

AJAKAJA

SUMMER 2006

ALBERTA ESTONIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY

VOLUME 24

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TORINO 2006

*Andrus, Kristina, Mellisa -
olympic medalists!*



Alberta Estonian Heritage Society
Alberta Eesti Kultuuripärandi Selts

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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, the first Editor of Ajakaja. She lives in Tallinn and Luxembourg.

The cover page shows double gold medalist Kristina Smigun (top), gold medalist Andrus Veerpalu (middle left) and bronze medalist Mellisa Hollingsworth-Richards with her uncle Arnold Mottus (bottom right).



AJAKAJA

Alberta Estonian Heritage Society

Issue 24

Summer 2006

Letter from the Editor

Estonia has received an abundance of international media coverage in recent months. President Meri's death generated numerous articles in magazines and newspapers such as Time, the Wall Street Journal, the Economist and the City Paper. More recently, Estonia's first Prime Minister Mart Laar received the prestigious Milton Friedman Prize for his contributions to the rapid development of the Estonian economy and his role in furthering democracy. Worldwide media coverage included articles on the country's thriving tourist industry, with a focus on Tallinn's Old Town, the advanced state of hi-tech applications and a feature on Estonia's Modern-day Bach, composer Errki-Sven Tüür.

Our aim is to highlight happenings in Estonia and to provide coverage of events involving Society members as well as

to profile the families and the descendants of the pioneers who settled here during the last century. The interest in family histories has resulted in numerous articles from near and far. One of the more fascinating accounts is provided by the "accidental genealogist" from Colorado.

We're also appreciative of our Estonian "correspondent", Dr. Anti Liiv, for his thoughtful contribution about Estonian Encyclopedias and their role in preserving the national identity.



Höbevalge

An Early Sailing Ship

Alberta Estonian Heritage Society Website launched.

Given the popularity and versatility of the Internet for communications with the world at large and information-sharing about our activities, the Society now operates a website. Bob Kingsep took on the job of developing the

AEHS website and, to familiarize us with its operation, convened seminars in Eckville, Calgary and Edmonton last winter. We encourage all members and their friends to log on, find out the latest news, and be-

come actively involved to make it a prime communications tool.

The Alberta Estonian Heritage Society website address is:

www.aehs.ca

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Descendants of pioneer Estonians win World Cup Championships and Olympic bronze

Helgi Leesment

Most readers of this article have careened down neighbourhood slopes on a sled in their childhood. What we didn't know at the time was that when we lay on our back and went downhill feet first, we were doing a recreational version of the sport known as Luge; and when we lay on our stomach and went down head first, we were doing a recreational version of the sport known as Skeleton.

A compilation of phrases taken from the Torino Winter Olympics website describes the sport of skeleton as:

“Lying prone, facing downhill, head tucked down, skimming just a few centimeters above the icy track, hurtling down the run at maximum speeds of 130 kilometers an hour, arms at their sides, guided by courage and the most advanced aerodynamic materials.

Skeleton athletes use the same track as bobsleigh and luge. To move the sled, only the thrust force produced by the athlete and the force of gravity are permitted. Steering is carried out by means of the athlete's body movements.”

At competitions, the athletes do two slides of approximately one minute each. The times are added together and the lowest score wins. Wins are a matter of hundredths of seconds ahead of other racers.

The track is a narrow, curved frozen half-pipe, usually about 1400 meters long, down a steep slope. It is very expensive to build

and maintain. In Calgary, an entire separate building and several full time staff members are dedicated year-round to producing the right conditions on the competition track.

Why are so few people aware of this sport? Skeleton sliding has had an irregular association with the Olympics, being in the 1928 and 1948 Games as a men only event, starting again as of 2002 as women's and men's events. Also, there are only 14 suitable skeleton racing tracks in the world. One of those is located in Sigulda, Latvia, about one hour's drive from Riga. It was the former Soviet Union's only bobsleigh track. Of all the skeleton race tracks worldwide, it is the only one with the first six curves or corners built on pilings, because there is not enough height on the natural hill in that region. An elevator takes the competitors and sleds to the top.



Mellisa Hollingsworth-Richards on Skeleton track wearing the World Cup leader jersey

Two Albertans, cousins Mellisa Hollingsworth-Richards and Ryan Davenport, both of Estonian ancestry have garnered the admiration of their friends and extended families for their achievements in winning Canadian Championships, World Championship and World Cup medals in Skeleton racing. One also earned a Bronze medal in the recent Torino Winter Olympics. The entire Mottus (Mõttus) family in central Alberta is beaming with joy, as many members of that clan have provided extensive support to the two athletes for over a decade.



Photo: Peeter Leesment

Mellisa Hollingsworth-Richards with part of her extended family during a special evening in her honor in Eckville. Mellisa's husband Billy Richards (black cowboy hat) is to her left, her uncle Arnold Mottus is to the left of Billy, and Ryan Davenport is 3rd from left side of picture.

Mellisa's rural roots are now into ranching, but they stretch back over 100 years to Rõuge, near Võru in the southeast corner of Estonia.

Mellisa's and Ryan's great-grandfather Gustav Mottus left Estonia at the age of 21 in the year 1910, first arriving in New York, then travelling on to homestead at Risula, west of Eckville in Central Alberta by 1911. A small community of Estonians was already settled in the area, and in 1917 he married Linda, the daughter of the first known Estonian to settle in Canada, Henry (Hendrik) Kingsep and Emilie Saar. Several of Gustav's siblings also came to settle in Alberta but one brother Jaan remained in Rõuge. Contact was maintained with Jaan until WWII when the Soviet Russian occupation of Estonia forced an end to all written and telephone communication with the outside world. Thus for nearly 60 years neither half of the family knew the other's fate. Gustav died in 1977. Eventually, the 1999 Centennial Celebration of Estonians in Canada provided the contacts needed for Gustav's descendants in Canada to find their cousins in Estonia.

Given the speed of emails and easy access to directories via the Internet, it was a mere matter of days until the first email from Jaan's daughter arrived at the home of Arnold Mottus, grandson of Gustav and uncle to Mellisa and Ryan. Arnold states, "It was without a doubt the most exciting letter I have ever received... an e-mail was sent immediately to Estonia, and many have since been exchanged, along with photo images, as well as letter mail, and a phone call. We are fortunate that the son-in-law in Estonia has access to a computer and can read and write English. His family lives in Võru, close to where Gustav was born." This story appears on the website <http://www3.telus.net/armottus>.

No doubt there has been much celebration in Võru as well as in Alberta with everyone following Mellisa's many successes, especially during the current Skeleton season, the culmination of ten years of serious dedication to the sport her cousin Ryan Davenport convinced her to try. Among Mellisa's athletic achievements:

- 6 times medallist in Canadian championships, including a Gold in 1996
- Year 2000 silver medallist at the World Championship with 10th to 5th placements 2003-2005
- World Cup top standing for the 2005-2006 season after placing 3rd in two races, second in 3 races and first in 2 races, medalling at all of the seven international competitions held in Latvia, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, USA and Canada.
- Bronze medal at the 2006 Winter Olympics at Torino

Part of Mellisa's success is due to the custom-made sled she uses, designed and manufactured by her cousin Ryan Davenport. Ryan first noticed this high-speed sport in a newspaper article in Calgary in 1992 and immediately signed up at the first Canadian Skeleton School for training. Calgary is fortunate in having the legacy of several winter sport facilities, including a world-class skeleton/luge/bobsled racetrack, thanks to hosting the 1988 Winter Olympic Games. The Canadian Skeleton championships have been held exclusively at Calgary's Canada Olympic Park

each year as of 1987. This facility also hosts World Cup or World Championship skeleton competitions almost each year. Starting in the 1992-93 competitive season, Ryan was the undisputed long term Canadian Champion, winning 7 Gold medals until he retired as an athlete at the end of the 1998-99 season. He also won 2 World Championship Gold medals (1996 & 1997) and a bronze in 1995. Unfortunately, skeleton was not an Olympic sport during the time.

Despite his retirement, Ryan is still intimately involved with Skeleton sliding. After severely damaging his sled at a 1994 competition, he tried to fix it. That led to him making a new sled for himself. His teammates were so impressed with the result, they requested him to also custom-make sleds for them. By 1995 he had established Davenport Sleds www.davenportsleds.ca as his full time business.

Skeleton sleds are precision designed. The governing sport body, the International Bobsleigh and Tobogganing Federation (FIBT) has detailed stringent requirements and restrictions as to size, composition of materials, bolting, welding, weight, etc. etc. The Davenport firm custom designs skeleton sleds within all those specifications, further taking into consideration each racer's height and various permitted preferences. The finished product typically costs approximately \$4000. A long way from the creaky wooden sleds we used as kids.

In addition to dedicating much time, effort and money into athletic training, Mellisa spends time on the Rodeo circuit, having grown up on her father's horse ranch in central Alberta. She married saddle bronc rodeo cowboy Billy Richards last June and now lives on a ranch west of Calgary where the Richards family raises horses for the Calgary Stampede and other rodeos. Her husband plus 12 other members of her family and her sponsor were at Torino, Italy in support. The main sponsor, True Energy Trust, gifted the couple a weeklong delayed

honeymoon in Mexico immediately after the Olympic Games.



Photo: Peeter Leesment

Left to right: Ryan Davenport, Mellisa Hollingsworth-Richards and her husband Billy Richards

Mellisa has her sights set on Vancouver/Whistler 2010 and will continue training and racing. Her progress can be tracked on her website

www.go-Mellisa-go.ca.

The Town of Eckville and Mellisa's extensive family held an appreciation night in her honour at the local Community Centre on March 17, attended by approximately 250 fans. Helen Posti, the mayor of Eckville (population 1200), was among the many who lauded the local Olympic athlete, especially for her constantly positive attitude. Mellisa's emotional account of her training and the Olympic race had many listeners in tears by the time of their standing ovation. Everyone had an opportunity to be photographed with Mellisa, get her autograph and to momentarily hold an actual Olympic medal. Mellisa, in turn, graciously dedicated her time that evening to all the Eckville supporters who have been with her for the ten long years leading up to her Olympic medal.

Estonian Charge d’Affaires Visits Edmonton

Dave Kiil

Argo K  nem  e, the Charge d’Affaires at the Estonian Embassy in Ottawa, spent a couple of days in Edmonton as part of a pre-Christmas 2005 western tour of British Columbia and Alberta. This was his first visit to Edmonton and very much appreciated by the local Estonian community.

Estonian expatriates and descendants of Estonian pioneers who settled in Alberta over a century ago took advantage of the opportunity to meet Mr. K  nem  e and to discuss and resolve issues around such topics as land claims, travel conditions and applications for Estonian passports.

Individuals who have not applied to obtain an Estonian passport may wish to do so in the future. Estonia is now a full-fledged member of the European Union and NATO and an Estonian passport may open many opportunities in the future, especially for the children and grandchildren of parents and grandparents with Estonian citizenship. Anyone with an Estonian

passport is, of course, entitled to travel in all member states of the European Union.

A small group of Edmonton Estonians- Eda MacClung, K  lliva Kangur and Ain Dave Kiil- became better acquainted with the Estonian diplomat around a dinner table at historic Hotel Macdonald. The conversation touched on recent happenings in Estonia, the role and responsibility of the Estonian Embassy in Ottawa, and Alberta’s unique and widely-dispersed Estonian community. We were impressed with Mr. K  nem  e’s hands-on approach in meeting client’s needs for information and his interest in the activities of the relatively small Estonian community situated some 3000 km from his office.

