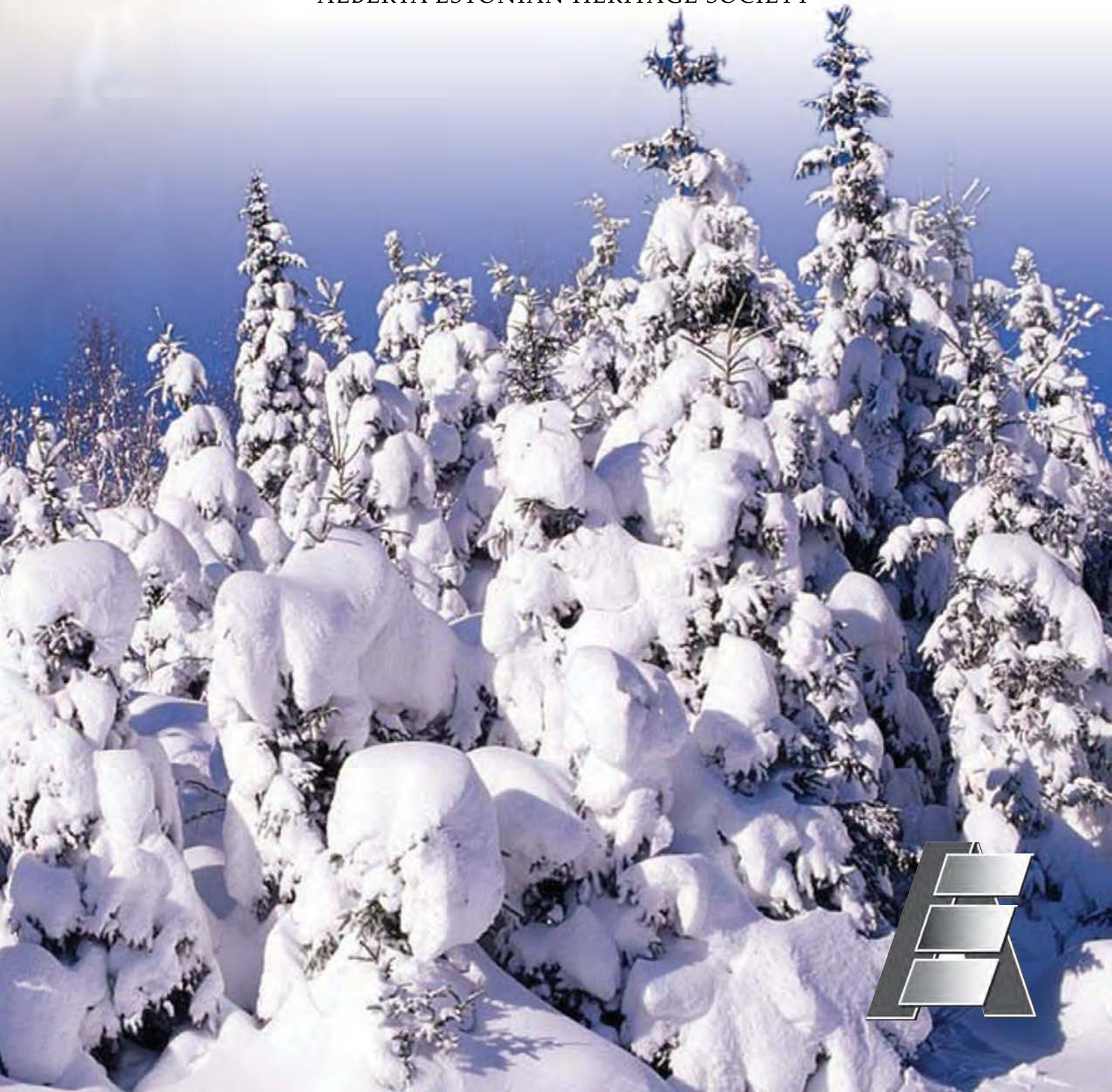


AJAKAJA

WINTER 2009 • VOLUME 31



ALBERTA ESTONIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY



Alberta Estonian Heritage Society (2009)

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.

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AjaKaja

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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

Visit "Alberta's Estonian Heritage" website: www.albertasource.ca/abestonians



AJAKAJA

Alberta Estonian
Heritage Society

Winter 2009
Volume 31

Letter from the Editors

It has been an eventful and exciting year for AEHS. The midsummer celebration at Linda Hall was an outstanding success in large measure owing to the work of Ron Hennel, his team of Stettler/Big Valley-area members and widespread community support. Over 30 members and friends of the AEHS renewed their Estonian connections by visiting Estonia during the summer of the 2009 National Song and Dance Festival. By all accounts it was a memorable and soul stirring experience.

A smaller but enthusiastic group of Alberta Estonians took part in the enjoyable and well planned West Coast Estonian Days in Seattle, Washington.

A special meeting of the AEHS board of Directors in September decided to proceed with plans to donate all archival materials to the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) in Edmonton. The Alberta Estonian Collection will include all historical materials collected during our heritage project, the Medicine Valley Estonian Society material preserved in Ottawa, and records of Alberta's Estonian pioneers at Estonian Central Archives in Toronto. We plan to donate the material by end of March, 2010.

The Alberta Estonian Collection will include both digital and printed materials and, following completion of the cataloguing process by the PAA, these materials will be accessible onsite and online to historians, genealogists and the general public.

The establishment of this historical archive, consisting of printed and digital records, is a first amongst Estonians abroad and has earned AEHS considerable recognition. We deserve to feel proud.

Using information gathered during the past four years, we are planning to publish a book "Story of Alberta's Estonians, 1899-2009." Major documents about Alberta's Estonian pioneers have been translated and will be available in English for the first time. This may make interesting reading. The story of Estonian immigrants who came to Alberta following World War II will be included. The book will be richly illustrated to highlight Alberta's Estonian community spanning 110 years. The book will be available for purchase in spring of 2010.

Although few in number, AEHS has distinguished itself by taking the lead in establishing this historical record but also in connecting a diverse membership to a shared history and common interests .

Thank you to all AjaKaja contributors from near and far! Your interest and involvement resulted in a record amount of submitted material. This is a wonderful dilemma so please keep sending.

Best wishes to our readers for the Holiday Season and New Year.

Eda McClung and Dave Kiil

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President's Message



Tere!

Yesterday I was a Canadian. Eda McClung, Tina Matiisen, Garry Raabis and I were part of an Eckville High School reunion organizing committee who were donating the excess funds of the reunion to the high school. As the chair of the committee I made the official presentation and as I stood before the students, I was struck with the realization that my years in school occurred half way between the opening of the original Estonian school (early 1900's) and now. The links to the past just got a whole lot shorter!

Today I am an Estonian. As a consequence of being a grandson to an Estonian pioneer, I have my Estonian hat on. I dwell on the notion that the early Estonian families in our area made a pact to assure that at least one member of each family would go on to higher education.

Tomorrow I will be a Swede. As a grandson of a Swedish pioneer on my mothers side, I will lace up my skates, strap on hockey gear and step onto the ice for another game. I

often think of the trunk full of skating trophies my grandfather left in the old country and never saw again. In the context of our society, I am reminded of the treasures that so many people had to leave behind.

As we know from our historical records, small communities like Eckville, Stettler and Barons, depended on the community for survival. Naturally we focus on the Estonian aspect of the community, however these communities consisted of mixed ancestry. A large component of our membership has lived their lives with several hats in their closets. They balance their lives by routinely slipping from culture to culture seamlessly adjusting to the circumstances. This may be one definition of the Canadian culture. This may be part of the explanation of why our society continues to succeed. With this inherent appreciation of multiple perspectives, the value of organizations such as the AEHS is enhanced. It is another vantage point, another perspective and another opportunity for each of us to expand our interests and test our abilities.

With the Winter Olympics in Vancouver just a few months away, lets get ready to cheer the Canadian athletes to victory. We will hold our collective breaths as Mellisa Hollingsworth of Eckville/Estonian heritage streaks down the skeleton track. Lets applaud the Estonian athletes as they pursue their dreams in our huge country and lets never forget the spirit of the coach who reached out to replace the competitor's broken ski pole! We are, after all, part of a much larger community, and in our own small but effective way, proof that it can be done.

Merry Christmas and all the best to everyone in 2010!

Bob Kingsep

2009-A Very Busy AEHS Agenda

2009 was an exceptionally “Estonian year”, with major and minor international, regional and local events taking place. Albertans have attended all but one, as listed here.

- January 14 Estonian musician Anu Tali guest conducts the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, followed by post-concert reception for members of the Estonian community.
- January 28-February 2 Estonian Junior Biathlon team competes at Canmore, Alberta in the Biathlon Junior and Youth World Championship.
- March 12 AEHS Board and committee holds meeting, Red Deer, re: Jaanipäev planning
- April 18 Alberta Estonian Heritage Society annual general meeting, Red Deer.
- June 20 AEHS Jaanipäev at Linda Hall, near Stettler, Alberta. Approximately 200 attend.
- June 26-30 “Esto 2009”, one of a series of world Estonian festivals usually held every four years on various continents, takes place in Münster, Germany, out of its usual time sequence. This was the tenth such festival since the first one in 1972 in Toronto, although there is considerable controversy as to whether such an event is needed any more. We are not sure, but believe that no Albertans attended this festival held in Münster.
- July 1 A special gathering at Raekoja Plats / Town Hall Square, Tallinn on Canada Day brings together approximately 20 current and former Albertans along with additional friends and relatives in Estonia. Later approximately 500 Canadian Estonians celebrate the day along with the Canadian Ambassador from Latvia.
- July 2-5 Song and Folkdance Festival / Laulu- Tantsupidu held in Tallinn. Approximately 25 Albertans in attendance.
- July 7-10 Baltic Heritage Network Conference at Tartu, Estonia, focusing on archives. Albertan Dave Kiil presents a paper about AEHS recent and upcoming historical projects; two other Albertans are in attendance.
- July 25-26 Two young Albertans, Andrew and Lisa Kaarsoo-Chisholm, win medals at the Fourth Summer Biathlon Viessmann Cup competition at Otepää, Estonia
- August 26-29 West Coast Estonian Days, Seattle, Washington Dave Kiil presents an overview of Alberta Estonian history and past and present AEHS projects. Approximately 11 Albertans attend the festival.
- September 1-7 Six competitors from Estonia participate in the WorldSkills event, Calgary
- September 12 AEHS holds Board meeting, Red Deer, re: planning archiving activities as per the Estonian Government grant for this purpose
- October 9 Rasmus Lumi, Estonian Chargé d’Affaires from the Estonian Embassy in Ottawa, conducts consular business in Alberta
- November 10 AEHS sends congratulatory letter to the Toronto Estonian Society which is celebrating its 65th anniversary, having been founded in 1944
- November 11& 19-December 19 Toronto musician Lucas Waldin, of Estonian heritage, conducts the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra
- November 27 &28 Estonian musician Eri Klas guest conducts the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. Earlier, he was one of several conductors at the Song Festival in Tallinn, July, 2009

Busy year!

Prepared by Helgi Leesment

Jaanipäev 2009 at Linda Hall

Alberta's Estonians will look back on 2009 as the year for reconnecting with and celebrating their roots, locally, nationally and internationally. Major events included the National Song and Dance festival in Tallinn, the ever-popular West Coast Estonian Days in Seattle, Washington and our own celebration of the Summer Solstice, or Jaanipäev.



Photo: Jo Hennel

Planning Committee meeting in June, 2008. L to R: standing: Ron Hennel, John Pelto, Marguarite Kerbes, Astrid Ustina, Otto Nicklom, Rodney Hennel, Allan Hennel; front row: Deane Kerbes, Margaret Pelto and Irene Kerbes

Planning for this major celebration by Alberta's Estonians started in June, 2008 and was followed by several follow-up meetings of the Planning Committee. The Committee was headed by Ron Hennel and included many descendants of Estonian pioneer families who settled in the Stettler and Big Valley areas.

On Saturday afternoon, June 20, Master of Ceremonies Ron Hennel took the stage and introduced a number of provincial and municipal politicians who praised the Estonians for their contributions to the

community and the province. AEHS President Bob Kingsep welcomed all participants and congratulated the Planning Committee on their excellent organizational and fundraising skills.

The Hall was decorated in the colors of the Estonian flag-blue, black and white-with many floral arrangements on tables. Marguarite Kerbes designed and made the huge banner above the stage: "Estonians in Alberta 110 yrs. Jaanipäev 2009." Marion Collin's wall chart of over 1,700 names illustrated a community of families with a shared Estonian heritage.



