service from Western-Viru County. The planned duration of the mission is 12 days. The director general of the Rescue Board, Mati Raidma, went to the crisis area along with the team to start work on the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team. The Estonian government has allocated more than 1.5 million kroons (EUR 96,000) to cover the costs of the mission. Estonia sent some 50,000 kroons' worth of medicines to Pakistan procured for the Foreign Ministry's budgetary humanitarian relief funds.

From Estonian Review,
Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Submitted by Helgi Leesment

A new series of Estonian publications and postcards now available

The Publishing House Grenader has just released a couple of beautifully illustrated brochures promoting new books about Estonia's recent history, including a "Birds-Eye View of Estonian History", "Estonia in World War II", "Forgotten War" about Estonia's forest brothers (metsavennad), and "Red Terror". The books were written by Mart Laar, former Prime Minister of Estonia and presently a Member of Parliament.



A Grenader brochure

The illustrated books are available in several languages, including English, and are priced between 89-99 krooni (approx \$ 8 Canadian).

A large selection of illustrated books and postcards are also available.

Check out Grenadier's website at <http://www.grenader.ee/> to view their material and to order via the Internet, or contact info@grenader.ee for further information.

Prepared by Dave Kiil



BORYS WRZESNEWSKYJ



Member of Parliament – Etobicoke Centre

News Release • News Release

For Immediate Release

August 2, 2005

Wrzesnewskyj again calls on Government to remove Visitor Visa requirements

Ottawa—Liberal MP Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre) continues to champion the cause of removing visitor visa requirements for visitors from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. His efforts to treat all members of the European Union equally was featured in the latest August 1, 2005 issue of *Maclean's* magazine, Canada's national newsmagazine:

"As Maclean's columnist Paul Wells rightfully asserted, the treatment of these seven countries is a holdover from the old Cold War days. The Berlin Wall crumbled to the ground years ago, yet the rules from that era remain. As a matter of fairness, it's time we treated these countries the same way that we treat the other European Union countries; it's time we put an end to the visa restrictions. I get calls all the time from constituents who can't get their family members to Canada from these seven countries for weddings and for funerals, which is particularly heartwrenching. We should treat all European Union members equally and not have a visa regime which in fact states that the citizens of certain EU countries are more welcome than others," stated Wrzesnewskyj.

Wrzesnewskyj first raised the issue of lifting the visa restrictions with Immigration Minister Joe Volpe during a March 8, 2005 Citizenship and Immigration Committee meeting. He subsequently introduced a motion (M-238) on the floor of the House of Commons on April 25, 2005 calling on the government to lift the requirements. This was followed up with his intervention during the debates on the Citizenship and Immigration Main Estimates on May 25, 2005.

Copies of Mr. Wrzesnewskyj's motion, his interventions, and the *Maclean's* column are attached.

Letters from Estonia

Recently an American from California moved to Estonia and "published" several letters about Estonia and Estonians on the Internet. The readers of his musings enjoyed his witty and insightful observations and the writer, Tim, decided to make his "Letters from Estonia" available to a larger audience by setting up a blog. (A blog is a regularly updated web page, consisting of news, links, opinions, and trivia).

Tim's letters can be found at <http://lettersfromestonia.blogspot.com>

Check it out an enjoy!



LET THEIR PEOPLE COME

Why are we still imposing visa restrictions on seven new EU members?

THIS WEEK we're going to actually try to get something done in this country. You can help, if you like. We begin with a story.

Meet Ivar Tallo. He's the head of Estonia's e-Governance Academy, which sounds obscure until he talks about it. Estonia's forced annexation into the Soviet Union came with oppression's usual tool kit: slaughter, torture, secret police, secret files, disappearances, interrogations. So Estonians *really* don't like it when governments know more about citizens than citizens know about their government. Tallo and his colleagues work to ensure

it can't happen again. Anyone can go online in Estonia and see every record the government holds about them—along with a list of everyone in the government who's looked at those records.

In short, Tallo has things to say that any government, including ours, needs to hear. Unfortunately, when I said "Meet Ivar Tallo," I was speaking metaphorically, because he won't be visiting Canada anytime soon.

He needs a visa to visit Canada, which means he has to give up his passport while his application is processed. His passport and visa application would have to travel from Tallinn to the Canadian embassy in Warsaw which processes visas for the Baltic states, then back. Tallo would normally visit several countries during this time. "I can't give up my passport for six weeks. Give me a break, guys."

Now here's the thing.

