



# Iltatähti

Evening Star



## Finnish Heritage House

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Finnish Heritage House  
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## Merry Christmas!

It's getting close to Christmas. The tori at the Finnish Heritage House is still open for a couple more weeks, on Saturday mornings from 9:00 am to 12 noon. The baked goods, pulla/nisu, doughnuts, cookies and fudge will still be available in the kitchen as well.

The tori has many Finnish crafted items. We sell hand-crafted birch bark Christmas ornaments, Finnish coffee and mustard along with several books written about local Finnish history and immigrants to the area. There are t-shirts and ball caps, hand carved wooden figurines, kitchen towels with hand knit hanger tops, CDs of Finnish bands and musicians, 2021 Finnish calendars with name days with Finnish and English spelling of the months and days, shopping bags and many more items.

## Hyvää Joulua!

### CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL! HAS YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRED?

If the date on the label is in red, it means your subscription has expired. Your name will be removed if you are more than two years overdue. We will send a notice when your membership has been expired for nine months. Newsletters will stop one year after expiration.





**Finlandia  
Foundation  
National**

**Anita Smiley is someone very important to us all!** She has served on the Board of Finlandia Foundation National for over 18 years and led our organization through a very critical and pivotal time during the Great Recession from 2009-2013.

During a 34-year period, Anita has organized 24 tours of Finland for Americans looking to learn more about the culture and for many to connect with their Finnish roots. Tour number 25 is ready to become a reality as soon as COVID-19 allows safe travel. These tours have created a greater understanding of Finnish history and culture, lasting relationships with new friends and family members, and made joyful memories that last a lifetime.

**To honor her work and achievements, the Finlandia Foundation National is now creating *The Anita Häkkinen Smiley Fund*** to help continue cultural exchanges between Finland and the United States. The Anita Häkkinen Smiley Fund will help fund travel for students doing research in Finland, help Finnish performers come to the United States, and fund other projects to strengthen the ties between our two countries. We continue to learn from one another.

**Through the *Anita Häkkinen Smiley Fund*, we will continue the important work that Anita has done throughout her life.** By supporting these cross-cultural ties, we ensure that future generations will discover, learn, and share our Finnish and American heritage and values.

As a friend of Anita, the Smiley family, and Finlandia Foundation National, please join us in supporting this fund with a gift of \$100, \$200, \$500, \$1,000 or any amount. **Your gift will be doubled, matched dollar-for-dollar by the Paloheimo Foundation** (to a maximum of \$100,000 annually). FFN is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, so your donation is tax deductible. You may make your gift safely online at [FinlandiaFoundation.org](http://FinlandiaFoundation.org), or mail your check to PO Box 92046, Pasadena, CA 91109. Please note that your gift is intended for The Smiley Fund.

**We hope you'll support Anita and honor the important contribution she has made to us all.**

With your gift, her legacy of hard work and building ties between Finland and the United States will endure for future generations.

Sincerely,

Anne-Mari Paster President

The Finnish Heritage House is a chapter of FFN. Many members of FHH have gone to Finland on Anita's tours.

## Great Christmas Gift Idea

A subscription to the **Finnish American Reporter** is a nice gift for people interested in the Finns in the United States. It features stories from all over the country and some from abroad. One of our members, Helvi Silverman, submitted a wonderful story in the October issue. It is a great monthly newspaper. For \$30.00 you will get 12 monthly issues delivered by mail to anywhere in the U.S. or \$40.00 delivered anywhere worldwide.

### SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Other Information \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your payment to:  
Finnish American Reporter  
P.O. Box 479  
Hancock, MI 49930

## *Pssst... Don't forget to get a few tickets for the Finnish doll raffle.*



This beautiful doll is on display at FHH. Tickets are \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. Kathleen Anderson, pictured, made the authentic Finnish costume and donated it.

The proceeds are going to the Finn-Am scholarship fund.



## Recipe Box

### Finnish Meatballs (Lihapyorykoita)



A favorite Finnish meal are these Lihapyorykoita (Finnish Meatballs) with Punajuuret (Beets), and Perunasose (Mashed Potatoes). Serve with cranberry sauce.