Following his stay in Edmonton, Mr. K  nem  e traveled to Canmore, a thriving resort community a few kilometers outside Banff National Park, to cheer for Jana Rehemaa, a cross-country skier representing Estonia in a World Cup event held there.



Left to right: K  lliva De-Elespp, Ain Dave Kiil, Eda McClung and Argo K  nem  e during a dinner meeting in historic Hotel Macdonald in Edmonton

Christmas party in Edmonton

Dave Kiil

During the first weekend in December, Edmonton-area members of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society gathered in Betty Ann and Dave Kiil's home to celebrate the onset of the Holiday Season. The entire evening was filled with good cheer and conversations with old and new-found friends. Young and old, from six years to a few years older, enjoyed the camaraderie and a buffet-style spread of delicacies to tempt the most discriminating taste buds.

The latest issue of the Society's newsletter, *Ajakaja*, was picked up at the printer's the day before and it was distributed to those in attendance. Articles about Society members and activities, news about Estonia, and contributions from several correspondents in Estonia and Canada resulted in the largest edition to date.

Estonia's National Song Festival or "Laulupidu" was launched in 1869 and has continued as the centerpiece of the nation's self-expression for independence and her passion for music. Anyone fortunate enough to witness the spectacle in person usually describes the experience as "overwhelming, impressive, awesome, highly emotional, etc." The showing of "25,000 Sing", a DVD about the 2004 Song Festival in Tallinn, elicited mostly the same comments from the people who viewed the video. Some even speculated about traveling to Tallinn for the next Song Festival in 2009, whereas others expressed interest in obtaining their own DVD of the event.

By all accounts, it was a very successful social event and accommodated the older members of the Society who find it challenging to travel long distances to attend provincial functions.



L to R: Karl Vollman, Tiina Payson, Helmut Langeste, Andreas Pilt, Külliva DeElespp (foreground) and Linda Peet



L to R: Diana Kiil enjoying a cheerful moment with Maret Burns and Tiina Payson

Skaters from Estonia hosted at Calgary

Helgi Leesment

The Alberta Estonian Heritage Society (AEHS) hosted a reception for figure skater Jelena Muhhina and coach Irina Kononova from Estonia on Monday March 20.



Photo: Rosalie Howard

Estonian figure-skating champion Jelena Muhhina

They were in town for the 2006 World Championships in Calgary. All current AEHS members had received invitations. The reception was attended by 21 people, including the guests of honour. It was a wonderful opportunity for chatting and meeting new people. Some had signed up for AEHS membership but had not yet attended any events, others drove a couple of hundred kilometers and met for the first time people who live close to their home. Each person brought a plate of nibbles or a bottle of wine which was all shared along with the coffee and other items provided by hosts Peter and Helgi Leesment.

Coming directly from a late practice on the competition ice, the seventeen year-old current Estonian women's figure skating champion was charming and gracious, wearing her team uniform. In turn, she was made to feel special by all the attention showered upon her and the many photographs which were taken that evening.

The Alberta Estonian Heritage Society had earlier sent them flowers plus a basket of fresh

fruit and chocolate assembled and delivered by Helle Kraav. Both gifts were appreciated by the representatives from Estonia who had a hectic 10-day schedule of practices, competition, meetings and social events organized by the International Skating Union and Skate Canada.



Photo: Liia Tamme Herman

L to R: Jelena Muhhina, hosts Peeter and Helgi Leesment, and Coach Irina Kononova

Thanks to local AEHS members, arrangements were made for Jelena and her friend from Latvia and their two coaches to have a private practice on the ice rink at the Westside Recreation Centre. Neither young lady qualified to advance to the Ladies' Short Program, the next level of competition. The more experienced Pairs skaters, Diana Rennik and Aleksei Saks of Estonia, were scheduled to participate after finishing 17th at the Torino Winter Olympic Games in February but, unfortunately, Diana became ill and so the pair was unable to travel to Calgary.

Jelena's Baltic compatriots, ice-dancers Margarita Drobiazko and Povilas Vanagas of Lithuania finished just out of medal position, coming fourth in their field. At the Gala Performance following the end of the competition, the Lithuanians received a standing ovation from a near sell-out crowd in response to their pirate-themed performance involving a swordfight on ice-skates. All three Baltic nation flags hung from the Saddledome ceiling during the entire competition and were carried by local skaters in a salute at the closing Gala event.



Photo: Liia Tamme Herman

L to R: Irina Kononova, Liia Tamme Herman, Imbi Ansley, Jelena Muhhina, Anne Cowick and Linda Holukoff

Irina Kononova, who has been a coach for 27 years, tells us there are about 600 figure skaters in Estonia with the sport being in a developing phase and having considerable potential. Among her many students are ice-dancers 17- year-old Grethe Grunberg and 19- year-old Kristian Rand who placed 9th in the recent Junior World Figure Skating Championships.



Photo: Liia Tamme Herman

Jüri Kraav in fine form

Jelena Muhhina has now returned to Tallinn and her Lasnamäe High School grade 11 class where she studies Estonian, English and French, with Russian being her native tongue. In addition she dedicates 12 – 18 hours per week to figure skating plus time to travel to various international competitions throughout the skating season.



Photo: Liia Tamme Herman

Helve Kraav enjoying the reception

AEHS member Livia Kivisild brought rock salt to alleviate Jelena's sore throat upon her arrival in Calgary and later took her to the top of the Calgary Tower. There Jelena was fascinated by the view and a temporary dinosaur display. She was also impressed by Calgary's covered walkway system, the cowboy culture and the number of tall buildings.



Photo: Liia Tamme Herman

Willy Kalvee in a cheerful mood

AEHS members have memories of a cheerful social gathering where they met some new, some familiar members, and enjoyed chatting with a national champion and her coach.

ANDREAS ENDEL PILT



*Born March 12, 1915, Järvamaa, Estonia
Died February 27, 2006, Edmonton, AB*

“Sinu pikaajaline ja järjekindel panus eestlusele, eriti Edmontoni eesti kogukonna organiseeritud tegevusele on olnud märkamisväärne. Sinu tahe ja oskus hoida kontakte ja püsivaid suhteid kaugemate asukohtadega on kindlasti hoogustanud teisi.

Eesti Vabariigi välisministeerium, saatkond Kanadas, aupeakonsulaat Torontos tänab Sind selle suure töö eest.”

Laas Leivat Thomas Heinsoo
EV aupeakonsul EV auasekonsul

(Signed message was sent on the occasion of Andreas Pilt's 90th birthday, March 12, 2005)

The Estonian community of Alberta mourns the loss of a special and distinguished member, Andreas Pilt. He was a founder of the Edmonton Estonian Society and played a key leadership role for many decades. He was instrumental in uniting Estonians across the province to retain ties to their cultural heritage. At the same time, he urged acceptance of change so that all could feel included in Estonian celebrations. He contributed regularly to the newsletter 'AjaKaja'. He was frequently consulted for counsel and encouragement by those who worked to preserve Estonian traditions. Andreas was a gentleman, a true friend and beloved by all who knew him. He is sadly missed and will be remembered. Alberta's Estonian community is grateful for his generous bequest to the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society.



Andrea Tamme: A Young Alberta Artist

Andrea Tamme is a budding young artist with Estonian roots. She lives in Innisfail.



Andrea Tamme (on the right) with her Auntie Liia (Tamme) Herman

Andrea produced an “ink and watercolor” painting of two youths from Estonian mythology, a girl Dusk (Hämarik) and a boy Dawn (Koit).

The folklore involving Dusk and Dawn is linked to the age-old Estonian fascination with and celebration of Midsummer Eve (Jaanipäev). Bonfires, a walk in the forest to look for a special flower, washing of one's face with dew, and wearing of a wreath made of wildflowers are part of this tradition. According to one fable, Dusk was assigned the task to look after the setting sun in the evening. In the morning, Dawn was to again “light up” the rising sun. During the shortest night of the year the two young lovers, blessed with eternal youth, joined hands and their lips met.



Andrea Tamme's Ink and Watercolor painting of Dusk (Hämarik) and Dawn (Koit)

An 'Accidental Genealogist' on a Persistent Journey to Discover his Estonian Family Roots

John Clark

A year ago I had no solid information about my grandparents: where they were from, who their children were, and what they looked like. Today my family history reaches back to the 1700s and I've acquired family photographs from as early as the 1870s.

My interest in my family history was awakened in mid- 2005 when my attention was drawn to a photograph and obituary in the Denver Post – a photo of a man that looked a lot like my own father. A half-page history of the man's life accompanied the photo of him standing on a mountain trail. Like my father, the man was born and raised in Montana. My dad grew up on Montana ranches and had picked the name Clark from a foster family in Montana who he hoped would adopt him.

The Clarks never did adopt my father. I was already in high school when our true family name was brought up in a conversation between my father and my uncle who was visiting from Alberta. I learned that originally our name was something like Kirkendall and that my father had lived in a home for orphans when he was a boy. My dad told me that his father had raised one family with his first wife and started a second family with my grandmother Mary who died in 1916 when my dad was two years old. Widowed, my grandfather farmed and cared for his five young children. In debt with a failing farm, my grandfather was forced to place my father, his three brothers and his sister into the care of the Montana orphanage.

From time to time my grandfather visited and wrote to his children at the orphanage. In vain he battled drought and locusts to bring in a big crop that would get him out of debt. The orphanage joined the list of his unpaid creditors. Since he was unable to contribute to their support, he lost his parental rights and his children became eligible for adoption.

In December 1921 my dad wrote to his father,

"It would be very good to see you on Xmas." (I am "hoping to get an ink pen and pen holder for Christmas." A week before Christmas my father's letter was returned to him "address unknown". My dad and my uncle said that their father had "disappeared" – or "ran out on the family."

I wondered if my grandfather had dodged his bill collectors and started a third family when he



Gustav Krikendal taking his children to the Twin Bridges orphanage in Montana, August 17, 1917.

"disappeared". If so, the man I noticed in the newspaper photo might be my uncle. I decided to do some research. Among some old family papers I found three documents that were sent to my father in 1968 by his sister with her suggestion to have them translated from German.

I showed the papers to my friends Sandy and his German wife. They translated the "old German" and established that the document was a 1908 Estonian "Character Reference" for Liso, or Liisa Reimer – probably issued by the parish to support an immigration effort. I didn't know any ancestors or relatives named Liisa, so I wondered why this document had been kept and handed down.

Only Liisa's Character Reference was in German. Sandy thought the other two documents might be Estonian. Through mutual friends I tracked down Helvi, an Estonian refugee, who lives in my neighborhood. Helvi's translation showed the second document to be a letter to my aunt Pauline, signed "*your parents in Montana*". Helvi thought the letter was originally sent to "Aunt Pauline" with a new Bible. She also recognized that the third document was written in Russian.

In searching the Web on "*Denver*" "*Russian*" "*Translation*" I found that Denver's 50,000 Russian emigrants had their own Cultural Center. Sophia, the Center's librarian, offered to translate the third document while I waited.

