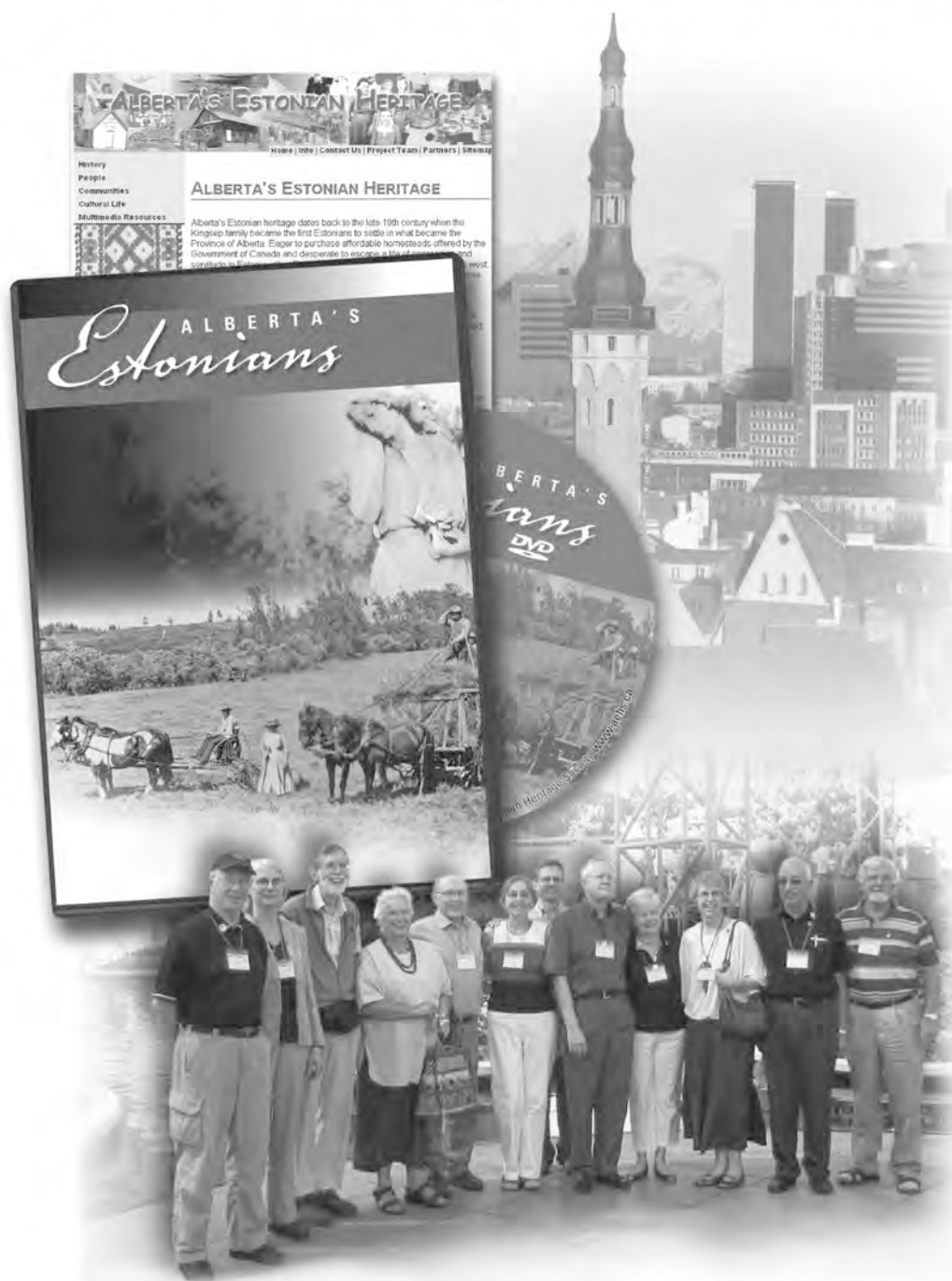


AJAKAJA

WINTER 2007 • VOLUME 27



ALBERTA ESTONIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY



IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial	3
President's message	4
Jaanipäev 2007	6
DVD completed	8
DVD Debut in LA	10
Estdocs film festival	13
Lumi visits Alberta	14
Albertasource.ca: new website	16
2007 photo gallery	18
AEHS honors an Olympian	20
A gift to AEHS	23
Idyllic Muhu Island	30



2007: AN AMAZING YEAR FOR ALBERTA'S ESTONIANS

Alberta Estonian Heritage Society ***Alberta Eesti Kultuuripärandi Selts***

The Alberta Estonian Heritage Society (AEHS) was formally established on April 23, 2005 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 23. Aprillil, 2005 Alberta eestlaste kultuuripärandi säilitamiseks ja laiemaks tutvustamiseks Eesti rahva elust-olust tänapäeval.

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Alberta Estonian Heritage Society (AEHS) Website: www.aehs.ca

Sõnumileht—AjaKaja—Magazine

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
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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).

Cover page: The images on the front cover include a view of Tallinn's skyline in the background, the front page of *Alberta's Estonian Heritage* website, *Alberta's Estonians* DVD and case, and members, and friend, of the AEHS in attendance at the West Coast Estonian Days in Los Angeles, August, 2007



AJAKAJA

Alberta Estonian Heritage
Society

Winter 2007

Volume 27

Letter from the Editors



The past year has been an exciting and productive year for AEHS. It was a year that saw many AEHS members coincidentally in Estonia at the same time in May which resulted in the first ever AEHS executive meeting held in historic Old Town Tallinn. AEHS organized a well attended and enjoyable Jaanipäev celebration at Lincoln Hall in June. In August AEHS participated at the West Coast Estonian Days Festival program in Los Angeles and in October accepted an invitation to premiere their DVD *Alberta's Estonians* at Toronto's Estdocs film festival. In November, the fully-completed DVD premiered on the same weekend in Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton with Estonia's Charge d'Affaires in Ottawa, Rasmus Lumi, in attendance. A comprehensive digital historical archive is being launched at www.albertasource.ca to continue to provide a linkage between generations to preserve



Estonian culture and traditions, and links to Estonia.

AEHS can take immense satisfaction in its achievements and its emerging profile on the national stage. There is growing awareness amongst others as well as ourselves that AEHS is a unique Estonian organization in North America. It represents 100 years of continuous functioning of our Estonian community and now includes sixth generation descendants. It is gratifying that our achievements are recognized as 'motivational' by others. As AEHS members attended the various festivals, they were frequently asked "How do you survive?" "What is the secret to your success?"

That is a question that we are also striving to answer. We want to build on our momentum. Clearly this depends on the participation of successive, younger generations who contribute to program planning. We urge members to get involved, to plan events that are inclusive, relevant, interesting and fun. In this way, AEHS will be able to continue building on its successes, to build bridges between generations and to strive for a profile that is greater than its size, surely a worthy legacy for future generations.

Eda McClung and Dave Kiil



Estonian design by Luule Sõva

President's Message



Tere! Sometimes everything just goes your way. To be sharing the dedication, energy and comradery of an organization that appears to be hitting its stride is a real pleasure and a testament to the success of my predecessors! I would like to express our appreciation to Bob Tipman for his stewardship over the last two years.

A very successful Jaanipäev 2007, participation and membership in the West Coast Estonian Days in Los Angeles, our addition to the Heritage Community Foundation website, the DVD production and another great edition of AjaKaja. We have had quite a year so far, and it's not over yet! All of this has helped define who we are. This is my spin on it.

I am not the first person to be elected to the position of President nor am I the first person to be elected as President of an Estonian organization, but I am probably the first President of an Estonian organization in Canada....who does not speak Estonian! That in itself is a message.

Our pioneer ancestors, who established the first permanent Estonian settlements in Canada, established social organizations to help ease their transition into the new world. In a land dominated by the English language, some of the stress of pioneer life was eased by the opportunity to socialize in their mother tongue. After the pioneer era, World War II forced many Estonians to leave their homeland. Those who came to Canada naturally sought out Estonian organizations for support.

Existing Estonian pioneer organizations and newly-established ones were logical groups to join. As the pioneers aged and their numbers diminished, the newer immigrants replaced them. The transition from the older pioneers to new enthusiastic members maintained several strong Estonian associations in Alberta for many years.

In the early days of the Pioneer Estonian Societies, members took advantage of opportunities in their new homeland, and the most important element in that quest was education. The early pioneers promoted integration and built schools with English instruction. Not surprisingly, the young Estonian children quickly adapted to English. For the newly educated children of the pioneers, English became their primary language while Estonian was left at home.



A sign at the site of the original Estonian School in the Medicine Valley area

As the pioneer descendants moved away from the homesteads to the major centers they found new interests, met new friends and married into non-Estonian families. Some years later, the children of the WWII immigrants followed a familiar pattern as here too the Estonian language was losing ground. With an ageing membership,

Estonian society numbers diminished and, at the beginning of the 21st century, all but one Alberta society had disbanded. The AEHS is the result of a convergence of past society members throughout Alberta and a rethink in direction.

The emergence of the AEHS is what I would call a 'third generation' transition. It is the recognition that a small minority culture will inevitably lose its ability to function as a group if it persists in operating in the original language. I suppose it's difficult for any group, which has significant numbers of first or second-generation members, to imagine how quickly and subtly integration changes the balance. Canada recognizes two official languages, and while most people applaud the benefits of multilingualism, generations of cultural blending exact a toll on minority languages and traditions. We have an ever-increasing number of Estonian descendants and we must continually search for ways to attract these new generations. Without inclusion, our valuable cultural ties will be lost. Not unlike the pioneers, we must adjust to changing environments. We have fifth and sixth-generation pioneer descendants attending our functions now. That is really quite remarkable!



*The younger generation on the starting line
at Jaanipäev 2007 celebration*

While we were making our DVD, we recognized at the onset that our ancestors

were our starting point. Once into it, we realized that our Alberta story would not have come to fruition without the enthusiastic involvement and progressive thinking of the later immigrants. Further to that, it required some re-writes within the script to make the point that with our multi-generational background and the emergence of the AEHS, we have made a transition from 'Estonians living in Canada' to 'Canadians with a proud Estonian heritage'.

So, what is the future of small cultural organizations like ours? The pioneers are gone. Their descendants have assimilated and don't need it. Estonia's independence has and will continue to minimize immigration and the small number of new Estonians to our province will not be significant.

Why continue? Cultural curiosity. The urge we have to understand our roots. The word "HERITAGE" becomes significant. With the common use of the web and easy travel, our heritage provides us with contacts to our living roots. Many of us have made the journey back. The reconnection is educational, personal, and very rewarding!

