



# **Open Gate in Vaasa, Finland**

**Blog Posts**

**<http://vaasagate.blogspot.com>**

**Vaasa March 2012**





## **WELCOME TO THE SITES OF THE PROJECT OPEN GATE**

**Open Gate is a project funded by the European Commission within the Socrates-Grundtvig Programme.**

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### **The Main Topic**

Enhancing the mutual knowledge of EU nations as to their historical development and mentality. Looking for ways to surmount differences in mentality, and so contribute to mutual understanding and cooperation. The project will support the consciousness of being member not only of one's nation but of the community of European countries as well and suppress possible prejudices. Even within the united Europe, it is still important to retain national identities and to promote knowledge about them. Therefore, the project includes the study and mutual information on cultural heritage, national customs and traditions typical for each participating country, that are a part of cultural heritage, strengthen the national self-consciousness and, at the same time, form a part of cultural heritage of Europe. Each participating institution will create its own database of texts, pictures, ev. multimedia presentations, concerning the above mentioned themes. The chosen works will be presented on the official web of the project. The communication among project members will be mostly done electronically and in English. This also includes enhancing the project participants' attitude to ICT and practical computer work as well as improvement of their foreign language knowledge. The project activities will include 5 international seminars

### **Partner organizations**

- Czech Technical University, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Prague (coordination responsibility), Open Gate -project website
- Akademia Pelni Zycia, Crakow
- Italian union of adult education, Rome
- CEPA Las Rosas, Madrid
- University of Vaasa, Levón-institute, Open University, Vaasa
- Vaasa Finnish Adult Education Centre (Vaasan työväenopisto - Vaasa-opisto), Vaasa

### **International Meetings**

**Prague** October 23 – 26, 2008

**Krakow** February 19 – 21, 2009

**Rome** June 11 – 14, 2009

**Vaasa** September 24 – 27, 2009

**Madrid** June 6 – 9, 2010

# Open Gate in Vaasa, Finland

WEDNESDAY, 30 JUNE 2010

## THE FAREWELL OF MADRID

By Hilve Leino-Pouttu

### INFORMATION ABOUT



#### OPEN GATE VAASA

Open Gate is an international Grundtvig Learning Partnership project. Open Gate is funded by the European Commission. The European Commission is not responsible for the content of these pages.

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### OUR COORDINATORS



Saija and Kaisa  
(saija.alanko(at)vaasa.fi,  
kaisa.toivonen(at)uwasa.fi)

### SNOW, SNOW



**MORE SNOW:  
MELANIEMI ("PADDLE  
CAPE"), VAASA**



Saturday 5 June 2010  
It is the first Saturday of June and the Fishing Day in Vaasa. In the Inner Harbour there are stands full of fish, raw and ready to eat, whole and sliced up. There are also new potatoes, home made bread, honey and jam among other things and of course flowers. People are walking around and

somebody is playing the accordion. The Fishing Day is very popular among people in Vaasa and it's neighbourhood but today the harbour is unusually quiet. Something else is arousing people's interest. Schools are closing today and there are festivities all around the city. Secondary school graduates will get their student's white caps about noon and also the little ones are having their own graduation ceremonies.

The Sun is shining but the wind is bitterly cold. Leena and I while waiting for a taxi to an air terminal of Vaasa are thinking about to fetch an extra coat. Fortunately we dismissed an idea, because a bit more that seven hours later we are no more cold. Our plain has landed into a beautifully warm place at the airport of Barajas in Madrid. The weather is so softly warm and the air terminal airy and quiet and our suitcases turn up pretty quickly. That is a good thing because we are already a little bit tired. But seeing Josefina, who has come at the airport, cheers us up. It was really nice of her to welcome us.. Still - Finnish time was nearly 10 pm. So "a speedy" bedtime snack and into bed.

Sunday 6 June 2010

The sunny Sunday and all ours! With the very first sight outside of



**PICTURES FROM VAASA SEMINAR**



**PICTURES FROM ROME SEMINAR**



**PICTURES FROM KRAKOW SEMINAR**



**PARTICIPANTS' EMAIL ADDRESSES**

Isomäki Martti,  
martti.isomaki(at)pp.inet.fi  
Jokinen-Andov Ritva,  
ritjokinen(at)hotmail.com  
Kansanaho Esko,  
ekansana(at)elisanaet.fi  
Kaskinen Tuovi,  
tuovi.kaskinen(at)netikka.fi

our hotel (Hotel Europa, Calle Carmen 4, 28013 Madrid) we noticed that the hotel is situated in the middle of the huge city of Madrid and that made us very pleased – of course. Hilikka and I have a view of Puerta del Sol from our balcony. Standing in the balcony I was able to take a picture of the bottom of the horse of King Carlos III.

We met each other at the reception of the hotel and had some difficulties to make up our minds what to eat. Some of us tried a continental breakfast and some took a glass of orange juice, toast and coffee. After eating off we went by metro to the station of Atocha. Our intension was to visit one of the most important museums in Madrid the Centro de Arte Reina Sofia and there to see Pablo Picasso's painting Guernica. The painting was bigger than I have thought and also - I somehow hadn't realized that it really was pure black and white. What a difference to see the real painting compared with the pictures of it. The horror, death, destruction and agony of the war came out from the painting so that they were almost touchable. No wonder it is said to be one of the most famous paintings of the 20th century. And in the other room there were preparatory sketches for Guernica. To walk through the whole museum would have taken days so we just took a look at some paintings of Joan Miro and Salvador Dali among others and I think I also somewhere saw a sculpture of Henry Moore (happened to be one of my favourite sculptors).

The city was very quiet when we stopped to have something to drink before going to another museum. Outdoor tables in the middle of a city may not be the best places to have a beauty care treatment but if a mask is put on one's knee it seemed to be possible. Arja was a "guinea pig" and got - by accident - the mask of very hot and thick chocolate on her knee. I never asked did her knee look much younger and more beautiful after that treatment.

The Paseo del Prado was wonderfully shady when we slowly walked from the Centro de Arte Reina Sofia to the Museum del Prado. It seemed to be a long way, but maybe it was not and a parkland on the right side of the street was so tempting that now and then one of us stopped and laid one's hand on railings of the park peeping longingly inside at flowers and green of big trees. An entrance of the Prado was on the other side of the huge building and on the way there we took a picture of the statue of Goya (?). An admission was free to EU seniors over 65. But, those young ones, Arja and Pirkko could not without their identity cards prove that they were old enough to be senior citizens and so they had to pay the admission and we others could not make up our minds if to be envious or not. As I said the building was huge and it's collections of masterpieces enormous, over 6 000 works so we just walked through some rooms with wonderful paintings to see. But of course we stopped in the front of "La Maja Vestida" and "la Maja Desnuda" by Goya and took our time to look at some paintings of Velazquez, Titian and so on. After all that culture a break

[Koskinen Toini](#),  
[toini.koskinen\(at\)netikka.fi](mailto:toini.koskinen@netikka.fi)  
[Leino-Pouttu Hilve](#),  
[hilveleino\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:hilveleino@gmail.com)  
[Levón Pirketta](#),  
[pirketta.levon\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:pirketta.levon@gmail.com)  
[Lindholm Arja](#),  
[arja.lindholm\(at\)hotmail.com](mailto:arja.lindholm@hotmail.com)  
[Mandell Sinikka](#),  
[sinikka.mandell\(at\)luukku.com](mailto:sinikka.mandell@luukku.com)  
[Mattila Juho](#),  
[juho.mattila\(at\)pp.inet.fi](mailto:juho.mattila@pp.inet.fi)  
[McBreen Rauni](#),  
[rauni.mcbreen\(at\)netikka.fi](mailto:rauni.mcbreen@netikka.fi)  
[Mäkipää Leena](#),  
[leena.makipaa\(at\)suomi24.fi](mailto:leena.makipaa@suomi24.fi)  
[Perttula Hilikka](#),  
[hilkka.perttula\(at\)elisanet.fi](mailto:hilkka.perttula@elisanet.fi)  
[Riipinen Pirkko](#),  
[pirkko.riipinen\(at\)netikka.fi](mailto:pirkko.riipinen@netikka.fi)  
[Tikkala Marja-Leena](#),  
[leena.tikkala\(at\)hotmail.com](mailto:leena.tikkala@hotmail.com)  
[Virtanen Ilkka](#), [itv\(at\)uwasa.fi](mailto:itv@uwasa.fi)

## **ORGANIZATIONS**

[University of Vaasa](#), [Levón-institute](#), [Open University](#)  
[Vaasa-opisto](#)

## **TOPICS**

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## **BLOG ARCHIVE**

was needed. It was luxurious to sit down at a cool restaurant, which walls were covered with pictures of bullfights and service just excellent.

However, a motive for coming to Madrid was elsewhere. The project of Open Gate was coming to it's end and our last meeting was going to take place here. So we, four people from Poland, eight from the Czech Republic, twelve from Italy and Finland and dozens from Spain (I am no so sure of exact numbers) got together in that beautiful evening at about ten o'clock at the Restaurant Hotel Maria Elena (Aduana street 19) Reunion was cheerful, joyful greetings were exchanged and news told. Many participants have been with the project for several years, so no wonder that many have also become friends with each other. The place was very nice and a high glass ceiling resembled Northern lights. Soft colours changed slowly from purple to blue, yellow to green ... So beautiful! And also food was very tasty. And - well - a way to the home-hotel was only about 200 meters. What a successful evening!

Monday 7 June 2010

Monday is the day of work and so it was also to us. The morning weather was again fantastic, warm – not yet hot – and sunny. Some of us took a metro to the station of Atocha, but some of us preferred to walk and we all met each other at the place called La Casa Encendida, which is an open social and cultural centre of the Obra Social Caja Mad (Madrid Savings Bank Friendly Society – if I had understood rightly). We gathered together at an auditorium, which had a screen to show pictures and so on. When plans of the day had been done presentations began.

At first there where the most appealing presentation of the host country. The presentation covered – I think – each of 17 provinces (?) of Spain; names like Valencia, Castile, Catalonia, Aragon, Sierra came out. A film told about festivities, everyday life and nature of the province which was introduced. I think it was ever so interesting and done with humour and also reasonable long, but at least I would have liked it to be even longer. There was also a presentation of Madrid.

After that the students of Madrid told about the works they have done since the last meeting. And then we others, Czech, Finnish, Polish and Italian group took turns to tell what had been done during the long winter – the presentations of the new things, writing and pictures on the web. I think we should take a time to look at them once more! .

During the last part of the winter session all kinds of questionnaires had been passed around asking about our opinion of Open Gate. Now coordinators had summarized our answers and an outcome was ever so interesting. Actually – I should not say that, because I no more remember conclusions. I took some notes but I somehow have lost

- ▼ 2010 (18)
  - ▼ June (1)
    - THE FAREWELL OF MADRID
    - ▶ February (2)
    - ▶ January (15)
- ▶ 2009 (49)
- ▶ 2008 (2)

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them. So the only thing I remember is that Finnish group was estimated to be fairly good in English. It is only natural for me to remember that because it was a credit to us!

After delicious lunch at the nearby situated El Valle Restaurant (Sebastian Herrera Street 6) it was time to enjoy the sunshine. And it was plentiful. Paving stones were hot and pavement cafes tempting but we walked heroically to a stop of open-top busses. Something more attractive than cafes was waiting us: a panoramic tour through historical and modern Madrid. Everyone of us wanted to have a seat on the upper floor of the bus, but maybe it was not after all so very good choice. The sun was hot and necessary hats kept on flying away with the wind. But it didn't matter. Within two hours the bus circled around the city. An eye spelled names of streets like Calle de Serrano, Goya, Valencia, Magdalena, Calle de la Princesa, Gran Via ... At first I tried with help of a map to find out a route of the bus, names of streets we passed by but I had only two hands and they were needed to hold my hat and earplugs. So I pretty soon gave in and only enjoyed the tour. And of course there was also an audio guide in English. We circled through some old parts of the city but saw also business areas, AZCA Complex, the Puerta de Europa Towers, Congress and Exhibition Hall, had glimpses of beautiful fountains like the Fountain of Neptune, the Fountain of Cibeles ...and so many statues of men on horsebacks. On the Plaza Espana behind leafy garden the statues of Don Quijote on his horseback, Sancho Panza with a donkey and Cervantes were to be seen. I would have liked to see them more closely, but of course there was no time for stops. Magnificent facades, decorations of buildings and iron ornaments were very well seen on the upper floor of the bus. Most of them were really beautiful and an other amazing thing was lushness of the city, the streets seemed to be everywhere lined with big trees. Flowerbeds and those pots of white flowers (we called them in Finnish pegonia) on tops of pillars were so nice.

A couple of hours later we were again on our way. This time we were going to walk around historic Madrid. There were four different tours from which to choose. I walked with the group that Begona was leading. We started at Plaza Mayor, a central square in the city of Madrid.

But – I just must in that meantime tell a little bit about our own plaza, Puerta de Sol, which is one of the busiest and most popular spots in Madrid. It is also kilometre 0 of all the roads in Spain. And in one corner of it is the thing we all at the very first sight in Saturday evening fell love with: the statue in bronze of the bear and the strawberry tree, which represents the coat of arms of Madrid. The picture of it is also to see on tops of drain slabs of the streets. On New Year's Eve people get together at Puerta del Sol and at midnight when church bells ring each one makes every effort to swallow a grape for each stroke in order to be happy during the coming year.



But back to Plaza Mayor, which was built during the Habsburg period, at the beginning of 1600- century. In it's centre stands the equestrian statue of Philip III, the sponsor of the building of the square. The Plaza is rectangular in shape and surrounded by in the Baroque style constructed three-story residential buildings. Also private people live in those houses and we saw on one window an advertisement "For Sale". I just wonder how much money is needed to buy that flat ... There are about 400 balconies from which people are able to look at events and festivities at the Plaza. One can go out from the Plaza through nine arched gateways and I think no motor vehicles are allowed at the Plaza. From Plaza Mayor we walked along Calle Mayor, Main Street and Bailen Street towards the Cathedral of the Almudena, passing the Plaza de la Villa, the Church of San Salvador and the remains of the Arab city walls. The Cathedral is dedicated to the Virgin of the Almudena, the patron saint of Madrid. Plans for the Cathedral were made as early as the 16th century but construction didn't begin until 1879 and the Cathedral was completed 1993. And on May 22th of 2004 the marriage of Prince Felipe took place at the Cathedral. Nearby the Cathedral is the Palacio Real, Royal Palace which is the official residence of the King of Spain in Madrid. The Palace is owned by the Spanish State and used only for important social occasions of the State. The Palace is built in Baroque style with a mixture of French and Italian influences. At that time of the evening the surrounding area of the Palace was very quiet, only we and few other tourists were walking about and taking pictures.

The long and hot day had emptied our energy so that we were really exhausted while turning towards Plaza de Oriente. It was a slow and quiet walk under the eyes of statues of Spanish Monarchs from the Visigoths to Ferdinand VI and ended into our hotel. Picnic supper and glass of wine at the nearest pavement cafe and then Good Night!

Tuesday 8 June 2010

The day started with beautiful sunshine and ended with heavy rain. A meeting of the day took place at Cepa Las Rosas, the State School for Adult Learners, (Arcos de Jalon 9) and our group went there by bus. A trip from our hotel to Cepa Las Rosas took about two hours so they arrived late at the meeting. Actually ... I don't know anything of that, because I was "out of order" and staying in the bed of the hotel for the whole day. But - I heard that others had had a very busy day.

I was told that the day had started with a practice of English language and some discussions and that they had have lots of fun. After a coffee break those at present were divided into groups. There were four Spanish Workshops to choose: Spanish cooking, Spanish dancing, wine tasting and Spain Quizz. Pirkko was at least part of the time with those who did Spanish cooking and told that they had made very tasty sangria among other drinks. Hilka was tasting wine. At first you just evaluate the colour of the wine then you smell it and lastly taste it. One of the samples had been very expensive indeed. I



also saw a picture of the dancing ladies. Carmen had a beautiful green flamenco dress and in spite of wearing plain trousers the head of our Sinikka was defiantly raised. But - I have not found out what was the Spain Quizz ...

The afternoon was free. Also I was scrambling to my feet and went with Hilkka for a short walk around the Plaza de la Puerta del Sol and popped in the department store El Corte Ingles. However – we left no money in the department store.

In the evening there was a time for farewell dinner at the L' abbraccio Restaurant (Capitan Haya Street 51) It was raining heavily when we drove there by bus and again I admired the greenness of the city. The restaurant was nice with brick walls and the dinner just excellent. I had a tasty salad plate and a big bass and I think that also everybody else was enjoying the good food. Of course the situation was a little bit melancholy: It was the last change of meeting the partners of Open Gate. So after eating many sad goodbyes were said, many cuddles given. And also many thanks were said. Madrid had organized the splendid meeting - that was something we all agreed. Thank you Madrid! Thank you all the partners; it has been nice to be with you, to become friends with you. Let's hope our friendships will last regardless of the fact that the project has now come to an end.

The gate has been closed!

THURSDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2010

## YOU CALL IT SPORTS - OR?

*By Sinikka Mandell*

When figure skating competitions are going on somewhere I usually sit on my sofa watching TV, sometimes in breathless expectation when a male figure skater throws “away” his lady partner. How will that end? Will she survive the flight? Oh, yes! She makes quick rotations in the air, lands graciously and continues skating as if nothing had happened!

Figure skating on that level requires great effort, lots of training five days a week. Pair skating is certainly not a sport for everybody. I could recommend you some other sports practised in Finland that anybody can go in for – at least the first one.

Instead of skating on slippery ice and throwing your partner you might like to walk on a fine lawn in your sports shoes and throw a rubber boot. The **Finnish Boot Throwing** Association was founded in Vantaa in February 1992 and the first World Championships were held that year in Pielavesi. The next Indoor Finnish Championships

will be organised in Vantaa 26.2.2010 and the World Championships 2-4.7.2010 in Niepolomice, not far from Krakow. Also World Cup Competitions are held in this sport.