Photo: Dave Kiil

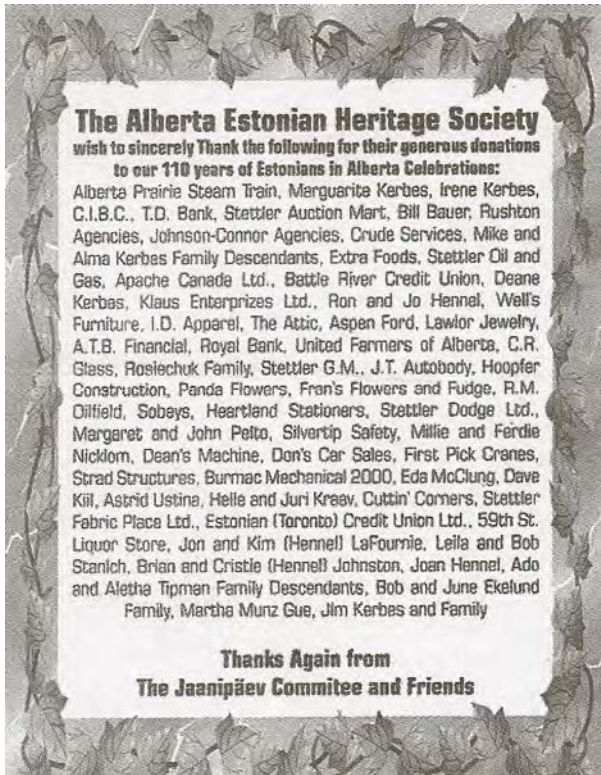
Cast members of Shadow Productions of Calgary acknowledge the applause of an appreciative audience following an entertaining musical show at Linda Hall

Traditional events and games included log-sawing, nail-pounding, children's games and the popular "Queen of 4 AM" competition.

A selection of lottery prizes was displayed on tables inside Linda Hall. The major prize, a

beautiful quilt handcrafted by Marguarite Kerbes, was won by Annette Kingsep.

The Planning Committee raised \$4,250 in cash donations, as well as many door and games prizes from individuals and local businesses, a particularly significant amount during an ailing economy.



A sincere thank you from the Planning Committee for many generous donations by individuals and businesses.

A scrumptious roast beef dinner, prepared by the Linda Ladies, included home-baked Estonian-style rye bread, sauerkraut, and dessert pirukad. Earlier in the day, a BBQ lunch was available to hungry attendees.

A Dinner Theatre performance by Shadow Productions of Calgary was the featured entertainment for the evening. Hal and Kathi Kerbes, with daughters Sarah and Hannah, and two other musicians, delighted the crowd with an entertaining musical show.

About 200 people attended the 2009 midsummer gathering at historic Linda Hall, meeting old friends and making new ones. They came from the four corners of Alberta, and beyond, to participate in an age-old tradition of their ancestors to mark the summer solstice. One of Estonia's better known brand names, Saku beer, turned out to be a favorite among thirsty revelers throughout the day. Owing to severe drought conditions in the area, the traditional bonfire was replaced with an outdoor fire place. The evening concluded with a sing-along as the sun set in the west...



A traditional sing-along by the outdoor fire place concluded a highly successful midsummer festival at Linda Hall

The 2009 midsummer celebration at Linda Hall was a huge success: the planning committee did an outstanding job on all fronts. The official opening ceremony, the traditional games, fundraising, the program, entertainment and opportunities for socializing all combined for what some participants described as "the best ever Jaanipäev!" Congratulations!

Article was prepared by Dave Kiil using notes provided by Ron and Jo Hennel, and Irene and Deane Kerbes.

AEHS Archival Collection to be donated to the Provincial Archives of Alberta

Tom Anderson, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton

Foreword

The production of “Alberta’s Estonians” DVD and “Alberta’s Estonian Heritage” website (www.albertasource.ca/abestonians) has resulted in an impressive collection of historical materials about Alberta’s Estonian community during the past 110 years.

At a recent meeting of the AEHS Board, it was decided to donate all suitable materials—photos, historical documents, accounts of Estonian pioneer families, maps and rare books to the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) in Edmonton.

As a result of discussions with Tom Anderson of the PAA, our collection of materials will be donated to the Archives during the first three months of 2010. The Alberta Estonian Collection (AEC) will include records returned to Alberta by the Library and Archives of Canada in Ottawa and the Estonian Central Archive in Toronto.

Individuals can donate family records to the Collection at a later date. Efforts will be made to link these items to the AEC. We will assist the archives staff to process and describe the records, thereby making them accessible to interested publics, onsite and online.

The Editors

Tom Anderson describes the mission and role of the Provincial Archives of Alberta as follows:

It is the mission of the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) to acquire, preserve and make available records of enduring value that represent the history and culture of our province. We were therefore very pleased to hear that the AEHS was willing to donate the research and work related to the wonderful heritage project of the last number of years. It is a grand legacy that will be preserved for all Albertans.

I am also very pleased that Library and Archives Canada is now in the process of transferring the records of the Medicine Valley Estonian Society to the PAA so that these records might be more accessible in the region they were created.

The records of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society, as with all donors to the PAA, will be open and available to the public once the donation has been appraised, processed and described by archives staff. The records at the PAA are housed in acid-free enclosures, and preserved in climate controlled and secured vaults. The records, regardless of origin or language, are described and file lists created so that researchers may easily access the materials in our holdings, either on site or through the finding aids on our website.

These finding aid descriptions of the records are made available at <https://hermis.alberta.ca/paa/>, and also through the Archives Network of Alberta at <http://asalive.archivesalberta.org:8080/access/asa/archaa/>. Everyone is welcome to visit the PAA, and researchers may access records onsite at 8555 Roper Road, Edmonton. Tours for larger groups can be arranged.

It is important to document the lives, work and lifestyles of the Estonian community in Alberta, and we accept records (papers, letters, photographs, home movies, audio tapes, maps and plans) from individuals, groups and businesses. The PAA is eager to receive donations from the Estonian community in Alberta.

If you are interested in donating family, personal or business records to the Provincial Archives, or to your local archives, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to working with the AEHS and its members to preserve the legacy of Estonians in Alberta and to make this rich history available to everyone.

Tom Anderson
Team Lead, Private Records
Provincial Archives of Alberta
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Century Farm Award for Oro family

Astrid Oro Ustina, Edmonton, Alberta

My father, Alex Oro, acquired his Stettler area homestead in Sept. 20, 1909. It is still owned and farmed by the family. Following a lot of documentation and proof, in September, 2009, we were honored to receive the Century Farm Award from the Government of Alberta.



Alberta Century Farm & Ranch Award recognizing the Oro family for 100 years of farming on the original homestead, 1909-2009

The following is a brief history of my father Alex Oro: my father's ancestors lived on Saaremaa and were serfs to German landlords. He joined a group of Estonians who immigrated to Tver, Russia (Pranti Mets) in 1888. There they bought land and farmed. Word reached them that ample farmland was available for homesteads in Canada. So a group of Estonians immigrated to Canada at the turn of the century, arriving in Sylvan Lake where they were greeted by other Estonians.

My grandparents John and Liisa Oro settled in Sylvan Lake area where they built a log house on their homestead. Homestead land became scarce so a group of Estonian families moved eastward and took homesteads in the Stettler/Linda Hall area. The Rahu family, with siblings Mike, Liisa, Sophie and Miina all migrated to Stettler. They married and became the families of John and Liisa Oro, Magnus and Sophie Tipman and John and Miina Neithal. By that time, my father had become of legal age to acquire a homestead. The entire John Oro family moved to Alex Oro's homestead. The log house on the homestead in Sylvan Lake was dismantled and shipped to Stettler by rail. It was then hauled to Alex Oro's homestead and rebuilt. It still stands there today.

In 1914, John Oro died at the age of 47 years and left Liisa and her five sons to farm the homestead. By the mid-1920's, Martin bought his own farm, Oscar moved

to Vancouver, leaving Liisa to farm the homestead with sons Alex, Mike and Otto.

When Alex was nearing 40 years of age, he arranged for a mail order bride, Julie Hiie, to come from Estonia. She arrived in the cold mid-winter 1927 and they were married in the spring of 1928. About that time, Mike and Otto moved a few miles to another farm. Alex and Julie had two children: Harold born in November 1928 and Astrid born in November 1929. Alex and Julie struggled through the 'dirty thirties' with two small children, little money, the dust storms and economic depression. They had a mixed farming operation; they hired help with farming until Harold was old enough to work. In 1948, I left the farm to attend University of Alberta to study Pharmacy. In 1952, Fred Ustina and I were married. We had five children: Stephanie, Melanie, Gregory, Judith and Barbara. We were divorced in 1971. I continued my career as a pharmacist in Edmonton until retirement in 1994.



The Oro family farm near Stettler, Alberta, 2009

With Estonian tenacity and Estonian work ethic, the farm survived the depression and farm life gradually improved. The old log house has had many additions such as a kitchen, back entry, sun porch, bathroom and upgrades such as electricity, running water, telephone and gas heating.

My mother Julie passed away in 1980, my father Alex in 1986 and my brother Harold in 1990. Now that I acquired the homestead I thoroughly enjoy spending summers there, living the life of a farmer

Astrid is fluent in Estonian and has travelled to Estonia several times with her family. She has an Estonian passport as do her granddaughter and great granddaughter. Interest in the family's roots and heritage live on to the sixth generation!

‘Now Generation’ of Alberta Estonians

Stephanie Ustina, Victoria, B.C.

“Listening for the Music”

This summer my mother’s farm near Stettler received the Century Farm and Ranch Award for remaining in one family’s possession for one hundred years. Why do I tell you this? Because prior to coming to Canada my family were serfs possessing no land, and then free but dispossessed and poor, and for these last 100 years, while Estonia froze under the icy thumb of Russian and German occupations, enduring repression to eventually find freedom, that land near Linda Hall, an undulating sea of golden grain beneath the wide

prairie sky, faithfully, peacefully, during a century of unbroken stewardship in the hands of one Estonian family, turned with the seasons, peacefully sovereign.

Not all years were good years—the Depression and lesser evils wrought their wrath—but the years belonged to John and Lisa, and then to Alex and Julie, then Harold, and now Astrid.

While Estonians in occupied Estonia survived by developing a certain outward politeness and reserve, coupled with a wry, biting sense of humour shared among certain



Stephanie and Astrid Ustina at West Coast Estonian Days, Seattle.

close friends, Estonian pioneers in Alberta were exploring freedom through creating a community of their own design. Drawing together the threads of their disparate existences, weaving a safety net for survival buildings were erected to meet in—houses, a church, a hall. Choirs formed. Work parties, and dinner and dance parties flourished.

This August I was lucky enough to attend West Coast Estonian Days in Seattle with my mother,

and the singing and dancing didn’t stop. I don’t speak the

language, and my father is not Estonian, but I was warmly welcomed. Why does this matter? In Edmonton, where I grew up, aside from my ballet teacher, a fiercely committed and exacting woman with posture to match, who during WWII escaped Estonia to Sweden by rowboat, I didn’t know of another Estonian. “Are you Estonian?” the people in Seattle would ask. When we are few, we search for ourselves in others.

I used to stop people in the street who were speaking a foreign language, hoping that the music I was hearing was the crisp lilting

singsong of my grandparent's Estonian. But, it would usually be Finnish, or Hungarian. Estonian is rarer. I have looked for someone to teach me Estonian—asked people directly, called the university, replied to an ad in a newspaper—but haven't found anyone. Most often I'm told "It's too late you need to learn it in childhood," or "It's too difficult. It would take a long time."

In September 2008, as I prepared for a trip to Estonia with my mother, where we would visit Tallinn, Haapsalu my grandmother's seaside birthplace, and Saaremaa, island of unerring light, birthplace of my great grandfather, I tried to teach myself a few Estonian words. Every night, just before sleep, I would turn to my laptop and *Before you Know It*, a free language course site, and dutifully recite phrases and words. Hoping to prove my progress, I would try out a few words on Mom. But, despite my best efforts, I couldn't make myself understood, and after some time of listening patiently, trying to make out what I was saying, she would break out in laughter. All I've been able to master is *mina armastan sind* (I love you). Sometimes, still, I close our conversations with it. And still she laughs, telling me I speak like a *real* Estonian. There's hope, though. I hear someone's teaching Estonian online using Skype (an Estonian creation!). I may try that.

