

CHICAGO NEWS

By Bob Kujanpaa

August 2011

Fred Niemi was awarded the Commander of the Order of the Lion of Finland by Ambassador Ritva Jolkkonen at a ceremony held July 13th. Fred served as Finland's Honorary Consul in Chicago for 34 years. Congratulations to Fred and special thanks for his many years of service to Chicagoland's Finnish community.

Readers are reminded that the 32nd Annual Scandinavian Day Festival will be held Sunday, September 11th from 9:00am to 5:00pm at Vasa Park in South Elgin. Our own DeKalb Footstompers will be playing music for dancing, there will be a Finnish merchandise booth, and members of our Chicagoland Finnish community will be participating in many of the day's activities. Check page 16 of the August issue of the Finnish American Reporter.

Members of the Sibelius Academy of Finland will present at concert at the Estonian House in Riverwoods beginning at 2:30pm, Sunday, September 18th. The program will include Blink, a contemporary Nordic folk ensemble with performers from Finland, Estonia, and Sweden and a vocal-piano duo, vocalist Annika Lumi who will be accompanied by Maarja Plink on the piano. Those who would like to eat dinner at 1:00pm should notify Oscar Forsman at oforsman@yahoo.com.

John von Rhein's review of the Sibelius Epic Finland Concert at Millennium Park July 29th and 30th says it all. The Chicago Tribune's music critic's review was titled: "Finnish Conductor's 'Kullervo' is among Grant Park's Finest Performances." Von Rhein goes on to say: "Finnish conductor Hannu Lintu, who made his Grant Park debut in 2004, merits an annual berth on the festival's roster." He praises Lintu for galvanizing the orchestra and chorus to deliver such a fine performance despite limited rehearsal time. He also has great praise for soprano Johanna Rusanen and baritone Ville Rusanen, the real life brother and sister, who play the roles of siblings in "Kullervo." The program for the concert devoted several pages to the Kalevala as well as a biography of Jean Sibelius.

Readers are reminded that the Finnish American Society of the Midwest has a web site: www.fasm.us. The web site has information regarding FASM as well as a calendar of Finnish events in Chicagoland and the Midwest. Nona and Steve Koivula and Mary Wurzer are doing a great job of keeping the web site updated.

Readers are reminded that non-golfers are invited to attend the luncheon following the Finnish American Chamber of Commerce's Autumn Golf Classic at Cog Hill in Lemont on September 30th. The luncheon should start about 1:30pm. RSVP to Helena Koivisto at (773) 342-2025 if you wish to attend.

Norma and Bill Maki and Mary Wurzer were among Chicagoland Finns attending the performance of the Rockland Opera in Houghton, Michigan, during July.

The Reino Salmi family participated in the marathon at Tomahawk, Wisconsin's Pow Wow Days while vacationing at the family's summer home on Somo Lake; and with great success! Twelve year old Jessica, who has performed well in Chicago schools' cross country meets, came in first in her age division. Brother David, age 14, came in second in his age group and dad Reino placed second in his division.

Condolences to the family of Sharon Perttula Sikora. Sharon's father, Wilho (Bill) Perttula, of Trout Creek, Michigan, passed away in May.

July 2011

The Finnish American Society of the Midwest's Annual Picnic will be held Sunday, August 21st on the grounds of the Estonian House beginning at 12:00 pm. Everyone is asked to bring their own lunch and a dessert to share. FASM will provide a grill for those who would like to grill their own lunch. FASM will also provide beverages. The Annual Meeting and election of officers will be held after the picnic. Following the meeting, there will be games including boot toss, horseshoes, lawn bowling and bean bag.

Multi-instrumentalist and composer, Arto Jarvela, of Finland, returned to Chicago's Old Town School of Music for a performance June 8th. Appearing with Arto were Finnish American multi-instrumentalists Sara Pajunen and Jonathan Rundman known as Kaivama. Word has it that Kaivama will be performing at FinnFest USA 2011. Their performance is not to be missed.