At home you can practise throwing boot of any kind, but in official competitions you have to follow the rules approved by the association. In men's series the official throwing boot is made of rubber in the size 43 and in women's series the size is 38, left or right boot. The weights and heights are specified, too, and there are different rules for young people and children. Last year the best personal result in the World Championships was 45,73 m for women and 56,94 m for men and both winners were Finns.

Another funny sport is **wife carrying**. It was invented in Sonkajärvi, eastern Finland, and the World Championships have been organised there every year since 1992.



The length of the track is 253,5 metres. It has two dry obstacles and one water obstacle, about one meter deep. The minimum weight of the wife is 49 kilos and she may be your own or your neighbour's wife or you may have found her farther afield. The style to carry the wife is free and also the costume. She must, however, wear a helmet and the best costume and the most entertaining couple will be awarded a special prize. The winning partners will also receive the lady's weight in beer.

**Wife carrying** obviously seems to be an easy thing for Estonians because they have dominated the competitions and obtained the World record, 55.5 seconds, in 2000. Finnish couples have been winners only twice, in 1992 and 2009.

One very important rule in this competition is that all the participants must have fun. Certainly even the audience enjoys these weird events because they attract thousands of spectators every year.

Take care and enjoy the BBC Content - One Minute World News - from last July. The video clip (picture in the next page) has been copied from

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8134866.stm>



MONDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2010

## The coin has another side

by Ritva Jokinen-Andov

Here in Finland, the ordinary citizens have for decades transferred to other countries. This started in 80 and 90's and continues today. This has resulted in unemployment, which affects all groups.

We are concerned about what kind of country we leave to our children. Education in our country is very good. But all can't find a job which matches their qualifications.

In this morning (27.1.2010) the newspaper reported that the country lost 74,000 jobs last year. It's also a lot of former, as there are only about 5,5 million citizens in Finland.

The industry is gradually disappearing from us. For example, in Vaasa there were created on 20-century textile and garment factories. The best known were the Vaasan Puuvilla (The Vaasa Cotton) with woven fabrics and men's shirt and suit factory Tiklas. In both women are employed.

In 1995 Tiklas-factory was closed. It caused a lot of grief and sorrow, even anger. All groups of employees were to leave, nothing is left, only the memories!

I was there at work, first as a temporary learning about the factory production. After my husband's death I stayed there because it seemed safe and familiar. I was a lone parent with 2 sons.

Tiklas produced fine men's suits. Several hundred thousands suits were sent to the Soviet Union, less in other countries, and of course, also be transmitted to domestic transaction.

I remember for one episode. We made 5 fine white suits for artists Finnish television programs, costumes are often ordered. In particular, I remember how we made those 5 white shakettes and are flown on the same evening in Helsinki, capital city of the TV-studio. The next night we saw how the artists men were fine in their shakettes. They are still well known and famous in our country. This happened in spring 1995. It was the beginning of the end. Tiklas work without interruption from 1923 to 1995.

SATURDAY, 30 JANUARY 2010

## Sports in Winter time in Finland

by Toini Koskinen

A seven years old girl skis to school more than 5 kilometers in the frost early in the morning even though it is over 20 degrees below zero. In her backpack there are a milk bottle, sandwiches and schoolbooks.

I am this girl.

This happened about 50 years ago. There weren't any schoolbuses, my parents didn't have a car even in those days.

In that time you got physical education enough daily. To day no one must ski to school, or walk, you can travel by bus or in your parents' car. In the schools there are now PE-lessons only twice a week. It is too little for children and youngsters.

The skiing is still a popular winter sport. Especially schoolboys and -girls like to skate and play ice hockey, of course.

A lot of people want to go to Lapland every year for skiing and downhill skiing. There is much snow always in winter time. The most special winter sport is the swimming in the hole in the ice. That has got a large amount of people following. They believe that they can't get a flu if they swim in ice-cold water. It eases joint and muscle pains too.

Poolswimming is anyway a popular sort throughout the year. The temperature in the water is 26-28 degrees.

Today such sports clubs and gymnastics clubs as Sport Gyms and Lady Lines organize many-sided exercises for everybody in the winter time, too. Now after Christmas the halls are full of members. The doctors recommend walking, exercising and dancing for senior citizens. It is a good thing.



## Alvar Aalto - Home and Studio in Helsinki

*By Leena Mäkipää*



The nature is very important for us Finns and it has inspired our artists, designers and architects, like our most important and famous architect Alvar Aalto (1898 - 1976). In the autumn 2008 I could visit as tourist his own home-museum and the studio in Munkkiniemi in Helsinki. I have taken lots of pictures and try to tell you about these two houses.

Alvar Aalto and his family moved to Helsinki in 1933 bought a plot in Munkkiniemi to build their own house there in 1936. It was a private home and at the same time it functioned as the Aalto's office where they met their clients. The main materials of the house are white bricks and dark wood. The flat roof, the roof terrace are all Functionalism. The facade towards the street is quite closed with a white brick wall. The little garden is on the south sunside. There are a small pool, stone wall, stone paved paths and climbing plants. From the living room there are large windows into the garden. From the roof-terrace they could see the sea in their time, but now the trees are so big, we could not see it more. The living room is dominated by Aino Aalto's black grand piano. The furniture are Aalto's wooden products of light birch. The paintings by his friends like Corbusier, Leger and Maholy-Nagy hang on the walls and there is not so much space but it is very cosy and homelike. The private rooms of the family are on the upper floor and it is not so much space there. The hall was everyday's living room, the portrait of Aalto's mother is there by the fireside.

In their own house Alvar and Aino Aalto applied their ideas about a good home. And Aalto spoke about how the own house was a paradise on earth. His central ideas about living and the home came together in the design. He lived in the house almost 40 years, until his death in 1976.

A half kilometer from the Aalto home they built the studio that was opened to the public in 2002. It is a sight for tourists and architects from all of the world, because it is one of the best examples of Aalto's architecture. The building was used as an architect's office until 1994. Now there are offices of the Alvar Aalto Foundation, the Alvar Aalto Academy and Museum.

We Finns know Alvar Aalto's genius production in industrial areas

factory complexes, standardized houses, university campus, studenthouses, hospitals, librarians, single-family houses. They always have a personal touch. And they are well situated in the nature and the place.

Alvar Aalto wrote already in 1935: Build naturally! Don't overdo it. Don't do anything without good reason. Everything superfluous turns ugly with time.

<http://www.alvaraalto.fi/>

### The Aalto House, Riihitie 20, Helsinki



### Studio Aalto, Tiilimäki 20, Helsinki



MONDAY, 25 JANUARY 2010

## The Day-Care/ Pre-School system in Finland (and in Vaasa)

by *Pirkko Riipinen*

The day-care and pre-school system in Finland is run by the ministry of Social Affairs and Health.



Day care in Finland comprises care, education and teaching to support children's balanced growth, development and learning. Local authorities are responsible for providing municipal day care for everyone who wants service. Every child under schoolage has right to day-care provided by the local authority either in a day-care center ("kindergarten") or in family centre. Compulsory education begins in Finland, when the child is seven years old. Before beginning primary school, young children can take part in preschool education, which supports learning by means of play.

First and second grade primary school pupils can take part in guided morning and afternoon activities. Special teaching for children with learning difficulties is organised for all school grades.

Day-care is provided in nurseries, children are taught to develop basic skills through creative play and social interaction. The teachers provides various materials and activities to motivate these children to learn the language and vocabulary of reading, mathematics, science as well as that of music, art and social behaviors.

The pre-schoolteachers' studying is in the universities with the other teachers'.

The city of Vaasa has a population of 59 000 people, 25% are swedish speaking and 75% finnish speaking and we have about 5000 under-school aged children.

Vaasa has 40 "kindergartens" and 220 family day-care mothers. In Vaasa almost 100% of 6 year olds attend kindergartens.

The children who are in municipal day-care are divided into half-care and all-day groups. For parents who work unusual hours such as shift workers, it has 24 hour day-care centers.

The size of groups varies according to age. Full-day groups of 3-6 year olds have 21 children and half day groups 26. The group of 1-2 years olds have 12 children.

Day-care centers are staffed by professional trained kindergarten teachers, day-care workers and child nurses.

Children with special needs are often placed in ordinary childrens groups in day-care centers or family day-care. In such a case the child might have a personal helper or the size of the group might be reduced.

In Vaasa we have some day-care groups for 5-6 years old children, speaking Finnish, named "Immersion groups". They will be teached in Swedish. When they start in the autumn they can not speak Swedish, that is the teaches language. Little by little they learn Swedish through the games, songs, drama and in the school they learn more – of cause Finnish, too. It is good and important to know in Vaasa our both languages.

SATURDAY, 23 JANUARY 2010

## Doris Day and a Teacher

by Arja Lindholm

DORIS DAY sang in the early `50th: *"When I was just a little girl I asked my mother what will I be."*

I did the same thing, I asked my mother the same question. She was quite a realistic lady and she answered: *"You are suitable for a teacher. You speak loudly, you repeat often your sayings and you look angry enough to get along with your pupils."* Because I´m an obedient person I started to study in Turku University and became a teacher in history and Finnish language. About 10 years I worked in a secondary school and a college. After that I was a headmasater in a comprehensive school on 20 years, and this was in Vaasa.

Since the year 1921 we have had in Finland a law for compulsory education for all the children. But some of them got only the elementary school education, some went to the secondary schools and some could study in the colleges. In the beginning of the decade 1970 we started to develop a new type of school: **comprehensive school**. Every child could have a same kind of teaching in the classes were they very talented pupils or - less talented all studying same kind of things. This kind of scool would last nine years for everyone. It was necessary to get new teaching methods as well. There were chosen 40 schools in Finland which began to do educational experiments in teaching different children together. And guess what: my school was one of them. Every teacher in school, we were about



50, wrote his or her opinion to school administration every year under 4 years. Especially it applied the teachers in mathematics and languages. We were quite motivated though the task was very hard.

We taught the teenagers between 13 and 16 years old. I like them because I'm not very mature myself so we get well along with each others. You can be quite hard against them but you will never be sarcastic. Young persons hate sarcasm. So all the teachers in my school and the pupils, too -anyhow most of them -worked hard to find the new teaching methods and the different ways to fulfill the standards.

And we succeeded! Finland took the comprehensive school as its system in the end of decade 1970. To day the Finnish school system is one of the best in the whole world. Civil servants and teachers are coming from everywhere to acquaint it e.g. from Italy, Spain and China. I am very proud, because I have been a tiny little part of developping this system. The teacher of history had get the opportunity to make school history.

So, when Doris Day went on her song: *The future `s not ours to see, que sera, sera*, she was right, but I myself am happy that my future - now of course the past -was what it was, a lifetimework in school.

FRIDAY, 22 JANUARY 2010

## MY CAREER AS A SECRETARY

by Tuovi Kaskinen

I retired from my job as a secretary two years ago. I worked as a secretary in different companies during my whole working career of 38 years. The first four years I worked as a secretary and translator in Helsinki. The last 32 years I worked as the managing director's secretary at the local energy company in Vaasa. During these 32 years I had four different bosses. My first boss was an elderly gentleman who addressed me and the other employees very formally. During my career as a secretary I noticed that it is important that the director and the secretary can work together without any friction. They form a team which together achieves more than they would alone. My first two bosses were older than I and the two latest bosses were younger than I. In my opinion the cooperation with the older bosses succeeded better than the cooperation with the younger ones. I think that it was easier for me to feel respect for the older bosses than for the younger ones.

My usual working hours consisted of answering the telephone, maintaining of the director's diary, reservations, meeting and travel arrangements, writing letters and notices etc. The most usual

languages were Finnish and Swedish, and sometimes even English and German. My older bosses used German in international connections and the younger ones used English. My first boss's native tongue was Swedish and the others had Finnish as their first language.

The Board of Directors used to go on a business trip abroad once a year. They usually visited some energy companies in order to exchange technical and business knowledge. I remember, for instance, a visit to nuclear power plant in Hungary. During this visit happened such a coincident that one visitor did not pass the security control to the nuclear power plant because he had a metallic implant in his hip. When the reason for peeping of the control device was clarified they let him go in. They had the same kind of security control as the airports usually have. Usually it was my duty to make travel and hotel reservations for the visit and to plan the itinerary in cooperation with the boss. Sometimes I even had the possibility to travel with the visiting group.

I also participated in making the annual report of our company. I gathered the information from the department managers, revised the suggested texts, translated these if necessary, had the report printed in cooperation with an advertising agency and a printing house. It was also my duty to proof-read the report pages and make the possible corrections. It was always exciting to see the final printed version. Usually it happened that in spite of the careful proofreading some mistakes remained in the final report. The report was printed in Finnish and Swedish.

During my working years I had the possibility to see the development of office techniques. I have used e.g. mechanic and electronic typewriters, shorthand writing, telex machines, word processors, desktop computers and laptops. I began my career in Sweden by typing export invoices in ten copies. If you made a typing mistake you had to correct the mistake in every ten carbon copy one by one. Now it is easy to correct typing mistakes by pressing only a button and print new corrected copies as many as you want.

I liked my job as a secretary. My working hours varied much due to the timetable of the boss. If I had in advance planned to do something, it sometimes didn't work out because of the changes in somebody else's timetable. The secretary had to be flexible. During the working hours it was difficult to concentrate on e.g. writing. In spite of these disturbances I liked the job as the secretary of the managing director. I felt that I was sitting in the centre of things with an excellent view to what was going on in the company.

THURSDAY, 21 JANUARY 2010

## VAASAN SASKIAT - SASKIAS IN VAASA

by Pirketta Levón

Vaasan Saskiat is an association that gives support to art painters. Similar associations are in eleven Finnish towns.

Vaasan Saskiat was established in 1971. Next year (2011) we will have our 40 years celebration and Saskia members around our country will be here during two days.

The art painters can get the support in form of money and other kind of help they need. Our association gets the money by having cafe in the Art Hall during "The Nights of Arts" happening in Vaasa and by selling the lotteries. Usually the lottery prize is a painting donated by an artist. We also hire paintings from our art collection.

Our association have meeting once a month (not in summer time). Usually we are visiting an artist who tells us about his works and the way he is working. Once a year we make a small trip somewhere. Last year we visited Tampere and the exhibition of Alex Katz and Helsinki where was the Picasso exhibition.

The name Saskia is well known for everybody in the art history and I am sure everybody knows her story.

The Open Gate Group of Vaasa is with five members to this association. I have been a member during 4 years and I really enjoy about it. Just now I'm the secretary in the association. With this I have got a lot of new friends and learned to know a lot of nice people.  
<http://vaasansaskiat.suntuubi.com/>

WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2010

## VAASA POSTAL HISTORY, BRIEFLY

by Martti Isomäki



Postal services has pursued in Vaasa for 365 years. The first evidence of the existence of postal service locations has been found in the Swedish postage rates in 1644, where the name **Vaasa** appears. At



that time, postal service concerned solely the needs of the state administration. However, among the Illiterate population the messages were transmitted mainly verbally, except when information of a threatening danger had to be quickly forwarded. Then fires were lit.

*The customs officer, "police chief" and the inn-keeper **Thomas Wattson*** acted as the first postmaster in Vaasa. As salary he received 32 "silverdollars" of tax relief and the exemption of communal burden. He had to supervise 16 "post peasants" (postitalonpoika) in Vaasa province. Vaasa was among the first post offices, which were established in Finland during the Swedish rule. Vaasa was located along the postal route circulating the Gulf of Bothnia, which acted primarily as a reserve postal connection for the rough but busy route over the Åland Sea. It was important for the super power Sweden to safeguard the flow of information via Finland to the Baltic countries. At that time one important point of the road network was the Korsholm castle and the center of administration around it.

#### **Post-Office Headquarters twice in Vaasa and Vaasa stamps**

Vaasa postal history is long and multiform. Under the Russian rule the local mail used its own postage stamps in postal traffic between Old and New Vaasa from November 1861 to June 1862. The Post-Office Headquarters have been situated Vaasa twice: first time under the War of Independence (1918) and second time under the Winter war (1939-40). During the War of Independence, specific stamps designed for "white Finland" were also used, because of the cash office and stamps stock had remained in Helsinki. These so-called *Vaasa stamps* differed only a little from the stamps used earlier.

#### **The New post**

Many things have happened in the World from the time of postmaster Thomas Wattson to the present day. In the long history, Vaasa Post Office has been involved in many locally and nationally important and interesting issues, which all are not possible to bring out in this context. I can only say that the time of the "old inn-post and postmasters" have expired and a new modern era has began. Today's state –owned postal company competes with other similar companies in the market. The basic task of postal service has remained: delivery of the messages and goods. And what is still important: Finnish post can still not forget its social service role after 365 years !

*My career* in the Finnish Postal Service lasted 45 years and during the period 1980-90 as the last postmaster in Vaasa. I`ve been retired since 1.12.1996.

Text source: Auli Alanko, Vaasan posti 350 vuotta–Vasa posten 350 år

Photos: My collections

More Finnish postal history: <http://www.posti.fi/english/postmuseum/collections/history/index.htm>



## ELECTRIC MOTORS IN FINLAND

By Juho Mattila



Squirrel cage motors are one type of Low-Voltage motors. Squirrel cage motor is the best motor in the World. We can say today so,

because they have:

- Simple and reliable construction
- Economic price and needed service is little
- High efficiency and easy starting
- Frequency converters allow the speed control of the motors
- Dimensions and efficiency classes are standardization international

The motors above are a. 100W....500 kW. These motors have been produced by ABB, two biggest in Vaasa and others in Europe or in Asia. Motors like these are used in industry round the world.

The first electric power station in Finland establish y. 1882 in Tampere, in the factories of the Finlayson.

Same time Gottfried Strömberg built up his first dynamo and it created electric light. He was that time young schoolboy. He learned very efficient, first in Finland and later in Germany. He worked both teacher and owner of a business. He managed so good that his name was like brand within all electric products in Finland.

Year 1965 when I started in Strömberg, first in Helsinki and later here in Vaasa, the company operated only domestic market. The competitors from other countries began to occur in our market and it was necessary to react by our company. But it was difficult!