I live in Victoria by the sea, counselling women with eating disorders and suicidal youth. When the Estonian Girls' Choir (choirmaster of 'Singing Revolution' movie fame) sang in a church here everyone of Estonian descent was asked to move up to the front row, and there I met a few Estonians, mostly of my mother's generation. All came to Canada in the wave after the war. They think of my roots as old time Canadian. But, when I think that my Estonian Canadian family started

with pioneers in 1901, I have a sense of being new to Canada.

Perhaps my perception has more to do with Canada being a young country, with soil first being tilled, with prairie brush becoming homestead. Perhaps it's the Estonian pioneer spirit I'm thinking of that is new—always young, courageously looking forward, strengthened by remembering one's ancestors, having faith in oneself and Nature, and never falling into cynicism or the easy way out. Perhaps it's a timelessness that comes with not being trapped by preconceptions of what is or is not possible that I'm thinking of.



Photo: Stephanie Ustina
Astrid Ustina surrounded by her family on her 80th birthday, November, 2009. Stephanie Ustina is on far right.

What of me is Estonian, then? My sweet tooth? My jokes so wry my boyfriend can't tell if I'm being funny or I mean it? My hand made life? My hearing the music in Nature? My work ethic? My desire to contribute to a team? That I enjoy doing new things? That I love freedom? Maybe it's that I'm succinct—some would say curt. But I say, If I've said what I've needed to, why say more? Please don't mistake my polite reserve for agreement or compliance. A true Estonian is never an occupied country.

'Now Generation' of Alberta Estonians

Mike Ekelund, Edmonton, AB

In 2008 I met with a delegation from Estonia's Eesti Power Company (the state owned power corporation) as part of my business working in Alberta's Energy Department. Following a walk-through I gave on the history of Alberta's approach to development of oil sands resources, which I thought might be of interest to Estonia in development of its oil shale resources, I was invited to make a presentation at the World Shale Oil Congress at the Technical University in Tallinn. I was also asked to moderate a session on fiscal development issues. This was particularly exciting for me. Although I speak in numerous venues each year on technical topics I had never been invited to Estonia, where my maternal grandfather "Mike" Kerbes and his family had emigrated from.



Photo: Mike Ekelund

Mike Ekelund presenting Estonian Minister Juhan Parts with Alberta Energy Strategy document, June, 2009

In early 2009 I was approved to attend on behalf of the Government of Alberta. Following discussions with my wife Lorraine (who did **not** intend to go all the way to Estonia with me and stay by herself while I attended a technical conference) we decided to include some vacation time. I also got travel advice and contacts of relatives in and around Tallinn from my aunt and uncle Deane and Irene Kerbes. They and a number of my other aunts and uncles had visited relatives there over the last decade. Some of their advice...don't drink vodka with the relatives there, and if you do, don't try to outdrink them.

We travelled to Tallinn prior to the conference start to use some of our vacation time to get acclimatized

and get a sense of where things were. It was a weekend, and we found while travelling there that Tallinn has become a major tourist location for visitors from around Europe. We spent that first day walking around the old town, which is one of the best preserved in Europe, and one of the reasons it is a tourist mecca. Our first discovery was the penchant for herring. At breakfast we were offered pickled herring, preserved herring and baked herring along with more familiar (to an Albertan) fare. For lunch, most of the bars had salted herring on brown bread. Since both Lorraine and I come from families that always kept a big orange jug of pickled herring around, this was great. I also tried to contact some of the relatives, but unfortunately was unable to meet with any of them due to travel, and in one case illness.



Photo: Mike Ekelund

Mike Ekelund and his wife Lorraine Deydey cycling in Tallinn. The memorial to lost Russian ship Rusalka is in the background.

We spent our free time before and after the

conference travelling around the old town, climbing up on the walls, visiting the coffee shops and the marzipan shops, and touring a number of museums using our ‘Tallinn Card’ and taking pictures. And sitting and relaxing drinking coffee in the town square. Since the weather was cold, we had to do that under blankets part of the time, but being out in the cold is not an unusual situation living in Edmonton.

We also went to the Estonian Heritage village, which had structures from across the country in different time periods. It was a bit like Heritage Park, Fort Edmonton or the Ukrainian Heritage village, but on a larger scale. This gave us a good understanding of how people lived in rural Estonia during different periods.

Another museum we spent a lot of time at was the ‘Occupation Museum’, which was dedicated to the recent history following independence with the involvements with the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. This is a very interesting, and complex, historical period and we spent several hours going through the presentations and looking at artifacts. As Lorraine comes from a Ukrainian background, she found it interesting to understand the different situations that various countries found themselves. At least that’s what she said – she being a very kind, and patient person. She did later draw the line regarding the number of different WWII tanks we went to see in different countries.



Photo: Mike Ekelund

Mike Ekelund leaning on a statue of Lenin at the Occupation Museum in Tallinn

The evening prior to the conference I was invited to attend a dinner at the Estonian Academy of Sciences. I was seated next to the keynote speaker, Minister of Economic Affairs and Communications Juhan Parts (a former Prime Minister), at a table of embassy and conference attendees from France, Jordan and the United States. The dinner was quite interesting,

especially being able to discuss with the former P.M a number of political issues around Estonia’s relationship with Russia and the challenges of joining NATO. We did receive a few raised eyebrows from some of the diplomatic corps when we started drawing maps on the napkins to illustrate our discussion.

The conference itself was held at the Tallinn University of Technology. It drew attendees from around the world, but primarily from countries that have large shale oil or similar resources – such as Estonia, Jordan, the United States, Canada and Australia. My presentation on the oil sands and its development went over well and I answered a number of questions on oil sands development policy and how it might apply to oil shale. A number of other presentations on production techniques, mine remediation and waste management, exploration results from New Brunswick, China and Serbia, the new fiscal regime in Jordan, greenhouse gas challenges, and potential world developments were attended by myself and by another representative.

Following the conference Lorraine and I took a couple of days of vacation and spent one day on bicycle travelling around the Tallinn area. We were able to visit the harbour and bicycle along the seacoast to the beach areas north of the city. As it was cool and a weekday, they were fairly empty but a number of young mothers were pushing strollers along the paved paths in the woods along the edge of the beaches. There were also a number of school age children in a school of miniature sailboats learning to sail at the Olympic sailing site. We visited the remains of a large mediaeval Abbey, and bicycled through the suburbs. Some had very nice detached homes and were reminiscent of towns in rural Alberta in the 1950’s or 1960’s. Others had the large Soviet style concrete apartment buildings, many of them covered with black streaks from water runoff. A few appeared to have been recently painted in cheery colours like yellow or light orange.

Another day was spent relaxing in town and mostly taking photos of the lily festival, of ourselves at various landmarks (such as me in front of the KGB building) and so on before heading out for the rest of our vacation itinerary.

Beyond the value of the technical conference, it was a great opportunity to see where some of my family had come from.

Mike Ekelund is Assistant Deputy Minister, Oil Development, Ministry of Energy, Government of Alberta.

'Now generation' of Alberta Estonians

Alison and Callum (Kaarsoo) McLeod, Calgary, AB

I am Callum (Kaarsoo) McLeod. I am 14 years old. As with my sister I am very proud of my Estonian heritage. A number of our relatives live in Estonia, and when we went to visit them in both 2002 and 2008, I felt a sort of connection. One connection that was very clear to me was that most of the people we met still had a close relationship with the land, and a love for the outdoors. I feel that I have these characteristics as I love hiking, skiing and cycling. I also enjoy growing and collecting some of my food. In Estonia many of my family take great joy in collecting mushrooms. It is a family outing, they all go out into the woods with a basket and a knife. When they return the baskets are normally full of chanterelles. My grandfather's cousin, Anne, has a wonderful garden. I loved it so much that I didn't want to come out of the strawberry patch for supper, after which I ran right back outside and climbed up the cherry tree. I stayed there for the next hour gorging myself. I feel as though I share many things I enjoy with my relatives, maybe it has something to do with the genes, but I am very proud to be Estonian.

My name is Alison (Kaarsoo) McLeod and I am 16 years old. I am very proud of my Estonian roots. I especially like to see people's reactions when I tell them I am Estonian because a lot of people have never heard of it. They usually look confused, it is really amusing to watch them try and figure out where it is before I tell them. I like teaching them something new about the world that they never have known otherwise. Some of my hobbies include arts and language studies. Currently I am studying



Callum and Alison (Kaarsoo) McLeod

with Helgi Leesment to learn Estonian. When I first visited Estonia in 2002 I became fascinated with the Old Town architecture in Tallinn and all the little shops throughout it, I really liked the blend of old and modern. After visiting again in 2008 and now that I have Estonian citizenship, I feel like I really am officially part of such a unique and interesting country. I plan on going back again next summer so I can learn the language through assimilation.

Kalev Kiil, Edmonton, AB



My trip to Estonia in 2009 was great. The reason my family and I went to Estonia is because my Grandpa is from there and so that we could see the Song & Dance Festivals. My Grandpa also came with us. We visited the Old Town in Tallinn many times. There were many nooks, crannies and winding streets in the Old Town. During our stay in Tallinn we ventured out to Tartu. We stayed in Tartu for 2 days. During our stay in Tartu, we saw the University of Tartu building. It looks like the Parthenon in Greece. When we were leaving we went close to the Estonian- Russian border and talked to a border guard. Except he spoke Estonian so my Grandpa had to translate what he was saying.

When we came back to Tallinn we went to the Dancefest. The dancers wore basic vibrant colours. One day we went to a manor, it was miraculously big. After a week of living in Tallinn we went to Saaremaa where we lived in an awesome cabin. There was a greatly furnished walking trail right near the cabin. Then one day we went to the city of Kuressaare where we visited the Kuressaare castle. In the castle there was a dark and scary tower. In the tower there used to be lions and they would throw people into the tower. The castle wasn't as cool as I thought because there wasn't that much about the castle. There was mostly other stuff like modern art. My trip to Estonia was different.

Kalev is Dave Kiil's 10- year- old grandson. He is a Grade 5 student in the German Bilingual Program at Rideau Park Elementary School in Edmonton

Fifth-generation Hennel family wins AMA Farm Family Award at 2009 Farmfair in Edmonton



Photo:Edmonton Journal

Hennel family of Stettler

From bottom middle clockwise: Emmitt, Leslee, Rita, Allan, David, Tallin

Edmonton Journal, November 9 discusses the ambitions and challenges facing farmers. David indicates that he works in the oilfield because he has to, and farms because he wants to.

David and Leslee's two sons, Tallin and Emmitt, would like to continue farming. If their wish comes true they will be the sixth generation of Hennels to work the land that has been in the family for over 100 years.

Both Allan and David have been involved in organizing a number of Jaanipäev celebrations at Linda Hall.

The Hennel family of Stettler received the designation of Alberta Century Farm Award. in 2004 The Hennels from Stettler are fifth-generation farmers with Estonian roots

Mellisa Hollingsworth glides to gold medal win in Women's Skeleton World Cup Race

The 2006 Olympic bronze medalist in skeleton has reached the podium in each of the two World Cup races to date. She won gold on November 20, 2009 at Lake Placid and raced to a bronze medal in the World Cup opener in Utah the previous week.

Mellisa's home town of Eckville,, with a population of just over 1,000, turned out full force on November 16 to show support for their hero. The occasion was a CTV promotional shoot as part of their coverage of the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. CTV producer Josh Shiaman felt that "the spirit from the community was absolutely stunning."

Eckville mayor Helen Posti stated "this was a great thing for the community overall."

In a message published in the Winter 2009 AjaKaja, Mellisa expressed excitement at the possibility of standing on top of the podium at the Vancouver Olympics in 2010

The Alberta Estonian Heritage Society wishes Mellisa continued success in realizing her dream. Twentynine-year-old Mellisa is a 5th generation Canadian with Estonian roots.



Wikipedia.org

Mellisa Hollingsworth

ÜhesHingamine 2009

Song Festival, Tallinn, Estonia

Susan Kenzle, Austin, Texas

Two Alberta-born ladies of Estonian heritage, Alice and Susan Kenzle, travelled to Tallinn, Estonia in July, 2009 to attend the 25th Song Festival (*Laulupidu*). Alice Kenzle (nee Moro) grew up in Eckville; she is the daughter of August and Lily Moro¹. This was the two Kenzle's third trip to Estonia in recent years. The trips were taken to research their southern Estonian² roots and experience contemporary Estonia. This was their first song festival.