The Chicagoland Finnish School's Summer Olympics will be held beginning at 1:00pm, Saturday, August 27th, at DuPage River Park East, 808 Royce Road, in Naperville. Competition will be held in cell phone target tossing, sack hopping, boot tossing, egg carving, Finnish darts, and hula hoop relay. There will be a fishing game for the children and a raffle. Admission is \$10.00 for families and \$5.00 for individuals. Those planning to attend - RSVP: TanjaSaarinen@comcast.net

A steak fry with crayfish sampling will be held at Vasa Park in South Elgin Saturday August 13th. For further information go to: www.vasaparkil.com

Readers are reminded to mark their calendars for Sunday, September 11th, the date of the 32nd Annual Scandinavian Day Festival at Vasa Park. Chicagoland Finns will be active participants in the day's events.

Readers are also reminded that members of the Sibelius Academy will perform at the Estonian House at 2:30pm September 18th. More details regarding both Scandinavian Days and the Sibelius Academy concert will follow in forthcoming issues of this paper.

Chicagoland Finns can find Finnish Leipajuustoa ("Squeaky Cheese") at the Farmer's Market held in downtown Chicago's Daley Plaza each Thursday. The cheese can be found at the Brunkow's of Darlington, Wisconsin booth at the southeast corner of the Plaza. Juustoa is misspelled on the label; however, with your reporter's continual prodding that is sure to change.

Alice M. Luttinen, 64, died June 21st. She was born in Hancock, MI, April 16th, 1947. She had been a retail buyer for Wieboldt's Department Stores in Chicago. Services were held at Dyke's Funeral Home in Valparaiso, IN, June 24th. Burial was in Angelcrest Cemetery in Valparaiso.

June 2011

The Finnish American Society of the Midwest and the Estonian House presented a program featuring Finlandia Foundation Performer of the Year, kantele player Wilho Saari and Lecturer of the Year, ethnomusicologist Carl Rahkonen at the Estonian House, Sunday, May 15th. Following the lecture and concert, Lee and Jim Hoofnagle and Oscar Forsman joined Wilho and Carl in a jam session playing many traditional Finnish folk songs.

The program was preceded by a pasty dinner served by the Board of Directors of the Finnish American Society of the Midwest.

Special thanks to Oscar Forsman and Andres Peekna for making the arrangements for this enjoyable event.

Chicagoland Finns celebrated Juhannus in June. Some joined their Scandinavian friends at the Midsommar celebration at Vasa Park in South Elgin while others celebrated with their Estonian friends on the grounds of the Estonian House in Riverwoods.

Members of the Finnish American Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors met at Restaurant Orso's in Chicago on June 14th.

The Thirteenth Annual Finnish American Chamber of Commerce Autumn Golf Classic will be held at Cog Hill Golf and Country Club in Lemont on September 30th. Flights will go off between 7:30am and 8:30am. Early sign-up would be appreciated so that the proper number of tee times can be booked. RSVP to Henna Koivisto at (773) 342-2025 or koivihe@yahoo.com by July 30th. All levels of players are invited. Non-golfers are invited to attend the luncheon following the tournament which should start about 1:30pm.

The Finnish Barflies gathered at Rock Bottom Restaurant and Brewery at 1 West Grand Avenue in Chicago on June 3rd. Annika Hau and Annika Maattanen will be promoting the event in the future. Those wishing to receive notifications regarding Barflies get-togethers in the future should send an email to chicago.barflies@gmail.com in order to be put on the mailing list. Readers may also call (773) 960-0995 for information.

Reverend Dr. Kari Makinen of Finland, who will be conducting a service at FinnFest USA in San Diego, is related to one of the very active members of our Chicagoland Finnish community. He is the son of Matti Makinen's cousin. Dr. Makinen is Archbishop of Turku and Finland for the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Hennik Width, Royal Norwegian Deputy Consul General, from New York, was the guest speaker at the Norwegian Constitution Day Celebration in Chicago on May 17th. His wife, Terhi Width, who is Finnish, accompanied him to the parade banquet and other events. She is a member of the Finnish-Norwegian Cultural Foundation, which promotes relations between Finland and Norway.