Engineers in Finland were not educated for international tasks. Y.

1970 was established the first marketing office in Stockholm.

Also the name Strömberg was not known in the other countries. In Europe we were a little and unknown motor manufacture. The situation began to be very difficult !

The fusion came true in the end of 1980. ASEA, Strömberg and AEG built up the new company, ABB. Head office of the company was in Switzerland.

For us it was very lucky solution. We could utilize the marketing network of ABB. It was worldwide and our export increased very soon.

I am proud when I can say, that our motors were good and competitiveness. We survived fine!

Product arrangements started, motor factories in France, Germany and Denmark were closed very soon. Production of smaller motors in Vaasa were ended and we concentrated bigger motors, in power area 50 kW...1000 kW. Motor factory in Vaasa was the biggest unit in this area round the world. Export from Vaasa motor factory was about 85 % that time, today it can be even higher!

Global competition is hard. It means that motors or their parts must be produced the places where it is the most economic and the quality is good. It is the big challenge!

TUESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2010

## THE FIRST EXPERIENCES OF THE COMPUTERS

*by Hilikka Perttula*

It was in the beginning of 1980 when the first PC (personal computers) came to our school. The school was a vocational institution. The students were from 16 years to 50 years. They came from comprehensive school and upper secondary school. Also there were adults, who had to change their profession because allergy or suchlike.



I and most of the other teachers had hardly seen a computer and never touch one. We teacher had a one week course in the summer. A young man from the importer company was the teacher of the course. He came in the classroom and said: Hello, take our diskettes and format them. None of us knew what the diskette is neither what the format is. Gradually we learnt to know that and something else so much that we could start to learn by ourselves. I know that it sounds duffs today but almost 30 years ago everything of the computer was new and not even seen before.

Then we had to go with the students to the classroom. I don't know who of us was more excited the students or the teacher. It was only 10 computers and the students were 15 or 20. The young boys were anxious and ran forward to get the computer for themselves. Especially the older students were a little afraid. They told to teacher that they don't want to sit alone by the machine, they rather only follow from the distance. Already after the first lesson they were equally anxious as the boys.

Shortly after that we got more computers so that everybody got one for himself. To use a computer was much different than today. It was no mouse, you had to learn to use the function keys and many other keys which you today can do with the mouse. The programmes were more difficult to use than today. All our programmes were in English, so that students with different mother tongue could use them. So it was much to learn and to remember. The students were interested to work with the computer and it happened more than ones that the student knew more than the teacher. It didn't matter, the essential was that the problems were solved.

THURSDAY, 14 JANUARY 2010

## THE FINNISH LEGAL SYSTEM

*by Hilve Leino-Pouttu*

It is year 1979. A bachelor of Faculty of Law from the University of Helsinki is staying in Kauhava upstairs of a bank. She has a bed, one armchair, and a table and of course some books on a floor. .and further to be noticed .... a TV, the lottery prize. But, better not to tell anyone about the TV because she has no license to watch it. Still she knows perfectly well that to watch a TV without a license is forbidden by law, but the license costs and she is so short of money. She is training in the District Court of Kauhava for to become a judge. Everyone in the court knows that she has the TV without the TV license, but they say nothing. However it happens when she had to act as the chairman of her first legal proceedings in the courtroom she is among other matters given a case of an illegal TV watching. That is too much for her sense of justice. Three days before the trial she buys a TV license.



Legal security is one of the fundamental rights of the people of Finland. Under the Constitution of Finland everyone is entitled to have her or his case heard without undue delay by a court or other authority. And also any use of public powers must be based on law. The courts are independent, bound only by law. One can handle legal matters in the court proceedings by oneself, but in many cases professional assistance is needed. One should pay for the legal assistance, but if you cannot afford it a legal aid gives the possibility to obtain necessary assistance in all sorts of legal matters and one can also have a cost free trial.

The Finnish court organization is very clear.

The district courts deal with criminal cases such as thefts and assaults ... and watching a TV without a license ... and civil cases such as business conflicts, a quarrel about a rent and petitionary matters such as divorces and a custody of children etc. The district courts are also places where one had to practise after graduation from the faculty of law of one of the universities in Finland to be entitled to work as a judge. There are 27 district courts in Finland. Vaasa has one. The district courts have beside district judges also lay members, who participate in making a decision in certain criminal matters. These cases there are three lay judges and the ordinary judge of the district court acting as the chairman. If one is not satisfied with a decision of the district court the decision can normally be appealed in a court of appeal. We have all together six appeal courts, one in Vaasa. The decisions of the courts of appeal can be appealed in the Supreme Court if the Supreme Court grants leave to appeal. The Supreme Court is situated in Helsinki.

The administrative courts deal with decisions made by the authorities E.g. to build a house needs a licence of a local authority. If a person or a corporation think that the decision of state or the local authority is illegal he can appeal against the decision in an administrative court. There are eight administrative courts in Finland and one of those is in Vaasa. In most cases it is possible to appeal further to the Supreme Administrative Court in Helsinki.

In addition we have also four special courts: the Market Court, the Labour Court, the Insurance Court and the High Court of Impeachment.

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By the way

The person I told you about at the very beginning was – as you might guess – nobody else but I. myself ...

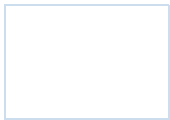


TUESDAY, 12 JANUARY 2010

## WORLD HERITAGE SITES

by Esko Kansanaho

To contact the traditional nature conservation and the cultural heritage is a quite new project. The UNESCO's general agreement was accepted in 1972 and now these Sites include 689 cultural, 179 natural and 25 mixed properties. World Heritage Sites supplements that environmental protection, which project national and local places. Where the Southern and Middle Europe offer cultural objects so Finland offer nature-experience.



World Heritage Sites: Examples in the various countries.

Czech: 13 objects: e.g. Gardens and Castle at Kroměříž

Finland: 8 objects: e.g. Kvarken Archipelago, the only naturobject in Finland

Italian: 44 objects: e.g. The Dolomites and the historic centres of the old towns.

Poland: 13 objects: e.g. Belovezhskaya Pushcha / Białowieża Forest

Spain: 31 objects: e.g. Doñana National Park.

### KVARKEN ARCHIPELAGO

The members who were in Vaasa in September could see a little glimpse of Vaasa archipelago. The outermost part of Vaasa archipelago and also the opposite coast on the Swedish side compose a



harmonious World Heritage object: Kvarken Archipelago/High Coast. Where the rise of the earth's surface is possible to see with a unique way and it represents extraordinary beautiful landscape



Already now there is some criticism that the objects are too many. To the growing objects there isn't possibilities to get enough money. Many objects are falling into delay with each passing year, in spite of the strict protection. The urbanisation and the "turismrush" are not only positive to the World Heritage Sites. In many objects the turismvolume has been snowballing. Here in outlying Finland we have not yet this kind of fear but in the old cities this problem is founded.

And the urbanisation has always been based on the early towns ruins. Therefore under the old towns there are to many meters depth "culturerich" which make difficult to build new and ex. in Rome it has done the building of a new metro almost impossible, like it is illustrated excellent in Fellini's Roma-film.

We have a hope, that we will have enough capital to protect all old, valuable objects.

The pictures of The Metsähallitus(Finnish Forest and Park Service) procure: Merenkurkku-Kvarken.

FRIDAY, 8 JANUARY 2010

## Group Discussions

### Discussions in Group 4

Ilkka Virtanen

The discussions in Group 4 during Autumn 2009 were rather lively. The topics touched included personal diaries, recipes, Christmas traditions etc. The text were in many cases equipped with photos. A collage of the texts can be found at the address [http://lipas.uwasa.fi/~itv/Autumn\\_2009\\_G4.pdf](http://lipas.uwasa.fi/~itv/Autumn_2009_G4.pdf)

The texts are in a non-edited form, in the form the individual members have sent them to the group. Only the photos have been embedded into the texts.

Have a good time with the texts!

## HIGHER EDUCATION IN FINLAND

Ilkka Virtanen

### Finnish education system in brief



The Finnish education system consists of voluntary pre-school, compulsory comprehensive school, upper secondary level education (upper secondary school and vocational school), higher education and adult education.

**Pre-school education** is intended for six year old children, who will start their compulsory education in the following year. Over 90 % of the entire age group attend this voluntary education. It is normally provided in day care centres.

**Comprehensive school** provides a nine-year educational programme (with a voluntary 10th form) for all school-aged children, beginning at the age of seven. The largely standard comprehensive school curriculum prepares pupils for further studies at upper secondary level.

After comprehensive school, at the **upper secondary level**, there is a choice between the general upper secondary school and a vocational institution. On completion of the upper secondary school, students take the national matriculation examination. The general upper secondary education, together with the matriculation examination, qualifies students for all higher education studies. Finnish vocational education is traditionally institution-based; apprenticeship training covers only about 10 per cent of the intake to initial vocational training. Taught courses form the core of the programmes, but on-the-job training is nowadays included in the study programmes in all fields. From 2001 onwards all the qualifications are based on three-year courses and they produce general eligibility for higher education.



The Finnish **higher education** has been developed during the last two decades as a system of two parallel sectors, the university sector and the non-university sector comprising the polytechnics. Universities focus on scientific research and education based on research. Polytechnics are professionally oriented higher education institutions. In addition to their educational role, polytechnics conduct R&D that serves teaching and the world of work.

**Adult education**, which is designed for the entire working-age

population, has expanded rapidly especially during the last ten years. General adult education is provided by evening schools, local adult education centres (e.g. Vaasa-opisto), folk high schools, and summer universities. Vocational adult education is given by most vocational institutions and specifically by vocational adult education centres. At polytechnics adult education is provided on the same degree programmes as education for young students and it leads to the same polytechnic degrees. In addition, polytechnics offer professional specialisation studies as a form of continuing education. Adult education at universities comprises further education and open university education and it is offered by their own continuing education centres.

### **The binary system of Finnish higher education**

The mission of **the universities** is to promote free research and scientific and artistic education, provide higher education based on research, and educate students to serve their country and humanity. In carrying out this mission, universities must interact with the surrounding society and strengthen the impact of research findings and artistic activities on society. The university sector consists of 16 (20 before the large-scale university reform implemented in the beginning of 2010) universities, nine of which are multi-faculty universities and seven are specialised institutions. Of the specialised institutions two are universities of technology, one is a school of economics and business administration, and the remaining four are art academies. In addition, university-level education is provided at the National Defence College under the Ministry of Defence. All institutions in the university sector carry out research and confer doctorates.

The Finnish **polytechnic** system was built during the 1990's to create a non-university sector of higher education. It was founded on the ground of institutions which previously provided post-secondary vocational education. The polytechnics form nowadays a nationwide network of regional institutions of higher education. There are 26 polytechnics, most of which are multifield and operate in several units. Polytechnics train professionals in response to labour market needs and conduct R&D which supports instruction and promotes regional development in particular. Polytechnic-level education is also provided at the Police College, which operates under the Ministry of the Interior.

### **Two big university reforms in the 2000's**

The Finnish universities experienced a **degree reform** in the middle of the last decennium. From the year 2005 onwards, the Finnish universities follow the education system based on the Bologna process. The degree system is so called 3 + 2 + 4 system. Students study first for Bachelor's degree (3 years) and after that for Master's



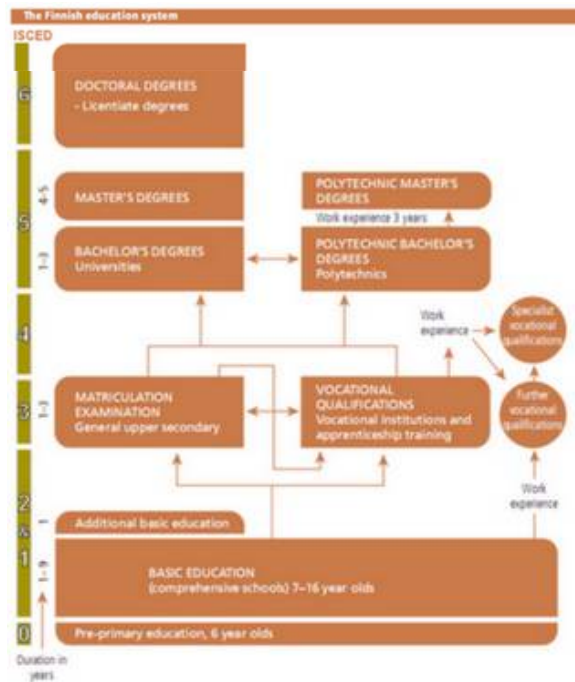
degree (2 years). The main scientific or artistic postgraduate degree is Doctor's degree (4 years) with an intermediate (not compulsory) Licentiate's degree.

Studies are quantified as credits (ECTS). One year of full-time study corresponds to 60 credits. The extent of the Bachelor's degree is 180 credits and takes three years. The Master's degree is 120 credits, which means two years of full-time study on top of the Bachelor's degree. University postgraduate education aims at a doctoral degree. In addition to the required studies, doctoral students prepare a dissertation, which they defend in public. The requirement for postgraduate studies is a Master's or corresponding degree. The nominal duration of full-time doctoral studies is four years.

The other **big university reform**, the biggest since the reforms in the 1960's and 1970's, was the preparation of the new Universities Act. Under the new Universities Act, which was passed by Parliament in June 2009, Finnish universities have become independent corporations under public law or foundations under private law. The universities have operated in their new form from 1 January 2010 onwards. Their operations are built on the freedom of education and research and university autonomy. At the same time, the universities' management and decision-making system was thoroughly reformed.

The reform will give universities more power by reducing the steering of universities by state administration. The universities will therefore no longer be developed as part of state administration, but in terms of their main mission: education and research. University staff will no longer be employed by the State. Civil-service employment relationships will become contractual employment relationships, and universities will negotiate in collective bargaining. The universities will be able to pursue independent human resources policies, improve their attractiveness as an employer and in this way strengthen their competitive advantage in order to recruit the best personnel.

The universities will be better placed to make the best use of their income from capital and to supplement their financing with donations and business activities. This will facilitate the targeting of research and education resources and allow the universities to develop stronger profiles on the basis of their strengths. Government will, however, continue to guarantee sufficient core funding tied to the rise in costs for the universities. In addition, the universities will be able to apply for competed public funding and use the revenue from their business ventures, donations and the return on their capital for financing their operations.



The Finnish education system (source: Wikipedia)

WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2009

## Agreements of the Vaasa Meeting

1. Each partner will choose max 20 of the texts written by students to be published and send them by the end of the year 2009 to Marie Matejakova (matejakova(at)chello.cz).
2. Each partner will produce DVD-material or a live presentation in English to the meeting in Madrid June 2010. The DVD-material or the presentation should be something inspiring, for example a new way of studying English, a play, a song or so on – something funny.
3. An evaluation of the student's studies should be made and therefore send the questions/proposals to Vlasta Kreckova (Kreckova(at)fel.cvut.cz) by the end of the year 2009.
4. The students should be encouraged to use the latest technology in the project, e.g. iPod, Facebook, Skype, but at least the email.
5. The national identity and heritage will be in focus in the project studies. At the same time the students will learn about the other countries in the project by reading, by conversations and by email-group discussions. It has been noticed that the communication between the students has already increased and become better.
6. The next and the last meeting of the project will be from 6th to 8th of June in 2010 in Madrid, Spain. The attendance of the meeting should be informed to Beatriz Luna

(beatriz.luna(at)educa.madrid.org) by the end of April 2010.

7. The final report of the project will be written after the meeting in Madrid June 2010. The Czech partner will prepare the report by the end of May 2010.

SUNDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2009

## THREE DAYS IN VAASA

*by Hilve Leino-Pouttu*

**Thursday 24 September 2009**

The big day of Open Gate seminar in Vaasa was here. Kaisa and Saija had done programmes, altered them, tried to find places where to make tours with our greatly expected visitors, worried about the weather and – at the same time – enjoyed all the reparations. Arja had made muffins, Pirkko date cakes, Ilkka taken care of special Bothnia cheese, cloudberry jam and cranberry and lingonberry juices, Rauni arranged smoked whitefish and so on. It also has been decided about transport from place to place. All of us had for days kept our fingers cross hoping for good weather. Autumn in Vaasa at it's best may be a most glorious season: the high cold-blue sky above autumn coloured trees and crispy clear air. But it can also be very nasty with hard wind and almost icy-cold rain beating against a walker in a street.

As an answer to our prayers a reasonably good weather welcomed our guests in Thursday when they arrived in Vaasa close to the evening. Partners from Spain had already spent a day in Helsinki and among others visited the Church of the Temple Square and Picasso's exposition in the Ateneum. Alena, Marie, Vêra and Vlasta from Czech Republic had had trouble in Helsinki. Their airplane from Helsinki to Vaasa had not been in order and they had been obligated to go into another plane and so they arrived in Vaasa quite late. Fortunately Juho who was fetching them at the airport is "a cool fellow" so he waited patiently and brought them all to the Governor's House in the very last minute for to get something to eat. The opening dinner at the Governor's House of Vaasa had already started about 19.30 and we were welcomed by Marjatta Vehkaoja the member of our city council. She told little about the building that has been build by a factory owner Gustav Wasastjerna in 1863-1865. The style of the house imitates the English Gothic style. The house has been as an official residence for the governors in 1965-98. Nowadays the house in used as the representative premises. Also the Finnish Senate convened temporarily in the house during the war in 1918. At that time the supreme commander C. G. Mannerheim has also had a room here. That room is now reconstructed.



I think the Governor's house was a very nice place to start our seminar: plenty of room with beautiful furniture and pictures on the walls and enough tables to have dinner: salad, egg rolls and beetroot temptation. It was pity that our partners from

Poland were not able to come. We really missed them. We missed also partners from Italy, because only two coordinators were on the spot. But we were happy that as many as 18 Spanish partners were with us. And of course almost everyone of the members of Open Gate of Vaasa were present. The Spanish partners entertained us by singing and dancing and also Saija told us something about the building. We finished rather early and many of us walked in quiet streets to hotels and homes. Everything is near in Vaasa. The Spanish and Italians were staying at the Apple Hotel and people from Czech Republic in the old family hotel Astoria, both hotels near the railway - and bus station of Vaasa.