My excitement built as Sophia rendered each line into English. The first paragraph showed that she was translating a church document listing the members of the Krikenthal family. It named Gustav Krikenthal and his wife Julie (Paarmann) Krikenthal and their children Pauline, Julia, and Mary - Those were my aunts! AND!

two boys that I had never heard of – August and Mihkel who were born in 1892 and 1902. Both were my uncles!

So now I knew the spelling of the family name, that my grandfather was named Gustav, his first wife, Julie, was born in Parnach, and that their children were baptized in Boz Koz. But where were Boz Koz and Parnach?

I searched in vain for Parnach and Boz Koz on Estonian maps. I Googled for Boz Koz – and found nothing. The web only referenced Parnach once. A soldier had written in his memoir that his platoon had camped outside Parnach during the Crimean War. A dead end I assumed, since Crimea was thousands of miles from Estonia.



Krikenthal family, 1903. L to R: August (3), Gustav (35), Pauline (11), Julie (32), Mihkel (1), Mary (7) and Julia (8).

Because Sophia had struggled a bit with the translation, and the villages or districts were not familiar to her, I was anxious to get a second opinion. Over the next months I actually listened for people that might have a Russian accent. At Office Depot I noticed that Maria, the cashier, sounded Russian. She read my document and said that she thought the towns might be near Moscow.

At my favorite sushi restaurant I interrupted two young Russians on a dinner date. Their big mistake was speaking in Russian within earshot of me! They recognized that the document named other villages or districts in addition to Parnach and Boz Koz, but they had no idea of their location. I continued listening for Russian speaking people who might recognize a town or city from the document.

At my gym I overheard, Alex and Michael conversing in Russian as they were lifting weights. I intercepted them leaving the gym and showed them the document. Standing in the gym's parking lot Alex immediately recognized that the country was Crimea. He knew that hundreds of German colonies had been established in Crimea in the 1800s. He took the document home, translated it, and emailed me the Krim-GR Research Website that identified Gustav's birthplace as Kontsch-Schawa, a German colony founded in Crimea in 1860.

Was I German? It seemed to fit. When asked about his heritage, my father would say he didn't know for sure, maybe Estonian, Finnish, or Swedish. To me the family names sounded more German than Estonian, particularly the names Paarmann, Krikenthal, August, and Gustav. I also seemed to have the German trait for order "*everything squared up and always in its place*".

I poured over the wealth of information on the "*Germans from Russia*" websites (GRHS, AHSGR). With folks from both organizations helping, we located Crimean church records from the 1860s for the birth of Gustav and his sister Mina and for the death of his brother Mihkel. Almost every evening that I searched on the Internet I found another piece to the puzzle.

To learn more about German settlements in Montana, I contacted Barbra, with the Chester Branch of the Montana State Genealogical Society. Instead of information on German families that I had expected, Barbra sent me a list of Chester area Estonians. Her research showed that the Krikenthals were part of the Estonian community in the early 1900s.

Now I was confused. Gustav was born in a German colony. I had Julie Reimer's Estonian character reference written in German, and a letter to my aunt Pauline written in Estonian. Barbra suggested I research Lethbridge, since many of the Montana Estonians had come from Canada. I searched the web on combinations of "*Krikenthal,*" "*Alberta,*" and "*Lethbridge*" – and found nothing.

Then I got an idea. Maybe searching the web for some of the other Chester family names might indirectly help. I searched on the family "*Keldrauk & Lethbridge*" and found a list of surnames referenced for "*Wheat Heart of the West; Lethbridge*". In the list alphabetically below Keldrauk was "*KRIKENTAL, G.*" – it had to be Gustav Krikenthal!

I emailed the Lethbridge Alberta Genealogical Society's website to see if there was any more information regarding the person referred to as KRIKENTAL, G.

Shirley answered my email:

There wasn't much information in this book and it is as follows:

"Mr. and Mrs. G. Krikental and family of Crimea, with five girls and one boy Gus, came to homestead in the Barons area in 1904 or 1905. Their farm was just east of Ernie Allen's farm, where they first built a sod house. The girls went to Lundy school when it opened, while Gus, being younger, went to Wheatland Centre. All the family went to Chester, Montana in 1910 to homestead, where each adult could get 320 acres."

"I hope that this is of some help to you."

WOW! It was official and in writing. The book confirmed that these were Estonian families who had emigrated from Crimea – I was Estonian!

I next searched the Barons phone listings for the family names of the Estonian settlers whose lives were described in the Barons history book.

My story continues with my finding the Erdman family, including Martha Munz Gue. Following this contact, Martha sent an email to some Albertans of Estonian extraction:

"Isn't this wonderful! Tom Erdman and I were introduced to John Clark, when, last Saturday, he phoned each of us from Colorado! His father was raised by a foster family so he only recently found his paternal grandparents birth names, and he has discovered that they were of Estonian descent. He learned this fall that he is connected to the Krikenthal family that emigrated from Crimea. They lived about five years in the Barons area and then immigrated to Montana along with many other families of Estonian/Crimean origin. I guess there is quite a settlement in Montana.

He was enthralled by the (Barons area history) book and has read quite a bit online. After reading and reading, he found the only Erdman in the Barons phone listing and talked with Tommy, who suggested he phone me. We had a great chat and have been emailing since. He is keen on learning more about Estonia, Crimea, and family history. He asks some questions that perhaps some of you could provide some help with. Any anecdotes would be of interest."

Through Martha, I met Livia and Helgi who helped me understand my ancestors' journeys from Estonia to Crimea and to Lethbridge. Their translations of key documents from German and Russian accompanied one of their emails to me:

"We spent several hours yesterday deciphering and translating the documents you had sent to us. The difficulty lies in the poor quality of the reproduction, deciphering German Gothic handwriting, and trying to guess the specific circumstances surrounding the original document...."

We were not entirely successful with your excerpts from the (Crimean) Neusatz parish birth and death records because the headings for various columns are missing.

...We persisted and did our best."

Martha told her cousin Leongard Salman in Crimea about my search and I sent him everything I had learned so far. About a month later I received from Leongard a big envelope full of information including a list of Gustav Krikental's brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nieces, and nephews in Crimea. Leongard's research showed that Gustav's father Mihkel was born in Aggeri, Estonia in 1819, and immigrated to Crimea with his wife Mina and their four children. They were part of the "White Ship" Estonian families that walked from Estonia to Crimea between 1861 and 1863.

Having traveled so far so rapidly along my research path, I reflected on the power of serendipity. Why had I been drawn to that newspaper photograph? I felt a

connection to the man in the photo who started me on my journey and maybe a little sorry that we turned out not to be related. The man was not Gustav Krikental's son after all. My grandfather had not started a third family – and he had not completely "disappeared".

Wanting to learn more about Kontsch-Schawa where Gustav was born, I called the AHSGR "Germans from Russia" organization and met Margaret who is with its Denver chapter. I told Margaret that my father had said that his brother Louis "might have seen" their father years later in Chicago. In my mind I pictured my uncle Louis passing an old man sitting on a Chicago park bench and later wondering if the man might have been his father, Gustav.

It took Margaret about 5 minutes to find where Gustav had "disappeared" to.

Knowing the tools of genealogy, Margaret quickly found the Web site for death certificates issued in Cook County, Illinois. Gustav Krikental died in Blue Island, Illinois in 1938. In the next five minutes Margaret used the Heritage Quest Web site to bring up the 1920 Montana Census and the page showing Gustav as an immigrant from Russia, his native language was Estonian, he was literate, and he had become a US citizen in 1916.

Margaret also gave me some great advice, "As you do your research always think about the story. In your story you should ask, why would Gustav leave his kids? Was he in deep debt with no way to pay? Was he being sued for payments on farm equipment, seed, or building materials?? Why would Gustav have picked Chicago? What reason? Often, as parents get older they go to live near their children. Did Gustav have children or other relatives in Chicago? Do you have relatives in Chicago?"

An aunt, I thought, might have lived in Chicago. My dad and his brother had lived in Chicago for a few years around the time of the stock market crash. I needed to find out who my cousins were and get them involved in my project.

I guess like a lot of people, my interest in my family history developed late. My father, all his brothers and sisters, and many of the next generation are already gone – along with their first hand accounts of our family's history. I had started my research using the Internet because I had never maintained contact with any cousins – not even Christmas cards. After a gap of over 50 years, I called my cousins Shirley in Montana and George in Alberta. They told me where to find 10 more cousins that I'd never met. I called each one, introduced myself, and found everyone to be enthusiastic about contributing to the family genealogy project. I also started calling and emailing folks that came onto my radar in Montana, Alberta, and across the USA. My network expanded to include Martha, Helvi, Livia, Helgi and Dave in North America, and Leongard in Crimea and Heldin and Kairi in Estonia. Their help and knowledge allowed me to compress my search into a number of months compared to the multi-year search had I focused only on the Internet, courthouse records, and microfilm research.

I tracked down descendants of the Barons and Chester Estonians including the families Palkman, Erdman, Musten, Sepp, Keldrauk, Bader, Kotkas, Reinson, Laas, Arick, Orraw (Orav), and Yurman (Jürman). Most of them had already done some research on their Estonian roots, and were of great help. Sally, the granddaughter of Maria Kotkas Sepp, sent me three pages of her grandmother's writings – all specifically about the Krikental family in Barons and Chester between 1905 and 1918. I guess it was because of our common heritage, but I felt welcomed by each family – like I was a long lost cousin. Lots of people went out of their way to help me with my research. Even the folks at Montana courthouses always seem to find more information on the Krikentals than the land, court, or naturalization records I had originally requested.

Among the most satisfying findings came from my cousins who had a handful of old photographs of both my grandparents. I finally knew what they looked like. I recognized my father in Gustav. I thought that my brother, sister and I shared some of my grandmother's features. My cousin Linda had saved her grandmother Pauline's family photographs from Crimea – some as old as 1875!



Gustav Krikental in Chicago, 1937

To my surprise, Linda had photos of Gustav from the 1920s in Chicago where he had gone to work in a sugar refinery and later for a cigar company. Then, to my complete astonishment, Linda suggested that we call Pauline Krikental's son Floyd to learn first hand about my grandfather Gustav. We called my cousin Floyd who is 89 years old and was a teenager when Gustav lived in Chicago. Floyd crisply remembered his grandfather Gustav visiting on Sunday mornings. His mother and grandfather would sit at the kitchen table and entertain him by speaking together in *"that Estonian language"*. Floyd also remembered my father from 1929 - *"my uncles Eddie and Louie came from Montana to work in Chicago and slept out on our porch."*

What a journey! Not just birth, marriage and death records, but photographs, diaries, and living cousins who had their own personal and hand-me-down stories about the Krikental family. And it was amazing to be able to track the family back so far. Back to 1785!

Back to the time when Gustav's grandfather Hinrik was a serf and who was the human property of the estate that owned the Kulli farm where Hinrik worked as a watchman. Carefully preserved parish records for the Estonian peasants provided much appreciated knowledge of the Krikental origins.

Heldin, Leongard and Dave, who could read German, Russian, or Estonian, were of particular help in finding the Krikental family in the old Crimean church records on the Odessa Web site and the Estonia parish records from the Saaga Web site. Helvi, Livia Alex, and Helgi translated parish records, my aunt's Estonian notes, and letters from Leongard. This group's efforts led to the discovery of the first use, in 1819, of the name Krikenttaal.