And if the conversation at your next social function should need a little boost, let it slip that you are of Estonian descent. That will invariably get some response! Our pioneer heritage is a success story and our Baltic cousins are citizens of 'the little country that could'. Grist for 'the rest of the story'! Distinctions we can be proud of.

So, let's celebrate our ancestors! Let's recognize the uniqueness we have inherited. Let's appreciate our fellowship here and abroad. Let's learn a few more phrases of Estonian. Let's cheer the spirit that keeps our community alive!

Tervitades,

Bob Kingsep

Jaanipäev 2007 in Alberta

Helgi Leesment

We came through the downpour, played traditional outdoors games between rain showers, feasted indoors on very tender rotisserie pork roast, reaffirmed our Estonian heritage and impressed the guest politicians. “We” are the descendants of Estonian pioneers and more recent immigrants who gathered on Saturday June 16, 2007 at Lincoln Hall, a countryside community centre, nestled in between farms a short distance from Gull Lake in central Alberta. About 200 counting lots of kids. A heartwarming crowd!

During opening ceremonies, newly elected Alberta Estonian Heritage Society (AEHS) President Bob Kingsep reviewed the reasons why the society exists and why third, fourth, fifth, sixth generation descendants of Estonians are retaining some of their inherited traditions and visiting the land of their forefathers. We were treated to a rousing rendition of “O Canada” by trio Evelyn Shursen, Roy Klaus, and Letty Wyzykoski, accompanied on the piano by Helve Sastok. A reader’s theatre production about one pioneer family, the Erdmans, told the story of determination (a euphemism for Estonian stubbornness??) and resourcefulness that enabled the immigrants of over 100 years ago to not only survive but to thrive in very difficult conditions in Canada. The play was written by Lillian Munz and featured her cousin Barbara Gullickson in the role of “Mari”, with sister Martha Munz Gue as Commentator. All three are descendants of Crimea (Ukraine), South Dakota (USA) and Barons (Alberta) pioneers Jakob and Mari Erdman. Dave Kiil played a convincing Jakob despite not being a member of the 150-strong Erdman clan.

The AEHS paid homage to a fifth generation descendant of Canadian Estonian pioneers, Mellisa Hollingsworth-Richards, who won the 2006 World Cup overall championship and Olympic bronze medal in the winter sport of Skeleton. As Mellisa was unable to attend because of previous commitments to her sponsors, the gifts were accepted by her aunt Jean Maki on her behalf. Jean read out a gracious note of acceptance written by Mellisa.

Each of the three local guest politicians turned out to have some previous Estonian contact, a tribute to the gentle influence Estonians have had in the regions around Lincoln Hall, where the Jaanipäev

event was held. Red Deer city mayor Morris Flewwelling, regional MLA Ray Prins and Lacombe County Reeve Terry Engen all had words of praise and encouragement for this ethnic group to maintain their traditions as they are an important part of the fabric of Canadian citizenship and make a worthwhile contribution locally.

Otto Nicklom directed the “Queen of 4:00 AM” contest, won by Kathy Tipman who best aimed the rolling pin at a stuffed figure. Ron Hennel was in charge of the log-sawing and nail pounding contests. Winners were: men’s log sawing - Bob Tipman and Bob Kingsep (they claim no collusion or influence peddling despite being the former and current AEHS presidents), women’s log sawing – Lisa and Diana Kiil, men’s nail pounding - Les Peters and women’s nail pounding - Letty Wyzykoski. All children participating in races and other special games received fun prizes kindly provided by Lori Sparrow. Leila Stanich organized these games, assisted by June and Bob Ekelund.



Kathy Tipman, the 2007 “Queen of 4 AM”

As a brief aside, sometimes the Estonian-related memories are based on the simplest situations: June Kerbes-Ekelund mentioned at Jaanipäev that one of her favourite memories is of her grandmother singing Estonian songs while picking potatoes on their farm. She also recalls reading that those Estonians who were deported to Russia also did a lot of singing, maintaining that if they

had not been able to sing, they felt they would have perished.

Tables at Lincoln Hall displayed a range of charming Estonian and local area-related lottery prizes which were awarded during the evening. The major prize, a Deluxe Grand Occasion Weekend at the Fairmont Hotel Macdonald in Edmonton, was won by Peeter and Helgi Leesment. All prizes were donated and are gratefully acknowledged.

The Alberta Estonian Heritage Society must have burned out many internet wires over the previous few months with intense discussion establishing the design of its pin and logo. The end result is a classy pin featuring an “A” for “Alberta” with blue, black and white rectangles superimposed. These were a popular sales item at Jaanipäev, as were new memberships to the Society. Another outstanding issue of *AjaKaja* (edited by Dave Kiil and Eda McClung), the organization’s twice-yearly publication, was also available at the various tables ably manned by Lori Sparrow, Anne Cowick, Annette Kingsep, Toomas Pääsuke and Eda McClung.



Impromptu recital by a group of enthusiasts

In addition to the catered pork, potatoes, beans and salad, some guests had responded to a voluntary call for traditional bread and sauerkraut. As a result, several kinds of wonderful Estonian rye bread were available alongside the homemade sauerkraut. Prior to the meal, lay minister Barbara Gullickson said a thoughtful and meaningful grace with a heritage and family roots theme.

Being a musical nation, the descendants of Estonian pioneers have maintained that skill, and so the local Garry Raabis band provided evening musical entertainment and dance music.



Garry Raabis band in action

Many of these and other activities were filmed by Polar Bear Entertainment Inc who had the contract to produce a half-hour video telling the story of early Estonian pioneers in the Alberta region. The firm showed a sneak preview of the part already completed, a segment dealing with the Kingsep family trip to Võru, Estonia in May of this year, where they were reunited with other members of their family for the first time in 108 years. Everyone was impressed. All were wiping tears of joy at the end. This production is a tribute to the coordination provided by Dave Kiil and all those who have submitted images and stories. The almost completed video was later debuted at the Los Angeles West Coast Estonian Days festival in August.

A volunteer clean-up crew had the job done in one hour next morning at Lincoln Hall, including guests from Ontario.

Thanks are due to Eda McClung, her team, the AEHS board and other volunteers for another well run AEHS Jaanipäev event!



President Bob Kingsep at the podium

Alberta's Estonians: DVD completed

Dave Kiil

Editor's note: At the AEHS Annual Meeting in June 2006 we received an invitation from the organizers of the West Coast Estonian Days in Los Angeles to make a presentation about the history of Alberta's Estonians. The invitation was accepted.

Our plans called for a 1 1/2 hr presentation, consisting of a live Reader's Theatre presentation about the Erdman family's epic journey from Estonia to Crimea and later to North America, and a 30-minute DVD about the history of Alberta's Estonians. (The early stages of the production process are described in 'A Progress Report' in the Summer 2007 Issue (Volume 26) of AjaKaja.

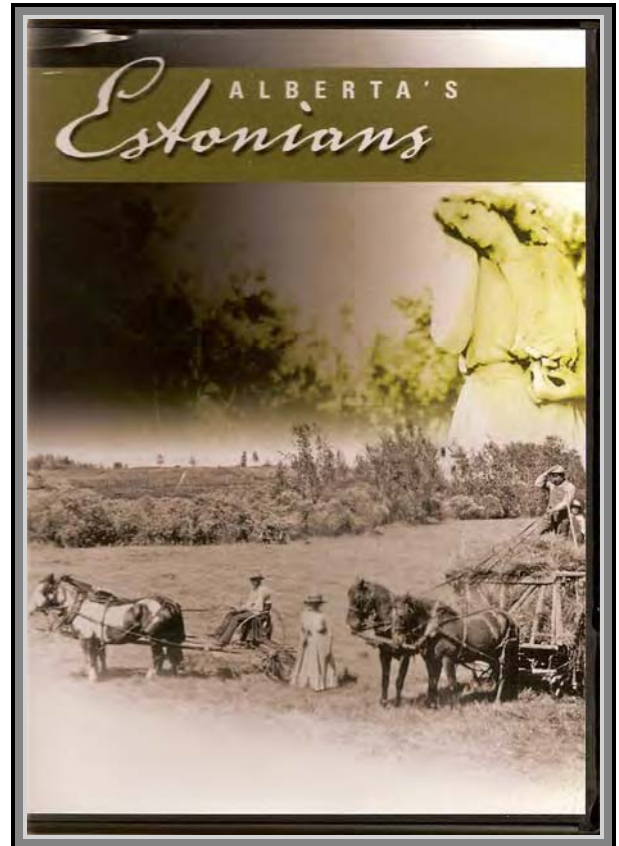
As coordinator of the DVD project, my assignment was develop a storyline for the film and to move the production process forward by contacting members of the Society and other information sources, such as museums, archives and libraries in Alberta, Canada and Estonia to obtain pictures, video footage and literature describing Alberta's Estonian pioneers and WWII immigrants. The response from members was overwhelmingly positive, and the problem was one of managing the data base rather than worrying about having enough material.

The pre-production work progressed on several fronts: development of a storyline to guide the production, the collection of materials from a variety of sources, interviews with potential producers and, perhaps most importantly, applications for funding support. This was partly resolved before Christmas when our grant application to the National Estonian Foundation of Canada was approved. Several agonizing months passed before a second application to the Community Initiatives Program of the Alberta Government was approved in March of 2007.

With sufficient funds on hand for a 30-minute professional production, the film's storyline was developed to capture pioneer families as well as the influx of WWII immigrants and their contributions. An important step was to engage Polar Bear Entertainment Inc. of Edmonton as producers of the film.

Bob Kingsep's visit to Estonia after an absence of 108 years was an emotional highlight for him and his relatives (see story in Summer 2007 AjaKaja, Volume

26) and others involved in this exciting venture. The partially-completed film was initially shown during our Jaanipäev celebration at Lincoln Hall and was well received.



Front cover of Alberta's Estonians DVD case

The producers were present at the midsummer celebration to conduct interviews and to shoot additional footage for use in completing the film.

Visits to Barons, Stettler, and the Medicine Valley area and interviews with pioneer descendants in various locations provided ample video footage to go with the impressive collection of historical pictures from pioneer descendants and other archival sources.

The production team included Deborah Forst and Rick Bremness, the principals of Polar Bear Entertainment, scriptwriter Jim Warner and narrator Garnet Anthony.



Gathering of Estonian Pioneers at Linda Hall, 1914

The film premiered in Los Angeles and received very favorable comments. Final editing, including changes to the script, images, and addition of credits were completed in August.

Following the LA event, our efforts were focused on the design of an attractive trap sheet (a cover sheet for a DVD case), including an illustrated synopsis of the film's storyline.