The Grant Park Music Festival, held at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Chicago's Millennium Park, will feature "Sibelius' Epic Finland" July 29th and 30th.

The Finnish American Society of the Midwest will hold their Annual Meeting and Picnic on the grounds of the Estonian House on August 21st. More details to follow in forthcoming issues of this paper.

Readers are also asked to mark their calendars for September 18th, as members of the Sibelius Academy of Helsinki will perform at the Estonian House at 2:30pm. More details to follow.

Havis Amanda Honored by Chicagoland Finns By Bob Kujanpaa

Havis Amanda is a nude female statue located at the Market Square in Kaartinkaupunki in Helsinki. It was sculpted by Ville Vallgren (1855-1940) in 1906 in Paris. The statue was erected at its present location in 1908.

Havis Amanda is cast in bronze and the fountain it resides in is made of granite. She is a mermaid who stands on seaweed as she rises from the water. There are four fish spouting water at her feet and she is surrounded by four sea lions.

Havis Amanda has not always been well accepted as she is today. There were those that considered her nudeness inappropriate. Others found the statue belittling to women and felt it made them sex objects. Today, she has been consistently voted the most important and most beautiful piece of art in Helsinki.

Havis Amanda has become a very important part in Helsinki's celebration of the coming of spring. Students march around her and sing such songs as "Minun Kultani Kaunis On" (My Sweetheart is Beautiful). Finally, a student is chosen to crown her by placing his cap on her head. This causes the crowd to go wild as they begin to cheer. It's like New Year's Eve with noise makers and pom-poms. Many are drinking sima.

The Chicagoland Finnladies re-enacted the celebration of Vappu at the Finnish American Society of the Midwest's Vappu Party on April 29th with a fully-clothed, but cleverly dressed Marjut Lohtari-Kuklin starring in the role of Havis Amanda, and the Finnladies and members of FASM playing the part of Finnish students. Jim Hoofnagle was chosen by the group to crown Amanda with his student cap.

May 2011

Chicagoland Finns once again welcomed the coming of spring, late as it was, with a Vappu Party held at the Estonian House, Saturday, April 30th. The event was sponsored by the Finnish American Society of the Midwest. The hall was decorated with blue and white balloons and spring flowers. Those attending enjoyed sima, a very nice dinner, entertainment by the Finnladies, and dancing to the music of the DeKalb Footstompers.

Mary Wojcik and Oscar Forsman gave the traditional toast to men and women and John Berg served as the MC.

Chicagoland Finnladies, Taru Berg, Lee Hoofnagle, Eeva Kallio, Marjut Lohtari-Kuklin, and Christina Turcson entertained with a re-enactment of students celebrating Vappu in Helsinki. Participating with the ladies in the parade as students and singing traditional Finnish folk songs were Anna Berg, John Berg, Jim Hoofnagle, Helena and Paavo Pelkonen, Arielle Manninen-Senteney, and Hilikka and Urpo Vartiainen. Marjut Lohtari-Kuklin posed as Havis Amanda (yes, she was clothed), and it was Jim Hoofnagle who bravely climbed the ladder and placed his student cap on Amanda's head.

Special thanks to the members of the Finnish American Society of the Midwest's Board of Directors for a wonderful evening.

The Madetoja High School Girls' Choir from Oulu, Finland, performed with the Lake Forest College Women's Chorus in the Lily Reed Holt Memorial Chapel at Lake Forest College on April 16th.

Andrea Gronvall taught a course on contemporary Nordic filmmakers for the University of Chicago's Graham School of General Studies during March, April and May. Andrea is a Finnish-American whose grandparents immigrated to the US a century ago. She is a contributing film critic with the Chicago Reader and Time Out Chicago.