They found Gustav's mother and her parents, Gustav's grandfather, and my great grandmother. The background for Julie Paarmann, Gustav's wife, and the first person buried in the Baron's cemetery remains obscure. Paarmann families are listed in the parish books in Estonia but we have found no records of any of them emigrating to Parnach, Crimea. We also found Estonian families named Paarmann who lived in Simferopol, Crimea at the turn of the century. We don't yet know if the Simferopol Paarmann's were Julie's. The Paarmann name also shows up in Swiss or German families – both countries had colonies in Crimea. I've ordered the "Simferopol marriages" microfilm from the LDS Family History Center and I'm optimistic that we'll find where Julie Paarmann's parents were from.

Oh, and by the way, I did find out who Liisa Reimer was and why her character reference was kept in the family the last 100 years.

To be continued.....

About the author.....



John Clark on Mt. Bierstadt, Colorado

John has lived in Colorado his whole life. He has worked in marketing and sales for many Colorado software and technology companies. He's presently developing a business plan for a software company he wants to launch in 2006. John, who is single, enjoys trail running and backpacking through Colorado's mountains. John's email address is: JohnClark-TTI@comcast.net

The Otto and Olga Klaus Story

Otto Klaus was born on December 20, 1881 in Vaike Maaria, a small town in central Estonia. He moved with his family to Pranti Mets (located half way between Moscow and Leningrad) and there met Olga Soop. They married in Moscow in 1908. Olga, born September 11, 1884 in Estonia, had lived in Poland before moving to Pranti Mets. Their daughter, Alide (whose name was Canadianized to Aletha when she started school in Canada), was born on Feb. 17, 1909. Ever in search of a better home, the family moved to Simbirsk, Russia when Aletha was a year old. Emile (born in 1913) and Alexander (born in 1915) were born in Simbirsk but only survived until the ages of seven and five years, both dying in 1919. Alfred was born on Nov. 14, 1920.

During the Russian Revolution around 1917, Russians were expropriating other people's land. Otto Klaus was a farmer in Russia. Roving bands of soldier's seized anything they wanted from the unarmed people. A Russian family had been given Otto's house and most of his possessions. As a result, Otto and his family were forced to live in a granary. There was no stove in this building so Olga had to ask the Russian family if she could cook her food in their former home. This was allowed but for a price, of course. Otto feared that the 'Russian Bear' was going to put its paw on Estonia again. His fear of the Russians motivated him to write to his brothers who had settled in Canada, near Stettler, at the turn of the century. Otto wrote to the Klausés, hoping that one of his brothers would get the letter. They responded by inviting Otto and his family to Canada and sent him tickets for the crossing.

They left Simbirsk as part of a prisoner trade arrangement which allowed Estonian citizens to return to their now independent homeland. The twelve cattle cars full of Estonian families who had journeyed to Moscow for their return trip to Estonia had to wait there for two weeks because of the poor condition of the trains and the lack of coal to run them. Eventually they made their way to Estonia. Otto Klaus worked on the railroad while they

were in Estonia. In Narva, the northeastern border town, Otto and his family were again detained, searched and relieved of most of their possessions. Their clothes were boiled so no diseases could be brought into Estonia. The few gold items and jewelry that had been hidden in the false

bottom of a suitcase that Otto made were used to buy food and pay living expenses in Estonia. Customs officials had not searched this suitcase. Otto had Olga strategically place soiled diapers around the edges in order to deter the search.

In September 1922, Otto and his family left Tapa, Estonia. They journeyed to Riga,



L to R: Olga, Alfred, Otto and Aletha Klaus, 1922

Latvia and waited two days before a small boat took them across the Baltic Sea to Liverpool, England. They boarded a ship run by Cunard Lines, crossing the ocean in nine days. Waves came over the ship several times but for the most part the weather was good. They arrived in Quebec City on September 17, 1922. A train took them via Montreal on to Stettler, arriving there four days later.

The Otto Klaus family stayed with brother Ed and his wife Pauline and family for the first winter. The following year, Otto and his family moved to a small shack on property near the Red Deer River, west of Big Valley. While living with Ed and family, Aletha attended Wooded Hills School. Aletha stayed with Alex and Amanda Klaus and went to school at Aunger. She moved back with her parents once an addition to the house was constructed. She then attended Vimy School. Otto rented additional farmland, raised a few cows and worked for other people during the winters. Open rangeland was still available but it was quickly being settled. Otto purchased land from Montreal Trust Co. for \$10.00 per quarter section (160 acres). This was the amount that had been advertised overseas to attract immigrants to Canada: "HOMESTEADS FOR \$10.00". Freedom of speech and freedom of religion were also part of the advertising that appealed to many newcomers. In 1938, Otto bought land northwest of Big Valley from a Mr. Eaton who lived in the

United States. Fred Biggs, the County Secretary, assisted with the communication for the purchase. Otto paid \$2,500 for two quarter sections. On November 14, 1939, after building a house that was modern at the time, the family moved. Alfred attended Vimy School and then continued his education in Big Valley, living in the dormitory for part of the time.

Farm life posed many hardships. People needed to be self-reliant so the family raised chickens, pigs, cattle, wheat, oats, barley, strawberries, vegetables, and small fruit that would survive on the prairies. Thus they could provide their own meat, vegetables, jams, wine, eggs, milk, butter, preserved fruits and other commodities required for daily living. Trips to the nearby town were infrequent as roads were not always passable. The entire family worked extremely hard in order to survive and accumulate property.

Horses were a necessary part of farm life at this time. Otto had six horses that were always in front of the plow, disc or harrows. Another saddle horse was used to get the cows and help at branding time. Three or four families usually got together to do the branding and Olga and Aletha cooked for the entire group. There were always lots of visitors in the Klaus household. Most guests would be served dinner, lunch or breakfast depending on the time of their visit.

Linda Hall was one of the centers for community get-togethers. The Klaus family participated in many Estonian occasions that were held there. Christmas was always celebrated here with performances by members of the community, young and old, and Santa Claus always arrived. In July, Buffalo Lake was the setting for the Farmer's Picnic, where activities for the children were organized, everyone joined in the pot luck lunch and various activities such as ball games, horseshoes and nail pounding contests provided entertainment for all.

Aletha married Ado Tipman in August, 1940. Ado was a school teacher and also of Estonian heritage. The Tipman family had four children: Bob, Marlene, Allan and Thomas. Thomas died at birth. The three Tipman children and their families follow many Estonian traditions. Bob Tipman is President of Alberta Estonian Heritage Society (AEHS). Bob and his wife Kathy, have two children: Liisa and James. They all attend and participate in the varied activities of A.E.H.S.

Marlene and her husband Kalev Kuutan, also of Estonian background, live in Toronto. Marlene has been on the Board of Directors for Estonian House in Toronto since 1999.

They have three children: Kersti-Li, Aili and Eon. The children are trilingual, having gone to Estonian School and participated in a French Immersion Program.

Allan and his wife, Marianne, live in Calgary and attend A.E.H.S. functions whenever possible. Ado Tipman passed away in May, 1990 at 85 years. Aletha stayed on the farm for two years but found the winters too lonely so moved to Stettler where she lived until her sudden passing on July 2, 1999. Two weeks prior, Aletha was pleased to attend the Estonian Centennial Celebration at Linda Hall. It was the largest gathering of Estonians in Alberta.

Alfred Klaus married Irma Nitschke and they raised two children, Ron and Audrey, while farming in the Big Valley area. During this time Alfred and Otto shared farm duties and both lived on the property in separate houses. As Otto's health declined, Alfred assumed full responsibility for the farm.

Otto and Olga Klaus celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary in July, 1958 at the home of Aletha and Ado Tipman. Otto suffered a stroke in 1963 and passed away on January 20, 1965. Olga continued to live on the farm for a few years and then went to live with Aletha and Ado Tipman. She lived with them until she passed away on July 30, 1977, a month and a half prior to her 93rd birthday. She had lived long enough to welcome two great-granddaughters, Keri and Kersti-Li.

In 1969, Alfred sold the farm. He moved to Stettler and went to work for the County of Stettler as an assistant field man. He held this position until his retirement at age 65.

Alfred and Irma's son, Ron and his wife, Carol, have two children, Shannon and Jason. They are often in attendance at Estonian functions at Linda Hall. Audrey and her husband Dan Benjamin have two girls, Keri and Amri (Irma -spelled backwards). They are often in attendance at Estonian functions.

Irma Klaus passed away in July, 1980, following an asthma attack. Alfred later married Joyce Wilson in December, 1981. Alfred and Joyce continue to enjoy their retirement and are members of the A.E.H.S.

The descendants of Otto and Olga Klaus celebrate their Estonian heritage and have passed on many traditions to the next generation.

Prepared by Irene Kerbes from notes compiled by Marlene (Tipman) Kuutan, and Alfred and Joyce Klaus

History of Linda Hall

Irene and Deane Kerbes

Linda Hall was built by Estonian pioneers. They arrived in the area about 1901-1906 to be agricultural farmers and realized they needed knowledge in crop production, harvesting and marketing, as well as government and politics. So they decided to pool their knowledge and form a club. At a general meeting in 1910 under heavy brush at Neithal's home, the Estonian pioneers formed "Linda Eesti Põllumeeste Selts", ("Linda Estonian Farmer's Organization"). John Neithal was elected President, John Kerbes as secretary, John Oro as treasurer. Thirty-five men became members. It was decided to hold monthly meetings on the second Sunday of each month. The farm homes soon were too small for meetings so a decision was made to build a community hall.

Why was the hall named "Linda"? The name derives from the Estonian epic "Kalevipoeg". Kalev is a mythical super hero and Linda is his wife. She travels everywhere with him and is beloved for her beauty, intellect and culture. There was much discussion by the men's club about the choice of name for the hall. Since "Linda" embodied cultural values, her name was chosen for the hall as well as the "Linda Põllumeeste Selts". Kalev's prowess was not forgotten. The Estonian settlement northwest of Big Valley was named "Kalev".

The land for Linda Hall, located eleven miles south and one and half miles east of Settler, was donated by John Kerbes in 1911. To raise money, box lunches were sold at the picnics with a total of \$300 raised this way. In those times, this was a considerable sum and enabled basic building materials to be purchased. Members also donated equal amounts, to be repaid from rental revenues or to remain as a gift.

The first hall was a small rectangular building, positioned lengthwise, west to east. The west entrance door opened directly to the hall proper and the stage. The hall was later lengthened by several feet and the entrance changed to the east. The first building, built entirely by volunteer labour, was a simple roomy structure. It had a grand opening on Jaanipäev, June

1911. In just one year, an idea had been transformed into a community hall.

The furniture consisted of homemade orange colored benches and wooden tables with folding legs. The benches and tables were stored under the stage or in a storage space under the building. There was a wooden book-case filled with books, some from Plum Tree Publishing Co. in Estonia, about farm economics, history, travel, geography, medicine, veterinary science and fiction. Over time this library grew to contain approximately 2000 books which were lent out once a month during meetings. The hall had an upright piano. Lighting was from coal-oil lamps resting on wall brackets high above peoples' heads. A disastrous fire in 1930 destroyed the hall and all of its contents. The books were missed most of all as they had been ordered directly from Estonia after WW I.