**Prep:** 20 mins **Cook:** 30 mins **Total:** 50 mins

**Servings:** 4

#### Ingredients

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 cup plain bread crumbs
- 1 yellow onion, minced
- 1 egg
- ½ cup whipping cream
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- ¼ cup butter
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups milk
- ½ cup whipping cream

### Directions

#### Step 1

Mix the ground beef, bread crumbs, onion, egg, cream, salt, and allspice in a bowl with your hands until evenly mixed. Roll the mixture into golf ball-sized spheres.

#### Step 2

Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook about half the meatballs in the melted butter until evenly browned on all sides, 5 to 7 minutes; remove to a plate and repeat with the remaining meatballs, keeping the liquid in the skillet when finished. Be gentle, they break apart easily.

#### Step 3

Sift the flour into the skillet drippings; cook the flour in the skillet drippings until brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Slowly stream the milk into the skillet while whisking vigorously; pour the cream into the mixture and stir until smooth. If you aren't good at making gravy and end up with some lumps you can pour the gravy through a strainer. Return all the meatballs to the skillet; stir to coat with the gravy. Bring the mixture to a simmer and cook until the meatballs are cooked through, 15 to 20 minutes.

I have added 1-2 teaspoon(s) of mustard to the gravy while cooking, for a little extra flavor.

Another serving option is, these meatballs go great over egg noodles as well.



# The original Finnish Christmas ornament – thisisFINLAND



**Koski says of himmelis that she “couldn’t imagine Christmas without them”. Photo: Emilia Kangasluoma**

The *himmeli*, a traditional Finnish holiday decoration made out of straw, remains popular today. We take a closer look at the ornament’s many forms and talk to himmeli maker Eija Koski.

Although the root of the word “himmeli” is Germanic – in Swedish and German *himmel* means “sky” or “heaven” – and different versions of this straw mobile can be found in other Nordic countries, the himmeli is considered the quintessential traditional Finnish Christmas decoration.

Back in the olden days, himmelis hung above dining tables to ensure a good crop for the coming year, and stayed on display from Christmas till Midsummer. The structure of a himmeli – especially a bigger and more complex one – is visually striking, with geometrical shapes made out of hundreds, or even thousands, of pieces of straw.

According to connoisseurs the best himmelis are made out of rye, the grain with the longest and sturdiest stems. A well-kept himmeli can last up to a hundred years. In modern interpretations, the materials vary from plywood to paper and even plastic straws. Recent years have seen a himmeli boom in Finland.

## The enchanted artist

Himmeli maker Eija Koski’s childhood memories go back to her aunt’s farmhouse in Finland’s Northern Savo region, where a himmeli was always on display for Christmas.

“I remember how I used to stare at the himmeli slowly swaying with the draft while the adults were just talking,” says Koski. “I became enchanted by it!” Twenty years later Koski went to a course on how to make a himmeli. “At that moment I just knew that this was my thing!”

Eventually she became a himmeli artist and she is currently fully dedicated to himmelis: She travels round the country teaching courses, she has shown her work in innumerable exhibitions and her book, *Himmeli* (published by Maahenki, 2012), is in its third printing.

According to Koski, the himmeli boom is part of the slow movement. “I think people are looking to reconnect with their heritage,” she says. “Artisanal handicrafts are becoming more popular.” Often the himmeli-making courses are attended by “urban-style youngsters, and not just women but also men.”

Koski, who lives in a farm near Vaasa, on the west coast of Finland, uses only organic rye from her own field to make her himmelis. She selects and hand cuts her own rye straws. Even though himmelis seem quite geometrical and architectural, “it’s easy to become addicted,” she says. Many designers consider the himmeli more of a sculpture than an ornament.

## Japan and Finland joined by a himmeli

A few years ago Koski received a call from Japan asking if she would be willing to host a Japanese graphic designer who is interested in himmelis. “Well, you can imagine that I was quite surprised at that call!” Koski explains enthusiastically.

Mutsuko Yamamoto travelled to Vaasa from Sapporo, the northernmost island of Japan, and spent three days as an apprentice at Koski’s farm.

Yamamoto first spotted a himmeli in the window of the Artek design shop in Helsinki during a Christmas visit. Subsequently Yamamoto became a himmeli artisan, and also teaches the craft to others. Himmelis seem to strike a chord with people in Japan. Yamamoto’s himmelis have even been on display at a Finnish design shop in Tokyo. Koski, who has a himmeli in every room of her home, “could not imagine Christmas without them.”