Vasa Park in South Elgin will hold their Annual Midsommar Celebration on Saturday, June 18th. The park will open at 1:30pm and the day's events will start at 2:00pm with a Children's Parade and dancing around the Maypole. This will be followed by children's performances, free pony rides, and storytelling. There will be family activities from 6:30pm to sunset. A luminaria will be lit along the river at 8:00pm, and the bonfire will be lit at sunset. Various Scandinavian organizations will serve food from 2:00pm-6:00pm. For directions to the park, go to www.vasaparkil.com.

Jorma Kaukonen gave two performances at SPACE in Evanston on Saturday, May 7th.

Readers are reminded that Finnish fiddler Arto Jarvela and the Finnish duo Kaivama featuring Finnish Americans Sara Pajunen and Jonathan Rundman will perform at Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music at 8:00pm, Wednesday, June 8th. Reserve your tickets by calling (773) 728-6000. This is a free ticket event with a \$5.00 suggested donation.

Roy M. Hannula, 86, of Hoffman Estates, died April 1st, 2011. He was born in Van Buskirk, WI, the son of Finnish immigrants Herman and Selma Hannula. He was a World War II veteran. He is survived by his wife Didi, daughters Geraldine (Gerald) Gros and Pamela (John) O'Shea, four grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Services were held April 5th at St. Peter Lutheran Church in Schaumburg with internment in the St. Peter Cemetery.

April 2011

The Finnish American Society of the Midwest and the Estonian House will present a special program featuring Finlandia Foundation Performer of the Year, kantele player Wilho Saari and Lecturer of the Year ethnomusicologist Carl Rahkonen at the Estonian House at 2:30pm, Sunday, May 15th. Admission will be \$15.00.

The Board of Directors of FASM will serve a pasty dinner prior to the program. This will be at 1:00pm. Those planning to attend the dinner are to email the number of people coming to oforsman@yahoo.com to help the board plan ahead. The cost of the dinner will be \$10.00.

Reverend Melvin Johnson conducted Finnish worship services at St. Marks Lutheran Church in Waukegan on March 27th. Participating in the services were: Carol Suomu, pianist; Lise Myllymaki, communion assistant; and Jussi Rautiokoski and Paavo Pelkonen, who served as ushers.

Sibelius Chorus members Arnold Aho, Eric Aho, Bill Maki, Matti Makinen, Jim Tentles, and Jack Ylitalo, also participated in the service.

Proceeds from the coffee hour will be sent to Sortavala.

Pastor Johnson has conducted Finnish services at St. Marks for 20 years.

Members of the Sibelius Chorus participated in the 31st Annual Festival of Song held at the Estonian House on March 25th. They sang with the mass chorus that included the Normennenes Singing Society, the Waukegan Swedish Glee Club, the Bjornson Male Chorus, the Elmhurst Maennerchor, the Chicago Swedish Glee Club, and the Latvian Men's Choir. Cathy Wendt, Director of the Elmhurst Maennerchor, directed the singing of Finlandia (Dear Land of Home), that was sung in English. Sibelius Chorus members participating included Arnold Aho, Eric Aho, Matti Makinen, Imre Pagi, and Jack Ylitalo.

Finnish influence continued well into spring for the 2010-2011 season of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. On Monday, March 21st, their program included composer Kaija Saariaho's "Gaal Theatre," described as a lush and rich concerto for violin and string ensemble. Later in the week, the CSO included "Suite from Karelia," by Sibelius during three performances. In late April, three concerts included Sibelius' "Violin Concerto."

The Finnish influence will continue into the 2011-2012 season as Susanna Malkki will conduct the orchestra in October, followed by Esa-Pekka Salonen in December.

For more information concerning the 2011-2012 season, call (312) 294-3000 or go online to cso.org.