Shortly following the successful presentation in Los Angeles, a copy of the documentary film was sent to the organizers of the Estonian Documentary Film Festival in Toronto. It was reviewed by a jury and accepted for screening during the festival in mid-October.

Our DVD was shown to a capacity audience at the Munk Centre on the University of Toronto Campus.

Copies of the DVD are now available for sale by local distributors in Alberta, by mail order worldwide, and at the Estore in Toronto.

Recently the Alberta premiere of the DVD took place on November 16-18 in Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton, with the Charge d'Affaires, Mr. Rasmus Lumi, from the Estonian Embassy in Ottawa as the Guest of Honor. The screenings at these three locations were also very successful and generated sales.

Following several showings of the film in North America, a consensus has emerged that the presentation accurately captures the history of Alberta's Estonians from the early days of the pioneers to present-day events and activities of Alberta's Estonian community.

It is well to mention a couple of spin-off benefits. Owing to the length of the film, only a small proportion of the collected materials, such as pictures and literature, could be used. This wealth of historical information is being preserved as a 'digital archive' and will be stored at the Red Deer and District Archives for use by future generations.

Secondly, the first stage of a new website, *Alberta's Estonian Heritage* has been completed. Planning is underway to enhance the Albertasource.ca website by including additional materials not already used in the DVD and the first phase of the *Alberta's Estonian Heritage* website.

The DVD is the result of wonderful teamwork throughout. Many pioneer descendants and members of the AEHS Executive, especially Bob Kingsep and Helgi Leesment, were supportive throughout. Eda McClung was directly involved in all aspects of the production and deserves to be singled out for many excellent suggestions and her wealth of knowledge about the history of Alberta's Estonians.

DVD Debut a Hollywood Reality Show!

AEHS members cast in survivor series

Bob Kingsep

Just back and unpacked from our attendance of the West Coast Estonian Days (a bi-annual festivity) in Los Angeles, California. Our primary mission was, as you know, to present the play 'Thrice Pioneers' written by Lillian Munz and the Premiere our DVD 'Alberta's Estonians'.



Folk-dancers performing on an outdoors stage during the Festival in Los Angeles.

In summary our presentations were VERY well received and we all went home feeling proud and pleased with all the efforts of all of the AEHS members who gave their support to our mission.

No story would be a story if there were not some element of intrigue. With that in mind, the following is our story.

Our contingent was represented by Dave Kiil, Helgi and Peter Leesment, Martha and David Munz Gue, Helle and Jüri Kraav, Bob Tipman, Peter and Jeanette Asmus, Annette and myself. Dr. Giuliana Songster, LA resident and a descendant of the Alberta Erdmans, joined the group. Martha also displayed her paintings that in my (partially color blind) opinion were either the best or one of the best displays in the Gallery! That family was further represented via artworks by Martha's sister Lillian Munz and their late mother Helmi.

From the DVD side, we went prepared for any possible contingency. Three DVD's on three separate flights. Two copies of the script, one in checked baggage, one in carry on. An extra laptop just in case the DVD player and sound

equipment we requested on three separate occasions was not available or nonfunctional.

On the Thursday before our Friday presentation I located the man in charge of the organization of our segment of the festival to ensure our requested equipment was in place and available. He assured me it was and introduced me to the technical man they had hired from an outside source to insure all the sound and visual requirements necessary for all of the singers, speakers, and dancers had been arranged. The technician listened to my specifics and although he could not demonstrate it because of the continuous changes necessary for the variety of sound requirements by the different groups, he assured me it would be in place.



Opening ceremony at the West Coast Estonian Days

The events were very tightly stacked, with at most, 15-minute intervals between them. This year, more than previous years, there were requests to have more bilingual (Estonian and English) content in the presentations. Whether it was the inability to account for the extra time involved with delivering lectures in two languages or just the good old Estonian habit of perpetual dialogue, the events preceding ours were WAY over their time limits and the pressure to 'get on with it' was probably at it's height when our turn finally transpired.

The technician went to work the moment the last speaker stepped away from the podium and began re-arranging the equipment to our requirements. I was impressed with the mass of

complex sound equipment on the site and I presented him with the DVD when it appeared he had completed his re-arranging. He looked at the DVD with a bit of a surprise and said, "Oh, we don't have a DVD player. Do you happen to have a laptop?" My heart went into a pace I didn't know it had, and the background music of 'Jaws' was becoming increasingly audible as I fumbled to unpack and boot up my laptop. Somewhere nearby I sensed Murphy was grinning.

The clock was running, Jüri Tint, the head organizer was pacing, I was sweating, the technical guy's long hair was buried deep in his box of cables and my laptop just decided it was time to do a virus scan. This was not looking good.

Finally my computer was up. The technician whipped over to plug the main output cable into my computer muttering something, which included the phrase '...this cable has been giving us trouble...' With some extra cable wiggling the video was displaying, but there was no sound.

Dave, Martha and Helgi have now been ready and waiting to begin the play for at least five minutes. Finally, with a bypass of the sound output, we get video and sound! What a relief! Now we can have the DVD ready to go the second the play is finished. On with the show! The play went splendidly, Helgi's narration was as professional as it gets. Martha, a veteran of the play led the way and Dave was his cool self. The audience listened, understood and appreciated. Our story was unfolding and the applause bolstered our confidence!

Now, on with the DVD. I walked over to the laptop, glancing at the screen. I felt a hint of concern that the projector had gone into standby. Raising the laptop screen, I realized that it too had taken the opportunity to go to sleep. While neither of these states should be a problem, there was something ominous in the air. Pressing the shift key on the laptop will wake it up. The signal from the laptop will wake up the projector, and away we go. I pressed the shift key.

Nothing. I pressed it again. Nothing. I waited five seconds. Again nothing. The audience is beginning to chat. Again. Nothing. I had a desperate move left. A quick tap of the 'off' button will bring it up, but one has to be careful

not to hold it too long or the computer re-boots. I try it....and see my world falling apart as the laptop goes into a reboot.....and now worse...another virus scan! Seconds are now minutes....and three minutes later we have the laptop up and the projector back in standby. It won't wake up! The technician has gone to another venue.



Bob Kingsep preparing his laptop for the DVD screening in Los Angeles.

Various people with experience with projectors lend their assistance....but it just won't work. Finally I had to make the inevitable announcement..."We apologize folks, but we are going to have to find another time slot, and "play it then"

Our group and Jüri Tint are gathered around the laptop. People are filing out. "Well" Jüri sighed, "There is no other time slot available. I'm sorry, but you won't be able to show it. Sometimes these things just happen. Again I'm sorry, but there is nothing else I can do."

The unimaginable was just happening!! Fortunately, this had carried on long enough that the denial period had faded away and the anger process was just coming up to stride! Helgi's hands were forming into a neck size grip! Helle had darts coming from here eyes that would have killed Superman! In as controlled a voice as I could muster, I looked up from the laptop, gazed

directly at Jüri, and said "You don't understand, this is a forty thousand dollar professional investment produced just for this festival! It has to be seen!"

"Oh..... ah...ahhh...let me see what I can do.....tomorrow at noon.....there is a half hour break.....we'll do it then. And I'll make sure they have a DVD player. We'll do it then....if that's OK with you people."

Peter Asmus, unnerved by the circumstances, decided that a quick trip to the Macy's store a few blocks away and the purchase of a DVD player was a small price to pay for a good nights sleep. Paranoia is contagious.

Saturday came. Dave Kiil checked out the room and talked to the technician. They now had a DVD player and they had tested it.

Twelve o'clock, and almost on time. The prospects are even better as the audience is larger than it was Friday! The technician moves mikes, runs cables, adjusts the projector and hits the play button. We hold our collective breaths.... and onto the screen comes the image of the ship.....we are running at last! I raised my hand in victory and the patient and appreciative audience breaks into applause. (Most of the attendees have heard of our plight). The applause is so loud, I'm having trouble hearing the audio. I look back at the technician and see he is moving the volume knobs up. The applause dies down to reveal the impossible.....NO SOUND!!! How can this be?

After five to ten minutes of restarts, adjustments and cable replacements there is still no sound!! Our contingent is in utter and complete disbelief as the previous day's disaster begins all over again! One young lady from the audience slips up to the projector and wiggles one of the cables.....static.....a promise....and a clue to the technician as to what might be wrong! He recables and the sound comes on!

A reset of the player.....some static.... and FINALLYwe have a visual and audible presentation! Finally!

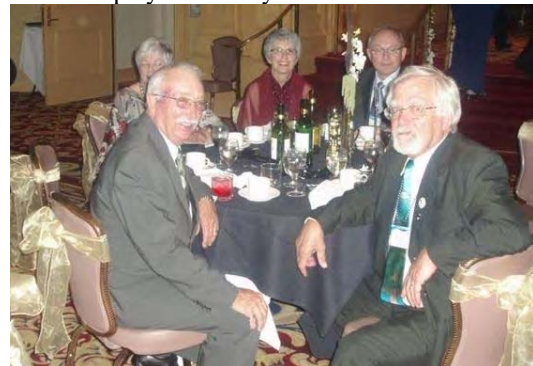
The applause, and the questions and comments at the end of it all, were as much or more than we could have asked for! It was a success! Many people came to us and said how much they

enjoyed it. A lady from New York wants it to play to her students. A lady from Toronto said it made her proud to say she was Canadian. Many want to know how to buy it.

A gentleman who was born and raised in New York but now works in Tallinn and does production work said it is as good a presentation as there is. The story, editing and presentation were first class. He insists that it needs to be shown on Estonian TV because most Estonians don't have any idea what happened to their relatives who went to North America, and this DVD tells the story.

My only consolation for the near disaster was that it was proof that we 21st century pioneer descendants still have the genes it takes to make something happen. Perhaps our predecessors up there invoked this. If we were going to talk the talk, we'd better be able to walk the walk!

Helgi gave an AEHS pin to the young lady who wiggled the right cable. Peter Asmus returned the DVD player to Macy's for a refund.



L to R: Helle Kraav, Bob Tipman, Annette and Bob Kingsep, and Dave Kiil at the festival Ball.

I am personally so very appreciative of the support I received during that period of frustration. We had a fantastic group who worked very well together and pulled it off! No doubt the tension relief we felt at the ball later that evening made the event even more enjoyable, and the success of our venture tasted that much sweeter.

Congratulations to every one! This is just the beginning of another great AEHS accomplishment!

And that's the story to date!