### **Friday 25 September 2009**

When I opened my eyes in the morning I saw a cloudy sky. And the red light was spreading out in clouds. Oh, no! – I thought – Not that! Because we all know that a red of dawn means bad weather for the coming day as well as red clouds at twilight mean good weather for the next day. Anyhow – it was not raining and about at 9.30 o'clock the partners of the seminar with smiling faces had found their way to Palosaari on the top floor of the building of the Tritonia Academic Library. A panorama from windows of the top floor over a sea and many islands was really magnificent. Unfortunately autumn colours of trees were not yet here and some drops of rain made us – the hosts – a bit unsure.

After short social discussions and coffee and tea it was time to open the seminar. Sinikka and Martti started the meeting with music playing together songs “Two boys from Kurikka” (“Kaksipa poikaa Kurikasta”) and “Emma-waltz” (“Emma-valssi”).



Then there were short but very interesting presentations of partner groups. The Italians showed some pictures of our visit in Rome and the Czechs about their beautiful national costumes and of course every party told how they have carried on with their works during the summer. As the summer has been a time for a holiday big projects had not been completed. Also we had done only little except Kaisa and Saija, who have done the reparations for this meeting.

After the lunch at the Matilda-student restaurant in Tervahovi building – that is a main building in the university campus – we were

divided into four groups for discussions. Arja acted as a chairman in the group I was a member of and we had one member from Italy and Czech Republic and four from Spain and Finland. We had very lively discussions about hobbies, possibilities of education of older people – and also generally – families and so on . So – before we even noticed it was time to leave the University and go to the Kuntsi Museum of Modern Art. A way there went along the seaside so many of us went on foot. The Kuntsi Museum of Modern Art is situated in a former custom house in the Inner Harbour of Vaasa. The museum is quite new, opened to the public in 2007 and it is named after consul Simo Kuntsi, who had in 1971 presented his large art collection to his hometown Vaasa. In the museum one can find classic collections of contemporary art covering pop art, kinetic art, surrealism, postmodernism, new expressionism and so on. Right now the museum – as a loan from the Art Museum of Estonia – presents collection of artworks from Estonia’s recent past called “Under the Red Banners (Punaisten lippujen alla)” All these works of art have been made under the period of Stalin’s rule and the themes of the exposition deal with the Second World War, Stalin’s cult, heroes of labour and the building of New Soviet Estonia.



Then there was a surprise – even for us living in Vaasa. The Mine Ship Pohjanmaa (Bothnia) had dropped anchors in the Inner Harbour. Vaasa happens to be the Pohjanmaa’s hometown, so the ship visits Vaasa at least once a year and luckily the visiting time

happened to be now. It is the very grand grey coloured ship and almost everyone took pictures of it and handsome sailors on it’s bridge. Our boat the Tiira (tern) with which we were supposed to sail to Janne’s Saloon seemed so hopelessly small compared with the Pohjanmaa. But we all climbed bravely into the Tiira and soon found a place to sit on. Some were sitting inside in a cabin but defiant ones took their seats on deck. It was a bit windy and otherwise cold but all the same everyone was feeling quite well when we arrived at Janne’s Saloon in the Island of Kuusisaari in the Archipelago of Vaasa. And while sitting on a terrace of the saloon after eating salmon soup or ham casserole the sun came out. I think also a swan with two little ones and a sea grouse we saw on the way liked that sunshine. Still – after sitting half an hour in the boat from the saloon to the Harbour of the University we again were stiff with cold.

The sun really had not warmed us up as much as we would had liked, so we had to take the matter into our own hands. And an answer was a sauna! The University has the sauna of it’s own and it was immediately put on. I think that most of our guests visited the sauna and I suppose that many of them also liked it. I am very sure that all of our guests would have liked it at summertime when we had had a

possibility to swim in the sea. The sauna had been under a renovation and we were the first ones to use it after that. And so it happened that ovens of a kitchen were out of order: it was not possible to warm sausages and pies. But we had salads and bread and butter – and everyone seemed to be happy with that. Well – better to be, because the Father Christmas was looking around a corner. When I was a child I was before Christmas told to be nice because the Father Christmas would see if I was naughty and if so I would not get any presents. But – that he was on the move at that time of the year! It means that one had to be good all the year round. Huh-huh! Many of our our visitors wanted to be in the same picture with Father Christmas. I think their grandchildren will be very pleased to see that their grandparents have a good relationship with Father Christmas.

### **Saturday 26 September 2009**

Only the coordinators started to work in the morning. We others had time off. I think that many our guests were looking around for to find things to take home as suovenirs. I went to City-Market to fetch some milk and met there three good humoured Spanish ladies looking something to their grandchildren. And I was very shamed of not to be able to tell them where to find the Muumi Troll.

All of us met each other at 12 o'clock at the Auditorium of Vaasa-Opisto. Vaasa-Opisto (the name has been changed during the years) has been open to people over 100 years. So it is one of the oldest worker's institute of Finland. Saija, who is the substitute of the headmistress of Vaasa-Opisto told us little about the institute. Then the same groups which had been together yesterday got again together for to decide how to carry on ... how to keep in touch with the members of the group until we will see again in Madrid in June 2010. Because Arja our chairman had at home prepared proposals we others got off lightly. We all agreed that the proposals were very suitable ended. We will make contact with each other by e-mail. A problem is that there are some who have not got e-mail address.

After working "so hard" – thank you Arja, it was you who did the work – it was time for lunch at the Vaasa-Opisto's Café. The lunch was very common everyday meal: mashed potatoes with meatballs and lingonberry. And then back to the Auditorium for to present the future plans of the groups. The plans of all four groups were quite parallel: to keep contact with each other by e-mail. Not even tobics differed much. We are going to write about feelings of the meeting in Vaasa, our everyday routines, waiting of Christmas and so on. One group had also had time to talk about politics and they had decided to dismiss the Prime Ministers of Italy and Finland.

When the official programs of the seminar were over we had the whole afternoon free. Arja took couple of Spanish to see the ruins of Old Vaasa where Charles IX of Sweden had founded the town in 1606. The town burned down in 1852 and the new town of Vaasa was built on the coast some kilometers from the old one. By the way – the



oldest library of Finland has been set up in Vaasa. Arja had had difficulties while telling about our national poet J L Runeberg “A poet – what that is?” Rauni sorted the situation out starting to recitate one of Runeberg’s poem with high flown.

We others spreaded out for to do some shopping on the way to the Ostrobothnian Museum and Terranova the Kvarken Nature Centre. A guided tour there was ever so interesting even for us who had been in the Centre many times before. We were told about an earthrising at the Kvarken between Finland and Sweden In 100 years time the rising is about one meter. So with time we will be able to walk with dry feet from Finland to Sweden – oh – maybe that will not happen in our time. The Kvarken’s shallow and beautiful archipelago with the High Coast of Sweden form a Unesco World Heritage Area. In Terranova they had also displays of the nature and animals of Northern Europe. I think that our visitors were especially interested in animals which live in our nature particularly big ones like bears and wolves. We also saw a caveman by a campfire. From nature and wild life back to cultural activites! Ilkka had made the use of his influential connections and arranged us



tickets of the entertainment concert given jointly by the Finnish Navy Band and the Ostrobothnian Military Band. So we hurried back to the centre of the city to the City Hall of Vaasa where the concert was taken place. The music was largely composed by Finnish composers and contained also humorous tones

The days gone by had been full of activities. And in Saturday evening our meeting had turned towards it’s end. Our last mutual dinner took place at Strampen a summer restaurant by the sea. We were made to sit so that there was always somebody not from your own country sitting next to you. So we were forced to use English while chatting with each other. And I must say the conversations seemed to be very lively. Francisco who sat next to me found a solution: it is easier to write than to speak, so we took out a pencil and paper and after that also our “conversation” was ever so lively. And I am really shamed that I teased him about a present to his wife. I did not know that his money had been stolen in Helsinki. I am so sorry! Hilikka was going to have a birthday on coming Sunday so we all wished her luck by singing “Happy birthday dear Hilikka!” And so ... while we were eating and talking and having fun at Strampen the evening was a minute for minute getting darker. The nearby staying Mina Ship Pohjanmaa was foodlit. The lights of the lamps were dancing on waves. It was time to say the farewell to the friends, to give hugs and wish to everyone all the best.

Thank you all!

It has been nice to see you!

## Syllabus

### Syllabus of the Open Gate Project

#### ***Aims of the Open Gate -project***

Enhancing the mutual knowledge of EU nations as to their historical development and mentality. Looking for ways to surmount differences in mentality, and so contribute to mutual understanding and cooperation.

The project will support the consciousness of being member of not only of one's nation but of the community of European countries as well and suppress possible prejudices. Even within the united Europe, it is still important to retain national identities and to promote knowledge about them. Therefore, the project includes the study and mutual information on cultural heritage, national customs and traditions typical for each participating country, that are part of cultural heritage, strengthen the national self-consciousness and, at the same time, form a part of cultural heritage of Europe.

Each participating institution will create its own database of texts, pictures, ev. multimedia presentations, concerning the above mentioned themes. The chosen works will be presented on the official website of the project.

The communication among project members will be mostly done electronically and in English. This also includes enhancing the project participants' attitude to ICT and practical computer work as well as improvement of their foreign language knowledge.

The project activities will include five international seminars:

Prague 2008/10/23.-26.

Krakow 2009/02/19.-22.

Rome 2009/06/11.-14.

Vaasa 2009/09/24.-27.

Madrid 2010/06

#### **English Courses**

##### ***Open Gate to English***

Time of the course:

Tuesdays at 10.00-11.30 a.m..every two weeks (even weeks), in class room 202.

Autumn 29.9.-8.12. '09 (6 times 2 lessons, totally 12 lessons)

Spring 12.1. – 4.5. '10 (10 times 2 lessons, totally 20 lessons)

Alltogether 32 lessons, course fee 38 euros/ person.

Teacher: M.A. Leena Ekoluoma

*Course syllabus:* A refresher course for those participants in Open

Gate Project who wish to improve their written and spoken skills in English. Knowledge of national identities, cultural heritage, national customs and traditions typical for European countries. Students can also propose other topics of interest. Exercises both in oral and written skills.

Organized by: Vaasa-opisto

### ***English Before Noon***

Time of the course: On Wednesdays 10.30am-12.00am, from 10th of September 2008 until 26th of November 2008 and from 14th of January 2009 until 8th of April 2009.

Teacher: Leena Ekoluoma FK

*Course syllabus:* A course for senior citizens who have an intermediate level of English and would like to improve their spoken skills in English. We will practice to survive in everyday situations and have discussions on various topics. Theme Great Britain. Level 4 (int. B1).

Organized by: Vaasa-opisto

### ***Traveller's English***

On Wednesdays at 10.30am-12.00am starting on 15th of April 2009. Six lectures.

Teacher: Leena Ekoluoma FK

*Course syllabus:* Come to this course and practice with us how to survive in different kinds of situations you might come to when travelling abroad, eg. at a hotel, at a bank or when shopping and sightseeing. We also talk about what to do if you get lost. Level 3-4 (int. B1-B2).

Organized by: Vaasa-opisto

### **Using Computers**

Time of the course: During the spring of 2009

Teacher: BSc, econ. Klaus Salonen

*Course syllabus:* Supporting participants in writing and maintaining text on our webpages and in the general use of computers. The teaching is targeted to participants who need the support. The lessons are being held during the spring of 2009 for a total of 12 lessons and thereafter as needed.

Organized by Vaasa-opisto

### **Cultural Studies**

Time of the course: once a month on Thursdays at 10 to 12 am from the beginning of January 2009.

Teachers: FM Marko Hautala and FM Saija Alanko (from the beginning of April 2009)

*Course syllabus:* These studies will be kept throughout the Open Gate -project. In these lectures the students produce texts in English about Finnish culture and national heritage as well as create understanding of the cultures of the other participating countries.

Written texts will be linked to the blogpage of the Finnish Open Gate -group and through that to the official webpage of the international Open Gate -project.

Organized by Vaasa-opisto

TUESDAY, 7 JULY 2009

## FOUR DAYS IN ROME

*by Hilve Leino-Pouttu*

**Thursday 11 June 2009**

The grey light rested above the trees and the quiet sea: the early summer day was already waken up but it had not yet decided will it rain or be only cloudy when Rauni picked Leena and me up at our doors. We happen to live very near each other. Though we were reasonable early at the airport there was somebody already waiting and one by one the whole group of 17 was there ready to go. We left Vaasa at 6.10 a.m. changed planes in Helsinki and were in Rome before noon. And there we soon noticed that under Italy's sky the sun had already in the very morning decided to smile broadly. Air was so softly warm and after a long walk at the railway station it turned out to be hot. The real summer: people with summer dresses and sandals! A train was packed with people but somehow at the end each of us found a place to sit on. I found a place in a compartment where a Swedish family with two little girls and huge suitcases were staying – and a man was speaking Finnish with a right accent. The World is small! Bushes with red, white and pink flowers (oleanders?) lined the way from L. Da Vinci Airport of Fiumicino to Termini Station. And pines with umbrellas and palm trees which always indicate summer for us northern people!

Suitcases and woollen panties to the hotel (Hotel Fiamma via Gaeta 61) and out again for a lunch hunting. There seemed to be at least one restaurant in every block and we were soon sitting at table covered with a white tablecloth. Food and wine was good. The opening party didn't begin until 19.30 o'clock so we had before it plenty of time to wander about. Some of us started to observe the monuments of Rome and some enjoyed a feeling of a big city sitting at street cafes and observing an atmosphere. And I heard that someone had already had time to write postcards to home. Actually - the most difficulties with postcards were to find a letterbox where to drop them. Kaisa was unlucky: She was forced to spent the whole hot afternoon with me at a health centre because I had some trouble with my eye. But – she was proved to be very useful acting as an interpreter also for other tourists who could not speak Italian. I was so proud of her!

The official opening party took place at UPTER, Palazzo Englefield (via Quattro Novembre 157) where we, the partners from Italy, Czech

Republic, Poland, Spain and Finland gathered together more or less punctually half past seven (p.m.). On the way to UPTER we were told that a water of hydrants – these were seen quite often – was drinkable. Indeed, the taste of the water was very refreshing! Blessed Rome!

It was really nice to see friends. Many of us knew already each other but – of course - there were also those who were taking part in the meetings for the first time. In these situations I always feel a bit lost because I don't speak English well enough, still I am not the only one with broken English. There were tablefuls of food and everything seemed to be very tasty. The terrace in the evening sun was a wonderful place to stay and associate with friends. In spite of the evening hours the sun was very warm, the blue sky was checked with smokes of aeroplanes and swallows glided about. The Finnish poet called Eeva-Liisa Manner has said that a horse is the most beautiful animal of all. In making a horse He succeeded best! I do not agree with her. I think that while creating a swallow He succeeded best.

### **Friday 12 June 2009**

What a surprise, the sun was shining again! Or ... maybe it was the surprise only for us, the people of Vaasa. After a long season of cold weather we almost kneeled down in front of this warmth, even the wind was blowing so softly. But – mind you – it slowed our steps so that many tourist attractions we had planned to see are still waiting for us. Anyway - our working day started at 9.30 a.m. with the presentation of the partner groups' activities and web sites. All groups have introduced their members with pictures, told about some events of their lives and the history of their countries, maybe national food and how to make it (Pasta e Fagioli, Spanish Potato Omelette etc). The special feature of our web site was the songs by Sinikka. After the coffee break we were divided into four groups of different nationalities. We were supposed to have discussions on the living situations of the partner countries. It was ever so interesting to make comparisons between different countries e.g. the last voting of EU, rents of flats, pay scales, immigration, at what age children are leaving their parent's home... In Italy e.g. old people live at home as long as possible and a servant is employed to live with her or him. Unfortunately the time run out, the lunch was waiting. We were supposed to make comments about these conversations on Saturday morning but again – there were no time for that. I personally hope that we can carry on with these subjects in Vaasa in September.

After lunch there was something very nice to see. Two ladies made Tiramisu under our supervision. And we – at least we women – watched with an admiration how systematically without any unnecessary movement the skilled cook made her job. And the cake tasted delicious – so I was told. While we were our mouth watering waiting for to get a piece of that cake we were told about the sightseeing tours all together three different ones organized by Italian students. There was so much to see. Rome is about 1285 km<sup>2</sup>

(more than 2,5 million inhabitants and about 14,5 tourists a year) and full of history starting from the time before Christ, art and beautiful buildings and monuments of its own and those that have been brought there from other countries

Two of the tours started from Piazza Venezia and Altar of the Fatherland (Altare della Patria) and one from Colosseum. The tour 2 (my group) gathered at Colosseum and we did it mostly by walking. I must admit I am not able to tell the streets we went by. Anyway we walked much, saw a lot and very interesting things indeed. I also noticed on few buildings those mysterious letters S.P.Q.R. that I had already seen above the door of UPTER. Also Ilkka had seen them and Arja – as the teacher of history – told that they are Latin and dated back to Ancient Rome. They mean “ The Senate of Rome and the People”. Nowadays one can see them here and there and also on the Coat-of-Arms of Rome.

We stopped for a long time by the Roman ruins, the heart of Ancient Rome. The area is quite large and excavations are still going on. Somehow one can here feel the spirits of people who have lived here before the birth of Christ and a few centuries after that. Monuments are named after those in power but they are also monuments of hundreds – or thousands - of unknown workers. On this hot afternoon it was very easy to understand that building of these constructions have demanded much of sweat and blood. And it was also easy to understand why Berlusconi, the Prime Minister of Italy did not get very excited about our wooden church from 1700-century.

The Month of the Truth was situated under the roof behind the bars. Because we passed it by bus (or did we?) we were not able to text its power. Oh – maybe the bars were just for the safety of us. I think that nowadays it is more difficult that earlier to separate truth from lie. So the bars are needed. Someone might by accident put the hand into the month of the truth and lose it ..