Photo: Susan Kenzle

Alice and Susan Kenzle in Tallinn.

The theme of this national song and dance celebration was *ÜhesHingamine* (To Breathe as One). It was a good occasion for unity of the nation in a time of difficult economics. Given the huge crowd at the festival grounds it seemed to us that the entire Estonian nation had turned out for the celebration. Indeed, the Estonian newspaper *Õhtuleht* proclaimed after the event, "Kõigi aegade suurim pidu!" (Biggest ever Celebration), with 153,900 reported attendees to the three-day-long song and dance event. This figure did not include the 26,430 singers or the 7,460 dancers. It was an event of impressive magnitude.

The festival officially started on Thursday, July 2 with a free Folk Music Celebration in Tallinn's Old Town Hall Square and the arrival of the "celebration flames" to the ferry port. The celebration flames are like the Olympic torch, their arrival initiates the celebration and they burn on top of a tower at the *Lauluväljak* (Song Festival Grounds) until the last song.

¹ August Moro was born in Sõmerpalu, Estonia and immigrated to Canada with his parents, Karl and Marie Moro, in 1902. The spelling of the name Moro was adopted after immigration. The original Estonian spelling of the name is Murro.

² The Murro Family has a long history in Sõmerpalu, Võrumaa which the author has been researching.



Photo: Õhtuleht, July 6, 2009

Crowded Song Festival grounds



Photo: S. Kenzle

Song celebration in Old Town, Tallinn.

Friday, July 3rd was the first of three dance celebrations, none of which we attended unfortunately. Saturday was the first of the two song celebrations, preceded by a five-hour-long festival parade. The Celebration Flames led the parade, in which groups from all over the country sang and danced their way from downtown to the Song Festival Grounds, about 6 km away. There were no floats as you would see in a typical North American parade; mostly it was groups of singers and dancers in their colorful, traditional costumes, preceded by flags and banners announcing their affiliations. Groups from outside Estonia were in the parade too, with a large Canadian contingent mainly from Toronto and Hamilton, but at least 20 people from Vancouver also and maybe others we missed. Large and small Canadian flags flew among the ubiquitous Estonian tricolor flags. It was a strong expression of national pride.

We watched much of the parade, hoping to see folks from Sõmerpalu in Southern Estonia where my grandfather was born. We left before the parade finished, so we could go to the

song grounds. As we were walking down Narva Mnt. paralleling the parade route (buses weren't running due to the parade) we finally saw the participants from Sõmerpalu and Urvaste, and actually walked beside them part of the way.

After reaching the Grounds shortly before 7 p.m. we headed for our seats which were three rows from the front and near the "stage" which is a huge concrete shell with risers. The stadium is built in a bowl that rises up towards the rear allowing people seated on grass at the back to get a good view. Outside the stadium there were many tents housing vendors selling all



Photo: S. Kenzle
Sõmerpalu Pühajõe Lastekoor in parade.

kinds of food and souvenirs. The area outside the stadium was packed, making it difficult to walk around or get food or drinks during the performance.

The evening's performance did not begin for over an hour after the stated time of 7 p.m. because the parade was still filing through the front of the stadium. Following that was the



Photo: S. Kenzle
Salmon vendor at Song Festival Grounds

lighting of the Celebration Flame atop the stadium's tower. This involved the torch holder taking the flames up the tower stairs, stopping at each level to reveal the flame through a window. The crowd cheered excitedly every time the flames appeared through a window in the tower.

Estonia's President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves made a speech. We were surprised to see that he and his family (and other

dignitaries) were sitting mere rows away without a posse of armed guards as you would see in North America.



Photo: S. Kenzle
Celebration Flame on tower at Song Festival Grounds.

Photographers in the aisle next to us were snapping a photo of the President's every movement. He even signed some autographs and shook hands with some of the singers during a break.



Photo: S. Kenzle
President Ilves shakes hands with singers.

There were 28 songs performed the first night, each directed by a different conductor who led the singers or orchestral groups from a raised platform in front of the stage. After each song a little flower girl or boy ran up the stairs of the platform to present a bouquet of flowers to the conductor. The number of performers changed throughout the evening, starting with 24,705 singers and decreasing to 446 later. The choirs contained people of all ages—from small children to seniors—and genders, mostly decked out in their elaborate

region-specific costumes. We even saw one fellow in a kilt, an Estonian-Scotsman we guessed.

It was quite an event to see the changing of the choirs, as people streamed on and off the steps of the “stage” as quickly as they could. Considering the numbers of performers it was an amazing feat of organization and choreography. Remarkable too was the high quality of the sound in the 50-year-old stadium.

We were also astonished by the length of the event. The singers who had just endured five hours of marching seemed to have endless energy as they proceeded to sing well into the night. We have no idea what time the first song celebration ended as we were tired, cold and wet from rain, and left for the hotel around 11 p.m. As all the buses were packed to the bursting point we decided to walk the 6 km back to our Old Town hotel.



Photo: S. Kenzle

Spirited conducting at the Song Festival.

The second and final song celebration was on Sunday, beginning at 2 p.m. During the next approximately six hours the various choirs performed 38 songs. Around 8 p.m. the celebration flame was extinguished and the large, raucous crowd of singers and festival attendees cheered, sang, and waved flags. It was truly an emotional experience to see so much pride and joy at such a large, peaceful gathering.

As we left the crowded stadium thousands of singers were still singing. It seemed that they did not want the party to end. A happy but weary crowd of festival goers left the stadium and streamed down Narva Maantee, in reverse of the parade a day before, closing down the highway to vehicles, and signaling the end of the *Laulu-* and *Tantsupidu* for another five years.

Susan Kenzle is a native Albertan presently living in Austin, Texas where she works as a Landscape Architect. She is currently researching her Estonian heritage in Alberta and Estonia. She has been able to trace the Murro family back to the end of the 1700s in Southern Estonia.

Tallinn, Estonia Scores Again Amongst World’s Cleverest Cities

In terms of studies about the world’s most intelligent cities, Tallinn came in the top 7 for the third year running. Canada was the only country to have two representatives in the top 7, whereas Stockholm kept up its typically good performances. The intelligence is measured in terms of the city’s relationship to information technology. Seven most intelligent world communities have been recently chosen among 400 cities by independent think tank Intelligent Community Forum.

The ICF is an organization that measures the intelligence of a certain community on the basis of its relationship towards information technology, particularly broadband and the Internet. The top 7 intelligent communities of 2009 are Bristol, Virginia, USA; Eindhoven, Netherlands; Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada; Issy-les-Moulineaux, France; Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada; Stockholm, Sweden; and Tallinn, Estonia.

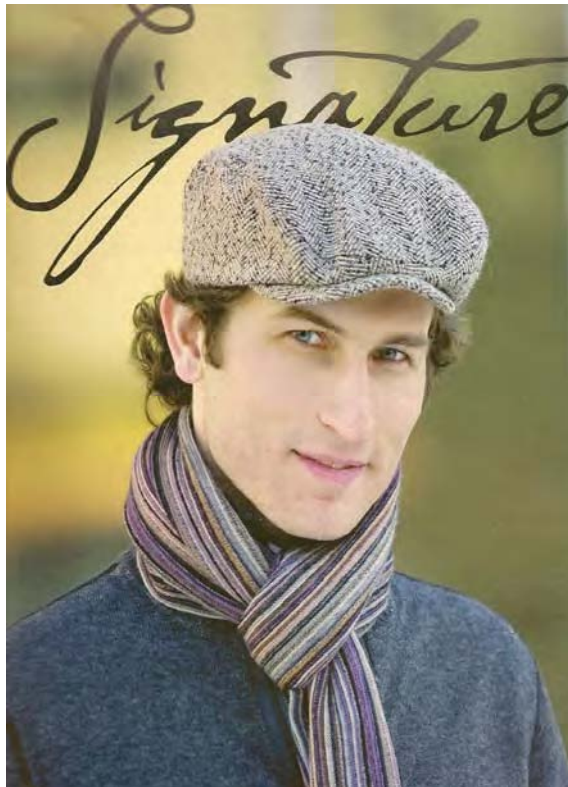
Many of the top scorers were typically from the richest countries in the world, such as the USA, Sweden, Canada and France. However, despite its reputation of being stuck in the gloom and doom of Eastern Europe and in the freezing Baltic, Tallinn came out as one of the winners.

Major contributions to the Estonian capital’s success were the Ülemiste University and the Cyber Defence Centre. There is also the fact that, mostly young people tend to use technological services such as hotspots and broadband. Tallinn is renowned for having older users. The research and technology status of the city is second to none in that area of Europe and mobile applications and e-services are currently on the rise.

Experts have named Tallinn the centre of ‘smart business’ and often praise the fact that so much is developed there. It has also been stated in many places that the Estonian capital should improve its marketing skills to ensure the findings of the ICF are well known in Europe and other areas of the world. This could do wonders for the possibility of technology tourism in Estonia.

www.tourism-review.com

ESO features conductors Eri Klas and Lucas Waldin



ESO's Signature magazine cover

Welcome!

It is with great pleasure that Lucas Waldin is introduced to the Edmonton community as the ESO's new Resident Conductor!

Since his arrival in late summer 2009, Lucas has appeared frequently in ESO programs and has caught the attention of local press and fans. He was described in the *Edmonton Journal* as the "young blood on the podium", a "tall, lanky fellow with a pleasingly dry sense of humour." Lucas has also made the press with his athletic pursuits. He is a competitive triathlete and says conducting is "like swimming in the air, like a maestro doing laps."

This young Toronto-born conductor comes from a musical family with Estonian roots on his father's side. Since his arrival he has endeared himself to Edmonton's Estonian community. His rising career in his 'adopted' city and family will be followed with keen interest

Welcome Lucas!

Eri Klas conducted the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra on November 19 and 20, 2009, with presentations of Beethoven's "Emperor" and his latest release, Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*-An Orchestral Tribute.

Eri is a native of Estonia and has appeared in many North American, European and Asia centres. Edmonton Estonians, members of the ESO, and friends were delighted to meet Eri at a post-concert reception hosted by Eda McClung. With his engaging wit he shared his background and wealth of musical experience, Eri is representative of the outstanding musical talent produced by Estonia.

His appearance as guest conductor of the ESO was much appreciated by members and friends of the AEHS. Eri expressed interest in a return visit to Edmonton as guest conductor and continued association with the city's Estonians.

His interest in working with young conductors was evident in his warm acknowledgement of Lucas's career.



Eri Klas at post-concert reception

The 2009 Estonian Song and Dance Festival in Tallinn

Helgi Leesment, Calgary, AB

Have there ever been so many Albertans or former Albertans of Estonian heritage in Estonia at once? Two years ago there were fourteen at dinner at the Golden Piglet restaurant, but this summer's Estonian Song and Dance Festival attracted over thirty. About twenty people from BC, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec met, chatted and reminisced at the lively Alberta gathering on the warm and sunny Canada Day July 1 at Raekoja Plats = Town Hall Square in Tallinn. A few others were unable to be present, or were unfortunately unaware of the gathering. A Tallinn relative of an Albertan was the most visibly loyal person there, cheerfully waving three large flags: Canadian, Estonian and Albertan.

Among the Albertans were four members of the Leew family (anglicized version of the original name Liiv). For 93 year old Alexander, born in Stettler in 1916, this was his first trip to Estonia. He and his three children were all impressed with the festival, the Old Town and the islands. Despite a long-ago loss of all family records and photos in a flood, on this trip they were able to gain some understanding as to their parents' and grandparents' origins in the Pärnu area - an additional worthwhile achievement for this family.



Photo: Helgi Leesment

Group of Alberta Estonians in Tallinn's Town Hall Square, July 1, 2009

We all were among 1000 visiting Canadians of Estonian heritage this July. About 500 turned up late afternoon July 1 to take in a short Canada Day ceremony. Canadian Ambassador to Estonia Scott Heatherington, based in Riga, Latvia, read a brief speech in commendable Estonian. Estonian president Hendrik Ilves and his wife were in attendance as he

too has a Canadian connection, having attended university and lived in Vancouver and Toronto.

Then it was on to the big musical event - Laulupidu and Tantsupidu - Song festival and Dance festival and the parade.

The dancers and gymnasts presented a "sea"- based theme on the grass of an outdoor stadium close to downtown Tallinn. Estonian folk dances were presented by thousands of dancers in a variety of national costumes, forming at different times straight and curved lines, circles of many sizes, at one point surrounding a large sailboat; all the while doing elegant footwork or quick changing partner work. One of the highlights was a map of the country formed by rhythmic gymnasts of all ages from teens to pensioners. Another was an elaborate spiral of hundreds of dancers which kept spinning while tightening AND moving across the field - a feat requiring high levels of spatial and timing skills. During the entire dance performance, no one got lost on the field, not even any of the young children.