Finances for rebuilding the hall came from fire insurance and donations by Society members, each according to financial ability. The new building was rebuilt by volunteer labor and came into use in the early 1930's. The Society sought to have a building with fine acoustics. Despite their efforts, they had to settle for the ceiling as it now is. The basement kitchen also had drawbacks, being too cold and the stove pipes being unable to draw. Eventually a kitchen was built on the outside central part of the south wall.



Rebuilt Linda Hall, 1931

The Society looked after all activities at the hall for many years. Meetings of the "Linda Põllumeeste Selts" were conducted in Estonian until the early 1950s after which a switch was made to English. The hall had outdoor equipment for physical development with a swing, trapeze, parallel bars, sand and poles for high and long jumping. Distance runners used the adjacent road. The brass band, formed by Tony Fridulin, entertained mostly outdoors while the mixed choir entertained indoors.

The Linda Men's Club planned five or six events each year: a fall masquerade, Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day and St. John's Day (Jaanipäev). Family nights were held once a month. These usually began with a "Circle Song" where everyone joined hands in a circle, with a pair in the center, and everyone sang a familiar folksong. During the chorus, the tempo increased and the dancers in the middle picked a new partner and danced a fast polka until everyone in the hall was up, singing and dancing. This was followed by games of skill, a program of educational presentations (by either sex), musical entertainment and a dance. Lunch would be served. The dances always began and ended with a waltz.

Everyone enjoyed square dances called by Joe Tipman, Ed Kerbes and many others. The violin players in the early years included John Kerbes, Martin Neithal, Mike Tipman, John Raho and Dick Hennel. The musicians started playing their instruments while they were still very young. John Kerbes on violin, was accompanied by his six year old son Archie playing the piano. In future years, Archie played the piano and his brother Alec played the violin at many district dances, parties and social gatherings. John Kerbes' younger sons, Ernie and Jim, also played the violin. John's daughter, Helen (Kerbes) Mulligan was the pianist with the original 4K's Orchestra, a group which for decades was the band of choice at Linda Hall.

During summer picnics, there were indoor and outdoor sports, speeches and plays. The society as a group made trips to enjoy nearby rivers and lakes.

The ladies of the Linda Hall district formed a club in

1925, soon after the men-folk had formed "Linda Põllumeeste Selts". The ladies club was called "Linda Naiste Rahvaste Ühisus - translated "Linda Women's Society". Meetings were held in Estonian. Some of the original members from the Linda and Kalev area were: Mrs. Minnie (John) Kerbes, Mrs. Lizzie (John) Saar, Mrs. Minnie (Tony) Fridulin, Mrs. Hilda (Martin) Oro, Mrs. Alide Wartnow, Mrs. Annette (Jaan) Kerbes, Mrs. Annie (Felix) Cusick, Mrs. Pauline (Kristian) Mägi, Mrs. Ida (William) Hennel, Mrs. Marie (Martin) Oliver, Mrs. Leena Klaus, Mrs. Pauline (August) Nicklom, Mrs. Julia (Peter) Kerbes, and many others. For a time the club was associated with the U.F.W.A. Among the members in the 1920's was Mrs. Maria Oliver, Mrs. Elizabeth Saar, Mrs. Anna J. Tipman, Mrs. J. Klaus, Mrs. B. Mägi, Annie Raho and others. This club was dissolved during the 1940s. For a time, some ladies in the district made lunches and catered dances individually. In 1952, some district ladies got together, these being Anna Tipman, Salme Hennel, Dulcie Hennel, Dorthea Laing and Doris Hennel. They were a quorum of five, and formed the present Linda Hall Ladies Club which conducted business in English. Anna Tipman acted as President, and Dulcie Hennel as secretary. Although minutes were kept of the meetings, unfortunately they have been lost. Doris Hennel remains a honorary member of the ladies' group.



4K's Band at a Wedding Dance, 1954

Over the years, the men's and ladies' clubs cooperated in many joint financial ventures. Along with support from government grants, they were able to make improvements and upgrades to Linda Hall. Forced air heating and running water were installed, and the

kitchen was updated with a cooler, new flooring and paint. The ladies' club purchased chairs, tables, kitchen equipment, electric stoves etc. A micro-wave was donated to the hall following a school reunion held to remember 'the good old times' enjoyed at Linda Hall.

At club Christmas concerts, children and adults took part in plays, singing and recitations, and of course, there was a visit from Santa. The annual summer picnic is still held around Jaanipäev. The entertainment at the picnic includes horseshoes, log sawing, nail pounding, rolling pin throw, children's games, and a pot luck supper. The ladies buy gifts for member's children who graduate from grades 9 and 12. The Club caters for weddings, funerals, parties and meetings. Each year on the first Sunday of November, they host a fall supper complete with Estonian rye bread. The Ladies Club, Linda Men's Club and the Recreation Board all work together on the fall supper and share the proceeds.

Before a kitchen was built at the hall, the ladies brought cream cans of water for coffee which was boiled on a wood stove in the basement. They made the lunch on a table upstairs. Gas lanterns hung from the high ceiling. A big pot-bellied stove at the back of the hall and a small stove in the ladies room provided heat. In 1953, the Men's Club decided to give the catering to a group of ladies instead of one or two persons, with 20% of the profit to be given to the hall. In 1954 electricity was installed. In 1957 a kitchen was built on the south side of the hall, all with volunteer help. In 1965 a new dance floor was installed in the hall and in 1966 a stoker was installed. In 1974 a well was drilled. In 1977 and 1978, the Hennel brothers, Henry and Harvey, held a threshing bee at their farm to raise money for the hall. The Ladies Club sold lunches at these functions. As a result in 1979, indoor washroom facilities were installed. In the same year, ball diamonds with back stops were completed with ample room for parking and camping. An extension of the kitchen and large walk-in cooler were welcome additions in 1984. Also in 1984, Glen Collins made signage for the hall.

In 1988 an improved heating system was put in place. A playground for children was made on the south side of the hall which included swings, a slide and merry-go-round. Horse-shoe pits were built for grown-ups. An

extension was built on the north side of the hall and a built-in vacuum cleaner was installed in 1986. A burning pit was also developed. The renovation included construction of a liquor bar and a carpeted social dining area on the north side of the hall which easily accommodates 150 people. A covered Bar-B-Q annex was added to the north side and the roof changed to cover the whole area.

The original 1911 wooden hall was probably unpainted. The second hall was painted white and aqua. When the roof was changed, new white siding was added. It is quite a different looking hall now it was in the early years. When the Estonian-Canadian Centennial was celebrated at Linda Hall on Jaanipäev, June 1999, two flag poles and a plaque were placed beside the main door. The plaque commemorates pioneers 'who made this land our home'. In 2005, a small patio was poured near the plaque and a garden seat was placed nearby. This area is accented by chain railing leading to the main steps of Linda Hall.

From the early 1900's to the present, Linda Hall has been the scene of many community events such as agricultural meetings, concerts, Estonian gatherings, dances, weddings, funerals, reunions and many assorted functions. Province-wide Estonian Jaanipäev celebrations have been held here over the years, including the first Jaanipäev of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society in 2005. In 2000, Lennart Meri, President of Estonia, visited Stettler to view its pioneer past and meet Estonian pioneer descendants at a reception at Linda Hall. The past and present members of the Linda Hall Clubs have generously volunteered their time and skills to keep the hall an active and inviting place. Hopefully future members of the clubs will continue traditions set so long ago.

The above information was taken from articles by Anna Tipman, Joe Tipman, Doris Hennel, and from "Eestlased Kanadas" (1975). The information was compiled by Irene and Deane Kerbes, February, 2006.

Remembering President Lennart Meri

Ain Dave Kiil

When Estonian President Lennart Meri visited Alberta in July 2000, following the Esto 2000 cultural festival in Toronto, he immediately demonstrated his interest in and understanding of the history of Alberta's Estonian community

Lennart Meri was welcomed at the Calgary airport by a couple of dozen local Estonians. In the spirit of the Calgary Stampede, some wore Western gear. Later, the Calgary hosts accompanied wife Helle and daughter Tuule Meri to the Calgary Stampede grounds for the Rodeo events and a visit to the Indian Village.



Photo: Helgi Leesment

President Lennart Meri in Calgary

The President, accompanied by his wife and teen-age daughter, endeared himself to all during a visit to Stettler. A tour of the Stettler Museum, with many Estonian displays and artifacts, a roadside stop at the sign dedicated to Alberta's Estonian

pioneers, and a visit to the cemetery near Linda Hall, resulted in discussions about the Estonian settlers who came to Alberta directly from Estonia, Russia, northern States, or via the Crimea .



President Lennart Meri making friends with Bob Kingsep and Evelyn Shursen in front of the bilingual highway sign near Linda Hall.

Lennart Meri was not restricted to competence in things cultural and historical; he was also interested in business and natural resources. One of his interests involved the further development of north-eastern Estonia's oil shale industry which bears some resemblance to Alberta's massive oil sands development.

With the generous assistance of Alta Flights, owned by Alberta Estonian Heritage Society members the Robertsons, the president flew to Ft. McMurray to get a first-hand look at the oil sands operations there.

The presidential entourage concluded its western visit by rail from Calgary to Vancouver. Helgi Leesment reports that Lennart Meri later made it clear that he appreciated the friendly informality, yet attention to detail, on his entire Alberta visit.

President Meri's death earlier this year, at age 76, marked the end of a noteworthy and meritorious life. His accomplishments as a historian, playwright and politician were extensively covered in the printed and visual

media. Additional details can be found on several Internet sites, including: www.riik.ee/lennartmeri; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lennart_Meri.

As the son of a prominent Estonian diplomat, Lennart Meri attended numerous schools in Europe and he became proficient in six languages.

In 1941, Meri's family was deported to Siberia and the young boy spent his early teen-age years far from his birthplace. His first jobs were as a lumberman and a potato-peeler at the age of twelve.

Back in Estonia, Lennart graduated from Tartu University in 1958 with a degree in Languages and History. The government in Moscow didn't allow him to pursue his interest in history so the president-to-be became an actor and playwright.

He was eventually permitted to undertake trips to Siberia and the Far East, a passion he followed for a quarter-century. During the Soviet occupation of Estonia, Mr. Meri pursued his keen interest in small Finno-Ugric populations by extensive travel and study in eastern Russia, including Siberia. By observing first-hand the lives of the Russian people and especially the challenges facing the smaller Finno-Ugric ethnic groups, he gained an appreciation of the aspirations of these isolated groups as well as a profound understanding of Russian culture. He observed first-hand the festering conflicts between the locals and the central regime in Moscow.

As a writer perhaps his best-known work is *Hõbevalge* (Silver White), a book based on his vast knowledge, scientific study and a fertile imagination about the history of ancient Estonia and the Baltic Sea Region, including the mythical Thule region. One of the major themes of the book involves the impact of a meteorite in central Saaremaa some 3,500 years ago and speculation about the long-term effects of this not only on the island's but also the region's population.

By the 1970's, the Soviets allowed Meri to travel outside the Iron Curtain. In the late 1980's, he worked in Finland and in 1990, a year before Estonia's second Declaration of Independence, he became the country's unofficial Minister of Foreign Affairs and quickly established communication links with the Western World. Days after the failed Soviet coup d'etat in 1991, the President-to-be drove around Helsinki with an Estonian flag in his car's windshield and delivered notices about Estonia's independence to foreign embassies.