By Carina Chela, December 2013



**Obituaries:**

**Robert G. Blick**



Topsham—Robert G. Blick, age 81, died Thursday, October 8, 2020 at Cadigan Lodge in The Highlands.

Robert was born January 22, 1939 in East Jaffrey, NH, the son of Gustaf L. and Laina L. West Blick. He lived in several towns across New Hampshire and Maine and graduated high school in Dixfield, ME. He married Janice C. Boehne on October 23, 1965 in Schenectady, NY.

After graduating from the University of Maine, Orono, he started his career at the General Electric Company. He retired in 2000 after 39 years with GE, where his last 16 years were spent licensing technology to international companies. He and his wife, Janice, enjoyed the international travel that came with that work and they retired in Camden, ME.

He especially enjoyed the skiing and hiking near the coast and mountains, and opportunities to connect with his Finnish heritage. In 2016, they moved to The Highlands in Topsham, ME. Robert was a long-time member of the Finnish Heritage House and contributed to the construction of the historical monument honoring his Finnish roots.

**Helvi A. Impola**

September 19, 1926 – July 1, 2020



Helvi A. Impola, a long-time member of FHH, was born in Bronx, New York, the daughter of Albert and Aili (Leino) Thors. In 1946, she married Richard A. Impola. She was a city girl, and he was a country boy from the UP of Michigan, just out of the army. After living in the city and then in Michigan, they settled in New Paltz, NY in 1963, enjoying over 65 happy years together before Richard’s death in 2015.

Helvi loved music and dancing, and, as the daughter of immigrants, she was passionately interested in the culture of Finnish-American communities. She researched and delivered lectures on Finnish-American musicians, including the folksinger Hiski Salomaa and the vocalist/accordionist Viola Turpeinen. She also wrote about the immigrant experience for Finnish-American periodicals.

Helvi and Richard donated many of the books he had translated from Finnish to English to FHH to be sold in our Tori and added to our library. Some of the titles include *Storm Over the Land*, *Our Daily Bread*, and *The Winter of the Black Snow*. They also were wonderful dancers, and attended most FinnFunn Weekends over the years, teaching many of us (including several FHH members) Finnish dances. What a delightful couple!

Helvi is survived by two sons, a daughter, and two grandchildren. She requested that you consider a donation in her name to Finlandia Foundation National: <https://finlandiafoundation.org>



## Boston Ballet Interview from Finlandia Foundation National

Enjoy the latest free online program at the FFN YouTube channel: An exclusive Zoom chat with [Boston Ballet](#) Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen, who shares his stories, thoughts and insights about his path from Finland to one of the most respected dance companies in the world, with FFN Trustee Eeva Syvanen, president of the

[House of Finland, San Diego, California](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOmt1HUZUwFyDaV5CzRlpQA>



### OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER JOKE

When returning to my car after shopping at WalMart, Kirsti and Arthur Fish happened to be parked next to me, so I stopped to chat. During the conversation, Arthur asked, "What's that on your hand?"

My response: "Oh, that's just my grocery list." (I write notes to myself on my hand frequently.)

Arthur's comeback, "Oh, you Finns, you'll do anything to save a penny!"

Submitted by Jacqueline Harjula

## A CHRISTMAS REMEMBRANCE

This is a story from a long time ago that comes to my mind every Christmas season. I was about three or four years old when this happy memory took place. We had many children in our family, and our older sister, Aino, who was 12 years old, had a friend whose name was Seija. On the days when school was in session, Aino took a short cut and ran about two kilometers through the woods, and then another two and a half kilometers to get to school.

At this time of year, the lakes were frozen solid, and there was enough snow on the ground to use the horse-drawn sleigh. For the holidays, there was a Christmas celebration at school. Seija and her parents came to our house, and we rode in the sled to the schoolhouse. The parents and smaller children sat in the audience. The students were the performers, dressed up as elves and fairies. They read Christmas stories and poems, and sang Christmas carols.