Ah, yes, the parade. All 26,251 singers plus their directors, all 7460 dancers and gymnasts plus their leaders, and hundreds of government officials from all levels marched in the parade from downtown Tallinn out to the Song Festival grounds in perfect sunny weather. Also 60 musical bands. Foreigners were given the place of honour at the front of the parade; thus we saw the Torontonians and Vancouverites, including several former Albertans among those choral and dance groups. One former Albertan marched with the Tallinn civic officials as a special guest of honour in the last section of the parade; that is the host city's traditional position. This parade was happily interactive in nature: spectators called greetings and marchers enthusiastically responded. Unfortunately, the parade was so long, that the start of the first song concert was delayed by nearly two hours as the marchers continued crossing the performance area, the official end point of the parade. That has never happened before.

Many readers of this article have attended an Estonian national Song Festival and/or have seen the 2007 film *The Singing Revolution*. Thanks in part to that film, ever more non-Estonians are now getting caught up in Song Festival fever. Among the 804 participating choirs, 41 were from outside Estonia's



Photo: Helgi Leesment

View of the front of the Song and Dance Festival parade, Tallinn, 2009

borders. For example, one choir from Spain had no connection with Estonia or Estonians at all, except that the members very much wanted to participate in this concert and had learned the songs and pronunciation well enough to be among the selected.

The July 4th Saturday evening concert at the Song Festival bowl had an audience numbering well over sixty- thousand, which dwindled noticeably as the rain came down. Had the start been punctual, the performance would have been over by the time the weather turned unpleasant. Nonetheless, that concert was magnificent, focusing partly on Estonian music and partly on famous classics. The sound of 15,000 adult voices forming the massed choir thrust its energy into the first set of songs, followed by various combinations of men's and women's select choirs. Among the traditional pieces were Lüdigi's *Koit* and Nerep's *Call, Cuckoo Bird*. The operatic numbers also were definitely worth the damp wait - *Gypsy Chorus* from Verdi's *Troubador* and a selection from Orff's medieval themed *Carmina Burana*.

Next day's concert attracted over 100,000 audience members, heralded as the largest ever. The

instigators of the first Laulupidu in 1869 in Tartu could not have imagined such participation 140 years later. However, their original idea of choral singing of traditional songs as an integral expression of Estonian culture, continues to be valid as proven by the concert on the cool, sunny Sunday afternoon of July 5th, 2009. 1700 wind instrumentalists started the event followed by combinations of boys', men's, girls', women's and massed choirs. Works by well known Estonian composers including U. Sisask, V. Tormis and R. Valgre were on the program. There were new and old humorous, playful, contemplative and traditional selections such as *Let's get going, men*, *What's behind the forest?*, *Yearning for home*, *Men and women*. Gustav Ernesaks' *My native land is my love* brought everyone to their feet according to Estonian Song Festival tradition and as highlighted in the film *The Singing Revolution*. When all the singers tried to gather for the grand finale, they did not fit onto the huge stage. They spilled over into the seating area, forming an unintended yet symbolic unity with the appreciative audience. The vocal power of 26,251 united singers makes for a unique, rich, utterly unforgettable experience.

Albertans at West Coast Estonian Days, Seattle 2009

Helgi Leesment, Calgary, AB

Is Alberta considered part of the West Coast? For purposes of the West Coast Estonian Days festival, the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society is a full fledged member of the Estonian League of the West Coast = Eesti Organisatsioonide Liit Läänerannikul = EOLL.

Albertans of Estonian heritage enjoyed a few days of getting in touch with their roots in Seattle, Washington August 26-29. This is the 29th time the West Coast Estonian Days have taken place. The festivals started in San Francisco in 1953 moving to Los Angeles in 1955, Portland in 1957, San Francisco in 1959 and for

the first time in Canada, in Vancouver 1961. Since then, the Estonian communities in those cities plus Seattle have taken turns hosting the event, once every two years.

While a smattering of Albertans have attended many of the West Coast Estonian Days festivals over the decades, two years ago, 2007 was the first time Alberta made a major impression with our Reader's Theatre play outlining a pioneer Estonian family's story and with the world premiere of our DVD *Alberta's Estonians*. We followed through this year. Nearly a dozen Albertans partied, purchased, souvenirs, dined, attended concerts



Alberta visitors to WCED in Seattle on boat cruise from the Salmon BBQ at Kiana Lodge

and academic presentations in Seattle. Among the first time Alberta attendees were Astrid Ustina, Stephanie Ustina (former Albertan), Laura Bakken, Rein & Jan Paasuke. Among the veterans were Eda McClung, Jüri & Helle Kraav, Dave Kiil, Peter & Helgi Leesment. Most of the events took place on the campus of the University of Washington which was celebrating its 100th year of the Scandinavian Studies Program and the 15th year of the Baltic Studies Program. These themes were woven into some of the

festival events. Particularly noteworthy was the University Library's large display dedicated to Estonian Song Festivals.

For the second time in its 29 year history, an Albertan was part of a major presentation at an Estonian West Coast Days festival. At the Thursday morning session, Dave Kiil presented a well received overview of Alberta Estonian history, enhancing it with PowerPoint illustrations. He was in the company of Maie Barrow of Australia, Dr. Guntis Smidchens of the Baltic Studies

Program at the University of Washington, and Aho Rebas of Tallinn, Counsellor to the Minister for Population and Ethnic Affairs, and mediator between the Estonian Government and Estonians abroad, as well as coordinator of the Fellow Countrymen Program implementation. As the AEHS had recently received final approval for a major grant from the Estonian government, Aho Rebas' speech on "Estonians abroad and the implementation of the Fellow Countrymen Program" dealt precisely with our grant application process. During his presentation he referred to Alberta several times as a positive example of how the Estonian government grant process benefits many aspects of society inside and outside Estonia.



Astrid and Stephanie Ustina on a boat cruise during West Coast Estonian Days in Seattle

Among the other highlights of the 2009 West Coast Estonian Days were the concert by a professional fivesome song-and-comedy team from Tartu (Kaunimate Aastate Vennaskond = (Brotherhood of the Best Years of Our Lives), a boat cruise to a wonderfully floral picnic site operated by a local First Nations band, and an excellent Song and Dance Concert in a modern theatre with good acoustics. In the past, the conductors of the choral songs have been Estonian, with an occasional guest not of Estonian descent. This year, the statistics were turned. The choral segment of the main concert featured four non-Estonian conductors: veteran Lonnie Cline from Oregon, Terri Johanson from Vancouver, Giles Buser-Molatore also from Oregon, and University of Washington student Andrew Schmidt who is enhancing his music Master degree by learning the Estonian language because of the prominence of Estonian songs in the choral world. The other three conductors were

USA Estonians: Kati Tamm, Dr. Taavo Virkhaus and Helve Kalman. The printed program offered English translations of most of the songs.

First timer Stephanie Ustina's impressions of the Festival:

"Mom and I had a great time at this year's LEP in Seattle. Everywhere we turned we were met with friendliness and organization. It just didn't stop! Starting with the young musician who opened the door for us and the welcome desk and envelopes filled with tickets and map and every need to find our way around the university campus. We loved meeting everyone from so many parts of North America -- learning about their lives and hearing their stories. Friendly faces, the musical lilt of the Estonian language, celebratory meals and the special Estonian meal, the song and dance festival night, singing on the boat trip.

We remember it all with affection, but for me what really made the entire event special was the band from Estonia. They really carried the day. Not only did they entertain us all with everything from jokes and rollicking polkas to folk music, but they also joined in during informal moments, sitting with the rest of us when they weren't on stage, making for a very rare and special experience, for many of us, of meeting fine performing artists from afar.

Our hearts were opened so much with all the singing and dancing, especially those magical moments on the lawn at the Salmon BBQ when we all joined in a huge circle on the grass to dance and sing, that our hearts were heavy when it came to leave -- but only for a moment, for soon we were singing again, and when I went to bed the music and singing were still ringing in my ears. Thanks to everyone who worked so hard to organize. It couldn't have been better!"

Stephanie's mother Astrid Ustina comments:

"The welcome mat was out to greet and direct us for the first time attendees. I thoroughly enjoyed socializing and immersion into the Estonian culture. Personally I was happy to speak Estonian as it was my first language. I was even questioned as to when did I come to America? The presentations were most interesting. With the luck of the draw, we sat with the Estonian band members at the Ball. The Song and Dance presentation was excellent. The last day at Seattle we took in the Salmon BBQ, a three-hour boat ride to a Lodge with beautiful grounds and flowers. There we were treated to Salmon feast followed by music and dancing on the lawn. What a great event."

The next West Coast Estonian Days will be hosted by the Estonian community at Portland, Oregon in 2011, specific dates to be announced.

Introduction

Families in Alberta's third-largest Estonian pioneer community, Barons, hosted immigrant families as they begin new lives in Canada. The following three articles describe new beginnings for the Ruus, Silverton and Weiler families.

IVAR AND ALLAN RUUS

Lea Ruus, Calgary, AB

Harry Ruus, born December 15, 1900 in Tartu, Estonia, graduated with a law degree from Tartu University and had a successful practice in Tallinn, Estonia. In 1926 he married vivacious and beautiful Irma Mamers.



Ruus family collection

Harry and Irma Ruus in Tallinn, 1926

Son Allan was born in 1928, Ivar in 1931. Estonians reveled in their long fought for freedom, achieved in 1918. Life was wonderful. The young couple led a glamorous social life. Happy summers were spent on Estonia's pine clad sandy beaches at Klooga. Winter Sundays were spent cross-country skiing at Rahumäe with their two sons.

All of this came to an end in 1940 when the Soviet Army occupied Estonia. In early 1941 the government in Moscow ordered the deportation or execution of prominent, leading and well-educated Estonians. Harry Ruus escaped by hiding in the boggy woods of Estonia together with many other citizens.

Then, at the time of the March 9th 1944 devastating bombing of Tallinn, the family lost everything in the horrific fire. In September 1944 they escaped to Germany just ahead of the re-occupying Russian forces, later fleeing on foot from advancing Communist troops to western

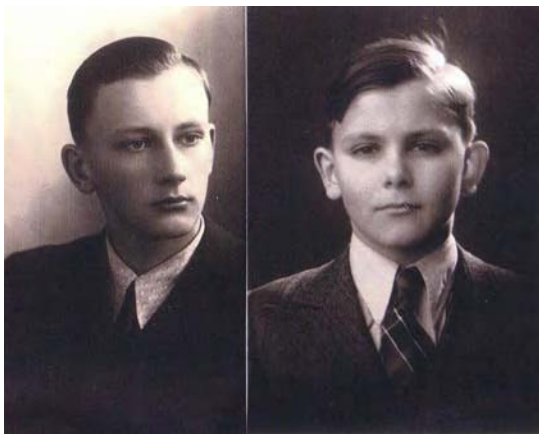
Germany. While in Germany, Allan briefly attended Bonn University. Ivar continued his education at a temporary Estonian language high school in what was then the British zone of northern Germany.

The Ruus family arrived in Quebec, Canada on June 7, 1949 as immigrants and immediately headed by train to Barons, Alberta where their distant relative Walter Silverton had guaranteed them work on his farm.

At that time, Walter Silverton was finishing the construction of his large two-story house in Barons. It was a lively place upon the Ruus's arrival. Aside of Walter and wife Lea's children, there were Lea's parents, Aleksander and Stella Weiler plus Lea's sister Asta Pakasaar with her two children. Lea's brother Rein Weiler with wife Marga and their three children lived close by. Allan and Ivar Ruus mostly slept in the bunkhouse in the field but joined the large clan for meals and family fun. All summer and fall, Allan and Ivar worked in the fields, long dusty days. In winter they moved to the nearby town of Taber working for the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) as assistant surveyors, at times in -30° C and -40° C weather. They continued this job until September 1950 when both enrolled at the University of Alberta engineering program.