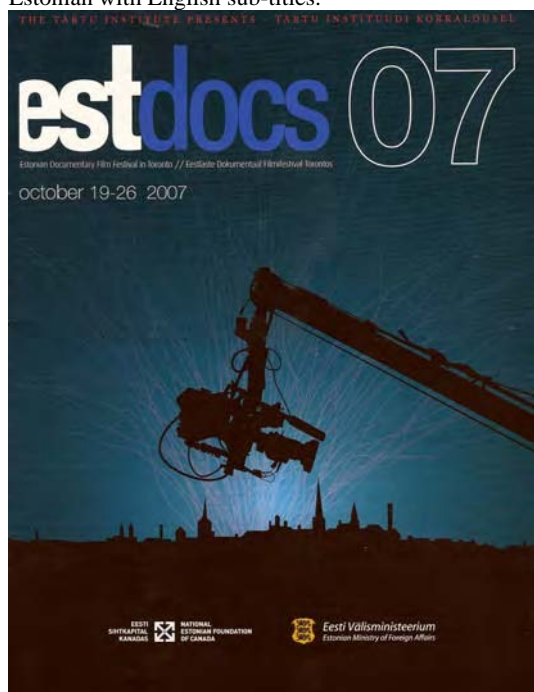
Whew!

***'Alberta's Estonians'* shown at the Estonian Documentary Film Festival in Toronto**

Eda McClung and Dave Kiil

Following a successful international launch of our DVD at the West Coast Estonian Days in Los Angeles in August, our film was submitted to the Toronto Estonian Documentary Film Festival. It was accepted as part of the week-long festival program now in its third year. This year's edition of the Festival was attended by about 1,500 people.

With Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves as its Honorary Patron, the Festival presented some 19 films during its run from October 19-26. Three of the films, including *Alberta's Estonians*, were in English; all of the others were in Estonian with English sub-titles.




Estdocs 07 Toronto Estonian Documentary Film Festival brochure cover page.

Somewhat surprisingly, our film was the sole Canadian entry in the Festival. The screening was in front of an overflow crowd in the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto.

Ellen Valter, the festival's organizer and the evening's moderator, introduced the AEHS's entry in the festival's lineup. The successful screening was punctuated by lengthy applause and followed by a discussion about the production and Alberta's Estonian community. The questions and comments ranged from production aspects of the DVD, to socio-political attitudes and organizations of the pioneers, and the present-day viability of the Estonian community in Alberta.

The audience rated *'Alberta's Estonians'* 4.1 on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), resulting in a tie for fourth place out of

a total of 19 films shown during the week-long Estdocs Festival!



"Freedom"
LETTER FROM THE PRISON: Henry Kingsep, COMING OF AGE: Henry Kingsep, FOR A NEW LIFE IN CANADA

Alberta Estonians

Saturday, October 20, 7:00 PM **Munk Centre**

Producer:	Polar Bear Entertainment Inc. Alberta Estonian Heritage Society
Length:	30 mins
Year:	2007
Language:	English

In 1899 the Kingsep brothers arrived in Western Canada, looking for freedom, land, and a place to catch fish. Soon hundreds more Estonians made the trek to Alberta, overcoming pioneer hardships to establish three vibrant agricultural communities – something no other Estonian settlers have achieved in North America.

This film reflects the spirit of Alberta's Estonians, captures its most passionate voices, and follows a descendant of the Kingsep clan as he journeys to Estonia and brings a family story full-circle.

A synopsis of 'Alberta's Estonians' in the Estdocs 07 brochure

The documentary film was made possible by many members of the AEHS who contributed thousands of images, video clips, literature and moral support during the 18-month production phase. A post-screening interview in Estonian for the Estonian Life (Eesti Elu) website completed a busy evening.

The feedback from the audience at the Saturday and Sunday evening screenings and reception, respectively, was heartening. Terms like 'a well-designed story', 'inspiring', 'a very professional production', 'impressive', 'commendable', 'fabulous', 'wonderful musical selections', 'survival of the Estonian spirit' and 'this production needs to be shown on Estonian TV', captured the audience's response.

The highlight of the Festival was a reception and Canadian premiere of *The Singing Revolution* on Sunday evening, a full-length movie depicting the dramatic and inspiring account of Estonia's path to independence in 1991. The event was attended by over 450 people in the impressive theater at the Ontario Science Centre.

An extended standing ovation was testimony to its impact on the audience. The film will be shown at public venues in Los Angeles and New York City in December, and will likely be available in DVD format in spring, 2008. This film is a must-see!

Former Prime Minister of Estonia, Mart Laar was present at the screening and responded to questions from the audience. The Singing Revolution won the 2007 Estdocs Jury Award.

***Alberta's Estonians* DVD premieres in Alberta**

Charge d'Affaires R. Lumi is guest of honour

Helgi Leesment

Rasmus Lumi, Chargé d'Affaires for Estonia in Canada, visited Alberta from Ottawa November 16-18, on a tour organized by the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society. He was the guest of honour at each of the three Alberta premieres of the documentary film *Alberta's Estonians*. Because the members of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society are widely spread throughout the province, it was most practical to hold a separate premiere of the film in each of three geographical regions: Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton. Thus, Rasmus Lumi had a grand opportunity to meet, among others, many descendants of Estonian pioneers, a first for him, and to learn about their background from watching the highly acclaimed documentary DVD *Alberta's Estonians*. In turn Albertans were honoured to meet Rasmus Lumi and to host him as the official Estonian government representative at this unique tri-partite event.

Polar Bear Entertainment Inc. was initiated into the AEHS documentary project in early Spring 2007 for their professional film production expertise. As the staff had no previous knowledge of Estonian history or culture, a considerable amount of AEHS time was required to ensure accuracy. All together, one and a half years of steady volunteer effort brought the DVD to a timely conclusion in September 2007. Thanks are due to many, including two main funding agencies (National Estonian Foundation of Canada and the Community Initiatives Program of the Alberta Government) plus hundreds of hours of effort, travel and vigilance mainly by Dave Kiil, assisted by Eda McClung, Bob Kingsep, Helgi Leesment and several others.

This 30- minute, professionally produced DVD was first shown at the 2007 West Coast Estonian Days festival in Los Angeles in August where it was highly acclaimed by North Americans as well as by visitors from Estonia. Next it formed part of the 2007 EstDocs Estonian Documentary Film Festival in Toronto in October. It was the only Canadian made film at that event.

In Alberta, the first segment of the tri-partite premiere celebration of the DVD *Alberta's Estonians* was held in Calgary on November 16. The emphasis in AEHS President Bob Kingsep's opening address was on the reasons the pioneers departed their homes in Estonia and Crimea over 100 years ago and their struggles in finding suitable land for homesteading - land which allowed for their extended family members and friends to settle nearby. He also drew attention to the physically demanding labour initially required of the men in order to enable their families to survive the cold winters and short summer growing seasons. Rasmus Lumi was given two AEHS pins - for him and his wife who stayed behind in Ottawa. Jüri & Helle Kraav, Bob & Annette Kingsep and Peter & Helgi Leesment hosted the Calgary function.



An attentive audience listening to Rasmus Lumi's presentation in Calgary

The second segment of the DVD's tri-partite premiere took place at the Red Deer Museum + Art Gallery on Saturday afternoon November 17 in Central Alberta. Among those present were Michael Dawe, City of Red Deer archivist and Morris Flewwelling, Mayor of the City of Red Deer. Evelyn Shursen presented each with a copy of the DVD as gifts from the AEHS.

Loree LeTourneau, a descendant of the second Kingsep family to settle in Canada, presented a verbal tableau of the life of the pioneer Estonian women. The Estonian Chargé d'Affaires gave Jack Pallo a framed letter from the AEHS recognizing his family's contribution to the storyline in the documentary. It was Jack's late mother Selma

Pallo who wrote diaries and accounts, parts of which are read by current family members on the DVD.



Anne Cowick and Jack Pallo in Red Deer

The organizers concluded that “Mr Lumi was a great person to chat with, he’s a man with a vision, his sights are set high and we’ll most certainly hear more about this young man in future years.” Arnold Mottus, Anne Cowick and Liia Herman hosted the Red Deer event.

On the third day, November 18, Rasmus Lumi, along with the event, reached the provincial capital. It was another successful gathering and reconnected many Edmonton- area Estonians. This DVD premiere was dedicated to the post WW II immigrants who brought renewed energy to existing Estonian communities, forming long-lasting Estonian societies in Edmonton and Calgary. Bob Kingsep asked Eda McClung to speak on the recognition of “immigrants who carried the torch while the rest of us were too busy growing up to realize the gift that we had been given.”

Mr. Lumi was presented with a gift copy of the DVD despite the fact that he had just seen it four times within the last four days. In his remarks, he noted that he knew of no other Estonian group who has made a professional documentation of its own history. He paid tribute to AEHS for this significant accomplishment and said he had enjoyed meeting in person many of those who appeared on the DVD. Eda McClung and Dave Kiil hosted the Edmonton event.

Over 70 people attended the three-part Alberta



Rasmus Lumi, Eda McClung and Dave Kiil at the Edmonton event

event. At each location there were opportunities to chat with other attendees about the professionally produced film while nibbling on elegant finger foods or sipping a glass of wine. Tables were exquisitely decorated with Estonian themes in honour of both the official Estonian government representative’s presence and the series of significant historical premieres. Guests discovered connections with each other of which they were previously unaware. This is a most welcome development and a reason for the creation of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society. Rasmus Lumi obliged all those who needed his consular expertise. As part of his presentation at each location, Mr. Lumi informed the listeners about recent happenings in Estonia and a range of consular services available to them and their families. He also brought a variety of literature as hand-outs.

This tri-partite Alberta event was a marriage of enthusiasm, pride, determination, efficient planning, professionalism, hard work and some luck, united with the presence of an interested official representative of the government of Estonia. All in all - a highly successful unique three-day celebration, in the spirit of traditional Estonian weddings of yore which, as everyone knows, properly lasted three days.

Alberta's Estonian Heritage: a new website now online on the World Wide Web!!

Dave Kiil

As production on the 'Alberta's Estonians' documentary film got underway in 2006, we also proceeded with the so-called Alberta Estonian website project. The project involves the design and production of *Alberta's Estonian Heritage* website as part of the *Alberta Online Encyclopedia*. The website makes the history, culture, traditions and achievements of Alberta's Estonian community accessible via the World Wide Web.

Using documents, digitized images and other materials collected since the AEHS accepted an invitation to participate at the West Coast Estonian Days in Los Angeles, we partnered with the Heritage Community Foundation (HCF) to develop a storyline for the website. Five major thematic elements emerged: History, People, Communities, Cultural Life, and Multimedia Resources.



Kinna Family Storyboard-1999

These were further subdivided to allow for greater in-depth presentation of material.

The website presents a more comprehensive overview of Alberta's Estonian community-past and present-than was possible in the 30-minute documentary film.