Suvi-Tuulia Keto gave a trumpet recital at Roosevelt University's Ganz Hall on March 28th. Her trumpet performance was a requirement to graduate from Roosevelt with a Master of Music degree. Suvi-Tuulia holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Sibelius Academy. She holds the position of sub-principal in the Finnish Guards' Band in Helsinki. As the recipient of an ASLA Fulbright Graduate Grant for graduate studies in the US in 2009, she was able to take a study leave from her job and begin her studies at Roosevelt. She received her master's degree at the end of April. Congratulations Suvi-Tuulia.

"Letters to Father Jacob," Finland's entry in Chicago's European Union Film Festival in March, was well received by audiences and critics as well. Another Finnish film, "Into Eternity," was shown at the Gene Siskel Film Center in late April.

The Finnish American Chamber of Commerce held their annual meeting and election of officers March 15th at The Q Restaurant in Chicago. Officers chosen for the coming year were: President: Tony Johansson; Vice President: Henna Koivisto; Secretary: Anna Koivisto; and Treasurer, Steve Koivula. On April 7th, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs hosted Martti Ahtisaari, former President of Finland, and 2008 Nobel Peace Prize winner, to discuss the process of creating a sustainable peace and cultivating the political will needed for such outcomes. Ahtisaari has mediated and brought peace across three continents. The program was held at Chicago's International Hotel.

Arto Jarvela, one of Finland's most accomplished folk musicians, and a third-generation fiddler in the Kaustinen tradiion, will perform at Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music along with Kaivama, a new folk duo featuring Finnish-Americans Sarah Pajunen and Jonathan Rundman, Wednesday, June 8th at 8:30pm. This is a free-ticket event with a \$5.00 suggested donation. Advance tickets are recommended and can be reserved by calling 773 728-6000.

Former Chicagoan, E. Jane Maki, 88, passed away in Barnegat Light, New Jersey, March 16th. She was preceded in death by her husband Melvin. She is survived by a son, William (Ida), two grandchildren, and five great grandchildren. Jane was the former owner of Libra Industries, Inc.

March 2011

The Finnish American Society of the Midwest will hold their Annual Vappu Party at the Estonian House in Riverwoods, Saturday, April 30th. The social hour will begin at 6:00pm and dinner will be at 7:00pm. Entertainment and dancing to the music of the DeKalb Footstompers will follow. Call (773) 631-9785 for further information.

Readers are also asked to mark their calendars for Sunday, May 15th. The Board of Directors of the Finnish American Society of the Midwest will serve the Sunday Dinner at the Estonian House. Following the dinner, at 2:30pm, will be a program featuring Carl Rahkonen and Finlandia Foundation Performer of the Year Wilho Saari.

Esa-Pekka Salonen received rave reviews from Chicago's music critics after conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in late February and early March. The CSO concerts in February included the orchestra's premiere of the conductor's Violin Concerto. He also conducted the Chicago Civic Orchestra on February 28th. The Civic Orchestra concert included "Two Legends From the Kalevala, op. 32" by Sibelius.

In February, Sakari Oramo substituted for ailing CSO conductor Riccardo Muti. The title of John von Rhein's review in the Chicago Tribune read, "In Maestro's Stead, Finnish Conductor Shines in Debut." Bryant Manning's review in the Chicago Sun-Times was very complimentary as well.

A Finland-based film by a Danish director, Michael Madsen, Into Eternity, was shown by the Chicago Filmmakers Society in Andersonville, Friday, February 8th.

The Finnish film, "Letters to Father Jacob," was shown as Finland's entry in the 14th Annual European Film Festival. The film was shown at the Gene Siskel Film Center on March 19th and March 21st.

Finland's Circo Acero, under the direction of Maksim Komari and Jani Nuutinen, performed at Dominican University's Lund Auditorium in River Forest on March 4th. Circ Acero is known for mixing traditional circus acts with innovative cabaret theater.

The Chicagoland Finnladies held their annual luncheon and election of officers at the Greek Village Taverna in Schaumburg on February 2nd. Officers chosen for the coming year are: President: Anne McAlpine; Vice President: Sari Covington; Membership Secretary: Sari Emaus; Treasurer: Jenny Werronen; and Secretary: Henna Koivisto.