Rome has been built on seven hills and we became aware of it. Many stars up and down and so we ended at Piazza Venezia called after Palazzo Venezia. It was the first Renaissance palace (1455) in Rome, the huge, pompous building of white marble. As far as I understood the guide told that it has not been so well liked by inhabitants of Rome because it differs a lot from its brownish surroundings. And because of the colour and rich decorations it has been called “the Wedding cake” and also “the False Teeth”. But I think it is very beautiful indeed. In the middle is the Alter of the Fatherland. There lies the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a young boy killed during the first world war. Two soldiers are continuously watching over it and the eternal fire which burns the honour of the fatherland and the soldier.

We also saw the Column of Traiano and Toini tried - but I think with no much success – to follow the story that was cuted on it. And



somewhere was also the monument one can paste posters on and the fountain with a little turtle – or was it along some other walks... Anyway the time was quickly used up and we had to hurry for to be in time at a concert in the Church of St Paul (Chiesa di San Paolo Entro le Mura). Some of us had thought to take a closer look at the church, but there was no time for that. On the way to the church we speedily had some snacks and that's all. At the concert we heard classical opera arias by Mozart, Rossini, Verdi ...

### **Saturday 13 June 2009**

In Rome and the whole day in front of us! The first meeting was going to start with coffee break not until 10.30 a.m. For to spent a free morning usefully we, Rauni, Tuovi and I decided to do an open-deck panoramic tour starting from Termini Station. While stepping on a bus we thought that the tour would be over before 11 o'clock, but pretty soon we realized that it was only a wishful thinking. At first we waited until the bus was full up and street sellers had sold hats and parasols to all of them who had nothing to protect one's head from the hot sun. The tour had 12 stops, not like usual buss tops but waiting places for new customers. When we were about halfway we were forced to make up our minds, either to disrupt the tour, take a taxi and be in time at UPTER or to continue on our tour and be late ... We decided to be "naughty" and to carry on with our exploration. The tour itself was very good, even taped commentaries were – party – understandable. We circled around the city, saw so many famous sights of Rome, went to the Vatican via Piazza Navona and game back via Piazza Popolo. We were surprised at the green of Rome. There was at least one place where I almost was able to pick an orange (?) from a tree. And all those flowers! And we had luck because in the end our decision turned out to be really good one. When we at last came to UPTER others were still having coffee and nothing very important had been done. After coffee break the singers of our group decider to sing some Finnish songs as an invitation to Finland in September. The performance was success and it was followed by songs and dances of the Spanish group. Then it was time for the lunch - and – the meetings were over ...

In the afternoon Pirketta was brave enough to visit the Vatican. Courage was really needed – I remember lines before the gates of the Vatican in the morning. But: she made a success of it and saw a lot. She told later on that she had gone against the current and so she was able to keep away from crowds. Some of us stayed for a while at a street café and looked around. We were told that a big demonstration of gays would go by but it didn't happen and we were not interested enough to go and look at it. Some of us went to the Roman National Museum into the part (Palazzo Massimo) that was situated near our hotel. An admission was free for retired people, but my scissors was not accepted. So I was not allowed even an opportunity to cut my initials on some marble statues of ancient times. Mind you – I was not planning to do so ... There were three floors, whitewashed, cool

rooms full of priceless collections of marble works, portraits and relics starting from times before Christ and some even from Greece. The courtyard around the building was also magnificent with statues of men, horses and Capricorns with one-horn (?) and all those sarcophaguses ... and flowers.

In the evening a concert was again waiting us at the very same church as yesterday. This time they performed Verdi's La Traviata. And again we were in hurry. We got seats reasonable close to an altar but the church was so full that I was not able to see much. Well - the music needs not to be seen! The church seemed to be quite simple and peaceful. glittering with greenish mosaics. But so hot ... Most of listeners seemed to be dripping with sweat and fans were rotated all the time. In the interval Ilkka manager to conjure up some grapes that he shared with us. With that he saved at least my day!

### **Sunday 14 June 2009**

The taxis were leaving at 8.30 a.m. towards the airport. So – there really was nothing much to tell about that Sunday. Pirketta and I did in the morning a quick walk around nearby blocks. The city was quiet. A white magnolia was opening its flowers. At the airport someone was complaining about forgetting to throw a coin into Trevi Fountain. Don't worry! It doesn't really matter! I was in Rome about 18 months ago and I didn't throw a coin. And still – here I was again È stato un piacere!

Arrivederci!

It was nice to see you!

Goodbye!



MONDAY, 25 MAY 2009

## **The Year 1952**

*by Pirketta Levón*

I was born after the year 1952, so I do not have any own memories from that time. But something I can tell you about that year:

The year 1952 was a special year to Finland. We paid the war reparations to Soviet Union.

The Olympic Games was in Helsinki, the capital of Finland. Armi Kuusela won the beauty competition as Miss Universum. Coca Cola was sold for the first time in Finland because of the Olympic games.

THURSDAY, 14 MAY 2009

## Some Characteristics of Finnish Folk Songs

The Finnish folk singing tradition has several different layers representing styles from ancient times to the present day.

**The yoik** (*joiku*) is a very special kind of chant sung by the Lapps. It is one of the most curious forms of music in Europe and its sound is comparable to the traditional chanting of some American Indian cultures.

Each yoik is meant to reflect a person or place. It usually has short lyrics or no lyrics at all and can be accompanied for example on drums.

**The lament** (*itkuvirsi*) is a ceremonial improvised song of grief which has usually been sung at funerals and weddings. In Karelia there were professional mourners who were paid for wailing at funerals.

Nowadays these songs have had their rebirth in Finland. There are associations and classes where people learn to sing laments in order to release their emotions and heal themselves.

The ancient Finnish folk singing tradition consists of **rune songs** (*runolaulu*) based on the Finnish national epic, Kalevala. These songs belong to the era when the Finns lived in family-centred hunting communities. They were sung during daily routine and festive occasions and also for pure pleasure when people were having fun together.

One song of this type is “Kamanat kohottukohot”, to be sung for visitors in order to welcome them.

The first verse states in Kalevala-metre how the doorway is wide and the door opens by itself when the worthy guest is coming.

The second verse tells that we seldom meet each other here on the Väinölä moors and the heaths of Kalevala. It welcomes the visitor whose presence is a great honour for us and lights up the day.

All folk songs have originally been performed without accompaniment. Because there were no instruments at that time, dances were accompanied by singing. Therefore the songs represent various times (*tahtilaji*) from the polska, a group dance performed in a ring, to dances for couples, such as the waltz, schottische, mazurka and polka. The contents of the songs reflect the whole range of emotions, the dominant themes being love and longing, and in contrary to the rune songs, which are rich in alliteration, the modern songs have end rhymes.

Here are some examples of the songs representing different times (*tahtilaji*):

**Polka:** "Isä-Matin polkka - Father Matti's polka" describes those good old times when people were swift-footed and able to dance an ordinary polka.

**Mazurka:** "Pappani talo – My father's house" is an example of a bragging folk song. In the first verse the girl tells that her father has a stone house but her poor boyfriend only a wooden one and the other verses continue on the same lines.

**Waltz:** "Kultani kanssa – With my sweetheart"

The lyrics of this song are somehow modified. Wine didn't use to belong to the Finnish folk song vocabulary, even though some stronger spirits did.

Interpretation into English:

I'd rather sleep in a firewood shed with my sweetheart than on a comfortable bed with somebody else.

I'd rather drink water from a river with my sweetheart than red wine from a glass with somebody else.

I'll carve my sweetheart's name on a birch trunk, I'll always keep his/her portrait in my heart

Our folk song heritage is rich and can delight and surprise us when we start searching.

*Sinikka Mandell*

## The Easter Traditions in Finland

by *Pirketta Levón*

We have two established churches in Finland: the Orthodox church and the Evangelical Lutheran church. For this reason we have two different traditions during the Easter time.

On the Shrove Sunday people use to slide down with the sled. In the Orthodox church people eats plini, the Russian pancakes, with sour cream, onion and egg from the powan.

This is the beginning to the Great Lent.

On the Palm Sunday the Orthodox, especially children dressed in their best clothes, conduct the Easter by reading a nurcery rhyme wishing all the best for people in the memory of the happenings in Jerusalem during the Palm Sunday. The children will get their price in the Easter. Usually it is an Easter chocolate egg.

On the Good Friday the Lutherans use to eat fish and the Orthodox do not eat nothing more than vegetables (as during the whole Lent).

On the Saturday after the Good Friday in the western part of Finland the Lutheran children are dressed as witsches and they go from door to door wishing happy Easter. People gives them sweets and sometimes money. Also in the western part of Finland (in the countryside) are Easter bonfire. Propably this has the meaning that after Christ is dead, the graves are open and with fire people tries to keep the spirits away. During this day the Orthodox people are cleaning their homes and preparing the Easter food for next nighth. The typical foods are pasha, sweet cheese, kulitsa, sweet bread for the pasha and roast mutton lamb.

People are eating rye pudding. This food is typical in the Lutheran church. It is the symbol to the Holy Bread. Also the common traditions are crowing the grass and decorating it with small yellow birds, yellow flowers and decorating the willow and birch brances with feathers in different colours. And, of course, painting the eggs and eating them.

WEDNESDAY, 29 APRIL 2009

## Reflections of the visit in Krakow

### FOUR DAYS IN KRAKOW

by *Hilve Leino-Pouttu*

Thursday 19 February 2009

The night towards Thursday was long and short. .. About three o'clock I put the alarm clock next to me under the blanket to make sure that it would not wake up the whole house cruelly at the time

one should see sweet dreams and a bit after four I was already sitting by my desk to be ready to immediately answer the wake-up call quarter past four. So, the day started quite early and with a feelings there was something new to expect. Rauni had taken care of the taxi transport to the airport and picked me up first and then Leena. Thanks to Rauni.

We had to change planes in Helsinki and Warsaw. The journey went surprisingly quickly though the flight to Krakow was not in time. So in Warsaw we had plenty of time for lunch and hot Irish coffee that did good for our spirits and the cold that was harassing Arja. Our hotel in Krakow - Hotel Fortuna Bis - was located in ul. Pitsudskiego 25: a very good place near the old city. On our way to the hotel we saw many police cars, and some helicopters were buzzing on the sky. We soon found out that in Krakow were besides our meeting also the meeting of Nato countries.. Krakow must certainly have felt itself very important because of the men of Nato nations and other outstanding persons like us were visiting it. A long demonstration with red flags and banners passed our hotel while we were standing in its courtyard – but maybe – they were not walking for our sake

“Let`s make friends” -meeting was taking place in the Fullness-of-Life Academy office (u. Lea) A sweet “little girl” (something like Anjuska ?) fetched us from the hotel and lead us to our meeting place partly by walking in slippery streets and partly by a streetcar. There were people from Prague, who are responsible for the whole project, people from .Krakow – of course – and from Rome. People from Madrid arrived just when we were leaving for a shared dinner in u..sw.Annu 3. (?) In the meeting a tiny woman with white hair told us their activities, courses they have every day. I became quite breathless while listening to all the actions they have. What an energy! The dinner took place in a cellar restaurant something like our Gustaw Vasa. The dinner was good, but a bit too salty for us, who were not used to salty food. Conversation was lively though most of us were quite tired. – And - even I with my broken English found out that a principal organiser, a lady from Czech Republic (I have real difficulties to remember even Finnish names - and now there were so many new people and the names were something I could not make any sense at all ... so I picked up no names ...) who was sitting opposite me had a terrier and that her daughter is taking care of it while she is travelling. Oh – I must remember that she reminded me, her dog is not it but she. Beside me at the table was another woman from Czech Republic. She was nearly eighty years old and very tired and we were not able to make much conversation – her hearing and my English were not good enough for that. .

Friday 20 February 2009

A nice surprise! I had succeeded to set a waking call right in my mobile. though the night before I had had difficulties to understand



that our clock was one hour ahead of Poland. That is how I respect others – I think everyone is always better than I ... that is ... ahead of ...

Stuffed with breakfast we went out to a cold morning running after Anjuska (?). The streets were slippery and some of us were jumpy when thinking of broken legs. But we managed it and after a long walk got a bus to Nowa Huta where the official opening and the meeting with local authorities were to take place. And after the bus ride there was again a long walk in slippery streets when we were supposed to look around and admire the clear cut city plan of Nowa Huta. I must admit that I did not get much of it because I was concentrating on my foot – and of course – because of the problems with language. Leena had been clever enough to take “slide stoppers” on her shoes. Others were very interested in them. and she had to make a performance about how to use them.

Nowa Huta built in the 1950`s lies partly on top of the best farming soil of Krakow. and was a gift from the people of The Soviet Union to the Poles. It was to be a socialist showcase city: as an example of a good housing area and contrast to the dark and impractical houses and homes in the old Krakow. It was based on examples of renaissance architecture. And – oddly enough - idea for it was taken from the American neighbourhood city blocks that had been built in the 1920`s New York. The tree-lined streets were wide and the houses were built in blocks with own shops, kindergardens, schools, and so on. Nowa Huta was to serve the steel works named after Lenin. The idea was to send the products of the area by train straight to The Soviet Union. In a magazine I read on the airplane it was said that a Pole is like a radish: red outside but white inside.... maybe ... the article was telling about the time when Nowa Huta was built. The central part of Nowa Huta is really well built but the surroundings are gloomy dormitory suburbs. We stopped in the Central Square, renamed Ronald Reagan Square in 2004 and after our meeting we visited the Church Arkas Pana, Ark of Noah. Ark of Noah is the first church of that area and it was built by volunteers and the very first corner stone was laid by Cardinal Karol Wojtyla later on Pope John Paul II. We went inside and Leena thought that the walls of the “second floor” would look much nicer with whitewash. For me the most amazing thing was a statue of Christ on the cross flying to the heavens surrounded by light coming through the big windows above.

But - back to the meeting. First of all there was the meeting with local authorities and the presentation of the “Seniors city project. Two ladies made long speeches about the subject. I wrote down some figures of the growing numbers of elderly people (I learn from Rauni: that you should never say old people but elderly people or senior citizens) and what they are going to do to make life better for them and so on. . But I have lost my notes – as well as the boarding pass tickets from Helsinki to Krakow - except for the tickets I deliberately threw into a waste basket at the hotel.

The team work presentation were ever so interesting. I think we have quite a lot to learn from the web pages of others. I especially remember the pages of the Italians, their way to show their work and of course the various contents of the pages. I think it was something I myself have thought we could do.. But – I know nothing - and that really means nothing – about computers and how to make use of them and very little of ideas of the whole project so I have no comments about these things Still - and of this matter I am capable to comment – I think that Arja, when presenting us said “I love you all!” with all-embracing smile. fully conquered the hearts of the whole audience. Bravo, Arja!

After the meeting there was a cold tour around the Nowa Huta district and then back to the hotel. At dinner Arja and Toini ordered a mushroom soup – but what they got? A whole mushroom, big and brown, made of bread! Well – the soup was inside the mushroom and they said it was just delicious. And Toini took the mushroom with her ... She was planning to grow a cactus in it at home ... Hm ....

Saturday 21 February 2009

The coordinators went to work but we – common people – were free to do what ever we liked. In the big city there are many possibilities. After a discussion we all decided to visit Wawel. In the shining sun we walked along reasonably quiet streets to Wawel Hill. There was snow on the hill and someone after a hard climb up to the hill, was sliding down. It looked very dangerous but he seemed to enjoy it. From a courtyard there was a gorgeous panorama over the river Wisla. On the river there were birds fishing and one young, grey swan swimming about. And on the river bank people were walking lazily. A statue of a dragon that once upon a time lived in a cave under the castle stood on the slope covered with snow. We turned our faces towards the sun and enjoyed it. There was so much to see inside the castle but the staircases. nearly killed us. Everything was well restored looking brand new. Someone of us was wondering if the new looking textiles really were like they had been over centuries ago. But huge wall tapestries on the walls of the rooms, many from the 16th century, were not mended – Anyway I think they were as they had originally been. Seeing them one cannot but admire the skill, and wonder how much work and time they have taken. The arms and weapons and horses` rugs were also like pieces of art. The cathedral with wonderfully stained glass windows and royal tombs was really worth seeing.. There was also the Chapel of Wasa. But – there is a limit of how much one can take in ... and we soon reached that limit. We left Wawel knowing that there would have been so much more to see and walked to the city for lunch.

In the evening there was a farewell dinner in a funny restaurant (ul. Stawkowska 32) where we went by taxi. Taxis are not at all expensive in Krakow. At “the getting to know you dinner” people from different countries had been placed so that there was always a stranger sitting next to you but now there were always two people from the same country sitting side by side.. And the show was ready when the waiters in the dark restaurant came towards the tables with flaming bits of meat on a sword. We had also live music. The Slaviv Mandry orkester played and sang Polish, Russian and Jewish melodies and songs from the play “The Fiddler on the Roof” (?). And Rauni in her quiet way while giving to the partners reflectors of smiling faces told everybody with excellent English about our warm heart. Was it so, Rauni?

But the best was still to come: a wild party in the room of Arja and Toini In spite of heavy cold - Arja sang “... kapakassa juhliitaan ...” and Toini in her black tights danced to us. I wonder what the people would have said if she had done it when we had the presentation meeting the day before... How about next time when we will be in Rome! And ... if the recycling is an answer to save our globe Toini at least is doing her share: the bread-mushroom bowl Toini had taken the night before was already used as a jewellery box. . . .

..  
Sunday 22 February 2009

We met at breakfast not so early in the morning. Everyone of us was quite worn out. Arja and Toini both with a cold decided to stay in to be strong enough for a long journey home. Leena, the only one with guts made up her mind to visit some art galleries and the University. Kaisa and Saila went to Wawel. Rauni and I went to walk in the old city or actually around the Market place. I wanted to buy a book about Krakow and went into the Cloth Hall but they had no books there. Instead they had various things made of amber, very beautiful indeed. Because it was the time for the Mass at St Mary`s Church we popped inside but it was so cold that we soon had to leave. We saw a glorious high-altar and wonderfully stained windows but that`s about all. At the Market Place people were taking pictures of the statue of the signal of the full hour from the church tower. But we went on and passed the Gate of St Florian and behind the walls Rauni had her chance to bargain for the price of a watercolour of Krakow. And somewhere we also saw sculptures of twelve apostles outside of the Church of St Peter and St Paul – or did I see them some other day ... On the way to the hotel we lost each other but we were anyway in time for lunch before leaving for the airport.