Meanwhile, Harry and Irma Ruus worked for various farmers in the Barons area, Irma mostly as a cook. She also worked at the Barons Hotel baking pies. In winter 1949-1950, Harry and Irma moved to the Silverton's old farm house where they tended the cattle and poultry kept there. In May 1951, Harry tragically passed away of a heart attack. Irma decided to move to Edmonton to be with her two sons. There she held a job as clothing alterations specialist for a dry cleaning company and participated in the social life of the local Estonian community. In

1957 Irma Ruus moved once again to be close to one of her sons, Allan; this time to Calgary. After a year of intense training at three different hospitals, in 1958 Irma was awarded a nursing aid diploma and worked at the Colonel Belcher Veterans Hospital until her retirement.



Ruus family collection

Allan and Ivar Ruus, ca 1944

The two sons supported themselves through university by their summer job earnings, surviving on tight budgets. Time permitting, together with Irma, they were part of Edmonton's Estonian social group. Among other activities, there were summer outings to Sandy Beach. Allan and Ivar participated occasionally in the local Estonian folkdance group.

In February 1947 Leduc oil well #1 blew in and started a booming oil industry in Alberta. It was an exciting time and young engineers wanted to be part of it. Drilling rigs and pumps dotted the Alberta landscape.

Allan Ruus, who had attained a degree in civil engineering, started his career with Gulf Oil and was posted to Stettler area operations, reaching as far westward as Bentley. Allan oversaw Gulf Oil operations out of the Stettler production office, with a year's break at the Calgary office. Stettler had a lively social life. There Allan met the love of his life, Rosemarie, whom he married in 1962. Their daughter Kirsten was born in 1963 (she graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Calgary in 1985). In 1967 Allan was posted to Turner Valley with the firm Western Decalta which transferred the family to Calgary in 1974. Allan and Rosemarie were

active participants in the Calgary Estonian parties where they especially loved to dance.



Ruus family collection

Rosemarie, Kirsten and Allan Ruus, 1985

Younger brother Ivar's career with Texaco Exploration took him to remote locations, including the Dawson Creek - Ft. St. John area. One afternoon on his way to a drilling site, his car slid off the muddy road into the ditch. Ivar proceeded a couple of miles on foot, grabbing his camera, all the while listening to the hissing sounds made by a lynx tracking him in the bushes. Night driving on northern roads was especially hazardous. One night, rounding a sharp bend, Ivar hit a deer that was crossing the road. The year 1955 saw Ivar in the Bonnie Glen - Mulhurst area where one of the oil wells had a blowout and caught fire. Ivar was part of the crew extinguishing the fire and bringing the well under control. A posting to Calgary followed and in 1956 Ivar drove to Toronto to marry his longtime girlfriend Lea Ernesaks. They had met years earlier in Germany.

Oil was discovered in the Pembina-Drayton Valley area in 1953. By 1957 Ivar was transferred to the Texaco field office in the village of Cynthia, which consisted of ten houses, a trailer court, a service station with a Chinese restaurant and office space. Bears wandered through the village looking for garbage. Children and cars regularly got mired in mud, roads became impassable at spring breakup and after heavy rain. Cynthia is 40 miles west of Drayton Valley and 23 miles south of the Edmonton-Jasper highway. For groceries and doctor, the Ruus's drove two hours to Edmonton.

In 1960 Ivar started working for Skelly Oil Company and the family moved to Edmonton.

There the small group of Estonians met frequently and celebrated special anniversaries with Estonian food. Every Christmas “veri vorstid” (blood sausage) and rye bread arrived from Estonian shops in Toronto. Estonian clergy came from other provinces to conduct church service.

Declining a move to the United States, Ivar instead accepted employment with the National Energy Board in Ottawa in 1967. The family quickly became part of the Estonian club in Ottawa. They met then prime minister of Canada, John Diefenbaker at an Estonian Independence Day commemoration event.

By 1968 Ivar decided to return to private industry, accepting the position of Chief Engineer with Great Plains Development Company which was absorbed into Norcen Energy Resources in 1975. Ivar’s last appointment was manager of heavy oil operations at Norcen Energy. Ivar also obtained a Management Diploma from the University of Calgary and is a member of APEGGA (Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists, and Geophysicists of Alberta).

Calgary was such a vibrant place in the late 1960’s and 1970’s. Tall buildings were rising downtown, new restaurants mushroomed, entertainment blossomed. Members of the Calgary Estonian community met often for special days and social functions. The well loved “rosolje” (beet salad), herring, “sült” (jellied meat) and other cold cuts and fish were always present. An annual community fund-raiser sold “vastla kukleid” (sweet puffy buns filled with whipped cream) baked by Irma Ruus, the ever popular cranberry drink (years before this juice became available in Canadian grocery stores) and many other food items provided by Estonian members. Lea Ruus managed these annual displays and sales for a few years.

In 1986 Ivar Ruus took early retirement following a heart attack. He continued to do some consulting for a few more years. At that time, Ivar and Lea’s oldest son Allan, born 1958, was a graduate engineer working on his MBA degree; middle son Mark, born 1960 was a chartered accountant and youngest son Alexander, born 1964 was a graduate engineer working for Chevron. Alexander obtained his MBA in 1992 and works in investments. Family, travels and nine grandchildren keep Ivar and Lea Ruus busy.

The families pursue many sports; Ivar golfed and hiked into his mid-seventies.



Ruus family collection

Ruus family, 2008. Standing: Ivar, Lea; sitting: Allan, Alex, Mark

In 1960 Irma’s mother, Alberta Mamers, joined the Ruus family from Estonia. Those two generations have since passed on. It is disappointing that both older generation family members did not live to see Estonia re-gain its independence.



Watercolor by Lillian Munz, Calgary, 2009

ALEKSANDER WEILER

Roland Weiler, Toronto, Ontario

Aleksander Weiler played an instrumental role in the creation of the Estonian republic and in its War of Independence in 1918 - 1920, in its politics after the war and in founding and building up the largest newspaper publishing enterprise in Estonia between the two world wars. World War II ended his publishing enterprise in Estonia as he and his family were forced to escape the Communist takeover of Estonia, first to Finland, then to Sweden in 1944. He re-established his journalistic career, first in Sweden, then in Canada, founding the Estonian weekly *Meie Elu* in Toronto in 1950. His untimely death at the age of sixty-three put an end to the resumed career as well as to the many services he rendered to the Estonian displaced persons community in Canada.



Photo: Roland Weiler

Alexander Weiler in Sweden, ca 1946

He was born in 1887, the son of a gardener on an estate in Estonia, then part of the tsarist Russian Empire. Leaving school at 15, he worked as a smith, then a machinist and electrician. His

career in journalism began already at the age of twenty, when he became the editor of a periodical. The Russian tsarist regime jailed him as a leftist representative of workers and for his writings. After his release, he was one of the founders of a daily in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. The paper's editor was Konstantin Päts, later the first president of the Republic of Estonia. From 1914 to 1917, he worked as news editor and war correspondent. During the Germans' occupation of the Baltics from February to November, 1918, he was active in the underground Estonian provisional government. At the start of the War of Independence in November, 1918, against the Communists in Russia, he recruited volunteers for an infantry battalion. At the same time, as a member of the Constituent Assembly, he was instrumental in passing the land reform laws of 1919, which confiscated the estates of the Baltic German landowners to create a relatively satisfied agrarian sector of small, individual family farmsteads. As one of the founders of the left-of-centre Labour Party, which was a leading political force in the early days of the Estonian Republic, he helped to found, in 1918, the publishing company *Waba Maa* (*Free Country*) and the newspaper of the same name which served as the Party's voice. Later, he was a member of the State Assembly (or parliament) until 1929, when, his chief interest being the newspaper business, he withdrew from active party politics. In the twenties and thirties, he, as publisher, made the *Waba Maa* newspaper and its associated publications, advertising and retail businesses into the biggest publishing concern in Estonia. He changed the traditional dull solidity of Estonian journalism by increasing the amount of news in the papers, sometimes of a sensational nature, and by including more photographs,

caricatures and illustrations. The most modern printing presses were bought and installed. The chairman of the board was Voldemar Päts, the brother of the Estonian President and married to Aleksander's sister, Johanna. Aleksander was also on the boards of several publishing and trade associations.

During World War II, the company was confiscated after the Communist takeover of Estonia in 1940. He was arrested and jailed but, because he was severely ill, was not taken to Russia with other prisoners in July of 1941. During the German occupation from 1941 to 1944, only papers approved by the Germans were allowed to be published. *Waba Maa* was not one of them. Under the direction of his son, the company functioned as a printing and bookbinding concern. Aleksander worked in the retail end of the business. In September, 1944, as the Russians were entering Estonia again, he and some of his family escaped by boat across the Gulf of Finland. The rest of the family had already left for Finland in February of the same year. Once together, they escaped by ship to Sweden the same month.

Aleksander continued his journalism trade at a newspaper in Sweden. At the invitation of his daughter, Lea, who had married Walter Silverton of Barons, Alberta and emigrated to Canada before the war, he and his wife Stella, whom he had married in 1909, came to Canada in 1948.

His organizing spirit and his belief that the Estonians in Canada could further their aims better by speaking with a single voice led him to coordinate the activities of the numerous existing Estonian clubs and organizations by initiating the formation of the South-Alberta Estonian Society. After his move to Toronto, he founded with others, in 1949, the Estonian Federation of Canada (Eesti Liit Kanadas - EKL). As its first the president, he assisted, through direct contact

with the Canadian government, the immigration of post-war Estonian refugees to Canada, amongst them coal miners and their families from Belgium.

Because of his backgrounds as a newspaper publisher, he, together with others, created the Estonian Publishing Company in Canada (Eesti Kirjastus Kanadas) and became the publisher of the weekly *Meie Elu (Our Life)* in the spring of 1950. His work was cut short by his untimely death in October of the same year, although the paper continued to be published for another fifty years.

Aleksander was followed to Barons in May, 1948, by his son, Rein, with his wife Marga and his three children - Roland, Hendrik and Merike. His daughter Asta and her husband and three children- Indrek, Reet and Helga followed as well as other Estonians from Sweden, whom Aleksander helped to immigrate. The older children attended school in Barons. Asta and her family soon moved to British Columbia. After Aleksander's death, his son and family moved to Toronto to continue the work at *Meie Elu*. Despite his death in January, 1952, his children went on to university and to post-graduate studies as did Asta's children. Today, they and their children and grandchildren live widely dispersed from British Columbia to Cairo, Egypt.



Roland Weiler is Aleksander Weiler's grandson. He graduated in chemistry from the University of Toronto and received his Ph.D. in oceanography from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Until his retirement, he worked for both federal and Ontario environment ministries. He is married and has two daughters and a son.

In Memory

Lea (Weiler) Silverton (1912-2008)

Silvia Silverton Marshall and Lillian Munz, Calgary, AB



Lea and Walter Silverton were among the several dozen Estonian families that lived in the village of Barons, Alberta, at various times since 1904. She passed away in 2009.

Lea was born in Tallinn in 1912, just before the turmoil of World War One and the struggle for Estonia's independence from Tsarist Russia and German landlords. Estonia became independent in 1918. Lea's parents were Stella Saksen and Alexander Weiler. Alexander owned two bookstores and was publisher of one of the main newspapers *Waba Maa*. Since his youth, Alexander was passionate about his country became a respected politician after independence was declared.

Alexander had two sisters: Johanna married Voldemar Päts, the artist brother of Konstantin Päts, who was president of Estonia for over ten years until 1940 when Estonia lost its independence once again. Alexander's other sister married Eduard Taska, a craftsman who made fine leather book covers, boxes and other items highly sought in Estonia and abroad.

Lea's mother, Stella, was an organizer of *Kodukäsitoo*, a handicrafts industry for war widows. Their weavings, embroidery and

other handicrafts were sold locally and exported to international craft shows and markets as far away as New York. This industry enabled war widows and their families to earn a living.

Lea, her brother Rein, and sister Asta enjoyed a happy life in a family interested in education, music and politics. Lea attended the commerce high school in Tallinn, and went to Switzerland to study to become a dietician. When she completed her studies, her father came to accompany her home and suggested that they travel via Vienna to visit relatives. Her two cousins, studying at the university, arranged a meeting of Lea and a Canadian born Estonian named Walter Silbermann, also studying at the University of Vienna. They were married in Estonia in 1933 when Lea was only 21. Walter's parents and twin brother had immigrated to Canada the previous year after spending 12 years in Estonia.