My eyes were on the Christmas tree. It had real candles, all lit up and burning brightly. Red apples, shiny candy, colorful balls, and white paper snowflakes added to the decorations. To complete the magic, on the top was a smiling angel child. She wore a shiny white dress with wide-open wings, and on her head was a birch halo. She was smiling for me!

The teacher started playing an instrument. The children and the audience started singing, "A Child was Born in Bethlehem." I was in Heaven... I imagined all this beautiful celebration was just for me. It was almost too much to take in, and I fainted in my mother's bosom. The music, the sounds I heard...they were like hearing the wind blowing in the forest, and the waves rolling against the rocks on the shore. I heard birds singing and my best memories of my mother singing lullabies.

My mother tried to wake me up, saying, "This is not time for sleeping, my baby." All this was so beautiful. I really thought I was in heaven.

*By Helvi Silverman*



## FINNFUNN 2020 GOES VIRTUAL!!

Despite not being able to hold our traditional FinnFunn Weekend in the fall in New Hampshire, a Zoom get-together was held on Saturday, October 31. Computers were set up at the Finnish Hall (FAHS) in Canterbury, CT, with greetings, live music, awards, presentations, and sharing time. Many Finnish groups gave an update on their abbreviated activities. Representing FHH, I brought virtual greetings from our group and noted that we are still publishing a quarterly newsletter and holding bake sales with masks and social distancing. I also shared one of my memories relating to Roy Helander, when we traveled with the group enjoying Anita Smiley's tour of Finland.

Roy, of Maynard, MA, was lured to the Hall in CT when asked to play some piano music, when actually he was to be given an award. Roy, who is now 90 years old and who has been a long-time volunteer for the Finnish Center at Saima Park, was honored with the Amerikkaan Suomatar award from the Finnish American Heritage Center (FAHC) in Hancock, Michigan. Jim Kurtti of FAHC presented the award and spoke about connecting in this digital age. A video of the play "At the Post Office," (starring Roy) was shown. It was a delightful three-hour FinnFunn event.

FinnFunn is planning to return to the Inn at East Hill Farm in Troy, NH, October 29-31, 2021

By Jacqueline Harjula

## Zoom To the Rescue

It had been over a year since Marja-Leena Bailey, our resident Finnish language teacher, had been able to travel to the midcoast to offer a class at Finnish Heritage House. So it was a pleasant surprise when Marja-Leena contacted Steve Gifford to say that she had developed a new Finnish language curriculum based on a Power Point platform and would like to offer a class via Zoom from her home in North Chelmsford, Massachusetts. A plan was developed to offer the class three consecutive weeks every other month until the end of the Coronavirus pandemic. The students were split into three groups meeting on either Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday evenings. Students in level one are Marilyn Pulkkila, Diane Laing, Steve and Mary Gifford, Karyn Bowers, Linda Grant and Jackie Harjula. Students in level two are Mariann Ahola, Lorraine Lans, Beverly Bartlett, Sue and Scott Edwards. Level three students (Discussion and Conversation) include Lin Gordon, Steven Chayer, Irene Rochwarg and Mariah Tarvainen. Marja-Leena's teaching style is relaxed, very supportive and like modern dentistry, pain-free, but a lot more fun. Everyone seems very enthusiastic about this new format and is looking forward to the next session in January 2021. If you would like to be on our mailing list to receive information about future Finnish language classes contact Steve Gifford at [gifford7tree@gmail.com](mailto:gifford7tree@gmail.com) or tel. 207-273-2877. Rauhallista Joulua ja Onnellista Utta Vuotta.



## Finnish Christmas Crafts

An interesting program was presented Tuesday at a meeting of the Rockland Garden Club held at the Farnsworth Museum. Mrs. Fred Webel of Warren was the guest speaker and her subject was "A Finnish Christmas." The talk was illustrated with many replicas of the various types of ornaments and decorations used in Finnish Yuletide celebrations from the early 1700's to the present. This presentation took place sometime in the late fifties. Mrs. Webel is pictured at left giving her presentation at the Farnsworth Museum.

There are two scrapbooks at the Finnish Heritage House with wonderful pictures and stories of the many crafts that Mrs. Webel made. She used a loom to weave straw into rugs and made himmelis with straw. Her son, Fred Webel Jr. who is a long-time member of Finnish Heritage House, provided this photo and told of many other crafts his mother created.