The website (Phase I) was designed and produced by the staff of the HCF with funds from the Community Initiatives Program of the Alberta Government. Following initial completion and review of the site in late July, additional material was incorporated into the prototype website. Extensive review and editing of the site was carried out to provide a comprehensive treatment of the subject matter. It should be noted that the design and content of the present site was limited by the availability of funds; as such, it is a work in progress and will be further enhanced in the near future.

The stories and pictures used in the production of *Alberta's Estonian Heritage* website were almost entirely contributed by members of the AEHS, their families and friends. Collectively, we now possess a large data base, or a 'digital archive', for use by anyone interested in the history of Alberta's Estonians. Thank you for the support and encouragement in helping to launch *Alberta's Estonian Heritage* website at:

*Alberta's Estonian Heritage
website address is:*

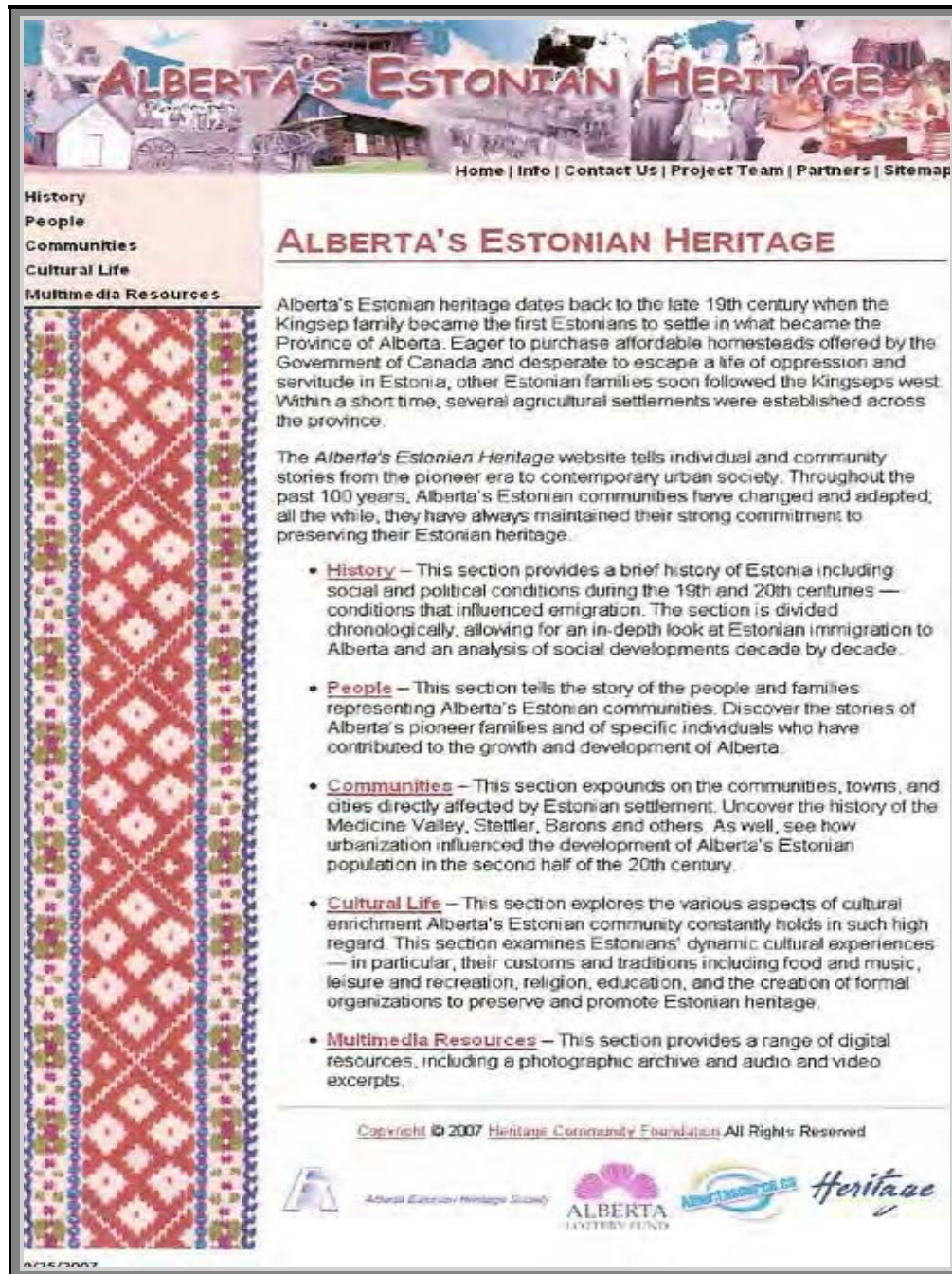
www.Albertasource.ca

Grant application approved!!

November 27, 2007: We have just been informed that our grant application to the New Horizons for Seniors Program has been approved. These funds will enable us to develop a more comprehensive Albertasource.ca website, utilizing materials submitted by members and friends of the AEHS.

Front page of *Alberta's Estonian Heritage* website on Alberta's Online Encyclopedia

www.Albertasource.ca



Courtesy of Heritage Community Foundation

2007 Jaanipäev: A fun-filled celebration



Top row, left: Garry Raabis and his Band entertained the crowd throughout the evening; middle: Letty Wysykoski, Evelyn Shursen, Roy Klaus, Eda McClung, Irja Mägi (Toronto), and Helve Sastok during an impromptu sing-a-long; right: Dave Kiil and Barbara Gullickson presenting the Reader's Theatre play.

Middle row, left: Eda McClung aspiring to the 'Queen of 4 AM' title; middle: part of the large crowd enjoying live entertainment; right: Evelyn Shursen sweeping the dance floor!

Bottom row, left: Glenn and Kalev Kiil giving their all in the log sawing event ; middle: nail pounding!; right: the younger set waiting for the starters gun.

ALBERTA ESTONIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY PARTICIPATES AT THE WEST COAST ESTONIAN DAYS IN LOS ANGELES, 2007



L to R: Peeter Leesment, Giuliana Silverton Songster, David and Martha Munz Gue, Bob Kingsep, Helgi Leesment, Peter Asmus, Jüri and Helle Kraav, Annette Kingsep, Bob Tipman, Dave Kiil



The Reader's Theatre presentation in full swing, L to R: Dave Kiil (Jakob), Martha Munz Gue (Mari), Helgi Leesment (Commentator)



Breakfast meeting at the Biltmore Hotel: L to R: Dave Kiil, Martha Munz Gue, Bob Kingsep, Helgi Leesment, Jüri Kraav, David Munz Gue, Helle Kraav, Annette Kingsep

AEHS recognizes 2006 Olympic bronze-medal performance of Mellisa Hollingsworth-Richards

Editor's note: During the 2007 Jaanipäev celebration at Lincoln Hall, Bob Kingsep recognized Mellisa's achievements on behalf of the Society. Mellisa is the 2006 women's world cup champion in Skeleton and the 2006 Olympic Winter Games Bronze medalist.

Mellisa, please accept this token on behalf of the AEHS as recognition of your achievements as a world-class high performance athlete.

Estonians tend to strive for perfection and, as such, we can appreciate your commitments to being the best. Naturally we presume your Estonian Pioneer Heritage plays a role in your success!

We congratulate you on your accomplishments and assure you that our hearts will be with you on every high-speed split-second run you take on the World Cup circuit and the road to Vancouver 2010!

All the best
Bob Kingsep
President, AEHS

Mellisa was unable to be present in person because of prior commitments to her sponsors; however, her aunt Jean Maki gratefully accepted the award on her behalf and read out a message of thanks from Mellisa:

Thank you for the special recognition. I am a 5th generation Estonian on my mother's side. It took me 10 years to accomplish my dream of standing on the Olympic podium. There were many trying times where I could have very easily given up, but I continued to strive for excellence and stay determined. I'm sure my ancestors could identify these struggles as they ventured into the unknown promised land of Canada. I'm so grateful to my ancestors that I was given the opportunity to grow up and live in this wonderful country.

In 3 years time, I can't imagine anything more exciting than to compete at home with family and

friends all supporting and encouraging me to do my best, which could possibly be standing on top of the podium at the Vancouver Olympics in 2010.



Mellisa Hollingsworth-Richards with her Olympic bronze medal

Thank you for your support
Sincerely,
Mellisa Hollingsworth-Richards

Note: Skeleton involves racing a sled down an icy track. Unlike luge, skeleton sleds are ridden in the prone position, face first, on the stomach.

Late news flash!

November 29, 2007. At the season-opening Skeleton World Cup event in Calgary, Mellisa Hollingsworth-Richards won a silver medal!! We wish Mellisa continued success on the World Cup circuit in the months and years ahead as she prepares for the 2010 Olympics.

Compiled by Dave Kiil

More highlights from Alberta's three DVD premieres and Lumi's visit



Top row, left photo: L to R: Rasmus Lumi, Bob Kingsep, Helgi Leesment, Annette Kingsep, Jüri and Helle Kraav

Right photo: L to R: Bob Kingsep, Livia Kivisild, Rasmus Lumi, Willy Kalvee in Calgary

Middle row: Evelyn Shursen at the Red Deer event

Bottom row, left photo: L to R: Linda Peet, Betty Ann Kiiil and Shirley Dinning socializing in Edmonton

Right photo: L to R: Judy Ustina and Eda McClung

THE *Fairmont*
HOTEL MACDONALD

20 Gladstone Gardens SW
Calgary, AB T3E 7E4

October 16, 2007

Hello Alberta Estonian Heritage Society!

Thank you so very much for arranging a Grand Occasion Package at the Fairmont Hotel Macdonald as the grand prize for the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society Jaanipäev midsummer celebration last June!

My husband Peter and I were the lucky draw winners and spent this past Saturday and Sunday at the luxurious and beautifully appointed Lois Hole Suite. We also enjoyed dinner and breakfast in the Harvest Room. Needless to say, both meals were delicious. The added touches were that valet parking and all gratuities and taxes were included as part of the package. Everything about this award is most gratefully appreciated.

Thanks again to the very hardworking Jaanipäev Committee and the Board of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society for making this wonderful experience possible!

Sincerely,

Peeter & Helgi

Peeter and Helgi Leesment

AEHS receives a gift from Bob Tipman

Dear AEHS Executive:

I would like to congratulate all members of the AEHS Executive for all the hard work and commitment to making the AEHS so successful in the projects which were undertaken over the last two years since our inception. The first Jaanipäev at Linda Hall vcelebrating the legacy of the 4K's, the DVD project and this year's Jaanipäev at Lincoln Hall were outstanding successes. It was a honor to be your first President and witness the energy that the AEHS Executive put into making all these projects as successful as they became. Bob Kingsep will have a rewarding time working with all of you into the next series of projects.