Already in 1934, the political situation in Europe was beginning to put fear in the hearts of many Europeans. Germany was again becoming a threat. The Weilers and the Silbermanns encouraged the newly weds to leave Europe and settle in Canada. Arriving by steamship and train, the young couple first settled on the large grain farm near Barons which Martin Silbermann created from prairie sod in 1905. Walter was born there and left for Estonia with his family in 1919. Lea, being raised in the cultural environment of Tallinn, was not accustomed to the lifestyle of people

working on a prairie farm. After taking agricultural courses at the University of Alberta, the couple decided to pursue business experiences in Calgary and Vancouver. Prior to WW II, Walter worked in Calgary with Crimean Estonian August Holtswell producing office furniture. (Walter and Ernest changed their surnames to 'Silverton'.) When the Second World War began, the Silvertons returned to the Barons farm because food producers were urgently needed for the war effort. Walter loved working the land and Lea totally supported him in this endeavour.

Walter and Lea soon built a home for their family in the village of Barons. Walter bought farmland and expanded his agricultural pursuits. By this time three children Mae, Silvia and Ernie had arrived to complete their family. Lea was a devoted mother but found time to drive the truck and combine the fields during harvest. She also did bookkeeping for the farm business and drove her children to Lethbridge for music lessons. In the community, Lea was involved with many organizations such as Scouts and Guides where she did instruction and testing in handiwork. She also joined Royal Purple, and Prairie Women's Institute (service organizations). She enjoyed badminton and being part of the Barons community.

In 1948, the Silvertons sponsored Lea's parents, the families of her sister and brother, as well as several Estonian friends to emigrate to Canada. After living in Barons for a year, working and learning English, these families re-settled to other areas of Canada. Alexander and Stella Weiler, along with Rein and Marga Weiler with their three children, moved to Toronto. Alexander and Rein became

involved with the Toronto Estonian newspaper named *Meiei Elu*. Asta and Ray Pakasaar and their three children moved to BC where Ray worked in the forest industry.

Lea was proud of her Estonian heritage and incorporated some of the customs in her family life. She attended several Jaanipaev celebrations in Eckville and continued to support her sorority, Filiae Patriae. Lea made one trip back to Estonia for a year-long visit with baby Mae in 1937. That was the last time she saw her beloved homeland.

When her children finished university in Edmonton and chose not to be farmers, Lea and Walter sold their farm in 1963 after living for 23 years in Barons. They moved to Victoria, and built their home near Cadboro Bay. They and soon became friends with other Estonians in the city and joined the newcomers' club. Their children and seven grandchildren were among their frequent visitors. Both widowed mothers, Stella Weiler and Lisa Silbermann, lived with them for a time. The Pakasaars lived in nearby Comox and Nanaimo.

After almost two decades at the coast, Walter passed away in 1981. Ten years later, Lea sold the house she first went to live with Silvia in Vancouver and then with Mae in Port Alberni in 1999. Lea passed away at the age of 96 on December 4, 2008, following a ten-year battle with Alzheimers.

Lea lived a long and productive life which presented many changes but she willingly embraced life in her husband's homeland. She will be remembered as a caring, generous, hospitable and gracious lady.

THE STONE HOUSE

Lea Linderman Sepp and Anita Linderman Madill, Calgary, AB

Introduction: This story was received in response to the stone house heritage quiz in Ajakaja Summer 2009.

The stone house built by George and Minnie Meer Mursa on their homestead near Foremost in south-east Alberta around 1910 was the ideal environmentally friendly structure. Utilizing readily available and locally abundant building material, it was a cool refuge from the blistering heat of a southern Alberta summer day and was insulated from the cold icy blast of winter. We can only speculate if it was the family's first dwelling and shelter for children Martin, Johnny and Linda until lumber ordered from BC and hauled by wagon from Warner arrived to build their large two-storey house. A dance floor was built in the grove of trees and every Saturday, weather permitting, the piano would be hoisted onto a wagon and moved out for the open-air dance. The stone house would be a centre for musicians and guests. The sauna was a special feature that continued to be enjoyed by subsequent owners into the 1950s. Unfortunately, the stone house was demolished to provide more crop land for a new land owner.



Photo: Linderman collection

Left to right: Rosalie Peetof Linderman, Bob Linderman, Johnny Mursa. The stone house is behind the large two-storey wooden house, ca 1925.

The Mursas were part of the Otto Meer family group of Estonian Crimeans who headed for America in the early 1900s when internal strife in Russia became unbearable. Settling originally near Fort Pierre, South Dakota, Otto and Mae (already in their 70s) along with their grown children John, Hans, Martin, Jacob, Eliza (Metz), Minnie (Mursa) and Helen, then moved to the Foremost area when homestead land opened up in 1909. The only family member to stay behind was daughter Anna Meer who had married John Linderman in Estonia. Anna's son and our father, Robert Linderman, would leave Estonia at

the age of 16 to join the family group and seek a better life.

A few miles from the Mursa stone house was a much smaller stone house on Martin and Katta Meer's homestead. This is the farm where we grew up. Dad bought the farm in 1928 when Martin and Katta relocated to the Seattle area. We stored perishables in the stone house in the summer and occasionally mother, Rosalie Peetof Linderman, would take refuge there from the blistering prairie summer heat. Lea recalls how hired men working on our threshing crews used to store their jugs of spirits in the stone house to keep the contents cool. One summer when Anita and Wally Madill were helping on the farm during university break, mother decided the old stone house which was deteriorating and unsafe needed to go. Wally recalls the back-breaking labour on a very hot July day when he and father-in-law Bob Linderman sledge hammered, crow-barred, muscled and hauled away those rocks; he still relishes the memory of the lemon-aide Rosalie brought out to cool the sweating workers.



The smaller stone house was built on the Martin and Katta homestead. It became the Linderman farm

When the typical pioneer's first structure was a sod shack, it is interesting that these Estonians built stone houses. This required unique skills and knowledge. It's unfortunate in the trend toward modernization that these rare vestiges of Estonian heritage were lost.

Members of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society extend their sympathy to the family and friends of Lea Linderman Sepp who passed away on September 11, 2009

Stone House Quiz Prize

Anita Madill will receive a copy of "Back on the Map: Adventures in Newly-Independent Estonia" by Marc Hyman for submitting this story.



Welcome to Barons
Wheat Heart of the West!
And the
Barons 2010
100-Year Celebration
July 9, 10, & 11, 2010



Main Street, 1920. Do you remember muddy streets?



Main Street, November 2008.

Barons became *Wheat Heart of the West* because farmers here were generally able to grow excellent crops. The weather seemed to cooperate with them, while in other areas crops were often not so good.

The Celebration program includes
the usual Sports Day Parade,
with antique cars & a band!
BBQ Dinner and Dance.
There will be special events, such as
a walking tour of the village,

photos of Main Street thru the years,
flashlight tours of the Cemetery,
Haunted Village Tour
fantastic food
a craft show and sale
kids games & adult games, *and MORE!*

Bring your memories – and make more!
July 9, 10 and 11, 2010
At BARONS

For Information AND registration forms, Contact:
Barons 2010: e-mail – baronshistory@baronsab.ca
Mail: Box 4, Barons, AB T0L 0G0,
Dee Ryrie (403) 643-2443
Betty Anne Turner (403) 757-2370
Barbara Gullickson (403) 757-2229
Celebration Choir, Martha Munz Gue 403.526.2226

Please let your family & friends know
OR give us their addresses and we will
contact them!

Web-site: barons2010.ca (in process)

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Marc Hyman, Seattle, Washington

Excerpt from Back on the Map: Adventures in Newly Independent Estonia.

Tallinn's white-brick-and-smoked-glass Communist Party Training Center was built in the mid-1980s in a prominent location in the city center, on the lovely, esplanaded Lenin Avenue, adjacent to the larger-than-life statue of Lenin himself, and just across from the eleven-story "White House," the headquarters of the Communist Party of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic.



But much had changed by the time I entered the scene on the first day of September in 1992. The avenue had been renamed Rāvala, the ancient Estonian name for the Tallinn region. Lenin had been hauled away

to a Communist statue graveyard, and the White House was now home to the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Estonia, and to the German and Danish embassies. The four-story Training Center, renamed *Sakala Center* after a national student society closely associated with the Estonian independence movement, now leased its modern premises to a number of private tenants, including my new employer, the Estonian Business School.

Like many Soviet buildings, *Sakala* had an imposing façade but an understated entrance that was built on a scale more appropriate to a much smaller building. The thinking seemed to be that the portion of the façade that condescended to make allowances for people's comings and goings must be its least significant. It felt as though the building were saying, I may have to let people in, but I don't have to like it.



Sakala Center as it appeared between 1985 and 1991

It was ten-forty on a mild, overcast morning, my first in Estonia. I found the door to room 218, the Estonian Business School's administrative office, near the end of a long whitewashed corridor. Inside all was chaos. Telephones were ringing, typewriters clacking, drawers being whooshed open and slammed closed. There were three women behind the reception desk, one cradling a telephone between her ear and shoulder as she sorted little gray booklets, another impatiently explaining something to a cluster of young men I took to be students, a third punching at a computer keyboard with her index fingers.

The large open-plan office had been divided into cubicles of varying shapes and sizes and in seemingly random positions. No light bulbs were illuminated, so the tall windows along the wall opposite the door provided the only light. I approached the front desk just as the woman with the booklets put down the telephone.

"I'm Marc," I said.

"Oh, hello Marc!" she said, "I'm Mare. I spoke to you on the phone yesterday. Did you have any trouble with the train?" I had phoned the school from Riga the day before to let them know I'd be arriving in Tallinn at midnight.

"No, none at all. Madis [the president of the school] was right there when I got off."

"See, I told you," she said playfully. She grinned and cocked her head from side to side, like a

Excerpt from
*Back on the Map: Adventures in Newly
Independent Estonia.*

Copyright 2009 by Marc Hyman
Published by Krimar Mustoli
International

schoolgirl in the glow of a teacher's praise. Mare appeared to be in her mid-20s and had a broad friendly face with big green eyes and high cheekbones.

"Madis is over there," she said, pointing toward the opposite corner of the room. Then the telephone rang again. Mare sighed, rolled her eyes apologetically, and picked it up.

I could sense people waiting behind me, so I stepped back from the desk and moved toward a tall bookshelf just to the right of the door. It held mostly English-language business textbooks. "You are Marc," said a female voice behind me, more direct and more strongly-accented than Mare's. I turned around.

"I am Lidia. Welcome," she said, and we shook hands. Lidia was the school's registrar. She was about ten years older than Mare and had sharp features, short sandy hair, and narrow but lively gray eyes behind round wire glasses. She smiled shyly, glancing down as soon as she met my eyes.

"Listen, Marc," she said abruptly, serious and businesslike, avoiding awkward pleasantries. "I have your class schedule. Come."

I followed her back to her desk, which shared a cubicle by the window with another desk and was covered with stacks of papers, and she began to sort through them. Then I heard my name again. It was Madis.

He was dappily dressed in a navy suit, and he approached me smiling with his hand held erect at his hip, like a pistol. I reached for it and we shook firmly.

"In some minutes we will go to meet the students," he said crisply. "You will make a speech. Not long, about two minutes. Just to introduce."

"A speech ...?" This was a surprise, and my mind was flooded with questions. I wanted to ask Madis about the nature of the meeting, its purpose, its tone, exactly what sort of speech he was hoping for, and so on, but he had moved away and a cluster of people had already formed around him.

A few minutes later a feeling of urgency seemed to sweep over the office, and we all marched out to a more luxurious wing of Sakala Center and into a well-appointed, tiered auditorium. It was cool, softly lit, and so plush that it was devoid of echoes and quiet even though it was filling with people. With students.

Eight of us were seated at the dais on the stage. I was placed somewhere in the middle, between two Estonians I hadn't met, while Madis sat at one end. Mare and Lidia and some of the other staff members sat down below, in the front row. As more and more students filed in, my heart began to beat faster and I pulled a note card from my pocket to sketch out my speech.



The original corner tower of Sakala Center is now incorporated into the design of the Solaris Center

The house lights dimmed and Madis stood up and began to speak. In Estonian. He talked for about five minutes, then introduced the woman beside him, and she stood up to speak. She in turn introduced other speakers. They all spoke in Estonian, and I couldn't understand a word. I sat upright and tried to appear dignified.

Eventually I heard my name embedded in a ponderous Estonian sentence. I glanced up and, sure enough, I was being introduced. The speaker sat down, and all eyes were on me.