Chicagoland Finns were very pleased to read Ilpo Lagerstedt's "Tales of a Finnish-American Cartoonist" in the February 2011 issue of the Finnish American Reporter. There are many Chicago Finns that remember Gabriel and Saima Hukkala as well as Gabriel's brother, Rudy, and his wife, Edith, as all were very active members of the Chicago Finnish community.

Ruth Hammer Ekholm, 89, passed away February 14th, 2011. She was preceded in death by her husband, Guy. She is survived by daughters Karen (James) Belli of Wadsworth, IL, and Janis Hessforth of Marshfield, WI. Ruth served as a WAVE in the US Navy during World War II. A graduate of Northwestern University, she taught at Lake View and Mather High Schools in Chicago. Services were held at Warren Funeral Home in Gurnee on February 19th.

February 2011

The Traveler's Club of St. Marks Lutheran Church in Waukegan held their Sixth Annual Finnish Celebration Sunday, January 23rd, in the church social hall. Judy Shales-Reiner served as the MC and welcomed the guests. Carol Suomu provided piano accompaniment as those attending sang God Bless America and the Finnish National Anthem. Tuula Tamsi gave the Finnish Table Prayer before the dinner that included such Finnish favorites as herring, rosolli, rutabaga casserole, and pannukakku.

Arnold Aho, Eric Aho, Bill Maki, Matti Makinen, Vello Suigussaar, and Jack Ylitalo of the Sibelius Male Chorus sang several Finnish songs. The Kipakat Folk Dancers from Milwaukee delighted the audience with their performance of Finnish and Swedish dances. Bob Mayo introduced the dances and kept the audience entertained with his wit and good humor on this afternoon of the Bears-Packers playoff game. The audience appeared to be evenly divided between fans of the two teams. And, yes, the program ended in time for all to watch the game.

The Finnish American Chamber of Commerce joined with the Swedish and Norwegian Chambers of Commerce for a table trade show and cocktail party at the Swedish American Museum in Andersonville on Thursday, January 20th.

The Finnish American Society of Milwaukee will hold their annual St. Urho's Pasty Dinner Sunday, March 27th. The Society will have a meeting at 2:00pm and the dinner will follow at 3:00pm. The event will be held at Grace Lutheran Church, 3030 West Oklahoma Avenue in Milwaukee. The complete dinner will cost \$8.00. The Milwaukee Festival Brass will play an all-Finnish program. For reservations, call Linda at (262) 789-0380 by March 23rd. Feel free to wear your purple and green.

The Fourteenth Annual European Film Festival will be held between March 4th and March 31st. At least one Finnish film, Letters to Father Jacob (2009), will be shown. As of this writing, the time of the showing is unknown. Readers can go to <http://siskelfilmcenter.org> for further information or they can check with the Chicago Reader and other Chicago papers.

Esa-Pekka Salonen conducted the Chicago Symphony Orchestra February 24th and 26th. The program included compositions by Debussy, Salonen, and Sibelius. He is also scheduled to conduct March 3rd through March 6th. Call (312) 294-3000 for further information.

Patricia Michalski, who is well-known to members of Chicago's Finnish community, has announced her retirement as Director of Ethnic Affairs and Ethnic Media for Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas. Happy retirement, Pat.

Longtime De Kalb resident Laura Korpi passed away in January at the age of 99. Funeral services were held Saturday, January 15th, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in De Kalb with the Revered Gary Erickson officiating. Reverend Antti Lepisto gave the eulogy and Oscar Forsman said the Lord's Prayer in Finnish and presented a musical selection. Laura, who was born in Finland, was a very active member of De Kalb's Finnish community.

Mary Barrara Wehmanen passed away in January. Services were held January 21st at St. Bernadette's Church in Oak Lawn.