When he returned to Estonia from Helsinki, he ordered the authorities to take down the Soviet flag at the Tallinn harbor and declared that "I won't walk onto Estonian soil under a Soviet flag". (City Paper).

Meri was President of Estonia from 1992 to 2002. He leaves behind him a reputation as an amiable and cultivated man. As a lifelong student, Meri brought to the position a depth of knowledge and life experience that served him well during his tenure. The correct measure of a public figure sometimes doesn't surface for many years; in Meri's case, his legacy as a father-figure of Estonia's second period of independence and as a widely-recognized figure in world history is not in doubt. As noted in the *Economist*, he put Estonia back on the map of Europe.



President Meri in his study.

During a visit to Estonia in the fall of 1992, a forestry colleague took me to a Russian military installation on the country's north

coast. It was still manned by the Russians who refused to leave.

Two years later, Meri met Boris Yeltsin in Moscow in an effort to resolve the issue. Some reports suggest that shattered glass littered the floor under the negotiating table. The long session led to the withdrawal of Russian soldiers from Estonian soil.

Meri is quoted widely in the international press and his utterings are sometimes referred to as “Meriisms”. A couple of examples:

Concerning membership in NATO:

“Security is like virginity:
you’re either a virgin or
you’re not. You either have
security or you don’t” (City Paper)

About Soviet-style behavior in government and society:

“Our most dangerous enemy
sits between our ears”.

Paul Goble, a friend of Lennart Meri, put it well in his article in *Estonian Life* when he said that “Lennart Meri had an amazing ability to make friends, to reach out to people, be they presidents or the poorest of his countrymen, literary scholars and filmmakers or those who had never read a book in their lives, and those who began with a basic affection for Estonia and those who had a different set of feelings”

Michael Tarm of Associated Press recently referred to Meri as Estonia’s Mr. Fix-it. This label was partly attributable to the Soviet way to fix a burnt-out light bulb. The Soviets would plan to fix all light switches and then decide to form a committee to organize the work. President Meri carried a screw driver with him as he moved through the Presidential Palace and immediately fixed anything that caught his eye.

During his brief but much-appreciated visit to Alberta, President Meri impressed all of us who had an opportunity to talk with and listen to him. He was well-versed about the

Estonian immigrants who settled here more than a century ago. His thirst for knowledge was obvious, as was his message about the importance of being aware of one’s roots and the need to preserve Estonian culture. He reached out and made friends, we felt better, and remain thankful that he was in our midst.

The Alberta Estonian Heritage Society has mailed a message of condolence to Mr. Meri’s wife and daughter.



Lennart Meri with a group of newly-acquired friends at Linda Hall, 2000



We remember Estonian President Lennart Meri (1929-2006).

Mart Laar Receives Milton Friedman Prize



On April 20, Washington 2006, Mart Laar, the former Prime Minister of Estonia, became the third recipient of the Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty.

The Friedman Prize is awarded every two years to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the advancement of human freedom. It comes with \$500,000 in prize money. The Cato Institute, which awards the Friedman Prize, is a non-profit public policy research foundation headquartered in, D.C.

The winner of the Friedman Prize is selected by an international selection committee that this year included Anne Applebaum of the *Washington Post*, Fareed Zakaria of *Newsweek International*, Francisco Flores, former President of El Salvador, Fred Smith, Chairman of the Federal Express Corporation, and Rose Friedman.

The previous winners of the Friedman Prize were Peter Bauer, a British economist, for his pioneering work in development economics, and Hernando De Soto, a Peruvian economist, for his work on the importance of property rights in helping the poor to obtain access to capital. The two economists helped to create a theoretical basis for applying the market principles to fight global poverty. They showed that free

market, characterized by trade openness, limited state intervention in the economy, and strong emphases on property rights and the rule of law, was the best available mechanism for alleviating global poverty. Mart Laar put those theoretical principles into practice to the benefit of his countrymen.

According to the *Economic Freedom of the World: 2005 Annual Report*, which is published by the Fraser Institute in Canada, Estonia is the ninth economically freest country in the world. Today, many people find it difficult to remember the days of the Soviet Union, when the Estonian economy was completely dominated by the state and marked by endless lines and shortages. Mart Laar replaced the "dead hand" of the government with Adam Smith's "invisible hand." His government eliminated import tariffs (a decision that was partly reversed by Estonia's membership of the European Union) and established a flat income tax. Corporate taxes on reinvested profits fell to zero and a currency board was established to combat inflation. The government also undertook extensive privatization of state companies.

Though Estonia experienced a sharp but short recession that was shared by all transitional economies, by 1995 the economy was roaring again. According to the World Bank, between 1995 and 2004, Estonia's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) grew at a compounded average annual rate of 6.6 percent. During that decade, Estonia's GDP per capita adjusted for purchasing power parity rose from \$6,847 to \$12,773 in constant 2000 dollars, an increase of 86.5 percent. Estonia's sustained, high growth rate was among the region's highest and set the country on course to join the

rest of the developed world.

Mart Laar's premiership also marked Estonia's return to democratic rule, which the country enjoyed during a brief period of independence between the two World Wars. It did not have to be that way. In Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko's assumption of power in 1994 marked the return of that country to a communist dictatorship. Ukraine had to wait 13 years after her declaration of independence in 1991 before becoming democratic, and Russia has slid back into autocracy under the leadership of Vladimir Putin.

Mart Laar's impact was felt beyond the influence he had on the lives of his fellow countrymen. Other post-communist countries learned from Estonia's reforms and imitated them. Estonia's successful adoption of the flat tax led the way for Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine, and others. Estonia's unilateral trade liberalization is a continued inspiration for other countries; including, most recently, Georgia. There are also those who feel that the presence of a market-liberal Estonia in the European Union will lead the EU away from her socialist policies. Though I am not convinced that Estonia's market-liberalism is safe in the EU, let alone that Estonia will be able to change the policy debate in Brussels, I certainly hope that Mart Laar's optimism about the EU's future evolution will be justified.

Mart Laar was a superb choice for the 2006 Friedman Prize. I am very pleased that my employer, the Cato Institute, is able to honor him in that way and I hope that the fire of liberty that Mart Laar and his colleagues set alight in Estonia will continue to spread to the rest of the world.

Marian L. Tupy is assistant director of the Project on Global Economic Liberty at the Cato Institute.

Estonians in Alberta **(2001 Canadian Census)**

A total of 1990 Albertans claimed to have Estonian ancestry.

The above total includes the following breakdown of respondents by selected Alberta cities and towns:

Medicine Hat: **30**

Brooks: **20**

Lethbridge: **20**

Calgary: **740**

Red Deer: **145**

Edmonton: **465**

Estonians in Canada

A total of **10,690** and **8720** respondents in the 1996 and 2001 Canadian Census, respectively, claimed Estonian as their mother tongue

In the 2001 Census, a total of **22,085** respondents reported that they have Estonian ancestors.

Greetings from Crimea

I bring you greetings from the Crimean Estonian Cultural Society and from the Estonian Kalev Cammerkor which we heard near Yalta. We also went to an Ethnographic Museum in Simferopol with a display of items from Estonian homes in the region.

The Kalev Choir would like to tour Canada in three years.

**Martha Munz Gue,
May 6, 2006
Kiev Airport**

Elmar's library: Part Two

Anti Liiv, Estonian Psychologist

Part One of Elmer's Library was published in Ajakaja-Winter 2005 issue

In Part One we talked about the books read by 50 to 55-year-old Estonian men in their childhood in the 1960s. This time we'll focus on his books of interest in the 1980s. It was a time when it was very cool to have at least 200 to 300 books in an Estonian home. The books were cheap, approximately the price of a couple of bottles of beer.

Perhaps it was a bit strange to have different reference books at home. To understand the importance of some very important books for preserving Estonian identity and culture following WWII, it is helpful to write a few words about encyclopaedias.

The idea to write a National Encyclopaedia in Estonia arose already at the end of the 19th century. Estonian-speaking authors were few and not ready to tackle such a comprehensive treatise, or perhaps there were not enough readers to justify the effort. Those interested in searching for facts used German sources up to WWI.

The first Estonian Encyclopaedia (Eesti Entsüklopeedia, or **EE-1**) was published between 1932 and 1940 in independent Estonia. This very well written reference book (8 volumes + 1 interim edition) reflected and supported Estonian culture.



Cover pages of the Estonian Encyclopaedia (EE-1) and the Estonian Soviet Encyclopaedia (ENE)

Unfortunately Estonia was occupied by the former Soviet Union during WWII. The new rulers were afraid that this book was too dangerous for the socialist system and tried to

destroy all copies of the first Encyclopaedia. It became very rare during the post-WWII years.

In the 1960s, EE-1 came to be perceived as being less anti-Soviet. It was found on open shelves in the Library of Tartu University. As most copies of the book were destroyed during the Stalin era it is not known how many have survived to the present time. Nevertheless, EE-1 is and was highly-priced in Estonian second-hand bookshops. Although EE-1 is more than 70 years old, some facts from this old book are still sought after today.

The next Estonian Encyclopaedia was published (Publishing House of Estonian Encyclopaedia) when the Soviet occupational regime became a bit milder in the 1960s. A well-known Estonian politician, Mr. Tunne Kelam, now a member of the European Parliament, worked as one of about 50 editors in the Publishing House from 1965 -1975. Due to political issues, the first volume (65 000 copies!) wasn't published until 1968.

The official name of the book was the Estonian Soviet Encyclopaedia (Eesti Nõukogude Entsüklopeedia), but it became well known in Estonia under the nickname **ENE**, a very nice Estonian girl's name. Eight volumes of ENE plus an addendum were published between 1968 and 1978. This publication was a very important milestone in Estonian culture under Soviet occupation as all the authors were the best Estonian specialists. Some of the authors had taken part in compiling EE-1 before WWII and their unsanctioned involvement was discussed in cafeterias and family parties.

The success of ENE led to the publication of **ENEKE**, an endearing nickname of ENE, for Estonian children. It was published in four volumes (75 000 copies!) between 1982 and 1986 and quickly became a bestseller.

It should be emphasized that both ENE and ENEKE were psychologically important educational tools in Estonia during Soviet occupation. Pressure was also mounting for Estonians to become bilingual in support of the so-called "Soviet nationality". ENE and ENEKE both supported the Estonian identity and also the development of scientific thinking and writing in Estonian.

Following the publication of ENE-1 work started immediately on ENE-2, the first of several editions. It was published in 1985, the same year that Michael Gorbachev restricted alcohol consumption in Estonia.



Cover pages of ENEKE (Published as 4 Volumes) and ENE-4

This time **220,000** copies were ordered (or bought from bookstores), perhaps the highest number of copies of any Estonian-language publication.

The first volume of ENE had the Soviet censorship numbers (IB #4553 and MB-08646). By the late 1980s the winds of change, fanned by the Singing Revolution, resulted in the declaration of Estonian Independence in 1991.

Volume 4 was the last edition of the Estonian Soviet Encyclopaedia (ENE).

Starting with the 5th volume, the Publishing House decided to restore the old name “Estonian Encyclopaedia-EE”. You can trace the development on Elmar’s bookshelf - Volumes 1 to 4 is ENE; starting with Volume 5 the name is EE-2. The latest Volume, published in 2000, is EE-14.