As a parting gift to the AEHS, I would like to make a donation of \$1,000 to the Society to cover any outstanding expenses that have risen. What funds are left over are intended to be enjoyed by the members attending Executive meetings and cover the costs of such extraneous items as lunches and wine which will help inspire even more exciting projects.

Tervitust
Bob Tipman
October 27, 2007

A reply from Bob Kingsep

Dear Bob,

From the first days we had the opportunity to plan and rehearse our duties as co-masters of ceremony at the Alberta Estonian Centennial celebration in 1999, I was struck by your sincere and energetic commitment to the Estonian community. Your tenure as the first President of the AEHS further strengthened my appreciation for your spirited dedication to the success of the society.

On behalf of the AEHS I am expressing our appreciation for your contribution in time and energy, and further recognize your significant monetary donation. This will help ensure the completion of our current projects, and ease the way into future endeavours.

Since we have determined that the DVD project is paying its way, my suggestion is to budget this donation for executive meetings.

We need to be prudent in how we use it, but I think it is reasonable to provide a modest supplement to executive/board meeting costs.

I see merit in this direction. Without organization and planning, nothing else happens. The more sociable and amenable the environment for meetings, the easier it is to continue. We do have the tools to make communication over distances easier and we will continue to use them, but we are, after all, humans. Humans are social, and our organization is a reflection of a long-standing human community.

We look forward to your continued involvement with the Society, and many more opportunities to break bread, toast our accomplishments, and share our friendship.

Sincerely
Bob Kingsep

The Kerbes's connect with their roots

Deane and Irene Kerbes

Interest was high and, with a little persuasion from Margaret (Kerbes) Pelto, Deane and Irene Kerbes, Margaret and Eldon Kerbes embarked on their Estonia adventure in June, 2007. The main reason for going to Estonia was to visit our Estonian relatives. A couple of relatives were contacted prior to the journey, but our group was positively overwhelmed with the many more unexpected visitations.

Margarita Anstal, great granddaughter of Liisu Kerbes and Rein Anstal, was our first contact and tour guide in Tallinn. She contacted more relatives, namely her sister Elena Anstal, Roosie (Kerbes) Klein, Matina (Elfride) Azarenko and her daughter Natasha. Always, we were met with big smiles, hugs and gracious words in English, Estonian and Russian. Margarita and Elena are accomplished musicians playing the cello and piano respectively. At a concert in Kadriorg Palace we also met Margarita's daughters Julia, an accomplished flute player, and Linda, an artist, and her family.

Kose Parish, the ancestral home of the Kerbes clan, was next on our itinerary. The 1795 list of parishioners of the nearby Habaya Estate includes Peter Ristinna, wife Madli, and their children. The record states that the whole family was "Sold to Habaya Estate". The Estate is located southeast of Tallinn and belonged to the German landowner zur Muhlen.

Our visit to St. Nicholas Church near the ancestral home of the Kerbes's was very emotional and moving. The feeling of connection to our ancestors was further accentuated as we toured a number of manors in the region.



L to R: Margaret (Kerbes) Pelto, Eldon Kerbes, Deane Kerbes, Klaara and Paul Sunter, Irene Kerbes

Heldin Allik of Rapla connected us with Robert Kerbes in Haapsalu. Robert is the only person in Estonia bearing the Kerbes name, as all other descendants were girls. He does not speak English, but his grandson Denis acted as a translator. We met Robert's wife Maria and his family at

their summer home. Maria and daughters Tanja and Anzelia had prepared a typical Estonian feast for us with wine, cognac and fruit juice for the driver.

Next on our itinerary were trips to Hiiumaa and Saaremaa. On Hiiumaa we met the families of Krista and Tarmu Kutt, and Paul and Klaara Sunter. Paul is the grandson of Thomas Kerbes and Marie Hennel. On Saaremaa, our hosts were Silvi and Raul Volderman.

Armed with maps, directions and much anticipation, we travelled to Vihterpalu and the "Singing Sands" along the north shore of Estonia. Vihterpalu was the birthplace of our first known ancestor Peter Ristinna. Once again we had that feeling of connection with an ancestor from over 150 years ago. Vihterpalu Manor is a beautiful Convention and Conference Center. We were given a tour of the facility and walked on the original manor staircase.

The 'Singing Sands' is a beach near Vihterpalu. We drove through many forests and finally, after receiving directions and guidance from locals, arrived at the sandy beach. A walk on the sand caused our footsteps to cause a squeaky sound, hence the name "Singing Sands".

Jaanipäev was celebrated at Rocca la Mare Open-air Museum with relatives Linda Anstal and her family. We joined in the folk dancing and other events, and enjoyed the traditional Estonian cuisine of sauerkraut, braised potatoes and sausage, washed down with Saku Beer. Our Estonian adventure was absolutely wonderful from start to finish. Our relatives were happy, smiling people and they made us feel happy too.

The four of us returned home with great memories of wonderful times spent with new found relatives. Along the way we developed a greater appreciation of our Estonian heritage and culture. As well, we are very grateful that Peter, Julia and their children decided to come to Canada in 1911.



L to R: Voldemar Smirnov, Deane Kerbes, Leida (Anstal) Smirnov, Margaret (Kerbes) Pelto, Eldon Kerbes, Voldemir Avdovin, Margarita Anstal

Estonian students help Crimean Estonian descendants

Translator's note: As many Albertans are descendants of Crimean Estonians, they may read the following item with interest. Beregovoye, mentioned in the article, was the location of the September 2001 cultural and historical festival marking the 140th anniversary of Estonians in Crimea. That event was attended by three Albertans whose forefathers were members of an Estonian group that walked over 2000 km from their homeland in 1861 to establish new lives in Crimea. Most of the Estonian villages created in the 1860's were located within a 100 km range of Beregovoye.



Estonian School in Targhan, Crimea, 2001

A group of 30 Tallinn high school students spent the summer of 2007 in Beregovoye on a working holiday providing labor assistance to descendants of Estonians who settled by the Black Sea in the south-west region of Crimea 146 years ago. These young people had to work in somewhat extreme circumstances as daytime temperatures hovered constantly around 40 C during their stay. However, this did not deter them from the task at hand. According to their leaders, they faithfully cut brush overgrowth, sawed logs, harvested tomatoes, tended fields and repaired agricultural implements. On days off, they visited tourist sites including Eupatoria, Sevastopol, Yalta and various caves on the Crimean peninsula. The students found their lack of familiarity with the Russian language to be somewhat of a hindrance;



View of ancestral village in Crimea

however, by combining bits of various other languages they had studied at school, they managed to converse with the locals.

Several of these students had taken part in the same type of event in past summers, leaving Crimeans with a very good impression of their professional attitude. Thus this year's reception of the Estonian visitors was again excellent, as previously, especially as copious amounts of work were assiduously accomplished by the dedicated Estonian youth.



*A Reader's Theatre presentation in Crimea
(Martha Munz Gue is standing on the left)*

Article translated and reprinted, with permission, from the Toronto Estonian newspaper Eesti Elu, August 31, 2007. Photo credits: Martha Munz Gue

Helgi Leesment

Another Estonian Innovation: Kiiking!

Dave Kiil

As a youngster on the island of Saaremaa, I remember watching older kids gathering by the village swing (kiik) to show off their prowess trying to turn 360 degree revolutions. A few of years ago, during a visit to my childhood playground, our family group tried out a large wooden platform swing in the Village of Lümada. We didn't do any 360s but everyone, especially the younger and braver souls, enjoyed the experience.

While the venerable wooden swing is still around it now has a spin-off in the so-called changeable metal swing. An Estonian, Ado Kose, is credited with the development of the trapeze-like version in 1997. This means that the length of the shaft can be increased; however, the longer the shaft, the harder it is to accomplish a full rotation.



A traditional wooden “platform” swing in Lümada, Saaremaa

During competitions, the swinger attempts to complete a 360-degree rotation while fastened to the shafts of the swing for safety reasons. The men's world record is 7.02 metres, (the shaft is 7.02 metres long!) whereas the women's record is 5.91 metres. Both are held by Estonians and have been accepted as Guinness World Records.



Photo: Estonian Kiiking Federation

A modern changeable-shaft swing (kiik) for the “Extreme sport” enthusiast.

Without the University of Tartu There Would Be No Estonian State

According to President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, without the University of Tartu Estonians would not have become a cultural nation and would not have been able to create their own state in 1918.

In a speech given at the ceremony marking the 375th anniversary of the foundation of the University of Tartu, President Ilves called upon the University of Tartu to pursue the ideal of a universitas, an environment that provides a universal education. "It would be erroneous to think that universitas only means a wide choice of courses. What a university offers is not important. What is

important is the kind of education the students receive," said President Ilves.

Drawing a parallel with the concept of paideia known from ancient Greece, which only considered people that were educated in every possible way to be perfect, President Ilves referred to the excellent education received by the founders of the nation at the University of Tartu. "If we had not had our intelligentsia at the end of the 19th century - our own doctors, journalists, clerics, and lawyers - we would not have been ripe to create our own state in 1918," said the Estonian Head of State.

From Estonian Review, October 3 2007

Estonia in the front ranks in worldwide press freedom Index, 2007

Estonia is sharing third place with Slovakia in an index measuring the level of press freedom in 169 countries throughout the world that was published by the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders. At the top of the 2007 index are Iceland and Norway. Only European countries made it into the top 10. Estonia's northern neighbour Finland shared 5th place together with Belgium and Sweden. Latvia placed 12th and Lithuania 23rd. Russia is on the 144th place among 169 countries.

Anna Politkovskaya's murder in October 2006, the failure to punish those responsible for murdering journalists, and the still glaring lack of diversity in the media especially the broadcast media, weighed heavily in the evaluation of press freedom in

Russia, the report said. Last three places are held respectively by Eritrea, North Korea and Turkmenistan. Outside Europe no region of the world has been spared censorship or violence towards journalists, Reporters Without Borders said.

The index reflects the degree of freedom that journalists and news organizations enjoy in each country, and the efforts made by the authorities to respect and ensure respect for this freedom. Reporters Without Borders prepared a questionnaire with criteria that assess the state of press freedom in each country. It includes every kind of violation directly affecting journalists and also the degree of impunity enjoyed by those responsible for press freedom violations.

From Estonian Review, October 10, 2007

Estonia's next Song and Dance Festival

The next major Estonian Song and Dance Festival will take place in 2009. Some Albertans are already planning to attend with their extended families. Note that all performances take place at outdoor venues within the city of Tallinn. Rain capes, cushions and sun protection are recommended.