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The nice journey with good friends ended too quickly. And I myself would be ready to go again as soon as that flu will be over ... .

THURSDAY, 16 APRIL 2009

## Stereotypes of the co-operating countries

### **CZECH**

Excellent beer-production  
Good separation of the Czechs and Slovaks in peace  
Good in Winter and Summer sports: Emil Zatopek, Jan Zelesny,  
ice-hockey country  
High level of the technology  
Culture: Smetana, Janacek, Dvorak, Hasek (Good Soldier Svejk),  
Havel

### **POLAND**

Movie directors: Kieslowski, Wajda, Polanski  
Very religious country: John Paul II  
Adam Malysh; Kowalzyk  
Flat landscape with big rivers, important agriculture  
Chopin  
Polish puppet-theater, poster-arts

### **ITALY**

Romulus and Remus  
Special food: Pasta, pizza, parmaham, parmesan, good wines  
Culture: eg. Fellini, Pavarotti, Verdi  
Vatican  
Mafia and earthquakes  
Ferrari (and the good driver Räikkönen!)  
Temperament in mentality, noisy people  
Strikes often

### **SPAIN**

Turism: eg. Costa del Sol  
Culture: Gaudi, Picasso, Cervantes (Don Quijote), Dali  
Sports: Great level football, Flamenco, Salsa, Bull-fighting  
Long period of Franco  
Latino culture: temperament, strong feelings

THURSDAY, 2 APRIL 2009

## The Jubileum of Light

*by Ritva Jokinen-Andov*

Midsummer is celebrated annually between the 20th and 26th of June. It is the brightest time of the year. Also, it is the biggest

Midsummer is celebrated annually between the 20th and 26th of June. It is the brightest time of the year. Also, it is the biggest summer celebration here in Finland and we'd like to think it's the start of a really hot summer (sometimes it even is!). We celebrate life, summer and the Nightless Night. The cold and dark winter is far away.

The name "Juhannus" as the Midsummer is called in Finnish, origin for commemoration and birthday of John the Baptist (Johannes Kastaja, we say). Midsummer is also our Finnish Flag Day. We raise the Flag at 18.00 on Midsummer Eve and lowest at 21.00 on Midsummer evening

Many Midsummer traditions from the past are still followed to day. One of them is the building of the "kokko", a huge bonfire by the water. An old traditions is also to decorate houses and doorways with young trees and flowers. Even today it is popular among young girls to pick flowers on midsummer night and to place them under their pillows in the hope that their future husbands will be revealed to them in their dreams.

Many open-air dance and music festivals are arranged and most of cities have big bonfires for people to gather around and see, but many Finns prefer to celebrate this special occasion in the countryside. At their summerhouse with family, friends and relatives. SAUNA is warmed of course and fresh birch whisks are prepared, traditional Finnish songs are heard playing on the radio, sausages are grilled and drinks are enjoyed. It's time to enjoy the magical Nightless Night and welcome the Summer!

Unfortunately the Midsummer in Finland has a sad side. We have thousands of lakes. Every year statistics indicate that some people drown during this particular period, as so many celebrations are held close to water. Under the influence of alcohol common sense is forgotten resulting in unnecessary accidents.

## Vappu - The First of May in Finland

*by Rauni McBreen*

Traditionally the First of May in Finland was a bank holiday for workers with massive parades and political speeches, but in course of time it has become a general day of joy welcoming the spring and the approaching summertime. All Finland seems to be on the move with various celebrations. Also children are having a great time with huge balloons, streamers, funny hats and crazy masks.

Vappu- the First of May is officially opened in Helsinki by the University of Technology students at 6 p.m. sharp on the eve of the

University of Technology students at 6 p.m. sharp on the eve of the May Day. That's when the students place their student cap on Havis Amanda, the statue of a naked maiden standing in the middle of a fountain in Helsinki Esplanade. Usually somebody falls into the fountain and gets soaking wet. The students also issue a special Vappu- bulletin with all kinds of crafty jokes and funny texts. The university choir singers visit the President wishing her a glorious spring time. In Tampere the first year technical students are 'baptised' by making them stand in a kind of cage which is lowered into the Tammerkoski icy water! I suppose every Finnish university has some kind of pranks on the First of May.

As to eating and drinking, Sima is a must 'vappu' speciality, a soft drink made with water, lemon, brown sugar and yeast. After it has fermented overnight it is bottled. When the few raisins at the bottom of the bottle have risen to the top, sima is ready for drinking. (By the way, there is also a special instant 'sima' for adults: put a couple of raisins in a bottle of Koskenkorva vodka and your 'sima' is ready!) To have with 'sima' we have 'tippaleipä', a kind of rosette, which looks like a deep-fried bird's nest covered with powdered sugar.

After the night-long celebrations the students in Helsinki gather on Ullanlinnanmäki, the hill in Kaivopuisto park. There they enjoy picnic brunches with lots of singing and sparkling wine. All the restaurants are full with lunch guests and everybody seems to be in a jolly mood. We really couldn't do without Vappu in Finland!

TUESDAY, 31 MARCH 2009

## Independence Day

*by Leena Mäkipää*

On December the 6th 1917 the Finnish Parliament approved the Declaration of Independence. After 700 years under Swedish and 100 years under Russian government Finland was finally independent. It was the right moment: Russia was weak after the revolution in 1917. So the birthday of Finland is the 6 December and Finland is now 91 years old.

We are very happy to have this beautiful and lovely country and we are celebrating Finland's birthday every year. It is no carnival outside because it is in December and it is dark and cold like the Euro-winter in the middle of Europe. We are celebrating with families and friends at home. Nobody is working, the shops and supermarkets are closed. We are a very patriotic people, and there are flags, candles and ceremonies in the cityhalls and churches.

We will remember our nearest and dearest and we are walking in the cemeteries and we will have candles, thousands of candles on the graves. It is very beautiful there at night.



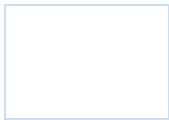
We have a tradition that other people cannot understand: we are looking at a program on TV: the ceremonies of the Independence Day Gala in the presidential residence in Helsinki. We are together 5 millions and altogether 2 million people are watching this program. We can criticize or admire dresses, hairstyle, dancing interviews of famous people. And famous are sportsmen, actors, filmstars, diplomats, artists and the members of our parliament. Funny. It is a show for us.

MONDAY, 30 MARCH 2009

## Christmas, the greatest celebration of all ! - Joulu juhlista jaloin !

**by Martti Isomäki**

Christmas has always been the highlight of my life. The experiences of Christmas time have given me a lot of life content both as child in the countryside and as adult among my family in the town. The celebration of Christmas includes so much specific positive things and expectations, that without them, my life would have been - and would still be - a lot poorer. I do not know what else could replace them in my life? I can also ask how we Nordic people could be able to get over the long, dark and cold winter time without Christmas lights and atmosphere? My Christmas has been guided at first hand by the Christian tradition of the immediate neighbourhood but also by the other positive things associated with Christmas. As an adult particularly following our children's and grandchildren's Christmas delight has been irreplaceable.



### ***My childhood Christmas in the country, some memories***

At home in Korttesjärvi  
Christmas approached slowly  
without much uproar. We lived  
in modest circumstances in a  
small country village and it was  
1940's, still partly war time. It  
was most important to

concentrate on everyday routines: to take care of the cattle and horses, to get firewood and to do other wintry farm work. In any case, we had to survive through wintertime there with the previous summer's crop – good or bad. The food and money we got from taking care of the domestic animals was an important addition, too. However, a few days before Christmas the feast preparations began by baking and cleaning. The works were done by my stepmother and older sisters. Pig, sheep or a calf were slaughtered often in early winter well before Christmas, when the crops were got in. Thus the basic food for Christmas was found from the house. Still the job was left to be done: baking, roasting and cooking. Then Christmas was ready to begin on behalf of food. We enjoyed the good and simple rustic food also in Christmas. In addition there were a few Christmas-

related specialties such as swede and carrot casseroles. Also meat brawn (lihasyltty), jellied veal (lihahyytelö) and blood sausages could maybe sometimes belong to the Christmas table. We ate much porridge at Christmas time but definitely on Christmas Day. Porridge was made most often of barley, because rice didn't exist in the village shop.

**Lutefisk:** The absolute Christmas food, however, was the lutefisk (lipeäkala) made in the way á la Korttesjärvi. I remember how the dried fish (Norwegian cod) laid as a pile of firewood on the floor of the village shop. On this shop floor laid also our Christmas fish. My father made the pre-reparations (softening) of the fish with the ash-lye treatment, which stage lasted 2-3 weeks. The womenfolk completed the cooking of the fish. After cooking in the normal way, milk and spices (pepper, salt and butter) were added and the delicious Christmas-fish soup á la Korttesjärvi was ready for eating. Ah' how it tasted good in child's mouth (and still tastes) even eaten with a wooden spoon.

**Christmas presents:** We could not afford buying Christmas presents so the gifts were made preferably by ourselves. Baking a "wheat bread-boy" for the children was also one tradition without which Christmas could not come. This "Christmas-boy" was packaged and it was one of the present which Santa Claus brought to the children. Sometimes this was the only gift! The home-woven socks and mittens were very usual gifts as well, although the children didn't especially like these. Otherwise these articles were quite useful, because it was cold wintertime! However, I remember when I got a watch as a gift a "false clock". I was then about 10 years old and I was so happy, that I could not sleep at Christmas night just because I had to wake up often to admire my own clock!

**Christmas-tree** was felled a few days before Christmas but was taken indoors just on Christmas Eve and mostly decorated with the little things made at school by the children and with live candles. Searching a Christmas-tree has always been for me a duty of honour. When I was quite young, I inherit this task from my father. It was not easy at all to find a good and beautiful tree, although all the village's forests were available. In our village there was an unwritten rule that it was allowed to take a Christmas-tree anywhere you liked. Hardly possible nowadays? Sometimes I had to go back to the forest again, when folks at home did not accept the first tree.

**Christmas-sauna** has always been one of the Finnish Christmas traditions. Especially on Christmas Eve it is almost a holy event. In Korttesjärvi we went to sauna in the afternoon (4-6 pm). After sauna we ate Christmas meal but main meal (Christmas dinner) was eaten on Christmas Day.



SUNDAY, 29 MARCH 2009

## Sauna - Bath

by Hilve Leino-Pouttu



Walk through a birch wood towards a glimmering lake behind it. While walking take some branches of the birch and make them into a bunch - you might have some use of it later on. Smell a scent of a smoke. And suddenly the lake is at the front of you.

There is a tiny log cabin - a sauna house - near a water and the smoke is rising from its chimney. It is Saturday afternoon and the sauna is warming up. Try to go against your desire of a refreshing swim, it will be twice as wonderful after a hot sauna bath...

We Finnish people often think that the sauna is something special for us but that is not the entire truth. Many other nations have also had buildings where they have had a steamy bath and relaxed. But of course – the sauna has always been a part of the life of Finnish people. In the early days the sauna was the very first building one made when moving to a wilderness. And sauna was home at the same time. The building made of timber was warmed with an open fire on a dirt floor. Above the fire there were stones that become hot while the fire was burning. The smoke came inside and one must wait outside until the air was clear of a burning smell. It might take hours. Later on people learnt to make a chimney to get the smoke out of the building. And nowadays most saunas are warmed with electricity.

In the North saunas were mostly made for washing. When the sauna was ready for bathing one got off the clothing and went inside. While sitting there on wooden banks in the heat of the sauna one just threw water to the hot stones (a sauna stove) and the steam would fill up the whole building. Then it was a time to beat oneself with branches of the birch (a birch switch) which have been warmed up in a boiling water. An aroma like a young summer after a soft rain would spread all over. No wonder that the sauna was considered to be a sacred

place, where no one was allowed to speak with a noisy voice. It was said that if the sauna, booze and tar do not heal you, your days will be numbered. When somebody got sick, the sauna was warmed and the sick person was taken in the sauna. In years gone by also babies were born in the sauna. And it was very important to tell in a loud voice how very ugly a newborn was, because there were all around sprites which were keen to take a beautiful baby. But – every sauna had also a good elf who took care of the sauna building. And at Christmas time he was always given a bowl of porridge.

On the side of washing the saunas have also been used to make malt, smoke ham and dry flax. My childhood home had the smoke sauna, the only one of a village. And my father used to smoke the meat of the whole neighbourhood. It took days to get the meat well done. To get the taste of the smoke all through the meat was not at all easy, but people of the village said that the smoked ham made by my father was really delicious. And - I remember that the father was some times a bit nervous while the sauna was full of the meat.

Those times have gone but Finnish people have not lost their love of the sauna. Every house in a countryside has the sauna. Earlier there were public saunas in cities but nowadays every block of flats has the shared sauna and in the houses that have been recently built every flat has the sauna of its own. But – they all are really nothing compared with the saunas of thousands summer cottages at the lake- or seaside. Finnish people once and for all cannot live without them. Most lakeside saunas are still warmed with woods. The smoke saunas forgotten for decades are also having their come back.

... Look! There is no more smoke from the chimney of the sauna building. Sun is still high up but in the air there is a feeling of a late afternoon. Take the birch switch, open the door of the sauna and step in to a tender dimness. The heavenly luxury of the simple life is all yours!

THURSDAY, 26 MARCH 2009

## The celebration of the end of the summer season



Vaasa has a beautiful archipelago. Many of Vaasa's inhabitants have a summer cottage on the islands. On the last Saturday evening in August we are celebrating the end of summer season.

In the morning we take all lamps and lanterns and check that they are in order. Then we lay them on the big stones, rocks, trees, all

are in order. Then we lay them on the big stones, rocks, trees, all over. We also collect a bonfire on the beach. In the afternoon when it still is bright we go to the sauna and we swim in the sea maybe the last time this summer.

When the evening darkens the fire will be torched all over the shores of the islands. The view is unforgettable. Maybe it sometimes has rained and been windy but I remember only the beautiful evenings with the stoical sea and the many fires and the rockets in the otherwise dark night.

Hilkka Perttula

## My childhood Christmas

*by Toini Koskinen*

Christmas is very important to the children, all they can think about is Santa Claus (Father Christmas) and what they are going to get this year.

When I was a child the wait for Christmas started many weeks earlier. We had made a few presents for the parents and the siblings. Often in the evenings we sat together preparing the presents which were small and modest.

Christmas Eve was the longest and the most precious day of the year. In the morning we left with our father to the forest to get a Christmas tree. I remember how hard it was to choose a tree sometimes the tree was very important and it had to be beautiful. The forest was covered with snow.

Sauna belonged to the Christmas Eve as well. The sauna had no electricity, so there was only an oil lamp in the corner.

Santa Claus always came on the evening from Lapland of Finland. It felt like forever when I was waiting for Santa Claus, he always had a few gifts for each child. The gifts were not expensive but very important to us. My mother had baked a wheat-man (a bun man, with raisin buttons and eyes) to every child. Also she made some small presents on the night before Christmas.

The Christmas day we had to wake up early, because the Christmas church began at seven o'clock on the morning. To the church we went by horse sleighs. The trip was very exciting when it was dark and there were only few lights in the windows and the stars were twinkling in the sky. When we came back the speed was very high, because the horses were running a race.

In the evening we children dressed up as Santa Clauses to get some sweets and to see if people could recognize us.

Celebrating Christmas today is different from what it was in my childhood.

## Kalevala - Finland's National Epic

by Arja Lindholm



Kalevala is one of those books that every Finn knows. We learn it in comprehensive school and that's why there are not so many persons who actually love the book. The language in Kalevala is quite difficult, it is all in verse. Imagine: a 15-years old boy or girl reading a poem about an elderly man (called Väinämöinen) who is all the time running after a young girl (Aino, in picture). The subject could not be less interesting.

But anyway we Finnish people are very proud of Kalevala. Year 2009 is its anniversary. Exactly 160 years ago Kalevala was for the first time published in the form as it is now. There were in the beginning of the 19th century a young doctor, Elias Lönnrot, who collected the poems for the book. He walked around our country, that time a part of Russia, and asked the people, who often were not able to write themselves, to tell him old poems by heart.

To me Kalevala means a lot. The 28th of February we in Finland fly a flag to celebrate Kalevala, every year. And think: it happens to be my birthday, too. No wonder that I am a teacher in Finnish language and history.

Interesting information of our National Epic you find e.g. in this address:<http://www.finland.fi/netcomm/news/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID=27015>

WEDNESDAY, 25 MARCH 2009

## Typical Finnish Christmas Traditions

by Tuovi Kaskinen

Christmas time in Finland starts with the beginning of the Advent season, the period including four Sundays before Christmas, called Advent Sundays. This is the time when people start making Christmas preparations: cleaning and decorating the house, baking, sending Christmas cards, buying and wrapping presents and planning what to serve at dinner. Shopping streets in many towns are decorated with Christmas lights. Children are given Advent or Christmas calendars by which they can count the days from the 1st of December to the 24th, the Christmas Eve. Advent season is also the

time for many companies to organise pre-Christmas parties, called “little Christmas”, for their employees. Many clubs and organisations are holding Christmas fairs and bazaars selling Christmas decorations, handicrafts, food etc. Various concerts are also popular during the Advent season. People go to church to hear Christmas carols, hymns or classical music especially on the first Advent Sunday, when the hymn Hosanna is traditionally heard sung in the church services.