The name “Estonian Encyclopedia - EE” was used from Volume 5 through to Volume 14

It is interesting to note that two separate sets of atlases were also published: the first one in 1989 with Estonia shown as part of the Soviet Union and identified with Soviet censorship #'s: IB 6715 and MB-0813. The declaration of Estonian Independence in 1991 led to a change in the Estonian border and resulted in much debate about how to correct the 1989 border issue because it was perceived as an insult to national pride. These discussions lasted long enough to allow for the preparation of a totally new, high-quality Large World Atlas (Suur Maaailma Atlas) in Estonian, the biggest in the history of Estonia. It was published in 2005.



The Large World Atlas (Suur Maaailma Atlas) and a map of Alberta. Major names and locations on the Alberta map are in Estonian.

Estonians lived under Soviet occupation for 50 years. This situation is perhaps the reason why some strange competitions and quizzes (Informiin, Mnemoturniir and Kilvad), based on the use of different reference books, captured people’s attention. But that’s another story.

So the makeup of Elmar’s library illustrates how a small nation of one million Estonian-speaking citizens purchased 220,000 copies of the multi-volume National Encyclopaedias and used them to support their cultural identity through the 20th and the 21st centuries. If you visit the land of your ancestors in the future, take time to visit a library and look for these volumes.

Editors note: It is noteworthy that Estonians lined up for hours, sometimes overnight, to order their pre-publication copies of the Estonian Encyclopaedia prior to publication. The author waited in line for four hours. From our detached vantage point we can only imagine how the purchase of a book can contribute to a protest action in support of a nation’s identity and culture.

Tuur, Estonia's modern Bach

Paul Morton, *The Baltic Times*

TALLINN - Erkki-Sven Tuur is Estonia's second most famous composer. At 46, he's a good deal younger than the country's most famous composer, Arvo Part, the father of "holy minimalism." Born in 1935, Part's influences are centered on Russian classical and Orthodox church music. Tuur has written spiritual pieces as well, but he is very much a product of his generation, which apparently had a little more freedom to enjoy a thousand influences thanks to its late placement in musical history. In his house in Hiiumaa Island, he absorbed his father's record collection of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven.

Then there was the church. "It's very weird, but my parents were very sincerely religious people. Almost every Estonian had some relatives in the West, so some American gospel choirs and bands [Mahalia Jackson, The Imperials] reached our house."

Later as teenage student in Tallinn, he was introduced by some older friends to the best progressive rock, like King Crimson, Yes and Genesis.

A professor in Tallinn with good contacts in the West played Central European and Scandinavian modernists like Boulez and Xenakis in class. From other sources, Tuur listened to Philip Glass and Steve Reich.

"We couldn't analyze the scores of modern music, there was nothing really new in the music library. So there was a feeling of isolation. Still, we had better chances than the rest of the Soviet Union, so the situation wasn't so dark." He started composing music in the late '70s. In 1979, he and a few friends formed In Spe, a tremendously popular rock band in 1980s Estonia. He was always bringing in a range of instruments, sometimes the cello, sometimes the violin. Once he used brass instruments. When, by the middle of the decade, he decided he wanted to compose classical music, the transformation, such as it was, had occurred "absolutely naturally."

Though he mentions the most obvious influences here - Gregorian chant, Bach ("the king of music") and Mahler - he has his own style, in which tonal and atonal rhythms play against each

other quite smoothly. One can only take so much. "I don't like to listen to music as background," Tuur says. "I like to concentrate on what I'm listening to or I prefer silence because my own music is playing in my head."

He does listen to music in his car when he drives from Hiiumaa Island, where he lives, to Tallinn, where he keeps an apartment: jazz, rock, Brian Eno, and King Crimson, along with all the usual classical greats and modernists.

Classical stardom

Tuur sat down to talk on a Saturday in Tallinn a few weeks ago, during one of his excursions onto the mainland. He's a tall, thin handsome man, with mildly unruly hair. Though he sat for the entire interview, he was very physical, swaying from side to side when he was trying to illustrate a difficult point. He was dressed head-to-toe, in black, as much hipster rock and roller as classical composer.

There's nothing novel anymore, if there ever was, about classical composers and musicians playing across genres. Too often, the exercises sound like failed experiments, the work of unimaginative provocateurs.

"I like to build up synthesis between these separate 'musical islands,'" he says. "When you combine rock and orchestra, the result, too often, is empty crossover and very cheap. I'm interested in synthesizing the very essence of these things."

When Tuur, for example, sets the soft lingering notes of a piano against the falling strings of an electric guitar in "Architectonics V" (1991), he is creating a perfectly natural call-and-response. His Symphony No. 5, which premiered in Stuttgart last year, included an orchestra, a jazz big band, and an electric guitar, whose part was completely improvised.

"I'm interested in the interaction between polarities...I like to have extremely smooth changes, from one polarity to another." Though critics have suggested that his work creates a fantasy world through music - one critic said his "Desert Island" (1989) was reminiscent of the phantasmagoria of Arnold

Bocklin's paintings - he cites less ephemeral influences.

"I am a great fan of contemporary architecture... Sometimes, I draw shapes on paper before I shape my music. These images help me capture the musical form. There's a very tight connection between the visual and the sonic imagination." Does one building influence one specific piece of music?

"No, it's not so literal." Looking at architecture helps him meld together a musical composition from many different materials. "In architecture, houses are made of wood and concrete, steel and glass. In musical composition, one source for the material could be totally atonal, and another source can be tonal and simple. I try to build a coherent musical work from these elements." Going back to "Architectonics V," again just to take an example, you can almost hear some undefined structure taking shape. That piano and that electric guitar are building something together. Whether or not it is something you can live in is another question, but it still must be something nice to look at.

On the program Tuur's two children - a rock guitarist son and a daughter who studied theology and now works as a translator - are grown up. His daughter recently had a son, and he and his wife, a pianist who he met back in his In Spe days, are now enjoying life as young grandparents. "This is a very interesting time for me." He has a schedule of commissions that will keep him busy for the next three years. Tuur is currently in the middle of a piano concerto for the Austrian composer Thomas Larcher and the Frankfurt Radio Orchestra. One small part of it "will have a jazzier approach. It sounds like it was improvised." Tuur, like everyone else, hated the Soviet system, and though his life as a rock musician in In Spe in the '80s "had the smell of rebellion in it," he was never much of a political activist. He was always doing his work more or less unaffected by great events. At one point he set rock music, which was permitted, to liturgical texts, which were forbidden. Somehow it passed the censors. "[The Soviet cultural authorities] were so stupid, they figured that if it wasn't set to classical music, it couldn't be religious." He wasn't trying to make a political point when he wrote that piece. Then

as now, "it was always art for art's sake for me." Now he is composing in the shadow of the McDonald's capitalization of Estonian music culture, in which you can hear Britney and all the worst American music in every cafe and restaurant.

"What can you do? You have to find a right way to act against these kinds of cultural movements. All you can do is write something yourself. I just keep writing music, keep adding little bricks to my culture."



Photo: In Estonian Theatre and Music Museum
Erkki-Sven Tüür



What is an Estonian like?

Fred Jüssi, nature photographer



An Estonian is like a tree. His appearance is completely different when he is looked at from the west, the east or from other directions. His various shapes cannot be discerned from under the shadow of the tree crown;

they become visible at a distance.

Throughout centuries, the reigning winds have shaped his crown, but not his roots. They are fixed firmly in the ground following supreme laws, his own laws, his own wisdom. How forked the crown really is, becomes evident only when storms have stripped it bare. Only then do you see his broken branches, and twisted or withered twigs; some are visible from the west or east, others from the north or south. Near the tree trunk they can be observed clearest of all.

Standing there, you can see his rough bark, with fresh and old welts. Just like big or small gnarls and burls indicate a tree's health, these too tell the tree's story. They speak about those who suck or have sucked the vitality from him and left their marks on him. They are evidence of the pain that can be felt by the tree alone and no one else. Here, you may hear the whistling of storms amongst the branches and the rustle of wind in the foliage. You hear the shouts of those who come and go, and the songs of those who stay. You begin to understand the whispers and silences of those present. Here, you perceive the circulation of life in this entity, one amongst others. And its words become your words, and you become somebody, so that you could be who you are.

An Estonian

Jaan Undusk, literary critic



An Estonian has low collective emotionality, and thus he does not want or indeed is not able to, either take in or let out the collective energy of his emotions. He realizes how it shatters his interior and destroys his personal balance. An Estonian is not interested in the intensity of an emotion, but rather its quality. One of the features of the quality of an emotion is its

personality. Estonians are good tacticians, chiefs of staff, but they make poor cannon fodder; they are poor soldiers when they're expected to cast aside their own feelings and charge headlong into machine gun fire. They never seize a single Bastille. They stand on the fringes instead, finger in mouth, analyzing, assessing, advancing, and sometimes gradually falling in love with something.

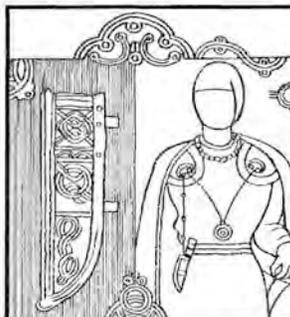
Being Estonian as a branch of postmodernism

*Mihkel Muut, a man of letters,
editor of a cultural newspaper*



An Estonian is an extremely contemporary person, although he might not be aware of it himself. In the world today, all kinds of fashions and styles exist side by side. The mind of any European or American citizen includes both the fragments of a scientific worldview and the belief in healers and horoscopes. An Estonian too, is the embodiment of the sum total of the most different

influences, both in a biological and mental sense. In diverse situations, these differences are revealed as different aspects, which is why it is so difficult to explain to someone what an Estonian is really like. Describing what an Estonian is not like is much more effective. An Estonian does not remember his roots which date back thousands of years very well, he has no national dishes he wants to eat himself, and there are few customs the whole nation follows. Although every generalization about a nation is weak and there do exist nervous Finns and Englishmen without a sense of humour, myths about these nations still circulate widely. Despite efforts throughout the ages to work them out, nobody is really prepared to believe any myths about the Estonian character. Other nations nearby represent these qualities in a more pure form than in Estonia; this is partly due to the vigorous mixing of blood with people from all parts of the world. Furthermore, the history of Estonians as a nation has been the history of catching up with others. At the end of the last century, Estonians went through the same cultural trends that developed elsewhere over centuries within the period of a few dozen years. During the first period of independence, Estonia managed to catch up with Europe. Now, after the end of the Russian occupation, Estonia is once again catching up with the world. It is quite clear that this constant catching up has left its mark. This is a postmodernist nation with all the related good and bad things; it's a nation of the pastiche, parody, eclectics and recycling. Failing to remember the lost paradise, Estonians strive towards a vague notion of paradise. Very-very contemporary indeed.



An Estonian woman's knife sheath and dress.

The sheath is from the 12/13th century, the woman's dress is from the early Stone Age period.

Source: Hõbevalge

The Cunning Keeper of a Threshing Barn

Andrus Kivirähk



The nature of a nation is revealed in its **fairy tales**: they document truths and store them in crystallized form for centuries. Let us have a look at Estonian fairy tales, which nearly always have a barn-keeper and a shrewd

man called Ants.