The Song Festival Stage, 2004



Old Town Tallinn Souvenir shop

Schedule of Events:

Thursday July 2	10:00 am to 10:00 pm	Raekoja Plats / Old Town Hall Square	Folk music and dance groups perform on a temporary stage among the many outdoor cafes and restaurants
Friday July 3	7:00 pm to 9:00 pm	Kalevi Stadium	Folkdance performance - approximately 5000 dancers and gymnasts
Saturday July 4	11:00 am to 1:00 pm	Kalevi Stadium	Folkdance performance – repeat program
	2:00 pm to 7:00 pm	downtown Tallinn to Song Festival Grounds	Parade of dozens of choirs, folk dance groups and various special guests
	7:00 pm to 9:00 pm	Song Festival Grounds	Song Festival Program I
Sunday July 5	11:00 am to 1:00 pm	Kalevi Stadium	Folkdance performance – repeat program
	2:00 pm 7:00 pm	Song Festival Grounds	Song Festival Program II (different content)

Submitted by Helgi Leesment

Come and Try

NEW ESTONIAN CUISINE

Being located in Northern Europe, Estonia's four seasons are the creative inspiration for the connoisseurs of good cuisine who are keen to prepare and enjoy food made from fresh, flavourful seasonal ingredients

In choosing quality and savoury ingredients for the Estonian kitchen, we greatly value what Mother Nature seasonally provides us with. Here, in Estonia, we have the special privilege of being able to enjoy a unique form of synergy, which derives its strength from both the pristine nature that surrounds us and the appreciation that Estonian farmers are developing for the principles of organic farming.

This is a vision, which, hopefully, will help to shape the continually developing New Estonian Cuisine, in which local rustic cooking is blended with the world's chic culinary trends. As all the other fields of activity, which, in a country bursting with renewed energy, have to realign their priorities, the Estonian culinary world is now facing the enjoyable challenge of presenting the best creations that it possibly can. Estonian culinary specialists are gladly accepting this challenge, in order to create one of the most colourful and striking segments of the bright and aesthetically pleasing mosaic known as Estonia.

We are used to countries using their cuisine as a calling card and in many cases, even as a symbolic emissary. Most people are not indifferent to matters concerning food in an ever more globalising world, however cuisine art remains one of the most neutral and pleasing impulses in culture today. I would like to believe that a people's eating habits along with their knowledge of natural, local produce can be a distinguishing feature, which helps to present to the rest of the world that nation's traditions, present values and visions of the future.

Throughout history, the cuisine of many other nations has influenced Estonian cooking. This has been beneficial in many ways. Among other things, it has strengthened the Estonians' determination to retain their own unique cooking and eating traditions, keeping only that, which has stood the test of time and of quality. Life is in a constant flux, as are the culinary demands of contemporary society. Therefore, it seems that the appreciation and retaining of culinary traditions can not only have a stabilising effect, but can also be a source of strength for any nation.

At the same time, it is essential to discover the creative culinary possibilities that each day has to offer. This makes it possible to make maximum use of the wonderful and unique ingredients that can be found in Estonia.

Spring, the beginning of which is always greatly longed for, returns with spring lamb and veal; goat's cheese, rhubarb, wild leek, and fresh sorrel; and perch from our clean inland waters.

With the arrival of the energy boosting and flourishing summer, comes time to enjoy all the wildest, headiest flavours imaginable. There are herbs, berries from the garden and the forest, chanterelles and new potatoes; and our ever-popular fresh perch, eel, and crayfish. These all play the lead in Estonia's midsummer symphony.

When autumn arrives, there are opportunities galore to make what is good even better. From bushes and fruit trees come wild cranberries and boysenberries, hazelnuts and the black salcify. From the farmer's barnyard comes the traditional goose and fish lovers can choose from lamprey, dwarf herring, and plaice. The best part of autumn is, however, the hunting season. It is hard not to be impressed by the variety of game available in our primeval forests and on our coastal islands: pheasant, elk, boar, and wild goat all enrich the Estonian dining table.

During the dark and seemingly endless series of short days, which constitutes our sombre winter, it's invigorating to eat smoked meat with sauerkraut, roasted roe deer, the traditional black pudding, and Christmas blood sausage; and to drink mulled wine and nibble gingerbread.

I sincerely hope that I have been able to transmit the notion of synergy with the above descriptions of our immensely enjoyable dishes, so as to lucidly demonstrate the ultimate Estonian culinary creation as a whole. Nowadays, it is important for food to do more than merely fill our stomachs. The desire to achieve every nuance of taste and harmony of ingredients must be kept in balance. Less is more - the world is full of brilliant examples of this, where the blending of just a few right ingredients can result in a small miracle.

It is essential to recognise both the ingredients offered to us by our environment and the culinary creativity given to us by the muses. With the help of the concept of a comprehensible whole, one has to search for essential additional nuances and innovations, which will lend added value to the raw ingredients in the New Estonian Cuisine. It is important that these complement one another. Not to mention the aesthetics involved. It is wonderful to see the earnest aspiration to offer the best meal, coupled with the desire to ensure that Estonia's culinary future will offer all of us unique and enriching sensations for the many years to come.

Head isu sõbrad!
Bon Appetit, mes amis!

Written for the MFA by **Imre Kose**, Chéf de cuisine, Vertigo Catering

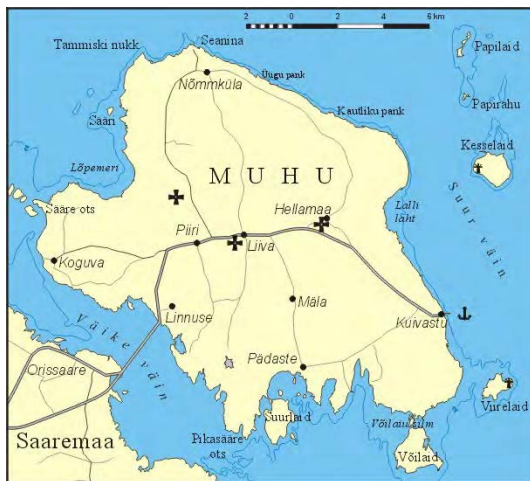


Press and Information Department, Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

A Baltic time warp-Muhu Island

Estonians like to brag that theirs is the most wired country in the world. They can pay for parking, taxis and many purchases in shops by dialing a number on their mobile phones. Trains and intercity buses are equipped with wireless Internet.

But here in Muhu Island, just two hours from the capital, Tallinn, you could easily think you were in another country. Many of the wood and stone houses, which date as far back as the 17th century, have roofs made from wooden reeds harvested at the shoreline. Some elderly residents still have outhouses.



Google

Map of Muhu Island

The juxtaposition between Tallinn and Muhu Island illustrates a great advantage of travelling in the Baltics. This trio of tiny countries-Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia-achieved independence from the Soviet Union 16 years ago and towns untouched by progress are only now starting to open up. In one day, you can go back centuries in time, from a capital city with international restaurants and the latest

technology to villages that reflect another era.

These villages aren't unchanged because they've been preserved as showpieces for tourists. They were left to stagnate for decades under Soviet occupation. The 2,000 inhabitants of Muhu Island, for instance, are mostly fishermen and farmers, just as they've always been.

The last Russian troops didn't leave Estonia until 1994, and the animosity between Estonians and Russians still hasn't faded. Only last month, when the democratic Estonian government relocated a Soviet war memorial from the centre of Tallinn to a cemetery, ethnic Russians rioted on the streets. In Russia, government officials called for a boycott of Estonian goods and some rail and road links to Estonia were briefly cut off.

Estonians still shudder at the memories of Soviet occupation. "I remember a time when people were fighting for washing powder in a store," says Kristiina Ojamaa, destination marketing consultant for the Estonian Tourist Board. "There were lines for bread, lines for eggs, lines for everything. We couldn't celebrate Christmas because KBG agents were standing outside the churches making note of who went in."

When the Soviets left, the economies of the Baltic countries were in shambles. By the 1990s, with tourism around the world booming, governments decided that the wisest approach was to restore the old buildings and not to demolish them.

Figures speak dramatically of what happened to tourism: In the 50 years of Soviet occupation, Estonia drew two million tourists over that whole period.

Now, more than two million come every year. Each summer, more than 300 cruise ships call at Tallinn alone.



Photo: Dave Kiil

A traditional farm in the quiet countryside of Muhu Island.

Development capital has poured into Tallinn and high-tech companies such as Skype, which was founded in Estonia, have helped give the country the nickname "e-Stonia." Estonians attribute their country's technology advances to a president who was an Internet fanatic, and to the fact that the economy was so destroyed during Soviet times that it had to be rebuilt from scratch, skipping decades to jump into the computer age.

Recent landmarks in Estonia include what could be the world's first election, this March, allowing voting over the Internet, and a "virtual" government and parliament, where meetings and votes are conducted via the Internet.

There are still challenges, however. Thirty percent of Estonia's 1.3 million people are ethnic Russians and, as the recent rioting over the removal of the Soviet-era statue showed, the loyalties of them still lie toward Moscow rather than Tallinn. Outside Tallinn, the government is still trying to rebuild the Country's infrastructure from the days of Soviet occupation.

Muhu Island provides a prime example of the development lag in rural areas. In the Soviet era, tourists weren't even allowed on the island unless they had gotten permission from Soviet authorities, since the island housed a military base. Today, although the buildings of a 19th century manor have been converted into a lovely hotel called Pädaste

Manor, it only has 12 rooms and can only be reached by driving three miles down a bumpy dirt road. On the rest of the island there are a few houses that have been turned into bed and breakfasts.

In short, Muhu Island is a tourist's paradise - it's particularly attractive because so few tourists get here. The 20,000 foreigners who come to Muhu each year are mostly from Finland, which lies just across the water from Estonia, and from the neighboring Baltic countries.

The island is flat, the traffic sparse, and the terrain a scenic mix of forests and old houses. The loudest noise I heard was the sound of birds chirping.

This is dramatic contrast to Tallinn, which has come a long way from Soviet times. The cobblestone streets of the Old Town, some of them forbidden to cars, are crowded with people, both locals and tourists, jammed into many restaurants, bars and boutique shops that have sprung up.

With Finland just across the Baltic Sea, the Estonians' shared Nordic roots are reflected in their blond hair and tall stature. English is widely spoken and although Estonians are friendly enough when you start a conversation, they're so reclusive otherwise that they make the Finnish, who have a reputation for reclusiveness, seem gregarious.

One night, at a restaurant with a largely Estonian menu, I found a perfect tom yum goong, the Thai spicy shrimp soup. When I asked the waiter how this came to be, he looked at me, startled. Rather than try to answer my question, he turned his eyes to the ground and shuffled away.