January 2011

The Traveler's Club of St. Marks Lutheran Church in Waukegan held their Sixth Annual Finnish Celebration Sunday, January 23rd, in the church social hall. Judy Shales-Reiner served as the MC and welcomed the guests. Carol Suomu provided piano accompaniment as those attending sang God Bless America and the Finnish National Anthem. Tuula Tamsi gave the Finnish Table Prayer before the dinner that included such Finnish favorites as herring, rosolli, rutabaga casserole, and pannukakku.

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December 2010

Chicagoland Finns were active participants in the city's celebration of Christmas this year.

Many thanks to the Finnladies for decorating the Finnish tree for the Museum of Science and Industry's Hall of Trees and for joining with the children from Chicago's Finnish School to present a "Traditional Finnish Christmas" at the museum's "Christmas Around the World" program on November 28th. Many thanks to the children as well.

And a special thank you to Eeva and Reijo Kallio for decorating a tree in Finnish style for Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas' Ethnic Christmas Party that was held December 1st. The Finnish tree was one of seventy-five holiday trees from around the world.

Members of the Chicagoland Finnish community celebrated Christmas at a party sponsored by the Finnish American Society of the Midwest Saturday, December 11th at the Estonian House in Riverwoods.

Violinist Aleksandra Forsman and Oscar Forsman, with his accordion, entertained during the social hour playing holiday songs and Finnish favorites. Following dinner, Santa Claus (aka Oscar Forsman) appeared with gifts for the children. He was assisted by Taru Berg, Lee Hoofnagle, Eeva Kallio, Marjut Kuklin and Christina Turcson. After Santa's visit, those attending enjoyed listening and dancing to the music of Juli Wood, who was accompanied by Petri and Anu Ahjokoski of Finland. Mary Wurzer served as MC for the event. Many thanks to the members of the Finnish American Society of the Midwest's Board of Directors for this very special evening.

The Chicago Chorale, under the direction of Bruce Tammen, presented Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara's Vigilia (All-Night Vigil) performed in Finnish at its concerts December 11th and 12th. (The All-Night Vigil was jointly commissioned by the Helsinki Festival and the Orthodox Church of Finland and premiered at Divine Service in the Uspenski Cathedral in Helsinki in 1971. The concerts were held at St. Thomas the Apostle Church and the Church of the Holy Family in Chicago.

Members of the Finnish American Chamber of Commerce and their guests celebrated Finnish Independence Day at Lottie's Pub in Chicago's Bucktown neighborhood on December 4th. Traditional Finnish foods were served, Finnish carols were sung, and there were several raffles.. Pauli Kolsi was the winner of a trip to Finland courtesy of Scandinavian Airlines.

The guest speaker for the evening was Ritva Kuosmanen from the Finnish Embassy in Washington, DC. Sovi Keto, who is working on her master's degree in music in Chicago, entertained with several trumpet selections.

Maria Pappas, Cook County Treasurer, hosted a reception in honor of the Finnish American Chamber of Commerce's 50th Anniversary at the County Building in early November.

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee held a Nordic film festival November 12th-19th. Among the films shown was the Finnish movie, Recipes for Disaster (Katastrofin Aineksia). The film is about climate change, the world's addiction to oil, and its environmental consequences. In the movie, the filmmaker, John Webster, convinces his wife and two sons to go on an "oil diet" for one year. The movie chronicles their efforts on a month-by-month basis.

Sue Hokkanen appeared on WTTW (PBS) television several times during the months of November and December. Sue was promoting the Museum of Science and Industry's special programs to encourage young people to enter the field of science as a vocation.

Bliss Maki recently was mentioned in a Chicago Tribune article regarding Illinois' New Teacher Mentoring Program. Bliss is a new teacher at the Bradwell School of Excellence in Chicago.

Readers are reminded that St. Marks Lutheran Church in Waukegan will host its Annual Finnish Festival on January 23rd. The program will begin at 11:00am and dinner will be served at 11:30am.