We do not find brave noble heroes fighting dragons and liberating imprisoned princesses from castle towers. There are no kings and powerful wizards, beautiful elves, or legends about everlasting love. The heroes are neither rich nor famous, and will never become king. Nor are they knights swinging their battle-axes on a battlefield. In fact, they never commit heroic deeds. Moreover, they hardly bother to leave their homes!

They sit by the fire, puffing at their pipe or lie down somewhere with their toes pointing towards the sunshine. They can be chums with both the Creator and Satan. Sometimes they meet some evil spirit or other, but they do not reach for their sword or cross. Instead, they have a nice little chat together, but there's always an ulterior motive. They may even enter the service of Lucifer himself, to do nothing particularly useful. Quietly, however, they'll pinch their

master's things, and rip off their superior at the first opportunity.

They are also familiar with all kinds of witchcraft, and use it for the sole purpose of amassing wealth and fortune for themselves. To that end, they may conjure forth treasure-bringing goblins, or turn into a whirlwind in the shape of a fly that crawls out of someone's nose; or charge off in a trough to a neighbour's barn for grain. After walking around a grey stone they may turn into werewolves. Once in a while, an enraged neighbour or landlord appears as a whirlwind, to claim the hero's treasure instead! But not to worry - the barn-keeper knows a remedy for that too - he hits the greedy intruder with a rowan branch and cripples him. And life goes on.

Finally, the Prince of Darkness or the Grim Reaper comes to claim his soul. He asks the visitor to take a seat on a tar-covered bench, or pours some hot pitch down his throat. The enemy flees while the barn-keeper or Ants sit in front of the fire and puffing on a pipe as if nothing had happened. Forever after. These fairy tales portray Estonians as a cunning thicket of alders under the high and mighty timber forest.

They're not afraid of either storms or an axe; they are here to stay.

The four articles about "Estonian characteristics" form part of a collection entitled "Estonian People" published by the Estonian Institute. They are reproduced with the permission of the authors.

Estonian cross-country skiers Smigun and Veerpalu ski to gold medals in Torino.

Dave Kiil

Kristina Smigun and Andrus Veerpalu were both victorious at the Winter Olympics in Italy last winter. Smigun was a double winner in the women's 15 km pursuit and the 10 km classical races, whereas Veerpalu triumphed in the men's 15 km classical race.

Both have had outstanding careers and their achievements in Torino brought renewed international acclaim to Estonia's cross-country skiers. The two skiers, along with wrestler Kristjan Palusalu and cyclist Erika Salumäe, are the only Estonian Olympians who have won two gold medals!

Of the two new Estonian folk heroes, Smigun received most of the media attention in the domestic and international press and on the Internet. Described by reporters as a bubbly and outgoing individual, she admits to living a highly focused and regimented life for at least eleven months of the year. When an acquaintance invited her to go shopping for souvenirs her answer was: "You collect souvenirs, I collect medals". Having participated in four Olympics to date, she is already dreaming of gold in Vancouver in 2010!

Veerpalu is also a highly decorated athlete with a total of three medals (2 golds, 1 silver) in the last two Winter Olympics. He is a devoted family man with three children.

Golden Andrus is reportedly more comfortable on the ski trails than in front of thousands of admiring fans. Asked if

he plans to participate in another Olympics, he notes that he'll live from year to year for the time being. He is also quoted as observing that, for a small country like Estonia, his win in Torino is important for all Estonians.

Both athletes received a huge homecoming welcome in Tallinn's Freedom Square. President Rüütel, Prime Minister Ansip and other dignitaries were on hand to heap plaudits on the new national heroes and to thank them on behalf of the Estonian people. President Rüütel presented the golden pair with traditional laurel-leaf garlands during the ceremony.



Photo: Maaleht

Kristina Smigun and Andrus Veerpalu showing off their traditional laurel-leaf garlands during their homecoming welcome in Tallinn's Freedom Square.

The two athletes will each receive premiums reportedly well over a hundred thousand dollars.

The Baltic Life: Hot Technology for Chilly Streets

By MARK LANDLER

New York Times
December 13, 2005

TALLINN, Estonia, Dec. 8 - Visiting the offices of Skype feels like stumbling on to a secret laboratory in a James Bond movie, where mad scientists are hatching plots for world domination.

The two-year-old company, which offers free calls over the Internet, is hidden at the end of an unmarked corridor in a grim Soviet-era academic building on the outskirts of this Baltic port city. By 5 p.m. at this time of year, it is long past sunset, and a raw wind has emptied the streets.

Inside Skype, however, things are crackling - as they are everywhere in Estonia's technology industry. The company has become a hot calling card for Estonia, a northern outpost that joined the European Union only last year but has turned itself into a sort of Silicon Valley on the Baltic Sea.

"We are recognized as the most dynamic country in Europe" in information technology, said Linnar Viik, a computer science professor who has nurtured start-ups and is regarded as something of a guru by Estonia's entrepreneurs. "The question is, How do we sustain that dynamism?"

Foreign investors are swooping into Tallinn's tiny airport in search of the next Skype (rhymes with pipe). The company most often mentioned, Playtech, designs software for online gambling services. It is contemplating an initial public offering that bankers say could raise up to \$1 billion.

Indeed, there is an outlaw mystique to some of Estonia's ventures, drawn here to Europe's eastern frontier. Whether it is online gambling, Internet voice calls or music file-sharing - Skype's founders are also behind the most popular music service, Kazaa - Estonian entrepreneurs are testing the limits of business and law.

And by tapping its scientific legacy from Soviet times and making the best of its vest-pocket size, Estonia is developing an efficient technology industry that generates ingenious products - often dreamed up by a few friends - able to mutate via the Internet into major businesses.

These entrepreneurs grow out of an energetic, youthful society, which has embraced technology as the fastest way to catch up with the West. Eight of 10 Estonians carry cellphones, and even gas stations in Tallinn are equipped with Wi-Fi connections, allowing motorists to visit the Internet after they fill up.

Such ubiquitous connectivity makes Tallinn's location midway between Stockholm and St. Petersburg seem less remote.

Even the short icebound days play a part, people here say, because they shackle software developers to the warm glow of their computer screens. For the 150 people who work at Skype, Estonia is clearly where the action is.

"What Skype has shown the world is that you can take a great idea, with few resources, and conquer the world," said Sten Tamkivi, the 27-year-old head of software development.

Whether Skype poses a mortal threat to telephone companies, as some enthusiasts suggest, is an open question. But it has become an undisputed technology star - a status cemented in September when eBay, the Internet auction giant, bought the company in a deal worth \$2.5 billion.

More than 70 million people have downloaded Skype's free software from the Internet, Mr. Tamkivi said, and it is adding registered users at a rate of 190,000 a day. On a recent evening, 3.7 million people were logged on to the service, nearly three times the population of this country.

Professor Viik and others relish the attention that Skype has brought Estonia. But he says his country cannot build a long-lasting technology industry on a single hit or even a few hits: Kazaa was hugely popular before it ran into a blizzard of copyright-infringement lawsuits.

Silicon Valley, Mr. Viik noted, is composed of clusters of companies that feed off one another. Skype is a closed company, with proprietary software and owners who are so secretive about their plans that for a time local journalists did not know where its offices were.

The company's two founders are not even Estonian. Niklas Zennstrom is a Swede, and Janus Friis is a Dane. Skype's legal headquarters are in Luxembourg; its sales and marketing office is in London. Although Estonian developers wrote Skype's basic code, only a fraction of the eBay bonanza went into Estonian pockets.

Part of the problem for Estonia's entrepreneurs is the nation's inexperience in capital markets. It regained its independence only in 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Estonia's entrepreneurs do not yet have the

Rolodexes of their Scandinavian counterparts. Recently, Tallinn got its first high-tech venture capital firm.

Then, too, there is its small size. Estonia's entire software development industry employs roughly 2,500 people, less than the research and development staff at a major American technology company.

"Let's be frank," said Priit Alamae, the 27-year-old founder of Webmedia, another leading software design firm. "Estonia has 1.3 million people; we have 200 I.T. graduates a year; we do not have the resources to develop our own Microsoft."

The competition for talented recruits is driving up salaries more than 20 percent a year, he said. While Estonia remains cheaper than neighbors like Finland or Sweden, the gap is narrowing rapidly.

In some ways, however, Estonia's labor shortage has contributed to its success. Companies here are extraordinarily efficient. And they tend to focus on niche products or on business models - like Skype's or Kazaa's - that can expand from a small base by word of mouth.

Skype and Kazaa are powered by so-called peer-to-peer technology, which allows computers to share files or other information on a network without the need for a centralized server to route the data. In Kazaa's case, the files being swapped are songs. In Skype's case, they are voices.

"There is no new technology in Skype," Mr. Viik said. "It is an example of how you put together bits and pieces of technology in a clever way. Estonians are very good at putting together bits and pieces."

Necessity is the mother of invention, but what is it about Estonians that makes them the Baltic's answer to Bill Gates?

"People here are kind of introverted and into technology," said Jaan Tallinn, a tousled-haired man who looks younger than his 33 years and wrote the software code that is the basis of Kazaa and Skype. "We have long, cold winters when there isn't much to do, so it makes sense."

Other people cite history: Estonia's long subjugation by the Soviet Union, and the euphoria that came with freedom.

"It's as if a young country suddenly came into independence with great hopes but few material resources," said Steve Jurvetson, a venture capitalist in Silicon Valley. Mr. Jurvetson, whose family has Estonian roots, has invested in a few start-ups here, most notably Skype.

Estonia owes one thing to its former oppressor. In the 1950's, the Soviets chose the Baltic states as the site for several scientific institutes. Estonia wound up with the

Institute of Cybernetics - basically a computer sciences center - that now houses Skype and many other firms.

That scientific legacy remains embedded in society, people say. It is most visible in Estonia's receptiveness to new technology. Internet penetration is estimated by the telecommunications industry to be 49 percent of the population.

Estonians use mobile phones to pay for parking, among other things. Most conduct their banking online, and more than 70 percent file their taxes on the Internet. The state issues a digital identification card, which allows citizens to vote from their laptops.

In a rare disappointment, less than 2 percent of the electorate, or 10,000 people, voted electronically during recent local elections. One hurdle was that voters had to buy a card reader to authenticate their ID's. The government hopes for better numbers for the next election, in March 2007.

Some people contend that Estonia's success is a function of hard work and happy circumstance rather than raw talent.

"I can't say that Estonians are the greatest software programmers," said Allan Martinson, who last June started the first high-tech venture capital fund to be based here. "You can find more talent in Russia."

While entrepreneurs complain about the shortage of skilled workers, more and more young foreigners are ready to trek to this northernmost Baltic nation for a job. Skype employs people from 30 countries; in the halls, one hears plenty of English, and even some Spanish.

Oliver Wihler, 38, a Swiss software developer, moved to Tallinn from London in 1999, drawn by the heady professional atmosphere and by Estonia's parks and forests. Now he and a business partner, Sander Magi, 28, run a company called Aqris, which reformats Java software.

"The commute in London was a drag, and I missed not having any green space," Mr. Wihler said.

Estonia offers plenty of that. But Skype is relying on more than a pleasant lifestyle; it is taking a more traditional approach in its recruitment by offering stock options in eBay. But Mr. Tallinn says that is only part of the company's appeal.

"The other draw," he said, "is that if you want to work for a company that influences the lives of tens of millions of people, and you want to do it in Tallinn, there really isn't any other choice."

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