Stan Sessser
Hello Estonia blog
June 21, 2007

Tallinn, a vacation hotspot

According to an article in the 2007 issue, Number 34, of the popular German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*, Tallinn is rated among the six most popular cities of Europe along with Amsterdam, Barcelona, Dublin, Copenhagen and Hamburg. The author Erich Follath visited the city to see an artificial old-town but was pleasantly surprised by the boomtown atmosphere among the genuine medieval buildings. He was especially impressed by Estonia's Internet-savvy populace and contemporary art.



A view of Tallinn from Toompea



*Hara Krishna parade in downtown
Tallinn, 2007*

AEHS Membership List , 2007

1. Annist, Alar&Pille, Okotoks
2. Ansley, Imbi, Andrea A,
Gary&Cooper, SV Birchcliff
3. Asmus, Peter&Jeanette, Calgary
4. Brennen, Virginia, Stettler
5. Brewer, Elsie, White Rock, BC
6. Clark, John, Denver, CO
7. Costello, Wilma, Calgary
8. Cowick, Anne-Liis, Red Deer
9. De-Elespp, Ricardo&Külliva,
Ardrossan
10. Derksen, Linda&Colin,
Jack&Jamie, Edmonton
11. Dinning, Shirley&Leonard,
Edmonton
12. Doherty, Linda K, Big Sandy
13. Ekelund, Bob&June, Rocky
Mountain House
14. Engler, Faye, St. Albert
15. Erdman, Anne E
16. Erdman, Evelyn, Calgary
17. Erdman, Oscar&Sally, Calgary
18. Gagne, Lyann, Red Deer
19. Gibson, Howard&Diana, Calgary
20. Grant, Carole, Calgary
21. Gullickson, Barbara, Barons
22. Hall, Ernie&Gwen, Boyle
23. Helenurm, Kalju&Margot,
Calgary
24. Hennel, David&Leslie,
Tallin&Emmit, Stettler
25. Hennel, Leah, Calgary
26. Hennel, Lorne, Calgary
27. Hennel, Rodney, Stettler
28. Hennel, Ron W.F, Stettler
29. Herman, Derrill&Liia, Innisfail
30. Holukoff, Bob, Calgary
31. Kass, Mark, Calgary
32. Kaert, Mati&Linda, Edmonton
33. Kalev, Walter&Tiiu, Eckville
34. Kalvee, Willy G, Calgary
35. Kerbes, Corina, Stettler
36. Kerbes, Deane&Irene, Stettler
37. Kerbes, Kenneth&Hazel, Calgary
38. Kerbes, Marguarite, Stettler
39. Kerbes, Richard (Dick),
Saskatoon
40. Kiil, Dave&Betty Ann, Edmonton
41. Kiil, Glenn, Ingrid, Ranek, Kalev,
Edmonton
42. Kiil, Lisa&Diana, Edmonton
43. Kingsep, Bob&Anette, Redwood
Meadows
44. Kivisild, Livia, Calgary
45. Klaus, Larry&Kathy, Sherwood
Park
46. Koosel, Ted&Marian, Canmore
47. Koper, Donna, Cochrane
48. Kotkas, Perry&Karen, Calgary
49. Kraav, Jüri&Helle, Calgary
50. Kuester, Matt F, Edmonton,
51. Langeste, Helmut&Airi,
Edmonton
52. Leesment, Peeter&Helgi, Calgary
53. Leew, Alexander&Eva, Calgary
54. Leilop, Aino, St. Albert
55. LeTourneau, Loree, Eckville
56. Luik, c/o Renate, Avo, Edmonton
57. Madill, Wallace&Anita, Calgary
58. Magi, Enzo&Maimu, Calgary
59. Maki, Jean, Eckville
60. Maki, Steven,
61. Maisoneuve, Tamara, Cochrane
62. Matiisen, Arne&Carolyn, Calgary
63. Matiisen, Janet, Calgary
64. McClung, Eda, Edmonton
65. McElroy, Elve&W.L, Camrose
66. Metsar, Gerli, Calgary
67. Mottus, Arnold&Vera, Catherine,
Red Deer
68. Mottus, Brian&Gwen, Mark,
Stony Plain
69. Mottus, Catherine,
70. Mottus, Vera
71. Munz, Lillian, Calgary
72. Munz Gue, Martha&David, Lisa,
Anita, Brian, Medicine Hat

73. Nemeth, Anton&Anthony, Calgary
74. Nicklom, Otto&Gladys, Stettler
75. Pääsuke, Rein&Jan, Calgary
76. Pääsuke, Toomas, Canmore
77. Pallo, Jack Henry, Red Deer
78. Pastewka, Astrid, Calgary
79. Payson, Paul&Tiina, Edmonton
80. Peet, Ethel, Edmonton
81. Peet, Linda, Edmonton,
82. Peltto, John&Margaret, Sherwood Park
83. Pihooja, Ralph&Nella Collins, Edmonton
84. Pilt, Shirley, Edmonton
85. Põhjakas, Kaljo&Lilian, Lethbridge
86. Poldas, Alar&Ann, Calgary
87. Poldas, Karin, Calgary
88. Posti, Allan&Maria, Ryan, Eckville
89. Raabis, Garry&Judy, Red Deer
90. Rafuse, Quinton,
91. Raynard, Bob&Shirley, Stettler
92. Robertson, David&Christine, Brendan, Kari, Leduc
93. Ruus, Ivar&Lea, Calgary
94. Saar, Lembit&Iris, Calgary
95. Sandre, Ülo, Calgary
96. Sastok, Helve, Calgary
97. Sastok, Laine, Edmonton
98. Schuler, Kelly, Calgary
99. Schafer, Nancy, Blue Island
100. Shorten, Evelyn, Stettler
101. Simmermon, Astrid, Victoria, Jaxon, Mart, Calgary
102. Sparrow, Lori, Eckville
103. Stanich, Robert&Leila, Calgary
104. Szady, Caroline, Calgary
105. Szady, Linda, Edmonton
106. Tiislar, Enn&Pärja, Canmore
107. Timma, Olev, Calgary
108. Tipman, Bob&Kathy, Calgary
109. Urke, Jan, Edmonton
110. Ustina, Astrid, Edmonton
111. Ustina, Judy, Edmonton

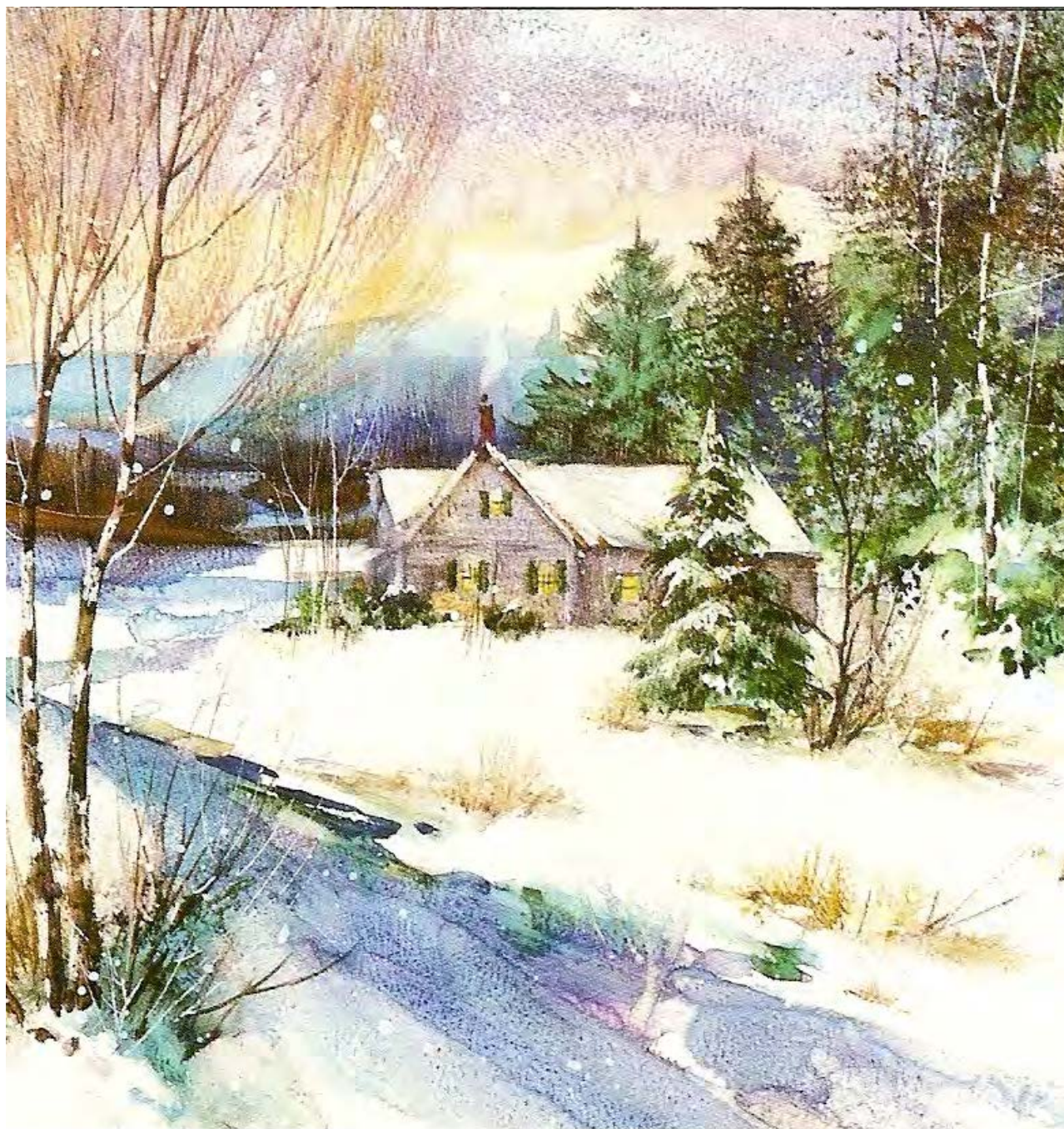
112. Varney, Sharon, Edmonton
113. Wartnow, Floyd C, Delta, BC
114. Watson, Maret, Spruce Grove
115. White, Anneli, Calgary
116. White, David
117. White, Jeff
118. White, Josh
119. Zach, Inge, Calgary
120. Zielinski, Michel&Kristine, Spruce Grove
121. Zoumer, Anne, Calgary



Estonian National Dress, Muhu Island



*Woodburning/watercolor on wood plate
by R & G Koddo, Calgary, 1970s*



Hääd jõule ja õnnerikast uut aastat!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!