Traditionally the Finnish Christmas tree, a spruce, is brought in and decorated on Christmas Eve morning. The tree is usually decorated with candles or lights (nowadays electric), silver and golden ribbons, coloured glass balls and other kind of ornaments. A silver or golden star is placed at the top of the tree. The fresh tree is placed in a stand with a water container. The Finnish homes are decorated with different kind of Christmas ornaments: decorated wreaths on doors and lit paper stars or Christmas lights of various designs and shapes hung in windows. A traditional decoration is a billy-goat made of straw. Another traditional Finnish Christmas ornament “Himmeli” can be hung from the ceiling of the house. It is made of short strips of straw tied together with strings to form a complex three-dimensional structure.

The Finnish equivalent for Father Christmas is “Christmas buck” (billy-goat). He visits many Finnish homes on Christmas Eve, December 24th, to hand out presents for children. He travels by land in a sleigh drawn by reindeer. To thank Christmas buck children may sing Christmas carols for him. The Finns believe that the true origin and home of Father Christmas lies in Lapland, the northern part of Finland where he lives in a fell called Korvatunturi (Ear fell) together with Mother Christmas and their little helpers, the elves. There is a workshop where toys and other Christmas presents are crafted by the gnomes. Another task of the elves is to keep an eye on children, in order to see whether they have been behaving well and deserve any presents on Christmas.

The highlight of the Finnish Christmas celebration is the Christmas Eve, December 24th. The old town of Turku, the former capital of Finland, declares the beginning of Christmas peace period, starting at 12 o'clock on Christmas Eve. The citizens are wished a merry Christmas and prompted to spend the Christmas time peacefully, avoiding noisy and rowdy behaviour. In the afternoon some people go to church to attend the Christmas Eve Mass and light candles on the graves of their deceased relatives. Most people have a tradition of going to sauna to bathe and relax before attending the celebration of the evening. Families and friends gather together to have a Christmas dinner which consists of traditional Christmas dishes, such as oven-baked ham, root vegetable casseroles, mixed beetroot salad, liver casserole and patés, meat aspics, gravlax or smoked salmon, fish roe and herring dishes. As dessert you can serve rise porridge with plum soup.



In some families it is a custom to read aloud the Christmas gospel describing the events at the time of the birth of Jesus. After the Christmas dinner families with children usually have a visit from Christmas buck. He brings Christmas presents which are placed under the Christmas tree. Christmas Day is usually spent quietly at home, relaxing and resting. Some people use to attend the early morning church services. The following St. Stephens Day (Boxing Day) is traditionally a day for family visits.

MONDAY, 23 MARCH 2009

## One picture says more than 1000 words



by Esko

FRIDAY, 20 MARCH 2009

## Winter in Finland

Finland's winter specialities.

In Finland there are two special periods during a year. Beyond the Polar-circle in winter there is a Kaamos, a period when the time is non-stop night and in summer the sun is not going down. In Winter also in another part of Finland the well-lighted time is very short. In the northernmost part of Finland the darkness lasts about 50 days. Christmas brings a long-awaited break. People eat, drink, and sleep.

The darkness increases depression among the people. But some artists, such as Jean Sibelius considered the winter's darkness a time of creativity.

The winter form gives a special element to the finish nature. All the thousands of lakes in Finland get an ice-covering. The ice-mantle has many benefits, e.g. a heavy traffic can use ice-roads to the archipelago aso. The lowest temperature has been -51.5°C in Kittilä in January of 1999.

The ice-mantle offer also ways, which are very special to all the Polar-area. Those are a ice-swimming and ice-fishing.

Swimming in ice pool.

It has a very close connection to a finish sauna. After a heat sauna it's a way to go swim in a ice-pool or throwing in a snowdrift. This is a tested to have more good health and keep flu far away.

It's easy to get ice-hole and keep it open.

The ice-swimming has also as a ritual status in the Orthodox Church.

Ice-fishing

It's also easy to get with the ice-drill to get a little hole in the ice, a diameter about 10 cm. The fishing-rod is also very short, about 20 cm and the hook is bated with angleworm or some larvae. The hook is often names called jig. The catches are often perch.

Before going ice-fishing one must be sure of the ice conditions. Each year hundreds of ice-fishing people have browned , often because of thin ice. Dress warmly for ice travel/fishing.

Esko

## Winter fishing / Ice fishing



By Juho Mattila

Winter fishing, ice fishing, on the right photo "a little catch."

Fishing trough the ice is the most popular form of winter fishing in Finland. Ice fishing for perch, pike and burbot is possible all along the Baltic coastline. There are many types of ice-fishing equipment

First you must drill the whole through the ice by using ice-drill. You must fish vertically through the whole by using the hook and bite. But remember, the catch is not so important ! Most important is fresh air and the relaxation !

THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2009

## Winter in Finland

*by Pirkko Riipinen*

In Finland we have four seasons. The autumn is depressing with the lengthening nights - the days can be very sunny and beautiful with many colours on the trees. But the people are waiting for the light and snow. The winter months are December, January and February.

The first snowfall can be already in October, but the ground is still so warm that the snow melts. The days are shorter, the sun shines only for a few hours and the nights are longer and longer. On the 21st December is the winter solstice and there is only a few hours of daylight. After that the days will get longer again. In Christmas time in Finland the day is short, the darkness comes early, therefore it is good to have candles and other lights out- and indoors.

When the January sun shines, the nature is beautiful, the trees have snow on the branches and the snow glitters on the roofs, the world is white! The people take out their sleds, skis and skates and enjoy in the white nature, the kids make snowmen and snowballs and are happy in the snow.

THURSDAY, 12 MARCH 2009

## Happened in 1952

*by Toini Koskinen*

It is the year 1952 in Finland, in the town of Kokkola, a small town in Western Finland. Finland is recovering from the war and poverty is a part of everyday life.

Two boys aged 16 and 17 are dreaming of having the possibility to visit the Olympic Games in Helsinki. The boys are members of a cycle racing club. Because they don't have enough money to travel to Helsinki they decided to go there by biking.

The distance from Kokkola to Helsinki is over 500 kilometres. During the trip they stayed overnight at a few farms. Fortunately there were kind farmers who gave them some food as well. The boys

helped the farmers to compensate for their accommodation.  
The Olympic Games were worth all the troubles.

The trip back home was a lot heavier, but thanks to their good condition the boys managed to get back home.

By the way, the other boy was my husband.

WEDNESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2009

## My lucky year 1952

*by Ritva Jokinen-Andov*

In Winter 1952 I won in speed skating of championships of Finnish girls. I was the best skater girl in our country, a master of Finland! I was very excited and happy when I heard that I got a



journey as a prize. The prize was a journey to Helsinki, to the city of the Olympic Games! The train journey to Helsinki was long and hard. I was sitting on treebenches with two girls from Lapua and Seinäjoki. It was an unpleasant experience at night time.

But when we came to Helsinki I forgot all difficulties. The city of the Olympics had a very lovely atmosphere. It was so exciting to meet persons from many countries, other races. It was such an experience!

In the Olympic Stadion I saw Joseph Barthel, an unknown runner from Luxemburg or Liechtenstein. He won a running race for 800 m or 1500 m. It was an unexpected experience to him and to everybody, too. He cried with joy when he got a gold medal. I can never forget his cry. Emil Zatopek was a grand hero and everybody loved him.

Once we went to the football stadion. We saw the match Germany-Brazil. Germany was better, they had hard and persistent men, wrote Helsingin Sanomat. One day I walked along the road Mannerheimintie and I was worried because I saw 6 men who looked serious and they walked towards me. They had black clothes with white alphabets: CCCP on the front of their sportshirts. Later I thought may be it will be possibility that they killed my father's two beautiful and friendly little brothers in the war.

Sometimes I remember my unforgettable time in Helsinki. We slept at a Lyceum of Helsinki in one classroom on the wrestling carpet.

Later I was missing the Olympic Games and Helsinki for that inspirational atmosphere. I had a dream to go to the next Olympic Games 1956 to Melbourne. But Melbourne was so far away and I was so shy, young and very poor.

THURSDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2009

## The Olympic Year 1952, a time of hope and enthusiasm

by Martti Isomäki

### ***The life turns to normal***

It is no exaggeration to say that the Olympic year 1952 marked a turning point in the Finnish post-war life. Military action between Finland and the Soviet Union had expired in September 1944. The Moscow and Paris peace treaties were harsh to Finland. Finland had to hand over more than 10% of its

land area and to pay war reparations up to 300 million (later reduced down to 226 million) dollars to the Soviet Union. During the post-war years, people had to work hard to pay reparations on time. As well other difficult problems caused by the lost war, also should be solved. A part of the population was placed in the new living areas. People were still living in the rationing economy due to the lack of the food and other commodities and goods. Also politically the circumstances were unsteady and tense. The general mood ranged from hope and expectations of better life to depression and uncertainty. National self-esteem was not very high up after two lost wars. Now the national success with outside stimulation was of great importance and very hopeful! Fortunately the payment of the reparations was close to end and expired completely later this year. The last reparations train passed Vainikkala border station 18.9.1952.

### ***The Olympic Games***

The Helsinki Summer Olympics were approaching and it created a positive spirit in people's mind. We wanted to show the outside world Finland's position and that the country will rise on its feet again. The good Finnish success in the Oslo 1952 Winter Olympics, with the female skier's triple victory, had already raised the sport loving nation's mood to the new high expectations. The success in Olympic sport, especially in skiing and athletics, were still very important. From the times of Hannes Kolehmainen and Paavo Nurmi Finland had really a glorious tradition to defend in the sports. The preparation for the Helsinki Olympic Games was a major national task for such a small country as Finland. Almost everybody wanted to participate in one way or another. The game arrangements and the journey of the Olympic torch into and inside Finland were followed



closely. Many voluntary tasks around the Olympic Games were eagerly participated. The Finnish voluntary work “talkoot” flourished! We wanted to take care of Olympics with diligence and with the Finnish guts “sisu” and to succeed in the arrangements and in the sport performances as well.

### ***Miss Armi***

The coming games got the excellent attention because of Miss Armi Kuusela, who was crowned the world’s most beautiful woman, Miss Universe (Miss Universum). This first-ever Miss Universe contest happened in California just before Olympics on 29th of June. Armi also took part in Olympics by following the football final Hungary - Yugoslavia. The Finns could not hope for any better boost than Armi for the Game. Everything seemed better now, and the mood was high. Olympic Games were able to begin.

### ***My year 1952***

The Olympic year 1952 also meant very much to me personally, because at that time I was searching the direction for my own life. In the end of last year, I had left my home in Korttesjärvi to begin work as a post office trainee in Munsala. This was an experimental choice that was recommended by my cousin. He himself had already worked some time in a post office, and I worked at my father’s house after my “middle school” years. I did normal farm work there at home. Finally it happened that the Finnish Post Office took care of me by educating and employing me for 45 years.

### ***My interest and the Olympics***



In my youth I was very keen on sport, especially following how the Finns succeeded in the international games. It was also obvious, that I had to get a ticket to Helsinki Summer Olympics. I purchased the tickets and took the train to Helsinki to follow athletics in stadium over the

weekend of 26th -27th July 1952. It was my first trip to Helsinki in honour of the Finnish Olympic Games. In this way one of my dreams came true and I could return pleased to continue my work as post office trainee, now in Ylivieska.

Besides the sport events it was interesting to follow how the foreign countries reacted to the Finnish Olympic arrangements and how the foreigners felt about Finland and Finnish people. I followed these reactions very intently by reading the papers and listening to the radio. At the Ylivieska railway junction I had also a good opportunity to listen to the foreign train passengers talking during their break for enjoying refreshments and walking on the platform. Perhaps this curiosity was allowed!

Images: The Sports Museum of Finland



Perjantai, 9. tammikuuta 2009

## Olympic Games in Helsinki 1952, some posterior experiences

Ilkka Virtanen

The Games of the XV Olympiad were organised in Helsinki from 19<sup>th</sup> of July to 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 1952. Helsinki was planned to host already the 1940 Olympic Games, but those Games had to be cancelled because of World War II (as was the case for the 1944 Games, too). At the time of the Helsinki Games I was only eight years old, wherefore my reminiscences about the games are only few. I remember that the adults listened radio (TV did not exist in Finland!) to hear reports from the games: reports about the duels between Czech Emil Zatopek and French Alain Mimoun, about the Finnish gold medallists (e.g. Kelpo Gröndahl in wrestling and Sylvi Saimo in canoeing) etc.

### ***Helsinki Olympic coin***

My personal experiences relating to the Helsinki Olympic Games are from later years. I am a collector of Finnish special coins – silver and golden festal coins. The first Finnish festal (collector) coin ever minted was the silver Helsinki Olympic coin. Its nominal value was 500 Finnish marks (“old marks” used until 1962 and equivalent to 5 “new marks”, new marks were in use 1963 – 2001, and equivalent to 0.85 eurocents; its relative value today is about 14.50 euros). In all 18 500 coins in 1951 and 586 500 coins in 1952 were minted. The collection value of the Olympic coins today is about 500 € (1951 coin) and 50 € (1952 coin). It is worth to note that the Helsinki Olympic coin was the first special coin in the whole world minted to celebrate the Olympic Games. The next Olympic coin had to be waited until 1964 when Austria minted its collector coin for the Winter Olympic Games held in Innsbruck. Nowadays it is a tradition that every Olympic Games has its own Olympic coin.





## ***Helsinki Olympic flame***

Perhaps the most important symbol of the Olympic Games is the Olympic flame. Traditionally, the flame of the Olympic torch is lit in Greece and transported (mainly by running) to the Olympic City. In Helsinki there was two flames, the authentic Greek flame and a domestic flame lit in Lapland. The Lappish flame was lit on top of Taivaskero (“Heaven fjeld”), an arctic hill in the Pallas hill district at midnight on July 6, 1952 and it was put together with the Greek flame. According to a legend, the flame was lit by the midnight sun via a parabolic mirror. This is, however, only a legend: the weather was cloudy and the sun was not visible. The torch had to be lit manually.

Fifty years later, in summer 2002 when the 50 years anniversary of the Helsinki Olympic Games was celebrated, there was a reconstruction of the Olympic flame lighting on Taivaskero fjeld and its transportation as a relay to Helsinki. Before the year 2002, I had hiked several times in Lapland’s fjeld district and climbed also to the top of the Taivaskero hill. There exists a memorial of the lighting ceremony of the 1952 Olympic flame. In the beginning of July 2002, I travelled with my son Antti to Lapland and to the Pallas area to participate in the 50 years anniversary ceremony for reconstructing the lighting of the Olympic flame on top of the Taivaskero hill.

The day (6<sup>th</sup> of July, 2002) was cloudy, even rainy. In spite of this, a couple of hours before midnight we started to climb up to Taivaskero. The visibility was only a few meters but the path was well enough marked and we – together with some tens of others – were able to reach the top of the hill on time. As in 1952, the midnight sun was not visible; the tops of the hills were even inside the clouds. The torch had again to be lit manually (the organisers had brought even this time a parabolic mirror on the place). The lighting was done by Eero Mäntyranta, “the King of Innsbruck”, multiple Olympic Gold medallist and World Champion in cross-country skiing (in Innsbruck Mäntyranta won two gold medals and one silver medal). After the flame was lit, it became possible to start the torch’es way as a torch relay towards Helsinki. Helsinki was reached on 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2002, exactly 50 years later than the Opening Ceremony of the Helsinki 1952 Olympic Games took place. The torch relay visited also Vaasa on its way to Helsinki and we had another possibility to see the flame some days after the start.





*Previous page: Lighting of the Olympic torch on Taivaskero "from the Midnight sun" at Midnight on 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1952*

*Above: 50 years anniversary reconstruction of the lighting of the Helsinki Olympic flame on Taivaskero at Midnight on 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2002. Gold medallist Eero Mäntyranta holding the torch, the (unused) parabolic mirror on the left. U*



*Uppermost: Antti Virtanen sitting (2002) at the memorial of the 1952 Olympic flame on Taivaskero*

*Above: Finnish text on the memorial stone: On this place on Taivaskero the Helsinki Olympic flame was lit on 6<sup>th</sup> of July, 1952*

## The year 1952 in Finland

by Tuovi Kaskinen

The Olympic Games had expected to take place in Helsinki in 1940 but those games had to be cancelled because of the World War II. After the war, in 1952 Finland had the honour to host the XV Olympic Games in Helsinki. Nearly 5000 athletes from 68 different countries competed in Helsinki. The arranging of such large games was a big effort to a small country. Thousands of volunteers took part in the organisational tasks. The number of paid game tourists was nearly 1,4 millions.

The Olympic Games in Helsinki was opened in July 19th 1952 by Finland's president J.K Paasikivi. Our "running legend" Paavo Nurmi, then aged 54, lighted the Olympic flame at the Olympic stadium. A German "peace angel" surprised the organizers by approaching in the opening ceremony. The most brilliant athlete of the Helsinki games was a long-distance runner Emil Zatopek of Czechoslovakia, who won all the three long-distance runs. The Finns made him as some kind of godson in the lack of own hero runners. The Soviet Union participated for the first time in the Olympic Games and it grabbed the second most medals after the United States.

For Helsinki and Finland the Olympic Games of 1952 were a display window to the outside world. In 1952 Helsinki was very different from what it is today. The proximity of the war was still leaving its mark on life. Coffee and sugar were rationed. The last instalment of war reparations was paid to the Soviet Union in the autumn following the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games gave a boost to the image of Helsinki and Finland. Foreigners who came to the games could note that Finland was a Western country.

I have not much personal memories about the Olympic Games in Helsinki. In 1952 I was only seven years old. I was living in the countryside in the Western coast of Finland. My father was an enthusiastic sports fan and he listened to all radio broadcasts from the Olympic Games. I can remember for instance Pekka Tiilikainen's enthusiastic voice when he related the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games.

The same year as the Olympic Games took place in Helsinki a Finnish beauty queen Armi Kuusela was chosen as the first Miss Universe. This thing also raised the national self-esteem of the Finns. Armi was an idol for especially young girls and ladies in Finland. We used to clip her photos from the magazines and put them up on the walls, for instance in the outhouse.