I had been in Tallinn for less than twelve hours following a grueling forty-nine-hour rail journey from Berlin, and now, with little forewarning, was standing to address an auditorium full of expectant faces. Until four months earlier I had spent my workdays on the twentieth floor of a San Francisco skyscraper, making loans to big American companies, cruising along a neatly conventional MBA career path. And now that I'd made the radical decision to upend my cozy life and join in Eastern Europe's chaotic transformation, it began to dawn on me that I was not *merely* a participant. The

Estonian Business School was the first private business school to be established in the former Soviet Union, and I was its only full-time visiting instructor from the West. I was about to make my all-important first impression on the student body and I realized that, to them, I wasn't just a new faculty member; I was a representative of the United States of America, a symbol of free market capitalism, of the governing philosophy to which this small and vulnerable country had decided to tie its fate.

I'd better not blow it.

Marc Hyman lived in Estonia for five years. During this period he taught at the Estonian Business School and at Concordia International University Audentes, did consulting work for Hansabank, North Estonian Bank, Raebank, and Virumaa Commerce Bank, and served as Tallinn Bureau Chief for the Baltic Observer (now the Baltic Times) and as Managing Editor of the Baltic Business Leader.

He currently teaches accounting and business at Cascadia Community College in Washington, and is a member of the University of Washington's Baltic Studies Roundtable and of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies. He blogs about contemporary Estonia at EstoniaOnTheMap.com, and his accounts of day-to-day life in the newly independent Baltic States and Russia have been published in Crosscurrents, Yours Truly, and Europe Today

He lives in Seattle with his wife and son.

Back on the Map: Adventures in Newly Independent Estonia by Marc Hyman, available on www.amazon.com, \$10.95

Diplomatic Announcement

Rasmus Lumi and his family are departing Ottawa this November. He is being promoted to Consul General in St. Petersburg, Russia. The next Estonian Charge d'Affaires in Canada will be Riho Kruuv.

AEHS wishes both diplomats and their families in their new endeavors.

Estonian Pianos Among Top ten in the World

Estonia pianos constructed in Tallinn have risen to among the top ten pianos in the world thanks to their technical attributes and quality, reports America's authoritative ranking of pianos, Larry Fine's "Piano Book".

Piano technician and consultant Fine, in his most recent publication, ranks Estonia in the same position as Steinway pianos made in New York. In addition to Steinway and eight pianos built in Germany, one other American piano and a Japanese piano round out the top ten.

The owner of the Estonian piano factory, pianist Indrek Laul, recalls that 16 years ago Fine's "Piano Book" stated that Estonia was one of the lowest-quality pianos available on the American market. Eight years ago Estonia's grand piano ranked right in the middle, or 23rd place out of 44 pianos. *Editos note:* And now it has reached the upper echelons of the piano world.

Excerpt from Estonian Review, August 25, 2009

Estonians Rate Top Brands

The most highly-rated brands in Estonia are Kalev, Nokia, EMT, and A. Le Coq, it appears from a survey of TNS Emor pollsters. Of beverage makers, A. Le Coq, Saku and Coca-Cola were the top three brands.

Excerpt from Estonian Review, May 19, 2009

Pitka Monument unveiled in Fort St. James, B.C.

Juta Kitching, Vancouver, B.C. and Dave Kiil, Edmonton, AB



Rear Admiral Sir Johan Pitka, with his family and followers, immigrated to Canada and lived on the southwestern shore of Stuart Lake near Fort St. James, B.C.. The group arrived there in 1924. Over several years the members tried to earn a living in various ways but had

to go elsewhere for work and by 1932 the group had dissolved. Pitka and his family moved back to Estonia. It is believed that at least one family, the Andreksons, moved to Barons, Alberta; others settled in other parts of Alberta and B.C..

But they left a legacy, a fact which is evident in today's place names in the area, such as Pitka Mountain, Pitka Creek, Pitka Bay Resort, Paaren's Beach Provincial Park and Colony Point.

On August 3, 2009 this hero of Estonia's independence was honoured at the opening of the Spirit Square in Fort St. James. Officiating were Mayor Susan Harwood, B.C. MLA John Rustad and Col. Riho Terras, Undersecretary of the Estonian Ministry of Defence. Also present from Estonia were also sculptor Aivar Simson, who designed and made the bronze bas-relief of Pitka, and Mr. Peep Reisser from the Estonian Ministry of Defence. Mr. Urbel, the architect of the monument, was not able to attend.

The Pitka Monument shows on the front the head of the Admiral. On the right hand side is a text which summarizes the history of the settlement. The back of the pillar houses a time-capsule, which contains items of interest to Fort St. James history as well as Pitka, to be opened in 50 years. The left hand side will have another plaque listing the names of donors and supporters; contributions are still being accepted from organizations and individuals whose names will

be listed and therefore this third plaque will be prepared and placed later.

The Pitka Monument project arose in collaboration with the Society for the Advancement of Estonian Studies (Vancouver), the Estonian Ministry of

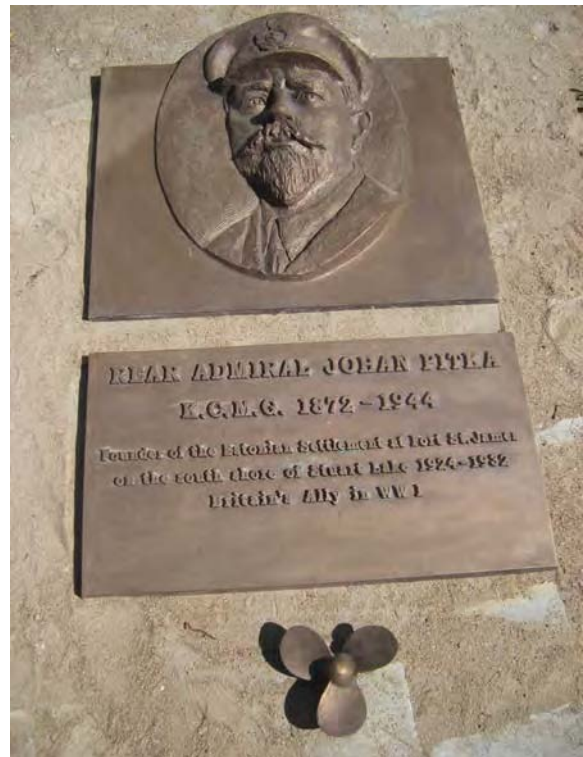


Photo: Juta Kitching

The front of the Pitka Monument

Defence, Friends of Fort St. James National Historic Site, and the District of Fort St. James, B.C. The Society is most grateful for additional help given by individuals and organizations.

Juta Kitching is the president of the Society for the Advancement of Estonian Studies, a retired university instructor in Linguistics, an avid champion for the promotion of educational and cultural values in Canada and the Estonian ethnic community, and has lived and taught in North America and Europe.

Lessons from Estonia: Protecting the West from a computer attack

Vaino Reinart, Tallinn, Estonia

The cyber attacks carried out against Estonia in the spring of 2007 served as a wake-up call about the potential damage that a large scale cyber attack can have on a highly wired country.

Estonia is a small nation that can't afford a large, complex government. Instead, we use IT to run our affairs. Ninety-eight percent of all bank transactions here are made electronically via the Internet. Estonians can vote online in local and national elections. More than 90% of taxes are filed electronically. And the Estonian government is paperless. All official documents are produced, adopted and published electronically.

Unfortunately, the more technologically advanced a country is, the more vulnerable it is to cyber attacks. But because the Estonian government kept the potential for cyber attackers in mind when we developed our e-services, we were able to repel the 2007 attacks without suffering any serious threat to our national security, while the private sector in Estonia suffered significant economic losses.

We also learned some important lessons. In response to the attacks, Estonia adopted a National Cyber Defence Strategy together with an Implementation Plan. One of the main principles is the importance of protecting the civilian critical information infrastructure. Since most of the infrastructure serving our basic daily needs is run by the private sector, it is the easiest target for attackers hoping to cause significant loss and affect our way of life.

The state has, therefore, partnered with the main IT actors in Estonia who are involved in both producing cyber defense policies and managing the cyber defense efforts. Our approach is aiming to bring together security analysts, technical experts, lawyers, diplomats and regulators in order to take into account all aspects of cyber security. This approach also helps us bridge the gap between cyber experts and policy makers.

Another important goal is increasing awareness and educating computer users. More than 60% of our population uses the Internet every day so we must start at the grass roots. We have launched targeted campaigns, used social marketing and implemented special programs. Priority target groups are home users, small- and

medium-sized businesses and system administrators. At the same time, we are offering training and education to policy makers and business executives. We have increased IT education in our universities as well as included computer safety classes in primary and secondary school curricula.

"We must build a defense from the ground up"

There is a lot of work to be done internationally. We have had some success in raising awareness among global policy makers, but we still need to work on that in order to be able to collectively address cyber threats without waiting for an inevitable cyber catastrophe to jolt us into action. And we should not limit ourselves to the club of technically well developed Western states. Our aim should also be to help some of the less developed countries where cyber attacks are not part of the criminal code and where there is no cyber attack response capability.

Internationally, we should focus on sharing best practices on protecting critical information infrastructure. We can all learn from each other. On the practical level, we should facilitate international incidence response and information sharing between our national agencies. We should also promote international enforcement mechanisms for adopting legal instruments to fight cyber crime. The best existing tool for that is the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, which Canada has also signed.

I firmly believe that cyber threats should not be allowed to overshadow the positive aspects of using information technology and the Internet. However, as open and pioneering societies, we must act together to bolster our cyber defenses against those who are intent on challenging our modern way of life.

National Post, October 22, 2009

"Fighting the Virtual War" is presented in collaboration with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), a Washington, D.C.-based policy institute focused on terrorism. Vaino Reinart is the ambassador of the Republic of Estonia to the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Scrap Metal and Estonian Brides

Rick Steves' Blog 'Gone Europe'

I spent a long day touring the Estonian countryside with my guide, Mati. It seems that the life and money are being sucked into the big city, Tallinn. Country people are moving there to work. The Estonian countryside seemed pretty dead enjoyed by holiday-makers and offering work to those who can telecommute.

The forests are thick, but the country is flat. Its highest "mountain" is under 1,000 feet, nicknamed "Big Egg Hill." The endless pine forests are carpeted by wild berries and mushrooms. It is part of the lifestyle to pick berries. Mati said, "We have many berries. If you are very sick, some can make you well. Others can kill you. We pick them now for the joy, but during communist times, we picked them because we needed the food."

The coastline is littered with souvenirs of Soviet occupation. Each little lip of land had a track for a gun and searchlight. The metal used to keep the Estonians down is everywhere. Estonia's first post-independence millionaires made their fortune selling scrap metal to the West. Today, Estonians enjoy their mellow, peaceful Baltic coastline, playing amid the ruins of their former prison.

History was tough even before the Soviet Union. If it wasn't the Russians, it was Germans...making life miserable around here. Until the mid-19th century, a good hunting dog was worth more than an Estonian peasant worker. And it was even tougher east of Estonia. In fact, the vast majority of Soviet movies set in past centuries were shot in Tallinn, Odessa, or Riga. These three towns were about the only ones from the former Soviet Union with an old

quarter that survived the tumult of the 20th century.

And there was nothing charming about the architectural heritage of the Soviet Union. Ugly buildings, which dominate most cityscapes, are just assumed to be "from communist times." Hotel Viru, long the only skyscraper in Tallinn, was an infamous Soviet hotel. Mati said that it was built of a new Soviet material: "micro-concrete, 60% concrete, 40% microphones."

Doing my research, I asked Mati about a good Italian restaurant. He said these days, Italian restaurants are common in Estonia...but no good. They're generally based on couples: Italian guy married to Estonian girl. His mom was a good cook, so they think, "Easy. Let's open an Italian restaurant." "It's always Italian boys and Estonian girls, not the other way around. Italian boys think Mediterranean women (Portugese, Spanish, Italian) don't age well. Let's face it: For this, God created the Catholic religion...so they can't divorce."

Mati explained his theory that Italian boys see Estonian women as the best bride material. They are the ideal Russian/Scandinavian/Estonian mix. Deep, poetic, and romantic like Russians. Free-spirited like Scandinavians, but without the problematic feminism of a Scandinavian. And the hands-on, can-do practicality of Estonians...the perfect woman.

Posted by Rick Steves on August 3, 2009.

<http://blog.seattlepi.nwsourc.comrickstevestrav el/archives/175293.asp>

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Times Online, November 8, 2009

Christmas Market in Tallinn's Town Hall Square

Tallinn's Town Hall Square named as the number one Christmas Square in Europe.

*Peaceful Christmas and a joyful New
Year!*

*Rahulikku jõuluaega ja rõõmurohket uut
aastat!*