For no clear reason, Canada requires visas for short-term visits, not only for visitors from Estonia, but from six other European Union member states: Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. For most, the delay is a lot shorter than six weeks. But it's a pointless hangover from the Cold War. A hassle Canada imposes on no other Europeans—and which none of the seven countries imposes on Canadian visitors.

Ivar Tallo, incidentally, studied here. In the early 1990s he was a Ph.D. candidate at McGill University. He could return to lecture our senior officials on democratic reform.

"Or I might just want to go to my favourite *depanneur* in Montreal and say hello to the nice Greek guy there. Or have a bagel. I respect and understand your right to have an independent country. But if you want to have friends..."

Canada is losing friends in one of the world's most dynamic regions, not through any great misdeed but because of this silly visa restriction. In Bratislava, a half-dozen Canadian businessmen told me Slovaks bend their ears about visas all the time. In Ottawa, a Polish diplomat told me the visa restriction has become the first issue at every meeting. Too often it's also the last issue because our feds can't explain why (a) somebody from

dians with Polish ancestry. And at least another 430,000 with links to Hungary, Lithuania and the rest. When one dies or gets married, potential wedding or funeral guests have to work too hard to get here. Why?

Borys Wrzesnewskiy is the Liberal MP for Etobicoke Centre. He's trying to get visa restrictions lifted for the seven countries in question. He can't get a clear answer from his own government. Is it because some Czechs abused their visa-free status and tried to stay in Canada a decade ago? That was before the Czechs' own western European neighbours welcomed them into a union far bigger and richer than ours.

Is it because the Americans also impose visa restrictions on the same seven countries? So what? Canada is still a sovereign country. It expresses that sovereignty by letting Mexicans and Bahamians and citizens of many other countries into ours without visas, even though the Americans require them.

Like everyone I've asked, Wrzesnewskiy suspects the rules stay in place simply because nobody can be bothered to remove them. In 20 years when these countries are among the most influential in the world, Canada will be paying for its short-sightedness.

So let's fix it.

On April 14, Wrzesnewskiy tabled Resolution 238 in the House of Commons, which calls for the seven countries' visa restrictions to be lifted. Private members' resolutions normally sit around forever. Let's get Parliament to put Resolution 238 to a vote and Paul Martin's government to end the visa restrictions. And let's get it all done by Nov. 9—the 16th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Go get some scissors. Cut this page out, add polite comments of your own if you like, and mail it to your MP in Ottawa. You don't even need a stamp. Tell Ottawa the Cold War is over.

To comment, [backpage@macleans.ca](mailto: backpage@macleans.ca)
Read Paul Wells's weblog, "Inkless Wells," at www.macleans.ca/paulwells



France can visit Canada with only a passport; (b) somebody from Poland can visit France with only a passport; (c) that same passport isn't enough for the Pole to visit Canada.

There are 800,000 Cana-

The little tree that stood

Riina Kindlam

If you type “first Christmas tree” in an internet search engine and start poking around for the various versions of how, where and when the fragrant little evergreen came to be the focus of our attention, you’re lucky if you come across the date 1441 and Tallinn. You’ll sooner find Riga 1510 (the very first hit in google.ca), Alsace 1521 and Strasbourg 1605.

These are the all presumed dates for the first recorded public display of a decorated Christmas tree – as a Christian symbol, that is. The worshipping of sacred trees was practiced by the Greeks, Romans, Druids, Vikings and most Northern Europeans. You can still visit sacred groves in Estonia today (sing. *hiis*, pl. *hiied*), the ones that have managed to slip past the clutches of ski-hill developers and the like. It was natural for all of these cultures to celebrate nature’s turning point of darkness to light that is the winter solstice with evergreens as symbols of the renewing fertility of spring.

The symbol of the tree or similar decorated wooden pyramid shape undoubtedly became most prevalent in Germany. According to legend it was there that St. Boniface (675? – 755 A.D.) the Anglo-Saxon bishop who was sent to Christianize the Germans, came upon a group of pagans ceremoniously gathered around an oak tree. They were most likely worshipping Thor, the Norse god of Thunder. In anger, he cut down the sacred oak and to his amazement a young fir tree sprung up in its place. Through St. Boniface’s teachings the fir (evergreen like Christ’s everlasting light, with embracing boughs and pointing toward heaven), became a sign of Christ and eventually spread to become a world-wide symbol of Christmas.

Devout Christians in Germany may have started bringing decorated trees into their homes in the 16th century, but their traditions had travelled along the Hanseatic trade routes to places like Tallinn much earlier.