## My memories of the olympic summer 1952

My aunt and her husband had got some tickets to the Olympic game in Helsinki. They asked me if I could take care of their three boys one week if they went to Helsinki. I couldn't refuse. I moved to their house for a week. The boys were 11, 9, and 6 years old. The parents called every evening to us. The nearest phone was by the shopkeeper. We were waiting for the call at his place. The parents told what they had seen and on the next day the boys played what they had heard. When the parents came home they had Coca-cola, which we hadn't seen before. We tasted it. The youngest boy found it bad tasting and we others didn't want to have more of it.

Hilkka

SATURDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2009

## My romance in 1952

*By Arja Lindholm*

The year 1952 was an epochal time to us Finnish people. The bombings were only a terrible nightmare. The war reparations had been paid to Sovjet Union, a Finnish girl was choosen as Miss Universe, The Olympic Games came to Helsinki, our capital.

I myself was at the time very romantic and very foolish schoolgirl. We teenagers were somehow younger than the boys and girls are now. I had read many romantic novels, such as L.M. Montgomerys Anna-stories and Margareth Mitchells Gone with the Wind, and was interesting in going to U.S.A. and see all the miracles there.

So, I knew that there would visit also Americans in the Olympic Games. I did not like any kind of sports but I really did like the young sportsmen. Unfortunately I lived in the town called Turku, which was several hundred kilometers from Helsinki. My family was poor, too, so I had no money to travel to Olympics. It was a sad thing to realize but I could not help it.

I was working that summer as a clerk on the marketplace. And then it happened: America came to me! The day was sunny and I was standing behind the counter solding liters and liters potatoes and blueberries and bunches of carrots. Gess who was coming nearer and nearer. It was a black man in a white t-shirt, in my eyes he was Mister America himself. I had seen black men only in the pictures and movies - never alive. He walked by me and did not even look at me. But though that happened for more than 50 years ago I still remember the black man in his t-shirt.

No sex, no kisses, not even a glance. Anyhow, it was a perfect romance for a young lady on the marketplace.

## In 1952

In 1952 I was a school girl. In summer I helped my mother to sell ice cream in front of the present Adult Institute, which that time was a commercial building (SOK). Our employer was Fritz Stauffer Oy, the forerunner of Valio Oy.

I remember a special day, the 3rd of August. Our Capital Helsinki was crowded by sportsmen and spectators on the final day of the Olympics. But there were also lots of people on that street where we were selling ice cream, people on their way to and from Vanha Vaasa, the Old Vaasa, where the centenary of the town fire was commemorated. Those days that street, nowadays called Opistokatu (Institute Street), was the major road to that direction.

Vaasa was founded in 1606. The houses, mainly wooden and many of them with thatched or birch bark roofs, were built close together and when a violent fire broke out on 3rd August 1852 early in the morning, when most inhabitants were outside working, almost the whole town was destroyed. The Court of Appeal was one of the few buildings which survived the fire and it is nowadays the Church of Korsholm, our neighbour municipality.

The new town was established on the seashore, about seven kilometres to the northwest from the original location. The fire was a cruel lesson and it was considered in the new master plan by Carl Axel Setterberg, which gave us a town with broad streets and five avenues. Furthermore was each block divided with alleys so that a fire could be restricted to a small area.

Sinikka

## The day was 27. July 1952



by Pirkko Riipinen

A 15 years old girl wrote later about this day in her diary:  
“Early in the Sunday morning 27.7. 1952 I travelled with my father to Helsinki. We wanted to see The Olympic Games and specially the Marathon Run. It was very exciting to be in Helsinki.

From the station we walked to the Stadium, but we were too early there and we had time to see Helsinki, to go to Linnanmäki and other

places in the city. Everywhere there were so much people and they didn't speak Finnish! I saw a black man and a man, who certain was from India, he had a lila turban and so beautiful black beard. In Linnanmäki Amusement Park we met two men from Switzerland, they wanted to photograph us and my father said, that I should speak German with them, but I couldn't find words, only "Ich danke Ihnen".

Later we listened the famous Swedish opera singer Jussi Björling, who sang so beautifully!

Then it was time to go to the park. The Marathon Runners game through the park. We saw them coming, the first was Emil Zatopek from Czechoslovakia. We all shouted and it was very fine to see the man, who could run fastest in the world!!

Later we saw a very fine Limousine, Prinz Philip from England sat there, but the windows were dark, we couldn't see him. To my mother I wrote a postcard with a picture of the Stadium, and at home I had very many stories to tell about that day."



## The 1952 Olympic Games and the war reparations

by Esko Kansanaho

About 5000 athletes were there. The Soviet Union entered at the Olympic games for the first time. Their athletes were housed in a separate "village". Emil Zatopek of Czechoslovakia became the first person in Olympic history to win the 5,000, 10,000 and marathon at the same Olympics.

Also some Olympic events took places in Hämeenlinna. In Ahvenisto there were the modern pentathlon, it's a sports contest that includes five events: pistol shooting, epee fencing, 200 m freestyle swimming and show jumping and a 3 km cross country run.

In 1952 I was in military service. And I was in the signal corps in Hämeenlinna. The military corps constructed the communication contacts between the competition places and competition central, and I was a one of those working there.

In year 1952 went the last war indemnity train to Russia. I was working in Paloheimo-sawmill, which constructed timber houses as war indemnity and I remember, when a Russian controller came often and commanded to pull down the ready uploaded baggage cars because there were too much branches in the tree fabricated units.

The replacements were 300 million dollars in total in the prices of the year 1938. Finland carried out replacements together 340 000 wagon load goods to Russia and also too locomotives, ships aso. As a one train the length could be up to 3 600 km. It was necessity to rebuild our industry. For example Paloheimo sawmill, after war reparations, got the tenfold orders for timber houses from Russia.

## In 1952

*by Leena Mäkipää*

The Olympics in Finland in 1952 I can remember only from documentaries on TV: the Stadium in Helsinki, so white and new, the sky blue, lot of sportmen doing gymnastics on the grassfield. And only one name: Emil Zatopek!

The Olympic Games were a very important and great event for us in Finland. All of the world was looking at us. It was clear, that we Finns must stay at home, not go to Helsinki where it was no place for us, not enough hotel rooms, no tickets etc. But the foreign people were not coming so much and the Finnish people got the invitation to come and fill the seats in the Stadium.

So my father and my brother travelled by train to Helsinki, they could pay the tickets and have a private room. They saw Emil Zatopek who had the most of medals there. I was younger and stayed at home in Mikkeli and I was not so interested in sports.

In compensation I could have got the ticket to sportsfield of our town when the Finnish beauty Miss Universum Armi Kuusela was going around the ground and sitting in an open car. I had never seen an open car or a so beautiful Miss Finland. Her darkblue eyes and her blond curly hair. I cannot forget it! It was summertime and I was 13 years old.



## My 1952 - When a country boy moved to the town

*By Juho Mattila*

I was skiing in the 1980s in Lapland, in Muonio. On the Taivaskero, the highest point of Pallastunturit, I detected the sign with the text: The Olympic flame was ignited in this place 1952. This sign reminded me times about 30 years before.

Year 1952 I was 12 years schoolboy and I was living in countryside. We had not a lot of possibilities for hobbies there. Only sport and reading were my most important hobbies. I remember that Tarzan was one of my big heroes.

The Olympic Games in 1952 were very important event for me and also for Finland. We could not participate but we listening to radio all broadcasts about these games. I remember names Emil and Dana Zatopek. Running style of the Emil Zatopek was strange but he won three gold medals.

Armi Kuusela was elected miss Universe 1952. We all were very proud about it. She married later Mr. Gil Hilario from Manila in Philippines. Year -53 Armi and Gil did the tour by train round Finland. They visited also in Pietarsaari were I was that time. Also I a little boy from countryside managed to shake hands with Armi and Gil. I was very proud, Wow!

Primary school on countryside was very little, six classes and two teachers. The teaching could not be very effective but I succeeded in entrance examination of Intermediate School in Pietarsaari. Even though this was the nearest school, distance from home to school was so much that I must live there. Every weekend I visited home. Our family was poor and I could not continue after Intermediate School. I had to find workplace and to get practice for entrance examination for Polytechnic School in Tampere where I started in 1961.

That time we had not Comprehensive School in Finland. It begun years 1972...1977 and it was very important matter for people who were poor and living in countryside. All youth had now same possibility to start learning not depending on your family's money. I was very satisfied when this new Comprehensive School came true.

Bullying in school was not under discussion that time. When I started my studies at Pietarsaari I was a shy boy from countryside. I spoke unusual dialect and other students imitated and laughed at me. .Already that time I was not subservient boy and I was displeased by many other students. During first week in school one big boy started a fight with me and challenged me to wrestle with him. Because I was strong and fast sportsman I won ! After that I was not school bullied by my schoolmates.

Most teachers had a lot of prestige and natural charisma. They had not difficulties with discipline. But I remember one young female teacher. She was inexperienced and without prestige and student could see that she was afraid. Young student like we were, can be very savage. They teased her very often so, that she cried. I pitied her! But I know that school bullying can be also so that students bully teachers.

## Members of the Vaasa Open Gate Group

### Pirketta Levón



I was born in Vaasa. When I was 20 years old I moved to Stockholm, Sweden, but after five years I returned back to my hometown. I have been in very many working places. My latest work was as a teacher (orthodox religion). Now I am retired. My hobbies are collecting stamps and phonecards, fishing, painting, opera and classical music. The newest hobby is bowling. I really enjoy it!

In my family is a man, a cat and two turtles.

### Toini Koskinen



My name is Toini Koskinen. I was born and grew up in the countryside in Pyhäjoki (Pyhäjoki means Sunday river in Finnish). My father was a farmer, he and my mother worked very hard. I was sent off to high school. When I was a child I was sick often,

so my father thought that I would never become a good farmer's wife. Therefore, I got to go study to graduate in the near by city and near by city and from there on I continued my studies in the University of Oulu. I graduated as a teacher. I was working as a physical education teacher and as a student-tutor at my school. Most of my years of teaching I have been working in Vaasa. I exercise much. I love physical education and dancing. And these two subjects I still teach for seniors. My group is called "Tanssin iloa 50+" which means Dance Joy 50+. I have a son, Jari and a daughter, Heli and from them and because of them I have four wonderful grandchildren. They are my everything.

THURSDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2009

## Rauni McBreen



I am a retired teacher of English and Swedish from Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences. Most of my students were studying for a degree of B.Sc. in various fields of engineering, e.g. construction, automobile, woodworking etc. I also worked as the international coordinator at our department. I have two children, a boy and a girl, and four grandchildren. Reading is my favourite spare time activity, but I also enjoy watching all kinds of sports on TV. My grandchildren keep me busy and on top of that I was, one day a week for five years, a so called 'school granny'. My seaside cottage provides a lot of work and pleasure, particularly in summer. I love swimming, walking in the woods and picking berries and mushrooms.

TUESDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2009

## Ritva Jokinen-Andov



I have been living here in Vaasa almost all my life. I moved from Tampere when I was 8. Now I'm retired and designer of clothes. My work ended 1995 because a clothing industry moved to abroad. I am in married and I have four grandchildren. I have enjoyed my free time, because I have many interests. I like read books, listen music, theatre, swimming, skiing, skating...etc. Of course also to learn English and computer science. My crandchildren are living in Oulu and Helsinki. Very often I'm hardly missing them. But we are very happy together.

MONDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 2009

## Tuovi Kaskinen



I am a 63 years old correspondent, retired since 2007. I was born and have lived my first 21 years in Merikarvia which is a small county on the Western Coast of Finland. I have studied at Turku School of Economics and graduated in 1969. After that I worked as correspondent and secretary in different companies in Helsinki. In 1973 I moved with my family to Vaasa where I am still living. I have two sons, born in 1973 and 1979. Since 1975 I worked as managing director's secretary at the Electricity Works of Vaasa.

Now when I am retired I try to spend my time by reading books, learning English, going to theatre and concerts, by swimming, water gymnastics, skiing and bicycling. I have not yet any grandchildren, the older son married last autumn and the younger son, who lives nowadays in Oslo, is still single. My family has a summer cottage in Maksamaa, in the archipelago north of Vaasa.

Email: [tuovi.kaskinen\(ar\)netikka.fi](mailto:tuovi.kaskinen(ar)netikka.fi)

## Leena Mäkipää



Born in East Finland, 70 years old, since 1964 here in Vaasa.

I was teacher (German and Swedish) in 38 years in the school . Now I am retired and learn English and Computer in our Adult Institute.

I am interested in arts and I am doing graphics. I like museums, exhibitions, movies, librarys, books, storys, cross country skiing, but not shopping.

## Arja Lindholm



My motto: You live only once.

I was born in Turku, before the Second World War, but I have been in Vaasa for over 30 years. I am married and have two children and four grandchildren. I am retired now but I used to be a principal of the comprehensive school for 20 years, and I taught Finnish language and history as well. History is my main hobby, too.

Archeology, ruins, museums - they are something. Big cities are my beloved places. I have visited almost all the capitals in Europe but not on other continents. This computer thing is my newest hobby, very difficult but very interesting.

## Marja-Leena Tikkala



I have retired 5 years ago.

I have worked as a secretary  
book-keeper.

I am widow and have an adult son.

I have lived in my hometown Vaasa for  
55 years.

My favourite spot is my garden.

My hobbies are exercising; (Nordic walk  
are good to my shoulders), genealogy,  
painting.

I like reading and music and the peace of

the nature.

I don't like noise.

I value honesty and a sense of reality.

I want to try everything new and different

## Pirkko Riipinen



Born 1937 in the Middle Finland  
Lived in Vaasa 50 years  
Pensioner  
No Family but many Friends  
My Hobbies: Travelling, all kinds Cultural  
Aktivities

## Hilkka Perttula



I was born here in Vaasa, but I have lived in an other Finnish town long time. I retired many years ago. The last 27 years of my working time I was teacher and before it I did different kinds of office works. I have three children, four grandchildren and one dog. At the Vaasa-opisto I take part in some groups, e.g. GoldenAge in 2004 - 2007 and at present in Open Gate. I like classical music and theatre. I read books and take long walks every day with my dog in the always uplifting nature.

MONDAY, 26 JANUARY 2009

## Juho Mattila



Born: 1940 Retired 2002  
Married, two children, one grandchild  
Education: Electrical Engineer  
Jobs: Product development, squirrel  
cage motors, projects  
Hobbies: Reading, summer cottage,  
walking, traveling,  
Special interests: Energy issues, memories, different cultures, Golden  
Age  
Slogan: You always learn something when you are away from home  
Place of residence: Vaasa, Finland  
Contact: [juho.mattila@pp.inet.fi](mailto:juho.mattila@pp.inet.fi)

SUNDAY, 25 JANUARY 2009

## Hilve Leino-Pouttu



I was born in the southern part of Finland and after living here and there around the country I ended up in Vaasa. I have had many different jobs, and I was over thirty years old when I began, beside working, to study, starting from the very beginning. Now I am a retired judge of the Administrative Court of Vaasa. By nature I am "a lone wolf". My main hobbies are lazing around and reading and I am fond of the forest, sea and big cities.

SATURDAY, 24 JANUARY 2009

## Esko Kansanaho



Born 1933  
Pensioner 1994  
Widow, 3 children and 6 grandchildren  
Education: University of Technology, surveying  
Jobs: Surveying in Oulu and regional planning in Seinäjoki and Vaasa  
Hobbies: Golf and detective novels, former:  
fly-fishing and genealogy  
Contact: ekansana@elisanet.fi, tel. +358055204604

FRIDAY, 23 JANUARY 2009

## Martti Isomäki



\* Surname: Isomäki  
\* First name: Martti (Nickname: Mara, Maraseniör)  
\* Profession: Senior citizen  
\* Family: My wife Nina, three adult children (two sons, one daughter) and four grandchildren  
\* Email: martti.isomaki(at)pp.inet.fi  
I was born in Kortesjärvi, in Ostrobothnia,



100 km from Vaasa. I have worked for 45 years in the Finnish postal service, e.g. as a postmaster in Vaasa. Now as a pensioner I have time to take interest in many useful and funny things, for example:

- Adult learning at Vaasa-opisto
- Computing at home and also working as ICT-tutor
- Choral singing and playing guitar
- I like cycling the year round and in the summer abroad

I have taken part in the international Grundtvig –projects: Golden Age in 2004-2007 and at present in Open Gate.

\* I like skiing too. You can see a videoclip from winter 2007 [here](#).

We are still waiting for the good skiing days this winter !

*With best regards*

*Martti*

THURSDAY, 22 JANUARY 2009

## Sinikka Mandell



I am a retired translator with several interests. The number one of them is nowadays playing accordion and singing – mostly folk songs. As a member of the previous Golden Age project I already know many of the participants in this new project and am pleased to meet them and all the new members, and eager to cooperate in different ways.

Regards! Saluti! Saludos! Pozdravy! Pozdrowienia!

TUESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2008

## Ilkka Virtanen



I am 65 years old, recently retired male member of the Open Gate Vaasa team. I was born and spent the 35 first years of my life in [South-western Finland](#), near Turku and in [Turku](#), the former Capital city of Finland. Last 27 years I have lived with my family (spouse Ulla and two adult sons) in [Vaasa](#), the Capital city of the [Region of Ostrobothnia](#). My professional career consists of over 40 year's period in Higher Education. In Vaasa I worked as a professor of Operations Research and Management Science in the

[University of Vaasa](#). Besides teaching and research duties I also had a lot of administrative responsibilities. I worked for example as the Head of a Department, the Dean of a Faculty, the Vice Rector and Rector of the University of Vaasa.

My hobbies include detective stories (both reading and collecting), cross country skiing and nordic walking, (cultural) tourism, voluntary national defence, motorboat cruising in the beautiful [Kvarken archipelago](#) (Finland's first UNESCO's World Natural Heritage site), [Rotary](#), wine and cheese tasting, and "all kinds of cultural activities" (theatre, [opera](#), [concerts](#)), but only as a consumer, not as a producer. For more detailed information, visit my website <http://lipas.uwasa.fi/~itv>.



We are working !