The first tree was most likely the festive gesture of jovial members of the Brotherhood of the Blackheads (Mustapeade vennaskond), uniting single, young merchants and known to have been

established in Tallinn just shy of the year 1400. The Brotherhood was unique in Europe, active only in what is now Estonia and Latvia (with 20 members’ houses built in various cities and towns) until the Wismar “branch” was founded in the 17th century.

Latvian legend has it that Martin Luther, the father of Protestant Reformation himself (1483-1546), was so inspired by twinkling stars seen while walking in a pine forest outside of Riga that he promptly felled the prettiest tree, brought it home and lit candles on its branches to simulate the beautiful sight. That may well be, but there is a more concrete historical account of none other than the men of the Brotherhood of the Blackheads placing a decorated evergreen in the Riga’s Town Hall Square (Ratslaukums) in 1510, decorating it with flowers and setting it on fire! The Blackheads were notorious drinkers among other things, so the event was most likely rooted in revelry rather than piety.

And it happened in Tallinn in 1441. So who exactly gets the ad campaign for “Birthplace of the Christmas tree”...? Chronicler Balthasar Russow later recorded the custom at length in Estonia: in 1584 he describes the tree erected in the market as the centre of dancing, singing and raucous merriment in a very pagan carnival style. It was of course none other than the impending German culture which later “straightened” us and our Christmas traditions out. (A little known fact: composer Richard Wagner wrote one of the world’s most popular yuletide songs, *Oh Tannenbaum (Oh Christmas Tree)*, while living in Riga in 1838.

In 1834 Prince Albert of Saxony decorated the first tree in Windsor Castle for his beloved Queen Victoria. German immigrants had taken the tradition overseas with them long before that, but it was initially considered extremely suspect. The first tree lot opened in New York City in 1851 and President Franklin Pierce brought a Christmas tree into the White House for the first time in 1856. Coca-Cola’s jolly man in red would now have the perfect backdrop.

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Alberta Estonian Heritage Society

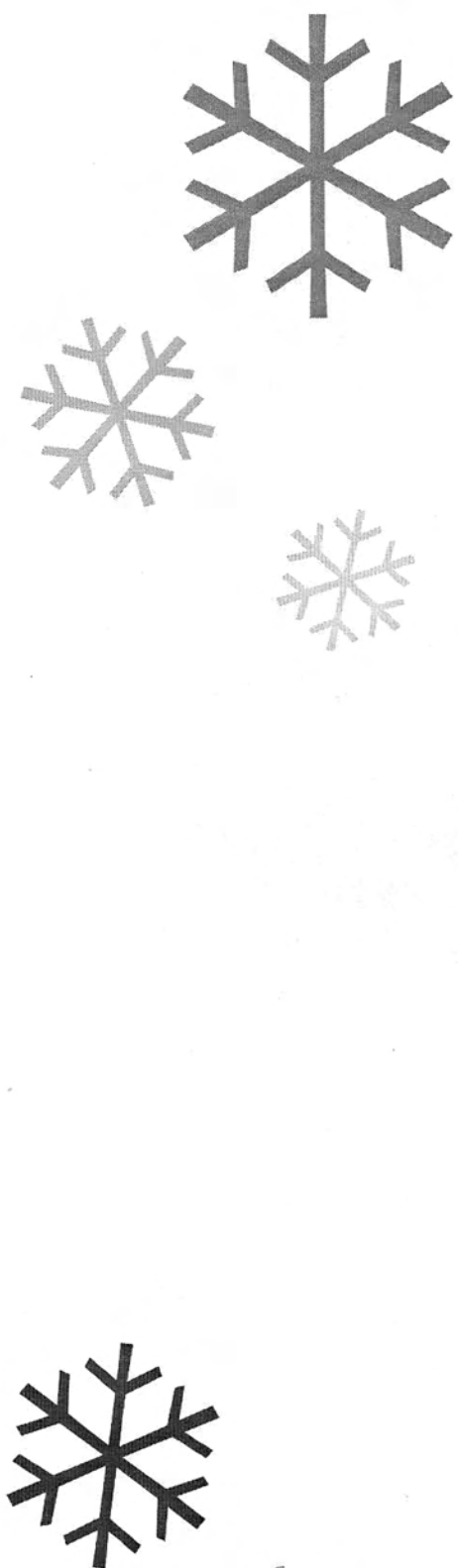
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Merry Christmas

